Chapter 2
TEA INDUSTRY IN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

Tea industry is a formal organization of work, producing tea for market and consumption of people. India and Bangladesh share substantial portion of tea products as well as organization of tea work in the world. Social organization refers to a relatively stable pattern of social relationships of individuals and sub-groups within a society or group which is based on a system of social rules, norms and shared meaning that provide regularity and predictability in social interactions. Elliot and Merrill (1934) write, "Social organization is characterized by the harmonious operation of the different elements of social system when a group functions harmoniously; it is (relatively) organized. Thus, the articulation of different parts forming a pattern and process of relations which are functioning in accordance with their recognized or implied purposes". Formal organization refers to a highly organized group which has explicit objectives, formally stated rules and regulations and a system of specifically defined roles each with clearly designated rights and duties (Bhushan 1989: 219-20) Among different organizations, "organization staff' is used for the staff of specialists and technicians who carry out research and advisory services for the line officials for production segment of a formal organization like a larger industrial corporation (Bhushan 1989). David Silverman (1970) suggested that the formal organizations have three distinguishing features; out of these one is organizational participants whoh often seek to co-ordinate and control: consequently considerable attention is paid to the nature of these social relations and to planned changes in them (David Silverman1970: 534). It may be contrasted with the informal organization or system of human relations through which the organization actually operates and which typically departs (sometimes widely) from the formal structure (John Scott and Gordon Marshall 1994: 201). Anthony Giddens said that an organization is 'a large group of individuals, involving a definite set of authority relations' (2006:1026). Aldrich and Marsden call organization a principle means for accomplishing a co-operative action, 'a group with an identifiable membership that engages in concerted collective action to achieve a common purpose' (Anthony Giddens 1988). "Many important group relationships occur on the job or in direct connection with it. In an industrial society millions of men (and women) work for long hours in the factory and their personalities are subjected to tensions that are unique both in kind and in intensity. Industrial disorganization may thus come to a man in the factory, either in the form of physical disability or more often through boredom, dissatisfaction

and apathy (Elliot and Merrill 1934: 207). The tea industry is a formal organization of work which operates through informal organization- a system of human relations among labourers, as well as between labourers and management. Therefore, social organization of tea production is being discussed in terms of its history, its structure and functioning, problems and prospects, pattern of work etc. This chapter describes the status of tea industry in India and in Bangladesh, in general, and in the context of the sampled districts of Cachar and Moulvibazar of the two countries respectively, in particular.

HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF THE TEA INDUSTRY

In 1788 CE Sir Joseph Bankes (then Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew) advised the Directors of the East India Company to initiate efforts for cultivation of tea in India. But little or nothing of practical nature was accomplished till 1834, when Lord William Bentinck appointed a committee to investigate the question of establishing a tea-growing industry. The discovery of the Assam tea plant is attributed to Robert Bruce, who made an arrangement with a Singphow (tribe) chief to supply him some tea plants. The Charter Law of Assam in 1833 opened the doors for tea plantation in Assam. C.A. Bruce In-Charge of the British Combat Division in the War, posted at Sadiya, to combat with the Burmese occupying Assam in 1824, met the Singphow chief who supplied some tea plants and seeds. Most of these seeds were planted in Bruce's garden at Sadiya while some of these were sent to the Commissioner Jenkin at Guwahati and a few were sent to Botanical Garden at Calcutta where Dr. N. Wallich was the superintendent. Wallich identified the leaves as to be belonging to the Camelia family but he did not consider them to be of the same species as the China plant (Tea Board India 2008).

In 1834, Lord William Bentinck appointed a tea committee to advise on feasibility of commercial tea cultivation, and the committee sent its secretary, Mr. G.D.Gordon, to procure tea seeds, plants and workers from China. In response to the circular, Major F Jenkin, the Commissioner of Assam, collected complete specimens and forwarded them to Botanical Garden at Calcutta. After identification of tea plants by Dr. Wallich, the tea committee recommended that the indigenous plant might be cultivated with full success for commercial use (Tea Board India 2008).

A scientific commission was formed with Dr N Wallich, W Griffith and Dr J Maclelland to report on the Indian indigenous plants and to advise on the most

favourable localities for starting experimental tea gardens. Accordingly, the scientific commission visited the tea plantation area of Assam where C. A. Bruce acting as guide took the members to a number of tracts at the foot of Naga and Patkai hills as well as to a few in the Brahmaputra valley where indigenous tea plants were growing in clumps. Having seen the tea bushes Dr. Wallich expressed his view for no need any more to import tea seeds from China while Mr. Griffith favoured import of the China seeds because the wild plant was not likely to give a good product as compared to the one that had been produced for long time. Commission was unable to choose the most favourable localities for establishing experimental garden. So Mr. Gordon was sent to China again and China tea seeds were imported regularly in India. From these seeds, nurseries were raised in Botanical Garden at Calcutta and the plant was sent to Assam, Dehradoon, Kamaron and the Nilgiri hills (Tea Board India 2008).

The history of starting tea plantation that follows here is recounted from the statistical report given by Deputy Commissioner of that period which mentions that "Lalicherra was the first tea garden established in that period (Quoted in W W Hunter's Statistical Account of Assam, London, 1879: 310). In Assam Gazetteers, Volume 2, B.C. Allen wrote, "tea is said to have been first discovered growing wild in the Assam valley in 1823 and the first garden was opened in Lakshmipur in 1835".

Tea industry in India, an agro-industry, has been developing in the north-eastern region since 1835. A statistical profile over tea industry in Cachar shows that in 1900 the total number of tea gardens in India was 5783, where Cachar had 185. It became 38707 in India and 116 in Cachar in 1997. Another statistics on tea estates in India, given by tea board, shows that the number of tea gardens was 2305 in 1951 in north India which increased to 69253 in 2006.The number of tea gardens in Cachar increased to 198 in 2006 from 116 in 1951. But in south India the number of total tea gardens was 6214 in 1951 which became 143217 in 2006. The estimated total number of workers in north India in 2004 was 696119 which extended to 1013963 in 2006. Within this period south India shows the expansion of number of labourers from 943750 to 1247832. The tea industry in Assam is about 175 years old. It occupies an important place in the state economy in particular and national economy in general. It provides average daily employment to 600000 persons in the state which is around 50% of the total daily laboureres in the country. These are recent reports regarding status of development of tea industry given by administration of tea board on 18th March 2009. According to the

tea board of India, there are more than 43000 small tea gardens in Assam producing about 9% of the state's total annual production (State Focus Paper, Assam, 2009-10 by NABARD). Most of the small tea gardens in the state are confined to upper Assam. Dibrugarh accounts for 30% of the total gardens followed by Tinsukia - 6.39%, Dibrugarh- 5.36%, Jorhat- 4.28%, Golaghat- 27.58%, Sivsagar- 6.05% and other districts- 51% (Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2009). The Indian Tea Association (ITA), a powerful body of tea plantation owners, was established in a tavern in London in 1879 by European planters, most of whom had big plantations in Assam. It was founded in London, and not in Calcutta or Guwahati, was, in the words of a member, 'because the members saw a natural gravitation to London', writes Sanjay Barbora in his article "Struggles in the Tea Plantation of Assam: Then and Now (2010)". The picture of tea industries has come to light with an observation. "Cost increases due to management obligation to implement various provisions of government legislations such as Plantation Labour Act 1951, Factories Act 1948, Employees Provident Fund Act 1952, Employees State Insurance Act 1948 etc. According to Report of the Plantation Inquiry Commission 1956, labour cost in Indian tea plantation constitutes 38% and 45% in North India and South India respectively in 1953 (A K Bora 1981). M.C. Bora tells about performance of Indian tea industry over last decade, actual and predicted, besides earning huge amount of foreign exchange the industry contributes to the national exchequer by way of paying substantial central and state taxes, excise duty and cess. India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of tea. She has the largest area under tea cultivation and has the distinction of achieving the highest yield per hectare of plantation *(www.systemdynamics.org)*.

At the time of partition in 1947, Pakistan acquired only 133 tea estates covering 30353 hectare area with annual production of 18.36 million kg of tea. At the time of liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, the nation inherited 153 tea estates having 43398 hectares under tea plantation. Now she has 163 tea estates covering 49264 hectares of area under tea with an annual production of 56184 million kg. At present, a total of 116518 workers are employed in the tea estates, 95137 of them are permanent and the rest are temporary workers. Most of the tea workers of Bangladesh were immigrants of India who were brought from Orissa, Bihar, Madras and Madhya Pradesh for working in the tea estates as labourers. They have been living in the tea estates with their families and dependents enjoying all political and cultural rights as other citizens of the country *(http://www.teaboard.gov.bd 2010)*. During the period of over five decades (1947-

1999) area under tea has increased from 30353 to 48611 hectares, that is, by 60.15%. The annual tea production increased from 18.36 million kg to 56.184 million kg, that is, 206.1%. From 1947 to 2008 the area under tea has extended from 28734 hectares to 54106 hectares. In this period, yield per hectare has increased from 639 kg/hectare to 1238 kg/hectare (Bangladesh Tea Board 2009).

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE TEA INDUSTRY

The vital importance of tea industry in India's Assam state is that it is highly labour- intensive which employs 61,9,743 workers (49%) out of India's 12,59,500 workers daily on an average (Statistics of the Tea Board of India 2006). According to the tea statistics of 2006 (Tea Board India 2006), the number of tea gardens in India is 2,12,470 out of which 69,253 are in North India and 1,43,217 are in South India. North India contains Darrang, Goalpara, Kamrup, Lakshmipur, Dibrugarh, Nowgang, Sibsagar, Cachar, North Cachar, Karbianglong, Darjeeling, Doars, Terai, Tripura, Bihar, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Orissa, Meghalaya and Mizoram. In South India, the tea gardens are situated in Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Cannanore, Palghat, Kojhikode, Malapuram, Trichur, Trivandrum, Quilon, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Idukki, Wynnad, Chikmagalur, Coorg and Hassan. According to tea statistics of 2006, Assam has 51605 tea gardens. Among these Cachar has 198 and North Cachar has 8 tea gardens (Tea Statistics 2005-2006, Tea Board of India). Assam produced more than half of the total tea produced in India over the year of 2006, which was 502041 per '000 kgs (Tea Statistics of Assam and India, Economic Survey Assam 2009-2010).

The vital progress made in tea production since India's Independence has been phenomenal. From 309 kilo hectares of plantation area producing 246 kilotons of tea in 1946, the area and production has grown up to 360K H and 472 K H in 1973, a rise of 17% in area and 92% in production. For over a century tea industry is being managed by what may be called remote control system (Venkatakrishnan 1981: 66-68). The three functions of management are decision-making, analysis and coordination of activities and follow up. By following this in the management system the rate of development is becoming easier to assess, when document shows the average yield even after 100 years in 2001 in Assam being 1685 kg/hectare and in India 1675. It has declined to 1593kg/hectare and increased to 1705 kg/hectare in 2007 (Economic Survey Assam 2009-10).

Tea is planted in greater Sylhet in Northern part, greater Chittagong and Comilla district in Southern part of Bangladesh. Among 163 tea gardens of Bangladesh, Moulvibazar district has the area of 64624.34 hectares where tea area is 31379.1 (48%) and production is 1104 kg per hectare. According to the total granted tea area in Bangladesh is 115820.33 hectares, out of which 54,106.24 hectares (47%) is under production. Of this area tea bush of 0-5 years grows in 6728.76 hectares, tea bush of 6-10 years grows in 7057.42 hectares, tea bush of 11-40 years grows in 17145.54 hectares, tea bush of 41-60 years grows in 13820.28 hectares and tea bush of above 60 years grows in 9354.24 hectares. Agricultural area of the tea gardens of Bangladesh also includes rubber, bamboo, planted forest, natural forest, thatch, paddy land, jack fruit area, lemon area and other crops. Non-agricultural area (17887.03) includes fallow land, pond areas, Masjid/Mandir, Graveyard, school, dispensaries and roads. In 1947, in 103 tea estates the production was 639 kg/hectare which became 1238 in 2008 (B.T.B 2009).

Tea industries have a structure of management personnel comprising Superintendent Manager, Manager, Deputy Managers, Assitant Managers, Head Clerks, Tilla Clerks/Tilla Babu, Talab Babu/payment clerks and the supervisors at the lowest level. Workers are given different types of duties including cleaning (jungle or bush cleaners), spraying (spray machine holders), and plucking (tea pluckers). Some other workers are Sardars, Darwans, Peons, Water Suppliers, Tea Leaves Sorters, Power Mechanics, Drivers, Cooks, House Workers, Malies (gardeners). Some of them are responsible to managers. Some have the Tilla Babus as the topmost controllers, especially with the division of labour in particular site, e.g, factory, tea garden and tilla (tea garden site). All are ultimately responsible to the highest authority of a Manager. The following chart represents the structure of a developed tea garden in India and Bangladesh:

The Indian tea industry plays significant role as the largest producer among tea traders in the world and provides employment to nearly 23, 60,000 persons, out of which around 600549 are women (Statistics Tea Board India 2007). Of 143217 tea gardens in India, northern part (including Assam and West Bengal) and southern part of India has 69253 and 74964 respectively. In India most of the tea gardens have a management or managing system which comprises Superintendent Manager, General Manager, Deputy Managers and Assistant Manager including Clerks, Tilla Babu, Factory Babu and other staff for proper management of the tea garden. Most of the tea gardens are private and some are government's. Recently on August 12, 2012 Government decided to allow 100 percent foreign direct

investment (FDI) in tea sector, including plantation (www.ibef.org/exports/indian). But, again, on August 5, 2013 it has been mentioned that foreign direct investment (FDI) in tea sector is subject to certain rules and regulations (www.mondaq.com/india/x/256108/inter).

Of 163 tea gardens in Bangladesh, 28 are managed by Sterling Company - a foreign company, 3 by Bangladesh Tea Board, 13 by National Tea Company, 61 by Deshi Company, and 58 by individual owners. In Bangladesh, generally the tea gardens of foreign origin have two layers of management: Manager and Deputy Manager. Generally the proprietary system has only one manager. The managing system comprises manager and deputy manager with one or two clerks for maintaining accounts and disbursing wages with a number of babus/ clerks- one or two for factory and 3 or 4 as Tilla Babus, depending on the area under plantation.

The total number of tea gardens in Cachar is 206 and the number of labourers is 68783 in 2002, according to Tea Board of India's report (Tea Board India Statistics 2002). There comes an average of 333.90 labourers in the gardens of Cachar. In Bangladesh, the total number of labourers in Moulvibazar district is 65865 in 92 tea gardens in 2002 (Tea Industries Statistics 2002), where the average number of labourers in tea gardens is coming 715.92.

In India and Bangladesh the tea garden management pattern is similar except the post of welfare officer which is found in an 'A' category or high producing gardens in India. Except this difference, in both countries, the system which once started during the British period has continued, where it comprises Manager, Deputy Manager, Head Clerk, Factory Babu, Tilla Babu, Supervisor/Sardar etc. But in 'B' category or medium performing gardens the post of deputy manager is not found. In 'C' category or low producing gardens number of *Tilla Babu* is either one only or not existing at all and manager himself works as *Tilla Babu*.

Both in India and Bangladesh, the individual owners' and *Deshi* tea gardens are more autocratic and centralized under the authority of proprietor in respect of any decision making. Here, the job of manager depends on not only production but also personal satisfaction of individual owners. In both countries, the Manager's Bungalow is always near the garden because Manager has to observe and control all the works. So when he is in Bungalow and if he wants to take any decision the Head Clerk, next to Manager, would attend to him in Bungalow.

Tea labourers are provided with free accommodation for their families. Their dependents are provided for their sons and daughters. The terms and conditions of the work of the tea garden labourers conform to the provision of the Factories Act and the Plantation Rules. Tea garden workers are unionized. In Bangladeh they are represented by the two unions: The Bangladesh Cha Sramik

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Union representing field and factory workers, and the Bangladesh Tea Estate Staff Association representing medical and clerical employees. Wages and benefits are fixed through bilateral negotiations between the union and Bangladesh Cha Sangsad.

Bangladesh Tea Board is a Govt. regulatory body set up under Tea Act 1951. It primarily performs monitoring on behalf of the government. It is also entrusted by the relative ordinance for overall development of the industry. Bangladesh Tea Board has grown in manpower over the years, though its helping hand for the industry has not performed its entrusted duties to the traders and the government. Bangladesh is producing more than 50 million kilograms of tea annually from about 48000 hectares of land. About 96% annual production is contributed by Greater Sylhet obtained from 93% of plantation area. It is also noteworthy that among the five managements, Sterling Company Ltd. itself produces about 50% of annual tea from about 40% of the plantation area. In spite of 9th position out of 30 producing countries, both, in respect of plantation area and annual production, Bangladesh occupies the 6th position in respect of productivity. It implies that Bangladesh tea industry has been going ahead of global increasing rate of tea development (Bangladesh Tea Board 2009). Total production system within factory is controlled by Factory-in-Charge, but the tea pluckers are under Tilla Babu/Sarder/Supervisor. Categorically the duty of the labourers is to do tea worl but they are used for domestic help more in Bangladesh because of the continuity of the European Management culture. Sircar, Islam and Gain write about social condition of tea labourers in Bangladesh: The tea workers are obviously socially excluded people; they are ignored, sometimes treated as untouchables and are kept at a distance by the local Bengalis. The Bengali tea workers, who are over one sixth (16.68%) of total labourers do not live within the labour lines of the non-Bengali tea workers. They consider themselves superior to the non-Bengali tea workers and show as if they do not belong to the labour lines, a filthy place (Sircar et al. 2005: 13). But in India, such instance of labour condition is not present, though about one fifth (18.40%) of the Bengali labourers have come from West Bengal.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF THE TEA INDUSTRY

Problems of the tea garden labourers in Assam have been studied by groups appointed by Government and sometimes also individually. Recruitment was a chronic problem as the population of Assam was sparse. As they had sufficient lands in their possession, they themselves were cultivators cultivating their own paddy fields and considered it derogatory and against their social prestige to become wage earners in the tea gardens of foreigners. The labourers recruited in the Brahmaputra valley were therefore all immigrants and were required to work in the garden for some years, usually five years, as per contract. Labour unrest in

some of the plantations had accelerated in the midst of the Indian nationalist movement. So far Cachar district (in the Surma Valley) was concerned, the labourers were tempted there by their employers providing them with sufficient garden lands for their permanent settlements. But in the Brahmaputra valley, the case was different. Various abuses soon cropped up in connection with recruitment when the middlemen tempted the unwilling immigrants with false promises of handsome wages and other facilities. Labourers, mostly very poor, became naturally the victims of their false promises and once reached the gardens of Assam they were not allowed to return and were treated as slaves by their employers. All these evils led to the passing of as many as five immigration Acts in the nineteenth century. After great public agitation when a new law was passed in 1901, the interest of the labourers was once again ignored. They were as usual forced to work in the tea gardens against their will and criminal penalties were imposed for desertion and other breaches of contracts. Five years later, in 1932, Tea District Labour Emigrant Act was passed which superseded all previous acts and aimed at preventing recruitment by enticement and other connected abuses. Notwithstanding the prevalence of various abuses, tea gardens in the Brahmaputra valley were provided with regular supply of imported labourers year after year by the Tea Districts Labour Association and many of the immigrant labourers did not repatriate themselves and voluntarily settled there. During these five years, 86619 immigrants were repatriated on expiry of their contract period but as many as 94438 immigrants' rights of repatriation were postponed and they preferred getting themselves settled in the tea district. Thus, in 1960, the 9th session of the industrial committee on plantations, reviewing the policy of recruitment reasonably suggested that fresh recruitment for the tea gardens of Assam should be made from the surplus areas within the province with the help of a special employment exchange (Shibopada Dey 1981).

There had been general tendency among the 19th century planters to pay tea garden labourers as less as could be possible and to exact as much work as they deemed it. Thus, in 1954 onwards the provisions of minimum rate of wages were gradually restored. Closed gardens were also gradually reopened in Cachar and soon these were found earning large profits. In 1958-59, adult male, adult female and child labourers earned Rs 23.38, 38.76 and 45.45 respectively in Brahmaputra valley. In 1960-61, the figures rose to Rs 29.87, 45.67 and 50.77 respectively in the same valley (Shibopada Dey 1981: 115). Surma Valley Tea Association (Indian Tea Association, Silchar Branch) report says that the daily wage of adult labourers in Barak valley is Rs. 55.25 and of non-adult is Rs 27.71 (Indian Tea Association 2013).

Tea industries have faced various problems related to management and labourers. Due to changeable economic condition, an unexpected demand for more wages and intentional deception of work with absenteeism as a whole is a picture

of counter-productive work behaviour. The *Times of India* on 31st December 2012 published the news of tea workers' starvation death. "Labour Relation Practice in Tea industry of Asssam" by Dr Haren Gowala (2008) explains the social conditions in a sentence, though the responses of the workers vary from one tea estates to another, they reflected a strong degree of dissatisfaction on different parameters associated with practices (2012). The *Arunachal Times*, a leading newspaper, says, 'Tea workers movement is gaining momentum in Assam' (2012, 3rd October). Of all factors responsible for development and sustainability of Bangladesh tea industry the hard labour of tea workers at all operational stages up to the end products cannot be ignored. The population in Bangladesh tea industry is about 4 lacs, including 1.5 lacs employed and the rest are dependents (PDU 1993). Other factors are intensive cultivation, adaptation of newer concepts and technology and efficiency of management and skill of tea workers. Hasib says, manpower development will enhance the tea output and improve quality of tea and reduce cost of production per hectare (Hasib 1996). The *Daily Independent* says in an article that the production of tea is being hampered due to the policy of the Government. Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh protested the steps to increase the taxes or importing tea in the country. Secretary of Tea Traders Association says that the rate of increase of tea production from 1980 to 2010 is not satisfactory. He also said that at least 25% of the total production of tea was low quality tea. According to the sources in the association, there was the demand of 9.1 million kg in 1980. There was the demand of 62.98 million kg in 2010 in the local markets while the production was 59.17 million kg. Of these, the country exported 0.3 million kg in 2009. So it is apparent that though yearly production of tea has increased, yet it is insufficient in comparison with domestic demand. An inquiry report printed in the *Dainik Kaler Kantha*, a daily Bengali news paper, expressed the cause of lower production. According to Govt. principle, every year there is a provision of expansion of tea and a half portion of cultivated land would be under the tea cultivation land. But these rules are not being complied and so out of 115886.66 hectares land, only 54804.58 hectares of land is being utilized for production of tea and the rest is lying uncultivated (*The Daily Kaler Kantha*, 28th June 2011). In 163 tea gardens' land, about 54106.24 hectares area is under tea, out of which 47377 hectares have pluckable tea area. In 2008 the production was 58.66 million kg (Bangladesh Tea Board 2008). In some gardens, by ignoring the Government's principle the owners of tea estates have established poultry farms instead of tea gardens.

An organization formed by tea labourers called 'Cha Jonogosthir Nagorik Odhikar Forum' has demanded the following:

1. The ownership of land which is used by labourers.
2. The tea garden labourers be declared to be unprivileged community

3. Proper infrastructural arrangement for education of tea garden labourers' children be provided.
4. Quota in medical and engineering streams of education be provide.
5. Cultural academy for labourers be established on the same pattern as for Manipuri, Garo and other communities.
6. Club centres for labourers be started.
7. To increase wages.
8. Representatives of tea garden labourers be nominated in different projects for tea labourers' development.
9. Scope for tea garden communities' youth for jobs be created in Ansar, Army, Border Guard of Bangladesh and Police etc.

By observing all these demands, the problems of tea garden labourers will reduce. Besides, the establishment of labour courts, better arrangement of health and sanitation, electrification of houses, provision of bank loans etc will help in improving their lot.

In sum, the area under tea in Bangladesh was 28734 hectares in 1947 with 639kg/hectare yield, which increased to 1238kg/hectare in 54106 hectares of land in 2008. A total of 47258 million kilogram tea was produced in the country's 163 tea gardens until October 2008 against 47305 million kilograms over the same period in 2007 (BBN, 28 November 2008). Assam's tea industry is dependent on about two million labourers, almost all of whom are the descendants of those who were brought to Assam first by the East India Company and later by the British rulers and entrepreneurs from 1830s to 1920s mostly from Santal Pargana district of Bihar (Now, in Jharkhand state). The descendants of these labourers are now called tea tribes (Chatterjee and Das Gupta, 1981; Verghese 1996). The tea tribes are found mainly in the districts of Naogaon, Tinsukia and almost all the districts of Assam. Those who once came over contract, later most of them were repatriated permanently. In Bangladesh though most of the tea workers are immigrants and have been living permanently yet till date they do not get any document of residence from owners or Government of Bangladesh (*Dainik Kaler Kantha* Report 2011). In India, tea industries are showing 1675 kg/hectare of production in 2006 but in Bangladesh the observed records show only 1174 kg/hectare of production (Tea Statistics Tea Board of India & Tea Board of Bangladesh 2006). The wages of Bangladesh tea workers are much less than those of Indian tea workers. In Darjeeling, Terai and West Bengal the daily wage was 53.90 in 2008 which increased in three steps and reportedly become Rs 67 in 2011. In Barak Valley, the wages of tea labourers is Rs 55.25 in 2010. Granted amount of wages per person is 48 taka daily in Bangladesh according to the last report in 2010 (Indian Tea Association, Silchar, & Tea Board of Bangladesh 2010). The history of tea labourers thus smacks of their struggle for existence and their deprivation. From the beginning, these labourers are used as cheap labour which started during

the British period and has been going on still now. They were recruited from different districts to work as bonded labourers. Later, the management took initiative for their repatriation and welfare of labourers to follow legislation. The authority has been always depriving the labourers by providing them low wages, though their profit is high. The labourers' ill-health, absenteeism and irregularity are common features in the tea gardens of India and Bangladesh.

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