

Lowest Pay in Tea Garden! Why?

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Abstract— As per the record India is the second highest tea production country in the world with 991180 tones, and several studies have been done by the many researchers and scholars but few scholars and experts have mentioned the relationship between labourers and tea garden authority or tea industry. Yes, there have been little efforts to study the labourers' relations in the tea plantations of West Bengal. With the help of labours laws and with the initiative of many non-governments organization tries to uplift their social and economic life of tea garden labourers, many political leaders from PM to local leaders promised to improve their socio-economic conditions are failed. No one is bother about the socio-economic conditions of tea garden labourers, then who will stand for them? It's a big questions mark for me and you.

Index Terms: Tea garden labourers, lowest wages, Socio-economic Conditions, Corrupt tea garden authorities and corrupt political leaders

INTRODUCTION

Tea is one the plantation crops like coffee and rubber, whose plants last for several years during which produce can be obtained. Tea is one of the most popular beverages in the world and consumed by a large number of people. Tea, as common beverage, has been playing a pivotal role in the national economy of so many developing countries in the world. Owing to its increasing demand, tea is considered to be one of the major components of

world beverage market. Tea is consumed in almost all the countries of the world though the process of preparation is different in different regions of the world. Despite commonly consumed beverage of the world, tea cultivation is confined only to certain specific regions of the world due to specific requirements of climate and soil conditions. Majority of the tea producing countries are located in the continent of Asia where China, India, Sri Lanka are the major producers. African tea growing countries are located mostly around the tropical regions where Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda are major producers. Apart from these regions, some quantities of tea are also being produced in Argentina, Brazil, Iran, Turkey, Russia and Georgia. China, India, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Indonesia are principal producers of tea amongst tea producing countries in the world. These five countries together account about 77 percent of world tea production and 80 percent global exports (Majumder et al., 2012). China secured the first position both in terms of cultivated area and production with 1419530 hectares of area under tea and 1467467 tones of production in 2010. India with 583000 hectares of area and 991180 tones of production secured the second position in the world tea in 2010 (Table 1.1). Tea industry in India is one of the largest organized industries. It is one of the oldest organized firm sectors with a large network of tea producers, retailers, distributors, auctioneers and exporters in the country. India is the largest producer of black tea as well as the largest consumer of tea in the world. India is the second largest producer of tea as well as the largest consumer of `tea in the world. In the face of stiff competition from many tea growing countries of the world, India's world ranking as an exporter has come down.

Table 1.1: List of Top Ten Tea Producing Countries in the World (2010)

Countries	Area (Ha)	Rank	Production (tones)	Rank
China	1419530	1	1467467	1

India	583000	2	991180	2
Kenya	171900	4	399000	3
Sri Lanka	218300	3	282300	4
Turkey	75851	7	235000	5
Viet Nam	113200	6	198466	6
Iran	19473	10	165717	7
Indonesia	124573	5	150342	8
Argentina	37221	9	88574	9
Japan	46800	8	85000	10

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (WWW.fao.org)

from number one to number four and production from number one rank to number two recently (Table 1.2).

The rank of Indian tea has not come down in terms of exporter but also in terms of production too. Currently India produces 23 percent of total world production and occupies 15 percent of world's tea area. India secured the second highest position in terms of tea consumption in the world with 21 percent of total world tea consumption. Moreover, nearly 80 percent of the tea produced is consumed within India.

Table 1.2: Status of Indian Tea in the World

Tea	World	India	Rank	% Share
Area (Million Ha)	3.94	0.58	2 nd	15
Production (Million Kg)	4162	966	2 nd	23
Yield (Kg / Ha)	1143	1668	3 rd	
Export (Million Kg)	1738	193	4 th	22
Consumption (Million Kg)	3980	837	2 nd	21

Source: Taken From Majumder et al. (2012)

India's large tea plantations are mostly concentrated in Assam and North Bengal. Though the state of Assam occupies a unique position in the tea map of the country, other states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Keral and West Bengal do produce a good amount of tea in India. They do contribute from a minimum to moderate quantity of the tea production of the country. The tea gardens in south states are mainly concentrated in the Nilgiri Hills and Western Ghats. Small areas are also found in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh in the North. On the whole, these states taken together contribute to the historical growth and culture of tea in India.

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (www.fao.org),

Source: Taken From Majumder et al. (2012)

Source: Various Issues of CMIE and Tea Statistics

Tea plantation sector is one of the biggest sectors, where almost 1.2 million employees are working across the country, in India mostly in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu these states has tea garden and tea workers.

70% of the total production from West Bengal and Assam and rest from Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Nilgiri Hills is the famous place for one of the best Tea in our country. In the state of West Bengal Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipur Duar districts are the famous for Tea Garden, in the state of Assam is one of the biggest and oldest Tea plantation area in our country.

According to Food and Agriculture Organization say India is the second highest production of Tea 991180 tones in the world, and Tea garden employees should get a good payment, why there is lowest pay? Today we are going to discuss some serious points that are the causes for lowest payment of tea garden labourers.

1. Market Monopoly
2. Corrupt Politician Leaders
3. Corrupt Tea Garden Authority
4. Neglected Sector
5. Making more profit

There would be some more reasons for monopolizing the Tea Garden Employees, but here we are going to discuss few points which are root causes of lowest payment in the tea garden.

1. *Market Monopoly*: From top to bottom, every single personal way they want they are doing freely, in the market monopoly from single manager to higher authority like owner of the garden all are corrupt. Because owners want to take more advantages of employees, tea garden authority suppose to give many facilities to employees like PF, Education facility for children, drinking water facility, medical facility, housing facility, electricity facility, from all of these facilities employees are marginalized but no one is there to talk about them.

If employees are complaining about manager to the owner, from next day itself that particular employee will be thrown out from the job, and the owner has to listen the manager because that manager is supported by the local people, and owner has to listen the manager because he is the one who get the labourers

for tea garden. And the labourers' prize is under the sr. manager of the tea garden.

Do you think that all labour's payments are same? No, payments are different according to the individual, if manager wants to favor any particular employee then he can do that, if any employees try to be cunning with manager then he/she will be in problems, not only that he/she will be punished in the form of fine/money or he/she will be suspended from the job. And these poor labourers are bound to obey the manager, because these people they don't have any other options, many years ago they left every things back home and now there is nothing for them, may they have some relatives back home but relatives has taken away whatever property or land they had, because it is not the case for 5 – 10 years, their cases is more than 100 years.

So, labourers are choose to be quite in the tea garden, and they will be happy with whatever situation they need to face, because they go back to their own place, they have to start from zero and they have to face many difficulties then here in tea garden. So, they are keeping quiet and accept the present situation. These labour class people are struggling with their daily food, where as some cunning people sitting at home and they enjoying their life, they are making big money out tea garden labourers, this is the present truth.

2. *Corrupt Politician Leader:* This is one the biggest factors for lowering the labour prize in the tea garden, one politician leader can do many thing in the state like West Bengal, if you are politician leader, than you will have all the pleasures and happiness, if you are politician leader, everybody will respect and honor you, if you are wrong also people will support, it doesn't matter what is your back ground, if you are politician leader you have all the pleasure on your feet.

Many politicians came once in five years; they come and made so many promises, once the election end all the political parties and politician will be disappeared, some where they will be lost, if you look for them, they will ask you to come again and again. Whatever they promise it will never fulfill, once they win the election, they become the most powerful person in that locality.

If by chance if you met some politician leader, they will show how much they love and respect you, they

talk and act like a real good friends neighbors but there is nothing real, this is India, and you need to understand the situation, how these people are surviving day to day, it is quite different from the developed country, here in India you will find some good people too but not much, very few people will be there those who think for others and die for others. By heart no body like politician leaders here in India, because 99% politician leaders are corrupt, whatever facilities come from government through nothing reach to the poor people. That's the reason here in India politicians are not safe, politicians are corrupt, selfish, and untrustworthy person. They think politics is the one of the best way to make money and it is true facts.

All the politicians suppose to be very helpful and kind to the local village people but in the reality is opposite of all the hopes and expectation. Some time I think about all the politicians, why they use to lie to the people? And there would be many more reasons but top most reason is selfish and greedy about the wealth and property. There is no value about honesty and truth in politics, they have only one motto in their life is how to make money and become a rich man.

There are very few people, those who have good heart and think about the common people to serve, and some good leaders they have a soft corner in their heart to serve the country. There is no doubt about it because of some good leaders the country progress rapidly, even for common people's life also become healthy and comfortable. Even though most of the politicians are corrupt and selfish but I always respect good leaders for their honesty and good heart. Although, being an honest leaders and faithful person they always face a lot of difficulties and troubles in their daily life.

3. *Corrupt Tea Garden Authority:* Tea Garden Authorities are the most corrupt person, because tea garden authorities suppose to give many facilities like PF, free rations, housing facility, education facility, medical facility, electricity facility and safe drinking water facility etc. Nothings are provided to the employees, all these facilities are recorded that they are providing to the employees but real fact is nothing is provided to the lower categories employees.

As per the government's labour laws, if any organization is operation more than 20 employees, that organization has to registered for EPF, and the

calculation for EPF is 12% of his/her salary, and employers will pay 50% and employees share is 50%, and altogether the calculation share will be 24% every months.

Suppose an employee is getting 15,000 salary, 12% of 15,000 is = 1800 + 1800 employers share total will be 36, 00.00 every month will be deposit in employees account. This EPF benefits will be the retirement benefits at the time of retirement of employees. Years after years the employee is working for that organization but no retirement benefits is recognized by the organization.

Same way other benefits also employees are not getting, education facility for tea garden children, medical facility employees, housing facility for tea garden employees and other basic facility like safe drinking water is not providing. To whom they will complain about their needs? Definitely to their owners or authorities but they are less bother about their labourers, so this is the current situation in the tea garden.

None of the employees are working permanent basis, all of the employees are working in temporary basis years after years, if organization count them as a permanent workers in the their organization than the organization has to pay all the benefits to the employees, so what the organization does is, they pay all the benefits to very few employees those who are working upper level, so that they can show in name sake they are providing all benefits to the employees.

4. *Neglected Industries:* The is one hundred percent is truth that tea garden has been neglected right after the British left out country, all most all states and districts I have visited and try to find out some information from local tea employees, and I found most of the tea garden is established by the British people, very few tea garden newly established by the Indian. Here I want to say about tea plantation rules, some tea garden is very old, and the production is gone down but still we don't want change the tea plants, where as the economic life of tea plants is 50 years not more than that.

Some of old tea gardens need to re – plant so that the production margin is more, twice in years we need to clean the grass and other bushes, time to time we need to pesticide the tea garden and we need to give proper quantity of fertilizer than the production level will be maximum. Some of tea garden authorities are

very active and concerned about the tea garden but majority tea garden authorities are less bother about the tea plants caring, tea plantations labourers are neglected by the economically, socially and politically.

Tea gardens employees are economically neglected because their average payment is Rs. 176 daily, even some tea garden authority pay them less than Rs. 176 per day apart from other benefits. Today's market it is nothing for a family to survive properly, somehow they are managing with little money, and we cannot think about their children education and other facilities.

The tea garden employees are recognized marginalized people in the society, no one is ready to talk about them, everyone knows about them but who will come forward and fights for their daily wages? It's an open secret to us but who will stand for these people? It is the big question marks and threats to our civil society. Personally I found that in this sector most of the employees are from adibasi community and this is the main reasons, why tea garden sector is neglected?

As I said that most of the adibasi people are illiterate and uneducated, they are simple village labourers, they don't understand many techniques which some time we need to play for our own benefits but these adibasi people they believe in simplicity, humble and care for others, in this community there is no big face in politics, not much educated in the society and not much greedy for wealth and property, only they are much concerned about their daily life. And this is the main reasons why we are very less in the community; I have seen if any man and woman get some serious health problems, they surely die because they don't have any backup or money for treatment. Very few people survive from their health problems, nowadays little better situation because of many NGOs and agents they are really working for the needy and poor people in the society. As our country became free from British rule and we think that we are free from slavery system? No way! Now we are slave for many rich people in the country, now we are slave for blind laws which is lead by the corrupt leaders.

It is very easy to say that “we all are equal in front of eyes of the laws” but in practical it is something different, remember this – “Everything got a price, if you have enough money then you can own it” that

means here I am talking about money power, if you have enough money then you can make things up and down, it means you can change the results with your money power.

And it's happening most of the places, whom to blame for injustice? What you can do in this situation? Only you can curse yourself being a poor, you will hate yourself being a victim, situation will make you slog being a poor. Many times people misuse their power, and they try to win you, in this type of situation you will fill like the whole world is in one side and you are alone other side.

This is an as usual case with all the victims, those who are common, neglected by the upper class level people, we should not forget about honesty and faithfulness, we should have strong believe on honesty. Some day God wills rearward His faithful servants with all mighty powers blessing. We should always walk in His path and depend upon His grace.

5. *Making more profit:* Every organization want to make more and more profit out their business, some organization make more profits and some are make less profits but business is to make profit. Every organization have their own people like manager, managing directors and CEO (Chief Executive Officer) who look after the business and they are the expertise in their own field.

Most of the managers and the managing directors are favorite personality of the company or organization, they are key person to manage and operate the business, if anyone found that they are not loyal to the organization, they will be terminate or dismiss immediately. However, majority of the higher authorities are unpopular to the general employees because they are person who take owners side within the organization.

Very few managers and the managing directors become popular to the employees because they stand for the general employees, they work with whole heart and they can understand employees' pain and problems. It doesn't mean that they are not loyal or faithful to the organization; they are the honest person for the organization. They are very much concerned for the lower level of employees, because these employees are the backbone of the organization, if the employees are not in good health then how can an organization can grow?

This is all about with the every individual, how we think about the lower level of employees in our organization, if we are very much concerned about ourselves definitely we close our eyes and think about the more profits for the own benefits. Hence, that's why we avoid other benefits of the employees like EPF, education benefits, medical facilities etc. When we are not providing any of these benefits to the employees that means we are more profit making mode. Indeed, all the employees are the eligible for their basic benefits; they should be honored with their rights and benefits.

Basically, there are two reasons to make more profits; one is to expand their business to establish more and more companies to make more money for their own bank balance, they make more profits to earned respect in the society, and other hand many organizations are there to expend more for the people of the country, community and for the society to develop.

Most of the organization they play a tricky game with their employees; trick is very simple and clear. The labour requirement of any organization or any company is fulfilling with recruitment of require labour but when the organization hide the labour requirement by hiring less number of labour for that particular requirement. For an example; if the organization need 100 labours for a particular tea garden to fulfill their labour requirement, in this situation if manager or a managing director hire 60 labours for that particular requirement and manage 100 labours work with 60 labours then definitely he/she is saving 40 labours cost. So, this is the simple trick played by the tea garden authority or owner.

In this process the labour cost goes down and the income rate goes up, but the workload will be huge and more, with that workload labour does not get any free time or relaxes time, continually he/she has to work without any stopping. How it can be possible? But the fact is this true, as I am working very closely with some of the tea garden and I have talked and find out about this trick. They never ever think about the employee's health conditions, it doesn't matter for him anything, its normal for him/her but profit should be there. They are damn care about the local labour authority, labour authority also involved with corrupt manager and managing director. These people are very much concerned about their profit not about their employees.

Majority of the higher authority are corrupt and dishonest, they are always in right after the profit, even there is cheating habits of the manager's towards his/her employees. In every organization it's happened with all the employees, they have been cheated by their manager how? All these managers are very cunning and claver, what they do with their labours is miscalculation of their wages. Always they keep dues of their wages, never ever they make 100 percent wages, and they (managers) always keep one week payments with them for security purpose, it is nothing but making fool all the employees. Because 99 percent tea garden labourers are illiterate and uneducated, they don't know how to calculate their wages, I mean manager make them confusion with their wages.

Even some time some employees they work extra hours for some immediate work need to be finished up, for those extra hours they worked the manager counted as a free, whereas the manager recorded overtime payment takeout him selves and keep it for him, there are many ways these poor labourers been cheated by the manager. Because there is no one who can evaluate and find out the truth.

I would like to high light about Madhura Rao is a research with Maastricht University in the Netherlands, what she said in her research work:

As human rights crisis brews in Assam's tea plantations, businesses must step up to end cycle of deprivation

To make a significant impact on the human rights of Assam's tea plantation workers, businesses need to move away from the window dressing approach of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that allows them to cherry-pick issues that they wish to address. They must move to a more robust and systematic approach – one that places the protection of human rights at its core.



An Assamese tea garden in colonial India. Wikimedia Commons

Each morning, millions of Indians start their day with a hot cup of *chai*. The custom of sipping on this sweet, milky beverage is one of the few practices that transcend class, linguistic, and religious boundaries in the country. *Chai* is such an integral part of the India cultural identity that mentioning its foreign origin almost feels blasphemous. But the truth is that before 1900, the only connection an Indian person could have had with tea was tending to British-owned plantations. Today, a majority of the tea powder used to prepare *chai* is sourced from Assam. However, there is little discussion around how the state became one of the biggest tea-growing regions of the world.

The first Anglo-Burmese war, which concluded in the late 1820s, resulted in the incorporation of the North-East Indian Territory of Assam into the British Empire. In the 1830s, British explorers foraging this newly acquired land discovered tea forests growing in the plains of Assam. This discovery presented the British with an opportunity to break the Chinese monopoly on tea and cultivated it within the Empire. In 1848, industrial spy and botanist Robert Fortune was sent on a trip to the interiors of China to steal secrets of tea horticulture and manufacturing. In what could be called nothing short of industrial espionage, Fortune smuggled tea plants and seeds into India. To cross with the wild Assamese variety. Meanwhile, in England, resolutions were passed for a public company to be formed to scale up the Assamese tea enterprise. This company was to be called 'The Assam Company'.

In the initial years, the company attempted to employ Assamese locals, but this did not work out well. Local labour was disinterested in plantation jobs and was hard to tie down. The quest for migrant labour began in the 1860s. During this period, the British were in the midst of recruiting a Coolie workforce – a system of indentured labour to replace the recently abolished practice of slavery. Tribal groups of Central and Eastern India were seen as fitting candidates and were deployed to colonial plantations all over the world, including Assam.

Low wages, a high rate of illiteracy, coupled with the lack of alternative employment opportunities have resulted in these workers falling into a vicious circle of poverty and deprivation, one generation after the other.

Civil society organizations working to improve the situation have reported hazardous working

conditions, poor healthcare facilities, gender-based discrimination, and dilapidated housing facilities. The lack of a strong labour union also results in workers getting paid lower wages than the national average. Their identity as tribal migrants and non-native Assamese leaves these workers without much agency to negotiate their terms of employment. Although the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 seeks to ensure fair treatment and socio-economic security, workers continue to be exploited because implementation is not systematic.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would like to draw your petty attention towards the tea garden employees, as their living condition is worst situation right now, let's everyone try to find out the some suggestions or solutions for tea garden employees for their better living condition. Let's stand for tea labourers and fight for their basic rights.

Ongoing Honorable Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi, when he was addressing siliguri public during 42 Lok Shaba Election in December, 2019. During his public speaking, he promised many things, even he talked about tea garden employees daily wages, he promised to the people that he will increase the daily wages for tea garden employees to Rs. 225, that was in 2019 but till now there is no result. So, you can understand their situation, till now many people believed that someday their need will be fulfilled.

When our country's Prime Minister failed to restore his promises, than what about the other political leaders? Any politician or political leader come to tea garden area only once in 5 years, they are most opportunities, selfish people around the society, when election time will come they play with these people, some time they will show their political powers, some time they will show their money and some time they will show their religious power.

And these adivasi people are helpless with their family and lives, if anyone pay them little money, they are ready to do whatever you want. Yes, if any one willingly offered you some money for your vote, we should accept it from all the parties, no one is there to watch your vote casting, at least one day take all the benefits whatever comes to you, but these adivasi people sincerely they will tell that they have taken some money for their votes, and they refused many other politician leaders.

My personal opening is we should take any amounts money they offer us, because this is the time when we can take maximum benefits from any politician leaders, and we should not waste our important and valuable votes, we should be good to every politician leaders and we should give them assurance that we are going to vote them, but you and me we knows that the better one, who will be the right and appropriate candidates, who will be the godfather for poorest one, who will be the shareable our pain and joy, who will be real political leader, we should vote them. There are some good leaders who think about poor people in the society, we should recognize their faithfulness, hard works, sincerity, patriotic and we should honor them with our valuable votes an give them a chance to prove themselves that they are also good people.

In politics there is every thing is acceptable in Indian politics, they never think about national interest, they will be preferred on their own benefits and do whatever is needed for them. We Indian believe on political leaders what every they promise to us, it is just to make us happy for some time and take our votes. In ground reality they don't provide anything which is good for common people, if a political leader meets 100 people then he might tell 100 lies to the people, and it is true that they deal many people with different problems and situations, to handle the situation they have to lie to the common people. There are some political leaders they can be recognize as a good human being and those leaders are always honored and respected by the village common men.

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