ABSTRACT

Plantation sector plays an important role in most of the developing countries like India. It is an important sector of Indian economy as a basis of foreign earnings and contributor to national development. The country's development activities and socio-economic progress have been closely linked with the plantation sector. The sector shares a major proportion in employment, export earnings and government revenue. The tea growing area in Jalpaiguri district is known as Dooars and the plains of Darjeeling district known as Terai.

Dooars economy was a typical natural economy before the plantation era. This natural economy was converted into monetary economy through this structural change. One of the principal effects was the commercialization of local agriculture. Roads and communication system owed its development to plantation. Therefore, it is imperative to measure the precise impact of tea plantation on the socio-economic conditions of the people of the region. The present study attempts to examine the role of tea plantation on different aspects of socio-cultural life of the people of Dooars Region.

The study area for the above study is Dooars Region which contributes more than 17 per cent tea production of the total
production of north India. The Jalpaiguri district, adjoining to the famous tea region of India, Darjeeling district of West Bengal is entirely composed the Dooars Region.

The Study region spreads on entire territory of the district of Jalpaiguri of West Bengal. The district of Jalpaiguri is located on the northern border of the state touching the boundary of Bhutan in the north, Assam in the east, Kochbehar in the south. Darjeeling district in the west. The Dooars lies between 26°16' and 27°0' North latitude and between 88°4' and 89°53' East longitude. It covers an area of 6227 sq.kms having a total population of 3401173 with density of 546 persons per sq.km (Census, 2001).

The present study aimed at to understand the nature and structure of tea plantations in the Dooars Region, to know the impact of tea plantation on the socio-economic life of the people of Dooars Region. It also tried to assess the prospects of Tea Plantation in context to growing population of Dooars Region and suggest certain remedial measures for the betterment of tea plantation.

The study includes hypotheses, Tea plantation affects the socio-economic life of the people more in the garden and village area compared to town area. The condition of Tea Plantation labourers is as pathetic as other landless labourers. Higher the number of family members involved in tea plantation, better the Socio-economic condition of the family.
The study is based on primary as well as secondary sources of data. The primary data has been collected through the field survey. Direct questionnaire method has been used to obtain the required information.

The researcher has collected the data from three sets of population i.e. garden, village and town. In the study area there were thirteen blocks in total. The researcher has selected one garden, one village and one town area from each block. The secondary data has been obtained from Census of India and Census Hand Book of Jalpaiguri district. The current Census data 2001, have been taken for analysis. Besides this, some of the relevant data have also been used from District Gazetteers, Publications of Tea Board of India.

Various statistical and geographical techniques of analysis, association and representation have been used. The association and correlation of the data have been done through Karl Pearson’s coefficient of correlation technique. The student t-test has been calculated for knowing the levels of significance. For measuring the regional disparities, the composite Mean Z score technique has been used. Simple percentage method has been used extensively to show ratios of the different aspects of the sampled population of garden, village and town areas. Various graphical techniques have also been used to represent the data.
The entire work has been divided into six chapters. In the first chapter an assessment of Physical and Cultural settings with a brief account of historical background of Dooars Region have been made. Chapter second presents conceptual framework and review of the literature in brief. Chapter third exhibits with state of Tea plantation in the Region. Chapter fourth highlights the level of Socio-economic Development in the Dooars Region with the help of precise statistical techniques. Chapter fifth, which is based on a comprehensive field survey of one village, one tea garden and one town from 13 blocks highlight the Socio-economic profile of the people in the study area. Total 780 households have been surveyed with the help of a questionnaire and finally the last Chapter explains the Impact of Tea Plantation on the Socio-economic life of the people in the study area.

In many developing countries like India plantation economy has no doubt accelerated the process of economic and social development. Tea is one of the important plantation crops for India as it plays an important role to earn hard currency. India is one of the leading exporters of tea in the world market, tea plantation has marked-impact on the socio-economic life of the people of the plantation region as well as its surrounding region in general and plantation workers in particular.

The high level of social development are found in the eastern part and some western part of the district due to high literacy, high Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe population, low education where as it is low in the western part and one block in North-Eastern part of
the region caused by low population, low literacy rate, low electricity facility etc.

Most of the opposite correlation between variables of tea plantation and socio-economic development of garden area and village area sampled households indicating that the poor villagers and those living around garden areas are only manage to earn livelihood through the labouring and the condition of tea plantation labourers is pathetic as labourers of other sectors i.e. agricultural and non agricultural. On the other hand, the positive correlation between the variables of tea plantation and socio-economic development of urban areas sampled households indicates that urban areas have other opportunities to get better livelihood than the tea plantation.

Moreover, the sampled household of urban localities engaged in labouring in tea plantation has much better socio-economic condition than their garden and rural counter part because of availability of other employment opportunity.

The analysis of socio-economic profile of the sampled households of the Dooars Region indicates a mixed picture of socio-economic condition of the sampled households of the Dooars Region. A comparative analysis of households size and age structure of garden, village and town areas reveal the fact that big family's size is more common in village and garden areas then the town area. It may be due to the culture of joint family in villages and nuclear family culture in the urban localities. Moreover, the percentage of
workforce is more in town area as compared to village and garden areas.

The overall literacy pattern of garden, village and town areas depicts the fact that overall literacy rate is lowest in garden, moderate in village and high in town areas due to the better availability of schooling facilities and mass awareness. Another important trend, which emerges from the analysis, shows that, as the size of family increases there is a decline in overall literacy as well as a sharp decline in female literacy. Therefore, it may be concluded that female literacy is negatively correlated with the size of family. On the other hand, the positive correlation between the variables of tea plantation and socio-economic development of urban areas sampled households indicates that urban areas have other opportunities to get better livelihood than the tea plantation. We have already come to know that sampled urban households have lesser association with tea plantation than the garden and village areas. Moreover, the sampled household of urban localities engaged in labouring in tea plantation has much better socio-economic condition than their garden and rural counter part.

On the basis of analysis and association of data which the study has done so far, the researcher has raised and pointed out the following critical point which may be taken as suggestions for improving the socio-economic Development of the people of Dooars Region. There is high job insecurity in tea plantation because most of the employment in tea plantation is seasonal. Though most of the
seasonal labourers are migrant but local workers of tea plantation have to face problem of job insecurity particularly female labourers who pluck the tea leaves from the garden. There must be some job security and provision of daily earning for them as we have already learnt that only a few sampled households of garden area save there income for future. Formation and effective functioning of **Self Help Group** (SHG) among the workers of tea plantation will certainly benefit them particularly at the time of uncertainty. Micro-credit system as launched and has been successfully running in neighbouring Bangladesh by Nobel Laurates Prof. Yunus must be introduced in the tea plantation areas which may be helpful for the labourers during the off season of the tea gardens. The micro credit system will be particularly beneficial in the closed and seek (reopen tea gardens) tea gardens. Moreover, it may be started by the owner of tea garden itself under the government regulation. The primary survey also exhibited that the sampled household of garden area have no accessibilities of health care facilities, thus immediate needs to provide the health care facilities by initially the garden owners.