

Tea Plantation Workers in a Himalayan Region



Khemraj Sharma

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PREFACE

The process of industrial development in the state of Sikkim is a post eighties phenomenon. Prior to 1975, Sikkim was an independent separate country under the protection of Government of India. With the merger of Sikkim in 1975 with the Indian Union, the concept of industrialisation through the small-scale industries suitable to the Sikkimese ecology started in Sikkim. Among the small scale industries, the then infant tea industry of Temi of South Sikkim also attracted the attention of the Government of Sikkim. Thus, industrialising Temi called for the introduction of a manufacturing factory in 1977 at Temi Tea Estate. After the establishment of a factory, the industrialisation process having specific goals of the organisation to the customers world, the tea industry evolved into a full flazed form.

The Temi Tea Estate emerged with the tangible contributions of Nepali castes and tribal workers having the agrarian expertise of the past. The workers are treated as good as agricultural workers without providing most of the industrial benefits of the industrial society. In spite of having treatment of the agricultural workers, the Nepali castes and tribes have adapted with the cultural alternatives of various caste and tribal organisations in their day to-day life in the plantation.

In the present study, issues like the historical background of the Temi plantation, migration of the workers, Social living, Economic life of the workers, Temi Tea Estate : A Hindu-Buddhist Contact Zone, Customs

and Traditions of the workers, problems and prospects of tea industry, industrial relations, Caste-tribe continuum and changes etc. etc. have been incorporated and analysed at length in different chapters.

Undertaking the research project on the Sociological study of Temi Tea Plantation workers of Sikkim, I got complete cooperation from my wife (Sarita) and beloved son (Abhinav) for which they are due to my heartfelt thanks. The personalities like Shri K.B. Subba of Temi Tea Estate, Prakash Paudyal, Vaskar Paudyal (Bermoik-South Sikkim), Dr. Ganshyam Nepal of North Bengal University, Darjeeling and Mr. M.P. Chamling (Manager), Temi Tea Estate are worthy to extend my thanks. Dr. S.S. Chaudhury, Ex-Regional Director, Central Board for Workers Education, Ministry of Labour, Government of India is also worthy to extend my thanks as one of the sources of my academic inspiration. Mr. J.P. Gurung, the General Manager of /Darjeeling Plantation Industries Ltd., Ging Tea Estate is also the personality to extend my thanks for his academic inspiration given to me to undertake such research work.

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KHEMRAJ SHARMA

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TEA PLANTATION WORKERS IN A HIMALAYAN REGION

Introduction

The origin of tea industry in Sikkim is a recent phenomenon in the process of industrial development of Sikkim. For the first time in 1960, an attempt had been made by the Government of Sikkim to introduce a tea industry in Kewzing area of South Sikkim to accommodate Tibetan refugees of third world countries. With the singular objective, the Kewzing tea garden started planting tea. But during the next three or four years, the garden could not reap with good harvests. It is known from the people of present Kewzing that soil content of the garden was not favourable for growing rich tea plants. Secondly, the Tibetan refugees could not work successfully at Kewzing as their dress known as *Bhakus*, *Pangden* with *Hongu* spoiled the small tea plants while working along the small tea plants planted in the initial stages of the plantation. In fact, Kewzing had only 20 acres of land under cultivation on experimental basis.

Thirdly, historically speaking, the Tibetan refugees did not know the terraced cultivation in the Himalayan ecology. Moreover, they were not agriculturists by tradition. This may be the strongest reason why some of the Tibetans shifted their profession from the garden or industrial job to trade and commerce as trade and

commerce were their traditional occupation. Still some other among them of Kewzing joined the Indo-Tibetan force of Indian army. Fourthly, the Tibetan refugees, being not agriculturists, failed to adapt to the plantation agricultural environment at Kewzing.

Finally, the garden job requires lot of perseverance of manual type while trade and commerce do not require such perseverance of manual type. Historically, the Tibetan Bhutias were not accustomed to such physical perseverance of manual type. This might be the apparent reason for them to leave the garden job. So, due to the above mentioned reasons, ultimately in 1966, the Kewzing garden had to abandon for ever. Interestingly, following Kewzing instance, a few people of Rolap Busty started planting tea in their respective private land to make handmade tea. This practice of making handmade tea is still found among the villagers of Rolap and the handmade tea is sold at Rangli Bazar of East Sikkim.

The Origin of Tea Industry in Temi

After the abandonment of Kewzing tea garden, the Government of Sikkim started surveying various areas of South Sikkim for employing the financial aids received from the World Bank under the Refugee Rehabilitation Programme of United Nation Organisation in the form of organised employment in tea industry. So, by 27th November, 1968, the then Temi forest area was cleared up and established the present Temi Tea Estate. A section of Temi area was under the rural belt where once upon a time, Bhutias used to cultivate potato. So, the literary meaning of Temi is Potato *Bagan* (estate) in the Bhutia language. This may be the reason why Temi potato is very famous in Sikkim. After the gestation period of four years, it was found to be ecologically suitable niche for growing tea plants with 20 acres of land under an experimental basis.

Unlike Kewzing tea garden, Temi had different

objectives. Firstly, the garden tried to employ the Nepali inhabitants of Temi and surrounding villages. Secondly, the Sherpas who were equivalent to tribe from Nepal and Bhutan were to be employed at that time. During the next ten years, the garden was expanded with 172 hectares or 500 acres of land under tea cultivation. The Temi garden is located at the distance of 22 km. from the Namchi which is the district headquarter of South Sikkim. Presently (2000-2001), it produced 1,12,000 kg. of Orthodox variety of tea having its own brand known as Kanchendzonga and Solja. It has 400 workers. Each worker has the productive capacity of making 231 kg. made tea per year.

There are two divisions of Temi Tea Estate, viz., Upper and Lower divisions. The garden has been encircled by villages and forests in all its boundaries. On the East of it, there is Temi Village/Temi bajar, Damthang village on the west, Ben village in the north and Rambing village in the south. In the east of the garden, there is a forest called Temi - Tarkhu Forest Range which is also locally known as *Gaucharan*, A Tourist bungalow or Tourist Rest House is there in the *Gaucharan* (grazing Land).

Since its inception, Temi Tea Estate is a Government enterprise of the Sikkim State. The garden was directly under the control and management of Forest Department of Government of Sikkim till 1974. After 1974, the tea estate is under the Ministry of Industries, Government of Sikkim with a Tea Board known as Tea Board of Sikkim having the representatives from the Department of Industries, Finance, Forest and Agriculture. The Tea Board has a Chairman and members of the tea board hail from the above departments of Government of Sikkim. The Temi Tea Estate is again located at the distance of 35 km. away from the Singtam town which is one of the important trading towns of East Sikkim. The elevation of the garden is from 4800 ft. to 6400 ft. above the sea level and it is a South faced garden.

Labour Recruitment and Migration

Indentured labour, low wages and isolation were the characteristic features of the plantation system in the world (Bhowmik : 1981) in general and Temi in particular. Similar features have been noted in other tea gardens of the Eastern Himalayas (Sharma : 2000). In Temi, the local Bhutia and Lepcha population did not accept the tea garden jobs. In general, the history of labour recruitment in the Eastern Himalayan tea industry is the history of Sardari System. So, is the case with Temi Himalayan plantation. Temi had to follow its own type. Immediately after the opening of the garden, Sardars from different castes and tribes of the neighbouring villages of Temi Tea Estate were appointed. In the initial stage of the plantation, the Sardars had to face lot of troubles in enticing the people around Temi. However, the question of caste and community affiliation of the Sardars having similar caste and tribal background could easily attract their fellow caste and tribal people who in turn were enticed for the garden work (Sharma : 1997). In this way, Sardars used to bring their fellow caste or tribe members as labourers in the plantation. Initially, four Sardars one each from Gurung, Rai, Tamang and Limbu castes were selected by the manager of the tea estate from the neighbouring villages. A Gurung Sardar from Damthang enticed his fellow caste members and made them settled at No. 1 Labour *Dhura* (line) which was latter on named as Gurung *Dhura*. Next to Gurung, a Rai Sardar from Ben village recruited his fellow Rai workers and made them settled in Lamitar *Dhura*. Similarly, a Tamang Sardar from Raming village recruited his caste fellows and made them settled at Pach *Dhura*. Subsequently, other castes were also recruited as workers by those Sardars and made them settled in other labour lines like 22 *Dhura*, Chaite *Dhura*, 12 *Dhura*, Shyal *Dhura*, Naya *Dhura* and Katwal *Dhura*. Today among the *Dhuras*, only Katwal *Dhura* is consisting of Tagadhari castes (Bahun and

Chhetri) as garden workers. Rest of the *Dhuras* are multi-caste or multi-tribal *Dhuras* as these groups are consisting of Matwalis of various Nepali castes. These *Dhuras* are also called Matwali Dhuras. The two groups of Nepali community known as Tagadhari and Matwali have separate socio-cultural history which I will discuss in latter pages of the present book. It is observed that Tagadharis including the Biharis are recent settlers in the garden. Socially, Matwalis claim themselves as *Raithanees* (early settlers) while the *Tagadharis* are called *Sukumbasis* (recent settlers) in the garden. To recruit a caste member as worker in the garden could carry a high dignity in front of management for which a Sardar used to get Rs. 100 at the time of Puja or Dasai (Dashara) festival as Puja Bonus. So, a kind of competition used to take place for recruiting the workers among the Sardars. Such process of labour recruitment continued in the garden till 1977 after which Mr. Young (Manager) introduced the Badli system of labour - recruitment by which a fresh worker is to be recruited in the place of retiring worker of the household. The Sardarship as recruiting institution has been discontinued but Sardars are still found today in Temi Tea Estate as the integral part of supervisory structure of the garden.

After Limbu, a few Chhetris from Tarkhu and Kewzing areas joined the garden as plantation workers. Their migration in Temi Tea Estate had mainly taken place after 1977 when a tea factory was started. After Chhetri, a few mangars from Magarjung area joined the garden job in early 1980's of the last century especially as factory workers. The Bhutia and Sherpa workers were recruited with the help of Bhutia Kajis (landlords) from Tarkhu, Bermoik, Damthang, Kewzing, Ben and Ravangla villages during the early eighties of the 19th century. The other castes or occupational castes of Nepal like Newar (goldsmiths), Kami (Ironsmiths) and Damai (Tailors/

Musicians) were recruited in early eighties of last century by the management for technical works of the garden. These castes and tribes are accommodated in various Matwali *Dhuras* of the garden. The pulling factor for their migration to the garden was permanent settlement with regular earnings while pushing factor for migrating to Temi Tea Estate was *Kaji Raj* in agrarian Sikkim and *Kipat Raj* in Nepal (Pradhan : 1991) Himalayas.

The Problem of the Study

This is a Sociological study of tea plantation workers in the Sikkim Himalayas. So far, hardly any study has been done on this aspect of the workers of Temi Tea Estate. The plantation system has dual characteristics – agriculture and industry (Xaxa : 1999). It is known from the above discussion that the Temi garden workers have peasant background of neighbouring villages of Temi and Sikkim state. Once employed in the plantation, they were bracketed into the category of wage labourers (Sharma : 1999). But socially, they are heterogeneous in structure. Historically, the heterogeneous character of Nepali society helps to sustain the isolation of the plantation system as two castes or tribes having two different dialects could not interact together. Another reason for their non-interaction was that a labour line or labour *Dhura* was located at the distance of two to three kilometres. The distance of two to three kilometres in hill terrains is a question of one to two hours journey by foot. The work in the plantation is a continuous process of production relation and it involves certain rules and regulations which are to be obeyed by all. This is a changed situation from that of the past.

The permanent settlement in Temi Tea Estate assures the workers for wages, housing, provident fund etc. So, it is completely a new work situation that gives rise to certain social relationship. Heterogeneity in the economic activity of the past as landless masses to the homogeneous work

force by selling their labour in the plantation makes the workers the industrial work force. Most writers, while defining plantation, tend to overlook the socio-economic relations. They have either lucidly explained its production relations or elaborately describe the production unit itself.

The International Labour Organisation notes the term 'plantation' at first as a group of settlers or the political units formed by it, under the British colonialism especially in North America and West Indies (ILO : 1950). Prof. Hla Myint (1973) has distinguished the plantation from peasant agriculture by its large scale enterprise which normally require more labour per unit of land. Again, William O. Jones (1968) defines a plantation as an economic unit producing agricultural commodities for sale and employing relatively large number of unskilled labourers whose activities are closely supervised.

Therefore, while attempting to conceptualise the plantation, an elucidation of its economic characters alone is not enough. It does not explain the uniqueness of the plantation. The social relations in continuity and change that are taking place in the inter-personal and inter-community level are to be taken into account with thorough caution (Sharma : 1997).

From the above discussion, certain pertinent questions may be drawn as to whether the Tibetan refugees at Kewzing got the same status as 'Sons of the Soil' as given to other communities by 1962 in Sikkim. What happened to the rest of Tibetan refugees after the abandonment of Kewzing Tea Estate? Whether they could not adjust or adapt with the industrial way of life of Temi T.E.? Responding to these questions, the answers received from workers clearly show that only Nepalis are the proponents of terrace cultivation and exponents of industrial development in the Sikkim Himalaya suitable to the Himalayan ecology.

After the introduction of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation policy for Indian economy, the effect is found equally acute in various government enterprises. It is also seen that ownership of tea gardens with the hands of government has reaped discouraging results all over the country after 1991. Temi Tea Estate is also a Government enterprise. Moreover, due to the Exit Policy of Certified Trade Mark adopted by Darjeeling variety of Orthodox type since August, 2000 it has resulted into the fall of Temi Tea prices from Rs. 800 to Rs. 1000 per kilogram to Rs. 200 to Rs. 100 per kilogram. Option-wise, leaf grade of about 55% attracts the foreign markets and remaining 45% is blended for both internal and external markets at Kolkata Auction Market. But the packet tea of Temi along with other packet tea of the country has been levied with 20% excise duty. Moreover, 2% of the gross profit of Temi garden has to be officially given to unemployed youth forum of the state of Sikkim. Interestingly, it is also observed that though Temi is a Government enterprise, all the cost of production is to be borne by the garden itself. Only the agricultural tax as in other states of the country is not levied to the garden while the sale tax is to be paid to the Government of Sikkim. This is because of the fact that Temi, in the eyes of government, is a unit of government process of industrialisation under the various five year plans instead of production unit of an industrial society. In spite of the above difficulties, Temi is producing tea of high quality. So, a question may come as to what is the sustaining capacity of Temi Tea Estate in the changed global economic environment. Is it because of low cost of production (Rs. 60 per kilogram of made tea) as the garden does not have the system of paying gratuity to the workers with minimum Bonus (8.33%), non-payment of subsidised rations to the workers, absence of medical facility, fuels, drinking water, other labour welfare facilities, education for the children of workers, electricity facility etc. etc.

Again, is it due to the whole hearted acceptance and cooperation of Nepali castes and tribes of the region with their perseverance, the Temi tea Garden is sustaining nicely. Their agrarian background helps the workers to accept the tea garden job no matter whether they are Tagadharis or Matwalis. The garden works substantiate agriculture along with animal husbandry because agriculture and animal husbandry go hand in hand in the Nepali society both in the past and today and Temi tea garden economy provides this opportunity (Xaxa : 1997). This is because of fact that Temi tea garden has sufficient waste land where cattle fodders are fully available to the agrarian Nepali people.

Another dimension of the study is that there is an interplay of Matwalisation (Tribalisation) and Hinduisation (Srivastava : 1966) process in so far as day-to-day socio-cultural relationship of the workers is concerned. The interactions between Hindu castes and Buddhist tribes, in regard to day-to-day socio-economic activities have shaped to the tune of industrial environment of Temi Tea Estate having specific organisational goals of its own. The ongoing inherent political turmoil between Tagadharis including Newars and Matwalis in Sikkim has definitely affected the Hindu-Tribal relationship at Temi Tea Estate also. The management hierarchy is completely dominated by Matwalis. It has been further noted that the workers don't expect anything especial except the usual wages being fixed up by the Department of Industries, Government of Sikkim which wholly sees the interest of industries first rather than the welfare of workers. This is the reason why the Nepali workers of Temi Tea Estate keep themselves busy with non-plantation agriculture and animal husbandry. This is corroborated by the fact that Temi butter is very popular in Sikkim and hill Darjeeling. It is explored from the observation made on them at Temi that

of 400 workers, over 350 workers have animal husbandry along with agriculture.

Although Temi Tea Estate is an agro-based industry, the workers are mostly apathetic to the development process of the industry simply on the ground that Temi is so-called a government garden or government property and workers believe that they have nothing to bother about its future. This occurs in the minds of workers as they have no avenue to ventilate their grievances at their own as they do not have any organisation of their own to do so. In this way, it can be said that they are unorganised workers as of rural belts of Sikkim in the clear sense of the term. To form a trade union means to violate their terms and conditions of services in the garden. Hardly it is found that any worker dares to talk about the formation of workers organisation. This has accelerated by the tempo of state policy of Sikkim that discourages unionisation process in the tea industry in the light of Indian Trade Union Act, 1926. In fact, except the partial implementation of Employees Provident Fund Act and Bonus Act of Government of India, no other labour legislation of Government of India has been adopted in the small-scale industries of Sikkim in general and Temi Tea Estate in particular. It means that whatever the Government of Sikkim provides to them has to be accepted by the workers at Temi. It shows that the workers are still in the colonial system of production relations. Of course, there is no apparent exploitation of the workers to look at in the colonial sense but exploitation of workers exists there in covert form.

In this way, the tea garden workers of Temi of Sikkim Himalaya have been hardly come across by the concept of trade union movement and working class solidarity. They have been bluntly lured by the regional concept of 'Sons of Soil' policy of Government of Sikkim. This may be another reason for their silent exploitation by the

management system which is very much organised in the sense that hierarchically there is a manager, an assistant manager, supervisory and clerical staffs who with suggestions of the Ministry of Industries, Government of Sikkim organise the production system of the industry in the modern fashion. Temi being the bastion of regular visit of bureaucrats of Government of Sikkim and outside agencies, manager remains always busy with their visits and he hardly gets time to look after the field and factory operations of the garden.

Operationalisation of the Concept of the Study

As mentioned above, there is hardly any study on Temi Tea Estate, except a few stray reports available at the offices of Tea Board of Sikkim and the Department of Industries, Government of Sikkim. Thus, there is a dearth of published materials on Temi Tea Estate. Mrs. Mamta Desai (1983) has explained in a paragraph regarding the original objectives behind the establishment of the tea garden at Temi. But she has not stated anything about the composition of tea garden workers and their socio-economic conditions. Again, most of the available reports of the Department of Industries, Government of Sikkim and Tea Board of Sikkim have simply reflected the information regarding the tea statistics, target (production), areas, price fluctuation, marketing problems, problems of its extension due to the paucity of land in Temi or due to the existence of villages and reserve forests. Only in 1968, the forest department allowed to clear up the forest of 500 acres for tea plantation due to the pressure of Government of Sikkim to adopt the Rehabilitation programme of International organisation for rehabilitating the Tibetan refugees of third world countries. It is, therefore, transparent from this that the opening of Temi Tea Estate in Sikkim is the noble result of international pressure of United Nations. This is in tune with the birth of tea industry in India during the British Raj. The denial

of China to supply tea to the Britishers forced British Government to open tea industry in India. Therefore, Temi Tea Estate emerged not due to the industrial or enterprising attitude of Chowgal (king of Sikkim) but due to the efforts put forwarded by the international agency. Otherwise, the Chowgal was a Bhutia king who had little inclination towards the emergence of an agro-based tea industry in Sikkim because of his cultural affinity to Bhutia community which had has phyobia for agriculture. This might be the apparent reason for having only four Bhutia households today at Temi Tea Estate. The hypothesis has been further testified by the concentration of Bhutia community in urban or semi-urban towns of Eastern District of Sikkim. Even if some Bhutias are found in Southern, Northern and Western districts of Sikkim, they are concentrated mainly in towns like Mangan, Namchi, Gyalshing and Jorethang which provide them with ample opportunity for trade and commerce. Again, even if some Bhutias are found in villages of Sikkim they are mainly Kajis (Landlords).

In fact, Temi Tea Estate was recognised across the world only after 1981 (much after the merger of Sikkim with Indian Union). Thus, Temi was in experimental phase prior to 1975. Hence, from the evolution point of view, Temi Tea Estate can be classified into three stages of its development since inception (27th November, 1968), viz., Formative (1968-1980), Expansion (1980-1991) and Stagnation phase (1991 onwards). The Formative phase being experimental, there was no clear cut concept of tea industry along with uncertainty of manpower resources. The second phase is characterised by repaid expansion of Tea bushes and manpower supply from the Nepali community of the region with the introduction of a tea factory. The present phase which is a stagnation phase is characterised by the Culture of Uncertainty of industry due to its beging outside the Darjeeling Certified Trade

Mark or Logo of Orthodox variety in the National and International markets. From price point of view, this is the main reason for the sickness of tea industry in Sikkim (CCPA : 1994) because the other parameters for its sickness like uncertainty of weather, increasing population, apathy of workers of Temi, political interferences, bureaucratic over meanings, fragile Himalayan ecology of Temi etc. have no bearing on the plantation. Above all, the age of tea bushes is very young of hardly three decades of growth along with the higher labour productivity of 231 kilogram of made tea per worker per year. The Labour productivity of Temi Tea Estate is much higher than any other tea gardens of Eastern Himalaya.

The theoretical approach of the study is Social Anthropological one as the Temi Society is neither purely Hindu caste oriented nor purely tribal one in structure. It is in fact a Hindu-Buddhist contact zone of the industrialisation process of Sikkim. It is found that other ecological zones of Sikkim are exclusively meant for specific communities. The three major communities of Sikkim (Sinha : 1975) like Nepali, Lepcha and Bhutia have their specific culturo-Ecological zones (Desai : 1988) of respective culture-niches for their habitation. For instance, Lepchas have North zone, Bhutias the East Zone and Nepalese the South and West Zones of Sikkim. The ecological zones of respective community has specific migration history in Sikkim (Caude : 1909). For example, the Nepalis had easy access to Sikkim in early 15th century from South and West Sikkim which happened to be once under the kingdom of Nepal (Coelho : 1970). The Tibetan Bhutia migration to Sikkim taken place mainly from Eastern border attached to Tibet. While the indigenous Lepchas were pushed to Northern Sikkim after the (Risley : 1894) Tibetan Bhutias started converting the Lepchas into Buddhist religion in West and Southern Sikkim in early 16th Century (Percy : 1922). But Temi Tea

Estate is found to be the zone of integration or contact between Hinduism and Buddhism as Hindus and Buddhists are simultaneously adapting the same industrial environment.

Some sociological hypothesis have been tested in the present study. The first one is that the industrial environment of tea plantation has transformed the socio-economic life of Nepali castes and tribes of Eastern Himalayas. Secondly, industrialisation process as borrowed from Indian mainland has definitely helped to prosper Hinduisation process in day-to-day socio-economic life of the workers. Thirdly, diffusion and diffision processes are found intermingling in different ways in Temi than as we found in other tea gardens of Eastern Himalayas. Aboding in the same industrial environment, some cultural traits of Hindu, Buddhist and Christian communities are diffused and still some other cultural traits are diffised. Finally the common organisational goal of Temi Tea Estate has shaped the Socio-Economic life of the workers in a specific direction whether it is apprehensible or comprehensible to the workers in the changed global economic environment.

It is agreed by the Nepali tea plantation workers that the industrialisation process of Government of Sikkim in Temi adds extra impetus to their livelihood, of course optional ones. For them, agriculture minus industry is not a misnomer while industry minus agriculture is completely a myth for their living. This is the inherent reason why inspite of their complete exploitation they have been sticked to the industry. Had there been any other dominant community in Temi like Bhutia or Lepcha than today Temi Tea Estate would be as good as a rural belt as we found surrounding Temi. Thus, the primary objective to open temi Tea Estate for continuing rehabilitation programme for Tibetan refugees by the Government of Sikkim in the beginning is proved to be a futile exercise

today. Rather the second objective of the Government behind the opening of Temi Tea Estate to accommodate the local Nepalis has reaped meaningful justification in the process of industrial development of Sikkim.

In the present study, caste-tribe socio-cultural relationships at Temi Tea Estate have been looked at the close quarters. Besides the general socio-economic aspects of the workers, political economy, health dimension etc.. have also been discussed elaborately. The nature of continuity and change in social structure of Nepali and tribal communities is another aspect of the study. Studying the Temi Garden Society, certain social parameters like family, marriage pattern, education level, religious structure, caste-tribe continuum, caste-tribe diffusion and diffusion processes etc. have also analysed. In regard to the economic life of the workers, occupational structure and mobility, style of life, migration pattern, place of birth, land holdings, animal husbandry etc. have also observed very closely. Again, as there is no trade union organisation in the garden, how the industrial problems are settled? Who settles the industrial problems? How the welfare measures of the workers get implemented? are other aspects of the present study.

Methodology of the Study

In early 2000, a pilot study of the households had been done to acquaint myself with the labours, management and other socio-cultural associations. Being Nepali by ethnicity. I was thoroughly accepted by the workers. Another reason for accepting me for the research work by the workers was that I belong to the Central Board for Workers Education. Ministry of Labour, Government of India as an Education Officer. But in the beginning of my field work, the manager did not supported me stating that he was unable to cooperate officially to me as he was suppose to keep everything of the garden secret under the instructions of the Department of Industries,

Government of Sikkim. The pilot study was over by the end of March, 2000.

Data Collection

By June 2000, I started field work with a structured household census and questionnaire. The questionnaire was consisting of sixteen pages with open ended questions for the workers. Besides the questionnaire for workers, separate questionnaires were also prepared for managerial personnel, aged people, portfolio holders of socio-cultural associations, panchayat members, as well as the neighbouring villagers of Temi Tea Estate. Two Kajis of Temi village were also thoroughly interviewed on the historicity of Temi garden, recruitment of workers etc. The field work was over by the end of July, 2001 and after that report writing of the study started along with the literature survey of secondary data available from the libraries of the region and outside. All the 269 households of the workers were covered during the field work period of about one year. All the 400 workers were interviewed thoroughly at homes and work places. The present study does not rely on theoretical sophistication but on the empirical data collected from Temi Tea Estate of Sikkim Himalaya during 2000-2001.

Methods of Data Collection

Considering the problem of the study, the following sample questionnaire had been prepared. The first section deals with household census :

1. Name of the Respondent.
2. Relation with the head of family.
3. Age structure of the family members.
4. Sex structure of the family members.
5. Birth place of the family members.
6. Educational standards of family members.
7. Religious structure of the family.

8. Occupational structure of the family.
9. Landholding pattern of the family.
10. Cattlestock of the family
11. Modern equipment of the family.
12. Wage structure of the workers.
13. No. of working members of the family.
14. The name of Festivals observed in the family.
15. The name of festivals/rituals attended.

These questions were structured one for the household census of the workers. Besides the above questions, the following questions on socio-cultural aspects of the workers on Temi Tea Estate were prepared.

1. Why did you migrated to the plantation?
2. What did you do in your place of origin?
3. Is there any division of roles among your family members? If yes, what are the role of wife, husband, children and other members of your family?
4. Do you do your duty in the plantation regularly? If yes, how many hours in a day/week?
5. Do you think production/ productivity has been increasing or decreasing presently?
6. What are the other job facilities you get from the plantation? (Details)
7. Do you think that your management deposit your Provident Fund regularly?
8. If no, why?
9. What are the main duty you do during 12 months of the year?
10. Do your manager visits your work place?
11. How your management recruit workers in the plantation?
12. Whether you get Bonus? If yes, how much? If no, why?

13. What type of (industrial relations is there in your garden between workers and management?
14. Who settles the industrial disputes in the garden?
15. Is there any social organisation in the garden? If yes, what are the names of associations?
16. Who are the executives of these associations? Name them.
17. Which community is most dominant in the plantation?
18. Whether the dominant community is taken in confidence by the management?
19. Whether Panchayat has any role in the plantation? If Yes/No and if no, why?
20. What are the functions of socio-cultural associations?
21. What are relationship among the Nepali castes and tribes?
22. What kind of marriage has taken place in your family?
23. No. of marriage within the caste.
24. No. of marriage with other caste/community.
25. How would you rank caste/community in your plantation?
26. Whether you invite other communities or castes in marriage, in your house?
27. Do you accept Pucca food from other castes/communities?
28. Do you accept Kuccha food from other castes/communities?
29. Do your manager or management personnel attend marriage and death rituals in your house if they are called for?
30. Do you sacrifice animals' blood etc. in your household rituals?
31. What are the common festivals in your household?

32. Do you invite other castes in such festivals in your household?
33. What are the major food items you use in celebrating festivals and rituals?
34. Do you offer wine and meat to Brahmin in day today life?
35. If no, why?
36. Do you accept intercaste/inter community marriages in your household?
37. If yes, why? If no, why?
38. Who settles the conflicts arising between two families, labour and management and labours and labours?
39. Do you think there is inter-ethnic conflicts in the plantation?
40. Do you celebrate any communal festival? If yes, name? If no, Why?
41. Do you invite Shamen (Jhankri) in celebrating festivals?
42. Do you know the people are converting to other religions?
43. Where do you first go if any of your family member falls sick? Jhankri or Doctor, if to Doctor, Why and if to a Jhankri, Why?
44. Do you have latrine at your home? If yes, Why? If no Why?
45. What medical facilities are given to you if you fall sick?
46. Is there any creche in the garden?
47. Is there any recreational facility in the garden?
48. Is there any classification of caste/community on the basis of number of years of service in the plantation?
49. Does one community helps others in time of emergency? If yes, how? And no, Why?

50. Do you think your plantation will survive for ever? If yes, How? And no, Why?
51. Is there any differences between 'Nak Chhuchees' and 'Nak Thapchees' in the plantation?
52. What do you think about behaviour of your manager?
53. What do you think about behaviour of your Asst. Manager?
54. Do you think that there should be trade union in your garden?
55. Do you believe on 'Sons of the Soil Policy' has helped to raise socio-economic life of workers?
56. Do you think your garden really a government enterprise of Sikkim Government?
57. Who raises the wages of the workers?
58. Are you satisfied with the facilities of the plantation?
59. Which community is most proficient in plantation job?
60. Is there Bhattis in the plantation? If yes, do you go there to drink? If yes, Why? If no, Why?