

TEA PLANTATION AND THE TRIBES OF TRIPURA

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&

R. G. Singh



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**TRIPURA STATE TRIBAL CULTURAL RESEARCH
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FOREWORD

Tea plantation is not new to the people of Tripura. The first tea garden was started sometime in the year 1917 A.D. in kailashahar Division. At present there are as many as 54 tea gardens in Tripura. Surprisingly, the participation of local tribal people in the tea plantation is negligible. To find out the reason why local tribal people are not interested to participate in the tea plantation and also to find out the scope of tribal Development through tea gardens, a research project work was entrusted to Dr. P. N. Bhattacharjee and R.G. Singh. They have focussed the main reasons for non-participation of the local tribal people in the tea gardens and also brought out some appreciable suggestions for taking up tea plantation as part of the Tribal Development programme in the State. The suggestions given may be very useful for taking planning in this direction.

(S. Sailo)
Director,

Dated, Agartala,
the 23rd March, '95.

Tribal Research Institute,
Govt. of Tripura.

PREFACE

Tea plantation in Tripura started around 1917 A.D. At the time of starting plantation work, the planters had to face many problems like scarcity of skilled labour, availability of suitable land, revenue payment ect. Even then, they produced tea from this state though the quantity of unit production was less than that of other northern states of the country like, Assam, North Bengal etc. It is surprising that negligible number of local tribals participate in the tea garden works. The problems of their participation is felt necessary to be studied. Tribal Research Institute, Tripura have taken up a project on this subject and the work was entrusted to us. We tried to focus the problems of the tribals to participate in tea garden works and also tried to describe the possibility of jhumia settlement through tea plantation like the existing rubber plantation, scheme in Tripura.

To complete this monograph, we received much assistance, from the tea garden authorities and other tea garden labour and owners organisations in this state. We are thankful to all of them. We are specially thankful to Sri Probir Kumar Chakraborty, Owner of Kalkalia Tea Garden and Sri Dipak Ranjan Paul, Managar of Fatikchhera Tea Garden for their continuous help to complete this monograph. In fine we are grateful to Dr. Mahadev Chakraborty, Prof. of Tripura University for his kind review of this manuscript.

20-3-1995.

Dr. P. N. Bhattacharjee,

&

Shri R. G. Singh.

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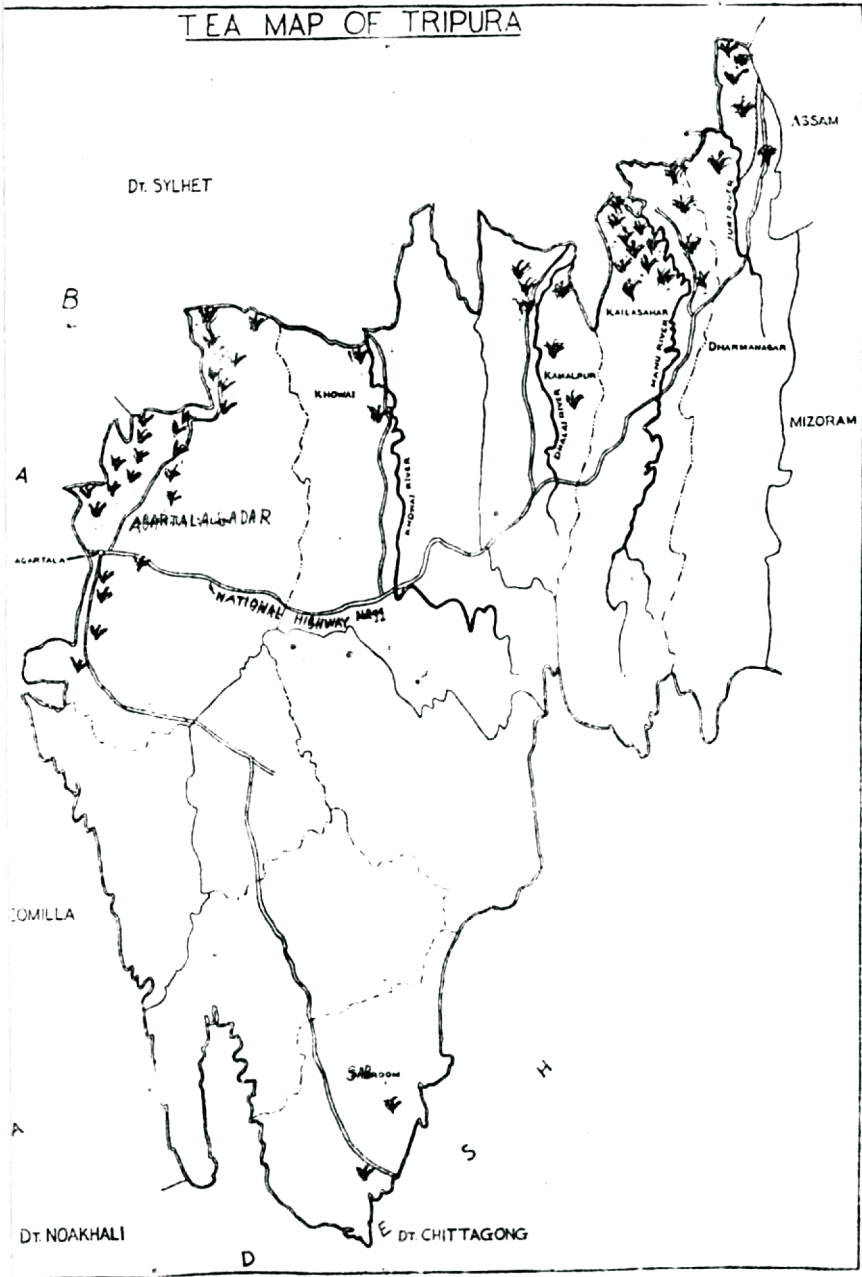
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CHAPTER-1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE

Tripura is a small state situated in the remote corner in the North Eastern region of India. Its area is 10,492 Sq. Kms. and lies between 22°51' and 24°32' North latitude and 90°10' and 92°21' East Longitude. The overall growth rate of her population during 1971-1981 remains 51.55% against the all India growth rate of 24.75%. Here 80% of the population live in the rural areas. About 60% of the total area of the state contains hills, hillocks and hilly terrains and the rest of the area consists of flat land with turbulent rivulets and barren tracts. As per 1991 Census, the total population of the state is 27,44,827 souls.

Boundary : Tripura is bounded on north by the Karimganj District of Assam and Sylhet District of Bangladesh, on the west by Comilla and part of Noakhali District of Bangladesh, on the south by the districts of Chittagong and Noakhali of Bangladesh and on the east by Mizo Hills

of Mizoram (India). The length of border line of Tripura with Bangladesh is 839 (839) Kms. with Mizoram is 109 Kms. and with Assam is only 53 Kms.

It is about 182.4 Kilometers in length from North to South and 112 Kilometers in breadth from east to west.

Natural features : Physiographically, the area represents the western fringe of the typical ridge and valley mountain belt of Indo-Burma Ranges. The general altitude of the state varies from 78^om in the North Eastern part to 15m in the western part above NSL. Five prominent hill ranges known as the Jampui, Sankhatlang the Longtarai, the Atharamura and the Baramura traverses the state from East to West. The highest elevation of 957.36m, Betling shib in Jampui Range, 816.25m at Sakhan in Sankhatlang and 482.83m at phertgur in Longtarai range dominate the topography. The Atharamura and the Baramura have comparatively lesser elevations of 346m and 249m. The rocks are related to Barail, Gurma and Tipan series of Assam belonging to tertiary age. The rocks consist of ferruginous coarse grained sand stone and are mostly found in up lands.

The soil is very deep and usually fertile. The texture varies from sandy loam to loamy sand. Clay

is found only occasionally in low lying areas in small pockets. The structure varies from angular to sub-angular, blocky to massive. But it is mostly granular. The colour varies from dark brown to dark greyish. The status of organic matter in forest areas is moderate. The soil in general is acidic. The PH value varies from 4.85 to 5.80. The soil of Tripura have been grouped in 3 (three) categories by Roy Choudhury (1963) such as (1) Forest and Hill soils, (2) Alluvial Soils and (3) Red and Yellow soils.

The lighter nature of soil with different degrees of slopes and in combination with heavy rainfall have led to severe soil erosion. The position has been further aggravated due to large scale shifting cultivation. The terraced alluvial terrain is divisible into 3 (three) groups, namely (1) the table lands (tilla lands) and rolling rounds formed by the Upper Pleistocene-Characterised by maximum dissection, drainage density and Weathering, (2) the low lands (Lunga lands) of the Holocene comprising stabilised, undissected, higher flood plains, and (3) the recent flood plains constitutives the present day flood prone belts fringing the rivers and streams (Ramesh, 1987). In Tripura, the rainfall amount being fairly high (2000 to 3000 milimetre) per year. The soils and bedrocks are subjected to severe chemical weathering and rapid erosion.

Topography : Topographically the whole terrain can be divided into seven distinct features, which are as follows ; (1) Hill Range, (2) Hillocks, (3) Valley, (4) Lunga, (5) Flat land, (6) River and (7) Lake.

Hill Range : Seven Hill Ranges increasing in height towards the East, run North South with an arise intervals of 9 (nine) Kms. They rise higher successively from West to East and each range enhances in height from South to North. The hill ranges are (1) Jampui, (2) Sakhan, (3) Longtarai, (4) Atharamura, (5) Sardeng, (6) Baramura and (7) Deotamura.

Hillocks : The natural elevation of an area is locally known as Tilla. These tilla lands are covered with timber forests, bamboo bushes which constitute rich sources of natural wealth of the territory. Some hillocks are utilised as homestead.

Lunga : The low lying area between the hillocks or tillas are called lunga land. The lunga lands are fertile. It is best suited for plough cultivation.

Land : There are four types of land to be found in Tripura. These are classified as follows :

(i) Tilla land, (ii) Lunga land, (iii) Plain land and (iv) Slope land. Of the four types of land, tilla land is suitable for shifting cultivation, forest plantation, orchard, rubber plantation and tea cultivation, etc. Lunga land and plain lands are suitable for plough cultivation.

River : Tripura as a land of many rivers that drain away its vast area and enrich it with soft alluvial deposits, water them and provide excellent water ways for the territory.

Climate : The climate is sub-tropical to almost tropical and is generally moist and moderately hot. There are 3 seasons, namely summer, rainy and winter in a year. The summer temperature is generally followed by rainfall. The average maximum temperature is 35°C. The maximum and minimum temperature in winter is 27°C and 13°C. The highest temperature is in May and June and the lowest temperature is usually in January. The relative humidity ranges from 50% to 90%. The maximum humidity was 100% in June, 1985 and minimum was 42% in April in the same year. The highest humidity is usually in the month of July. The rainy season starts by early part of June but pre-monsoon showers are common from May onwards. The rainy season continues till about middle of October. The cold weather usually extends from beginning of November to end of February. The winter is moderately severe and is characterised by heavy dew formation.

The amount of annual rainfall received in a few station are presented below to indicate the variability in area distribution :

- | | | |
|------------|---|----------|
| 1) Sabroom | : | 3047 mm. |
| 2) Belonia | : | 2650 mm. |

3) Udaipur	:	2101 mm.
4) Agartala	:	2404 mm.
5) Dharmanager	:	2636 mm.
6) Kailashahar	:	2536 mm.

Inhabitants : The inhabitants of Tripura may broadly be classified into three categories namely, (i) Original inhabitants, (ii) Immigrants and (iii) Refugees from erstwhile Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Besides then the Bangalees, the Manipuris are also being in the state for a long time. Previously the hill people were dependent on shifting cultivation or jhum. But now a large section of them has taken to settled cultivation. The immigrant tribes namely Oraons, Mundas, Santhals and Bhills came from undivided Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa. Their migration is contemporary with the starting of tea plantation in Tripura. In view of the above it may be obvious that they have mainly migrated for meeting up the demand of the labour force of the tea plantation in this state. They are included in the list of Sch. Tribes of Tripura.

The latest migrants are mostly Bengalee refugees who have taken refuge in Tripura after the partition of India due to communal disturbances in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

As per Sch. Caste and Sch. Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 1976 there are 19 (nineteen) tribes in Tripura. Their names and respective population are shown below :

Name of the tribes	Population			
	1961	1971	1981	1991
1. Bhil	69	189	838	
2. Bhutia	7	3	22	
3. Chaimal	50	—	18	
4. Chakma	22,386	28,666	34,797	
5. Garo	5,484	5,559	7,298	
6. Halam	16,298	18,076	28,970	
7. Jamatiya	24,359	34,192	44,501	
8. Khasia	349	491	457	
9. Kuki	5,531	7,766	5,502	
10. Lepcha	7	177	106	
11. Lushai	2,988	3,672	3,734	
12. Mog	10,524	13,273	18,230	
13. Munda	4,409	5,347	7,993	
14. Noatia	16,010	10,297	7,182	
15. Orang	2,875	3,428	5,217	
16. Reang	56,597	64,722	84,006	
17. Santal	1,562	2,222	5,720	
18. Tripura/ Tripura/ Tippera.	1,89,799	2,50,388	3,30,872	
19. Uchai	766	1,061	1,306	

CHAPTER-II

A Brief Account of Tea Plantation in India

Tea is a tasteful drink. From the centuries past, this drink is used by the Chinese people. It is said that tea has spread all around the world from China. Now-a-days tea is used all over the world. The tea produced in India has been found the best quality of tea and major part of demand of tea in the world is supplied from India. Many tea gardens have been established in Darjeeling of West Bengal and in Assam.

In India the tea plantation in an organised form started around 1860. But before Industrial Census- 1911 no data in this respect could be available. Only in 1921 it was found that there were around 2034 such Industrial (Tea, Coffee and Rubber) found in India. However, according to the suggestion of the Industrial Committee in 1934, tea plantation industries was the most important amongst all plantation industries in India which were started as early as 1788.

In fact, the actual tea plantation was started around 1851. Some opined that, tea was originated from Assam from where it spread to China in 3rd century A.D. and to Europe by the Dutch and to England around 1645. The tea industry became firmly established in India in 1869 through ups and downs. A remarkable growth of tea plantation was found between 1885 to 1895. In that period the tea plantation area was increased from 2 lakh 84 thousand acres to 4 lakhs 33 thousand acres and the production also increased from 72 million pounds to 156 million pounds. In 1928, the leading states in respect of tea plantation were Assam and West Bengal which covered 80% of the total cultivation area in India. In fact, during this time tea plantation was confined within the table land of Assam, neighbouring districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling of West Bengal and the elevated regions of Malabar coast and Nilgiri regions of South India.

Regarding the history of tea plantation and tea in India, Encyclopaedia Asiatica narrated as follows which may be considered as an authentic account of tea and its cultivation in India.

In British India, tea growing and its manufacture into the commercial product had become great industries. The name in ordinary used, alike for the plant its producer, is CHA. In Cachar the tea tree is

called 'Dulli Cham' meaning white wood, from the light colour of its bark. It is called phlap also khlap by the Assamese, but also misa Phlap in muttack, and Hoolkat in other Part of Assam.

Chinese tradition points to India as the original home of the tea plant. 'AB rahmin ascetic named Dharma went as a missionary to China. Wearied with a toil-some journey, he fell fast asleep on reaching his destination, and on awaking, angry at such weakness, he tore out his eye-brows. The hairs taking root, became tea plants, the leaves of which he tested, and he was soothed into mystic moditation'. Col. Kyd in 1780 formed a tea garden in Calcutta with plants from Canton, the nucleus of the Calcutta Botanic Garden.

It was known to be indigeneous in British India till the early part of 19th century. At the request of the East India Company on the suggestion of Warron Hasting, Sir Joseph Banks, in 1788 had drawn up a Memorandum recommending the introduction of plants from China, and suggesting Behar, Rongpur and Coochbehar as suitable regions.

But it was only in 1815 that a Lt. Colonel of Bengal brought to notice the presence of the plants in the North East of British India. From the date of notices became frequent. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton early mentioned it as a plant of Assam and

the Burmese territories there. In 1816 the Hon'ble Mr. Gerdner found it in the Nepalese dominions ; Moorcreft in Bussadir in 821 ; Bishop Hever in Kamaon in 1824 ; brothers Bruce in 1826 ; and Dr. Corbyn in 1827. But the really practical discovery was made in 1819. Mr. David Scott, Cmmissioner of Assam, who sent from Manipur to Mr. G. Swinton, then Chief Secretary to the India Govt., a specimen of the leaves of the shrub which he insisted was a real tea. The very specimen is still presented in the Linnaean Society of Lodon. It has been said that they were brought to his notice by the two brothers Major R. and Mr. C. A. Bruce. The latter, the younger, had been trading in Assam previous to its annexstion, and subsequent in 1926, being in Command of a Division of Gun Boated in Upper Assam, he brought down with him some shrubs and seeds, which were at once identified as belonging to the tea plant of commerce and he subsequently, in 1833, brought it to the notice of Capt. Jankins.

The tea has been found by Mr. Bruce on the Naga Hills ; but in his latest account, published in August, 1839 in the Journal of the Asiatic Society, he gives an account of the discovery of 120 tea tracts, some of them vary extensive, both on the hills and in tbe plains.

In 1834, Lord William Bentinck, Governor General, urged upon the court of Directors the importance of cultivating tea plant, and a Committee, consisting of 11 Europeans and 2 native gentlemen, was appointed to mature and carry out a plan for introducing the plant into such districts of India as seemed best suited to its culture. As it had been found in a wild state in Assam, the Committee proceeded thither, established nurseries, and organised a sort of exploring service under Mr. C.A. Bruce.

Chinese seed and young plants were also introduced, and were found to thrive well. At first, progress was very slow and unsatisfactory. A sample of the produce of the new gardens was sent to the Director in 1836, but it arrived in such a mouldy condition, that it could not be tested. It is said that this specimen merely consisted of green leaves, and that no attempt had been made to render it commercially valuable. Those In-Charge of the plantations knew nothing whatever of the process of manufacture, and in 1837, it was necessary to introduce Chinese tea makers and artisans. Under their superintendence, consignments of Assam tea were forwarded to the Court of Directors in the year 1838-39, and were found, on arrival, to be of excellent quality, and commanded very high prices on the open market. So good was it that it at once attracted the attention of speculators and a Company, which was afterwards styled the Assam Company, was

formed for the cultivation of tea plant and the manufacture of tea in Upper Assam. Having thus seen the industries adopted by the Commercial world, the Indian Govt. withdrew in favour of Private Enterprise, and handed over two thirds of its establishment, gardens, and nurseries to the Company. The remaining third was retained for a few years longer, and was subsequently disposed of (1849) to a Chinaman for 900 rupees.

But in 1850, the East India Company despatched Mr. Fortune to China to glean all possible information regarding the tea plant and the manipulation of its leaves, and to bring plants and seeds of the best varieties, as also some experienced cultivators and work-people.

From 1863, to 1865, Calcutta went fairly mad about tea; speculators set to work at the purchase of enormous tracts of land in Assam and elsewhere, which were subsequently disposed of to limited liability companies at enormous profit. Eventually the bubble burst, and for a time the very name of tea cultivation fell into unmeasured odium, from 1866-68, estates on which many lakhs of rupees had been expended, were sold for a few hundreds. Some shrewd capitalists, however, bought up the more conveniently situated plantations, quietly developed their productive capacities. The re-habilitation of the Indian tea industry fairly commenced in 1869, and has continued to make rapid progress ever since.

The India tea plant flourishes from the confines of Afghanistan to the border of Burma, from the 25th to the 33rd degree of latitude, and from the 70th to the 95th degree of longitude. Tea grows on the Himalayas at an elevation of 7000 ft. above sea level; in the valley of the Doon, at the base of Himalayas, and elevation of 2000 ft., on the banks of the Brahmaputra in Assam, and the Surma in Sylhet, at a very small elevation above the level of sea. On hill or plain, from 1000 to 8000ft. above the level of the sea, the tea plant thrives well, and the only condition that it appears to require is a light and porous soil. Over this vast area, wherever tea has been planted, it has more than answered the expectation of growers. It is now cultivated to a great extent in Assam, Cooch Behar, Chotanagpur, Darjeeling, Terainh, kangra, Garwal, kamaon, Cachar, Hajaribag, to a considerable extent on the Nilgiri Hills.

Tea Cultivation was undertaken on the Neilgherries about 1863, and although not much had been done there, it was clearly established that tea would grow, the plants attaining a large size, and yielding very fairly. Just when the matter was being taken up, coffee was introduced, for which the climate was found very favourable, and it practically superseded tea.

In 1872, the tea produced in the small gardens in the Neilgherry Hills amounted to only 80,000 Lbs,

and whole district methods of manufacturing it were in vogue. In the following year, the quality of the Nailgherry tea had so much improved that its price ranged from 2s, 4d. to 3s per pound and upwards. There can be no doubt that this Hills are well adapted for the growth of tea. Though better tea is turned out at higher elevations, larger quantities are obtained lower down, and Kotagherry, Kodanaad, Cunur, and the numerous ravines having any aspect but a S. W. On, will be found the most suitable localities for the formation of tea plantations. Forest land, if possible, should be secured ; the less precipitous it is the better. And as drought is not unusual at certain seasons, care should be taken to provide for water being led to any part of the site selected.

Plants supplied by Government through Dr. Wallich were planted in the Shevaroy Hills about the year 1844, and had thriven well.

Table : 1
**Statement showing area under tea in different
States of India since 1979.**

(In hectares)

State	1979	1980	1981	1982 ..
Assam	1,95,459	2,00,569	1,03,038	1,97,472
West Bengal	91,003	93,497	93,971	90,211
Kerala	36,141	36,130	35,509	35,228
Tamil Nadu	36,010	37,030	37,073	36,943
Tripura	5,024	5,257	5,333	5,275
Uttar Pradesh	1,004	1,004	N.A.	N.A.
Karnataka	1,872	1,887	1,901	1,911
Himachal Pradesh	4,103	4,103	N.A.	N.A.
(Mandi)				
Bihar	459	459	460	N.A.
Other	225	270	277	297
	3,72,900	3,01,006	3,77,642	3,67,337

N.A. : Not available.

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State	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Assam	2,13,087	2,14,741	2,16,117	2,24,718	2,26,883
West Bengal	97,170	97,788	98,015	1,00,129	1,00,530
Kerala	35,020	35,060	34,760	34,640	34,641
Tamil Nadu	36,952	36,885	36,970	38,013	38,066
Tripura	6,212	6,239	6,307	6,453	6,491
Uttar Pradesh	1,004	1,004	1,004	1,004	1,004
Karnataka	1,924	1,924	1,931	1,909	1,909
Himachal Pradesh (Mandi)	3,212	3,212	3,212	3,079	3,079
Bihar	460	460	460	444	447
Other	305	340	345	360	392
	8,96,066	3,98,453	3,99,929	4,11,549	4,14,232

Source : Tea Board, Calcutta.

Table : 2
**Statement showing production of tea in different
states of India since 1979.**

(In '000 Kgs.)

States	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Assam	2,76,190	3,00,700	3,05,130	3,02,866	3,21,641
West Bengal	1,23,978	1,33,185	1,28,259	1,32,205	1,39,705
Kerala	58,225	53,614	47,631	48,752	44,582
Tamil Nadu	77,620	74,006	71,597	71,308	67,428
Tripura	2,930	3,310	3,219	3,309	3,639
Uttar Pradesh	518	285	1,000	N.A.	423
Karnataka	3,515	3,475	3,409	3,471	3,251
Himachal Pradesh (Mandi)	560	551	607	N.A.	423
Bihar	21	20	21	N.A.	21
Other	19	26	32	N.A.	40
	5,43,576	5,69,172	5,60,885	5,61,911	5,81,484

B.N.A. : Break up Not available.

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N.A. : Not available

State	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Assam	3,38,533	3,52,538	3,35,492	3,63,739	3,71,745
West Bengal	1,48,293	1,57,371	1,41,270	1,49,617	1,50,932
Kerala	58,179	53,104	48,616	56,276	65,771
Tamil Nadu	86,127	84,853	86,742	86,340	1,01,857
Tripura	3,273	BNA	3,427	3,780	BNA
Uttar Pradesh	407	BNA	407	407	BNA
					BNA 4,144
Karnataka	4,130	3,910	4,146	4,254	BNA
Himachal Pradesh(Mandi)	407	BNA	636	730	BNA
Bihar	11	BNA	17	34	BNA
Other	46	BNA	50	66	BNA
		BNA7,238			BNA6,638
	6,39,864	6,59,014	6,20,883	6,65,251	7,01,087

Source : Tea Board. Calcutta.

Table : 3
Average yield of tea per hectore in diffarent
States of India, since 1979.

Average Yield in Kg/per Hectre

State	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Assam	1413	1499	1503	1534	1510
West Bengal	1362	1424	1365	1466	1438
Kerala	1611	1484	1338	1384	1273
Tamil Nadu	2109	1999	1931	1930	1825
Tripura	640	692	679	586	581
Uitar Pradesh	287	158	NA	NA	234
Karnataka	1878	1842	1793	1816	1671
Himachal Pradesh	134	132	NA	NA	252
Bihar	46	44	2	NA	2
Others	131	141	167	NA	131
Total (India)	1455	1491	1481	1538	1468

Source : Tea Board. Calcutta.

Contd. next page

State	1984	1985	1986	1987
Assam	1576	1631	1493	1603
West Bengal	1516	1606	1411	1488
Kerala	1659	1528	1403	1625
Tamil Nadu	2335	2295	2282	2268
Trípara	525	NA	531	583
Uttar Pradesh	226	NA	225	226
Karnataka	2147	2025	2172	2228
Himachal Pradesh	269	NA	287	237
Bihar	24	NA	38	76
Others	135	NA	139	168
	1606	1648	1508	1606

CHAPTER-III

Tea plantation in Tripura.

The land composition of Tripura is found suitable for tea cultivation. From earlier times, tea garden are found in the area nearby kailashahar and Dharmanagar of Tripura. Tea cultivation has a very good potentiality in this State. Therefore, the planters came forward to establish Tea Gardens in this State around 1917. The then ruler Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya (Tripura was a princely State) also encouraged tea cultivation in his State. It is learnt that Maharaja of Tripura showed his keen interest with the energetic and educated young Bengalee people of Tripura including Chakla-Roshnabad (now Comilla-Bangladesh), his zamindari estate, for establishment of tea garden in his state. It is also said that some young Bengalee students left schools and colleges in response to the call of non-cooperation movement by Mahatma Gandhi as a part of National movement. Some of those young students formed an institution named 'The House of Labourers Ltd.'

and started independent business in Comilla. The first President of the said institution was Prafulla Chandra Bhattacharjee who left college when he was a student of Intermediate in Science in response to the call of non-cooperation movement by Mahatma Gandhi. The then renowned and generous physician (homeopath) Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharjee was very much attached with the intention of the young energetic groups and he offered a loan to Rs. 22,000/- to the House of Labourers Ltd. without any interest to start with their business. Those young groups were also much attracted with the offer of the then Maharaja of Tripura and they came forward to establish tea garden at Fatikchhera and Kalkalia of West Tripura in Sadar Sub-Division. However, it is found from the Tripura Gazette notification that there is specific Rule for tea plantation in Tripura. The Rule is known as " Rules for Tea plantation in Tripura "

According to this Rule, tea plantation in this state has been prohibited without the permission of the Royal Court. With this instrument, the Maharaja of Tripura did not permit the European planters to establish tea garden in his state. But sometime, he was found to be indifferent to the tea planters. At the initial state, when the tea planters suffered from economic crisis and failed to pay land revenue for the tea garden lands, they appealed to the Royal

Court to exempt them from payment of land revenue. But Maharaja did not grant and exemption but granted some facilities for payment of the unpaid revenue and were permitted one year extension of time for the payment of revenue. In a notification No. 1756 of 14th Ashar, 1333 TE (June, 1923) issued from the Royal Court, it is found that the following Tea Gardens were allowed one year extension of time for payment of their revenue from Royal Court of Tripura :

1. The Mantala Tea Co.
2. The Krishnapur Tea Co.
3. The Makhlipara Tea Co.
4. The Satsangam-Ranibari Tea Garden.
5. The Golakpur Tea Co.
6. The Jagannathpur Tea Co.

Besides tea plantation in the Taluk settlement of the state was not permitted without the special permission of the Durbar nor was the tenant of landlord right authorised to make such settlement even within his estate. Considering the sickness of the tea estates, the state allowed tea cultivation in the Taluki estates with the hope that the interesting Talukdars could develop tea estate as an economically viable unit with minimum cost on land. In this case, "najarana" has to be paid at the rate fixed by the Durbar.

Moreover just after the First world War, a new spirit of establishing industries and business farms found among the businessmen and industrialists of Bengal. At that time first tea garden named Hirachhera Tea garden was established in Kailashahar of Tripura (North). When tea cultivation was found profitable in Bengal and Assam and when sufficient land was not available in those places for tea cultivation, the big industrialists of Bengal paid their attention to establish tea gardens in the virgin land of Tripura. Later on many tea gardens were established in this state. It is found that within 14 years of spell from the establishment of first tea garden in this state, about 50 tea gardens have been established. It is very interesting to note here that most of the tea plantations in Tripura located in the West and North Districts, in Sadar, Khowai Sub-Division of west District, Kamalpur and Kailashahar and Dharmanagar Sub-Divisions of North Tripura District. If we minutely follow the reasons behind it, this may be stated that, generally, tea plantation depends upon the availability of land and other factors. The following points may be considered :—

- 1) Soil and topographical conditions are conducive to tea plantation,
- 2) Infra-structural facilities like availability of skill labour force, transportation facilities, availability of machinery facilities for processing the green leaves, and Efficient management.

In discussing the point of confinement of the tea plantation in the above said sub-Divisions, this may be stated that the soil and topographical conditions of the above sub-Divisions were found suitable for tea plantation. Secondly, geographically the location of the plantations in Tripura were adjacent to the tea gardens of Sylhet district and Assam where there were established tea gardens and also there was no difficulty of border problems as whole of India was under British Empire and Tripura was a princely state under British Paramountcy. As tea plantations require skill labours, the early tea planters of Tripura collected the labour force from the adjacent established tea gardens. Side by side, the Assam-Bengal Railway line passes through by the side of North and west border of Tripura and so, there was enough facilities for transportation of green leaves and finished products. Considering the above mentioned facilities, the early tea planters established tea gardens nearby the border line of Tripura and adjacent to the established tea gardens of Assam and Sylhet (now Bangladesh). Climatic condition suitable for Tea plantation:- Tea is a natural plant of the tropical and sub-tropical region. Maximum rainfall required for tea plantation is between 150 cm to 175 cm in a year and this rate of rainfall is generally occurs in the monsoon driven regions.

Temperature required for good plantation is

28

28

28

27°C and temperature below 21°C or above 35°C affects tea plantation adversely.

Topographical condition : Tea plants should be free from stagnation of water in the garden because water-stagnation damages the tea plants. Hill slopes and valleys are suitable for tea plantation as there is natural system of drainage of water.

Soil : Iron mixed porous soil are most suited for tea plantation. Water does not remain stagnant in this kind of soil during the time of heavy rainfall as this type of soil has higher capacity to absorb water.

Tea production in the States : The record of tea production in this State at the beginning of plantation may be seen in the table below :

Table : 4

1923	2,25,533 Pound
1924	3,38,772 ..

From the above table, it is seen the rate of tea production was increasing every year at the initial state of establishment of the gardens. But the rate of production in 1930 was found less than that of 1929. It may be due to climatic variation.

Table : 5

**Indices of tea production in Tripura
since 1979.**

Year	Production (in 1000 Kg.)
1979	29.30
1980	33.10
1981	32.19
1982	33.09
1983	35.07
1984	33.39
1985	38.08
1986	32.83
1987	40.90
1988	42.16

Source : Statistical Department.

Table : 6

Indices of yield rates in Tripura

Year	Yield rate (in Rs. per hactre of plucked area)	Percentage increase (+) or decrease (-) over last year	General Index (1955=100)	Chain Index
1979	640	(-) 5.10	114	95
1980	692	(+) 8.13	123	108
1981	679	(-) 1.83	121	98
1982	681	(+) 0.29	121	100
1983	724	(+) 6.31	129	106
1984	683	(-) 5.66	121	94
1985	768	(+) 12.45	137	112
1986	658	(-) 14.32	117	86
1987	783	(+) 19.00	139	119
1988	802	(+) 2.43	143	102

Source : Statistical Department.

It is also found that the Tea Gardens of Tripura had many ups and downs. At the initial stage the tea gardens of Tripura might have flourished much. But as years went on, they faced many problems. As a result, the names of the tea gardens of this State changed with that passage of time and years. It is learnt that there were 56 tea gardens in this state and more two gardens have newly established by TTDC. But at present only 52 gardens are running somehow as learnt from officials of Tea Board. In the year 1975, a survey was undertaken by the Tea Board of India for the tea gardens of Tripura and the report was published in the year 1978 entitled "Techno-Economic Survey of Tripura Tea Industry". In the report it is found that there were 56 tea gardens in this state. The names of the gardens are given below :

1. Harishpur T.E.
2. Malabati T.E.
3. Rajlakshmi T.E.
4. Tripura Hill Development
Company
5. Mekhlipara T.E
6. International Tea Trading
Company
7. Durgabati T.E.

8. Central Tripura T.E.
9. Nripendranagar T.E.
10. Tufanialunga T.E.
11. Tripura Tea Corporation
12. Adarini T.E.
13. Binodini T.E.
14. Peerless T.E.
15. South Kalkalia T.E.
16. Gopalnagar T.E.
17. North Kalkalia T.E.
18. Jadabnagar T.E.
19. Mohanpur T.E.
20. Kalachhera T.E.
21. Mantala T.E.
22. Ishanpur T.E.
23. Meghliband T.E.
24. Brahmakunda T.E.
25. Pachim Simna T.E.
26. Krishnapur T.E.
27. Kalyanpur T.E.
28. Khowai T.E.
29. Jamthungbari T.E.
30. Mahabit T.E.
31. Darang Hill T.E.

32. Garabtiilla T.E.
33. Bara Surma T.E.
34. Ramdurlav T.E.
35. Golakpur T.E.
36. Jagannathpur T.E.
37. Natinchhera T.E.
38. Sarojini T.E.
39. Halaichhera T.E.
40. Rangrung T.E.
41. Sovapur T.E.
42. Tripura Tea Corporation.
43. Railasana T.E.
44. Anila T.E.
45. Manu Valley T.E.
46. Dilkhosh T.E.
47. Dabasthal T.E.
48. Silhata T.E.
49. Paschim Haflong T.E.
50. Bikrampur T.E.
51. Maheshpur T.E.
52. Sarala T.E.
53. Piarachhera T.E.
54. Ranibari T.E.
55. Lilagarh T.E.
56. Ludhua T.E.

But now the names of most of the above mentioned tea gardens changed perhaps due to the change of their owners as a result of sale, mortgage etc. However, some of the old tea gardens have been vitalized now and some new tea gardens have also come into existence.

In the year 1984, a survey of the Tea gardens of Tripura was made by the Department of Statistics of the Government of Tripura. It is found from that survey report that some of the tea gardens have become extinct and some new tea gardens have been established. The following tea gardens came under the survey of the Statistics Department.

1. Adarani Tea Garden.
2. Benodini Tea Garden.
3. Brahmakunda Tea Garden.
4. Durgabari Tea Garden.
5. Fatikchhera Tea Garden.
6. Gopalnagar Tea Garden.
7. Harendranagar Tea Garden.
8. Harishnagar Tea Garden.
9. Haridaspur Tea Garden.
10. Kalachhera Tea Garden.
11. Krishnapur Tea Garden.
12. Laxmilunga Tea Garden.

13. Kalkalia Tea Garden.
14. Mohonpur Tea Garden.
15. Meghliband Tea Garden.
16. Mekhlipara Tea Garden.
17. Malabati Tea Garden.
18. Narendrapur Tea Garden.
19. Simnachhera Tea Garden.
20. Kamalasagar Tea Garden.
21. Nripendranagar Tea Garden.
22. Tufanialunga Tea Garden.
23. Khowai Tea Garden.
24. Kalyanpur Tea Garden.
25. Devasthal Tea Garden.
26. Hirachera Tea Garden.
27. Halaichhera Tea Garden.
28. Golakpur Tea Garden.
29. Kalishasan Tea Garden.
30. Murtichhera Tea Garden.
31. Manuvalley Tea Garden.
32. Nottingchhera Tea Garden.
33. Rang Rung Tea Garden.
34. Samaruchhera Tea Garden.
35. Sarpjini Tea Garden.
36. Sonamukhi Tea Garden.

37. Sova Tea Garden.
38. Taichai Tea Garden.
39. Jagannathpur Tea Garden.
40. Dharmanagar Tea Garden.
41. Haflongchhera Tea Garden.
42. Madhusudan Tea Garden.
43. Maheshpur Tea Garden.
44. Peerachhera Tea Garden.
45. Ranibari Tea Garden.
46. Sarala Tea Garden.
47. Darangtilla Tea Garden.
48. Mahabir Tea Garden.
49. Ramdurlavpur Tea Garden.
50. Aichuk Tea Garden.
51. Mayangtuku Tea Garden.
52. Ludhua Tea Garden.
53. Leelagarh Tea Garden.
54. Dimatali Tea Garden.

The Government of Tripura have given importance to tea industries in this state in its Industrial policy to help the tea industries in Tripura and established Tripura Tea Development Corporation Ltd. (A Govt. of Tripura undertaking) in the year 1980. Out of the above mentioned 54 tea gardens, the Corporation has taken over the ownership of 2 (two)

Size distribution Tea Estates in Tripura

Size groups in Hactr.	No. of Tea Garden.
Below 100 Hectrs	31
From 101 to 300 Hectrs.	23
Above 300 Hectrs.	Nil

The above size groups has been classified as per existing plantation area of the respective Tea Gardens.

The yeild rate of tea in kg. hectare under plucked area is also found low in comparison to other tea growing states of India. The following chart may indicate the weild rate of tea in Tripura and the North India.

Year	North India Yeild per Hectare	Tripura Yeild per hectare.
1970	1133 kg.	481 kg.
1971	1175 kg.	544 kg.
1972	1239 kg.	553 kg.
1973	1287 kg.	706 kg.
1974	1356 kg.	768 kg.
1975	1315 kg.	672 kg.
1976	1381 kg.	777 kg.

It is seen from the above table that the yield rate per hectre in other tea growing states of India is more than 1000 Kgs. But in Tripura, it is around 700 kgs per hectre. Even than, tea cultivation in this state is profitable though the quantity may be less than that of other states of India. Table No. 3 may be referred to.

According to the survey report of the Statistical Department (1988), the following is the distribution of tea gardens in the State :

<u>Name of Sub-Division</u>	<u>Number of Plantation</u>
1. Sadar	22
2. Khowai	2
3. Kaliashahar	15
4. Kamalpur	5
5. Dharmanagar	8
6. Sabroom	2
7. Belonia	1
	<hr style="width: 10%; margin: auto;"/>
	55

(Latest number as per '88 A.D. Report)

TEA GARDEN LABOURERS

At the beginning of tea plantation in Tripura, the gardeners faced some acute problems. Clearance of the dense forest and skilled workers for plantation required a large number of labours. Moreover, the process of tea cultivation like hoeing, weeding, pruning of the bushes remained labour intensive; the supply of labour at that time was far from assured as the local tribal and non-tribal people did not take interest to work in the plantation due to low wages and peculiar nature of the plantation industry. Moreover, the working condition of the plantation failed to create any encouragement among the local people rather those kept them away from the plantation work. Hence most of the workers in tea gardens of Tripura came from Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and United provinces at the formative stage having different languages and culture. It is also interesting to note here that most of the tea garden labours, in off season, usually go to the nearby villages for harvesting etc. works in the agricultural fields.

In 1921, when tea garden workers of Assam left tea gardens in support of the call of Non-cooperation movement, several of them died of disease

and of starvation on the way and some are stranded forcibly at Chandpur or Karimganj Railway Station by the British Indian authorities. In this connection, Minister of Tripura state sent a letter to the political Agent of Tripura 6th June, 1921 stating as follows :

"I am directed by the Durbar to address you in a matter of great importance in connection with the trouble due to the exodus of coolies from the Assam Tea Gardens, the alleged incidents at Chandpur and the unfortunate strikes and haitals all over the country which have affected this territory along with the bordering British Districts. You have already been informed by me, and His Highness's Chief Secretary and Private Secretary of the recent troubles into which the Durbar have been dragged by the agitators.

2. This situation has given rise to a thought in his Highness's mind as to how he could render some services to the Imperial Government in the midst of this general turmoil. A solution presents itself to His Highness in offering a decent livelihood to the disaffected coolies in this territory. The Durbar are prepared to find shelter, land and employment for them if they choose to come and settle in this territory. They are ready to receive all the coolies (with the exception of those who are lying ill) stranded at Chandpur, pay for Railway fare to Akhaura

if the Assam-Bengal Railway demands the same and give them food and shelter on the following understanding among other things which may be settled in conference with the coolies, their advisers, popular leaders and the Government of Bengal :

(i) If the coolies agree to settle in this territory the Durbar will grant some land to each family for cultivation and building their houses on. No rent shall be payable for such lands for the first year of settlement—a reasonable rent shall be assessed on the expiry of the year and this rent will be regulated from time to time by the laws of the land governing the relationship of landlord and tenant.

(ii) The Durbar will supply temporary cottage for the immediate shelter of the coolies and feed them for 3 days of their arrival.

(iii) The Durbar will be ready to receive batches of 500 souls daily, 3 days after their intention to come here is intimated to the Durbar.

(iv) The A. B. Railway should undertake to carry the coolies at Chandpur free of fare or at reduced fare or even at full fare to be paid by the Durbar in the event of their refusal to grant concessions.

(v) The Durbar will not receive the persons who are lying ill at Chandpur and their families

until they are all right and declared fit to travel. State doctors will examine and pass them before they are taken charge of at Chandpur.

(vi) The coolies will be free to serve anybody they like. If it is desired, the Durbar will themselves employ them if they want.

(vii) No one will be forced to live a life of labour if he wants to turn a cultivator.

(viii) A Census of the coolies will be taken by the State Agents before they depart from Chandpur.

(ix) The Durbar shall provide Civil protection Medical aid and the education for the coolies at their settlement.

(x) The coolies shall be free to leave their territory at any time they like should they desire to go back to their ancestral homes or change their residence.

3. The Durbar will feel thankful by your kind intervention in obtaining the approval of the Government of Bengal to these proposals by immediate Telegraphic communication as there is no time to loose and request you to be so good as to place yourself in communication with the local Government officers popular leaders.

Another similar letter was sent on June, 23, 1921, regarding the stranded coolies at Karimganj.

From the above two letters, it is assumed that most of the tea garden labours of this state are the successors of those unfortunate coolies who are political sufferers in true sense. On the other hand the question of scarcity of workers in tea gardens of Tripura was solved in this way.

It is also found investigation that successors of those coolies may be found in the village Jalilpur under Bamutia Mouza in West Tripura District as settled cultivators and agriculturists.

The number of permanent labours engaged in different tea gardens is reported to be 10,550 out of which 4,732 are male labours and 5006 are female labours and 812 are child labours. The number of labours may vary from time to time with the increase of plantation area or with the decrease of the area as sometimes bushes wither. However, the number of garden wise labours have been collected from the labour Directorate, Government of Tripura. The following is the list of labours of tea gardens of Tripura.

Sl. No.	Name of Garden	S/T	Others	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Adarini	3	40	43
2.	Binodini	16	48	64
3.	Durgabari	4	68	72
4.	Brahmakunda	30	30	60
5.	Fatikchera	50	183	233
6.	Gopalnagar	38	47	85
7.	Harendranagar	70	166	236
8.	Harishnagar	19	45	64
9.	Haridaspur	—	16	16
10.	Kalachera	61	55	116
11.	Krishnapur	25	30	55
12.	Laxmilunga	27	105	132
13.	Kalkalia	—	15	15
14.	Mohanpur	45	28	73
15.	Meghliband	138	107	245
16.	Mekhlipara	58	151	209
17.	Malabati	15	27	42
18.	Narendrapur	161	313	474

1	2	3	4	5
19.	Nripendranagar (Buriding)	1	3	4
20.	Simnachhera	15	59	74
21.	Kamalasagar	17	133	150
22.	Tufanialunga	17	80	97
23.	Khowai	52	34	86
24.	Kalyanpur	5	61	66
25.	Devasthal	44	78	122
26.	Hirachera	156	160	316
27.	Halaichera	8	225	233
28.	Golakpur	142	301	443
29.	Kalishasan	46	55	101
30.	Murtichera	121	357	478
31.	Manuvalley	129	428	557
32.	Nattingshera	39	70	109
33.	Rang Rung	46	166	212
34.	Sarnuchhera	—	—	—
35.	Sorojini	28	99	127
36.	Sonamukhi	37	177	214

1	2	3	4	5
37.	Sova	45	250	295
38.	Tachai	41	45	86
39.	Jagannathpur	—	47	47
40.	Dharmanagar	4	278	282
41.	Haflongchhera	101	328	429
42.	Madhusudan	53	277	330
43.	Maheshpur	19	705	724
44.	Peerachhera	27	704	731
45.	Ranibari	44	542	586
46.	Sarala	—	200	200
47.	Darangtilla	2	94	96
48.	Mahabir	35	645	680
49.	Aichuk	20	—	20
50.	Ramdurlavpur	144	459	603
51.	Mayangtuku	21	—	21
52.	Ludhua	121	—	121
53.	Leelagarh	41	—	41
Total :		2,381	8,534	10,915

But it is found that the total number of labours engaged in the tea gardens it is as received from the Labour Department is higher than that of received from the report of the Statistical Department. The difference between the two figures may be due to inclusion of casual labours engaged in different Kinds of work of the gardens. However, it has been mentioned earlier that the number of labour, engaged in different tea gardens does not remain static all the year round. The number of labour varies with the extension of bush area or damage and withering away of existing plants.

From the above chart may be seen that about 40% of the total labours belongs to Scheduled Tribe Community. But this should also be clear that the above mentioned Sch. Tribes do not belong to the local tribal communities of the state. From the S/T list of Tripura, it appears that some immigrant communities are included in the S/T list of the state. They are Oraon, Santal, Bhil etc. They are not original inhabitant of the state. The gardeners/Planters have brought them from different states of India like, Bihar, Orissa West Bengal etc. While field Investigations were made in the different tea gardens, it is reported that a very negligible number of the labours belongs to the local tribal community. For example in Narendrapur Tea Garden, where the labour strength is 474, only one local Tripuri tribal is found to be engaged as Guard. In

Laxmilunga Tea Garden also, where there is 132 labours, only one Tripuri tribal is engaged as Night Guard.

In view of the above, this may be cleared that the tribal communitites working in different tea gardens are immigrant tribes belonging to Santal, Oraon, Bhil community. More over, apart from the above communities, the remaining labours, belong to Sabar, Tanti, Kanla etc. communities who are included in the of list of S/C communities of Tripura. In view of the above, more than 90% of the labours engaged in different tea gardens of Tripura belong to either immigrant S/T community or S/C community.

It is also significant that local tribals like Tripuris, Reang, Jamatiyas, Noatias etc. do not participate of the field of tea industry of Tripura as labours though their economic condition as a whole are not better than that of the labours of tea gardens. And as when tea plantation was started in this state, more than 50% of the population of the state belonged to the local tribal communities.

Table :7

**Average number workers employed daily
by tea growing Sub-Division.**

Sub-Division	Average number of workers	
	Adult Male	Adult Female
Sadar	1309	1467
Khowai	69	94
Kailashahar	814	1143
Kamalpur	513	716
Dharmanagar	930	1336
Sabrooni	62	56
Selonia	20	20
TRIPURA	3,807	4,832

(in field and in factory) durins 1988

employed daily in field.		
Adolesent 15-18 years	Children	Total
—	130	2,906
—	—	163
2	137	2,196
—	34	1,263
—	—	2,455
—	—	108
—	—	40
2	490	9,131

Source : Statistical Department.

Table : 8

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORKS EMPLOYED
During 1988 by Tea Growing**

Sub-Division	Average number of works employed		
	Adult Male	Adult Female	Adolescent
1. Sadar	223	134	—
2. Khowai	11	9	—
3. Kailashahar	188	167	15
4. Kamalpur	100	7	—
5. Dharmanagar	212	25	—
6. Sabroom	—	4	—
7. Belonia	—	—	—
Tripura	739	346	15

DAILY (IN THE FIELD AND IN FACTORY)
Sub-Division.

daily in Factory		
Children	Total	Grand Total
—	357	3,263
—	20	183
18	388	2,584
—	107	1,370
—	237	2,692
—	9	117
—	—	40
18	1,118	10,249

Source : Statistical Department

Table : 9-A.

**Labour Employed by Category in tea growing Sub-Division of
Tripura since 1979.**

Resident Labour

Sub-Division	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983	
	Field	Factory	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.
Sadar	1292	224	1319	214	1422	207	1300	197	1336	290
Khowai	87	35	80	34	113	19	113	19	113	19
Kailashahar	1324	236	1179	364	1406	335	1551	347	1299	263
Kamalpur	590	89	580	85	698	94	571	93	628	109
Dharmanagar	991	223	1035	207	1071	209	988	230	1067	185
Sabroom	9	--	38	--	158	3	65	3	69	7
Belonia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total :	4284	802	4231	904	4768	867	4588	889	4512	813

Continuation of Table : 9-A

Sub-Division	1984		1985		1986		1987		1988	
	Field	Factory	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.
Sadar	1606	221	1782	227	1894	205	1808	266	1857	298
Khowai	134	--	131	--	131	--	99	14	99	13
Kailashahar	1288	286	1269	308	1334	363	1329	305	1333	299
Kamalpur	636	119	658	116	654	98	848	103	839	107
Dharmanagar	1238	223	1205	199	1246	179	1233	180	1538	173
Sabroom	38	6	37	7	35	7	32	9	67	9
Belonia	--	--	--	--	--	--	40	--	40	--
Total :	4940	855	5082	857	5294	852	5389	877	5773	900

Source : Statistical Deptt.

Table 9-B

Outside Resident Labour

Sub-Division	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983	
	Field	Factory	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.
Sadar	606	69	528	115	696	57	661	46	651	36
Khowai	21	—	14	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kailashahar	645	102	295	50	364	40	334	27	635	43
Kamalpur	99	—	84	6	172	7	155	10	121	4
Dharmanagar	695	59	711	96	643	102	685	88	632	89
Sabroom	—	—	22	—	—	—	24	—	48	—
Belonia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42	—
Total :	2066	230	1654	269	1875	206	1859	171	2129	172

Continuation of Table : 9-B

Sub-Division	1984		1985		1986		1987		1988	
	Field	Factory	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.	Field	Fact.,
Sadar	737	50	662	58	700	55	683	46	1049	59
Khowai	32	--	42	--	42	--	64	6	64	6
Kailashahar	499	54	467	50	671	49	785	60	863	89
Kamaltpur	229	--	239	--	274	6	437	--	424	--
Dharmanagar	743	66	842	62	942	62	1115	56	917	69
Sabrocm	68	3	56	3	66	3	76	--	41	--
Belonia	45	--	45	--	45	--	--	--	--	--
Total :	2353	173	2353	182	2740	157	3160	168	3358	218

Source : Statistical Deptt.

CHAPTER-IV

PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL TRIBES IN TEA PLANTATION

A field investigation was made in 7 Tea Gardens of West Tripura District in order to have an idea about participation of the local tribals in tea plantation. The following table in this respect will indicate the position of their representation in participating tea plantation works :

Participation of Local tribes in tea plantation (Statement)

Sl. No.	Name of the Garden	No. of permanent labour.	No. of casual labour
1.	Durgabari Tea Garden	Nil	Nil

2. Narendrapur Tea Garden	1	70/80
3. Laxmilunga Tea Garden	1	6
4. Fatikchhera Tea Garden	Nil	Nil
5. Kalkalia Tea Garden	Nil	Nil
6. Harendranagar Tea Garden	—	15
7. Kamalasagar Tea Garden	Nil	Nil

The presence of local tribals among the tea garden labours, is very negligible. But why? It is very difficult to ascertain the reasons. However, an attempt is made here to find out the actual reason or to give some light about the matter.

Firstly, the demographic composition of this state may be studied. In 1917 to 1920, when establishment of tea garden started in this state, 54.69% of the total population of Tripura belonged to the local tribal communities. The following table gives

the demographic position of Tripura beginning with 1921.

Year	Total population	Tribal population.	Percentage
1911	2,29,613	1,10,129	47.96%
1921	3,04,437	1,66,500	54.69%
1931	3,82,450	2,03,327	53.16%
1941	5,13,010	2,56,991	50.89%
1951	6,39,029	2,37,958	37.23%
1961	11,42,005	3,60,070	31.53%
1971	15,56,342	4,50,544	28.95%
1981	20,53,050	5,83,920	28.45%
1991	29,57,205	8,53,345	30.95%

In the light of the above table and the position of the tribal population, it might be concluded

that if the local tribals were encouraged to participate in the newly established tea gardens in the state at that time, then there would have been some local tribals among the tea garden labours. Unfortunately, at that time, perhaps, the local tribal people were not encouraged to work as garden labours neither by the owners of the garden / planters nor by the than village chiefs of the tribal community. Secondly, the Maharajas of Tripura were a bit reluctant to interfere with the internal administration of the tea gardens. They were mainly interested in collection of revenues from the gardens. Thus when the planters faced economic crisis and approached the Maharaja for exemption of revenue that was outstanding. But the then Maharaja in stead of granting exemption, only allowed one year grace period.

Tea Plantation and tea industry is a commercial institution. The planters liked to engage skilled labours for both production and processing work. Any commercial enterpreuner is guided by the policy of "less investment, more income/production". The gardens were not exception to this policy.

Generally the tea planters used to engage skilled labours lifting from nearby established tea gardens

located in Cachar and Sylet and Bengal. The skilled labours generally belonged to Santal, Munda, Oraon etc. communities.

Another reason might be that the immigrant labours would be compelled to reside within the plantation area in the labour colonies provided by the owner's arrangement which is very much essential for any plantation and factory.

The other reason why the tea garden owners did not like to engage local tribals was, perhaps, that the local people were the direct subjects of the then Maharajas and they were under the direct control of the community chiefs who were the recognised agents of the rulers of Tripura. If any agitation among the labours broke out, it might have invited the interference of the royal court. Moreover, perhaps the garden owners did not like to engage local tribals as labours in the plantation area.

The aforesaid factors may be considered responsible for non-selection of local tribals in Tea plantation works.

The planters also considered to engage immigrant skilled labours to establish their new tea gardens from both economic and organisational point of view. From economic point of view it is true that maximum output derived by engaging minimum number of skilled labours. From organisational point of view, as the immigrant labours would stay with their family in a compact area within the plantation field which would be easier to lead the labours under direct supervision of the management. Moreover, it would also be helpful to them to create a working atmosphere suitable for tea plantation.

On the other hand, most of the local tribes in the state, during the first half of the 20th century, were dependant on jhum cultivation. There were plenty of jhum land in the state and the jhumias were also self-sufficient in respect of their needs due to abundant yield of jhum crop. So, they did not feel any necessary to switch over from jhum cultivation to tea plantation to cater their economic needs. Moreover, the life style of a jhumia and a tea garden labours is quite different from each other. A jhumia had to move from place to place in search of fertile jhum and which led them to a nomadic

nature of life. But in contrary to that, the life of a tea garden labour is confined under certain discipline. In a word, a jhumia led an independant life style without restriction. Whereas, the tea garden labours always had to lead a restricted life confined within the plantation area.

It may also be added here that the social life of the local tribes was jhum oriented. Most of their festivals and rituals are connected with the operation of jhum. So, it is quite natural that they were not interested to make a rapid change of their social rites and festivals by adopting of a life style quite different from theirs.

In the past, export of cotton and sesamun was an important source of revenue of the royal exchaquer. The above crops were mainly produced in the jhum field by the jhumias of Tripura. So, the King of Tripura favoured the practise of jhumming at that time for the sake of state revenue.

As mentioned earlier, the tribes of Tripura are habituated with the practise of jhum cultivation

protect the existing bush areas to collect leaves from the existing bushes to the possible maximum extent. In doing so, the scope to engage new labour in the tea garden is also limited. In this Juncture, when the local tribals come to works in the tea garden as labours, they found vacancies for casual labourers who are engaged in the pick season of the year for plucking leaves and other work for a few months. However, the local tribals want to get themselves engaged even as seasonal or casual labours.

It has been revealed from a field survey of Narendrapur and Laxmilunga Tea Garden that the local tribals are engaged as tea garden labours in large number as casual workers. But the difficulties are that unlike the permanent workers, the casual labours do not get any facilities, such as provident Fund, Medical facilities, Ration facilities, Education facilities etc. They just get the wages at the rate of Rs. 14/- per day. In view of the above, the local tribals are not much interested to be tea garden labours. When they get any work in the local Basti i.e. village agrifield, they would get wages at the rate of Rs. 25/- or so per day which is almost double then that of a tea garden labour/worker.

where there is spirit of cooperation in working. A jhumta contributes his labour to his neighbour's field. The neighbourers also in return work in his field which is known as "Yakul" means exchange of labour. The question of wages does not come with such type of work. The work of tea garden labours is mainly connected with earning wages. In view of the fact that around 1920 when the tea gardens were coming up in Tripura, the local tribals considered wage earning is a low status of works and a degraded job. The concept of the wages earning deterred them from enrolling themselves as the garden labours.

All tribal people are under the bindings of social rigidity and obligations controlled by the traditional community council. An individual person can not easily ignore the importance of his social obligations to the council. As the leaders of the traditional community council considered the work of tea garden labour as a degraded job, they naturally did not encourage their community members to take up this low status job.

As mentioned earlier that the Maharaja of Tripura and their representatives in the tribal comm-

unity were quite indifferent to the activities of tea gardens. On the other hand, the planters and tea garden owners also did not like to interfere the traditional social life of the tribals by engaging them in plantation works in Tea Gardens.

With the passage of time, of course the situation has changed. The poor tribals who did not like to work in the fields of other community as day labours, come out to seek employment in the roads, buildings, farm works as a hiring labour and other construction works. In the early sixtees, these local tribals could be found to work in the maintenance, bridge repairing jobs and in the paddy field belonging to people of different communities of the state due to increase of population in this small state and other economic difficulties in the hilly regions of the state. Tribals who would live around the tea garden areas have now become interested to working the tea garden as labour. But the whole process of tea plantation is carried out with a limited labour strength unless the plantation area is expanded. From information collected by us is that the expansion of the existing tea gardens is an easy task. Such expansion work of the existing tea gardens tend to

CHAPTER-V

FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

A field investigation has been made in the following tea gardens :

- 1) Durgabari Tea Garden
- 2) Narendrapur Tea Garden
- 3) Laxmilunga Tea Garden
- 4) Fatikchhera Tea Garden
- 5) Kalkalia Tea Garden
- 6) Harendranagar Tea Garden
- 7) Kamalasagar Tea Garden.

Moreover personal interview was also made with the Managar of (1) Masmara Tea Garden and (2) Kamalasagar Tea Garden.

Besides, field investigation was also made the tribal villages from where the local tribals would generally come to the tea gardens to seek employment as casual labours. Such villages are Bag-bari under Uttar Devendranagar Gaon Sabha of Mohanpur Block and the nearby village Falbagan, Kalapania etc.

During investigation it is found that the local tribal labours who go to Laxmilunga Tea Garden as casual labour belong to Tripuri community. It is informed that Sri Sukumar Debbarma of Bagbari was a permanent labour of Laxmilunga Tea Garden. Sri Debbarma expired a few years back and his wife Smti Ramani Debbarma has been engaged by the garden authority as casual labour. Smti Debbrama was also paid all dues of her deceased husband by the Garden authority. Her son Shri Sushil Debbarma, a 35 years old youngman has also been engaged in the said garden as casual labour. On asking, Shri Shushil Debbarma has informed that it is not at all profitable to him to work as casual labour in the garden. Because, the amount of wages for a casual

labour in the garden is only Rs. 14/- per day without other garden facilities. If he can work in the village as agri-labour, he can earn Rs. 25/- per day. Even then he works in the garden on anticipation of getting a permanent job in it.

Shri Susil Deb Barra has also expressed that he has owned about 15 Kanis tilla land which is used by his neighbours as pasture land. If he can establish a small tea garden, it would be very helpful to him and he may be able to maintain his family from the income generated from that tea plantation by selling green leaves. He has also expressed that he has sufficient experience regarding tea plantation as he worked for more than 7 years in Laxmilunga Tea Garden.

Before going to find out the prospect of small tea gardens and the income to be generated out of the garden, it would not be irrelevant to present per acre expenditure and yield of an established tea garden like Fatikchhera Tea Garden in order to prepare a model scheme of tea plantation suitable to the tribal people.

Name of the Tea Garden : Fatikchhera Tea Garden.

Name of the Section : Section No. 18

Area of cultivation : 33 Acres of land.

Age of the plants : Plantation started in the
Section 18 in November,
1989 and completed in
April/90.

No. of plants existed : 2,21,681 Nos.

In view of the above, it may be noted that the average age of the tender plants is 20 months i. e. under 2 years.

From the records of that Garden, it is found that garden collected green leaf from that section as follows :

7th September, 1991 — — — 447 Kgs.

14 September, 1991 — — — 431 Kgs.

21st September, 1991 — — — 1139 ..

4th Week of Sept. 92 — — — 825 ..

Total : 2,842 Kgs.
green leaf.

Average production per week is 2842 - 711 kg (say)
 Average production per week per Acre is $711 \div 33 = 21.5$ kgs.

If the green leaf is sold at the rate of Rs. 4/- per kg., the total income is Rs. 85/- per week (Rs. 4/- x 21.5). In view of the above, the monthly income from one acre of land in the 2nd year is Rs. 344/- for nine months in a year as the other 3 months are off season.

It is expected that after 3rd year or 4th year when the tender plants will be fully matured and if 0.500 grms of green leaf is produced per plant per year, the yearly production of green leaf per acre will be 1,10,840 Kg. which is in money value Rs. 4,43,360/- $\div 33 =$ Rs. 13,435/- which is a minimum production from a tea plantation and the normal production is expected 1 Kg. per plant per year. Taking this calculation into account, the yearly income will be double of Rs. 13,435/- i. e. Rs. 26,870/- per year.

NOW LET US EXAMINE THE VARIOUS STAGES OF NEW TEA PLANTATION :

1st year

Palvarize hoeing

2. Stacking
3. Making pit
4. Manuring
5. Planting
6. Over all mulching
7. Spraying P. P. C.
8. Hand deweeding (Preferably in a year)
9. Irrigation.

2nd year

1. Pruning— 14" cut from the ground or as suitable according to the plant across with centre cleaning.
2. Mulching
3. Spraying P. P. C.
4. Tipping with measurement of 24" above the ground.
5. Deweeding— At least twice in the year/Foliour Spraying.
6. Manuring (Y. T. D.)
7. Sickling

3rd year

1. Pruning (L. S.) – 26" above the ground.
2. Sickling
3. Manuring
4. Spraying P. P. C.
5. Plucking

Now the estimated cost of establishment may be calculated. Before doing this, the process of cultivation may shortly be explained.

The land preparation may be started in the month of December, January of the year, so that the plantation may be started just after the first rain in the year or the land preparation may be done suitably so that the plantation may be started just after the monsoon rain is over. But it is seen in the Fatikchhera Tea Garden that, the garden authority continues the plantation all the year round. However, as the most suitable period of tea plantation is just after the monsoon rain is over, the land preparation may be made keeping this in mind.

After preparation of the land, the plantation may be done in double row system. The space between the rows to double rows will be 4ft.

If this system is followed, more than 7000 plants may be planted in one acre land. If the plantation is done in single row and the space is given 4 fts. from row to row, the number of plants will be less than 7000 in one acre land.

When the plantation is completed the spaces between the two rows and the space between the plants would be covered with leaves, weeds etc. so that direct sun rays or rain drop may not fall on the incovered soil. It is called overmulching. This overmulching checks rapid evaporation of water vapour from the ground and also erosion of soil.

For making shed of the nursery plants, temporary shed trees are sown (seeds) in two rows leaving two plantation rows. For a permanent shed of the tea plants, sucklings of big trees are planted in rows making 20 cubits space from suckling to suckling. The normal space from a big tree to the other is 40 cubits. The reason for planting in a gap of 20 cubits so that if any suckling is withered, the gap will become 40 cubits if planted in a gap of 40 cubits. After two or three years, when the

Permanent trees will begin to give shed, screening of the permanent shed trees may be done easily leaving a normal space of 40, cubits from one tree to another.

Spraying of P. P. C. is a must so that any pesticides, fungus or disease may not occur in the baby plants. Preferably two rounds of P. P. C. spraying may be done in every year or the case may be.

Irrigation is also may be done into dry season so that the baby plants may not wither away. Hand weeding may also be done to keep garden area free from any unwanted grasses that suck the food of the plants.

After one year of plantation when the tea plant grow in a considerable growth, pruning may be done. The normal rule for pruning is 14" cut from the ground level. But this rule can not be maintained all the time. It mostly depends on the stem position of the plant. As for example, if a side stem is found in a plant just above 5" of the ground and there are possibilities to grow side stems, the

pruning may be done below 14 " above the ground considering the condition of the stem. So, the first pruning should be done by a expert / skilled labour who has the basic knowledge of stem and pruning. The growth of bush area and production of green leaf also depend upon this pruning. If this pruning is done properly green leaf production may start from the 2nd year of plantation and the future production will also be to the maximum extent. In the 2nd year tipping with the measurement of 24" above the ground is done. As a result of this tipping the bush plants will remain in same height. This levelling of the bush area looks like a carpet spreaded in the garden.

In the foregoing paragraphs different stages of tea plantation has been discussed in brief. But according to the tea researchers and experts of the line the following stages of plantation are recommended.

Mulching :

In dry weather the mulch is a fire risk. To arrest the spread of fire, strips of land in both direction should be kept bare of the mulch.

Bringing up of young Tea :

In N. E. India, young plants are pruned when they become about one C. M. thick at the collar. Before pruning, the usual practice is to examine a couple of plants for not starch by a rapid visual method.

Pruning : Bent and pegging method :

In N. E. India plucking is done to "Janam" which does not permit growth of any maintenance foliage above the tipping leavel.

Plucking :

The position of the fish leaf or "Janam" is very important on the stem so far as plucking is concerned and acts as a mark by which the severity of the plucking is judged.

Regarding the number if plants per unit area is usually worked by using the following formula :

$$\text{Number of bushes} = \frac{n \times \text{unit area}}{y (x + z)}$$

n = number of rows in the hedge.

x = Perpendicular distance between hedge rows.

y = Distance between bushes within a row,

z = Perpendicular distance between rows of bushes
in double and triple hedges,

Unit Area \approx 1 Hectre $= 10^8$ sq. cm.

$x \approx 120$ c.m. , $y \approx 120$ c. m. , $z \approx 0$ c. m.,
(a single hedge)

$$\text{Number of bush} \approx \frac{1 \times 10^8}{120(120+0)} \approx 6944$$

If we plant tea in single hedge and 120 c.m,
distance in square, then according to the above,
the number of tea plants will be 6944 per hectre.

MASMARA TEA GARDEN

The Masmara Tea Garden is situated in kailas-
hahar Sub-Division of North Tripura District. This
garden is established under the ownership of Tripura
Tea Development Corporation in the year 1981. The

total area of land under the possession of the garden is 2000 acre. Out of this total area of land tea plantation area is only 150 acre and bush area from where tea leaf is plucking only 118 acre. In view of the above, the plantation area is less than 6% of the total area of the garden. As the garden is newly established is only 11 years old, the garden authority has not yet made any provision for the labours to reside within the garden complex by providing quarters for them. In view of the above, the garden may be treated as non-residential garden. The labours would reside in their own houses and come to work in the garden daily at the working hours to the garden.

The total labour strength of the garden is at present 140 permanent labours and 40 seasonal labours as reported by the Manager of the garden, Among the labours 70% of them belong to local tribal communities like the Reangs and Chakmas. The rest 30% belong to other communities including traditional garden labours. It is also reported that the local tribal labours are not less skill than that of traditional garden labours of the state. They

are engaged in all kinds of garden works starting from hoeing and plantation to plucking stage. The local tribal workers have still shown their skillness in those works not less than that of traditional garden labours. On enquiry, it is learnt that the Reangs and the Chakmas who are working in the garden at present as labours are a bit shy to disclose their profession to other unknown persons even to their distant friends. They regard this profession as a degraded status in their community life.

The tea production of this garden as reported is 1.85 lakh green leaf the last year and the rate of leaf they usually sold at present is Rs. 3.25 per Kg. which is far less than that of the gardens of other places. In other places like in Sadar, green leaf is sold at the rate of Rs. 4.00 to 4.25 per kg. While asking the reason for such low rate of green leaf, it is reported that there is no tea processing factory of their own in the newly established garden. The surrounding tea gardens who possess factory are owned by private individual ownership. They are normally overlodged with their normal production of green leaf for processing in

their own factory. So they decline to purchase any additional green leaf from the garden of T. T. D. C. has its own Factory at Durgabari near Agartala which is more than 150 KMs away from Masmara. So, it is not feasible to carry green leaf from Masmara to Durgabari. Masmara garden, therefore, is compelled to sell its green leaf production at the low rate to the individual owners as offered by them according to their discretion.

Considering the above points, it may be concluded that establishment of tea garden at the place where there is no arrangement for processing of green leaf is not profitable. Before establishment of the garden, the main thing is to be considered is the communication of the place and some infrastructural facilities of the proposed garden. Moreover, it is to be considered if small tea garden comprising of 5/10 acres of garden area at the nearby established tea garden under individual ownership may be established under the assistance of state Govt. to help the small cultivators for enhancement of their family income.

KAMALASAGAR TEA GARDEN

The Kamalasagar Tea Garden is situated in the Sadar Sub-Division of West Tripura District. The Garden is established in the year 1983 under the control of Tripura Tea Development Corporation. The total area under their possession is 1000 acre of land. Out of this area only 170 acre has been covered under plantation. At present from 190 acre of planted area, green leaf is collected. The total production from that plucking area is 2.63 lakh green leaf during last year. This garden is not facing problem for selling the produced green leaf like Masmara of North District.

The labour strength at present is 156 permanent labour and 95 casual labours. It is reported there are 15/16 local tribals working in this garden as labour. All of them belong to Tripuri community. On making further investigation it is reported that the local tribals here do not feel any hesitation to identify themselves as tea garden labour. They do not consider this profession as a degraded status in their community life. It seems that they are aware of the present economic problems of the state.

The permanent labours of this garden enjoy facilities of ration, and others as prescribed for the garden labours like other gardens of the state.

CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the study it is clear that the indigenous tribes of Tripura were not so interested to work in the tea gardens as labours. They would regard it a degraded profession in their social status. But at present many of them are interested to work as tea garden labours though there is less scope to work in the existing gardens due to less employment opportunities. It is also the opinion of the garden managements that the indigenous tribes of Tripura are capable to work at par with the traditional tea garden labours if they are given the opportunities. In view of the above the following points may be considered in order to make them interested to participate in Tea Plantation work

1. Tea plantation may be considered as an alternative to jhumming.
2. The Jhumias may be given the scope of tea plantation at their jhum field after jhum harvest as to convert them from jhumming to plucking.
3. The Jhumias of Tripura are given settlement through rubber plantation scheme. Simultaneously a scheme may be taken up by the Government for jhumia settlement through tea plantation scheme.
4. In the scheme of Rubber plantation income generation stands from the seventh year. But in Tea Plantation scheme the beneficiary will get the income from the scheme just after 2 (two) years of plantation.
5. Tea plantation may be done under individual or co-operative ownership.
6. Tea plantation is proved successful in Tripura and Tea processing Factories also exist in the State. There is no difficulty for tea processing in the State. In case of rubber processing, such facility is limited.

7. For starting tea plantation, Tea Board will assist in all respects by providing grants, seedlings, technical advice and also technical assistance.
8. Unlike the rubber plants, tea plants are less affected by natural calamities like cyclone. Tea dust may be used as an ingredient element for dyeing. So the market of tea is considered wide.
9. For starting Tea plantation, marketing of the green leaf is to be ensured for that locality. It is very important for establishment of small tea plantation.
10. The beneficiary of tea plantation scheme is to be given practical training for plantation of tea.
11. For this purpose, Tripura Tea Development Corporation (A Govt. Undertaking) may play the key role of the Training programme.
12. As a model plantation, the existing tea gardens of TTDC may be shown to the tribals as to encourage them and to attract them towards tea plantation.

13. If Jhumia Settlement is given through Tea plantation, then the beneficiaries may reside in a group which the tribals like best.
14. Tea cultivation is based on agri-science, so it is to be done properly according to the scientific method of modern agri-science. Otherwise, there is every possibility for failure of the scheme.
15. Small unit of tea gardens may be found in Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh. Their technology for establishment of small tea garden may be utilised in Tripura.

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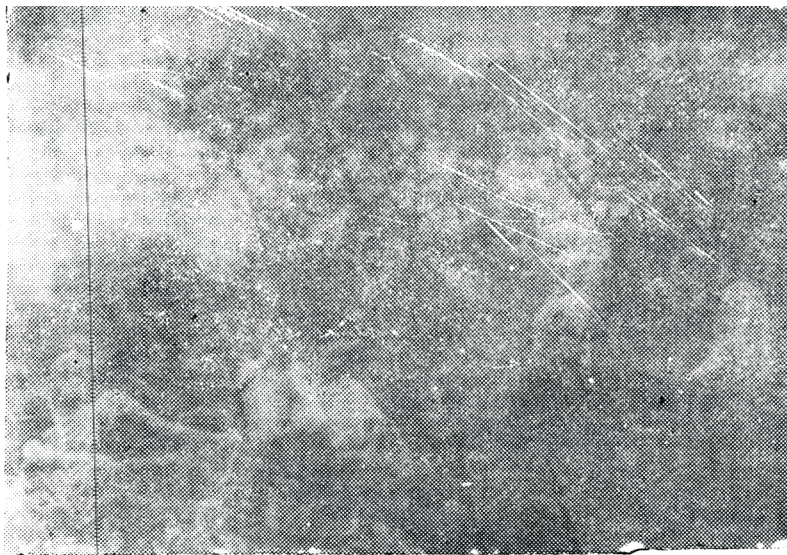
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Tribal women in plucking job.



From jhuming to plucking.



Tripuri women also engaged in plucking tea leaf



Waiting to deposit leaf.

