CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter is based on the findings and analysis of the study on the folk culture and literature of Barak Valley, southernmost region of Assam, with special emphasis on the culture and literature of the folks inhabiting the tea gardens which were established during the colonial regime in most unfavourable conditions and the workers were inducted from different states of India. Diversity in different degrees, characterizes many of the contemporary societies, which has stimulated cultural studies by various government and non-government organizations, sociologists, anthropologists, folklorists and researchers from different perspectives. Barak Valley has a number of ethnic subcultures within its fold; the Bengali Hindus, the Bengali Muslims, the Barman, the Bishnupriya Manipuris, the Meitei, the Hmar, the Rongmei Naga, the Khasi, the Kuki, the Assamese, the Koch, the Reang or Bru, the Chakma, the Dhean and the tea garden populace (Chatterjee 2000). The study involved a general overview of the cultures of the different ethnic groups and a detailed exploration of the oral and written literature of the tea garden folks of Barak Valley. The objectives of the study were (i) to understand the folk culture of the tea gardens, (ii) to study the folk literature of the tea garden communities, (iii) to interpret the folk literature of the tea garden communities for capturing the nature of interactions between the folk culture and the urban culture and (iv) to identify the areas of intervention by the agencies concerned for development of the folk communities in the tea gardens of the region. Each of the communities have their own religion, language, birth ceremonies, marriage rituals and practices, funeral rites, their dress, food habits and folklores. There are tribes and non-tribes in Barak Valley, including its tea gardens. The non-tribes of Barak Valley are the Bengali Hindus, Bengali Muslims, Assamese and the Bishnupriya and Mitei Manipuris. The tribes of the valley are the Khasis, the Hmars, the Dheans, the Burmans, the Rongmei Naga, Koch or Rajbangshis, the Kuki, the Reang or Bru , the Chakmas and the Tea Tribes. The population of the tea gardens of Barak Valley also consists of tribes and non-tribes. As the study is based on Koomber

Tea Estate the tribes and non tribes of the garden is taken into consideration. The non-tribes in Koomber Tea Estate are mainly the Bengali Hindus, the Bengali Muslims, Bengali Christians, the Nepali Hindus, Nepali Christians, the Hindustani Hindus, the Hindustani Muslims, the Hindustani Christians, the Oriya Hindus, the Oriya Christians and the Madrasis . There are twenty seven tribes in Koomber tea garden; viz., Santal, Mura, Tirki, Kaldulna, Kol, Aind, Goraith, Naik, Kondo, Kohar, Bengra, Bhumij, Teli, Kalindi, Oraon, Kurku, Barla, Biswas, Bakti, Bin, Tanti, Kurmi, Ganju, Rikiasan, Patuwa, Rabha and Tantubai. There is also a Kuki from Changsan family. Thus, both, in Barak Valley and the tea gardens when taken exclusively there are tribes and non-tribes living together. The non- tribes are following the caste system whereas the tribes have their own clans and sub-clans. The non- tribes are idol worshippers whereas the tribes are animists. The converted Christians pray in the churches and celebrate different functions in the churches and they do not follow their traditional beliefs and customs. Amongst the non-tribals the Hindus abstain from taking beef and the Muslims do not take pork. The Vaishnabs are normally vegetarian. The non-tribal men wear dhotis and panjabis and the women wear sarees, while the tribals have their own traditional dress. The tribes and non-tribes of the whole valley have their oral and written literatures. The tea gardens are rich in oral literature and some of the educated people have put down their experiences and thoughts in their writings which have been studied and analysed in their socio-cultural context.

Methodology

The present study is mainly based on the oral literature of the tea garden folks. However, some of their literature is available in written form as well. The data have been therefore sourced from both oral and written literatures of the tea gardens. Oral and written literature is found in the forms of songs, poems, novels, tales, dramas etc. Besides, to understand the literary data in the historical, contextual and comparative perspectives of culture, the Koomber tea garden village was thoroughly studied to understand the folk culture of the gardens as well as numerous communities. Thus, the data sources for the study are of two types; namely, (i) oral and (ii) documentary. The documentary or secondary data

were collected from books, journals, magazines and newspapers in which the literatis from the tea garden communities as well as those acquainted with these communities have written about the communities. The oral sources are again of two types; namely, oral folk literature stored in the minds of the people from various communities in the gardens of the valley and the villagers of Koomber Tea Garden as a sample and live representative repertoire of the tea garden folk culture.

The tea gardens of the Barak Valley constituted the universe and individual authors of oral and written literature in the valley as well as households in Koomber Tea Estate were the units for data collection. Units of the study were selected by passing through three stages. In stage I, Koomber, a multicultural tea garden village, was selected purposively as a sample of the tea garden folk culture in the valley. In stage II the households of various communities were selected by using stratified random sampling in which 10% sample of the households was drawn by lottery method from the households of each of 39 communities. Accordingly, 27 communities were taken into consideration. From the sample of households, the data on the folk culture in the village were collected to derive understanding of the folk culture in the tea gardens of Barak Valley as well as to enlist the informed persons and individual authors of the oral and written folk literature in the Koomber Tea Estate and outside, whom the Koomber villagers knew. In stage III the enlisted individuals were contacted, more names of the authors were collected from them and finally the well-informed people and those with lived-experience were selected for informal personal interviews with the help of interpreter. Out of the total 843 households, 85 families were in all selected as a sample of study, comprising 23 tribal families and 62 non-tribal families in Koomber tea garden, to understand the folk culture as a whole.

Data about the folk culture were mainly collected with the help of interview schedule which consisted of questions related to their socio-economic, political and cultural life. The data on oral literature were mainly collected through personal contacts and interviews with traditionally informed persons. Story telling sessions were organized in the tea gardens for collecting the

narratives, and other oral literary materials were collected through interactions. For written literature printed materials were used and some of the writers were also interviewed. The study involved transcription, classification and content analysis to comprehend, interpret and tease out the implications of the collected data on literature. Data on socio- cultural, economic and political aspects and the life style of the tea garden workers as a whole were collected by administering a structured interview schedule to the households in the Koomber Tea Estate. For analysis of data on the culture as well as the folk literature structural theory has been used.

The study is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the study, formulates the research problem and presents a review of the existing studies on folk culture and folk literature, the methodology involved, types and sources of data collection, methods of data analysis and the significance of the study. The second chapter enumerates the folk culture of Barak Valley as a whole which includes the folk culture of the tea garden people also. The third chapter introduces the field of study, the Koomber Tea Estate of Cachar district, and depicts the social structure, economy, politics, education, health and sanitation, religion, culture, festivals and the process of continuity and change amongst the workers of the tea garden. The fourth chapter contains some of the oral literature namely; proverbs , riddles, tongue twisters and narratives which have been classified , transcribed and analysed to find out their reflections on culture and society of the tea garden folks. The fifth chapter contains the folk songs and jatras. The songs have been classified and analysed to find out their context and to find out the meanings, the chapter also discusses the significance of jatra in the lives of the present generation. The sixth chapter is an overview of some of the written literature of the tea garden folks which consists of poetry, few short stories, novels, poetic drama and a few articles and the seventh chapter is the concluding chapter which summarises all the findings of the previous chapters.

The Findings

The workers of Koomber Tea Estate belong to numerous communities and each of these communities follows the rituals and practices which they

imbibed from their forefathers. Of course, it needs to be mentioned here that the converted Christians both from the tribes and non tribes have given up their old cultural ways. The findings of the social –economic, cultural and literary elements reveal the following:

A. The Cultural Continuity and Change

1. The Koomber Tea Estate consists of workers whose forefathers had come to the garden from different states of India. Over four fifths of tea garden labourers migrated before Independence and nearly two fifths migrated after Independence from their native places. At present, over one third (34.12%) of the families belong to their third generation and are not even aware of their place of origin and of the rest, 21.19% families have migrated from Ranchi and 16.47% from Odisha, and the others from Madras, Habiganj (Bangladesh), Uttar Pradesh, Bankura (WestBengal), Nepal, Chhatisgarh and Sikkim.
2. Most (72.95%) of the population of Koomber Tea Garden is the non-tribal yet, the tribal population (27.05%) also forms a significant portion in the garden.
3. Out of total population in the sampled households, 56% are male and the rest are female (44%). This indicates a huge difference in their sex ratio.
4. The tribes in Koomber Tea Estate belong to 18 communities and the 9 non-tribal communities comprise of various linguistic, religious groups and castes. Both the tribal and non-tribal have their own clans.
5. Of the persons in the sampled households 4.27% married underage and 70.66% married as per the legally prescribed age of marriage.
6. Most of the families (90. 58%) are nuclear and less than one tenth of the families (9.42%) are joint. This indicates the impact of modernization on the life of the tea garden workers for the younger generation want freedom from parental control and do not like to take the responsibility of old parents. Over two fifths (41.17%) of the families have 5 to 6 members, nearly two fifths (37.65%) have 1 to 4 members and one fifth of the families have more than 6 members. Thus, there is seen a downtrend in the size of the family in the garden.

7. The tea garden workers are still being exploited and are left with very little choice because of exploitative mechanism, power politics and vote- banking, lack of leadership and nexus between the trade union leaders and political agencies. The Indian National Congress Party has a very strong hold among the workers of the Koomber Tea Estate. The conservancy facility shows that most (92.95%) of the families have latrines built in their houses and only 7.05 % of the tea populace don't have latrines in their houses. Then, over a half (54.12%) have bathrooms in their houses and the rest do not have one.
8. Economically, the tea garden workers belong to the poorer section of the population. Most (76.48%) of the workers are casual workers and only 23.52 % are permanent workers in the tea garden. Every worker earns money from the tea plucking per day or per kilogram. The workers of Barak Valley are paid lower wages than those in the Brahmaputra Valley which is a gross violation of labour rules. More than half of the families have monthly income ranging from Rs.1000 to Rs. 2000 from tea plucking while 16.47% and 12.94% have the income of Rs. 2001 - Rs. 3000 and Rs.3001-Rs.4000 respectively. A section of the families constituting less than one tenth (9.42%) of the total families have monthly income of Rs. 5000 and above. Thus, tea plucking is the major source of income in the Koomber Tea Estate.
9. A shift has taken place in the mental setup of the workers with regards to saving in the Koomber. Previously, they used to rear goats and cows, keep ducks and hens which they sold off in times of financial crises. Nowadays, a good number of private and government sector agencies have started visiting the garden and as such 40% of the workers have savings with banks, 15% have savings with Post Office,13% save with Sahara India Company, 15% have invested in other private insurance companies and 5% have policies with Life Insurance Companies. The rest (12%) follow the traditional method of saving in their own Piggy Banks (Hundi) or inside bamboo poles at home and also invest in livestock. The permanent workers of the garden have their Provident Fund account also.
10. Most of the people are engaged in tea-plucking and work in the factory. Occupational mobility is low in the garden. Only 12% of the people are doing

other jobs, comprising teaching (1.86%), business (1.86%), daily labour (0.26%) Gaon Panchayat Staff (1.86%), government services (0.8%) and very few as carpenters, priests, agents for life insurance companies, Grade IV employee in Indian Oil and supervisors under Gaon Panchayat, Security Personnel in private companies, Supervisors under the Sarva Shiksha Abhijan, drivers, contractors. shopkeepers, tailoring, barbers, artisans, T.V. mechanics, goldsmith, blacksmith etc. Koomber Tea Estate does not have any agricultural land like other tea gardens because it is situated in the hilly terrain.

11. A significant cultural change is marked in the standard of living of the workers in the tea garden. Majority of the villagers (over 60%) have bicycle, scooter, and motor cycle, dish T.V, mobile phone, cooking gas, wall clock, torch, and kerosene stove. Nearly two fifths of the villagers have water purifier /water filter, refrigerator, VCD player/VCR/PVC, pressure cooker, inverter, dressing table, telephone (land), tape recorder, steel almirah, good night/all out. Over three fourths (77.65%) of the families use modern soap and shampoos like Lux, Vivel, Rexona soap and Clinic plus, All Clear Shampoo etc. 21.17% of the families use traditional soap made of leaves of trees , soil and various ayurvedic products while the rest (1.17%) of the families do not use any soap and shampoo. Further, 77.65% of the families use tooth paste like Colgate, Pepsodent and also use tooth brush and the rest (22.35%) use traditional products like coal, neem stick, soil, oil and salt etc. About three fourths (74.11%) of the families take allopathic treatment; one tenth take homeopathic treatment, 4.70% take both allopathic and homeopathic treatment and the rest (3.52%) depend on their traditional medicines consisting of herbs , roots and also magical therapies etc.
12. Nearly four fifths (78.40%) are literate and the rest (21.60 %) are illiterate. Of the literates 10.93% of the tea garden workers are educated up to high school, 32.27% up to primary school, 11.73% have pre-primary education and 8.80% and 14.67% have education up to higher secondary and graduation respectively. Thus, most of them have only primary education.

13. Nearly two fifths (37.86%) use bus, over one fourth (26.13%) use taxi, (21.06%) use bicycle and the rest (14.93%) walk for the purpose of visiting Silchar town, Udharbond market, relatives etc. But bus is the common transport for all the tea garden workers.
14. The tea garden workers have radio, television and phones which connects them with the outer world. Over a half (54.11%) of the families listen to news, sports news and film songs, almost one fourth (28.23%) enjoy film songs and sports news and the rest (17.64%) listen to film songs only. Sixty two (78.82%) households watch television, out of which nearly half (46.26%) enjoy films and serials, nearly two fifths (38.81%) watch news, sports and film songs and only 14.92% witness sports & listened to film songs.
15. Most (90.58%) of the families use mobile phone and the rest (9.42%) use land phone. Nearly half (49.42%) of the families make call to their relative over phones, over two fifths (44.70%) make call to their friends and the rest (5.88%) use for giving call to tea garden office and factory. Among the literates only 43.19% of the tea garden workers read the Bengali newspaper like Dainik Yugashankhya, Samayik Prasanga etc. in the Club office, market and tea shops and the rest 56.81% of the literate workers do not read newspapers.
16. By religion, most (50.59%) of the tea garden workers are Hindu and the rest are animists (27.06 %), Christians (11.76%) and Muslims (10.59%). Each religious group has its own religious places like temple, church, masjid and jaherthan. About one fifth (19.99%) of the families belonged to Christianity, out of which 10.58% are Presbyterian, 4.70% Baptist,2.35% follow the Salvation Army,1.18% are North Indian Catholics and 1.18% are Roman Catholics. There are no Sikhs or Buddhists in the garden. The Hindus are the followers of different sects of Hinduism like Thakur Anukul Chandra (10.58%), Ramkrishna (5.88%), Vaishnavites (3.52%) and the rest (39.97%) do not have any sect and Dharmaguru. Nearly three fifths (58.82%) use local Bengali dialect, 24.71% speak in Bhojpuri and the rest (14.11% and 2.35%) speak Oriya and Nepali respectively. Apart from these languages all the tea garden workers speak Sadri and a large size of the population are Hindi

speaking. Excluding the Christians, all the tea garden workers (tribal and non tribal) have numerous rites and rituals and each community have their own priests. The Christians perform all their ceremonies in the church and they too have their own priests.

17. Hindus (50.59%) are the major religious group in Koomber Tea Estate. Except Christians, all the tea garden workers (tribal and non tribal) practice religious ceremonies and perform rituals. These ceremonies are commonly organized in their respective villages, community or families. Excluding the Muslims and the Christians, all the tea garden workers (tribal and non-tribal) invite a Bengali or Hindustani priest on the occasion of worship, marriage, rice feeding ceremonies, death rituals etc.
18. All the tea garden workers commonly use Sadri language which is a mixture of Hindi, Bengali, Bhojpuri and Oriya other than their mother tongue. The people of the tea gardens developed this language to communicate amongst themselves as they hailed from various places and they needed a link language for themselves. The largest sections of the families (38.70%) belong to the Hindustani community.
19. Most of the individuals (78.40%) are literate because the village is in close proximity to the Kumbirgram Airport more over the road to Morley High School is well communicated.
20. Most of the families (74.11%) are health conscious and they always prefer Allopathic treatment, 14.12% take homeopathic, 3.52% take Ayurvedic treatment, 4.70% go for both Allopathic and Homeopathic and only 3.52% still have faith in traditional medicine and believe in superstitions. Thus, it is found that more people have faith in modern medicine as it is more effective and the health department is putting special effort to reach every village and provide hospital facilities along with ample supply of medicine. The Koomber Tea Estate Hospital was also visited by members of the UNICEF in 2012 and pressurised the management to provide all kinds of health facilities to its workers.
21. Most of the families (87.05%) use P.H.E water supply for the drinking purpose, 48.23 % drink pond water, 35.29% drink both P.H.E and well water,

but it has been noted that most of the well and ponds are unprotected and contained polluted water as the people take their bath and wash clothes by the source of water which has become a tradition for them.

22. All the tea garden workers (men and women) wear modern dresses along with traditional dress. Churidar has become common amongst the young girls but middle aged women wear mostly sarees unlike the women of the town area. Men wear shirts and pants mostly and occasionally like during Durga Puja they wear dhoti and Panjabi (as mentioned by Shankar Dev in his article on Durga Puja of the tea gardens) Young boys wear jeans and T.shirts and pyjama and panjabis on special occasions. Small girls wear frocks, pants, skirts, banti babli dresses, leg-ins etc. The traders in old clothes collect all kinds of modern dresses, discarded by the people from town areas and sell them in the Koomber market on payment days at throw away prices which is purchased by the workers. This is how the fashions of the towns' enter in most of the tea gardens. Muslim women living in the villages of Barak Valley wear burkhas (a long gown that covers from head to foot usually black in colour) which is not worn by the Muslim women of the tea gardens. The Muslim men wear white pyjama and panjabi and caps when they go to the Majids to offer prayers like their counterparts living in the towns. The article on Durga Puja by Shankar Dev also reveals that the Dimasas, the Bishnupriya Manipuris and even the tea garden people wear their traditional dresses while attending the immersion ceremony and modern songs on mikes are not played, for the traditional musicians and drummers are invited for the purpose. The Christian men do not wear dhoti, they wear shirts and pants and have special dress code when they go to Church. In Church they usually wear black pant and white shirt and women wear blue saree and blue blouse. Both men and women wear the Holy Cross on chains of various metals or beads, hanging from their necks.
23. All the tea garden workers thrive on normal Indian diet. They eat rice, roti, beaten rice, puffed rice, dal, mixed vegetable curry, fish curry, dried fish, red meat or chicken curry, milk etc. in their daily diet. They eat also magi, biscuits', kurkure, polao, chowmein , chat etc. Almost all of them drink

Hooch (country beer) but the young generation prefers bottled wine nowadays.It may be mentioned here that urban people get more varieties of food with the opening of fast food centers, and restaurants. There is a lot of competition and as such trained cheffs are employed in these food centers that make new items to capture customers in the town areas in contrast to the rural areas especially the tea gardens where the people can never dream of spending hundreds of rupees in food.

24. Most of the families (92.95%) have only kutcha latrine. Earlier the tea garden workers used to defecate in the open but now kutcha latrines are constructed with the money they got from the government under the sanitation scheme.
25. Most of the families (54.12%) have kachcha bathroom as their living houses are mostly kachcha, this is also a new introduction because generally the people of the tea gardens prefer to take bath near the wells and ponds which are also centers where women wash clothes ,take bath and at the same time gossip and share their joys and sorrows. According to them, the old and sick people take bath at home and if others do so they are considered to be lazy.
26. Most of the tea garden workers (77.65%) use soap and shampoos. Besides, all the families also use tooth paste and brush. These products are made available in the shops of Koomber itself in sachets at a very cheap price. It may be mentioned here that old men still prefer to use neem sticks and sometimes they use oil and salt.
27. Most of the individuals (85.07%) are using bus, taxi, bicycle, scooter and bike for their transportation yet; more than 50% say that they do not use any of these means of communication. The tea garden workers hardly go out to far off areas and towns and when they do, they mostly use buses which ply regularly from the garden itself. Some of the young boys who have other source of income bought bikes and scooters mostly second hand and some have incurred loans from banks and private agencies. They are facing problem to repay back the loans and are yet happy for they are able to show off their standard.
28. Very few families have radio and they generally listen to news, sports news and film songs. Most of the families (78%) have television sets in their

homes; most of which have been purchased in-between 2006-2010.It has been found out that some of the dealers in Television sets from the towns are selling it to the tea garden workers on installment basis. Some of them even have dish antennas and they generally observe films, serial, news, sports, film songs and dance programs etc.

29. Most of the people (98%) have mobile sets which are used to contact families and friends unlike their urban counterpart of Barak Valley who use mobiles for official work or commercial and economic purpose. The garden people feel that a mobile adds a prestige to their lives.
30. Out of 294 literate individuals, only 43.19% of the tea garden workers read news papers like, Dainik Yugashankha, Samayik Prasanga etc. in the club office, market and in tea shops and there are no individual subscribers.

Thus, different cultural communities within the tea gardens have assimilated and created for themselves a new society after a lot of interactions, adoptions and acculturations, yet, follow many of their traditional practices. India is a land of composite culture with an underlining unity. The cultural study on the tea garden people bring out the continuity as well as changes. The Koomber tea village is 32 kms from Silchar town and is in total isolation from the rural villages with people whose forefathers had migrated from various states of India in 1850s, having different cultural background. Gradually there was acculturation and this led to a new culture. This new culture is not a homogenous integrated whole, for although there is a central pattern that governs the culture of this tea garden populace, each individual community of the group has its own distinctive lifestyle. In spite of this, there is a complex connectivity, even then, many a times not conscious of it, every small action is connected with the unknown others in their native land, with whom their roots are connected. The tea garden workers alienated and estranged from their place of origin adapted and adjusted themselves with the new environment, taking shelter in their sacrosanct beliefs and traditions. The changes which have taken place are not very drastic and shocking. Cultural change may be directed from home or family or it may be directed from the outer world. The culture directed from home usually involves the beliefs, religion, customs and language which are evolutionary but is slow to

change whereas the outer directed culture is comparatively fast. The elderly group, in the age of 40-50 years in the tea garden sector are mostly illiterate and do not have the capacity to reconstruct or recreate their lives or the lives of their children, they have a tendency to adapt those which they can adopt quickly and dynamically. In recent times, the upcoming technologies have emerged as vehicles for trade in cultural goods introducing a global consumer culture. Satellite communication technology from mid- 1980s has given rise to a dominant media with a global reach.

They do not have direct communication with the mainstream population of Barak Valley; yet, they are getting introduced to the country and its people with different cultures through the televisions which has exposed the tea village people to get information, informal education and entertainment. It has opened up the flood gates of knowledge and curiosity. Till late they led a life submerged in age-old conservatism but now they are able to see and appreciate what is going around, adding to their information gain. Mobile phone is also very much popular amongst the Koomber tea populace.

Changes are also marked in their mode of communication. In the past the tea village people hardly left their village and if at all they went to visit their relatives and friends in other tea villages with the establishment of the airport and improved modes of communication enable them to visit the distant town areas of Silchar, especially during Durga Puja, Diwali and also Christmas. Many of the youths have also been to different states along with performance troupes.

The effects of ever expanding market which is engulfing both the rural and the urban people of India have touched the lives of the tea garden workers of Koomber. The urban people buy the products in greater quantity whereas the rural people buy in small quantities often sachets of Re 1 or 2. The changes are seen in their dress, toiletries, food, taste, habits and lifestyle, especially amongst the emergent groups, born after 1980. Globalization of mass media has boosted up the trade in cultural goods introducing a global consumer culture even amongst the tea garden people. Media has introduced non-traditional dance, music, films and serials dealing with day-to-day social life which has a great

influence on the younger generation. The tribal societies have been living in proximity with the nature but, now they are influenced by various cultures and are undergoing a process of modernization. The youths of the tea gardens wear jeans, skirts, salwars, maxi, full pants and even men are seen wearing shirts and full pants and women wear sarees with pleats, blouse and petticoats which is a new feature. Traditionally they used to wear light cotton towels (gamocha) or half pants and women used to wear short sarees without blouse or petticoats. The Hindu married women wear shanka and pola (coral bangles) which is being imitiated by other women folks of the tea garden area.

Look good formula is also catching fast among the young tea people and they buy various toiletries and even use hair dye and colours at cheap rate.

Language plays a significant role in cultural transmission. The Koomber tea garden people specially the younger generation converse mostly in Bengali , Sadri and Hindi apart from their mother tongue. Sylethi (local Bengali dialect) is spoken by all. The elite and intellectual people of Barak Valley and the various tribes residing in different pockets also speak in their mother tongue along with other languages like Sylethi, Hindi, English etc.

The changes in cultural context are marked mostly in material direction. The study reveals that most of the people still continue to reside in mud huts which are poorly designed and do not allow a family of four or five to live comfortably moreover sanitation is not proper and the people still use impure water leading to health hazards. Of course, cooking gas is used in place of wood by most of them, though some of them still use traditional fuel, i.e; wood or kerosene oil.

Elements of the modernism have become parts of local festivals but there is no replacement of the local customs, rites and rituals. "While elements of great tradition have become parts of local festivals, they do not appear to have entered village festival custom at the expense of much that is or was the little tradition. Instead, we see evidence of accretion in a transmutated form without apparent replacement and without rationalization of accumulated and transformed elements" (Marriot 1955).The great tradition of the urban Barak Valley has by no

means pushed aside the little tradition of the tea gardens but are interacting for fusion and mutual penetration. There is no clash of opposites in the Valley which is a classic example of heterogeneity. The people of the Koomber Tea Estate, excluding the converted Christians, still follow their religious festivals and celebrations. They still follow the traditional kinship norms as regards marriage and family like relationship of avoidance and joking. Most of the inhabitants belong to low Hindu caste groups with a few high caste Hindus and Adivasis. The Hindu way of life is gradually creeping in, yet, in the Koomber village revolutionary changes are taking place in the material side with little impact on the core zone of their culture. Old ways of life, collective feasting, drinking, dancing, mutual visits and exchange of gifts still continues. The festivals stimulate the collective sentiment of the common people and as such the different rituals and their observance have been given importance discarding rational thinking. The people incur huge debts to perform their birth and death rituals and even marriage ceremonies beyond their means upholding the same sentiment as the Santal, who expressed their feelings in a conference as quoted by Sachidananda that they have suffered a lot due to changing time but festivals are sacrosanct as they are rooted in their tradition and they must cling to them (Sachidananda 1994).They have still preserved their oral literature, they compose, recite, sing and dance merrily and forget about their miseries drowning themselves in home brewn liquor (haria).

Modernization and the urban influence have made the young generation lose their interest in Jatra (traditional drama), now they have gained interest in Orchestra and Hindi films 'a product of modern culture 'which penetrated the rural zone and became new means of asthetic delight. The even prefer wine to haria (country liquor).as the youths of other parts. The tea tribes retained their religious practices of worshipping their traditional gods and spirits as originally they were 'animists' worshipping their traditional ancestral deity with great faith and devotion and still believe in black magic and superstition. Even now, a small section (3%) of tea garden workers prefer traditional medicines and herbs and depend on Quacks and Ojhas but majority of them, since the last two decades, visit hospitals for treatment and care. Here, it is worth mentioning that there is no

harm for magic and medicine can exist side by side, used alternatively by the same people. "The syncretism of inconsistent elements has long been noted in the acceptance of religious usage and beliefs. Paganism and Catholicism have often achieved a mutual tolerance into a new form of ritualism drawn from each in Spanish speaking countries" (Redfield 1941).

Inter-caste and inter-community marriages are on rise. The Panchayat Secretary of Koomber Tea Estate who is an Oriya married a Manipuri girl and was accepted by his community and family only after he paid a penalty amount to the Bagan Panchayat. But on the other hand, the girl's family which lives in the urban area (Udharbond) did not approve of the marriage, till date. An Assamese (Rabha) married a girl from the tea tribe (Tanti) and their children are following the culture of both the parents and visit the relatives back at Sibsagar. Even the writer Santoshi Lohar married a Das and she uses both the titles. In interior tea villages like Longai and Chankhira in Karimganj district there are quite a number of Madrasi families who speak Telugu and follow their customs and rituals. Sangeeta , who is a Madrasi from Chankhira tea garden said that her family were looking for a girl for her maternal uncle who was a graduate but could not find a suitable one from their community and as such have decided to get him married even with someone outside their community if the girl is educated and belongs to a higher caste.

Christianity and Christianization came in with the British rule in India. In many of the areas like the tea gardens of Assam the missionaries have been the most important force of social change. To the missionaries education was one of the tools for evangelicization. The tea gardens were literally out of reach and the sufferings of the displaced and marginalized group of people knew no bounds. It is at this stage that the Western missionaries invaded the hearths and homes of these people. It must be kept in mind that initially almost all the tea gardens were owned by the Britishers and churches were set up in most of the tea gardens for their convenience. Koomber is surrounded by Khasi (Pnars) villages which were already converted. The people of the tea garden were living in close proximity to these villages which were full of Catholics, Presbyterians and Christians. The evangelists gradually made inroads to Koomber Tea village through the local

Pnar people and won the hearts of the miserable and economically deprived group of people with cash and kind and later on made numerous preaching places in the village. There are all together seven churches with 11.76% of Christians. These converted Christians have undergone a sea change as they have abandoned everything traditional and began a totally new life. They visibly discarded their traditional deities and spirits and have begun to go to church. Earlier they did not keep any pictures of gods or goddess but now every Christian household has pictures of Lord Jesus and Mother Mary and also symbols of the Holy Cross. Christianity thus had its significant impact on the culture and social structure of the tea village. A few of the converted respondents expressed that they no longer receive any financial or economic help from the missionaries, who rarely visit them, now. Moreover, if a Christian marries outside his/ her religion the church authorities see to it that the spouse is also converted. The Christians of Koomber refrain from attending any of the community festivals and celebrations of the caste Hindus and the tea tribes and only celebrate Christmas and other Christian festivities.

In case of caste Hindu community the study reveals that most of the religious festival and worship is performed on community level except for Laxmi Puja which is performed in their homes. In the folk urban context it may be mentioned that it has been noticed, in the urban areas of Barak Valley that young girls wear sarees on the occasion of Saraswati Puja and the same practice was witnessed in Koomber Tea Estate where little girls were, wearing colourful sarees while attending the Puja in the school premise as well in the Sramik club where young boys celebrated the Puja. They even artistically decorated the Pandal and the entrance gate with leaves and bamboos and lighted up the area which proves that even the youths of tea gardens are no less than their urban counterparts. Mikes are used to play Hindi songs similar to the other parts of Barak Valley. Here, it can be mentioned that the youths of the town also use mikes and play the folk songs of the tea garden people (Chalgori) during special celebrations, which shows a recapturing of the folklore of the tea community for furtherance of tradition as a source of regional unity in common culture. It has also been marked that Hindu priests are invited to perform community level worships like Durga

Puja, Monosha Puja, Basanti Puja, Kali Puja, Saraswati Puja, Sitali Puja,etc creating a unified regional religion to take firmer roots. The study also shows that the tea workers both caste Hindus and the tribes follow Dharmagurus (religious leaders) like other people of Barak Valley.

Despite all changes, the work culture of the tea garden workers remains unaffected and unchanged. The stereotyped nature of work has made the elder ones indolent, lazy and complacent while the younger ones in most cases are deviating from the traditional job as tea workers and are seeking new avenues. While discussing the rural and urban continuum we can say that Barak Valley is a region where people belonging to different tribes and community reside. Assimilation and acculturation is definitely going on but not on a large scale. The different communities do maintain their own cultural identity and language, yet, they merge with others very well. Globalization of market and media has its effect on Barak Valley This effect is not only on material aspect but also on education and economic prosperity. The people are utilizing technological advancement and greater sections of the people are becoming educated and economically solvent but the pace of economic change is very slow in the case of the tea garden people. The tea garden people do not have individual independence or economic freedom and are caught up in a vicious circle of poverty and misery, on one hand, and the power politics of their employers, on the other. Lack of effective leadership, education and economic independence are the main obstacles for the tea garden people which can be removed with sympathy and feeling of brotherhood and oneness amongst all the communities of Barak Valley. Time and again voices have been raised and a class of people and few emerging leaders belonging to the tea community are putting efforts to bring the whole of the tea populace together to fight for their cause. Adivasi Mahasabha is celebrated in Assam and a souvenir is also released every year. The ninth Adivasi Mahasabha was held from 19th Jan to 21st Jan' 2012 at Doomni, Baksa district of Assam where many people from Barak Valley also joined in. A cultural celebration during Karma Puja was also organized in 2012 for the first time in Barak Valley in Dologram Tea Estate. Such celebrations are positive indicators which perpetuate the values that the community holds dear. The folk

culture of the tea garden is not only tea garden culture but culture of the region and Assam but, is it not essential to make efforts to do away with the unhealthy cultures and preserve the positive ones? Of course it is for them to decide.

There is a slight change in the relationship between the management and the workers unlike the pre-Independence situation where the workers were not allowed to wear shoes and open umbrellas inside the tea gardens. It has also been found in some of the estates like Rosekandi and Dolu the managers and the workers jointly participate in pujas which are performed for the welfare of the whole village. Moreover, arbitration of the government and other non-government organizations like SSA have put the managerial staff of the tea gardens in a tight corner and they are now forced to allow the children to go to school, instead of employing them at cheap rates in the garden. Groups that have not been part of the educational structure in the past, now, utilize it to gain status as well as to get jobs. Of course, poverty has forced some of the children to still work in the tea gardens or elsewhere for which the dropout rates in the school is still high. Wages have increased from Rs 37/- per day to Rs 68/- in Barak Valley whereas the workers in Brahmaputra Valley are getting Rs 90/- per day. Hostility is still prevalent but not what it was earlier because of the various government and political bodies which act as a go-between. Press and media is also a great boon in this direction and everybody needs to be careful before they get exposed. Both the workers and the management party are accommodating without open hostility at least in some respect. The local bodies and non-sectarian inter-caste village bodies consisting of both males and females are a step forward towards change and progress. The school teacher in these decades of expanding primary education is also a source of knowledge and modernization.

B. The Folk Literature

1. The different communities of the tea gardens of Barak Valley are the people who were uprooted from their original settings and were reset in a heterogeneous multicultural situation which was in the form of becoming. The communities hailing from different regions had its own languages and cultures which they brought along with them. Once they came here they were

thrown in an unexpected and unwarranted situation which had a tremendous impact on their lives. They had a lived-experience of the past, their traditions or community cultures which they had brought with them while a new experience of confrontation and assimilation within the tea gardens inspired them to construct oral literature which is embedded into both traditional and acquired culture mirrored through proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, songs, myths, tales and narratives, traditional plays associated with various festivals, rites and rituals and ceremonies. They have memorized some old proverbs from their elders and are passing them on to the younger generations orally which have been categorized as:

I. Proverbs on Human Nature

II. Proverbs on Practical Life

III. Moral Proverbs

IV. Health related Proverbs

V. Socio-cultural Proverbs

Thus, it has been found that tea garden folks are still familiar and attached to their age-old proverbs which were carried by their fore-fathers years ago in their memories and have been handed down the line. Most of the proverbs were collected from the elderly people. It has been found that the youths are less concerned with the old sayings, for their concept is changing and they are against the moralising practices. The proverbs depict social values. However, some of these approve of class-caste-hierarchy, targeting the barbers, washer men and even the Brahmins who, though belong to the higher stratum of the caste hierarchy, are exploitative. There are still other proverbs which reflect on gender discrimination and asserting traditional male authority over the female within the caste hierarchy. Superstition is embedded in the life of rural folks, which is reflected in their proverbs like third daughter is the goddess of wealth and third son is a beggar. Proverbs like 'spare the rod and spoil the child' are instruments of social control as well. It is noteworthy that there are proverbs among different communities in different languages which are similar in their meaning. e.g., *Mate*

na batiye datey, goina pindena betiye begor nate (The girl neither speaks out, nor does she wear ornaments without nose ring) (Ahmed 2004:101), it means the daughter who is otherwise considered to be of a quiet nature does not wear ornaments without a nose ring. It is similar to *dhir pani pathor kate* (slow moving water cuts deep).Both the proverbs denote that one cannot be judged by mere looks. The principle of guardianship of females by the male members of the family remains the central guiding ideology in marriage (Patel 2010:147) and this is found in the proverbs of the tea garden workers also. Proverbs like 'early to bed and early to rise,' 'think before you act,' 'a bad workman quarrels with his tools', 'cut your coat according to the cloth', 'empty vessels sound much' etc. are all traditional knowledge which prevails amongst the people of the mainstream as well as the tea garden folks.

2. The tea garden people have their riddles also which have been classified into:

I. Riddles based on surroundings

II. Incident based Riddles

III. Riddles relating to animals and vegetables and parts of the body.

Riddles are used by both young and old in the tea gardens of Barak Valley as elsewhere, which adds a flavour to their stereotyped life style. One can notice their extraordinary sense of observation, humour and practical wisdom. Moreover, there are riddles which are similar and establish a bond between different people. The Bhojpuri people created riddle on mustard seed same as the riddle which the Bengali people have created on the eggs of fishes which shows that the Bengalis are fond of fishes. Most of the tea garden people may not have formal education but their riddles focus on their intelligence and presence of the mind and their keenness of perception.

With rapid urbanisation men have become busy and hardly find time for leisure more over television and mobile phones keep the present generation engaged and they hardly get time to communicate with family members especially elders and as such riddles are on the decline amongst the younger generations and this gap can be bridged through community education which can stir the interest of the rural populace for their traditional knowledge. Tongue

twisters are favourite games for children. It is also believed that such practices make the children more centered and focused and the tea garden children like all others enjoy such practices.

The tea garden folks of Barak Valley also construct, relate and circulate stories. Many such narratives circulate amongst the tea garden people which are of unknown origin and are believed to be rooted in the past and are passed on from one generation to another by way of mouth. They have their own myths or legends which have been classified as follows:

1. Myths about creation
2. Myths about origin of tea and rice
3. Culture myths
4. Ritual myths

The narratives of the tea garden folks are interesting and at the same time informative; they do mirror the emotions and sentiments, the cultural setup, the simplicity and naturalness and uphold the success and failures of simple and unaffected folks with honesty and ease. There are: 1.Historical narratives, 2.Real life narratives 2. Stories highlighting the importance of education, 3.Narratives on suicidal deaths etc.

3. The materials of the songs provide adequate historical, socio-economic and cultural contents. Reference to mythological figures is common in the songs of caste Hindus of the tea gardens. Moreover, the songs collected and analysed relate to social control, especially children and women who give expression to their resentment and unhappiness, and share every bit of joy and celebration through songs sung during Karma Puja, Tusu Puja, Durga Puja, Chhat Puja, Manasa Puja, etc. accompanied by musical instruments and dance. Such songs are considered to be sacrosanct. The songs invoke the deities; glorify their power and greatness and qualities. Every occasion involves songs whether birth, marriage or death and these songs narrate the rites and rituals elaborately and are pregnant with signs and symbols. The involvement and contributions of people from different walks of life in

community functions for instance, the Brahmins, barbers, washer men, the priests, the musicians, the friends and kinsmen are subjects of the songs which bring out the solidarity amongst the folks. The items used for rituals, the food habits, their ornaments, the gifts and every little thing with which they are acquainted form gist of their songs. Humour and jokes are displayed through songs, especially Tusu and Jhumur songs, and often target everyone. Crude and licentious compositions are taken for granted and it does not hurt anyone. The correlation between nature and the people of the tea gardens is unquestionable. The better part of their lives is spent in harmony with nature and obviously the elements of nature are components of their songs.

The songs of the tea garden folks throw light on communally structured group of people hailing from different states of the country reorganized in a natural setting embracing life with its varied experiences and giving vent to their emotions and thoughts through their songs and dances. The songs are acquired treasures of the past closely connected with traditional festivities and rituals which they carried with them and are still maintaining them. The rapid socio-economic changes do have some impact on the songs but as far as possible they maintain consistency and no shocking changes take place, for these are sacred texts of their forefathers. Of course, it may be mentioned here that some of the songs which are not directly connected with the rites and rituals but are consciously designed for fun and merriment e.g., "there are no utensils *(bason)* in your house and outwardly you show off as though you are Amitabh Bacchan" and "you do not have a piece of wood to latch the door (*benda*) at home and yet you behave like Govinda" reflect on the effects of change and modernity in lives of the tea garden folks along with the others. Traditional cultural media like ritual songs and dances are sanctified treasures of a community whether it is of the tea garden workers, the other groups of people living within Barak Valley, the state of Assam or India which are still preserved and passed on orally. The better section of urban people might have forgotten and some are not acquainted with such songs, yet, during religious ceremonies and festivals, they invite old people and relatives from villages or professional singers of traditional songs, especially during marriages. Some of them even play recorded songs on such occasions.

The government and non-governmental organisations also use the tea garden folk tone and language *(Sadri)* for promoting national and state sponsored programmes in the tea villages of Barak Valley.

4. Nowadays, the tea gardens are facing financial crisis as good number of the gardens are closing down and the workers are busy and concerned about their livelihood. Hence, they have no time and money for extracurricular activities. On the other hand, globalization is having its effect on the taste and mindset of the folks of the tea garden. The present day youths are more interested in television and media entertainments which have already reached to their households. The younger generations prefer Orchestra and films to Jatra. There are gardens which are struggling to keep this folk tradition alive but are fighting hard against odds. The people of Borakhai garden said that rebellious youths even throw stones to disrupt the performance of Jatra in their village. Yet, they continue to perform plays like *Jalim Singher, Mat Rokto diya kinlam Kaiphad Raghubir* etc. From Shankar Kumar Deb's article 'Phire Dhekha: Saradutsabe Jatra – Cinema Cha Bagan Mukhorito' (2005) one learns that in the year 2005, during Durga Puja cinema shows were arranged and in big tea estates like Dewan, people installed television and cable lines in their homes and, as a consequence, they went back home to watch films leaving the Puja pandals empty by 10 pm. Of course, exceptionally, in few gardens like Pallorbond, Chorapur Tea Gardens historical concerts and songs by Vivek were staged. The Jatras in the tea gardens are performed in Bengali. Ojanbabu, the headclerk of Pathichara tea garden who often took part in Jatras earlier expressed deep emotions through his oral composition which reflects on his experiences as an actor. He recapitulates the competitions which were held, his receiving a medal from the manager of Koomber Tea Estate for his role as a king *(Budev rajar)* and how the frenzied spectators used to throw ten rupee notes and cheer for them throughout the night. The narrator becomes emotional and craves for those bygone days. It needs to be mentioned here that *Jatra* was organized at Lalacherra tea garden at Hailakandi, during Durga Puja this year (2012).

By critically analyzing the whole gamut of collected oral contents of the tea garden folks of Barak Valley it has been found that although they were dispersed from their original homeland 170yrs ago yet, they retained most of their folklores which were carried by their forefathers in their memories.

5. The written literature is also stuffed with lived and living experiences. This material is repository of cultural values which inform the present and retain traditions for the future. The fabric of their work is derived from social and cultural context, with a handful of romantic and imaginary production. The works are by the tea garden folks, some of who are still residing within the gardens and the others have moved out. The writings on the folks reflect their memories, both, bitter and palatable, their aspirations, their psychology, their beliefs, their culture, their socio-economic status, the structure of relationship, the changing world and its impact on their minds and life. Women writers like Kajal Demta (2008, 2010),Jhumur Pandey (1975, 2007, 2011) , Annapurna Devi (2007) Santoshi Das (2003) have written women's stories which delineate "an act of power, against power" (Chatterjee 2001). Their writings are cudgels against male domination in the family, the community, as well as in the society at large. Ashok Verma wrote on history, politics, socio- economic themes, problems of youth, nature, romance, environmental pollution etc. His writings not only targeted the exploiters both colonial and Indian, but also implored his fellow men to become conscious of their rights and duties and lead a dignified life. Badrinath Sonar (1955), Uma Kant Tiwari (n.d) Kapil Dev Upadhaya (1995), Suresh Chandra Dwivedi (2011), Yamuna Prasad Swarnakar (2003), Dhub Narayan Koiri (2011), Babul Narayan Kanu (1997, 2011), Joydrath Goala (2003), Mira Singh (1997,2003), Dev Kumar Mishra(1997) Kumari Santoshi (Das) Lohar (2003) and Santosh Akura (2012) are some of the other writers who mustered courage and enthusiasm to give vent to their thoughts and feelings, castigating the past rulers as well as the present system of politics and economy controlled by selfish countrymen. The written literature of the concerned people is not systematic. In fact, their writings are scattered and some of them are not even dated whereas some other could not be procured because even the authors

failed to provide a copy, thus, details had to be collected in the form of interviews with the authors themselves. The available materials have been broadly enumerated and analysed under the following heads: (I) Historical contents (II) Socio-Economic contents.

6. The writings are suggestive, though most of the writings express their emotions and sentiments. But there are writings which are evident to the fact that the educated few do want to mobilize and change the fate of their fellow beings and educate them. Their language and style may not be elegant and grand, yet, the works have emotional intensity of feeling, pathos and greatly reflect the life and mind of the tea community. Gender discrimination, caste inequalities, religious rites and ceremonies, man and nature continuum, glorification of nature, and their mental agony seeking for transformation for a better life find expression in the writings by the tea garden and ex-tea garden literati. It has also been found that most of the writings have been published in local press and have not reached or drawn the attention of readers outside the region except for one or two writers. Moreover their printed rate is minimal, ranging from three rupees to hundred rupees only. This is an under estimation of their works. The literature (both oral and written) of the tea gardens displays tradition as well as change and adaptability. Coining of new words, ideas and concepts which are entirely new is worth appreciating. Literature survives only when it maintains the moving trend for the listeners and readers appreciate things with which they are acquainted. But that does not mean that literature of the past have become obsolete for the past is full of knowledge and history. The past serves as a support especially in sphere of values. Literature voices the sentiments and irregularities existing and thus moves the benches of justice in the human society. The present day writers are indulging in upholding the crises and the burning issues of the tea community through writings not only in books but also in journals and news papers. The need for introducing Sadri language as a medium of teaching in tea garden schools and recognizing the Adivasis as Scheduled tribe. It is also worth appreciating that many of the writings from the desk of tea garden community are being translated into different Indian

languages and English. The Injot Dahar (2012), Souvenir contains article from where we gather information of workers' suppression and threats for filing their first RTI against corruption. These displaced and marginalized people have to pay heavily if and when they break their silence fighting for identity and survival. The language and style of both oral and written contents may not be very lucid and extraordinary but the thoughts are meaningful and the truth is deciphered brilliantly. Oral literature is kept alive by the older generation the present generation does not have the time and interest.

Conclusion

The binary opposition between tradition and modernity carries the implicit sterile assumption of a stagnant past and a dynamic present. It is as if tradition represents continuity and modernity expresses the power of transformation. The opposition and discovering forces of transformation within tradition have its problems, for this historicizes tradition, it tends to overemphasize change and underestimate the significance of continuities. Changes should take place but continuity of tradition is also significant. The pattern of a society is more kaleidoscopic than a mosaic one. All ethnic groups in the society are characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture and descent. The ethnic groups carry certain cultural traits which the host society consider as inferior but the norm of the present is pluralism in culture. Barak Valley, is a land with social and cultural heterogeneity which manifests in diverse languages, religion, sects, castes, differences in food habits, customs, rites, myths, etc. The different historical and political forces have pulled and pushed the different ethnic groups of people and as such they are living in a scattered manner all over the valley. The study reveals very interesting facts on the folk culture and folk literature of the tea garden people of Barak Valley based on the field study of the Koomber Tea Estate of Cachar district .Taking into account the rural and urban continuum it will not be proper to make a clear cut distinction between the mainstream people of Barak Valley and the tea garden populace and thus segregate them. Most of the ethnic population dwells in the villages and these people are also not very modern and their villages are not developed. The towns of all the three districts may be termed as semi –urban for economically,

the whole of Barak Valley is underdeveloped with no proper roads and communication. There are no big industries or companies which can contribute towards employment and as such in no way, can we position the rural against the urban and in practice, elements of both modern and traditional are to be found in differing proportions in most social relations and societies of both town dwellers, as well as village dwellers. The people of proper towns of Barak Valley are educationally advanced and materially well off. They follow the urban culture in matters of food dress and outlook. They are acquainted with modern technology and communication but, at the same time uphold their traditions. Most of the marriages are arranged and caste practices persist and are not divorced from the traditional culture. Changes are taking place but every community has its own caste, linguistic, regional and religious preferences. There are many converted Christians in the Valley who attend Churches and have given up their old traditional practices. Elaborate rituals at child birth, naming ceremonies, rice feeding ceremonies, marriage rituals, funeral rites, religious festivals and most of the customary laws are still practiced in fact the core culture is still unaffected . Such trends do not hamper progress and development in any way. All other ethnic groups of people living in the periphery of the region including the tea gardens have their individual traditions and beliefs. The ethnic communities of people dwelling in the rural pockets of the Valley are moving to town areas for better education, jobs and also for business. Some have even moved out of the State just like the people of their urban counterpart. Changes are seen in their life style and habits as the people living in the towns of Barak Valley. The youths of all communities are studying together in different educational institutions, wearing modern dresses, enjoying fast food, using modern gadgets and technology, listening to modern songs, enjoying both Hindi and English movies and some are marrying outside their caste and community. There is no age bar for wearing of different kinds of dresses and middle aged people wear the same dress as the youths. Many of the Bengali Hindu women have given up the Shanka, Pola and Sindur. On the other hand many people from other communities like the Manipuris, Barmans, Nepalis have started wearing them. These changes are seen amongst the people who have shifted from their villages and come to the towns

of Barak Valley. But back in their rural places such changes are not acceptable as the villages are still traditional and follow the past practices religiously. The tea garden people are migrants who settled down for more than one and half century in Barak Valley, yet, failed to coalesce with the mainstream population for reasons which are better known- long distance from the town, nature of job where they do not get much time and freedom, lack of education and economic insolvency. With better communication in the present, the tea garden people are trying to merge themselves with the mainstream population and are establishing contacts in a better way. The change may be gradual but it is sure better days will come if only there is willingness and fruitful effort from both the sides. Here, it may said that the elites of Barak Valley are educated but, are not cut off from their roots in indigenous civilization, neither do they ignore the ways of Hinduism and Indian family. Almost all the people speak in their mother tongue and a good number of them are tied to native and they keep in touch through phones and even letters. To a large extent parents arrange the marriages of the children. "Earlier theories of economic growth viewed extended family system and caste structure as impediments to economic growth". We now recognize, however, that such relations are complex and can vary from one context to another, caste as an unalloyed impediment to economic growth has been much exaggerated though failing to balance its role in the division of labor and in caste mobility (one dimension) against its tendencies toward status demands as limitations on desire to accumulate capital (a second dimension). The legitimate demands of the tea community need to be fulfilled for justice delayed is justice denied. Recognition of Adivasis as scheduled tribes, proper execution of development strategies, proper address to the unrest and stopping of vote banking and power politics is the need of the day. The government and the tea management should play a catalytic role in insinuating the human rights agenda not merely through formal commitments but through dialogues, understanding, and research, positive and planned action. The tea management should be governed by a sense of ethics and encourage these people to come out of their economic depravity and develop a healthier outlook. Further no lobby should be formed that creates dissatisfaction and hampers progress. The younger

generations are no longer interested in the tea plucking jobs and new occupational patterns were seen. Some of them are going outside the garden in pursuit of different occupations. Some of them are employed in the Airport as security guards, a few educated ones are teachers, SSA Supervisors, agents in L.I.C, Sahara India companies etc. Some have also taken jobs of drivers, contractors and construction workers. No doubt, change is perceptible, now. Yet it needs to be mentioned that this changing and developing trend is not the same with all the tea gardens of Barak Valley. Koomber Tea Estate is better off than most of the other gardens because of its location near the Kumbhirgram Airport and is well connected with Silchar town .The situation of tea gardens in far flung areas are not at all good and needs to be addressed and targeted in a special manner.

Significance of study

The study is an invaluable experience by itself, for it has helped to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the various social thoughts, culture and practices and institutions of the tea garden workers of Barak Valley who have been living a segregated life for more than one and half centuries. Keeping in mind the Indian heritage the folklore and literature of the tea garden people is really of national significance. Globalization and modernization is bearing its effects on these cultures and the treasures of oral literature is fast losing their traditionalism thus, documentation of the oral compositions is necessary and the study has undertaken the task of not only documenting but also making situational analysis along with their social implications which is significant enough for preserving the most valuable treasures of oral literatures. The study further contributes to the existing knowledge on folk cultures, their dynamism and changes, on the one hand, and to find out, on the basis of that, the ways of appropriate development of the folk people. Taking the written literature into consideration was worthwhile for it contained valuable information and the most significant point to be noted was the writing and the translations of some the non Bengali writers in Bengali. Moreover it helped to bring the unrecognized writers of the tea gardens to limelight and carved a way for extensive research in future.

Suggestions

1. It can well be suggested that the folk literature of the tea garden should be encouraged to flourish unabatedly while keeping pace with the changing world. The present generation should be made aware of the richness of their oral heritage. They should stop distortion of their folksongs through cultural invasion like remixing leading to erosion of the original.
2. Story telling sessions should be organized to encourage collecting, listening and memorizing the old proverbs, riddles, songs and tales which will preserve history and tradition. Further creation of new ones should be registered. Dance programs should be initiated inside and also outside the country.
3. The media and communication can help tremendously in bringing these people into focus. More interaction should take place between the urban and rural and healthy exchange of ideas and culture should be encouraged.
4. The urban educational institutions should take initiative to organize trips for their school children to the tea gardens so that the privileged ones learn about the tea garden people, their life and contribution to the economy.
5. It is high time for these people to come out of their superstitions, fear and fight for their rights with the weapon of education and not just sit back and cry.
6. The tea garden writers focus on the injustice of the past as well as the present but it is possible for their fellowmen to get the message only when they can read, so, the educated and conscious citizens must lay greater emphasis on education and do some field work at the ground level to create awareness.
7. The writers and other educated and conscious people who have moved out of the tea gardens should visit the gardens more often and talk to their fellow brothers and create awareness and educate them and not leave them to their lot.
8. The Government can make provision for publication and distribution of the books written by the tea garden people and encourage them. The literary and scholarly people should translate more of the works by the tea garden people so that there can be more readers.

9. The present generation should come out of ignorance, wrong beliefs and not just blame others for their fate; they must make meaningful efforts and no longer allow the politicians to exploit them. Responsible and active leaders should be fostered.
10. Other job opportunities should be created and training imparted to youths and the tea garden owners can plan and utilize their unused lands for new projects apart from the tea production.
11. Wage inequality between Barak Valley and Brahmaputra should be done away with and labour rules should be followed.
12. It is high time that the government and the tea management of India should play a catalytic role implementing the human rights agenda and various developmental projects not merely through formal commitments but through dialogues, understanding research and positive and planned action.