

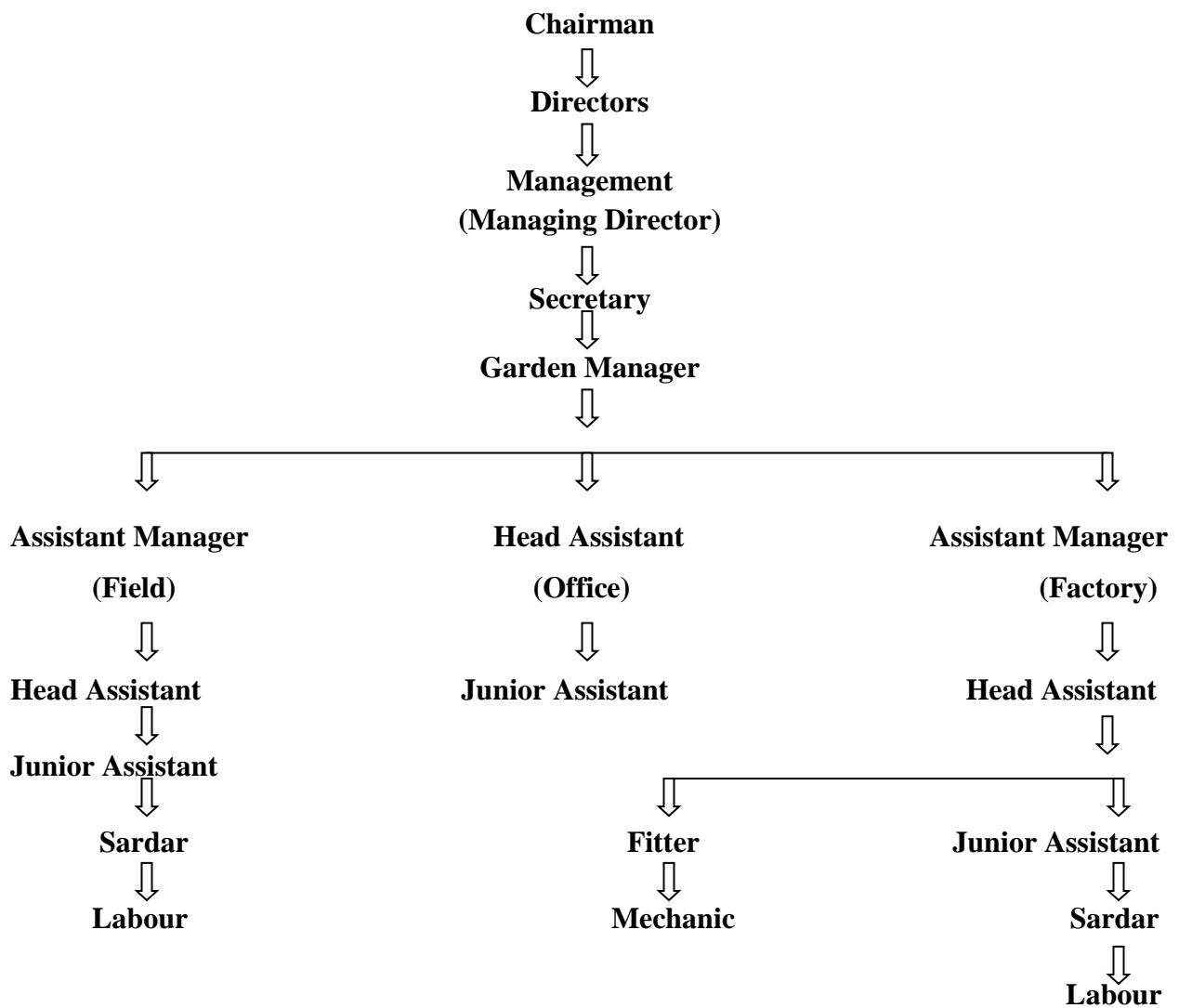
Chapter- V

Human Resource Management Practices in Tea Estates

5.1: Organizational Structure of a Typical Tea Estate

The organizational hierarchy is generally of rigid nature in the tea plantation industry. The organizational structure in tea plantation can be divided into five parts; the owner, manager, staff (Babu), sub-staff/ sardar, and labour.

Chart 5.1: Organizational Structure of a Typical Tea Estate



Source: Bhattacharya, 1977²

Generally in tea plantations, General Manager has control over the Factory Manager and Plantation Manager. One or more assistant or junior managers are under the supervision of the Factory Manager. Similarly, in the case of plantation (field), one or more assistant or junior managers are supervised by the Field Manager. The managers of tea plantations are acknowledged as '*Bara Saheb*' and the assistant managers are popularly called '*Chota Saheb*'. There is a group of staff among the workers to assist the assistant managers who are commonly referred to as '*Babu*'. Generally these are the senior staff of plantation industry. The clerical employees in tea plantation are regarded as staff and supervisor in the field/ factory, watchman, etc. are regarded as sub-staff. This class of staff workers are promoted directly from the labour (Mitra, 2012)¹. In tea plantations, the social difference between worker and manager are maintained in a disciplined manner.

5.2: Span of Management

Span of management refers to the number of subordinates a superior has under his supervision. V. A. Graicunas, a French management counselor, philosopher and an engineer, in the year 1933, published a paper on "Relationship in Organization" and mentioned three key types of relationships exist between superior and subordinates (Graicunas, 1933, as cited in Urwick, 1956)³. These are:

- 1). Direct Single Relationships,
- 2). Direct Group Relationships, and
- 3). Cross Relationships.

The relationship that is created in the span of management increases manifold. If the number of subordinate is one, then the relationships will be one. If it is two, the relationship will be 6 and so on. He explained such relationship with a wonderful scientific formula. The formula is presented here:

$$r = n[2^n/2 + (n - 1)]$$

Here, r = number of relationships that will be calculated, n = number of subordinates that is given.

If we calculate by using the above stated formula, then the following number of relationships will be created.

Table 5.1: Graicunas Relationship of Supervisor and Subordinate

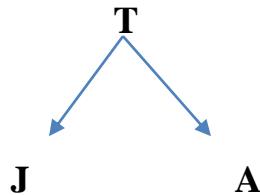
Number of subordinates	Number of relationships
1	1
2	6
3	18
4	44
5	100
6	244

Example of Graicunas control relationship:

Assume that, Tatan (T) is a superior; Joy (J) and Arup (A) are his subordinates. As per Graicunas, T has to control over the following relations:

1. Direct Individual Relations: T with J and T with A. Here, two direct relations have been created.

2. Group Relations: T with J in the presence of A, T with A in the presence of J. Here, also two such group relations have been created.
3. Cross Relations: J with A and A with J i.e. again two relations have been created.



Hence, T has to control total $(2+2+2) = 6$ relationships.

By using the above stated formula, we can easily calculate the number of relationships exist between superior and the subordinates. Graicunas has argued that for a superior it is very difficult to control large number of subordinates because of the complexity in the relationship. It is very difficult to control more than five or some cases six subordinates at a time (Urwick, 1938)⁴. Whereas according to Mr. Chandan Das Gupta, the Joint Labour Commissioner, North Bengal Zone, Government of West Bengal as well as one of the leading expert in labour relations, the ideal ratio of superior verses subordinates in case of tea plantations should be 1:7 (personal communication, 20th June, 2017).

Accepting the Graicunas formula for span of management and Das Guptas' ratio as a standard, the scenario of span of management of labour in tea plantations of North Bengal region is extremely poor. In the following table, a detail account of span of management of labour in tea plantations of North Bengal has been presented:

Table 5.2: Average of Supervisor Verses Workers Ratio in the Tea Plantations of North Bengal Region.

SL No.	Types of Plantation	Supervisor Vs. Workers Ratio
1.	Public Limited Tea Company	1:37
2.	Proprietorship Tea Company	1:85
3.	Partnership Tea Company	1:42
4.	Public Sector Undertakings Tea Company	1:71

Source: Field work, 2017

Table 5.2 exhibits the supervisor and subordinates ratio in the tea plantations of North Bengal. In Public Limited Tea Company, the ratio is 1:37, for Proprietorship Tea Company, it is 1:85, for Partnership Tea Company, it is 1:42 and for Public Sector Undertakings Tea Company, the ratio is 1:71. This is clear from the supervisor verses subordinate ratios of various types of tea plantations in this region. The quality of control over subordinates is not up to the standard. As the standards of the span of control as suggested by the experts' stands to be 1:7, in the tea plantations in North Bengal, it is found to be ranging between 1:37 to 1:85. Thus, it may be concluded that the span of control over subordinates is very poor in the region.

5. 3: Procurement Function in Tea Plantation of Bengal

5.3.1: Labour Recruitment

Recruitment is the first step in procurement process of management of human resources. The success of the enterprise fundamentally depends upon the temperament of human resource deployed. Tea industry is exclusively labour dependent. Suitable nurturing of tea plant is

extremely important throughout the year. From the preparation of nursery soil for rooting till the packaging of tea for sale, huge number of labour required throughout the year. Every job has its own specifications which call for specialized workforce in the sector. For the plucking purpose, women workers are regarded as most suitable. At the time of plucking the leaves, due concentration is given to the young tea bushes. Due to the distinct configuration of fingers, women workers are given preference to male workers in the jobs of plucking and sorting. Likewise, for the purpose of spraying of chemicals, manure and for most of the factory works male workers are preferred.

At the outset of the tea industry in India, tea planters confronted with difficulties while recruiting labour. Tea Plantations were located at distant and unpopulated areas of the hilly regions surrounded by jungles and unhealthy climates. The surroundings areas of the tea plantations were inhabited by tigers, snakes and other such wild animals. The regions were also engulfed by deadly diseases like Kala-Jar, Malaria, etc. prevailed (Ghosh, 1970)⁵. Under such conditions, labour recruitment from the adjoining areas was too difficult for the planters.

The migration of the labour towards the tea plantations in North Bengal started during the mid fifties of nineteenth century. With the expansion of tea plantations, the demand for laborers increased. During that period, the plantation management had to depend upon the contractors who procured labour to the tea plantations (Barua, 2008)⁶. However, this system of labour recruitment was entirely abolished in 1915. In 1917, all labour contractors amalgamated themselves and formed Tea District Labour Associations (TDLA). Afterwards, the TDLA has been actively entrusted with the task of procurement of labour from the different regions for the tea gardens. Initially, labour was recruited family basis. Labour was recruited from the tribal areas of Chotanagpur plateau (Sarkar, 1992)⁷. Usually, labour was recruited for a short term. As

per the terms of the agreement, labours were required to go back to their native places. The provision of 'Repatriation Allowance' was prevalent for the repatriated workers. However, the labour and their families never returned to their respective natives with repatriation allowances after the terminations of their agreement. Thus, the existing labours settled in the tea plantations permanently and gradually new labour recruitment was stopped.

5.3.1.1: Labour Recruitment Practice in the Tea Industry of North Bengal

However, the history of recruitment of labour force in tea industry of North Bengal region is very long and is quite conventional. The tea labours were recruited from the descendants of the migrants coming from different parts of the country and sometimes outside the country also. At the beginning, the tea industry failed to attract local people due to the hazardous work conditions and abysmally low rate of wages. These issues compelled the management of tea plantations to recruit labour from the distant places through different sources. Tea workers of the North Bengal (except Darjeeling hills) were the actual residents of the tribal region of Chotanagpur plateau. In the tea industry of Darjeeling, nearly of the entire worker were actually the migrants from Nepal.

5.3.1.1.1: Labour Recruitment Practice in the Dooars and Terai

In 1876, while the tea plantation industry was in the early stage, the region of Dooars had very small population. Local people had sufficient land to survive. They did not agree to work in the tea plantations. So, planters were adopted from other sources of recruitment of labour.

There were mainly two types of recruitment system prevailed in the tea industry of Dooars and Terai region; through *Sardar* (Government of India report, 1966)⁸ and *Arkati*. *Sardars* were the settled migrated staff members of tea plantations. *Arkatis*, on the other hand, were the Bengali educated staffs (known as *Babu*) and were recruited from the adjoining areas. *Sardars* went to

the tribal areas to lure the *Adivasi* people to work in the tea gardens. Chotanagpur plateau was served to be the main catchment area for labour recruitment. The *Adivasis* were attracted by the *Sardars* with every prospect and advantage for their family. Sometimes, poverty stricken migrant workers were offered loans by the *Sardars* of tea gardens. The amount of loan used to pay debts of poor peasants, ruined artisans and agricultural labourers to the *Zamindars* (land lord). The *Sardar* who fetched them and recruited them in the garden work were entitled to receive commission. This kind of system was prevalent in the tea gardens run by the British.

Another type of recruitment practice was also prevalent mostly in the private tea gardens. In private tea gardens labours were recruited through the private agencies. Garden management sent their representatives, known as *Arkati* to the recruitment area. The *Arkatis* had tied up with some local persons or agencies in the recruitment area. The *Arkati* used to propose the number of labour requirement to the agencies and the agencies in turn supplied the required labour to the respective tea gardens. These agencies were paid by the garden. This kind of labour recruitment practice was known as *Grimatias* (Rage, 1946)⁹.

5.3.1.1.2: Labour Recruitment Practice in the Darjeeling Hills

Initially, the tea plantations of Darjeeling hills had to face acute shortage of labour. During those times, Darjeeling was sparsely populated. Plantation management had to procure labour from different parts of the country. Chotanagpur was the ultimate source for labour recruitment. The labourers were employed as bonded labour. But for the labourers recruited from the Chotanagpur region was too difficult to leave in the harsh winter seasons. As a result, the labourers often left the tea gardens during the winter season. Later on the management of tea plantation started

recruiting labourers from Nepal and Sikkim who could cope up with the erratic weather of the region.

In Darjeeling, the labourers were also recruited through *Sardars* and *Arkati*. In every garden there were special teams of *Sardar* and *Arkati*. Once they bring labour into the garden, they would receive a cash incentive of Rs. 10 for each labour supplied. However, in Darjeeling the system of recruitment was quite different from that of Dooars and Terai. In Darjeeling, the labours were recruited and were required to serve like bonded labours. Further to retain labours in tea plantations a Para-military force named North Bengal Mounted Rifles (NBMR) was formed and their responsibilities were to keep surveillances on the movement of labours (Sharma and Das, 2009)¹⁰. In Darjeeling, tea plantation management recruited *Sardars* from the local Gorkhas who were physically strong. They were entitled to receive their regular wages along with *Bakshis* for recruitment of labour. The criterion for recruitment of labour was physically fit. However, the recruitment of labour in Darjeeling was characterized as coerced labour (Rinju, 2003)¹¹.

5.3.1.2: Categories of Workers and Methods of Recruitments

In tea plantation industry of North Bengal, mainly four category of workers are involved; male, female, adolescent and Children (Saragr, 1992)¹². Under the adolescent categories, male and female sub-categories exist. Earlier, tea industry used to recruit child labour but recently recruitment of such labour has been completely stopped. The labour recruitment is done through different modes of recruitment. Permanent, casual, and contract are different modes of recruitment in tea plantations of this region. In case of permanent mode of recruitment, only the dependent or the legal heir of the deceased person gets job in that position. Hence, the number of

job positions of permanent labour remains same over the years. Casual workers are known as *Bigha* workers. *Bigha* workers are mainly recruited during the peak seasons. While the garden management recruits such labour, the first person to be given preference is the family members or dependents of the permanent workers. Other than these, few gardens sometimes also recruits contract labours.

5.3.1.3: Criteria and Procedure for Recruitment of Labour

The permanent workers are recruited among the dependents or through replacements. Since the number of vacancy for permanent workers remain same over the year, no new position is created. Table 5.3, depicted the job position of sample tea estates. However, the criteria includes for recruitment in such positions, the person should reached at least 16 years of age and should be of sound health. To be concerned under this criterion, the person should have to produce medical certificate issued by the Medical Officer of that tea plantation to the plantation manager.

Table 5.3: Sample Tea Estates and the Number of Permanent Labours Position

Sl No.	Name of Sample Tea Estate	Number of Worker	Sl No.	Name of Sample Tea Estate	Number of Worker
1	Aibheel Tea Estate	2146	18	Arya Tea Estate	381
2	Bagdogra Tea Estate	395	19	Ghatia Tea Estate	1691
3	Baradighi Tea Estate	1690	20	Kanchan View Tea Estate	112
4	Chauluni Tea Estate	1289	21	Matelli Tea Estate	1764
5	Denguajhar Tea Estate	1751	22	Mogulkata Tea Estate	1116
6	Jadabpur Tea Estate	184	23	Moraghat Tea Estate	1296
7	Jaldacca Altadanga Tea Estate	311	24	Nepuchapur Tea Estate	750

8	Jayantika Tea Estate	1585	25	Phuguri Tea Estate	701
9	Kalabari Tea Estate	749	26	Radharani Tea Estate	424
10	Kathalguri Tea Estate	1356	27	Ranicherra Tea Estate	1372
11	Margaret's Hope Tea Estate	957	28	Saylee Tea Estate	1616
12	Neora Nuddy Tea Estate	994	29	Telepara Tea Estate	1312
13	Nuxalbari Tea Estate	676	30	Totapara Tea Estate	973
14	Raipur Tea Estate	617	31	New Dooars Tea Estate	1778
15	Trisakti Tea Estate	159	32	Rangmukh and Cedar Tea Estate	1717
16	Tumsong Tea Estate	449	33	Tindharia Tea Estate	316
17	Kamalpur Tea Estate	226			

Source: Field survey

Bigha workers in the tea plantations are recruited from within the tea plantation and from outside the tea plantations. The process of recruitment for *Bigha* worker from within the tea estate involves a permanent worker (say, husband) whose dependent (wife) would be *Bigha* worker, he (husband) has to apply to the plantation management. Then the plantation management would ask for medical fitness certificate issued by the Medical Officer of that tea plantation. Then only it may recruit the *Bigha* worker. While recruitment of *Bigha* worker is done from outside the plantation, the common practice is that the manager or his assistant would observe and ascertain the physical fitness of that person. For the case of contract labour, the common practice is only to allot the task to them by the garden authority and no specification is required. Thus, this is clear from the procedure of recruitment of labour, recruitment is based on the internal sources and there is no chance for an external candidate to be recruited in the tea plantation as a permanent labour.

Promotions to the higher positions of tea garden labour are rare in the tea plantations in the region. Only in few tea estates have promoted workers in the higher positions. Those workers were promoted, their position changed to sub-staff and staff for rare cases only. No record exhibits regarding the promotion of worker to managerial position. So, it may be inferred that promotional opportunity is limited for the tea garden workers of Bengal (Mitra, 2010)¹³. However, those were promoted in the staff and sub-staff positions were only for male workers. The chance of promotion of male and female workers is not equal to an extent. For the male worker, the chance of promotion to the higher position is more than their counterpart (Bhadra, 2004)¹⁴. There are several factors behind it. Literacy rate, socio-economic condition, attitudes of planters, etc. are mainly responsible. Due to the poor communication system between the labour colony and school, most of the parents are not interested to send their child to attend school. Although, as per the provision of the Plantation Labour Act, in every tea plantations arrangement of school bus must be made for school going child. However, in practice the scenario is horrible. Primary schools in tea plantations are poorly maintained in this region. Most of the time, teachers are irregular and infrastructure is also not up to the standard. Under such deteriorated situations, parents of school going children engaged them in family care. Mostly, they are responsible to look after the young child of their family. Although, according to the Plantation Labour Act, there should be crèches in each and every tea plantations employing more than 30 women and should be maintained in a prescribed manner. But in reality, crèches are physically existed only and no other facilities are provided. Thus, girl child has limited opportunity to attain school. Hence, social status of women in tea plantations is inferior due to their low level of literacy (Sarkar and Bhowmik, 1999)¹⁵.

5.4: Training and Development

Tea industry in Bengal is highly labour intensive and labour is required across the year. In the present study, due emphasis has been made on labour only. Hence, the training aspect under the head of training and development is highlighted only.

5.4.1: Training

In the tea estates of North Bengal region, training is imparted to the workers only in certain specific areas. In this region, only 36 per cent of the sample tea estates have training provisions for their workers. The training provided to workers by the tea plantation management in this region is not formal. In tea estates of this region, a wide range of training is offered to the workers. These include plucking, spraying, manure, weeding, pruning, planting, and factory manufacturing process. Training is provided through off the job and on the job mode as well. In the case of on the job training of tea workers, mentoring and coaching methods are preferred in most of the tea gardens. For off the job training, on the other hand, lecture methods are preferred. However, on the job training methods are preferred in the tea estates. Tea workers are generally not literate and they like to learn while they are on work. On the job method of training has positive as well as negative impacts. The positive aspects of on the job training is that it is less expensive and trainees learn while they are working i.e. no working hour is wasted. The negative aspect of this training method is that accidents may happen while giving training on important or sensitive issues which may prove costly for the organization.

For the purpose of providing training to workers, the plantation management appoints the experienced senior employees of that plantation only. Usually, the practice is such that the manager or his assistant is responsible for providing training. Training sometimes takes the form of briefing. Before the start of the work, a manager or his assistant of the respective department takes a few minutes to convey his message to the workers. This practice is common for the plucking workers. Training is sometimes given by the external experts. This kind of training takes place especially when new technology is adopted by the tea estates.

5.4.2: Performance Appraisal

In some of the tea gardens in North Bengal, the practice of performance appraisal is found to be existent. But the existing system is not organized in nature. Each tea estate has got its own method of appraising performance of their workers. The common practice of performance evaluation in the tea estates is confined to plucking of leaves and factory works. Some of the tea estates are appraising performance of their workers on monthly, quarterly or half yearly basis. In most of the cases, it has been found that the management of tea plantation uses the performance appraisal system for reward allocation. Some also use performance appraisal system for identification of training needs.

5.5: Compensation

5.5.1: Wage for Tea Workers

The rate of wages of the tea garden workers are revised from time to time. Since the inception of the industry in Bengal, the rate of wage paid to the worker has not been followed any rational parameter. Earlier, there was difference in amount of wage paid to the female and male workers. Such difference was observed greater during the pre-independence time. Prior to the 1966, the

differences of amount of wage between male and female workers were Rs. 14 paisa. This difference was raised to Rs. 17 paisa after the Wage Boards recommendations and was continued till the enactment of Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (Rai, 2015)¹⁶. However, subsequently such difference was declined but attitude of the planters remained same on determination of wage rate. Plantation management's argument in favour of such detrimental difference was that women were not regarded equal with their counterpart in the workplace and maintaining equality would lead discrimination against men (Bhowmik, 1981)¹⁷.

Table 5.4: The First Increment of Wage in Tea Plantations of West Bengal in 1962

Region	Men	Women	Child
Darjeeling & Terai	1.95	1.81	1.07
Dooars	1.98	1.84	1.07

Source: Sushma Rai, 2015¹⁸

The first increment of wage in tea plantations in West Bengal started in 1962. From the beginning of the increment system of wage for the tea labour in the study region, discrimination prevailed. The discrimination of wage payment was based on region and gender basis. However, this increment was only Rs. 6 paisa for women and Rs. 8 paisa for men based on the previous rate of wage. Another discrimination of wage rate was based on the size of the tea plantation. The usual practice was that the plantations in size less than 500 acres, workers will receive Rs. 3 paisa lower than the normal rate of wage.

In 1966, the Central Wage Board made recommendations that the normal rate of wage should be raised by Rs. 13 paisa for men, Rs. 10 paisa for women and Rs. 7 paisa for children (Bhadra, 1997)¹⁹. This recommendation of the apex institution further proves that the discrimination of

wage existed in the tea plantations of North Bengal. In the following table a brief account of revision of wage in the region has been presented.

Table 5.5: Revision of Wage for the Tea Worker of North Bengal

Year	Men	Women	Child
1969-1970	2.39	2.22	1.29
1970-1971	2.48	2.31	1.33
1971-1972	2.71	2.54	1.45
1972-1973	2.94	2.77	1.56
1973-1978	5.24	5.07	2.73

Source: Sushma Rai, 2015²⁰

It can be observed from the above table that the amount of wages in the tea garden worker has increased gradually. The demand of trade unions and bipartite meetings were the prime mechanism for increment of wages in the tea workers till 1975. In 1978, wage was raised as per the recommendation of Minimum Wage Fixation Committee. Many employers during that time did not accept this recommendation of the committee (Bhadra, 1997)²¹.

Presently, the existing wage rate of tea worker in tea plantations of North Bengal is Rs. 132.50 per day. On the other hand, the approved minimum wage for unskilled worker of agricultural activities is Rs. 220 (without food) in West Bengal (with effect from 1st July, 2017). As per the nature of work, tea worker possesses at least few quantity of skills and thus they should be in the semi-skilled group (Biswas, 2016)²². For the case of semi-skilled activities in agriculture, the prescribed existing minimum wage rate is Rs. 252 per day (without food) in West Bengal. Hence, tea plantation worker of West Bengal received about half of approved minimum wage. However, management of tea plantations argued in this regards that they are paying fringe

benefits in addition to the basic wage which accounts Rs.142.94 for the Terai and Dooars and Rs. 144.60 for the Darjeeling. As per their calculation the cost per worker has presented below:

Table 5.6: Wage and Fringe Benefits for Permanent Tea Workers of North Bengal Region

Particulars	Dooars region	Terai region	Darjeeling region
BASIC WAGE RATE (as on 1.1.17)	132.50	132.50	132.50
FRINGE BENEFITS			
A. Non-statutory			
1.Foodgrains	14.20	14.20	14.20
2. Dry Tea	3.54	3.54	5.20
3. Fuel, etc.	5.55	5.55	5.55
4. Addl. Comp/Pay of Post	8.50	8.50	8.50
Total non-statutory	31.79	31.79	33.45
B. PLA Statutory			
5. Housing Facilities	14.71	14.71	14.71
6. Education Facilities	2.73	2.73	2.73
7. Medical Facilities (sick and maternity)	16.19	16.19	16.19
8. Earned Leave	14.46	14.46	14.46
9. Welfare Facilities	5.41	5.41	5.41
Total Statutory	53.50	53.50	53.50
C. Common Statutory			

10. Provident Fund	19.51	19.51	19.51
11. Bonus- 20%	31.09	31.09	31.09
12. Gratuity	7.05	7.05	7.05
Total Common Statutory	57.65	57.65	57.65
D. Total Fringe Benefits	142.94	142.94	144.60
TOTAL WAGE COST	275.44	275.44	277.10

Source: Indian Tea Association, Kolkata, 2017

The above table clearly indicates that the cost of wage for a tea worker in North Bengal region. Total wage cost for a worker Rs. 275.44 in the Dooars and the Terai region and Rs. 277.10 in the Darjeeling region. In the Darjeeling region, wage cost for a worker is little higher than of the Dooars and Terai. This wage difference is mainly because of the cost of dry tea provided to the workers at subsidize price. Since market price of the Darjeeling tea is more than price of tea from the Dooars and the Terai. The total wage cost and its various components have been shown in the above table are completely based on the calculations of employer of tea estates. However, the actual practice is exclusively different. The amount of basic wage provided to worker is fixed for the entire North Bengal region but the other components of wage are varying from plantation to plantations.

According to the workers union, the amount for non-statutory benefits included with the wage cost is partially payable by the employers. Their logic is that since the State Government is providing food grains at the subsidized rate to the entire family employed in the plantation area; there are ample sources of fuel from the nature in and around plantation areas and for this purpose not a single paisa is paid by employers. Dry tea is only provided by employers and other items are provided irregularly. So, the cost of such items should be deducted from the total cost

of wage. In case of common statutory benefits, most of the time the rate of bonus provided which is lower than 20 per cent. Provident Fund and Gratuity due for long almost for every tea plantations. Hence, calculation of total wage cost is not justified and it should be much lower than that of Rs. 275.44 for the Dooars and Terai and Rs. 277.10 for the Darjeeling.

In reality, the rate of wage for tea worker in Bengal is inferior in India. The daily rate of wage for tea plantation workers in Kerala is Rs. 310, in Karnataka is Rs. 263 and in Tamil Nadu is Rs. 241. In case of West Bengal, even if all costs of the fringe benefits are added, amount of wage would be extreme below than of southern states of India. The average auction price of tea from Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were Rs. 115.48, Rs.99.07 and Rs. 93.07 respectively. Surprisingly, on the other hand, average auction price of tea from West Bengal was Rs. 128.54 (Tea Board of India, 2017)²³.

This is clear to us that tea industry of Bengal is in better position in terms of auction price and at the same time planters are paying lower wage to workers. In spite of poor auction price of tea, South Indian tea planters are paying the prescribed rate of minimum wages to workers. The tea planters of West Bengal, on the other hand, pay and fix wage rates through the mechanisms of collective bargaining or tripartite agreement though they have better profitable position than the South Indian tea industry. Hence, the usual claim made by the planters of Bengal of lower profitability which makes them difficult to pay minimum rates of wages cannot be said to be justified.

However, the determination of wage rate in the tea industry of Bengal is made through the tripartite agreement in which representatives of trade unions, representatives of planters associations and representatives from government are present. Usually once in an interval of

three years interval, the representatives are decided mutually to secure the minimum rate of wage. Some of the memorandum regarding settlement of wage rate is presented below.

As per the Memorandum of Settlement dated 21.07.1994 in respect of daily wages of plantation worker, the rate of increase of daily wages per day is as follows:

Table 5.7: Memorandum of Settlement of Wage Rate on 21.07.1994

S. L. No	Period	Nominal wage per day
1.	With effect from 01.04.1994	Rs. 2.50
2.	With effect from 01.04.1995	Rs. 2.50
3.	With effect from 01.04.1996	Rs. 2.00

Source: Labour Department, Government of West Bengal

As per the Memorandum of Settlement dated on 07.11.1997 in respect of daily wages rate of plantation worker increased as follows:

Table 5.8: Memorandum of Settlement of Wage Rate on 07.11.1997

S. L. No	Period	Nominal wage per day
1.	With effect from 01.04.1997	Rs. 3.00
2.	With effect from 01.04.1998	Rs. 3.00
3.	With effect from 01.04.1999	Rs. 2.50

Source: Labour Department, Government of West Bengal

As per the Memorandum of Settlement dated 03.02.2001 in respect of daily wages of plantation worker, the rate of increase of daily wages per day is as follows:

Table 5.9: Memorandum of Settlement of Wage Rate on 03.02.2001

S. L. No	Period	Nominal wage per day
1.	With effect from 01.04.2000 to 31.03.2001	Rs. 3.00

2.	With effect from 01.04.2001 to 31.03.2002	Rs. 4.00
3.	With effect from 01.04.2002 to 31.03.2003	Rs. 4.10

Source: Labour Department, Government of West Bengal

As per the Memorandum of Settlement dated 25.07.2005 in respect of daily wages of plantation worker, the rate of increase of daily wages per day is as follows:

Table 5.10: Memorandum of Settlement of Wage Rate on 25.07.2005

S. L. No	Period	Nominal wage per day
1.	With effect from 01.04.05	Rs. 2.50
2.	With effect from 01.04.06	Rs. 2.50
3.	With effect from 01.04.07	Rs. 3.00

Source: Labour Department, Government of West Bengal

As per the industry-wise tripartite wage settlement dated 23.08.2008, the rate of increase in wage of daily rated workers agreed upon is as below:

Table 5.11: Memorandum of Settlement of Wage Rate on 23.08.2008

S.L. No	Period	Nominal wage per day
1.	With effect from 01.04.08	Rs. 4.10
2.	With effect from 01.04.09	Rs. 4.50
3.	With effect from 01.04.10	Rs. 4.50

Source: Labour Department, Government of West Bengal

Under this settlement, decisions were taken that wages are to be paid at the revised rate w.e.f. 1st September 2008. The arrears accruing from 01.04.08 to 31.08.08 shall be paid before 25th December 2008.

As per the industry wise tripartite wage settlement dated 04.11.2011, wage revision of daily rated workers decided as below:

Table 5.12: Memorandum of Settlement of Wage Rate on 04.11.2011

S.L. No	Period	Nominal wage per day
1.	From 01/04/2011 to 31/03/2012	Rs. 85 per day
2.	From 01/04/2012 to 31/03/2013	Rs. 90 per day
3.	From 01/04/2013 to 31/03/2014	Rs. 95 per day

Source: Labour Department, Government of West Bengal

In the last such wage agreement signed during February 2015, wages were enhanced by Rs. 17.50 in the first year, Rs. 10 in the next two years and the agreement came into force with effect from 1st April 2014. Accordingly, wages were increase to Rs. 112.50 in the first year, 122.50 in the second year and 132.50 in the third year. As the agreement came almost 10 months late following the expiry of earlier agreement, workers were paid arrears in two installments.

As per the tripartite Memorandum of Settlement dated 20 February 2015 between the tea managements and representatives of trade unions, the nominal wage at the end of each period along with incremental wage hike is as follows:

Table 5.13: Memorandum of Settlement of Wage Rate on 20.02.2015

S. L. No	Period	Nominal wage per day
1	From 01/04/2014 to 31/03/2015	Rs. 112.50 (increment of Rs 17.50)
2	From 01/04/2015 to 31/03/2016	Rs. 122.50 (increment of Rs 10)
3	From 01/04/2016 to 31/03/2017	Rs. 132.50 (increment of Rs 10)

Source: Labour Department, Government of West Bengal

5.5.2: Mode of Payment of Wage

In the ancient period, tea workers of Darjeeling and Doars wage were paid through two modes; through the *Sardar* and directly to the labours. Workers who employed by the *Sardar*, were paid

through the *Sardar*. *Sardar*, for their intermediate jobs, commissions were paid by the planters. For the 'Nij Putty Collies', i.e. workers who joined work by their own, wages were given directly by plantation management. However, the *Sardary* system of labour recruitment and wage payment no longer existed in the tea industry of Bengal. In present times, wage is being paid directly to the workers by the plantation management. Amount of wage is paid to the workers of tea plantation either fortnightly or weekly basis. In most of the tea plantations of this region, within three days of ending the last wage period, amount of wage is paid.

In the sample tea estates of the present study, only one garden is found to be paying workers' wage directly into the bank account. The garden has reported only 60 per cent of their workers wage payment is made through bank account transfer. Otherwise, rest of the tea gardens are paying wage to the workers through direct cash payment mode. In case of direct cash payment, workers acknowledge the receipt by putting their thumb impression or signature. After the demonetizations, initiatives were made for each and every tea estate to pay wage through direct account transfer. However, due to the poor banking infrastructure and high illiteracy rate amongst the plantation workers the initiative was in vain.

5.5.3: Bonus of Tea Workers in Bengal

Earlier, tea plantation workers received bonus as per the 'North East India Tea Plantation Bonus Agreement' (NEITPBA), 1961. This system continued till 1963. Prior to that in Dooars, tea worker demanded about sixty days' average wage of the year 1953 as the amount of bonus of 1954. In the same year, the 'West Bengal Cha Sramik Union' (WBCSU) threatened to go on strike on the same issue. It is crucial to note that in 1954, the industry earned huge profit. However, initially, the employers opposed the demand raised by the workers. Then they applied to Government regarding their inability to pay bonus as per the demand rose by workers.

However, finally bonus was paid by them unwillingly as there were no other options in their hand at that time. Thus, since then industry wise bonus agreement was reached through the intervention of the Central Government and a sizable number of organization faced serious problem by this liability.

After 1956, the government of India appointed sub-committee of bonus. New system of calculation of bonus was introduced by the planters of Assam in 1959. Finally, in 1965 the Payment of Bonus Act was enacted. At present in the tea plantation industry, bonus is paid at the rate of 8.33 per cent of workers' yearly earnings and in addition to that an ex-gratia up to 11.67 per cent of yearly earning, which total up to 20 per cent.

5.5.4: Incentives

In the tea plantation industry of Bengal, the system of incentive wage is found to be prevalent. This incentive system is existent in the tea plantations and in the factories of tea estate. The nature of incentive in case of plantation and in the manufacturing factory is found to be distinct from one another. For factory, incentive is calculated and is based on added working hours spent by workers. In plantations, on the other hand, incentive is calculated and is based on added task. Task for the plantation workers implies that the given quantity of tea leaves is plucked. However, determinations of task vary from tea estate to tea estate. Quantity of tasks of the hill and plain regions are widely varied. Task also varied from season to season. Similarly, rate per extra task is also different. The usual practice is for example, task for a worker is 30 kilogram. If, someone plucked beyond that limit, he/she is entitled to get Rs. 4 per extra kilogram. Calculation of incentives for the factory worker in tea estate of this region based on the extra hours they work. Beyond the stipulated hours, workers in this region are entitled to receive double rate of normal

working hour in case of tea estates under Public Sector Undertakings. Otherwise, Rs. 35 per extra hour is paying tea estates under DBITA (Doors Branch of Indian Tea Association).

5.6: Integration Function

Integration function of management of human resources consists of workers participation in management, collective bargaining, conflict resolution, establishing good relations in organization, promoting good quality of work life, etc.

In tea industry of Bengal, participation of workers in decision making is not in practice. In the decision making process of tea estate, only top level management of the organization participates actively. Management of tea estate feels reluctant to establish good relations with labour. Some kind of negligence to labour is still present in the mind of management people of tea estate. In fact, there is huge social difference between the two parties. This social difference has been following since the inception of the industry. At the outset of the industry, the British tea planters regarded them as 'coolie'. The similar attitude still prevails in tea estates of this region. The quality of work life of tea workers has also remained the same over the decades.

5.6.1: Industrial Relations

For the advancement and growth of any business, it is necessary to construct sound and melodious industrial relations. There are core three actors which are unswervingly concerned in industrial relations; employees, Government and employers. In India, industrial relations are administrates by multifarious labour legislations.

In Bengal, around ninety years later of her first tea garden in 1856, find trade union movement. Ironically, trade union movement was started around independence of our nation. We can imagine the condition of tea workers in absence of trade unions during this long period. It is relevant to note in this connection that the peaceful industrial relations were existed during this

period. Due to the nonappearance of trade unions, which is one of the prime actors of industrial relations, workers were dominated by the planters. However, the state of affairs was distorted drastically after the commencement of trade union in tea sector of Bengal. Workers were organized and conscious on their rights. Subsequently, the industry began to witness the gigantic labour campaigning in the form of gheraos, lockout, strike, etc.

Enactment of Plantation Labour Act, 1951 was one of the strategic turning points to the labour unions. This Act made compulsory to provide multifarious welfare measure, which include housing, health care, education, drinking water, crèches, etc. to worker. Meanwhile, the World War-II and depression sent back foot to the planters. During this period, relationship between labour and management deteriorated to large extent. However, as of now the relationship between management and labour in tea industry of Bengal is unstable. Prof. Mitra, a profound scholar in the field of labour management relations, opined that globalization is mainly liable for the unhealthy relations which is present in tea industry of Bengal. Evidence shows that average number of strike, gheraos, gate meeting, lock out, etc. have amplified drastically only after the globalization. Workers of tea estates have lost their faith on plantation management. Workers backed by unions and raised their demand repeatedly in such a way due to which managers and other staffs left the tea estates. Thus, tea industry of Bengal is now deep turmoil.

5.6.1.1: Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is a typical process of discussions between the company and worker intended at reaching concurrence that aimed at adjust working environment.

Collective bargaining is existed vigorously in the tea plantation of Bengal. Collective bargaining serves as the most influential mechanism for fixation of wage rate of tea workers. Though, tea

workers of this part of Indian tea industry raise their voice collectively on account of several issues; bonus, rations, electricity, housing, etc. (Duara, 2015)²⁴. Collective voice raised by tea workers in Bengal on wage issues is a regular and common phenomenon. Hence, collective bargaining is one of the key features of tea plantation management. Tea plantations of Bengal have mainly bipartite and tripartite mechanism for settlement of collective issues by labours.

There are definite prototypes followed in the practice of collective bargaining machinery. The common practice is that trade unions present their demands to the employer in a written form containing the issues thereon. The demands may be hike of wage rate, rate of incentives, percentage of bonus, overtime rate, etc. The employer organization, then initiates bipartite level discussion. However, if the issues demanded by the trade union are not resolved at this bipartite level discussion, then the same is sent to the appropriate authority i.e. State Government. The State Government then communicates with the parties involved and does instigate tripartite talks. In the process of tripartite discussions, representatives of Government, owner and unions are present. Thus, the discussion is carried on till they arrived at an aggrieved point (Sarkar, 2015)²⁵.

5.7: Maintenance Function

Maintenance function is designed to look after and encourage the intellectual as well as bodily health of workers. For this purpose, organization arranges good quality working condition, safety and security at work, leisure facilities, recreation and leave, housing, health check up, etc.

For the case of tea plantations of Bengal, tea planters provide various facilities as to satisfy the Plantation Labour Act (PLA), 1951 (Bhowmik, 1981)²⁶. The facilities provided by the planters are broadly classified into two; statutory benefits and non-statutory benefits. Housing facility, crèches facility, drinking water facility, recreational facility, canteen facility, educational facility,

and medical facility are under the statutory benefits of the Act. Non-statutory benefits, on the other hand, fuel (fire woods), concessional/subsidized food grains, umbrella, slipper, tarpaulin, kambal (blanket), etc. are provided (Mitra, 2010)²⁷.

5.7.1: Housing Facilities

Section 15 of the Act prescribes that every employer has to provide suitable house accommodation for all permanent workers who are employed in plantation. It has noticed that only 1,66,591 workers have been provided houses out of 2,62,426 workers in the study area. The rest of workers (95,835) are yet depriving of getting housing benefits from their employers. There are six such tea estates in North Bengal and they have not at all provided housing facility to any single worker.

5.7.2: Educational Facilities

Section 14 of the Act prescribes that in case of plantations wherein the total number of children of permanent workers ageing between six to twelve years is above 25, the appropriate authority may frame rules to provide education in prescribed standard manner for those children.

It has noticed that school facility is available in 231 tea estates in North Bengal out of total 276 tea estates. Children of the remaining 45 tea estates have to go to the neighbor schools for learning. Only 143 tea estates provide vehicles for school purpose. Tractors and trucks are the common mode of transportation for the school going children.

5.7.3: Recreational Facilities

Section 13 of the Plantation Labour Act prescribed that the planter should arrange recreational facilities for its workers as well as for the children of the workers.

It has been noticed that only 197 tea plantations have made arrangements for club for the recreation purpose of the workers. In most of the plantations, it has been found that the club is

not in well condition and is mostly non-operative. Play ground is available almost in all the tea plantations but for the recreational purpose it is not financially supported by the plantation management. Plantation management is also passive to arrange of any kind of sports or games.

5.7.4: Crèches Facilities

According to the section 12 of the Act, employer should provide crèches facility in every plantation where the number of women workers is 50 or more and these workers may be employed ordinarily or by the contractor and the number of children of those women workers are 20 or more (aged up to six years).

It has been found that almost in every tea estates crèches exists except in three tea estates. In most of the tea estates, mobile crèches were found to be existent. Crèches have also been found running under tree or tent in somewhere in open area besides the plucking plots. Numbers of the attendants were very less and they were not well trained. Biscuit and milk are the common food for the children in the crèche. However, only 144 tea estates offer milk in the crèches.

5.7.5: Canteen Facilities

Section 11 of the Act prescribes; the State Government may frame regulation for those plantations wherein 150 numbers of workers are generally engaged. One or additional canteen(s) be required to be provided and the maintenance shall be done by the employer. It has been observed that only 148 tea estates have canteen facilities for their workers and out of which 43 tea estates have subsidized price facilities.

There are some other benefits which are provided to the tea plantation workers. These benefits are non-statutory in nature. Usually, these benefits are provided as per the demand made by labour unions to the plantation management. Then plantation management based on their ability

provides such facilities to the worker. A brief description of non-statutory benefits for tea worker has presented below:

5.7.6: Food Grains

Rice, flour, kerosene oil, etc. as means of ration are provided to the workers at concessional price. In addition to these, workers are also provided certain quantity of dray tea. Presently, the ration for tea workers is provided by the State Government and till date it is considered as the component of wage for tea worker in Bengal.

5.7.7: Fuels (Firewood)

The planters in Bengal offer 2.5 pill of firewood to each worker at free of cost. Usually, branches of tree, coal, etc. are provided in sufficient quantity for domestic uses once in a year. But this quantity doesn't seem to enough and the workers have to collect fuel from the nearby jungles.

5.7.8: Umbrella, Tarpaulin, Slipper and Kambal (Blanket)

Every year before start of the rainy seasons, the plantation management provides slipper and umbrella to workers to protect them while they work in the field. Tarpaulin is also provided to the workers for protection while working in the field. Blankets are also provided to the workers. But during the field survey it was found that in most of the tea estate such facilities are provided irregularly and the items remain due to the workers for a long period of time.

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