It is no denying the fact that, labour welfare is considered as a very crucial concept because, it relates to toiling masses of the society. The concept of welfare and social security has undergone radical changes due to rapid industrialisation of the country in the recent past. Yet due weightage has not been given for the safeguard of the vast working populations in the tea plantation industry of the state. It is one of the most well organised sector industries in the country engaging a vast majority of working population. They happened to be the most exploited section of the society. Financially they are underpaid and socially neglected. After retirement from their services, nothing was left to be spent. They became exposed to economic exploitation and social injustice in their retired life although they are responsible for earning the lion's share of precious foreign exchange for the country.

In view of this background the State and the Central Government made provisions on priority basis for some sort of savings out of their earnings upon which the workers could depend during their lean days. The employees' Provident Fund Act, 1952 makes provisions for such savings for the workers of organised sector industries of the country except the tea plantation industry of Assam.
In 1955 the Government of Assam brought forward the "Assam Tea Plantation Provident Fund Scheme through an Act called "Assam Act X of 1955" for the tea workers of Assam. This was the first major legislative measure and the first milestone of labour welfare scheme in the history of the tea plantation industry of the state. For this purpose the "Provident Fund" was created and compulsory deductions were made from every permanent worker at the rate of 6½% on gross wages. This was the beginning of the chain of welfare measures in the state and its successful implementation revolutionised the concept of labour welfare.

In 1963, the Life Insurance Scheme was introduced on an optional basis for the members of the Provident Fund (P.F.). In 1967 the Statutory Pension Scheme was introduced to provide pensionary benefits to the members of the Provident Fund after their retirement. In 1972 Pension Scheme was modified and Family Pension Scheme was introduced. Again in order to protect the members of the bereaved family who might die while in service, the Deposit-Linked Insurance Scheme was implemented in 1984 for the members of the Provident Fund. This Scheme has gone a long way in serving the members in ensuring economic security of the bereaved family.
In the same year, i.e. in 1984 the Invalid pension Scheme was introduced in order to compensate the workers who might become victims of various occupational hazards rendering workers physically invalid. Apart from these Statutory Welfare and Social Security measures, quite a number of other welfare measures have already been implemented such as housing accommodations drinking water latrines and urinals drainage and sanitation creche education to children medical facilities first aid canteen maternity and sickness benefits accident benefits games and sports recreational facilities leave travel facilities and so on.

India being a democratic Republic, having an independent constitution of her own, the right to work, right to speech and expression, right to welfare to her citizens are provided to all including tea plantation workers, as fundamental rights under the "Directive Principles of State Policy". As such welfare of labourers arises as a matter of right after India became independent in 1947

Objective of the study:

The main objectives of the study are

i) To know the past history of the Indian tea industry specially Assam.

ii) To know the Socio-economic background of the working masses in tea industry.
iii) To know the operation of the various labour welfare schemes passed by the Govt. for tea plantation workers in Assam.

iv) To get an idea of the impact of the labour welfare schemes as regards to productivity of work.

v) To know the workers efficiency after implementation of various welfare schemes.

Methodology:

For undertaking the study two methods were mainly pursued, one is primary for which 28 number of tea gardens scattered over the Dibrugarh district which happens to be the study area were adopted. Out of this 9 belong to private company gardens and remaining 19 are joint stock company gardens.

Information were collected by canvassing the questionnaire in two different methods one from the Employer of respective tea gardens of study area put in Schedule No.II (Observation Schedule) filled up by the concerned officials and the second Schedule NO.I (Questionnaire for worker's beneficiary) has been filled up by concerned tea garden Union labour leaders. In course of collecting such primary data and relevant information the researcher had the
opportunity of visiting the labour quarters of each garden and prevailing provisions/amenities like tubewell point common bathroom near the tubewell point existing drainage system cleanliness latrines link roads hospital facilities including medicines and so on.

The secondary information were collected from various published and unpublished sources viz. from the Libraries of Director of Economics & Statistics, Assam, Commissioner, Assam Tea Plantation Employees Welfare Board, K. K. Handique Library, G. U., Dibrugarh University Library, Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha Library, Dibrugarh, District Library Dibrugarh, DHSK and DHSK Commerce College Libraries.

Hypothesis:

The following hypothesis are taken to study the subject:

(i) that the labour welfare schemes are productivity link scheme.

(ii) that the efficiency of a worker largely depend on proper implementation of welfare measures in the garden.

(iii) that the welfare scheme can contribute a lot towards creation of good industrial relation between management and workers.
(iv) that the effective implementation of labour welfare provisions can check absenteeism as well as labour turnover in tea gardens.

Chapter design:

For presenting the works done materials has been utilised and it has been divided under eleven chapters. The First Chapter has been designed to include the historical background of tea industry in Assam and abroad including discovery of tea plants and subsequent evolution etc. has been covered. The Second Chapter discusses the tea industry and its place in Assam's economy i.e. importance of tea and part played by it in the economic development of the State. In the Third Chapter the present position of tea industry in India as well as in Assam has been discussed. In the Fourth Chapter-the Dibrugarh District Economic profile has been dealt with in a nut shell. The contribution of the tea industry towards the economic development of the entire region has been covered in this chapter.

The Fifth Chapter has been designed to include labour welfare measures in India and in Assam. The various labour legislations passed by the Central Government as well as State Govt. to cover all possible welfare measures in Assam and the whole country. In the Sixth Chapter (A) all Statutory labour welfare measures passed by the State / Central Governments and implemented from time to time have been discussed. While Sixth Chapter (B) includes Voluntary welfare activities by various trade union
Organisations, philanthropic institutions, employers, public organisations and others in the tea industry.

Further the Seventh Chapter has been designed to include agencies of various nature which are engaged in implementing welfare activities at different levels. The Eighth Chapter deals with financing of all welfare activities implemented from time to time. For this purpose the employers, the trade union organisations philanthropic organisations etc. are involved in materialising the welfare activities. In Ninth Chapter discussion are there regarding labour welfare and worker's efficiency. The productivity of any manufacturing organisation will increase only when the efficiency of workers increases. Again the efficiency of workers will increase only when the welfare activities are properly implemented in time and at proper place. It is observed that the efficiency of workers has got direct linkage with proper implementation of welfare activities.

Chapter Tenth covers some aspects of labour welfare and industrial peace. These two terms are also relative to each other. The industrial peace will exist only in industrial organisations where labour welfare activities are timely formulated and properly implemented. It is further observed that the expenditures made on welfare activities are deemed to be wise investments.

The concluding Chapter (Chapter XI summarises the whole findings of the works undertaken as regards to welfare activities that are implemented from time to time.)
The present work has been completed under the Supervision and guidance of Dr. N. C. Das, Professor of Commerce and Ex-Head and Dean, Faculty of Commerce, Gauhati University. I was thoroughly guided by him in my present work. He has inspired me in my present work by his philosophy and thought.

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