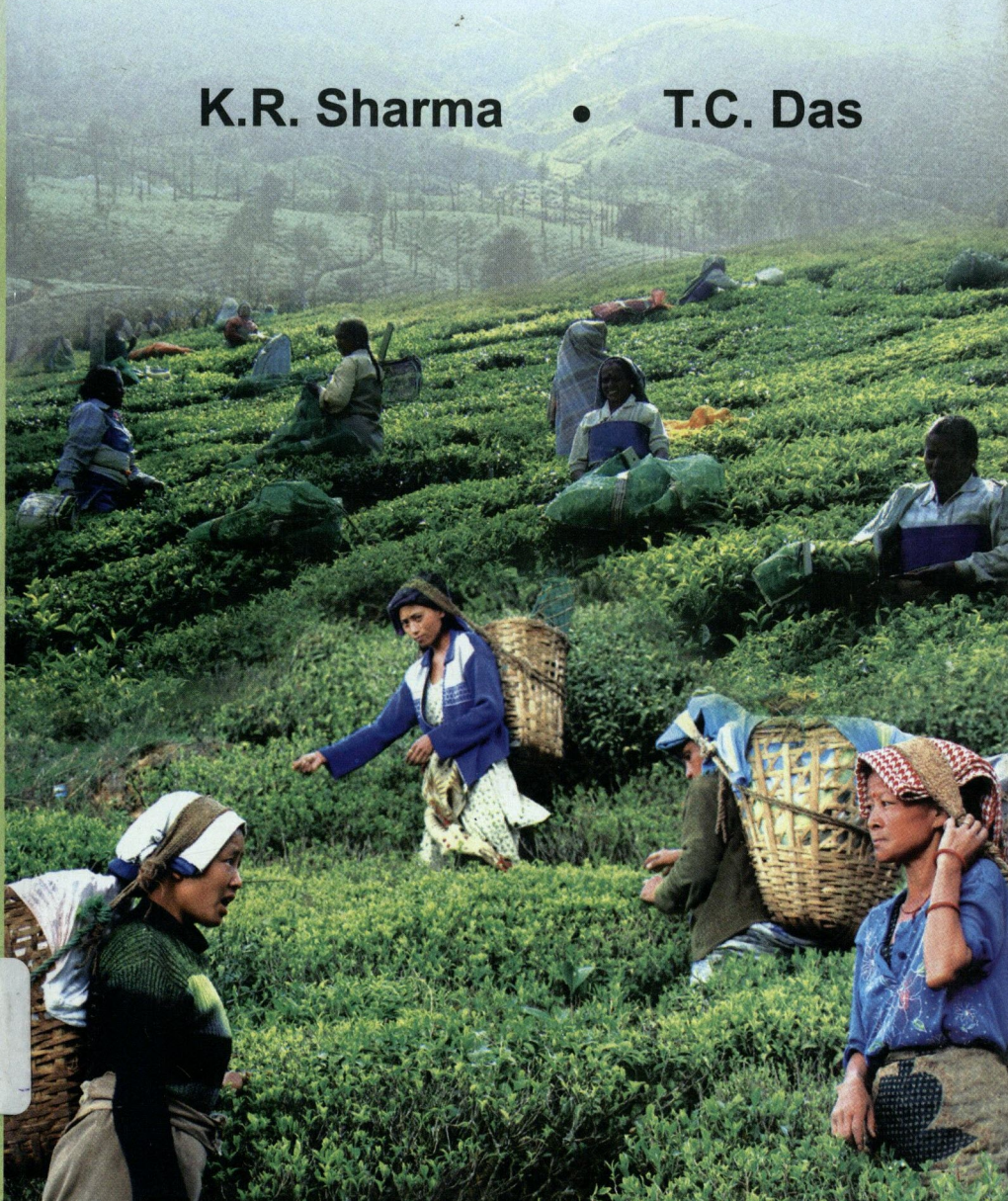


# AGONY OF PLANTATION WORKERS IN NORTH - EAST INDIA

K.R. Sharma • T.C. Das



The book *Agony of Plantation Workers in North-East India* deals with socio-economic agonies of the plantation workers of the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Darjeeling of the North East India. The workers are mainly immigrants from various parts of the country and Nepal. After joining the jobs of tea plantations, they have been barricaded within the plantation enclaves only having little exposure outside the plantation world. Their socio-economic agonies have been hardly known to the civilized world of human society. The present book shall enlighten their commitments to the industry, organised exploitations in the plantation universe, socio-cultural milieus and integration process. It also highlights their participation in nation building aptitude and perceptions to the change brought about by the liberalisation of Indian economy including the plantation industry of the region. The book will be the source material for further empirical study on the plantation frontiers of the country.

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**Dr. K.R. Sharma,  
Mr. T.C. Das**



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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

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The emergence of tea industry in the state of Arunachal Pradesh of North East India is a saga of Arunachal Government process of industrialization in the late eighties of 19 th century. For the first time in 1977, the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Development Corporation Ltd. was established by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to streamline the process of industrialization so as to regularize and then systematize the then wood cutting process of forests or to continue the then wood based industries of the state more and more scientifically (Bose: 1997). Exploring the plantation potentials into the territory (North Eastern Frontier Agency), the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Development Corporation Ltd. (Ibid) could successfully open tea plantations one at Kanubari and another at Medo in Tirap and Lohit districts respectively in 1991 of the state. Similarly, during the period, two private tea estates also emerged, viz, M/S Siyang Tea and Industries (P) Ltd. and M/S Namsom Tea Company Ltd. in East Siyang and Lohit districts respectively of Arunachal Pradesh. It is however observed that the climatic conditions, altitude and topography of the eastern districts of the state mainly East Siyang, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit, Tirap and Changlang are very congenial for the introduction and development of tea industry. The introduction of tea industry in those districts of the state was strongly endorsed by various expert committees (Das: 1995) appointed earlier during the late seventies of 19 the century for the purpose. But due to the non-compliance to the recommendations of the expert committees on tea by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, tea industry could not be introduced successfully before 1991 in the state. This may be the obvious reason why tea plantations under the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Development Corporation Ltd. are presently running at tremendous loss. Although the private tea plantations of the state are flourishing day by day, there are number of inherent constraints hindering the expansion of tea industry in the state. The main constraint is the land reform policy of the state government which does not allow outside corporate houses on tea to make an easy access into this aspect of industrialization

process. It is because of the fact that most of the land in Arunachal Pradesh is community based land and such land can not be leased out to any outside agency for tea cultivation. This may be one of the reasons why banks are also not much interested to remit loans to such community owned land owners of the state for want of mortgages. This has been further supplemented by the Arunachal Pradesh Land Settlement and Records Act (Act No. 10 of 2000 A.D.) which inter alia statutorily recognized community (tribal) property. The act also sufficiently provides that several aspects of land administration would be guided by the local (tribal) customs.

Over the last three decades, it has been thoroughly experienced by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh that the community based land owners of the state can not be forced to lease out their land for tea cultivation. Secondly, there is an acute problem of labour shortage in the state tea plantations due to the restriction imposed on the import of outside labourers as per the Inner Line Permit Policy of Government of India (Ibid) for Arunachal Pradesh. The local tribal people do not at all prefer to work as tea plantation labourers (unskilled/manual jobs) for they are the owners of cultivable or rich (fertile) wet land (Ibid) known as Pather and other natural resources of the region. Due to those factors, many pioneering projects being designed by the Government on tea plantation industry had been wind up in the state during 2001 to 2002 A.D.

According to a report (1996) of the Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations (CCPA), Calcutta, there were seventeen tea estates in Arunachal Pradesh in 1996 having 11,005 hectares of land under tea. About 325 thousand kilograms of made tea had been produced by those seventeen tea estates in the state. The average daily employment of labourers as per their Muster Roll was 1,329 and another 450 labourers were employed on casual basis during the peak plucking season. It has been mentioned in the report of CCPA (1996) that although a small tea estate of only 20 hectares was established in 1981, its real expansion could take place in the state only after 1987. There were sufficient amount of land available for tea cultivation in the state of Arunachal Pradesh from the Jhum areas of about 70,000 hectares as per the report of North Eastern Development Council. The CCPA (1996) has also categorically projected that by the year 2006 A.D., there will be 6,325 hectares of new land under tea with 9,225 kilograms of made tea having 1,459 kilograms yield per hectare. The Tea Board of India too has projected that there will be another 13,932 kilograms of made tea with 8,224 hectares of new land under tea bushes having 1,694 yield per hectare by the year 2006 A.D. in Arunachal Pradesh.

After 1995, a large number of local tribal entrepreneurs entered into the agro-based industry as an alternative to the then closing Plywood industry due to the prohibition for deforestation duly imposed by the Government of

## *Introduction*

Arunachal Pradesh. But unlike other manufacturing or processing units, the plantation sector requires a large number of stable labour force within the territory. In view of her sparse population (Ibid) of tribal origins and their utter reluctance to join the private sector industries during the late nineties of 19th century, the Arunachal Government started widely to accommodate a huge labour force from outside required for the development (Ibid) of tea plantations in the region. Because of this step being undertaken by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, number of tea estate has been calculated to be more than twenty today with more than three thousand regular workers and another one thousand casuals are employed in peak plucking seasons in the tea plantations of Arunachal Pradesh. Today, there are approximately 6500 hectares of land under tea cultivation in the state. Almost 42,000 workers were working in medium and small scale industries (Bose : 1997) of the state.

### **The North Eastern Enclaves**

As stated above in the study, tea plantations of the state of Arunachal Pradesh are located at her eastern most districts. Over the centuries, it has been proved that the eastern most districts of the state appear to have been the safety enclaves for the Government. The tea plantation industry is located either at the Myanmar (Burma) border or near the Chinese (Mc Mohan Line) mainland. The introduction of tea industry has a historical relevance (Ibid). Except two tea estates under the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Development Corporation Ltd., all the eighteen tea estates located at the eastern most districts of the state are under the ownership of local tribal elites to support the tribal based development policy of the state (Das : 1995). For example, Mr. Chowkhmoon Gohain, Ex.-Member of Parliament from Khampti tribe of Lohit district, Mrs. Yapang of East Siyang, Mr. W. Raj Kumar, Ex-Speaker of Legislative Assembly from Lower Dibang Valley district, Mr. Aken Lege of Roing (Lower Dibang Valley district) etc. have owned tea plantations in the eastern enclaves of the state of North East India. Thus, elites associated with politics and administration have entered accurately into tea plantation industry of the state (Mishra : 1994). Except two tea estates, one each in Lower Dibang Valley and another in East Siyang districts, all the eighteen tea plantations of the state are located at Lohit, Tirap and Changlang districts. There are certain pertinent historical antecedents as mentioned above for such enclave formation. These locations are either at the foothills of the eastern most Arunachal Pradesh or Myanmar (Burma) border being fully encircled by the dense forests. Till 1995, all tea leaves so plucked in the Arunachal plantations had to be sent to Assam plantations for manufacturing etc. But due to the increasing sense of regionalism and communal terrorism in the Assam plantations, separate factories had to be established after 1995 in the Arunachal tea plantations only. In that venture, they got sufficient loans from

Tea Board of India with handsome subsidy being given to the tribal tea plantation owners of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Take for instance, in 1996, the Tea Board of India provided Rs. 292.9 lakhs as loans and Rs. 160.10 as subsidy (CCPA : 1996) to the tribal tea plantation owners of Arunachal Pradesh.

The development process of the Arunachal Government helped the tribal tea garden owners of the state to make their respective areas as complete enclaves as the Britishers used to convert their plantations into Plantocracy (Devi : 1989) or the Planters' Raj (Guha : 1977) or the Sahib-Coolies Raj (Sharma : 2003) in Assam and West Bengal. The onslaught of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalization policy for Indian industries in general (Ratnam : 2001) and the tea plantation industry in particular (Bhowmik : 1995) after 1991 has further encouraged the tribal tea planters to convert their plantations into their complete sovereignty (Raj). For example, Mr. Chowkhamoon Gohain, the owner of the Guna Tea Industries (P) Ltd. has named the area as Gunanagar after the name of his late son 'Guna'. Secondly, such enclave formation process appears to have been officially approved by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh due to two primordial reasons, viz., to restore safety and sovereignty of the eastern most frontier of the state of Arunachal Pradesh and to earn good revenue for the government exchequer as the cost of production is very low of Rs. 20/- only per kilogram of made tea while the Arunachal tea fetches Rs. 80/- per kilogram of made tea in the national and international markets due to young tea bushes of hardly twenty years old. Except the wages of Rs. 35/- per worker per day, no other welfare benefit is given to the workers. This is very much possible for the tribal planters/owners because the workers are either the Nepalis from the Nepal Himalayas or Adivasis from the Assam plains tea gardens. The Adivasis immigrated to the Arunachal plantations as they had been covertly involved in anti-social activities or terrorism of course, under the banner of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in the Assam tea plantations. Though these Adivasis are simply called 'Tea Tribes' in Assam and 'Scheduled Tribes' in West Bengal tea plantations, they are simply treated as 'Non-Tribals' in Arunachal Pradesh along with the Nepali workers in the plantation industry. Thus, tribal-non-tribal polarization of the society has been sensed quite sufficiently in the state tea plantations. The enclaves have been persisting safely as the local tribal planters have received solid supports from their own tribes on the one hand and the state political elites of the government on the other. Eventuality of this kind has been further enunciated by the fact that the non-tribal tea plantation workers have weak social foundation as they are the recent immigrants from the Nepal Himalayas, Assam plains and other parts of the country.

They are brought there with temporary Inner Line Permits, the period of which has in most cases already lapsed. Most of them do not go for the

renewal of their Inner Line Permits anticipating legal complications (Das : 1995). This fact is well known to all the tribal planters and local tribal population as well. As a result of this, their staying in the plantations is inherently considered to be totally illegal. Due to this reason, the non-tribal tea plantation workers do not have courage enough to raise their voice against the exploitation of the tribal planters/owners. Because of this weakness, they are readily succumbed to any threat or coercion (Ibid). This is the actual reason why the tribal people do not just want to join the tea plantation jobs especially in the unskilled category. Therefore, it is presumed that such enclaves would not have been formed provided the tribal people of the region would have joined the plantation jobs. It is also conjectured that among the Nepali workers, there is no upper caste Hindu such as Bhramin (Bahun) or priestly double born caste in the plantations (e.g., The Anula Shagun T.E.) as an integral part of the unskilled work force. In the Nepali society, most Brahmins are found to be very talented both in Nepal and the Eastern Himalayas (Sharma : 2000). It is not that the skilled industrial workers immigrated to the Arunachal tea plantations because of low wages, the story supplements that the unskilled non-tribal reserve army of workmen have been immigrated to the Arunachal tea plantations in search of their livelihood.

The unskilled labour force are mostly illiterates or semi-literates and thus they do not at all know the terms and conditions of works or services. This has further enabled the planters/owners to convert the Arunachal frontiers into the strong enclaves.

### **Problems of the Study**

This is a Sociological study of Nepali tea plantation workers in Arunachal Pradesh of North East India. For the sake of analytical convenience, the Anula Shagun T.E. of Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh has been methodologically selected for the study. There are 150 households of Nepali community consisting of 300 workers. Besides, there are another 100 Adivasi workers in the plantation. Therefore, the study of Nepali tea plantation workers in Arunachal Pradesh invites an interesting empirical proposition. They are working under a tribal planter/owner from the Khampti tribe who was once a Member of Parliament from Namsai sub-division of Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh. So far, hardly any study has been conducted on tea plantation workers of Arunachal Pradesh. The tribal planter as the owner of the Anula Shagun T.E. along with other two tea estates in Tirap and Changlang districts belongs to the elite group of the state. He hardly allows any outsider to penetrate into his gardens. The immigration of Nepali workers to the Anula Shagun T.E. has portrayed the fact that industrialisation process has evolved

in the eastern most frontiers of the state. The Anula Shagun T.E. is the garden of a Khampiti family. The pull factors for Nepalis immigration as tea plantation workers in the tea estates of Arunachal Pradesh are delineated below.

Firstly, the Nepalis can have their permanent settlement in the plantation environment which is perfectly an agro-based industry. Unlike other industries, tea industry possesses both the agrarian and industrial characters (Xaxa : 1997) in the real sense of the term.

Secondly, the agrarian environment of tea plantation has enabled the agrarian Nepalis of Nepal Himalayas having landless occupational background, of the past to adapt the industrialisation process of Arunachal Pradesh very easily (Sharma : 2005).

Thirdly, the Nepalis, by tradition, not only cultivate the land for crops but they are also the staunch practioners of animal husbandry. The plantation industry provides them with ample opportunity for animal husbandry as well as agriculture.

Fourthly, inspite of having tribal-non-tribal differences in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, the Nepalis, due to their perseverance, could help to pay good revenue to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh because the Jhum (shifting) cultivation of the tribes as the major constraint for development process of the state, could not at all provide such revenue to the government. Unlike the Jhum cultivation of tribes having short term sustaining capacity of land productivity (Sahu : 1986) and susceptible to higher rate of soil erosion and landslides in the hill areas of Arunachal Pradesh, the settled cultivation sustains the land productivity for ever due to the presence of peripheral forest resources (Borthakur : 1981; Rai : 1994). The Nepalis have deep affection and love for both the forest resources and settled cultivation in the Himalayas (Sharma : 2003) including the state of Arunachal Pradesh of North East India.

Fifthly, basically Nepalis have close resemblance in respect of their physical appearance (Parmer : 1990) and way of living with rest of the Himalayan or sub-Himalayan Arunachal tribes. For instance, the Khampitis of Namsai sub-division of the state of Arunachal Pradesh have identical physical appearance as of the Nepalis. This may be one of the reasons why most of the Khampiti agrarian elites of Chowkham block, where the Anula Shagun T.E. is located at, have given their land on share cropping to the Nepalis (Dubey : 1978) only. This has generated a prior stimulus for complete comprehension and integration of the Nepalis with the tribal way of life in the region under study.

Inspite of above mentioned areas of comprehension and integration of the Nepalis with the local tribes of the region, the Nepalis have retained their distinct ethnic identity (Subba : 1990) in their day today life in respect of

language, marriage and culture by internalizing some of the cultural traits of dominant tribes of the region. Historically, the Nepalis as Jawans (soldiers) of the British Assam Rifles (Subba : 2003) were deployed in Arunachal Pradesh in 1873. Henceforth, they started to settle down there having similar Himalayan habitat and people as of their places of origin. That was most apparent for them as traditionally they were mainly tribes on sub-tribes of the Nepal Himalayas (Sharma : 2000). The most glaring instance of their cultural integration is in respect of language as duly encouraged by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh (Das : 1995). The popular local Assamese language of the region under reference has been totally internalized in day today life by the Nepalis. Besides the Assamese language, tribal dialects are also fluently spoken by the Nepalis in Arunachal Pradesh in general and the garden universe in particular. This is the reason why the Khampti tribes prefer Nepalis than Hindustanis in the plantation. It is proved over the centuries that their ingenuity to work and agrarian versatility have been positively ascertained to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh and people thereof though the Nepalis have been accustomed to bear the curse of being called immigrants in North East India. Sincere endeavours of the Nepalis have been profusely applauded by the tribes of North East India including the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The Government efforts to convert Jhum (shifting) cultivation into settled ones have been supported by the culture of terrace cultivation which the Nepalis used to be habitually done since time immemorial in the Himalayas. Therefore, the Nepalis proved themselves to be the agrarian experts possessing the expertise for wet rice cultivation (Sharma : 2000) in Arunachal Pradesh also. Even the rough terraces for tea cultivation appear to have been raised following the Nepali instances of agrarian terraces raised in the Himalayan or sub-Himalayan regions of Arunachal Pradesh. The perseverance to duty on agrarian/other assignments has characterised the Nepalis as “Khati Khanee Machees/Jati” in India meaning thereby the community which survives by hard work and hard work alone (Ibid). The same thing happened in case of the Anula Shagun T.E. also where Mr. Chowkhamoon Gohain, the Khampti owner of the plantation had no other alternative except to accommodate the Nepalis as tea plantation workers in the plantation for his tribesmen did not accept the plantation jobs for two simple most reasons, viz., most Khamptis were the owners of wet rice field (Pather) and Jhum lands at that time at Chowkham and secondly, the Khamptis are basically commercial minded tribes among other tribes (Das : 1995) of Arunachal Pradesh. Apparently, the Khamptis always endeavour to involve themselves with some sorts of trade and business in the region (Bose : 1997) rather than engaging themselves in the agrarian pursuits completely. It is found that the Khamptis prioritize business first and then agriculture in Chowkham (Mishra : 1994).

From the above discussion, it is transparent that although the Nepalis have integrated fully into the garden environment, quite often they feel unsafe of their living at the plantation due to the increasing communal terrorism in North Eastern region of the country. This has strongly enforced them to be in close touch or contact with Nepal Himalayas or other places of their origin because the Khampti as well as other dominant tribes of the region may one day ask the Nepalis to vacate the land of tribals for ever in Arunachal Pradesh in general and the garden universe in particular.

Heterogeneity, low wages, coercion and isolation were the characteristic features of the plantation system (Bhowmik : 1981). Historically, such heterogeneity was completely sustained by the isolated enclaves all over the plantation world. The same characteristic features are also found today in the Anula Shagun T.E. Though there are Adivasi workers in the plantation, the Nepali workers have been kept in separate labour line known as the Nepali labour Dhura. This has generated a kind of interesting, Sociological proposition for studying the socio-economic agonies of the plantaton workers.

Most scholars, while defining the plantation system, normally overlook the socio-economic agonies of the workers. They have either elucidated the production relations or described the production unit itself (Sharma : 1994).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) notes the term "plantation" at first as groups 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 requires more labour per unit of land, producing relatively large number of unskilled labourers whose activities are closely supervised and the primary skill of the labours is to follow orders. The emergence of tea industry was of alien origin (Greaves : 1957). Further, migration and coercion are other characteristic features of the plantation system (Jones : 1968). Therefore, defining plantation and conceptualising relationship as a whole, mere elucidation of the economic characters or economic benefits for the owners of the industry is not at all adequate. The social relations and thereby the emerging agonies at the inter-personal and inter-community levels are also to be taken into due consideration (Sharma : 2003) with thorough caution (Sharma : 1997).

The Nepali tea plantation workers of the Anula Shagun T.E. have no high Hindu caste background. Except the Chhetris, they belong to Matwali group of the Nepali society of Nepal Himalayas and Assam plains. Historically, the Nepali Matwalis were toiling mass of the Nepal Himalayas (Pradhan : 1991). They had high proneness towards the Matwalisation (Tribalisation) process both in Nepal and the Eastern Himalayas (Sharma : 1997). Whether such proneness towards the Tribalisation (Matwalisation) process has helped them

to adapt the local tribal (Khampti) environment of the Anula Shagun T.E.? This is another aspect of the study. The interactions between the Hinayani Buddhist Khampti tribes and Hindu Nepali castes in regard to their day today economic activities have shaped to the tune of industrial environment in a loose form of the term having specific organisational hierarchy with prescribed goals of the plantation industry. The management and office staffs are completely Khamptis by ethnicity. It has been observed that except the wages and house building materials for constructing labour huts, no other industrial facility is given to the workers. This may be the clear reason why the Nepali workers always remain busy after their garden duty with non-plantation jobs and animal husbandry. This has been amply coordinated by the fact that the Nepalis are very popular for cattle farmings not only in Assam but also in Arunachal Pradesh. The city/town dwellers of Assam like Guwahati, Tezpur, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Jorehat, Dibrugarh etc. and Tezu, Itanagar, Bomdila, Namsai etc. of Arunachal Pradesh purchase cow milk from the Nepalis. Quite a good number of Nepalis have huge **Gai Goths** (cow sheds) in the state of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram of North East India. They are called Gwalas or cow milk suppliers. The Kheti (cultivation) and Gai Goths (cow sheds) are part and parcel of agrarian economy of the Hindu (Gurkhas – protectors of Gau Dharma) Nepalis in North East India. In the Eastern Himalayas, they are treated as the founders of white revolution (Sharma : 2000; Balaraman : 1994). It is observed that off 150 Nepali households of the Anula Shagun T.E., altogether 148 households have animal husbandry along with agriculture in the neighbouring Khampti villages of Chowkham. In fact, the Nepalis immigrated to North East India and Burma mainly for cattle farmings and agriculture.

Although the Anula Shagun T.E. is an agro-based industry which was established after the abandonment of Namsoom Saw and Veneer Mills OP) Ltd., the workers feel that they do not by and large bother about their future as they have deep confidence on Mr. Chowkhamoon Gohain as god father of the area. He will definitely save them in hard days as he did the same at the time of closure of Namsoom Saw and Veneer Mills (P) Ltd. at Gunanagar (Chowkham) in 1987.

In this way, they are unorganised sector workers as no labour legislation of Government of India has been implemented in the plantation so far of its fifteen years of establishment. The workers have not earned any consciousness for the formation of trade union in the plantation. It means that whatever the owner of the garden provides them, they have to accept it forcefully. This shows that the workers are in the colonial system of production relations. A kind of industrial autocracy has taken place between the workers and management hailing from the family of Chowkhamoon Gohain.

In this way, the garden workers of the Anula Shagun T.E. have hardly come across the concept of trade union movement and working class solidarity. The industrial relation between the workers and management is the relation of Master-Servant in nature (Bhowmik : 1996). The workers being immigrants have been made scared of ousting from the garden by the management system inspite of their staying at the plantation for more than fifteen years or more of its existence. This is one of the main reasons why they always remain silent of their exploitation by the management system which is autocratic in form as the Managing Director, Directors and Managers of the plantation belong to the same Khampti family. Even most of the supervisory (Mauri) and office staffs of the plantation hail from the Khampti tribes of the region. In this way, management of the plantation is ethnically well organised. Another reason for complete sustenance of such technique of taming coolies in colonial fashion is due to the fact that the state government is represented by a Khampti man as a Member of Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh from Namsai constituency.

Therefore, it is transparent from the above discussion that the tribal ownership of tea industry being absolutely patronized by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh is as good as a British colonial enclave in the state to encourage as well as flourish the community based industrial development (Das : 1995) process and locals participation in the process. All the contracts regarding supply of necessary articles and goods for the garden are given to the local Khampti youngsters. Thus, coercion of workers as exercised by the management (Bhowmik : 1996) is widely supported by Khampti population of the region. Historically, the Khamptis immigrated to Sadiya of Assam from Upper Burma and later on from Sadiya to Chowkham area of Arunachal Pradesh (Gogoi : 1971). Thus, Chowkham is the den of Khamptis due to the existing dense forests and fertile arable land ever since the British days (Bose : 1997). The Khampti elites feel it very comfortable to lease out their agrarian land on share cropping mainly to the Nepalis of Nepal Himalayas and Assam plains of North East India. Doing this, the tribal elites are profitably utilizing their land resources on the one hand and victory in elections on the other.

### **Operationalisation of the Concept of Study**

There is hardly any study ever conducted on tea plantation workers of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Except a few stray reports that are available at the archives of the Directorate of Industries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, there is no other report on tea industry of the state. Hence, the Anula Shagun T.E. is also not an exception in this regard. The reports of the Directorate of Industries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh reveal some ideas about their production figure, target, marketing situation etc. Not a single report of the Directorate of Industries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh has

stated anything about the socio-economic agonies of work force of tea estates of the state. The reports available with Tea Board of India also reveal some information about the quantum of subsidy sanctioned to the tribal tea garden owners along with the actual loans provided for extension and expansion of tea industry in the state. This may be the accurate reason why Mr. Gohain of the Anula Shagun T.E. had only 30 hectares of land under tea in the year 2000 A.D. but during our survey period (2002 to 2003), the area had been very fastly expanding to the tune of 219 hectares under tea bushes with three lakh and fifty thousand kilograms of made tea per year. Being the sole landowner of most of the villages of Gunanagar (Chowkham), it is explored that he is going to expand the land under tea bushes to the tune of 700 hectares by the end of 2006 A.D. While tea plantations under the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Development Corporation Ltd. (two in number) are in very deplorable condition due to non-availability of land for expansion as the neighbouring tribal villages and forest land of the state government can not be brought under tea cultivation. Moreover, the cost of production is very high of Rs. 70/- per kilogram of made tea in the corporation gardens while it is as stated above, even less than Rs. 20/- per kilogram of made tea in the private sector gardens because the workers are devoid of any industrial incentive except the wages and house building materials. Above all, the age of tea bushes is very young of hardly fifteen years old and labour productivity is very high of 850 kilograms of made tea per worker per year.

The theoretical approach adopted in the study is Social Anthropological ones as the society of the Anula Shagun T.E. is neither purely a Hindu caste oriented nor perfectly a tribal in nature. In fact, it is a Hindu-Buddhist integrated zone of the Arunachal Pradesh. Historically, the area was directly under the influence of Assamese kings ever since the days of Ahom rule (Dutta Choudhary : 1978; Bose : 1997). The Assamese society is predominantly a Hindu one. Three major communities of the Anula Shagun T.E., viz, Khampti, Nepali and Adivasi have common habitation with separate labour lines for the workers and independent land holding for the Khamptis. A kind of social stratification has been emerged between the tribals and non-tribals. Former claimed themselves as the "Sons of the Soil" of Arunachal Pradesh while later are considered as the "Immigrants" or unskilled plantation coolies from outside the Arunachal Pradesh.

Under the situation as stated above in the study, it is agreed by all the Nepali castes that the industrialization process of the Anula Shagun T.E. is an extra stimulus for their living. For them, agriculture minus industry is not a misnomer while industry minus agriculture is completely a myth (Sharma : 2003) for their living at the plantation. This is the inherent reason why they

have been closely associated with the industry inspite of their complete exploitation by the management system of the plantation.

The present study focuses not only on socio-economic agonies of tea plantation workers but also on their health dimension, nature of Hindu-Buddhist relationships, changing social structure of Nepali society, family, marriage, education, religious structure, caste-tribe fusion and fission processes in the poly-cultural universe etc. in various chapters of the study. In regard to economic life of the workers, their occupational structure, migration pattern, place of birth, land holding pattern, animal husbandry, income, borrowing etc. have been analyzed thoroughly. The migration history of Khamptis has also been incorporated in the study.

### **Methodology of the Study**

For the first time, we visited the Anula Shagun T.E. in June, 2002 to introduce ourselves with the workers, management and other important personnel of the plantation. Being the scholars from North East India, we were out and out accepted by the plantation workers of the Anula Shagun T.E. At first, Mr. Chowkhamoon Gohain, the Managing Director of Guna Tea Industries (P) Ltd. was found to be little indifferent to us when we advertently explained the cardinal objectives of our research project. But later on during our survey period (2002 to 2003), he was convinced with the research project to such an extent that he not only supported us morally but also provided us the literature that was available with him about the emergence and growth of tea industry in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Besides this, the Government Gaon Burah of Gunanagar Gaon Panchayat, few old Khampti village chiefs and other influential people were also interviewed on the history of the plantation and recruitment of workers in the plantation in particular and the state of Arunachal Pradesh in general.

The Anula Shagun T.E. represents the emergence of tea industry in the state of Arunachal Pradesh as a whole on the logic that it is located at the eastern most enchanted district of not only the state of Arunachal Pradesh but also of the country adjoining Myanmar (Burma). Secondly, the plantation has accommodated 300 Nepali and 100 Adivasi workers. No other tea plantation of the state has employed such a large number of Nepalis as manual labourers. All 150 households of the Nepali community with 300 workers were covered under the study. The present study does not exclusively rely on the theoretical sophistications but based on the empirical data collected from the Anula Shagun T.E. of Arunachal Pradesh during 2002 to 2003 A.D.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

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

1. Name of the Respondent
2. Relation with the head of the family
3. Age structure of the family members
4. Sex structure of the family members
5. Birth place of family members
6. Educational standards of the family members of the workers
7. Religious structure of the families of the workers
8. Occupational structure of the family members of the workers
9. Landholding pattern of the workers
10. Cattle stock Population of the workers
11. Modern equipments of the workers
12. Wage structure of the workers
13. Number of working population in the families of the workers
14. Name of the festivals/rituals observed in the families of the workers
15. Name of festivals/rituals attended in others' households
16. Name of languages/dialects known to the workers.

The above structured questionnaire were administered in the pilot study in order to frame the following semi-structured questionnaire for conducting the survey in the Anula Shagun T.E. on the socio-economic agonies as well as the cultural integration of the workers.

1. Why you immigrated to the Anula Shagun T.E.?
2. Who brought you to the Anula Shagun T.E.?
3. Where did you work before joining the Anula Shagun T.E.?
4. What did you do in your place(s) of origin?
5. How much you get at the plantation as wages?
6. What are the other job incentives you get from the plantation?  
(Details).
7. How many hours you have to work in a day at the plantation?
8. What are the main duties you have to do during twelve months in a year?
9. How your management recruit the workers at the plantation?
10. What type of industrial relation is there in your plantation between the workers and management?
11. Is there any social organization in the plantation?

12. Which community is most dominant in the plantation?
13. Whether Gaon Panchayat has any role to play in the affairs of the plantation?
14. What are the relationships between the Nepalis and Khampti tribes in the plantation?
15. What kind of marriages have taken place in your family?
16. Number of marriages within the same caste/community.
17. Number of marriages with other castes/communities.
18. Do you accept Puccka foods from other communities?
19. Do you accept Kuccha foods from other communities?
20. Do your management personnel attend the marriage and death rituals in your house if they are called for?
21. Do you sacrifice animals' blood while observing your household rituals/festivals?
22. What are the common festivals of your plantation?
23. Do you invite other communities in such festivals/rituals in your household?
24. What are the major food items you use in celebrating the festivals/rituals?
25. Do you offer wine and meat to a Brahmin?
26. Do you accept inter-community marriages?
27. Do you think that there is inter-ethnic conflicts between the tribals and non-tribals in the plantation?
28. Do you celebrate the communal festivals? If yes, why? And if no, why?
29. Where do you go first if any member of your family falls sick? To a Jhankri (Shahman) or to a Doctor? If to a Doctor, why? And if to a Jhankri, why?
30. Does a community helps others in case of emergency? If yes, how? And if no, why?
31. Do you think that there should be trade union or workers organization in the plantation?
32. Is there any Bhatti (liquor furnace) at the plantation?
33. Do the tribal neighbours invite you in their festivals? If yes, how? If no, why?
34. Do you cast votes? If yes, since when? If no, why?

35. Whether you share crops with the tribal owner? If yes, how much in a year?
36. Do you pay tax? If yes, whom-the land owner or the Government?
37. Do you have to pay anything for keeping cattle stocks at home? If yes, to whom?
38. Whether you visit your places of origin in a year/two? If no, why?
39. Whether any communal riot has taken place in the plantation between the tribals and non-tribals?
40. Whether you have to face threats from the terrorist organizations?
41. How the government officers of Arunachal Pradesh treat you?
42. Whether you can avail forest resources as enjoyed by the tribals in the region?
43. Do you left the plantation if your management ask you to leave? If yes, why? If no, why?
44. What are the division of roles among your family members?
45. How many new babies were born in your household during the last ten years?
46. How many members died in your family during the last ten years?
47. Do you heard anything about family planning? If yes, has any member of your family undergone vasectomy or tubectomy operation?
48. Do you believe on 'Small Family Norm' If yes, why? And if no, why?
49. Whether the local Khampti tribes (Buddhists) try to convert the Nepalis or other communities into the Buddhist religion?