



Review Paper

Evolution of tea industry in Tripura: Socio-economic and political factors

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Abstract

The paper explores the evolution of tea industry in Tripura. Tea gardens in Tripura were mainly established to boost up the economy of the state. Bengali entrepreneurs from East Bengal were invited for establishing of tea estates. This paper is divided into two parts. First part is describing the economical reason of setting up of tea estate, labour recruitment and gradual evolution of tea industry in Tripura under monarchy before merging into Indian Union in 1949. Second part is after becoming a state of India, changes in tea industry occurred over the period. There is state involvement, unions of workers as well as owners which are influencing tea industry. Insurgency which is a burning problem in North-East and Tripura is also not spared from this also influenced the tea industry in state. Though Tripura has a history of tea industry of more than hundred years still there is less known literature on tea industry about this. This paper is trying to throw light on this through secondary literature review and field visit. This paper is also trying to bring out the history of setting up of tea industry in Tripura by the royal family of Tripura in the year 1916 without intervention by British and also trying to explore political, economic background of the state which is influencing the tea industry in Tripura.

Keywords: Tripura, Tea Industry, tea estate, economic, political.

Introduction

The history of tea consumption in India dates back to the 12th century. Tea industry in India is about 180 years old. This beverage was consumed by Singpho and Khamti tribe in Assam. This was recorded by a Dutch traveller named Jan Huyghen Van Linschoten. The Major General of British East India Company, Robert Bruce in 1823 also made a similar observation. He negotiated with the tribal chief Bishagaum and tried to test the leaves scientifically. In 1830 Charles Alexander Bruce, brother of late Robert Bruce dispatched the tea samples to the Botanical Garden of Calcutta. It was identified as a different variety of 'cha' in Botanical Garden of Kolkata. It was not the Chinese variety. It was named as *Camellia Sinensis Assamica*¹. In the year 1838, 12 boxes of tea manufactured by Singpho Chiefs were exported to London from Calcutta.²

More than thirty countries of the world produce tea. Among them China, India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Indonesia are the prime producers. These five countries produce 76% of world's tea and exports 79% of the world's tea. India contributes 26% of the world's total production³. In tea production India stands in second position now after China. The country produces mostly three varieties namely CTC (cut tear & curl) 88%, "orthodox" tea 10% and green tea 2%.

India is the largest tea consuming country and the most commonly consumed variety of tea is CTC and 22% of the world's consumption of tea is in India only. It is also the largest

producer and consumer of black tea⁴. Tea plantations are situated in hilly areas and interior places in North-Eastern and Southern states in India. Major tea producing states are Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. To a small extent tea is also grown in Karnataka, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Bihar and Orissa⁵. Tripura is the 5th tea producing state in India among all states of India. Tea is an agriculturally based industry and more than two million people work in the tea industry.

History of setting up of tea industry in Tripura is different from other states. In the year 1916 the then Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya Bahadur (1909-1923) established tea gardens. In other states tea gardens were established by the British. He set up tea garden with the advice of Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore, who was friend of the royal family, to boost up the declining economy of Tripura. The Maharaja invited Bengali entrepreneurs from East Bengal (undivided Bengal) and leased out land to them to establish Tea Plantation⁶.

Methodology

The main objective of this paper is to know the socio-economic and political factors which influenced the evolution of tea industry in Tripura.

The method here used as secondary literature review e. g articles, novels, stories, poems, drama, songs etc. Primary

survey for oral history taking from tea garden workers has been conducted at two tea estates of West Tripura District of Tripura. Oral history has been taken from 60 workers and 5 key informants. In depth interview has been done with the respondents. Consent has been taken from the respondents for interview and anonymity of respondents has been maintained.

The study is a qualitative study. Data collected from field survey has been analysed through thematic method. Content analysis has been done for secondary literature.

Results and discussion

Evolution of tea industry during monarchy: The Boundary of Tripura was till Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Noakhali and Chittagong during 1563 AD to 1793 AD. This boundary was reduced due to Mughal invasion. Because of that revenue of Tripura was lost. Gradually only *Chakla-Roshenabad* was left to Tripura Kingdom. Rulers of Tripura encouraged Muslim Bengali cultivators to settle in Tripura by providing land to them to boost up the economy of Tripura⁷. Rulers of Tripura also started to donate land to Brahmins, Muslims and higher government officials to boost economy of Tripura during early 15th century. After that the Tenancy Act in 1885-86 also provided Bengali people the tenancy right⁸.

Similarly, Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya Bahadur (1909-1923) invited Bengali entrepreneurs for setting up of tea industry in Tripura. In Plain Tripura i.e. *Chakla-Roshenabad* the kings of Tripura were only *Zamindar* of British. Because kings had to pay huge '*nazrana*' i.e. tax to British for plain Tripura and revenue from hill Tripura was almost nil and it was difficult to run the kingdom. (Tripura kingdom was divided into two parts during British era- plain Tipperah and Hill Tipperah) He showed interest to involve energetic and young entrepreneurs from Bengal and '*Chakla-Roshenabad*' area, in tea industry in Hill Tripura. On the background of non-co-operation movement by Gandhiji some young students enthusiastically established "The House of Labourers Ltd" and started independent business at Comilla. These young students group became interested by the offer of Maharaja of Tripura. They came forward to establish tea gardens in Tripura.

Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya Bahadur given terms and condition for leasing out land to Bengali entrepreneurs for setting up of tea industry. Prasanna Kumar Dasgupta, the chief Dewan of Maharaja announced the '*Bondobast*'. There were three years rent free period. Initially 33 applicants applied for sanction of land for tea estate. Among them 23 application were sanctioned. Among sanctioned applicants 15 were from Sadar subdivision, 7 from Kailashahar subdivision, 1 from Dharmanagar subdivision. One application was cancelled due to non-payment of '*nazarana*'-tax, on time. So, there were 22 tea estates in the first year (1916)^{9,10}. Land allotted to tea estates were approximately 3,737 Drones (24,800 acres). First tea garden established in Tripura was *Hirachhera* tea garden at

Kailashahar. (Then North Tripura District now Unokoti District)¹⁰. Those young Bengali students' group from Comilla established *Fatikchhera* and *Kalkali* tea estates at West Tripura District¹⁰.

Another factor also played a role for Bengali entrepreneurs to come to Tripura for establishing tea estate. Just after the First World War there were interest among entrepreneurs and industrialists of Bengal to establish industries and new business farm. Tea cultivation was profitable in Assam and Bengal. Establishing new tea garden in Assam and Bengal was difficult due to scarcity of land. Due to this reason industrialists of Bengal became interested to establish tea industry in Tripura¹⁰.

Rules of tea plantation and settlement: The kings of Tripura set up some rules about the settlement in the state and for the tea plantation. One of the rules was...

"Besides tea plantation in the Taluk settlements of the state was not permitted without special permission of the Durbar nor was the tenant of landlord right authorized to make such settlement even within his estate¹⁰."

The entrepreneurs could establish tea plantation but not allowed to make permanent settlement without the permission of the royal court. Even the tea estate owners were not allowed to keep tenant within the tea estate.

Another specific rule was for the Tea Plantation in Tripura. The rule was known as "Rules for Tea Plantation in Tripura". The rule was that "tea plantation in this state has been prohibited without the permission of Royal Court". This rule prohibited European planters to establish tea plantation in the state because Maharaja never given permission to European planters. Though he restricted European planters to enter in his state but sometimes he was indifferent about the tea planters of the state. Some of the tea planters were suffering from economic crisis in initial period and requested to royal court for exemption of payment of land revenue. Their request was not granted. Instead Maharaja granted an extension of one year to pay revenue. The notification from Royal Court (notification No. 1756 of 14th Ashar, 1333TE) (June 1923) showed the name of the tea gardens which were allowed extension of one year for payment of revenue¹⁰.

Those tea gardens were: i. Mantala Tea Co., ii. Krishnapur Tea Co., iii. Mekhlipara Tea Co., iv. Satsangam-Ranibari Tea Garden, v. Golakpur Tea Co., vi. Jagannathpur Tea Co.¹⁰.

Origin of tea garden workers in Tripura: Initial period of tea plantation i. e 1916s there were labour shortage to do kind of works like cleaning the dense forest, weeding, hoeing pruning etc in the tea plantation. Local tribes and non-tribes were reluctant to work in the tea plantation. Maharaja took initiative to address the labour shortage of tea industry by bringing stranded labourers from Assam by his philanthropic act. Labours were also brought from Bihar, Orissa, Madras and

Madhya Pradesh in initial period⁹. But how, when and why the workers came to Tripura for work, there is not much literature on that.

The non-co-operation movement in the year 1921-22 had an impact on tea industry of Tripura. The 'Chargola' exodus which caused workers of tea garden in Assam to erupt in protest due to inhuman behaviour of owners and inhuman condition of labourers of tea garden. There was strike in almost all tea gardens of Assam. About 8,888 workers left the tea gardens, but in Chargola more than 50% workers left tea garden forever. Thousands of labourers travelled to nearest rail station 'Chandrapur' or 'Karimganja' on foot. Many labourers died due to diseases and starvation. British Indian authorities forcibly stopped them at those two-rail station. Police and administration open fired on those unprepared labourers where children and women were also present. There was nationwide protest after this incidence. Workers of Bengal Railway and Inland Steamer Navigation organized a strike against this brutality¹¹. Maharaja of Tripura took initiative to bring those stranded labourers to Tripura. The Minister of Tripura wrote a letter to Political agent of Tripura on June 6, 1921. Letter also send to Karimganj on June 28, 1921. In that letter measures have been described elaborately how to rescue and brought those labourers to Tripura. Maharaja gave freedom to those labourers to take decision to go back to their native place or to settle in Tripura and work independently⁹. Many of those labourers after coming to Tripura from Assam started working in tea gardens of Tripura and labour shortage has been met in this way.

Chib (1984) and Adhikari's (1988) writings showed that most of the workers came to Tripura from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa or Sylhet district of Bangladesh^{12,13}. First General secretary of "Tripura Cha Mazdur Union" Amarendra Chakraborty who worked as office staff at Luxmilunga tea estate during 1947-'49 wrote that there were "Uria, Gour, Santal, Shabar, Urang, Goala" among female workers of that tea estate⁶.

Writer Goala (2010) in her novel, "*Murgajhutir Lal Dhul*" shows through a character of novel, '*Sambari*' an old lady that their forefathers migrated to Tripura with help of 'Arkathi' to Simna tea garden through Bangladesh. Munda, Santal, Tanti, Sabar, Urang (Oraon) (Urang-as written in Tripura) workers migrated from Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Burdwan, Rajasthan, Ranchi, Bihar and Telangana¹⁴. Her another novel (2003) and short story collection (in Chilomilo language) showed same origin of workers^{15,16}. Budhudas Panika's song "*Promotion*" (1989), poem '*Labour Jati*' (1990) also presented that different races from different places of India came to Tripura due to struggle of surviving in their home state. Torture of Zamindar and hunger compelled those workers to migrate to the tea gardens. They came to Tripura by fraudulence of 'Arkathis' or middlemen¹⁷. (Labour jati). Workers from the two tea estates of Tripura brought out their origin and causes of migration to Tripura through their narratives. They also narrated how

'Arkathis' brought their forefathers by fraudulence. The workers were given false hope by 'Arkathis' that...

"*charagachloraila taka gire*"—"money falls by shaking tea bush" ...¹⁸

Same stories were shared by other tea garden workers also. One of the workers narrated his family's history of migration to tea garden of Tripura...

"*Our forefathers came from Bihar. My grandfather had two wives. His first wife died. He came to Bangladesh by rail along with his second wife and a son from his first wife. During British period Bangladesh and India was the same country. From Bangladesh, he came to Teliapara and then to Balugang. From there they came to this plantation. We are his generations. They came here long ago*"¹⁹.

Some of the workers came to Tripura from tea gardens of Bangladesh after marriage. Many of the female workers also migrated from Bangladesh because of marriage.

"*My grandfather had love marriage. My grandmother was from this tea garden. He fell in love with her. He married her and came here from Chittagong of Bangladesh. My grandfather was worker of Rangapania tea garden, near Sitakunda of Bangladesh. We had communication with them but after border fencing, we lost communication*"²⁰.

An old lady recalls how she came to the tea estate...

"*When I came here, I was baby. My parents came here from Purulia/ Burdwan during British period. Initially we came to Agartala. We were staying at Pratapgarh. From there we came to Mohanpur, Kalachara and then to Rangamura (Katlamara). I got married here. I worked in this garden. Now you see I have great granddaughter also. She also works in this tea garden*"²¹

There are some "Urangs" who are known as "*Dhakaiya Urang*" to others. Due to communal conflict in Bangladesh those workers migrated to Tripura. They came from "*Tangy*", Dhaka, Bangladesh.

"*There was conflict among Hindu and Muslims. Whenever conflict broke out there used to police case. That time people were scared of police so whenever there was any police case they usually fled away from that place and go to other places. Those people also came here like that way. As they came here from Dhaka they are known as 'Dhakaiya Urang'*"²².

The "*Panurias or Pantanti*", "*Tanti*" respondents said that their original place was Odisha. Their forefathers were weavers there but now they are tea garden workers. Other workers of these two estates said that their forefathers came from Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, Assam.

Late president of INTUC, Tripura (Indian National Trade Union Congress) also said that most of the workers came from Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, and Uttar Pradesh.

“Munda, Oraon came from Ranchi, Tanti Adhikari from Orissa, Gour from Madhya Pradesh, from Bilashpur Oraon, Munda and Santal, from Santal Pargana Baori and Santal. Very few came from Sylhet of Bangladesh. Management used to appoint “Girmit” (middleman) to bring workers from other places”²³

Writer Jaya Goala’s husband said that due to poverty and torture by Zamindars those people came here.

“Workers were brought from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Purulia area of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, even from Bangladesh. They came here due to food shortage, poverty and torture by Zamindars. Middlemen (Dalal) lured them with better life and brought them here. They said if you shake tree money will fall from the tree. These simple people believed them and came here”²⁴.

These narratives showed that political situation, socio-economic and religious factors played a role for migration of these workers from their ancestors’ place to Tripura.

Problems in tea industry during monarchy: The Great Depression in 1930 AD had affected the tea industry of Tripura as production came down. The table below shows that production decreased due to the international scenario.

Table-1: Production of tea year wise in Tripura⁹.

1923 AD	2,25,533 Pounds
1924AD	3,38,272 Pounds
1925AD	5,68,568 Pounds
1926AD	8,28,615 Pounds
1927AD	9,48,862 Pounds
1928AD	10,57,488 Pounds
1929AD	14,82,725 Pounds
1930AD	12,49,374 Pounds

After independence of India, in the year 1948 conflict started between Maharaja and Tripura Tea Association. Representative from Tea Association went to Indian Central Government and claimed that there were 20,000 workers in tea gardens of Tripura. The land taken for tea cultivation was 54.413 acres and tax payable for that land was Rs 75,000 approximately, road tax was Rs 12,000 approximately and production of tea was 48000 mds. The representative of Tea Association also claimed that the revenue collected by state was eight lakh per annum;

they even claimed that tea garden has to pay tax to the Central Government. Due to heavy burden of tax they cannot improve the condition of the tea gardens. Those representative also claimed that there was no road connectivity to the nearest rail station or river. Condition of roads also were not good though they had to pay huge tax for that. The road connectivity to the nearest rail station was disconnected after partition of India. The Durbar said that labour population were 2000 not 20000 and denied all other charges⁹.

Due to the changing political scenario during that time Tripura Tea industry suffered from a lot of problems. The road connectivity was lost because the nearest railroad went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Hill Tripura became isolated from other parts of India. The Plain Tripura part ‘Chakla-Roshenabad’ fell on East Pakistan. Political scenario of Tripura also changed. The last independent king Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur suddenly died on 17th may 1947. The prince king Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur was only 13 years old at that time. Regent Maharani Kanchanprava Devi on behalf of him signed the merger agreement with Indian union and Tripura merged with India on 15th October, 1949 through the Tripura Merger Agreement of 9th September 1949. Maharani during partition of India wanted to include Chittagong hill tracts, Noakhali, Sylhet district in its boundary but Red Cliff Commission denied it⁸.

Tea industry of Tripura: After merger agreement: Tripura was termed as ‘C’ category state after it merged with Indian Union. Tripura became Union Territory of India on 1st November in the year 1956 but without legislature. The state became Territorial council on the 15th of August, 1957. It had thirty elected members and two nominated members by the Government of India. On the 1st of July, 1963 Territorial Council was dissolved and Legislative Assembly was formed. On the 21st of January, 1972 Tripura got statehood status.

Even after Tripura became part of India there was no binding of laws for tea garden workers, there was no fixed time for work in the tea garden of Tripura. The working period in tea garden was known as ‘unregulated period’. In the year 1952 before the first general election (Lok Sabha) in Tripura hundreds of tea garden workers gathered in the Kunjaban Palace and demanded for opening up of a labour office in Tripura from Chief Commissioner Nanjappa⁹.

The secretary of Tripura Government, Sri Nani Debbarman (Nani Karta) took the initiative to open a labour office in Tripura when he faced a problem to address the labour issue with Amarendra Chakraborty and Luxmilunga tea estate. The labour office was set up and first labour officer in Tripura was Mr. B.C. Halda⁶.

Trade unions and workers struggle for their rights: The first labour organization ‘Tripura Cha Mazdur Union’ was formed in Tripura in 1948. Joyram Kanda, a tea garden worker was the

first President and Amarendra Chakraborty was the first general secretary of that union. They started bringing up workers issues⁶.

The communist party was banned in Tripura that time. Shri Birendra Dutta, the communist leader formed 'Tripura Cha Shramik Union' in the year 1955 under the banner of CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions). Amarendra Chakraborty who worked at Luxmilunga tea estate took initiative to unite tea garden workers throughout state. He also took the initiative to educate children of tea workers and set up school for them- 'Adarsha Pathshala' in the year 1949 at Luxmilunga tea estate, Sadar subdivision, West Tripura District. Education for workers included maintaining hygiene, workers' rights, bad effect of drinking habit, cleanliness, patriotism, songs, drama, martial arts, equality and good deeds other than reading and writing.

He requested to the Secretary of Tripura government, Sri Nani Karta to change the rule of leave in case of illness and maternity leave for women workers of the tea garden. Gradually tea garden workers of Tripura became member of 'Tripura Cha Mazdur Union'⁶.

Tea garden labourers struggled for increase in their wages and for equal wages right. They succeeded to get equal wages for factory and field workers, both for male and female workers. Centre of Indian Trade Union, in 1986 held its sixth conference in Agartala. Only 400 hundred female workers are organized among 4000 female workers. Though they are not organized even now but they struggled for revision of Tripura Plantation Labour Rules. The plantation rule had been changed in favour of workers⁹.

Problem faced by tea industry: In the year 1974 there were 46 tea gardens and only 6, 771 labour were working whereas the number of gardens were 50 and 10,000 labour were working before.

Again, in the year 1975 Labour Department of Government of Tripura showed that tea gardens reduced to 39. This left a mark on labour force of gardens. In many tea estates their payments of dues, basic amenities, rations were irregular and even the provident fund of the workers also got affected⁹.

During this period Tripura tea industry face many problems because of inexperience planters, soil quality was not tested, small tea gardens, inadequate machinery, less supply of fertilizers, lack of technical knowledge and supervision, unscientific layout of shade tree and number of tea bushes and less total average rainfall. Deforestation also aggravated the situation. As a result, production was recorded lowest in North-East India⁹.

Insurgency and ethnic clashes within the state also affected tea industry of Tripura in the eighties and nineties. Ethnic clash between Tribes and Bengalis during the 1980's- especially after

1980's June massacre resulted abandoned of tea gardens by Bengali owners.

Militant organizations like 'The Liberation Front of Tripura' and 'All Tripura Tiger Force' targeted tea gardens of Tripura and many officials and two owners were abducted and murdered by the militants²⁵. Though militants never hampered tea garden workers but due to the effect on Bengali owners the tea industry experienced a setback. During 1994 to 2000 AD eleven tea estate employees were kidnapped by militants in Tripura. The owners abandoned tea gardens, closed down tea estates or reduced their activities. Even characters of novels and stories in writings of Goala (2001,2003) described their agony and insecurity they have to face due to insurgency^{26,14}.

Ownership changes over time: Interview with late INTUC President reveals that ownership pattern started changing during the decade of seventies. Marwari and Punjabi businessmen started showing interest in tea industry in Tripura. Initially they started financing the tea estates and gradually they started to buy tea gardens from Bengali owners. Ramdurlavpur tea estate and Kamalpur tea estate had been bought by Marwaris. Most of the new owners are from Kolkata. They own tea estates in other states like Assam and West Bengal. They blend Tripura tea with other states tea and market it. One of these teas is Goodwyn Tea under Sirohia Group.

When owners abandoned tea estates due to ethnic clash, loss or insurgency, Government of Tripura took initiative to take over those sick tea gardens. In Tripura now there are three categories of ownership; i. TTDC (Tripura Tea Development Corporation Ltd), ii. Private ownership, iii. The workers co-operative.

Governments' initiative for tea industry and for tea garden workers: Tripura Tea Development Corporation was established in the year 1980. Tripura Tea Development Corporation along with Government of Tripura took initiative to run the gardens in the year 1980. In the year 1986 five 'sick' (non-functional) tea garden, Mohanpur, Kalacherra, Brahmakunda, Tufanialunga and Luxmilunga under West Tripura District were handed over to the management of Tripura Tea Development Corporation (TTDC) as owner of these tea gardens abandoned the estates and workers were left under miserable condition. State Government made TTDC as nodal agency for small tea growers. There is a tea processing unit under TTDC at Durgabari near capital city Agartala. There are tea gardens which run by workers co-operative. Tachai was the first co-operative tea garden under Kailashahar subdivision of then North Tripura now Unokoti district and second is the Durgabari Tea Estate in West Tripura District. The tea produced in Tripura is of CTC (Cut Tear and Curl) variety. Now there are 54 tea estates and 4,346 small tea growers. Tripura Tea Development Corporation runs three gardens, 39 gardens are run by private ownership and 12 gardens are run by workers co-operative society; about 20,000 people are employed in these gardens. Yearly 9.95 million kg of tea is produced from an area

of 6430 hectares land²⁷. In the year 2016, May, a tea processing unit was set up in the Brahamakunda by TTDC under state government²⁸. Now West Tripura District produces 117.45 lakh kgs of green tea leaf /day and 33.87% are produced by small tea growers²⁸.

In Tripura the workers of tea garden were given status of Schedule Tribes (Santal, Bhil, Munda, Urang as spelled in Tripura) or Scheduled Caste (Sabar, Tanti, Kanla etc), the category they got from their forefathers' home state. But most of the workers are not aware of this status. In Tripura ST tea garden workers are categorized as Scheduled Tribe under immigrant tribe of Tripura¹⁰. Late chief minister Nripen Chakraborty of CPI(M) took initiative to give chance to tea garden workers in decision making process by incorporating them in Panchayat. Parbati Munda from tea garden worker was the first chairperson of Panchayat Samity at Mohonpur block of Sadar subdivision (now Mohonpur subdivision) of West Tripura District.

The wages of tea garden workers during 1961 was 1.25 Rs/day for male workers according to the Bulletins of the Statistical Department, Government of Tripura. The late INTUC president said

“during ‘50’s wages of workers were 4 anna for child workers, 5 anna for female workers and 6 anna for male workers other than facilities given by management in kind. (Rice and Atta)”²³

Tripura follow the path of West Bengal regarding wage hike. Every three year there are tripartite meeting among trade unions, state government and Tea Association of India. Last fee hike was on May, 2015. Tripura Cha-Mazdur Union, Tripura Tea Workers Union and TTDC participated in the meeting. Tea Association of India proposed to hike pay Rs. 12 for first year, Rs. 7 for second and third year by citing reason that tea industry is facing problems. The wage hike which was agreed was Rs 12 in first year, 11 in second year and Rs. 12 in third year with effect from 1st May 2015 and valid up to May 2018²⁹. Recently in the year 2018 before assembly election of the state the then Government increased pay of workers from 105rs/day to 175rs/day. But till Assembly election it has not been implemented.

Conclusion

Tea industry in Tripura is more than hundred years old. It is one of the important revenues generating industries in Tripura. Thousands of workers work in the tea industry. Not only there are big tea plantations but there are small tea growers who are depended upon this industry. From monarchy to today tea industry has gone through several phases. There were change in political front, from monarchy to democratic era. There were changes in ownership of tea estates. These phases not only changes characteristic of tea industry in Tripura but also had an impact on workers life. The labour forces who were brought by

middlemen or migrated due to social, economic, political reason in search of livelihood their lives have been changed over the time. Forefathers of these workers were migrated labourers but now they enjoy equal residence status in Tripura. They not only got equal resident citizenship status but also got political decision-making power, constitutional reserve category status. In neighbouring state, Assam, tea garden workers till today did not get SC, ST status. They are known as tea tribes in Assam. Tea produced in Tripura now exported to other countries. Recently In the year 2013 orthodox variety of Tripura tea was exported from Golakpur Tea Estate to Iran. Other tea estates like Manu valley Tea Estate of Unakoti district exported ‘Jewel Tip’ tea to Britain, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and Ludhua Tea Estate of South Tripura exported tea to Italy and Germany³⁰.

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