Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

Political participation can be defined in a variety of ways. The term denotes actions by which individuals take part in political process. Political participation generally refers to the activities of mass public in politics which include voting in election, financing in political campaign, petitioning, boycotting, demonstrating and the like. Participation as a concept is however a contested subject. As a concept it means different things to different people in different settings. For some it is a matter of principle, for others a practice and for still others an end in itself. In a nutshell it refers to the participation of the individuals in the political process, and it ensures that individuals are to take part in deciding the common goals of the society and the best way of achieving it. Political Participation can be seen as a process of empowerment of the deprived and the excluded.

The participation of the people has fascinated the minds of different scholar right from the days of Plato, Aristotle to the modern thinkers. The concept of political participation is fluctuating in the sense that earlier it was used to

1 International Encyclopedia of Social And Behavioral Sciences, Vol 16
include mostly voting right, gradual representation and now most of the
debates are centering on the issues of governance and decision-making.
Lasswel and Parson Verba view political participation as a process that
affects power relationship. As for Robert A Dahl, involvement of people in
political affairs varies from persons to persons. In an entire population all
are not equally engaged in power of which some are power holder and
others are power seekers. Even among the people of same category degree
of involvement varies.

The modern section of political scientist considers many activities usually
performed by the citizens as political participation besides voting. J.L
Woodward and Elmo Roper hold that the following five activities form part
of political participation. These are (i) voting at the polls, (ii) supporting
possible pressure group by being members of them, (iii) personally
communicating directly with legislators, (iv) participating in political party
activities and thus acquiring claim over legislators, (v) engaging in habitual
dissemination of political opinions through word of mouth communication
to other citizens.¹

According to Nie, “political participation is the activity of the citizens that
are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental,

personal or action they take"2. International Encyclopedia of Women’s Development has defined as-“Political participation is more than electoral administrative process which generally includes voting, support for political groups, communication with legislators, spread of political views and opinion among electorates”. Almond and Powell observe, “Political Participation can be defined as the involvement of members of society in the decision making process”3 Again Michael Rush and Philip Althoff hold that “Political Participation is the involvement of individuals at various levels in political system”.4 Kazenstein Mary Fainshod conceptualizes political participation as-“public membership of citizens sharing justice and orienting their action towards a public or a common good.”5Thus it seems that the view of political participation varies.

The notion of political participation varies from society to society. But normally they include voting and other electoral activities. It encompasses all kind of activities like the involvement of people in shaping and influencing the political decision making process and selection of their rulers, casting of votes in elections, making of organized demands on the political system, participating in party politics, participation in political movements, conferences, discussions, strikes and demonstrations, communications with the representatives and other political leaders,

5 Kazenstein, Mary Fainshod, Women and Politics in India, in Women and Social Change, 1980, p-15
involvement in political communication etc. all form part of political participation.6

The term political participation has been used in two senses narrow and broad. In the narrow sense it includes the activities like discussion of politics, convincing other person to vote in a particular way, contributing money to campaign and other activities of this nature. In the broad sense it includes all behavior through which people directly express their opinion. Thus it can be said that political participation implies the real involvement of the people in politics i.e., power, political activity and process which affects the people in the political system.

Political participation of people is directly related to the democratic functioning of the state and success of democracy depends on people’s participation and their awareness especially at the local levels. In a democracy where government is representative no doubt there is extensive political participation of people, but in case of authoritarian state also some amount of political participation is found in the form of protest movement. The concept of political participation in democracy can take various forms starting from voting for representatives at regular intervals to voting on policies in referenda, forming political groups, and engaging in legal or illegal protest. The individuals busy in such participation likely look

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forward that these actions will have some impact on the content of government policies. However, the effects of political participation might not be limited to outcomes. Political participation might also affect individual life satisfaction and happiness. It has important effects on policy choices and outcomes. In addition to the effects of participation on policy outcomes, political participation may matter in a very different way, by providing an individual with direct utility and thereby increasing happiness and satisfaction with life in general.

There is close relationship between political participation and power, since politics is a study of an exercise in power, to effectively influence the decision making process and policies, to reverse the existing situation wherever they are disadvantageous and to bring about necessary social changes required. Its close link with power is postulated by Laswell and Parsons Verba. Nie has stated political participation as the activities by the private citizens that are more or less directly involved at influencing the selection of governmental personal and the action they take. Hence political participation is much more than a physical participation, informal institution and structure. Political participation as a perception emerged with acceptance of popular sovereignty as the legitimate base of political power. It implies that as political power is derived from people, so people must have the power to exercise sovereignty in the form of participation in politics.

7 Nie, Verba and Kim, Modes of democratic Participation: Cross National Comparison, Beverly hills, Sage, p-9, 1971
By political participation we refer simply to the activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action, either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of the people who make those policies. The understanding of political participation has undergone change over the years. The modern empirical study of political participation began developing in tandem with the modern study of electoral behavior using sample survey data. Much empirical work was done in U.S and much of that was connected to the Michigan survey Research centre, especially under leadership of Warren Miller and Philip Converse. These investigators collaborated with colleagues outside U.S especially in Europe, producing further studies addressing participation.

Lester W. Milbrath on the other hand ranks political activities in a hierarchical order as –

a) Gladiatorial activities which include holding public and party office, candidate of office, investing time in election canvassing, becoming an active member of a party.

b) Transitional activities include attending of political meetings, monetary contribution to political party contacting political leaders and like.

c) Spectator activities that include voting, putting stickers on cars etc.

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8 Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Verba, Vol-16, p-38, 11078
The figure outlines the hierarchy divided into spectator, transitional, and gladiatorial activities. The activities at the bottom are more common and moving from one level to the next in the hierarchy is dependent on the individual characteristics. So, we can say that political participation is a wider concept which does not only mean physical presence, but also covers the influences exerted in the decision-making area through such participation.

According to Lane, political participation fulfills functions like it gives a better of economic needs, leads to social adjustments helps in pursuing value and most importantly satisfies subconscious and psychological needs when voice of someone is listened or given importance, definitely the
person feels tremendous psychological importance and find the worth of his
or her own living.

According to Mishra\textsuperscript{9} participation involves three kinds of dimensions as-
(a) the kind of participation which includes participation in decision making,
monitoring and evaluation. (b) Who will participate it could be the rural
poor, local leaders, foreign residents (c) how participation is occurring-
voluntary or coercive etc. which includes the aspects such as whether the
initiative for participation is from above or below. This framework implies
that participation occurs when the person who participates is fully aware of
his responsibilities

"The Centre for Study of Developing Societies " has identified he following
kinds of activities which form the part of political participation: (1) voting
(2) canvassing for candidates (3) getting out voters , (4) organization of
meetings and rallies (5) participation in processions (5) participation in
processions (6) distribution of pamphlets and campaign literature, (7) other
campaign activities, (8) campaign through associations and groups, (9)
attending public meetings and rallies (10) membership of political parties
(11) conducting party leaders in resolving problems and (12) conducting
government officials in solving problems .\textsuperscript{10}

Thus political participation refers to the active and willing participation of
the masses in the political process particularly in the decision making or the

\textsuperscript{9} Mishra S.N, Participative Management and Rural Development, Mittal Publication , New Delhi,

\textsuperscript{10} Dr. Vatsyanan, Political Sociology, Kedarnath Ramnath & Co. Meerat, 4\textsuperscript{th} edition, 1992, p113
policy formulation process. It doesn't only mean the participation on the governmental process but also in the non governmental process. It implies active and effective participation in all the decision making organization. Political participation also relates to the development works and activities. Through the formulation and implementation of developmental policies and programmes, government seeks to increase participation in the decision making process which strengthen the political system in a democratic polity. Now in India more importance is laid on the decentralization of power and attempts are made to increase which will enhance the participation at the grass roots. The involvement of the people in the governmental process through the institutions of local self government also makes citizen responsible towards their rights and duties.

1.1-FACTORS AFFECTING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political systems differ from one society to another, hence the involvement of the people in the political process of the political system may also differ from one society to another. However the political participation of the people in the decision making process of the government is effected by some factors like the psychological, socio-economic, political factors. It is influenced by man's desire for power, achievement, affiliation, aggression, money, prestige, recognition, approval, manipulation, sympathy and
responsibility. Political participation is incredibly reliant on the psychological factors. Urge for power is the most important psychological factor of political participation. Love for power impels people to get involved in the political process to a large extent. Loneliness is another psychological factor for which people participate in politics. It is a psychological need which compels political leaders to remain politically active till death, otherwise he/she will find life a lonely burden.

The social environment like age, income, education, sex, race, religion, mobility, occupation and residence has great impact on political participation. For instance the participation tends to be higher among the best educated members of higher occupation and ethnic group, religious group and settled resident. Education on the other hand helps to develop higher sense of civic duty, political competence, interest and responsibility. Education widen's man's field of interest. Moreover people holding higher occupation usually reveal a great willingness of participation. It is in fact one of the most important ingredient of political participation as through it people can make themselves alert and informed about the day to day activities specially the political deeds which help them to encourage in the politics. There are other social factors also which influences political participation like the religion, caste, language. Religion is focused as an essential catalyst for political participation and renewed civic engagement.

The caste based politics, caste based elections, caste considerations in the

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formation of government are important aspects in a country like India. In America the level of political participation among the Negroes is low and the Whites form the basic core of political participation and the leaderships are usually assigned to the urban elites and the higher income groups are more interested in politics than the lower income groups because the higher income is backed by more amount of leisure, less burns and anxieties.\textsuperscript{12}

The modern democracy holds that political participation is meaningless without economic democracy. The government of every political system of the world developed or the developing lays more importance on acquiring more and more socio economic development of the people as it enhances unity and integrity among the people. So keeping this background in mind the framers of the Indian constitution had included chapters like the Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy which are manifesting to bring about the socio-economic development of the country. Besides socio-economic factors, the political factors are major determinants of political participation. The nature and organization of political parties, government constitution mass media are the important components of political participation. People of a political system are regarded as a basic force of a democratic country. The constitution confers the various rights like voting, contesting elections, holding public offices, etc. In country like India in order to ensure involvement of people without any distinction of religion, sex, caste, birth justice in the socio economic and the political field

\textsuperscript{12} The Concise Encyclopaedia of democracy,pp 293-294
is guaranteed in the objective of the Preamble of the Constitution. The political parties introduce the new generation with values, belief, attitudes, norms and goals of political system which assists in making the political system stable and strong and also enhances the curiosity of the people to participate in the actions of the political structure. They highlight the problems of the people and suggest remedies. It gives political knowledge to the people by publishing manifestos, organizing election campaigns etc. The competition among the political parties also affect the turn out in the nations. If the parties are competitive the participation tends to be high.

The tendency of political participation is not same in all societies of the world and a segment of society generally abstains fro participating in the political life and here we can cite the case of ancient Greece where the right to participate in any form of political activity was limited to the adult male citizens, women foreigners and slaves were keep out from participation and the right to vote was restricted to the male citizens. Sometimes it happens that in most of the political system of the world the people take part in politics with great interest and remain active in public affairs but they do not constitute large proportion of the society.

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1.2-THEORIES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

There are various theories in the field of political participation explaining individual or regional variation in political activity. However, a glimpse at the key theories of political participation will help us to understand it in a better way. The most renowned and widely functional model of political participation in political science was originally referred to as the Resources model which has its genesis in the work of Sidney Verba and Norman Nie (1972) in their leading research on participation in the United States. It was subsequently applied by the authors, their collaborators, and others to explain participation in other countries, including Britain. According to this model, the social status of an individual such as—his job, education, and income determines to a large extent how much he participates. It does this through the intervening effects of a variety of "civic attitudes" conducive to participation: attitudes such as a sense of effectiveness, psychological involvement in politics and a feeling of obligation to participate. 14 Thus resources were paramount in the original version of the model, although psychological attitudes always played an important role in explaining participation as well.

The authors of this citation define the resources aspect of this model in terms of "time, money and civic skills". The psychological engagement

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14 Verba and Nie 1972: 13
aspect is defined principally in terms of the individual’s sense of political effectiveness, and, finally, the recruitment networks aspect is defined as “requests for participation that come to individuals at work, in church, or in organizations—especially those that come from friends, relatives, or acquaintances”

This theoretical model has been widely cited and stimulated, and it is probably the most important model of political participation in the literature today. However, it has some drawbacks also like-The main problem relates to the use of socioeconomic status as a forecaster of participation and civic values. It is well established that participants are generally higher-status individuals than are non participants; for example, Verba and his collaborators show that high-status individuals are overrepresented in the category of very active participants and underrepresented in the category of inactive. If socioeconomic status is such an important determinant of political participation, then societies that are gradually becoming more middle class and better educated over time should experience increased rates of participation. The key problem with the resources model is that it focuses exclusively on the supply side of the equation and neglects the demand side aspects. Thus individuals supply more participation if they have the resources or a psychological sense of efficiency. It has not focus as to why individuals have a demand for participation, and what incentives are

15 Verba and Nie 1972: 272
16 Verba and Nie 1972: 131–33
there to get involved in politics. This theory only allow one to understand the supply of participation, but it is necessary to consider the incentives for participation, or the demand side of the equation, to understand why individuals get involved in politics.

The General Incentives Model of participation was introduced specifically to explain the occurrence of high-intensity types of participation, such as canvassing, attending meetings, and running for office, activities. The theory derives from a synthesis of rational choice and social psychological accounts of participation. The general incentives theory of political participation postulates that a number of distinct factors are at work in explaining why people join a political party or become active once they have joined. These are selective and collective incentives, group motivations, and affective or expressive motives. Some of these factors are grounded in rational choice theory, but the theory goes beyond a narrow rational choice conception of participation to examine broader motives for involvement, derived from the social psychological theoretical tradition.

Unlike the resources model the general incentives model focuses on the demand side of the equation and the incentives for participation. The general incentives model incorporates the theoretical concerns of the rational choice approach, it includes key social psychological variables, and the general incentives model addresses the weaknesses of the other models in their neglect of the question of individual rationality.
Democratic elitist theory propounds that political power should be vested in the hands of intellectuals or the so called elites of society because the masses are generally ignorant. It is valueless to give political power to these masses because there will be no sustainable stability in the state and political decisions will also be very poor. It holds the view that if there is minimum participation headed by progressive leadership it will be best to maintain order. Therefore the decision making task should be left to the intellectuals so that good decisions can be taken. It is against the democratic principle of giving and considering everyone as equal.

Rational choice theory is an individualist account of political action that rejects collectivist approaches. Therefore, it seeks to explain collective outcomes by reference to the maximizing actions of individuals. Rational choice approach is a common explanation for a voting behaviour. It is often assumed and defended as a logically coherent approach. For the rational theorist participation is very often based on cost benefit account according to which rational citizens minimize cost and maximize benefits. In political field many people do not like to participate because of their rationality. It does not mean non willingness is a sign of their ignorance. Sometimes non-participation becomes the most rational option. Rayon has opined such participation as 'rational self interest' which is the basis of one’s interest. It may be assumed that participation is rational in the sense hat it consist of the examination of alternative actions and the selection of that alternative
which yield the greatest expected utility. However this theory neglects the motivational factor because people do not always participate for benefit only but there are instinctive urge for politics also.

**Social Modernization Theory** received classic exposition in the hands of Daniel Bell, Roland Inglehart and Russel Dalton. According to them change in the society causes change in the democratic process which leads to change in participatory behavior. Due to advancement in the society like industrialization, urbanization of life styles or better job options have transformed the rural life to an urban one. So along with these changes their has been change in the participatory attitude of the people also.

**Participatory theory** is one of the most important theories of political participation and it views political participation as developmental because it helps in individual development. It values democracy as great cementing force required for a civil society. Participatory theory is one of the best way for the individual development as it suggests that all possible decisions should be taken by individual themselves .Individuals are recognized as good decision makers because democracy extends the responsibility for decisions to everyone and it in fact develop the political competence. It tries to emancipate the civil society by educating the masses in the art of politics. It also helps in bonding the local governments and extending the principles

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17 Rayon Alan, Two Concepts of Politics and Democracy, in John stuart Mill Machiavelli and Nature of Political Thought(ed) M Fleister NY Allenium,p-80,1972
of democracy to the institution of civil society. It advocates the participation from all sides and helps in fostering political culture among the masses.

Participatory Democracy and Political Participation” provides the first systematic evaluation of most visible and explicit efforts to engineer political participation via institutional reforms. Policies of democratic reform aim to increase the level of political participation by implementing institutions of participatory democracy. Such policies are debated in established democracies as means to counter downward trends in political participation. Participatory communication identified encouraging participation, stimulating critical thinking, and stressing process, rather than specific outcomes.

With this theoretical background of political participation in mind we tried to study political participation of tea garden workers. Attempt has been made to research on the tea labours through the participatory theory of democracy as this theory advocates for the participation from all sides and tries to uplift people through participation in the decision making process. It believes that the masses should be made to use the principles of democracy like to raise voice, the freedom to participate in the affairs of the state without any discrimination because democracy recognizes individuals important decision makers. Attempts are also been made to study the political behaviour of the tea garden labourers of the study area through the criteria’s of political participation like voting, campaigning, mobilizing, contesting elections and attending meetings etc.
1.3: Statement of the problem

Tea the ‘green gold’ of Assam is the pride of India and the real toilers in the manufacture of this gold are the tea garden labourers. The word ‘tea’ is derived from ‘t’ ‘e’ of the Chinese fukien dialect. In Cantonese tea is known as ‘cha’.

The tea industry of Assam had a glorious history. The actual beginning of the organized tea industry can be traced to the first half of the 19th century following the discovery of indigenous tea bushes in Upper Assam by Major Robert Bruce in 1823.

Major Robert Bruce supposedly saw tea plants growing wildly in some hills near Rangpur (Sivasagar), the then capital of Assam. He went to upper Assam in search of trade. As he was addicted to botanical researches he soon found out that tea plants was growing wild on the hill side in a state of nature. He made an agreement with the Singpho Chief Bessa Gaum to supply some plants and seeds in his next visit. Unfortunately Robert Bruce died in 1824 but before he died he had told his brother C.A Bruce about the seeds. Afterwards the promised seeds were collected by C.A Bruce and handed over to then agent to the Governor General in Assam, David Scott. Mr. Scott sent some seeds to the Indian Govt. and rest to Dr N. Wallich, of Botanical Garden who identified it as leaves and plants belonging to

\[\text{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea accessed on 1-4-09 at 3.35 pm}\]

\[\text{Nag Amit Kumar, The condition of the tea labours in North east India and its background, S. Karotemprel and B.D. Roy(ed), Tea Garden Labours of North East India Vendrame Institute Shillong 1990.}\]
camellia family but did not consider it to be of the same species of tea as with that of China.

A tea committee was established in the year 1834 by the Governor General of India William Bentinck to advice on the commercial cultivation of tea in India. In the meantime Mr. Gordon the Secretary of the tea committee was sent to China to fetch some tea seeds. Again a scientific panel was constituted in the year 1835 with Dr. N. Wallich, Dr. J.M Cleland and Dr. W. Griffith and they were to report on the favorable localities for starting experimental tea gardens. Meanwhile the British East India Company took over Assam in 1826 from the Ahom kings through the Yandaboo Treaty. Soon in 1837, the first tea garden was established at Chabua in Dibrugarh District of Upper Assam, and in 1840 the Assam Tea Company started production of tea on a commercial basis. The plants were of China variety which was brought from China.

However there is a great controversy regarding the real discoverer of tea plant in Assam. Some regards Maniram Dewan as real discoverer who served as the Dewan for some time in the Assam tea company. It is quite conceivable that Bruce learnt about the subsistence of tea plant in Assam from Maniram Dewan who introduced him to the Singhphos chief. The Singhpho tribe played an important role in the discovery of tea plant in Assam. The tea committee appointed by William Bentinck recommended the valleys of Himalaya, the Nilgiri Mountains. The tea plantation was
started in Nilgiri since then. In South India Tea areas are concentrated in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

There are different legends attached with the origin of tea as-In one popular Chinese legend, Shennong, the legendary Emperor of China was drinking a bowl of boiling water some time around 2737 BC when a few leaves were blown from a nearby tree into his water, changing the color. The emperor took a sip of the brew and was pleasantly surprised by its flavor and restorative properties. A variant of the legend tells that the emperor tested the medical properties of various herbs on himself.

A terrible legend dates back to the Tang Dynasty. In the legend, Bodhidharma, the founder of Chan Buddhism accidentally fell asleep after meditating in front of a wall for nine years. He woke up in such disgust at his weakness that he cut off his own eyelids. They fell to the ground and took root, growing into tea bushes.20

Tea became a drink of the religious classes in Japan when Japanese priests and envoys, sent to China to learn about its culture, brought tea to Japan. Ancient recordings indicate the first batch of tea seeds were brought by a priest named Saicho in 805 and then by another named Kukai in 806. It became a drink of the royal classes when Emperor Saga the Japanese emperor, encouraged the growth of tea plants. However there are innumerable trails of such tales on tea.

20 url-http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/teattcite.note33 accessed on 3-4-09 at 10.40 am
History points ‘Tea’ as a product of colonialism. Plantations require large tracts of land and a large labour force. It was however a chronic problem in the beginning of the tea industry because at that time the population of Assam was very meager and they had bounty lands in their ownership. They cultivated their own paddy fields and considered it insulting to work in tea garden fields as wage earners under the Britishers. As the local people were not willing so the tea garden authorities had to bring labour from various parts of India. They sent employees to fetch labour from other parts of the country. The British who mainly owned the tea garden brought labours from far away places mainly tribals; Oraons, Mundas from Chotanagpur, Santhals from Santhal Paraganas and West Bengal, Orissa and Central province. These people are known as Adivasis (Adi-original, Vasis-inhabitants) in their own areas. A class of recruitment contractors started flourishing as their job was to supply labours. These contractors operated through recruiter known as the ‘Arkattis’. The indentured system of recruitment was carried out under two systems. The first (phase) was called the Arkatti system, characterized by unlicensed recruiting from Chota Nagpur and other parts of (tribal) central and South Eastern parts of the subcontinent. The second (phase) was called the Sardari system and was characterized by recruitment of new labourers by those already employed in the tea estates. Recruitment carried on through highly foul contractual networks and numerous episodes of fraud, forcible recruitment. 21These

21 Phullopillil Thomas, Identity of Adivasis in Assam, Indian publishers, 1999.-
labourers were not emigrating willingly, neither were they liberated labor, they were recruited forcibly and made to sign contract expressing their readiness to work in the colonies for a specific period usually for five years and for a specific wage rate. Most of the time expired labourers and deserters were unable to return home because most of the labourers had migrated with their families and their livelihood in their homeland was also uncertain as they were landless section of the population. Most of the places like the Santhal Paraganas, Chotanagpur area where labourers were recruited were known for famine and acute food scarcity. This led a major section of the labour population to live in the hovering condition. Migration at that time becomes a positive outlet. The tea managers also favoured the settlement of the time expired labours and as a matter of fact some planters took it as part of policy because they got a regular supply of labour force and during the peak time of plucking this section of time expired labours served great need. It was like reserved supply of labours for meeting extra requirements during peak plucking session and it was from this style of contract a new type of labour came into existence in India.

However the scenarios of the tea labours in the pre and post independent were quite different. In the pre independent period their bloods and sweats were utilized ruthlessly for production but in the post independent period

23 Famines in Orissa and migrant labours to the assam tea platation :a study of corelation' Proceedings of NEIHA, 14th session, 1993, pg-188
24 Phillophil Thomas, Identity of Adivasis in Assam- p-25-27, Indian Publisher, 1999.
their voice and platform are utilized as vote banks. During the pre independence period, the working conditions of tea garden labours were akin to slavery, with whipping, torture; in fact it was grim. They were kept under strict supervision with the harshest punishments for simple carelessness. The tea garden workers were under a strict time-bound discipline with strenuous work in all kinds of weather ought to be done by men, women and children. Terrible heavy loads of work, appalling wages, and mandatory work even when ill due to the fear of ruthless punishments characterized the working conditions of the tea garden labourers. However, the working conditions of the tea labours tainted in the post independent period. The Plantation Labour Act brought out in 1951 to protect the interests of workers in plantations. The profile of Welfare Office has been created only to look after the welfare of the tea labours which was earlier totally neglected. In every plantation wherein three hundred or more workers are ordinarily employed the employer shall employ such number of welfare officers as may be prescribed in the Plantation Labour Act 1951. In addition there are numerous other violations under legislative measures meant to protect workers, all of which the plantation workers fall under, such as the Workmen's Compensation Act 1929 and the Assam Plantation Employees Welfare Fund Act. Tea plantations are characterized by a dogmatic chain of command which has been a legacy of the British period.
About the worker management relationship Amalendu Guha has opined it as worst form of serfdom found in the tea gardens of Assam.\textsuperscript{25} There has always been a great gap between the management and the labourers and this tendency of conducting labourers has left its trail still in the tea management track. The pecking order or the hierarchy is reflected in a plantation culture characterized by a strong sense of superiority and inferiority. The social distance between management and labour can be regarded as master-servant relationship. Furthermore, field workers are commonly stigmatized as unaware and lazy. Generally speaking the organizational structure is divided into five strata: the owner, management, staff, sub-staff and labourers. Depending on the management there consists manager each for the plantation and the factory and an assistant manager. Clerical and white-collar workers are regarded as staff, while lower-level supervisors, sirdars and watchmen all comes under sub staff. Sub-staff members like to highlight that they have to guide and educate these backward workers, while the staff in its turn looks down on the 'inexpert sub-staff'. Such philosophy legitimizes the rigid hierarchy and strict pattern of control on tea plantations. One of the most remarkable features of tea plantations is the large number of female workers, who constitute about 50% of the total work force. Women are especially active in plucking, which is very labour intensive. Women are believed to be more efficient.

\textsuperscript{25} Guha Amalendu, Planter Raj to Swaraj : Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947, p-44, ICSSR, New Delhi
pluckers than men, but they are hardly given any opportunity for their promotion.

The intimidation, isolation and exploitation of workers of colonial days are still rampant on modern tea plantations. Though the Labour Plantation Act, 1951 has been enacted by the Parliament but it has not been fully enforced till date. It has always been struggling to get survival in society. Till date it has been trying for the assertion of the Schedule Tribes status.

The tea labours speak their own language and the assimilation of these labours with the mainstream is limited. Moreover society on the whole looked down upon this group of labours. This black tribal of Assam were regarded as coolies and the Assamiya ruling class also descheduled them. 27 These indentured labourers were the first important category of wage earning labourer in our country. The tea garden labours are poor with large size of the family. They are hard toilers who ventures out of their home with the beaming of the day and returns by dusk. Once retired they don’t enjoy much benefit. Ignorance, poverty, addiction of males to country-beer, poor standard of living has marked their lives. Gradually upcoming generation of tea labours are becoming conscious after being educated and they are inspiring other tea garden labourers to get education. Along with the spread of education among the tea garden labours a slow but steady awakening can be observed. There is an expedition for identity which is accelerating them for having political, social and economic justice. The glimpse of it can be

27 Hussain Monirul, Assam Movement, Manak Publication, Delhi, p-193
seen in the formation of various ethnic organization among them ie., Santhal Sahitya Sabha, Munda Maha Sabha, Assam Kharia Sabha, Assam Adivasi Council, Adivasi Samiti etc which organizes state and district level conferences at regular intervals to articulate ethnic and cultural association and renovate group unity. Moreover the formation of students organization like AASAA, AATTSA have been generating awareness among the masses. In Assam number of tea garden labourer have attained the status of M.L.A , member of Panchayat or the Zilla Parishad.

The trade union helps the tea garden workers to address their daily needs and it is the first step to political participation. It is only through it that they place their demands for wage increase, bonus, and other necessities. The Trade Union started in the year 1939 with the registration of labour organization of Assam. Sylhet Cachar Cha Bagan Mazdoor Union and Upper Assam Tea Company Labour Union registered on 27th April 1939 were the first Trade Unions formed. The Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) shaped under the banner of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) on 9th August 1958 is the largest Trade Union in the Tea Garden of Assam with largest membership. The leaders of it are from tea labour community mostly from the sub-staff, who are basically supervisors by occupation. The political parties always try to capture or influence this

28 Proceeding of North East India History Association, 13th session shillong, 1993, By Sunil Pio, PG-372
organization which provides as vote bank. The garden unions are politicized with some vested interest. For instance the ACMS leaders serve the interest of political party or leaders. The tea garden labour has been used as vote bank in different parts of the country\textsuperscript{30}. On this background our study wants to examine the nature of participation of these labours. Anyhow the foundation stone of tea garden are the tea labourers. Tea garden labourers who constitute about 20% of the total population of Assam is subject of our study. In independent India political parties pay lot of importance to this vote bank. Our objective is to find out how active this tea garden labours are as voters or any other form of political activities. Based on this theoretical context the researcher has tried to understand the texture of tea garden labourers in the light of political participation.

The rationale behind choosing the area is that though the tea garden labourers of the study area of Muttrapore tea estate has participated actively in the freedom movement but they have failed to find importance in the pages of history. The researcher through its writings has made an attempt to trace out the political participation of the people of the study area from pre-independence to the present era.

\textsuperscript{30} Toppo Hippoletus, Violation of Human Rights in the tea Plantation-, p-144-145, Don Bosco Publications Guwahati, 2005.
1.4-: Aims and Objectives

The present age of ours is of democracy where everyone has an equal say and so most of the countries have opted for it. On the other hand participation of the people in the decision making or the policy formulation is a necessary factor for democracy and therefore in our study we have aimed -

1) To assess the political participation of the tea garden labourers.
2) To observe the factors which is promoting their upliftment.

1.5: HYPOTHESIS

1. Political participation is influenced by education, culture and economy
2. Activities of SHG are training ground for development of political awareness
3. AATTSA is an important factor in deciding the political participation of the people of the study area.

1.6: METHODOLOGY

In the research entitled ‘Political Participation of tea garden labours – A case study of Muttrapore tea Estate’. The study covers both empirical and analytical methods. Along with this the researcher uses questionnaire for interview. So it is also a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research. The study is empirical study depended on primary and secondary sources of data. These secondary sources are Books, Newspaper, Journal
etc. On the other hand the primary sources are interviews carried on the tea garden labours (Queries were also made to the management cell like the Welfare Officer, Manager, Asstt. Manager, members of All Assam Tea Tribes Student Association (AATTSA), Anganvadi workers, teachers of the Bagisa school, Anganvadi school, and Private English School, members of trade union, panchayat members who hail from tea community, members of Bagisa Mahila samiti, members of Mother Club, members of SHG. In order to have a vivid insight interview was taken from the Adivasi organization like the Pajhra which works for socio, economic and educational development of the tea labours, Adivasi Sahitya Sabha, Nawa Bihan Samaj.

1.7-SAMPLING

It is the most significant technique in social science research. As we planned to study the political participation of the tea garden labours in the area of Muttrapore tea estate hence the lottery method under random sampling pattern has been chosen. After collecting the list of tea labours of all labour lines every 10th person was taken for interview. The researcher wanted the samples to showcase the level of political participation so the members of AATSA were taken exclusive interview as this student organization is playing a pivotal role in arousing awareness among the masses. As in random sampling, each item or element of the population has an equal chance of being chosen at each draw. So this method was taken for obtaining the sample. 10% of the total tea garden population was taken
which is 3500 and so a sample of labourers 350 were collected. Interview was taken from 40 ATTSA members and 10 political representatives. So, a sample of 400 has been collected.

1.8: SCHEME OF CHAPTERS

A scientific and systematic chapterization is always an integral part of research work without which a researcher cannot draw a fruitful conclusion of the research. With the objectives in view, we have outlined a scheme of chapterization which will be included a total of 6 chapters.

The first chapter relates to “Introduction” about my research work. This chapter will have a broad discussion of the Statement of the Problem, aims and Objectives of the study. The Hypothesis of the study, Methodology, Sampling, Scheme of chapters, and the review of the literature will be stated promptly in this chapter.

The Second Chapter ‘A panorama of the Study Area’ will consist of the brief introduction of study area and its population structure where their place of origin will be glanced. As political participation is influenced by the socio-culture and economic aspect, so in order to access the political participation of the tea garden labours of Muttrapore tea estate the researcher will penetrate to their socio-cultural and economic life in the second unit.
The Third Chapter entitled ‘Politics and tea labors’ will consist of the role of the tea garden labours in the pre and the post independent era where the involvement of the tea garden labours in the freedom movement is lighted. The second unit of it will include the involvement of the tea garden labours in the grass root politics and the role of Mahila Samiti, Mother Club and the SHG of the study area in moulding political awareness. The third unit of this chapter will cover the role of trade union in the study area.

Fourth Chapter entitled ‘Political Participation of the new generation of tea labour students’ will consist of the brief history of the tea labours students organization of Assam like the All Assam Tea Tribes Students Association (AATTSA) and All Adivasi students Association. The second unit will deal with role played by these organizations in political field.

Chapter five is the ‘Data Analysis’. In this chapter all the data collected regarding the political participation of the tea garden labourers will be thoroughly analyzed.

Chapter-Six entitled “In quest of alternative” will be the last chapter of my research work. Summary, findings and suggestion will be included.
1.9- REVIEW OF LITERATURE

We had read and gone through several books and journals for our study. Besides we have done library works in different libraries for the purpose. Though we have found valuable books and journals for our study but we have not found enough books to our expectation. Anyhow some of the books have really helped us. A review of literature on this line of research has been presented.

'Planter Raj to Swaraj-Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947' (1977) by Amalendu Guha deals with the socio-economic condition of a crucial period in the history of Assam. He analyzes the freedom struggle in Assam as the struggles against the attainment of land for growing tea by European planters, the limits set on the rights of citizens to move freely in the name of protecting the tea gardens, the imposition of higher taxes on the inhabitants to build infrastructure to support the tea gardens and so on. Thus, the phrase "Planter Raj" used in the title of the book is phrase for defining the historical situation. In 1826, Ahom rule had just come to an end after a chaotic period of political unrest. Continuous Burmese invasions in the 18th and early 19th century had ravaged the economy of the region. The British arrived and started imposing taxes not only on land but also on produce from the land. Guha defines these protests as "peasant struggles"
'Economics of Tea Industry In India' (1975) by R.C. Awasthi highlights a whole range of problems in tea industry. This book presents the scenario and troubles of the industry in the region relating them to the national point of view and it has also given a good description of history, expansion and the development of the tea industry. It has also dealt with the topics like the labour, finance, transport and marketing, agriculture. It is a gamut of the socio-political aspects of the tea garden.

Tea Garden Labours of North-East India – A multi-dimensional in the tea garden of north-East India (1990) edited by B. Dutta Roy and S. Karoltemprel exhaustively deals with causes the social, economic, political situations of tea garden labours. It has precisely described how the tea garden labours mostly belonging Oraon, Munda, Kharia, Santhal and several other tribes belonging to Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and other states are considerably called as Adivasi from a considerable part of the population of the North East.

'Politics of Alienation in Assam' (1984) by Bhawani Singh is saga of blood, tears and toil of labours. It is tale of total dedication to the laudable efforts of the labourers of soil. It has presented how the tea labors had left no stone unturned to make the tea gardens lush and bloom.

'The Ex- Tea Garden Labour Population in Assam' by Umanada Phukan (1984) is an intensive socio-economic investigation of a section of what is known as Ex Tea Garden labour population of Assam. It analyses
the historical circumstances under which the immigrant tea labour left regular employment and plantation and choose to settle in village.

'A Time For Tea -Women Labour and post colonial politics on an Indian Plantation’(2001) by Piya Chatterjee is creative ethnographic on an Indian plantation. Piya Chatterjee's highly readable ethnography is disarmingly crafted with the skills of a canny playwright scripting the tension between the colonial and postcolonial on the backs of women's labor. Each chapter opens with a scene from a play that takes its cues from a number of texts like Alice in Wonderland’s. She have reiterated that the social hierarchy of caste and gender determines the placement of women in the organization of work.

'Socio Economic and Political problems of Tea Garden workers’(2006) by S.N Singha Amarendra Narain and Puranendu Kumar(2006) is the critical examination of the authors in the problems confronting tea garden labours like socio economic and political. It is the output of intensive field study of the socio-economic and political problems faced by the tea plantation labourers of Assam. The writers have a given a very good picture how the toiling section have shed their blood and sweat to manufacture the green gold of Assam but still they are left far behind in the field of Participatory democracy. The fruit of the participatory democracy is still beyond their reach
‘Determinants of Political Participation of Women and Public Activity’ (1991) by Snehalata Panda primarily deals with the psychological involvement variable. It reveals that participation and non-participation of politics results from psychological resources of the people.

‘The Tea Industry of Assam-Origin and Development’ by Dr Pradip Baruah is a book on the analytical study of famous tea industry of Assam since inception. It covers an aspect of origin and development over the years of production, marketing, labour contribution to the economy of Assam. The quality factors problems and prospects, suggested measure for future development based on research findings and presents an overview of the tea industry of India as well.

‘Nationalist upsurge in Assam’ (2000) edited by Arun Bhuyan seeks to cover the nationalist upsurge in undivided Assam from 1857 to 1947. Topics covered include the growth of nationalism, the role of different classes and communities in freedom movement, the role of the press, the economic fall out of foreign rule etc. It contains 28 articles.

‘Assam in the nineteenth century (1999) – Industrialization and Colonial penetration’ by Priyam Goswami analyzes the impact of industrialization and colonial penetration in Brahmaputra valley of Assam during the 19th century in the general context of the British colonization of India. The focus has been mainly rendered to tea, coal and oil sectors which are the three most important industries in strengthening the British rule in the region. The author has gone deep into the roots of the policy of colonial expansion.
‘Assam in the Days Of the Company’(1996) by M.K Borpuzari analyzes the period from 1826 to 1858 in a formative epoch in the history of Assam. It marked not only the end of the independent and powerful Ahom monarchy that had ruled in the valley of the Brahmaputra for over 6 centuries but ushered in a new regime of foreign domination having radical changes, the effects of which can be felt even today.

‘Identity of Adivasi in Assam (1999) edited by Thomas Phillopillil speaks of the larger section of the tea labours population that has been brought from the Chotanagpur plateau of Bihar. It is an attempt to introduce to the outside world the extraordinary hardworking people, their history and culture. It contains papers on history of their immigration and culture.

‘Coolies Capital and colonialism’ by Rana Pratap Behal, Marcel Van der Linden is an excellent depiction of the historical background of the labour in India. This collection is dedicated to the memory of Rajnarayan Chandavarta one of the foremost Indian Labour historians. In this book much attention is also paid to the migrants and the persistent phenomenon of labour mobility, the self-employed and process of informalization of labour and indentured labourers and issue of free and unfree labour.

‘History of Assamese Movement Since 1947’ by Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay gives a very good picture of Assam history from 1947 to 1985. Here he has cited about the plantation migrants whose willingness to assimilate linguistically have made them model migrants to the indigenous
Assamese. The tribal migrants residing in or adjacent to the tea plantation do not have routine contacts with the assamese population. It also explains the post 1947 scenario when Britishers started selling some of their to the big capitalist such as Tatas and Birlas.

rendered to tea, coal and oil sectors which are the three most important industries in strengthening the British rule in the region.

‘The Story of Tea leaf’ by Montfort Chamney very vividly describes about the genesis of tea leaves. It also gives a good picture of the legends attached with tea leaf. Amongst other things the author tells us how the habit of tea drinking began and spread in England, how the trade in tea (imported from China) was at first carried on by the Dutch and Portuguese, how it subsequently passed into the hands of the East India Company, and that Company when its monopoly was broken, introduced the cultivation of tea into India.