INTRODUCTION

Plantation sector plays an important role in most of the developing countries as a basis of foreign earnings and contributor to national development. It has been an important sector to Indian economy. The country's development activities and socio-economic progress have been closely linked with the plantation sector. The sector has been sharing a major proportion in employment, export earnings and government revenue. Dooars Region was formerly a part of Bhutan, and it was annexed to the British Bengal in 1864. The first grant for tea plantation was sanctioned in 1865. Since then, the history of Dooars tea plantation began.

The development of Indian plantation sector took place with the development of the global economy. Improvement in means of transport and communication, particularly ocean transport and inland railways, have widened the scope of international trade. The standard of living in the Western society underwent upward vertical changes. Commodities, hitherto classified as luxury goods, were included into the daily necessities of the middle and lower income groups of the Western society. Many tropical colonies were sources of supply of these goods and tea was one of the most important commodities. This was
the international background when tea plantation was started in the Dooars Region.

Tea was primarily a luxury drink of the aristocracy. The flavor and delicacy of the Chinese brands were so dear and conspicuous that 'tea party' was held to be a part of aristocratic life-style. The Dooars plantation economy revealed all aspects of a colonial investment in the conventional sense. The expanding market of Indian tea also provided the impetus for the growth of Dooars plantation. Dooars tea was relatively 'strong' and used as 'filter' in the blending process. This factor contributed to the steady rise of the demand for Dooars tea in the international market. The life of tea bush is very long and replantation cycle dispenses away the need for building up a regular reserve fund out of profit so that dividend declared is always very high. Taking into account the rate of return with respect to investment, and its long term perspective, the tea investment was regarded as genuine safe investment for secured return.

The importance of the plantation sector in the national economy has given a new orientation to its future. The plantation sector is the export sector of the country, and its significance lies in its capacity to earn foreign exchanges. Declining viability of this sector would develop balance of payment difficulty for the country. The employment ratio in the plantation economy is very high. Because of liberal policy, the
national government has political commitment to the labourers in general. The dominant economic group in the colonial society was the merchant group. This group was the largest owner of plantation assets. In post-independence period, this group created a plantation lobby. They have successfully transferred some of their private financial burdens to the shoulder of national government. All these factors make the plantation sector a national burden in those countries resulting in either nationalization of the sector or increasing subvention by the government.

The socio-economic environment of local agriculture is completely different from that of plantation agriculture. The Dooars agriculture was in the process of transition from natural economy to the exchange economy. The economic attitude of the local cultivators was that of a tribal society where savings and productivity were secondary to their traditional philosophy of life. The climatic conditions, nature of cultivation, social way of life and economic objective; all provided a completely different level of living and rationality for the local cultivators compared to that prevailing in plantation economy. Hence there is hardly any chance of permission of the plantation enterprise and technology in the local agriculture. The plantation economy remained an island enclaved by the traditional cultivation.
Employment was given at the lowest stage of production cultivation. Work was described as unskilled work and division of work was done on the basis of manual labour. Light works such as plucking was given to the women workers whereas heavy work of cultivation and maintenance was marked for male workers. Field work was the major part of the production activity at primary stage. Secondary stage was the processing in the factory.

The impact of tea plantation investment on the local economy of the Dooars is apparently positive. A structural change took place in the Dooars economy. 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. A network of feeder roads joining the tea estates with the nearby railway stations had also been constructed which provided the base of present network of Jalpaiguri district. Financial institutions were set up to mobilize the local savings. Through these financial institutions idle money balances were channelised into the Dooars economy for productive expenditures. These are some of the infra-structural changes that were brought in the Dooars economy by means of plantation investment. 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.

Objectives

The present study has following objectives;

• To understand the nature and structure of tea plantations in the Dooars Region.
• To understand the nature of economy of the region and changes therein.
• To know the impact of tea plantation on the socio-economic life of the people of Dooars Region.
• To assess the prospects of Tea Plantation in context to growing population of Dooars Region.
• To suggest certain remedial measures for the betterment of tea plantation.

Hypothesis

The hypotheses are given below:

• 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.
Data Base and Methodology

The study is mainly 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. Total of ten per cent households have been selected as sampled. There were 260 households in total which have been surveyed.

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. Special tables and charts on socio-economic life of the study area have greatly enriched the text.

Various statistical and geographical techniques of analysis, association and representation have been used to analyse, associate and represent the data.

1. The association and correlation of the data have been done through;
(a) **Carl Pearson’s coefficient** of correlation technique by using the formula;

\[ r = \frac{n(\sum XY) - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{\left[n\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2\right]\left[n\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2\right]}} \]

where \( r \) = Coefficient of correlation  
\( n \) = Total Number of variables  
\( X \) = First variable  
\( Y \) = Second variable

2. The **student t-test** has been calculated using the formula;

\[ t = r\sqrt{\frac{n-2}{1-r^2}} \]

where  
\( n \) = number of observation  
\( r \) = the coefficient of correlation

3. For measuring the regional disparities, the composite **Mean Z score** technique has been used. The formula is given below;

\[ Z_{ij} = \frac{X_{ij} - \bar{X}_j}{\delta X_j} \]

where  
\( Z_{ij} \) = Standard score of the ith observation of variable \( X_j \)  
\( X_{ij} \) = Value of \( X_j \) variables on ith observation  
\( \bar{X}_j \) = Mean value of the \( X_j \) variables  
\( \delta X_j \) = Standard deviation on the \( X_j \) variables

4. Simple percentage method has been used extensively to show ratios of the different aspects of the sampled population of garden, village and town areas.

5. Various graphical techniques have also been used to represent the data.
Study Area

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, of West Bengal state of India is entirely composed the Dooars Region. The district lies in the extreme northern part of the state as indicated in the administrative map (fig. 1.1) of the district.

The geographical extent of the Dooars is between 26°16' and 27°0' North latitude and between 88°4' and 89°53' East longitude. The Dooars region has long history of tea plantation and more than 11 per cent of the net sown area of the district is under occupied by tea plantation. According to the Assam Directory, 2002-03, it has as many as 89 big tea states and numerous small tea estates which provide raw materials to more than 150 registered tea processing industries of the district. The researcher being the native of West Bengal is well acquainted with the cultural background of the Dooars Region. This has much contributed during the field work.

Chapter Scheme

The study has been divided into following six chapters excluding introduction and conclusion.

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 Dooars 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 the primary data highlight the Socio-economic profile of the people in the study area and finally the last Chapter explains the Impact of Tea Plantation on the Socio-economic life of the people in the concerned study area.

**Limitation of Study**

- Lack of regular and periodic data on tea plantation hampered the temporal analysis.
- Micro level data of Dooars Region is not available which hindered in comparative study.
- Lack of experience in collecting primary data, collection of data could not be optimized.
References


Roy Choudhury, S.C. (1987), Social, Cultural and Economic History of India, Surjeet Publication, Delhi, p. 87