

National Research Programme on Plantation Development (NRPPD)

sponsored by

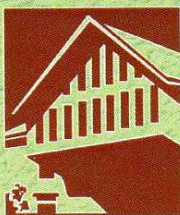
Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry,
Government of India

Discussion Paper No.46



Wages, Mobility and Labour Market Institutions in Tea Plantations: The Case of West Bengal and Assam

Kingshuk Sarkar



CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

NRPPD Discussion Paper

46

**WAGES, MOBILITY AND LABOUR MARKET
INSTITUTIONS IN TEA PLANTATIONS:
THE CASE OF WEST BENGAL AND ASSAM**

Kingshuk Sarkar

2015

These Discussion Papers are produced by the National Research Programme on Plantation Development (NRPPD) Sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, at Centre for Development Studies (CDS). The papers in this series aim to provide a platform for publishing preliminary results of the policy oriented research and it is meant for encouraging discussion and debate.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the NRPPD/CDS or the Ministry of Commerce. When reporting or citing this paper, the authors' names should be stated clearly.

Copyright © 2015, NRPPD, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.
All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

Daily rate of wages for tea plantation workers in Assam and West Bengal is very low when compared to similar wages in Southern India tea plantations as well as in terms of agricultural minimum wages. There are a few non-statutory benefits offered to plantation workers in Assam and West Bengal apart from the statutory benefits as per the Plantation Labour Act which are universally applicable throughout India. Even if we add the monetary equivalents of all such facilities, daily wages are significantly below the minimum subsistence wage. The observed difference, the present study argues, could be seen in terms of the nature of labour market institutions in which the tea plantations operate in these regions and the process of wage determination therein. That the tea plantations are 'enclave' economies functioning in a pre-capitalist feudal economic environment do help in sustaining such low wages in the long run. The fact that per unit cost of production of Indian tea is the highest among major tea producing countries in spite of such low wages, indicates that competitiveness of Indian tea in the world market crucially dependent on minimizing labour cost which in turn depends on perpetuation of such low wages. In Assam and West Bengal wage determination is left to collective bargaining in an environment wherein bargaining power is overwhelmingly in favour of employers'. Forced migrations, unfree labour further aggravate the problem. Workers even are not in position to move out even though they are aggrieved and face near starvation situation in case of abandonment/closure of tea estates. There are both push and pull factors which are responsible for the lack of mobility on the part of plantation workers. Lack of education beyond primary level, relative backwardness of the regions are among the institutional factors responsible for immobility of workers. The two most important policy imperatives emerging from the study are revival of plantation wages as part of overall minimum wage notification procedure and secondly State need to play a

more pro-active role in ensuring overall development of the region as well as the industry as such.

The following policy imperatives may be drawn from the study.

1. Wage determination should not be left to collective bargaining method in Assam and West Bengal. Rather, like in Southern tea plantations, wages should be declared and time to time revised as per changes in the index number through notifications under Minimum Wages Act 1948. Respective State govt. in Assam and West Bengal should set a time frame for adjustment for the employers before the wage is notified.
2. States concerned shall endeavor to ensure other employment opportunities in tea growing areas such that workers may have wider livelihood options.
3. Better implementation of Plantation Labour Act 1951 would ensure that statutory benefits reach plantation workers.
4. Efforts to provide secondary schools at every estate should be set as an immediate goal. Centre of Vocational training should also be set up.

1. Introduction

Prevailing daily wages in the tea plantations of West Bengal is Rs 105, whereas prescribed minimum wages for even unskilled agricultural workers is Rs 221. MGNREGA wage prevailing in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling is above Rs 150 (Labour Department notification, Govt. of West Bengal, 2014). Tea plucking involves at least some amount of skill and should be treated at least in the semi-skilled category. For the semi-skilled agricultural activities, prevailing prescribed minimum wage is Rs250. Thus plantation workers are getting not even half of minimum wage prescribed for them in similar kind of work. In that respect, plantation workers in West Bengal get about one-third of prescribed minimum wages. Similar is the case with Tea plantation workers in Assam as well; the present wage is Rs 94 only (Assam Cha Mazdoor Sangha, 2012). On the other hand daily wage of tea plantation workers in southern India is Rs 216 (UPASI, 2014). Employers but argue that plantations workers get many benefits apart from monetary wages as the planters are expected to adhere to the Plantation labour Act 1951. These are statutory in nature and outcome of legislation enacted in view of special working conditions in plantations. Moreover, even if one adds the monetary equivalent of such welfare provisions, wages as received by plantations workers stand significantly below that of wages in similar employment category. One should keep in mind, minimum wage is essentially the basic subsistence wage below it ought not to fall. Thus prevailing tea plantation wage in north eastern states are abysmally low.

In Assam and West Bengal, wage is determined through collective bargaining mechanism in a tripartite forum. Representatives of planters, representatives of workers' union and government representatives sit together through a series of negotiations to determine daily wage in an industry wise manner for a specified period. But it is pitiful that such labour market institution leads to such abysmally low wages. In this context it becomes important to understand why wages and conditions of work are poor for the plantation workers in the Tea sector of West Bengal and Assam. The purpose of this research is to locate the underlying factors for the low wage and working conditions in tea plantations, especially the role played by institutions.

Available literature (Bagchi, 1982, Behal & Prabhu, 1992, Behal 1983, Behal, 1985, Chakraborty D, 1976, Chatterjee R, 1987, Das Gupta R, 1992) in general dealt with deprivations faced by the plantation labor and situates those studies in prevailing socio-economic backdrop. But these studies did not analyse the role of labour market institutions. This study is an attempt to fill up this particular gap. More specifically, the goal of this study is to assess the role of labour market institutions in tea plantations in Assam and West Bengal that perpetuate low wages and highlight factors that restrict mobility of workforce. The study proposes to find answers to the following specific research questions.

- i) What are the labour market institutions that segment the workers in tea plantations such that barriers are erected in their mobility, and what are institutions in other labour markets (such as agricultural labour market) or in tea workers in other regions (such as southern India region) that created mobility among workers?
- ii) What are the practices of these institutions (organisations and activities) that sustain such barriers to entry/exit in the Tea worker segment?
- iii) What are the consequences of such segmented labour markets in terms of wages, conditions of work and relations of production in the tea industry?

First two research questions relate to lack of mobility of tea plantations workers in north eastern India vis-à-vis southern India plantations. The study will attempt to examine labour market institutions that perpetuate such immobility.

The third research question relates to prevalence of acute low wage in tea plantations in West Bengal and Assam. The study will examine labour market conditions that perpetuate such extra-ordinary low wages and will try to relate that to conditions of work and relations of production. The study will further evaluate conditions of work and relations of production that facilitate such phenomenon.

The study is mainly based on secondary data which was supplemented by data/information gathered through focus group discussion in three tea estates in West Bengal. The most important source of secondary data is Tea Board of India. Records of Labour departments of the two States are another important sources of secondary data.

The rest of the Paper has been divided into following sections. Section provides the historical context of the issue at hand. Section 3 deals with present labour market

institutions and mobility. A discussion on the work organization in Indian tea plantations is made in section 4. The following section deals with trade union. Subsequent sections describe Assam tea agreements, West Bengal tea agreements and collective bargaining and wages. This is followed by a concluding section which summarizes the findings of the Paper and spell out the policy imperatives.

2. The historical context

The initial process of recruitment in tea plantations in India involved diverse extra-legal forms of market as well as non-market power. Poverty-stricken potential migrant workers, who included poor peasants, agricultural labourers and ruined artisans, were given loans by the garden *sardars* to clear out their debts to *zamindars* and *sahukars*. Through this, they entered into the grip of the *sardars*. It would thus hardly be meaningful to consider the transformation of this class of workers into tea labour as an optimising decisions made by the free choice by the people who were faced with the alternative prospect of persistent unemployment - disguised or open – as well as starvation (Chakraborty 1978: 264-6).

Apart from the labour shortages they initially faced, the early planters had also been confronted by labour protests that took the form of desertion or assault, as well as informal collective bargaining and occasional strikes (Guha, 1981). In response to this, penal provisions were introduced as a measure of legal coercion, following the colonial sugar plantations of West Indies, Mauritius and Fiji. The Workmen's Breach of Contract Act 1959, reinforced by the by section 492 of the Indian Penal Code, introduced provisions for arrest and punishment by the government under civil laws of workers considered responsible for any breach of contract. The Inland Emigration Act of 1882, while introducing free emigration and unlicensed labour recruitment, also strengthened the penal provisions by making deserting or absconding workers criminally punishable, but also giving planters the power to arrest such workers without any warrant (Das 1931, Bose 1954:54, Guha 1988: 16-17, Dasgupta 1981, Chatterjee 1987). Contemporary accounts testified the ruthlessness with which this power was exercised by the planters (Ganguli, 1972). The amending legislations of 1893 and 1901 retained this penal system along with the powers earlier conferred on planters, and the planters' private power of arrest was only abolished in 1908. Even time-expired labourers whose term of contract was over were frequently induced

under duress to re-engage themselves. All these reduced wage labour employed on plantation to forced labour or unfree wage labour.

It was only in 1926, after growing nationalist criticism and labour protests in various forms including individual and mass desertion such as the Chargola exodus of 1921 (Guha 1988: 129-33), evasion of assigned tasks, litigation, strikes and assaults on planters (Guha 1981:87, Guha 1988: 133-4, Behal 1985: 20), that the 1859 Act was finally abolished. Thus, both legal and extra-legal sanctions and coercive power were in widespread use during the colonial India in general and in the tea plantations in particular. It was because of the various extra-legal non-market mechanisms that even labourers who were legally free were subjected to diverse forms of bondage (Arbuthnot 1904: 2, 4-5, Dasgupta 1993:65-9).

Certain features relating to plantation wages must also be taken into account for complete understanding of labour systems in the tea plantations of north-eastern India. Plantation workers were traditionally paid below-subsistence wages resulting in high mortality and low fertility (Behal and Mohapatra 1992). The fixing of low wage levels was the primary mechanism that compelled entire families, including children, to work in the plantations (RCLI 1931: 415). Even then, the total earnings of the entire plantation family amounted to 62 to 78 percent of the family expenditure (ALECR 1921-22: 123-37) and were not adequate to meet the requirements of labour reproduction. Under such circumstances where plantation workers also had to depend on the non-capitalist subsistence sectors outside the wage economy, the plantation system thus encompassed two different but closely interrelated sectors, namely the dominant capitalist plantation sector and the subsidiary non-capitalist subsistence sector.

These sectoral interlinkages had several distinctive components. Elements of tenancy and subsistence farming emerged for the first time in the Assam, Dooars and Darjeeling *terai* and hill regions where no significant peasant economy had evolved previously. Although a fairly large proportion of plantation workers were given plots of land by the planters to cultivate paddy and vegetables, not all workers held paddy-lands and were usually given cultivable land in tiny plots amounting to no more than two-thirds of an acre. The paddy raised on these garden plots was thus insufficient to meet the deficits in the cereal budget of a worker-family that arose from low wage

income. Nevertheless, the practice of allotting garden plots served as another non-market constraint on the freedom of plantation workers to enter and withdraw from the labour market (Dasgupta 1986, Guha 1981) by further tying and disciplining labour. Since extremely low wages and the need to supplement them led workers to accept the arrangement, the “willingness” among the workers to accept this tie-in land allotment was not independent of the state of the labour market, where the necessity for survival constrained all their choices (Bagchi, 1973: 1507).

The British annexation of Assam in 1826 partly expressed the East India Company’s need to sustain its tea trade following loss of its trade monopoly with China, and the Assam Company was formed in London in 1839 with a capital of 500,000 pounds sterling. The colonial government provided British capital with vast tracts of land on extremely easy terms with special rules on land grants being introduced from time to time (Behal, 1983: 8-12). However till 1860, only six companies had been registered owning 51 tea gardens. Thereafter a highly speculative boom, which was triggered by the doubling of tea prices and soaring profits, lasted till 1865, leading to registration of another 86 tea companies (Griffith, 1967:61-99)

Subsequent growth in the Indian tea industry had three distinctive features. The first of these was organisational rationalisation through increasing transfer of the management of tea plantations to British managing agency houses. The process was initiated when the Assam Company placed its gardens under the management of Schoene, Kilburn & Co. Efficient operation of large tea companies stimulated further amalgamation of small plantation units into large-scale enterprises under the control of these managing agents. By the end of the 19th century, seven major agency houses were managing nearly 61 percent of the Indian plantations (Behal and Mohapatra 1992:145). Second, after 1870, expansion of the Indian tea industry was financed principally from rupee investments by British residents in India and by reinvestment of undistributed surpluses and dividends by tea companies that were already in existence, rather than by capital raised from Britain’s home savings (Bagchi 1972:161-2,176, Gladstone, 1910:93-4). Third, in contrast to the speculative character of expansion till 1865, subsequent expansion in the tea industry till the turn of the century took place against steadily falling prices. Between 1880 and 1900, tea prices fell by half (GoI, 1901). These features had important implications on the methods of labour recruitment and on the structure of the plantation labour system.

In relatively less coercive conditions, a variant of debt bondage enforced by the planters through the *kanganies* came to play a critical role in the mobilisation and disciplining of labour. The *kanganies* or labour contractors were often drawn from the ranks of plantation workers but they did not, however, work as labourers. Many of them belonged to castes higher than those of the labourers (George, 1988: 210). The *kanganies* mobilised labourers by giving them cash advances. Once the labourers had accepted an advance, they became permanently tied for all practical purposes to the recruiting estate. The hold on workers was also maintained through various coercive devices resorted to by *kanganies* with the support of planters, including striking off the names of recalcitrant workers, underscoring the weight of leaf plucked, beating, kicking and other forms of corporal abuse as well as sexual violence against women workers (RCLI 7(1) 201). The nearly universal practice of paying labour wages through *kanganies* and of withholding wage payments as a mode of coercion were particularly effective methods of intensifying dependence and disciplining labour. Moreover, as was done in Assam and the Dooars, labourers were kept segregated and outsiders were prevented from making any contact with them (RCLI 7(1): 248). This interplay of indebtedness, caste hierarchy, personal dependency relations and administrative support from the colonial government kept the plantation workers under permanent control and in a state of perpetual fear, significantly restricting free operation of the labour market.

Thus the functioning of plantations in all parts of colonial India was based on economic and extra-economic compulsions on labour and *unfreedom* that resulted because of it. It also depended on the maintenance of a peculiar relationship between the capitalist sector and the non-capitalist subsistence economy that never freed labourers from significant dependence on the latter. After independence, the unfreedom continued in different forms. Plantation Labour Act 1951 was enacted as a welfare-enhancing measure on the part of government but labour market institutions did not develop as such. Practice of mono-culture and relative backwardness helped in the perpetuation of the condition.

3. Labour market institutions, mobility and wages

The tea industry in India has been going through a crisis since the early 1990s, primarily because of fall in tea prices. Other manifestations of this crisis include

decline in exports, closure and abandonment of tea gardens, increasing labour unrest at times leading to violent protest and confrontations, non-payment and curtailment of wages and other statutory benefits of workers, declining labour standards and excessive dependence of workers' existence on plantation economy. Relations between tea garden employers and labourers have deteriorated over the past decades and the so-called crisis in the industry has aggravated it. Also, there is a larger dimension to this tension as well. The exclusion of these communities from mainstream lies in their non-inclusion in the ST of Assam, despite the fact that they are tribes. This is the root cause of the growing restlessness among the tea garden labourers' community.

The coercion, isolation and exploitation of workers of colonial days are still relevant in modern day tea plantations. Plantations require large tracts of lands and a large labour force. During the early years tea planters in Assam and West Bengal faced acute labour shortages since the areas suitable for growing tea were sparsely populated. Local people were reluctant to work there because of the low wages and miserable living and working conditions. So, plantations came to depend on migrant labourers whose migrations were often forced. The influx of various alien, low-caste and tribal people led to the formation of an oppressed labour class. In fact, geographical isolation and social deprivations have been maintained to this day in order to perpetuate the exploitation of tea plantation workers.

Tea plantations workers are not just economic production units but rather social institutions which control the lives of their resident work force to a large extent. Plantations do not just offer employment, they are also responsible for providing housing, water, welfare and many facilities that affect the daily lives of workers. But these extensive legislations regarding conditions of work and living in plantations have proved to be difficult to implement in reality and as a result it had limited impact. Moreover, plantations are commercial enterprises and therefore not inclined to give top priority to welfare provisions for workers.

Further if we study the long run price movement of Indian tea, it essentially shows a secular increasing trend over the years as represented in Figure 1. Thus the usual argument given by the tea planters that they are suffering from lower price realization at auctions and consequently are not in a position to give minimum wage to workers,

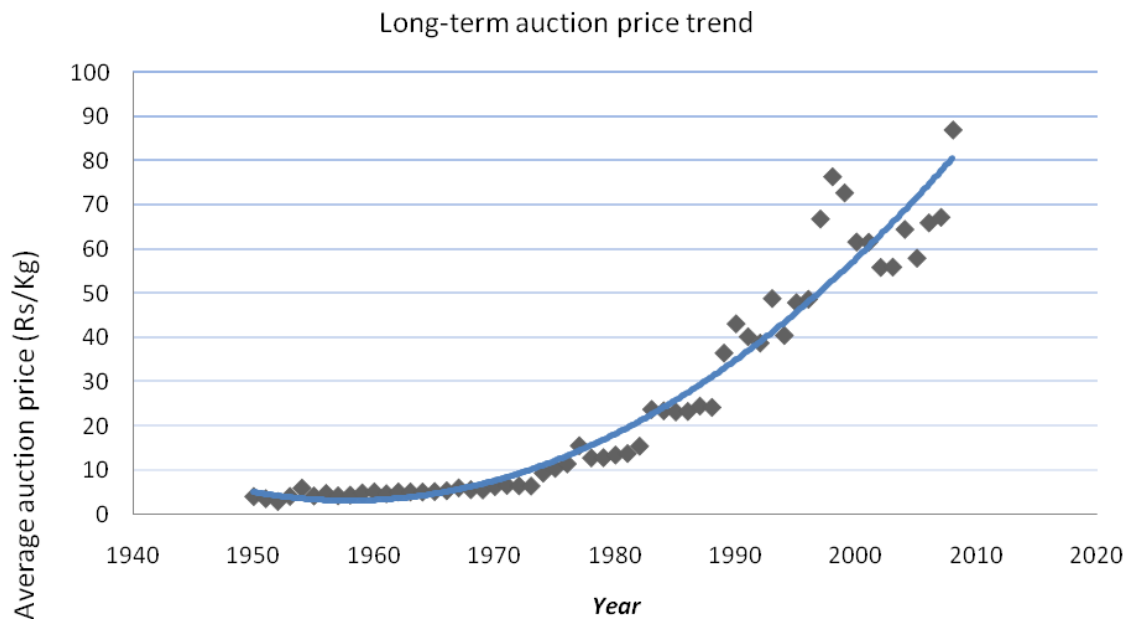
does not hold good. Moreover, price realization at the north-eastern auction centres is usually higher than that of southern auction centres. But wage scenario is exactly opposite as southern plantations do give the minimum wage whereas in West Bengal and Assam wage is determined through collective bargaining and wage so determined is even less than half of wages prevailing in southern states. Thus it represents a curious case where higher price realization is associated lower wage and vice-versa. This happens in an environment where long term price trends shows an increasing trend as depicted in Figure 1 notwithstanding business-cycle fluctuations.

4. Work Organization and the role of trade unions

Tea plantations are characterized by a rigid hierarchy. Generally, speaking the organisational structure is divided into five strata: the owner, management, staff, sub-staff and labourers. The management consists of one manager each for plantation and the factory plus an assistant manager. Clerical and white-collar workers are regarded as staff while lower-level supervisors, gang leaders and watchmen all count as sub-staff.

The hierarchy is also reflected in a plantation culture characterized by a strong sense of superiority and inferiority. The social distance between management and labour is huge and their relationship is typically a master-servant relationship. The sense of community is often weak. Even the field workers who are divided by ethnic origin, housing blocks, castes, family, gender, age etc. lack a sense of unity of being a group with collective interests. This fragmentation is further intensified by current developments such as casualization of labour, sub-contracting and preferential treatment. Furthermore, field workers are commonly stigmatized as ignorant and lazy. Sub-staff members like to emphasize that they have to guide and educate these backward workers, while the staff in its turn looks down on the 'unskilled sub-staff'. Such notions legitimize the rigid hierarchy and strict mobility thereby perpetuating the lowly position of labourers.

Figure 1: Long-run average nominal price movement of Indian tea



Source: Tea Digest 2008-09, Tea Board, India

One of the most remarkable features of tea plantations is the large number of female workers, who constituted about 50 per cent of the total work force. Women are especially active in plucking, which is very labour intensive. Women are believed to be more efficient pluckers than men but hardly given any opportunity for promotion.

Trade Unions are social movements built on the idea that workers have as much right as employers to participate in any decision making affecting the destiny of the enterprise and hence their own destiny as an employee of that enterprise. In Asian and African countries the labour movement was founded by largely ‘outsiders’ with a background in law, politics and social work whose motives were both humanitarian and political. Moreover, workers in these regions often just needed better educated outsiders to help them organize, bargain and participate in decision-making (Ramaswamy, 1992).

Under British rule, trade unions were forbidden on tea plantations in India and Sri Lanka and owners had no difficulty excluding ‘trouble makers’. In those days, plantation managers used beatings, fines and even imprisonment to keep the tea workers quiet and obedient. Such evil and humiliating practices became rather common and have had considerable impact of unionism. At present the main structural problems affecting unionism on tea plantations include fragmentation

among unions, lack of tradition of organization and participation, excessive dependence of workers' on employers which prevent them from speaking out, ignorance of workers; rights and unawareness of the fact that many of them face the same problems, low female participation in union decision-making bodies, failure of unions to promote women's interests and activists who promote unionism, are often excluded from tea plantations. In the tea plantation sector bargaining is not a level playing field. Often the position of trade unions is unfavourable and weak, while tea planters exercise considerable power over workers, unions and even over government officials.

5. Collective bargaining and Wages

There is a certain pattern followed in the collective bargaining mechanism. At the time of expiry of existing wage agreement, trade unions submit a charter of demand seeking wage hike and few other related financial demands like incentive price, overtime benefits etc. The main demand in the Charter of Demand is the demand for wage hike. Trade Unions primarily submit the demand to employers' organizations and they start bipartite level talk. However, these talks invariably fail and the matter is referred to the State governments. After getting communications from both the parties, State government does initiate tripartite talks which go through several layers. To start with, there is a huge difference between the quantum of wage hike as demanded by the trade unions and the quantum of hike proposed by the employers'. The gap narrows down through successive talks at the tripartite level. Like in the last such collective bargaining process in West Bengal, the prevailing wage was Rs 95. The coordination committee of trade unions in their charter of demand wanted a hike of Rs 105 such that plantation workers get Rs 200 per day. Employers' organizations initially offered a hike of only Rs 5 such that wage becomes Rs 100 per day in the first year of the agreement. After that there was a series of successive talks spanning over almost a year when ultimately wage hike was agreed at Rs 17.50 in the first year, Rs 10 in the second year and third year respectively.

In all cases, the process of collective bargaining favours the contention of the employers' organization in the sense that the wage ultimately agreed upon is closer to the wage hike initially proposed by them. In successive tripartite level talks, trade unions are compelled to come down on the issue of wage hike through persuasions

and deliberations. Managements' representatives are more articulate in their communication/argumentation and they always paint a picture where they try to show that further wage hike would lead to collapse of the industry. They also stress on their inability to pay. Trade unions representatives are not that competitive and often lack the numbers to justify their demands. They actually give up after a point and concede to a wage hike which is much below their initial demand. Thus, the entire process of collective bargaining is a bit long-drawn out process wherein wage hike as demanded by the trade unions gets moderated to a large extent. In other words, employers' do largely control the collective bargaining process through skillful bargaining, better presentation, delaying tactics, painting a picture of economic gloom with impending closure and creating a pressure on the conciliation machinery of the State. The officials of State conciliation machinery try to act neutral in an environment where bargaining power is skewed in favour of employers' organizations.

In the process of collective bargaining in the two States of West Bengal and Assam with regards to arriving at a wage agreement, certain traits can be observed which may explain the phenomenon of prevailing low wage. First, the process starts from a low base every time. Last agreed wage is always taken as base and the increase in previous years is taken as a reference point. This helps in perpetuation of low wages in successive agreements. Second, trade unions fail to argue with relevant numbers and logic. Their demand for wage hike is taken as rhetoric which lacks conviction. On the other hand employers' representatives do put facts and figures in a very convincing way. Also there lies a veiled threat of closure of tea estates in large numbers in case trade unions persist with higher wage hike. Third, employers' representatives do approach the conciliation in a patient way. They drag the process long such that trade unions lose their patience after a point and with growing pressures from their constituents and also that from the State. Stretching the process long adds to the advantage of the employers' organizations. Fourth, productivity is always pitted against wage hike demands in a context where supporting figures justifying fall in productivity. Declining productivity is very commonly used by the employers' organizations as an effective tool of bargaining power and is used as a cover for managerial deficiencies. Fifth, those who represent trade unions are not actually the workers themselves. They are a class in themselves. Indigenous leadership among the workers is lacking in a big way and they are a class of white-collar intermediaries who

represent workers' interest at the collective bargaining forums. The fallouts of the agreement do not affect them directly and because of this, during the intense bargaining process they do have a tendency to concede to the conditions put forward by the employers' representatives rather than protecting the interest of the workers. Sixth, State usually does not play an active role. They mostly act as a facilitator where it is assumed that bargaining power is evenly distributed between the two parties. Also in the prevailing liberalized economic context and growing competition among the States to attract industrial investment, looking after the interests of the industry has become an imperative on the part of State officials. As demonstrated in earlier discussions, the profitability of tea industry is linked to the backwardness of the region in general and perpetuation of low wages in particular. State officials are aware of this reality and do conduct the collective bargaining keeping in mind this reality of globalised liberal economy and the market-oriented way of dealing with labour. Thus, collective bargaining under such an environment, lead to an outcome that favours employers' rather than workers' and manifest itself in the form of perpetuation of very low wages.

Wages in North-Eastern tea plantations

Table 1 presents the existing wages in five major tea producing States of India.

Table 1: Daily rate of wages in major tea producing States 2014

Name of the State	Daily rate of wages (in Rs.)
Assam	94
West Bengal	95
Tamil Nadu	209.27
Kerala	216.53
Karnataka	228.35

Source: ITA and UPASI

From Table 1, it is evident that daily wages in Assam and West Bengal is significantly lower , not even 50% of the wages that prevail in the tea plantations of Southern States. In three Southern States tea plantation wages are declared through minimum wage notifications and wage settlements fall outside the purview of collective bargaining. In Assam and West Bengal, on the other hand, wages are determined through collective bargaining. But plantation does figure in the minimum wage schedule as evident in the synopsis of minimum wages 2014, Govt. of West Bengal given in Annexure 1. Corresponding to tea plantation row it is written that wages are determined through agreement. Daily wages of plantation in West Bengal was Rs 95

in December 2014 whereas the minimum wage for even unskilled agricultural work was Rs 216 as given in the synopsis. Let us briefly look at the tea agreements in Assam and West Bengal to understand movement of wages during the last two decades.

Assam tea agreements

The state of Assam houses nearly 800 plantations and more than 1,00,000 smaller tea gardens which together produce 52 per cent of India's entire tea production and almost 1/6th of world's tea production. Like the situation in West Bengal colonial era labour structure coupled with wages below minimum wage prevails in Assam also. Workers, who are descendents of labourers forcibly brought to work in the tea gardens by the British in the 1860s suffer through the same conditions as their exploited ancestors. The situation presently prevailing in Assam may be termed as modern day feudalism wherein workers came as migrant population and thereafter placed under social isolation and ensuring that they live in abject poverty with limited access to education, health, food and alternative livelihood.

Tea wages are determined through tripartite negotiations in Assam. The normal validity of the agreement is three years. Negotiations are primarily between the two umbrella organizations namely that of employers and workers. State intervenes at an advanced stage and facilitates to reach a consensus. It takes approximately more than six months for each round of negotiation. The new wage agreement comes into effect from the date of last agreement's expiry. If wage agreement is reached after the expiry of the preceeding agreement, arrears payment is made. At the mid period of last decade, wage in Assam was approximately Rs 60. Three subsequent agreements are as follows. As per the bipartite Memorandum of Settlement dated 30 Nov 2005 between the tea managements and representatives of trade unions, the rate of incremental wage hike is as follows:

Period	Incremental wage hike
From 01/11/2005 to 30/04/2007	Rs 2.60 per day
From 01/05/2007 to 30/08/2008	Rs 3.70 per day
From 01/09/2008 to 30/12/2009	Rs 3.70 per day

As per the bipartite Memorandum of Settlement dated 30 February 2010 between the tea managements and representatives of trade unions, the rate of incremental wage hike is as follows:

Period	Incremental wage hike
From 01/01/2010 to 31/03/2011	Rs 8.00 per day
From 01/04/2011 to 30/06/2012	Rs 5.00 per day
From 01/07/2012 to 30/09/2013	Rs 5.00 per day

However, even before the expiry of above agreement dated 3rd Feb 2010, the Assam Cha Mazdoor Sangha submitted a Charter of demand seeking increase in wages in the face of steep regional disparities in wage levels. After protracted discussions it was agreed to terminate the on-going agreement covering the period from 01/01/2010 to 30/09/2013 and they agreed to have a new wage agreement w.e.f. 1st Jan 2012 for a period of 3 years. In terms of the said agreement, the current rate of wages in Assam is Rs 94.

As per the bipartite Memorandum of Settlement dated 1 March 2012 between the tea managements and representatives of trade unions, the nominal wage at the end of each period is as follows:

Period	Nominal wage
From 01/01/2012 to 31/12/2012	Rs 84 per day
From 01/01/2013 to 31/12/2013	Rs 89 per day
From 01/01/2014 to 31/12/2014	Rs 94 per day

West Bengal tea agreements

Similar kind of wage settlement is also visible in West Bengal tea plantations. Planters' Association is represented by CCPA (Constituent Committee of Planters' Association) and workers' are represented by CCTWU (Coordination Committee of Tea Workers Union). In the last such wage agreement signed last month (February 2015), wages were enhanced by Rs 17.50 in the first year, Rs 10 in the next two years and the agreement comes into force with effect from 1st April 2014. Accordingly, wage would increase to Rs 112.50 in the first year, 122.50 in the second year and 132.50 in the third year. As the agreement came almost 10 months late following the expiry of earlier agreement, workers are to be paid arrears in two installments.

As per the tripartite Memorandum of Settlement dated 20 February 2015 between the tea managements and representatives of trade unions, the nominal wage at the end of each period along with incremental wage hike is as follows:

Period	Nominal wage per day
From 01/04/2014 to 31/03/2015	Rs 112.50 (increment of Rs 17.50)
From 01/04/2015 to 31/03/2016	Rs 122.50 (increment of Rs 10)
From 01/04/2016 to 31/03/2017	Rs 132.50 (increment of Rs 10)

After the new wage agreement in West Bengal, the difference in daily wages in Assam and West Bengal increases to Rs 18.50. There is a possibility that this would lead to demand for new wage agreement in Assam as regional wage disparity increases further.

Nominal and real wages

Here, the most important issue is that even though wages in West Bengal and Assam are determined through collective bargaining in an organized industry set up, wages so realized are still poor in terms of both real wage and minimum wage in similar occupation. In terms of real wage, if we make an analysis of tea wages for the last 25 years, it shows that though there is increase in nominal wage over the years, real wage fell. In other words, increases in wages through collective bargaining were not enough to neutralize the rise in general price level. In comparative terms also, daily rate of wages in Assam and West Bengal plantations is even less half of the minimum wages prescribed in similar occupation.

Table 2 represents trend in wage rate indices by sectors over a long period.

Table 2: Wage rate index numbers (Base: 1963-65=100)

Year/Industry	1976	2009	2010	2011	2012
Manufacturing	320.6	5042.5	5724.5	6011.4	6373.4
Mining	391.2	7051.9	8161.4	8515.6	8939.1
Plantation	198.5	3252.4	3811.5	3962.0	4052.9

Source: Indian Labour Journal February 2013

From Table 2, it is clear that increase in wage in plantation sector is significantly lower than that of manufacturing and mining. As a result, real wage fell in plantations over the years.

Table 2 presents wage index of three sectors since 1976. Among three sectors covered during 2012, the highest Average Daily Absolute Wage Rate was recorded in Mining Sector (Rs.367.86) followed by Manufacturing Sector (Rs.303.03) whereas the lowest Average Daily Absolute Wage Rate was in Plantation Sector (Rs.89.20).

During 2012, all India Average Daily Absolute Wage Rate stood at Rs.240.91. In Plantation Sector, the Average Daily Absolute Wage Rate varied between Rs. 84.54 in Tea Plantations and Rs. 179.00 in Rubber Plantations.

Average Daily Absolute Wage Rate is defined as the weighted average of the current years' wage rates, weights being the corresponding employment in base year in an occupation/Stratum/Industry. As the Wage Rate Index Number measures the relative changes in wage rates over a period of time, high or low Wage Rate Index in an industry does not necessarily indicate high or low wage rate in that industry as compared to other industries. To overcome this problem, statistics of Industry/Stratum-wise Average Daily Nominal Wage Rates for the period 1963-65, 1969, 1976 and 2009 to 2012 are presented in Table 3 along with corresponding real wage rates

Table 3: Average daily nominal and real wage rate over time

Year	1963-65		1976		2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Nom	Real	Nom	Real	Nom	Real	Nom	Real	Nom	Real	Nom	Real
Manufacturing	4.86	3.92	15.39	5.20	240.16	6.70	272.98	6.80	286.56	6.54	303.03	6.38
Mining	4.18	3.37	16.57	5.60	295.93	8.25	339.13	8.44	364.87	8.10	367.86	7.75
Plantation	2.32	1.87	4.47	1.51	71.69	2.00	84.89	2.11	87.98	2.01	89.20	1.88

Source: Indian Labour Journal February 2013

Among three sectors covered during 2012, the highest Average Daily Nominal Wage Rate was recorded in mining sector (Rs.367.86) followed by manufacturing sector (Rs.303.03) whereas the lowest Average Daily Nominal Wage Rate was in plantation Sector (Rs.89.20). During 2012, all India Average Daily Nominal Wage Rate stood at Rs.240.91.

Nominal Wage Rate indicates the overall wage, which a worker is getting for his services at the current price. However, it may not be a true indicator of living conditions of workers over a period of time, as it does not take into account the inflation rate. For obtaining the real value of wage, Absolute Wage Rate needs to discount the inflation rate.

During 2012, all India Average Daily Nominal Wage Rate at current prices was Rs.240.91, yet its real value at 1960 prices was only Rs. 5.07. Among three sectors covered, the highest Average Daily Real Wage Rate at 1960 prices was reported in mining sector (Rs. 7.75) followed by manufacturing sector (Rs. 6.38). In plantation sector, the Average Daily Real Wage Rate was reported as low as Rs. 1.88. Even

within the plantation sector tea recorded the lowest real daily wage rate. Thus though for plantation as a whole, barely could just maintain the real wage level during this last 45 years period, the same for tea showed a negative trend.

While comparing Average Daily Real Wage Rates over the years, it is observed that for all industries combined, the Real Wage Rate increased by 0.74 per cent per annum in 2012 over 1976 (i.e. last 36 years). The Average Daily Real Wage Rate of all industries combined during 2012 registered a decline of 3.43 per cent over the previous year.

The next three Tables 5,6 and 7 depict the above discussed aspects within the plantation sector and presents the position of tea vis-a-vis overall and other plantation crops.

Table 4 represents wage rate index within the plantation sector. Among the plantation crops tea showed the lowest index as far as wage rate is concerned. As because tea is the most important and largest among the plantation crops, average wage rate index also got depressed because of relatively poor increase in wage rate of tea workers. Similarly, tea is the most dominant plantation crop in North-East, wage index movement is also subdued in North-East compared to that in South where there is multiplicity of plantation crops.

Table 4: Wage Rates Index: 1969-2012 (As on January) (Base : 1963-65 = 100)

Industry/Stratum	1969	1976	2009	2010	2011	2012
Plantation		198.5	3252.4	3811.5	3962.0	4052.9
Coffee		307.3	5799.1	6398.5	6892.9	7028.3
Rubber		489.2	7730.1	8371.5	9181.8	9883.2
Tea		178.9	2854.2	3406.8	3502.1	3572.2
North-East		150.5	2519.3	3156.6	3242.6	3070.3
South		335.1	4343.9	4519.3	4656.0	5804.2

Source: Indian Labour Journal February 2013

Table 5 represents average daily wage rate over time within the plantation sector. Here also average daily wage rate in absolute terms is lowest in tea across time period. As tea wage rate is low so as the wage rate in North-East plantations.

Table 5: Average Daily Wage Rates (Absolute) during 1963-65 to 2012 (Rs.)

Industry/Stratum	1963-65	1976	2009	2010	2011	2012
Plantation	2.32	4.47	71.69	84.89	87.98	89.20
Coffee	1.57	4.82	90.98	100.38	108.14	110.26
Rubber	1.81	8.86	140.01	151.62	166.30	179.00
Tea	2.42	4.32	67.78	81.44	83.71	84.54
North-East	2.50	3.76	62.84	78.86	81.01	76.71
South	2.06	6.89	89.32	92.92	95.73	119.34

Source: Indian Labour Journal February 2013

Table 6 represents average daily real wage rate at 1960 prices within the plantation sector. Here again tea as well as North-East plantations are the two bottom ranking performers because of poor wage realization across tea plantations in North-East India.

Table 6: Average Daily Real Wage Rates at 1960 price during 1963-65 to 2012 (in Rs.)

Industry/Stratum	1963-65	1976	2009	2010	2011	2012
Plantation	1.87	1.51	2.00	2.11	2.01	1.88
Coffee	1.27	1.63	2.54	2.50	2.47	2.32
Rubber	1.46	2.99	3.91	3.77	3.79	3.77
Tea	1.95	1.46	1.89	2.03	1.91	1.78
North-East	2.02	1.27	1.76	1.96	1.85	1.62
South	1.60	2.33	2.49	2.31	2.18	2.51

Source: India Labour Journal February 2013

From the above analysis, it is amply clear that wage rate in North-East tea plantation is poor across region and across other plantation crops. The issue is why it is so. Here we will try to understand the labour market institutions that lead to such an outcome.

First, wage determined through collective bargaining mechanism where workers' representatives have comparatively less bargaining power. Such a context prevails in West Bengal and Assam. In Southern plantations situation is different as wage is notified as part of Minimum Wage schedule twice in a year. Because of such a practice, wages in Southern plantations could maintain parity with inflationary pressure. Thus it can be said that collective bargaining with skewed bargaining power can lead to poor wage realization. In such a scenario wage determination should not be left to collective bargaining. Rather, as originally envisaged wages for tea workers should be declared as part of Minimum Wage notification. Minimum wage would at least ensure survival at subsistence level.

Second, at the collective bargaining forum, those who represent workers' interest do not belong to the workforce. They are usually white-collared people who represent workers' interest at the bargaining forum. Under such circumstances, it is obvious that workers' interest get compromised at crucial juncture as workers' representatives at bargaining table are class apart and do not themselves face the consequences.

Third, because of lack of opportunity for mobility of workers and given a captive family-based labourforce, supply of labour is always overwhelmingly greater than the demand for labour. Thus, even if wage determination is left to market forces, outcome

would not be significantly different. Also in West Bengal, there was a tripartite agreement in 1969, which stipulated that workforce strength could not be brought down under normal circumstances. Given this and also the fact that workers have very little opportunity to move out of plantations, supply-demand imbalance will be a structural phenomenon in tea plantations if left to market forces. Actually a pre-capitalist economic system prevails in plantations in North-East India and as a result, outcome is worse than that in a full-blown capitalist system.

Fourth, tea workers do not belong to mainstream population in respective states of Assam and West Bengal. They were made to migrate from other States by the colonial planters who did not employ local people because they demanded a comparatively higher wage. As because tea estates remained as ‘enclave’ economy even after independence, these migrated tribal population remain isolated from the mainstream indigenous population. As because tea workers are still considered outsiders, their well-being were never occurred as the priority of the administration and mainstream political discourse.

Fifth, tea industry’s survival depends on the wage rate prevailing at the plantation. Input market was structured in such a way that planters’ had no control on the prices of inputs other than labour. Labour cost is the most significant component of the cost structure. Thus, planters tried to keep wages as low as possible. Even after such low cost of wages, cost of Indian tea production is higher than those in other close competitor countries like Kenya and Sri Lanka. Table 7 depicts such a situation.

Table 7: Cost of production of tea and cost of labour in major tea producing countries (US \$ per kg of tea) in 2003

Country	Cost of production	Labour cost	Wage share(%)
India	1.62	0.81	50
Sri Lanka	1.23	0.74	60.16
Bangladesh	0.32	0.16	50
Kenya	1.16	0.55	47.41
Malawi	0.84	0.27	32.14

Source: Tea Board of India 2006-07

From Table 7 it is clear that cost of production per kg of tea is highest in India among the major producers of tea in the world. Cost of labour is about 50 per cent of total cost of production. Labour cost per kg of tea is highest for India in spite of the fact that wages in Assam and West Bengal (which produces about 75 per cent of total tea produced in India) is well below the minimum wage prescribed in similar occupations.

In international market Indian tea may get competed out in terms of cost of production and cost of labour is the major component in the cost structure. If this happens in spite of such a low wages for majority of plantation workers, then it might well be concluded that Indian tea industry thrived on relative backwardness of workers who are given a very poor wage and very little opportunity for mobility. Perpetuation of such low wages over the years is linked to the survival of the industry at the international market.

With regards to perpetuation of such a low wages, planters do argue on a few points. **First**, they put forward the logic that it is family based employment in plantations. In many cases husband and wife both are regular workers and even temporary/Badli workers are dependent of regular workers and they add to the family income. Thus, according to planters, aggregate family income should be calculated in determining the minimum wage/entitlement criteria. This logic is difficult to accept in the sense that there are number of families which are single-earning member household. Further, even for two earning member household, they are putting up double the effort. Even after adding the wages of the two earning member, total wages fall below the corresponding minimum wage.

Second, planters in Assam and West Bengal argue that many statutory and non-statutory (subsidized ration and free firewood) facilities are being provided to the families of the planters. According to them, if we add up the monetary equivalents of such facilities, wages would be much higher than the present nominal wage. If we take this argument in its true perspective there would be some addition to the monetary wage but still it would be considerably less than the corresponding minimum wage. Application of Plantation labour Act 1951 is universal across plantations in India. It is equally applicable to plantations in southern India also. There are two non-statutory benefits exclusive for plantation workers in Assam and West Bengal that is concessional rations and free firewood. Adding monetary equivalents of these two does not lead to narrowing down the gap in monetary wages in any significant manner. According to ITA documents, cost incurred in issuing concessional ration was Rs 3.51 per kg of made tea in the year 2002. Table 8 provides the comparative welfare cost of tea produced in Southern and North-Eastern India as per the study carried out by the UPASI.

Table 8: Welfare cost of tea produced in Southern and North-Eastern India in 2002

Sl no.	Item	Whether statutory?	Estimated annual expenditure (Rs crores)		Costing in Rs per kg of tea	
			S India	N-E India	S India	N-E India
1	Medical	Statutory	41	77.12	1.23	1.2
2	Housing	Statutory	22	68.89	0.66	1.08
3	Drinking water	Statutory	12	DNA	0.36	DNA
4	Sanitation & conservancy	Statutory	10	19.8	0.30	0.31
5	Child care	Statutory	12	13.41	0.36	0.21
6	Creches	Statutory	2	DNA	0.06	DNA
7	Recreational	Statutory	3	5.02	0.09	0.07
8	Education	Statutory	6	DNA	0.18	DNA
9	Road	Non-statutory		49.49		0.77
10	Fuel	Non-statutory		1.91		3.51
11	Concessional ration	Non-statutory	24	224.33	0.72	0.02
12		Statutory	126	186.15	3.78	2.89
		Non-statutory	24	273.82	0.18	4.28
13	Total		150	459.97	3.96	7.17

Source: Report of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, Ministry of labour, govt. of India, 2003

From Table 8 it is evident that welfare cost per kg of tea produced both statutory and non-statutory benefits included is higher in North-Eastern India than that of Southern India because of few extra non-statutory benefits. But that does not neutralize the huge gap in nominal wages between the two regions. The case of poor wage realization in North-Eastern plantations still remain. Also the implementation of the Plantation labour Act 1951 is not uniform across estates in North-Eastern India.

Now given this low wages, the issue at hand is why workers do not move on? There is not much work or literature on this. I conducted three focus group discussions (FGD) at three different tea estates in West Bengal. These three estates belong to three different class sizes. One is having area less than 200 hectare, the other one is having area between 200 and 400 hectare and the last one is having area more than 400 hectare. Assembly at each FGD was about twenty workers including trade union representatives. Half of the participants were female workers. In general tea population is having a very unsatisfactory existence and provided the opportunity they want to move out. But they do not have choice. Certain factors keep them pegged to the plantations. These factors as came out in the discussions are as follows.

First, the general backwardness of the area and lack of industrial development in the vicinity. Tea gardens are located in the relatively remote places. There is a problem regarding accessibility, lack of general infrastructure, very limited State intervention,

political unrest, secessionist activities in recent and distant past all added to the woes. Apart from tea there are no other industry or service sector employment opportunities available. Thus the tea population has hardly got any other alternative opportunities to move on.

Second, absence of urban informal sector in the neighbourhood. As discussed earlier tea workers have hardly anything to fall back upon in times of need. Workers in industries like jute and cotton have over the years shifted to urban informal sectors as these industries are located in urban centres. But there is hardly any urban agglomeration in the vicinity of tea plantations. There are few urban spots dotted around the tea growing districts in West Bengal which are tea trading points and also serve as markets for the tea population. But these do not provide much scope for informal urban sector activities. Thus once the tea gardens are closed, tea workers face prospect of starvation death.

Third, tea gardens do not have educational opportunities beyond the primary level. Providing school was earlier the sole responsibility of planter employer as part of Plantation Labour Act 1951. Later in the 1990s in West Bengal, State govt. has assumed the responsibility of running schools located within the plantations. But these are mostly primary schools and children of tea workers need to travel long distances to reach a secondary school. Also in most cases there is not much transport options and even when those are available they can't afford them. Colleges, universities or centre of vocational training are located at far-off places and progenies of tea workers can hardly access them. Thus, the drop-out rate is very high during the transition from primary to secondary schools. Without basic minimum education or skill, tea population find it very hard to get job opportunities outside plantation.

Fourth, very limited exchange between the tea and non-tea population and relative isolation of tea workers from the mainstream. As tea estates exist like enclave economies, tea and non-tea population are two distinct entities living in close proximities. Limited interaction between them pre-empt movement across the enclave. Tea population hardly speak the local language and they are treated as outsiders in macro sense. Without integration with mainstream activities, tea population find it very hard to branch out from the plantations and the enclave economy concept continues.

Fifth, lack of demand for industrial goods on the part of tea workers. The demand side response of tea workers are very limited in the sense that they hardly consume any industrial goods and still live almost a primitive life. Wages they get from plantations take care of their subsistence food requirement. They do not buy any industrial goods of substance and save almost nothing. This lack of demand manifest in the form of clinging to plantation even when the general atmosphere is gloomy and depressing. The push factor is missing. Thus the lack of mobility on the part of tea workers can be attributed to both pull and push factors.

6. Concluding observations

Daily rate of wages for tea plantation workers in Assam and West Bengal is very low compared to similar wages in Southern India tea plantations as well as in terms of agricultural minimum wages. Wage determination in these two regions is different. While in Assam and West Bengal wage is determined through collective bargaining in southern plantations wage is notified as per provisions of minimum wages act. Two different sets of labour market institutions lead to different kind of result. There are few non-statutory benefits for plantation workers in Assam and West Bengal apart from the statutory benefits which are universally applicable throughout India. But even if we add the monetary equivalents of all such facilities, daily wages still be significantly below the minimum subsistence wage. That in many instances employments in plantations are family employment, still it is very hard to justify such low wages. Certain labour market institutions are responsible for such depressing labour market outcome. That tea plantations are 'enclave' economies functioning in a pre-capitalist feudal economic environment do help in sustaining such low wages in the long run. Actually tea industry to a major extent survives on the relative backwardness. The fact that per unit cost of production of Indian tea is the highest among major tea producing countries in spite of such low wages, indicate that competitiveness of Indian tea in the world market crucially dependent on minimizing labour cost which in turn depends on perpetuation of such low wages. Further, in Assam and West Bengal wage determination is left to collective bargaining in an environment which bargaining power is overwhelmingly in favour of employers'. Forced migrations, unfree labour further aggravate the problem. Workers even are not

in position to move out even though they are aggrieved and face near starvation situation in case of abandonment/closure of tea estates. There are both push and pull factors which are responsible for the lack of mobility on the part of plantation workers. Lack of education beyond primary level, relative backwardness of the regions, near absence of urban informal sector, lack of demand for industrial goods on the part of plantation workers are the institutional factors that are responsible for immobility of workers. The two most important policy imperatives emerging from the study are revival of plantation wages as part of overall minimum wage notification procedure and secondly State need to play a more pro-active role in ensuring overall development of the region as well as the industry.

Acknowledgements

This Study is financially supported by the National Research Programme on Plantation Development funded by the Ministry of Commerce, and Industry, Govt. of India. I am indebted to Prof K.J. Joseph for his guidance and constant encouragement during the course of the Study. His comments on the preliminary draft helped me a lot to revise and improve the paper. I am also indebted to Dr. Vinoj Abraham, Associate professor, CDS for being discussant and making valuable contribution towards designing and setting up the study. I am also thankful to all for their useful comments made during the presentation of the paper. I am thankful to Tea Board officials for providing me data and scope for interaction. I am also thankful to Rinju Rasaily for her constant encouragement and suggestions. Last, but not the least, I am thankful to my wife and children for their cooperation and help.

Kingshuk Sarkar is presently working as Deputy Labour Commissioner, Govt. of West Bengal and looks after labour administration and enforcement of social security schemes. He did PhD in Economics from Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His area of specialization is plantation economics and particularly tea plantation industry in India. Earlier Dr. Sarkar had served at National Institute of Rural Development as Assistant Professor and was also engaged with Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India in connection with determination of methodology for identification of BPL population.

References

- ALECR, (1921), Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee 1921-22
- Arbuthnot, J.C. (1904), Report on the Condition of the Tea Garden Labour, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong
- Assam Labour Reports, (1877-1902), Annual Report on Labour Immigration into Assam, Calcutta
- Bagchi, A.K. (1972), Private Investment in India, Cambridge University Press, London
- Bagchi, A.K. (1973), 'Some Implications of Unemployment in Rural Areas', Economic & Political Weekly, Vol 8 No 31-33, Nov
- Bagchi, A.K. (1982), The Political Economy of Underdevelopment, Cambridge University Press, London
- Bagchi, A.K. (1988), 'Colonialism & the Nature of Capitalist Enterprise', Economic & Political Weekly, Vol 23, No 31, 31 July
- Behal Rana P & Mohapatra Prabhu P, (1992), Tea and Money versus Human Life: The Rise and Fall of the Indenture System in the Assam Tea Plantations 1840-1908, Journal of Peasant Studies, December
- Behal, R P (1983), Some Aspects of the growth of Plantation Labour Force and Labour Movements in Assam Valley Districts (Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Darrang) 1900-1947, PhD thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, p 34
- Behal, Rana Pratap (1983), Some Aspects of the Growth of the Tea Plantation, unpublished PhD thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Behal, Rana Pratap (1985), Forms of Labour Protest in Assam Valley Tea Plantations 1900-1930, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 20, No 4, p PE-19
- Behal, Rana Pratap (1985), 'Forms of Labour Protest in Assam Valley', Economic & Political Weekly, Vol 20 No 4, 26 Jan
- Bose, Sanat (1954), Capital and Labour in the Tea Industry, AITUC Publication, Mumbai, p 75
- Chakraborty, Dipesh (1976), in A Study of Working Classes Historical Bengal', Indian Review, January
- Chakraborty, RN. (1997), Socio-economic Development of Plantation Workers, National Library Publisher, Dibrugarh

- Chakravorthy, D N (1971), Assam Tea Plantation Labour PF Scheme Gives Triple Benefit, Yojana, Vol 15, No 15, p 27
- Chandavarkar, R (1987), Labour and Society in Bombay, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Chatterjee, R. (1987) Social Perspective of Labour Legislation in India, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Calcutta, Kolkata
- Chatterjee, Suranjan & Gupta Ratna Das (1981), Tea Labour in Assam: Recruitment and Government Policy, 1840-80, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 16, No 44, p 1861
- Chattopadhyay, Manabendu (1985), Evolution of tea industry and labour relations in Darjeeling Terai, Man and Development, Vol 7, No 2, p 87
- Das, Gupta Ranajit (1986), 'From Peasants & Tribesmen to Plantation Workers, Economic & Political Weekly, Vol 21, No 4, 25 Jan
- Das, Gupta Ranajit (1992), Economy, Society & Politics in Bengal: Jalpaiguri, Oxford University Press, Kolkata
- Das, Gupta, Manas (1999), Labour in Tea Gardens, Gyan Sagar, Publication, Delhi
- Das, Gupta, Ranajit (1981), 'Structure of the Labour Market in Colonial India, Economic & Political Weekly, Vol 16, No 44, 45 & 46, Nov
- Das, Gupta, Ranajit (1993), Plantation Workers & Collective Action in Japaiguri, K.P. Bagchi & Co, Kolkata
- Indian Labour Journal (2013), Labour Bureau, Govt. of India, Shimla, February 2013
- Indian Tea Association, Indian Tea Scenario, various issues
- George, K Tharian (1988), Role of Government and Structural Changes in Rubber Plantation Industry, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol XXIII, No. 48, 26 Nov
- Ganguli, O. (1972), 'Slavery in British Dominion', Jijnasa Sept 1886-April 1887, Calcutta
- Griffith, Percival (1967), The History of the Indian Tea Industry, Weidenfield & Nicholson, London
- Guha, A. (1981), Formation of a Working Class in Assam Plantation, Research India Publication, Calcutta
- Guha, A. (1988), Planter Raj to Swaraj, People's Publishing House, New Delhi
- Govt. of India (2003), Ministry of Labour, Report of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, Ministry of Labour, govt. of India, 2003
- Govt of India, (1901), Prices and Wages, Govt. of India Press, Calcutta

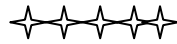
Mishra Deepak, Vandana Upadhyay n Atul Sharma, Unfolding Crisis in Assam's Tea Plantations: Employment and Occupational Mobility, Routledge, 2014

Royal Commission on Labour in India (RCLI), (1931), Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, Govt. of India Central Publication Branch, Calcutta

Tea Board of India, Tea Statistics, various issues

Tea Board of India, Tea Digest, various issues

Thapa Namrata, (2012), Employment Status and Human Development of Tea Plantation Workers in West Bengal, Discussion Paper no. 11, NRPPD, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram



About National Research Programme on Plantation Development (NRPPD)

This research programme, established with the support of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, envisages to help transforming the plantation sector in India to be internationally competitive and sustainable – economically, environmentally and socially - by;

Undertaking Policy oriented Research – on all aspects of plantation economy at the regional, national and international levels

Promoting Policy advocacy – at the regional national and international level - to influence particularly the National and State level policies

Facilitating Networking – of all relevant stakeholders and

Help Capacity building - of all concerned at the regional and national levels.

The programme works under the overall guidance of a Steering Committee, chaired by the Chairman, CDS. The Steering Committee comprises of the Chairpersons of Coffee Board, Rubber Board, Tea Board, Spices Board, Joint Secretary/Director in Charge of Plantations in MoC, Director CDS and an expert on plantation sector. Chair Professor of the Programme is the Convenor. A Research Advisory Committee chaired by the Director CDS has been set up to provide guidance to the research being undertaken by the programme.

The Centre for Development Studies is an autonomous national institution supported by the Government of Kerala and the Indian Council of Social Science Research, Government of India. The mission of the Centre is to promote teaching, training and research in disciplines relevant to development. The core teaching programmes of the Centre are the M.A, M.Phil and Doctoral Programmes in Applied Economics affiliated to the Jawaharlal Nehru University/University of Kerala and the research covers six thematic areas relevant to development.



CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Prasanth Nagar, Ulloor, Thiruvananthapuram - 695 011
Ph : 0471-2774200, 2448881, 2448412, Fax : 0471-2447137
Website : www.cds.edu