

**Socio-Cultural Life of the Tea Garden Workers People with special  
reference to the People of Manjha Tea Garden in Sub-Himalayan Terai  
Region of Darjeeling**

**Pabitra Paul<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar(Ph.D)

Department of History

North Bengal University

Rajarammohanpur,Darjeeling,West Bengal

Email:pabitranaxalbari@gmail.com

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***Abstract:**Tea Garden people play a vital role in the overall development of family, society, state as well as country. The workers are the major labour source in various tea garden of Sub- Himalayan regions of West Bengal. They play a significant role in the establishment of tea industry in this region. The present study reveals that the present social status of the tea garden workers. Major findings reveled that there were various drawbacks in the tea gardenworkers. Their life style, houses, hospitality, sanitation and superstition affected by their social morality. It intends to highlight and discuss the present conditions and challenges of the tea garden working people. They remained neglected and ignored in the social milieu of 75 years of Independence. Now the days little welfare measures undertaken by the state government and non-government organization also to rescue them.*

***Keywords:** Independence, Organization, Sanitation, Superstition, Social morality.*

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**Statement of the Problems**

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Tea garden is a vital sector of Indian economy. In Terai region people of the tea garden are mostly tribes. They are socially depressed and backward section of the society. The most of the Manjha tea garden people were illiterate, unhealthy, non of social security and malnutrition.

They are socially excluded from main stream of the society. On the other hand some worker were suffered from chemical hazards when they working in the garden. So Sanitation is very big problems. Another is Superstition problems in the tea garden people. In this paper I tried to explain the social, sanitation and superstition problems of the Manjha Tea Garden Working Peoples.

## **Review of Literature**

Large number of studies has been conducted by the researchers in different context on the historical point of view. Here are some humble attempt is made to review few of them.

The study *History of the Tea in India* by Brijinder Singh and R.K Sud in 2013 where they discussed about the brief historical background of the Tea Plantation in different parts of Darjeeling, Assam and Kangra Valley. The author Dr Khemraj Sharma in his book *The Himalayan Tea Plantation Workers* where he focused on the hill areas of Darjeeling district tea garden socio-economic condition of the workers, and their marriage system, possession of land and household and trade union activity and industry. *Impact of the Industry on the Life of the Tribals of West Bengal* by A.K Das and H.N. Banerjee in 1964 where they mention about the family of tea garden and economic system and pattern of workers, impact of social life in ethnic group structures. Manas Dasgupta in his study *Socio-Economic Impact on Tea Plantation on Agriculture in Darjeeling Hill Areas* where he mentions the development of the agriculture, garden economy and backwardness of the tea garden. Manas Dasgupta in his study *Socio-Economic Impact on Tea Plantation on Agriculture in Darjeeling Hill Areas* where he mention the development of the agriculture, garden economy and backwardness of the tea garden. Sudip Khasnobish in his article *The Transformation of the Demographic*

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Structure of the Tribal Population in the Terai Region of Darjeeling District(1850-1947) where he nicely describe the inhabitants of the terai region during the colonial british period and growth of the tribal population of this area. Rohit Sharma in his thesis *Trade Union Movement in the Tea Garden of Darjeeling Hills (2003)* where he discuss about the labours and management relation in the tea gardens of Darjeeling district. He has also mention the trade unions activity and ownership pattern had affected the continuity of garden management.

## **Methodology**

In this paper, methodology is mainly based on primary and secondary data sources. Primary data have been collected by direct contact method with the questionnaires and interview schedules and the secondary data have been collected from tea association, tea board office, various newspapers and journals. Simple random sampling methods were employed to select the sample of tea garden. Data collections were performed with the help of tea garden manager, local panchayat member tea garden employe, an old person, health worker . In Sub-Himalayan regions of West Bengal there are one districts namely Darjeeling. Following tea garden have been selected for data collection such as Manjha Tea garden.

## **Objective of the Study**

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The basic objective of the present research work is to present a detailed scenario on social, sanitation and superstition condition of the tea garden workers of Manjha Tea Garden in Darjeeling District. Apart from these overall objectives there are some specific objectives which are as follows: 1 To examine the condition of the tea garden workers. 2 To analyze the role of tea garden authority, NGOs and State Government as well as Union Government for social development of the tea garden workers. 3 To suggest some remedial measures for improving the socio condition of the tea garden workers. The main objectives of the present study are – 1) To study the present working condition of tea garden labour in the Manjha Tea Garden in Darjeeling district and 2) To investigate the sanitation system of the tea garden. 3) To find out the sources of the superstition problems and try to solve them.

## **Introduction**

Manjha Tea garden is a big tea garden on the banks of the river Mechi bordering India-Nepal in the north of north Bengal. This tea garden paints a unique picture in the economic history of Bengalis. Manjha tea garden is a very beautiful tea garden under Terai region. Tea industry plays a vital role in the sense of socio-economic scenario in India. About 70% worker of the tea industry are women who are the most potential labour force and are well trained from their previous generations. Although plucking machine, pruning knife etc. introduced in tea industry but their skill defiant them. The labour participation in the tea plantation industry of North Bengal has a very long history. The “Adivasi” and “Nepali” women worker all along formed the majority of the workforce of this industry in this region. The rights of tea garden women worker are still now neglecting and they are facing several problems in their daily life.

The Tea Garden village code-306569, under Naxalbari block Maniram Gram Panchyate. Tea Board no-146. Name of the company is Coronation Tea Co.Ltd Jalpaiguri. Total area 314.44 hectares. Total population 1332 (2011) census (Present Population-1500) source :(Tea garden survey report). Total house holder-286 male-672 female-651. Nearest Railway Station Naxalbari, 10 km from tea garden. Children 161 (0-6) Boys-89, Girls-72. Overall literacy rate-57%. Total literate 756 out of 1323. Male

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literacy 63% .of 424 males out of 672. Femal literacy 50% of 332 out of 651. Total mandays utilized in 2018-40296, 2019-42470, 2020-53419 (source: Tea garden survey report). This tea garden situated bank of the river Manjha. In the north and north east Lohagar forest and Bara change . In south Marapur tea garden and in the west river Mechi the border river between India and Nepal.

In the year of 1834 British governer general Lord Willim Bentinck recomended the cultivation of tea in various region in India like Himalayans hills, Darjeeling, Assam. That is why various tea company established tea garden in North Bengal. Andrew Yule, Willimson Maogr who step in this field in Terai-Dooars in colonial British Bengal. The British Raj encouraged the civilians to established tea estate in Terai region. But to raise for Bengali Industrialist in North Bengal their surpius money was invested in tea gardens, but they did nothave the capitalist goal of a colonial servent. The Bengali middle class people (called entrepreneur) established Tea gardens in 1915, also established Jalpaiguri Tea Planters Association. Befor independence in the year of 1928 established Terai Indian Planters Association (TIPA).

Since the Global economic downturn , Bengali tea gardens have been handed over to the Marwaris and also still going on. In this case the reluctance and indifference of the successors of the Bengali tea industrialist in the tea garden industry is largely responsible. The founder of the Manjha Tea Garden was Sachin Chandra Mitra was a Hindu non Brahmin labour contractor native place in Jessore (now in Bangladesh). Now the ownership has changed from Bengali entrepreneurship to other Indians. The present owner of the tea garden Mr. Kishor kumar kalyani , residence in Jalpaiguri. The present Manager of the tea garden is Mr. O.P. Mishra also a Marwaris from Uttar Pradesh. Saroj Mohan Neiyogi is one of the senior employe of this tea garden. A political party (TMCP) leader and also a panchyat member Mr. Roshan Tirki says 'our tea garden make a best quality tea in the Terai region'.

### **Social life**

Santali social life became more beautiful and there are so many features of their feeling and heritage. Their hospitality, drinking, rituals, marriage is wonderful and interesting. According to O'Mally 'This tribal community even today consists of one of the largest

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,most cohesive and resilient tribes in eastern India. They have certainly been the most written about in song and literature beginning from the days of the Raj'. Their family relation became more precious. They are polite in nature and very hard working. Their village divide into two parts. First one is called 'Jaher Than' and second called 'Majhi Than'. The 1<sup>st</sup> one old forest area of the tea garden second referred to Sal tree and Mohua tree, beside the deties reside. The main residential part situated in the hart of the tea garden. Another side tea garden office area, other side cattle feeding area. They practiced the strict regulation of the forest department. They usually help to control the garden area, plantation work, and joint forest management for ecological sustainability. Most of the tea garden people are engaged in the lower post like garden workers.

Deonar tea company took charge of the care of Naxalbari Manjha tea garden. Suresh Agarwal, the owner of this tea company, took over the responsibility on Tuesday. Darjeeling district INTUC president Nirjal Dey had been present for a long time. When the Manja Tea Garden Factory was closed for a long 12 years, only raw tea leaves were sold in the garden. In other factories, the condition of the garden turned out to be what it is today. It has been a great benefit to the people here who are labourers and people who are very happy with the tea garden. Bonus Gratuity, Pf, Drinking Water Garden Health Care Problems for Workers of the Beautiful Manjha Tea Garden Located on the Indo-Nepal Border Hills. Due to high debt, no company has agreed to take over the orchard. Located between Naxalbari and Mining Block, the 785-acre area of Manja Garden has 750 permanent and temporary workers, out of which 750 are permanent workers. The owner of Manja Tea Garden can be brought in 1994 to Tapan Mitra of Kalyani Group. The amount of debt is increasing due to deprivation of garden workers, As a result, bank loans are increasing. Garden workers are deprived of PF graduation bonus. The PF commissioner has also lodged several complaints against the company with Naxalbari police station for non-payment of BF to the workers. We have to rely on Marapur Tea Garden, where we have been sheltering. INTTUC President Nirjal Dey statement that Manja Tea Garden will be in charge of two gardens near Marapur. A company will be in charge of the two gardens, which has given new hope to the workers.

The People of the Garden Engaged in Agriculture. All Parts with Benefit by Sell and Price of Agriculture Product, Livestock and Elements from Border Area Site. The

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rural areas of the Terai Region of Economic Inequality for the Inhabitants of the Border Region's People. From Both the Countries inhabitants can cross the Mechi river. It is an international border area. The garden people work each other's country in a spear time.

## **Sanitation**

Manjha tea garden village is the main residential area. The Santali peoples residential house main door face streets. The wall made of Bamboos in the past time but now the days it is pucca house. A Dhenki at the veranda. There is a separate fire place in the house. The people regularly plastered with mud and cow dung and well decorated with colours like flora and fauna and miniature painting like birds, flowers etc.

Housing	Condition	No
1	Pucca House	200
2	Semi Pucca House	40
3	Other House (kutchha)	25

Sources: Tea Garden Survey Report 2021.

## **Development**

The Local panchayat visited weekly. This has resulted in more power at the local level with the participation of people through their elected representative by forming local panchayat for management and development of the garden. There are so many line (Road) in the tea garden like Nicha line, Factory line, 6 no line and 8 no line etc. Manjha Tea garden in Terai region of Darjeeling district has changed the economic map of Terai in North Bengal through the efforts of labours. The labour of the garden were very good and superior for their working activity. In this garden those who engaged in agricultural pursuits have benefited by the sale and purchase of agricultural products, livestock, and implements from markets located at Naxalbari, Siliguri on either side of the border. The rapid growth of urbanization of the Terai region has opened up economic opportunities for the people of the border areas tea garden workers. They can cross the border and work in each other's country. According to Roshan Tirki-most of the people are work as daily waged labourers in this garden. Some women sell vegetables, some sell woods from

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forest, some making Haria. Self –empowerment is the new motto of the people. Total families of workmen 260. Salary of field worker Rs-202/- per day.

### **Some Problems Faced by the Workers in Manjha Tea Garden**

The Manjha tea garden workers are not only deprived of various rights but also face various other problems inside the tea gardens. They are facing various social, economic and health related problems such as:

1. Poor health care facility
2. Maternal mortality
3. Scarcity of drinking water
4. Early marriages
5. Illiteracy Alcoholism
6. Superstition beliefs
7. Transport

### **Superstition**

The Superstition is a kind of religious feeling and the practices of this feeling imposes. Most Superstition regional and historical circumstances, such as religious beliefs or the natural environment. It also related with Psychology of Superstition. The Tattoo is one of the main superstition of the tea garden worker. This is their traditional practices. The most of the women were decorated their hand and face. Some young people decorated permanent Tattoo like leaves, sign, marks etc. The Evil eye another kind of superstition of the tea garden Santali workers. Mainly the women workers they believe in evil eye. On the other hand the Santali people believe in Ojhas. They don't believe in modern medical system. Though there is a Health Centre in this tea garden and a Health Worker stay in 8 h r x7 days duty. But the Santali people they taken traditional medicines like tulshi, kalomegh, thankuni, patharkuchi and others herbs. At the time of illness they practice Tabiz. (a metal item which is an amulet or locket worn for good luck and protection from common diseases and magic). They blind faith of Tabiz. Illiteracy



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became more creat pathetic situation on the belief in Witch Craft (It is a practice of what the practitioner believes in supernatural skills and abilities).But now the days the time became changed. The inhabitants of the tea garden are the value of different songs. They convey the message of radical change innature. They also respond to the call of dharti (world) wishing for the long life of the leopard and the pupil tree through ‘Baha song’.

### **Health Care Facility**

The garden has a small dispensary provided by the management. It is without adequate medical accessories. The pregnant women delivery time they went to hospital or Medical Collage by free Ambulance services from Government. The Health care Facility in the Tea garden became more effective during the present day. The responsibility of providing basic health facilities in the forms of primary health centre and other associated requirement fallswith the management of the respective tea estates in accordance with the Plantation Act 1951.But there is no infrastructure facilities like Ambulance.

No of patients sent to outside for treatment	Year	No's
	2018	70
	2019	80
	2020	150
Provide maternity benefit	2018-19	10
	2019-20	8
	2020-21	11

Source:Tea garden survey report 2021

### **Government Facility**

The Government of West Bengal taken so many nessecry steps to developed the People of the tea garden area in various field.The most senior tea garden workers like Sirmoth

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Kujur, Gabrel Soregn, Dhankumar Kujur. They says that their retirement date 31.08.2021. They provide services 42 years. They saw the remarkable changes of their garden life. Now the days became more modern. The young generation became more advance. They used mobile phone, computer and many electronic items. Some historian says that much of what constitutes folk Hinduism today is actually descended from an amalgamation of adivasi faiths. The people identified as less acculturated tribes among the tribal population groups and in need of special programmes for their sustainable development. All the village surrounding this tea garden have long been electrified. The village has one primary school and a junior high school.

### **Conclusion**

It is very much significant that the persons of each and every society plays vital role for their families, societies as well as countries. From the above discussion, it is concluded that tea garden workers are facing several daily problems and still behind in terms of socio- economically, culturally and educationally. Most of them are innocent and illiterate for that they are working only for their livelihood survivalist of their family. So it is our duty to literate them and always gives them moral support to establish as a socio-economically sound people in the Manjha Tea Garden. Life of Adivasis does not move forward at a very fast phase. Even today they are constantly struggling with various difficulties. There is a separate Adivasi Department of the Government of West Bengal for the development of Adivasis. To put it mildly, the vast majority of indigenous peoples are living below the poverty line, starving to the point that they have not tasted independence despite being citizens of a large country of their daily companion. Tea Garden People grace Judgment that they are constantly struggling with various problems but they do not have the weak mentality to give up. They are not afraid to fight because their firm belief is that one day many problems will be solved.

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