CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EX-TEA GARDEN LABOUR SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

The need for examining the social aspects of the ex-tea garden labour population was indicated at the very beginning. But, difficulty in evaluation arises due to the fact that there are no precise analytical tools or frameworks with which a society and its basic characteristics can be measured in quantitative terms. As such, no attempt is made to quantify the social aspects of the ex-tea garden labour population. The discussion is based on observations made in the sample ex-tea garden labour villages and also in other places outside the sample. Data already presented earlier are also kept in view in analysing the ex-tea garden labour society.

1 Hoselitz (1962:42) mentioned that the neglect of social aspects by economists was perhaps due to the fact that social aspects are 'qualitative' and 'defy subjection to acknowledged standards of measurement. They can be stated therefore only as factors which are present to a greater or smaller degree and which have more or less significance for economic change'.
The study of the society is undertaken to examine if there are any forces in the social structure which inhibit economic development or for that matter the economic condition of the society. Economists in general do not hold that social factors are the basic determinants of economic development of a country or a community. This was debated time and again and there is hardly any need for detailed discussion on it. But the issue has relevance to adopting policy and programmes for economic development.

Economists in general believe that economic development sets the stage for social and cultural development of a society. Myrdal (1970:269-270) mentioned that this approach is implicit in economic reasoning and it originated from Marxian idea. Hoselitz (1962:53) also mentioned that economists had generally accepted this Marxian approach in spite of their general rejection of Marxian views. Engels (1973:133) mentioned that changes in the system of production lead to remodelling of the social, political and spiritual setup of a society. But, Myrdal (1970) emphasised the role of social institutions in economic development particularly in the Asian 'stage!' Parsons and Smelser (1956) viewed the 'economy' as a 'sub-system' of the 'Society' (as society is a broader term consisting of sub-systems) and thus, the economic processes are always subjected to or conditioned by the 'non-economic' factors (the non-economic factors include social factors). This is a purely sociological viewpoint. E.E. Hagen's theory of 'social change' also gave such primacy to social and other non-economic factors (Higgins:1963:301-308). Kindleberger (1965:19) mentioned that economists necessarily emphasise economic factors but do not disregard social and cultural factors. Hoselitz (1962:47) opined that it was very difficult to give a definite answer to it.
The problems of economic development and economic growth of the underdeveloped (or developing) countries had attracted the attention of the economists. This interest in economic development and economic growth had given rise to various theories and models and also reviews of theories and models of the past. The literature on the aspects of economic development of the underdeveloped countries are numerous. A discussion on the theories and models of economic development and the discussion on available literature on the subject would be quite a digression. Lewis (1955), Higgins (1963), Kindleberger (1965), Myrdal (1970) and many others had discussed them in details. Most of these studies refer to underdeveloped countries in general (to national level situations in few cases) and therefore they are not much relevant for the purpose of the present study. However, some generalisations about underdeveloped societies might provide a theoretical frame of analysis.

3 The term 'economic growth' and 'economic development' are often used in the same sense. Economic growth refers to 'growth of output per head of population' (Lewis :1955 :10). Economic development refers to 'growth of output and changes in the technical and institutional arrangements by which it is produced' (Kindleberger :1965:3).

The United Nations Expert Group (U.N.0.1951) had pinpointed certain aspects of society and social psychology in regards to the problems of economic development of the underdeveloped societies or countries. Higgins (1963:11-13) listed the Lebenstein's 'characteristics' of underdeveloped areas. Myrdal (1970:207-307) discussed the 'mechanism of underdevelopment'. Lewis (1955) emphasised that economic growth depends on economic activity, increasing knowledge and increasing capital. When aspect of 'economic activity' is discussed the aspect of 'quality' of the population comes sharply to focus. The generalisations about the quality of the population and the characteristics of the society thus become factors (or variables) in the economic analysis.

The generalisations, by and large, hold that in underdeveloped societies (i) willingness to achieve economic progress is lacking among the people in general and they also do not think that progress is possible, (ii) even if the people think progress is possible, they do not think it 'worth the effort' to achieve higher economic standards because of (a) philosophical detachments for wealth and property, (b) higher valuation of leisure to work, (c) extended family system, because

5 These characteristics include, excessive prevalence of child labour, absence of middle class, inferiority of women's status and position, and traditionally determined behaviours. C.f. Higgins (1963:11).
it tends to diffuse the 'fruits of efforts', (d) social obstacles in pursuing different occupations i.e. due to caste restrictions etc. and (e) absence of social mobility i.e. the assumption that one cannot rise above one's own caste and society even if one makes a lot of efforts.

The generalisations mentioned above are also implicit in the 'backward sloping supply curve of efforts and risk-taking' which Higgins (1963:287) had discussed and illustrated. This curve denotes that under the conditions people will not try to maximise income (profit maximisation is considered as the rational behaviour) if they find safe occupations and more leisure, farmers will not increase output if they get higher prices for their produce and labourers will not turn up to work if higher wages are paid to them.

Another generalisation about underdeveloped societies is that any increase in income levels is quickly offset by increase in the population. A rise in income means more marriages and more babies. People also do not know how to spend their extra income. There are other bits of generalisations which need not be repeated. The present study does not intend to verify these theories and generalisations. Their relevance to the ex-tea garden labour society is generally examined.
SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Smelser(1965:27) indicated that the concept of 'social structure' is used to characterise recurrent and regularised interactions among two or more persons and therefore the basic units of the social structure are not persons but selected aspects of interactions among persons, i.e. roles. The social structure analysis involves use of three basic concepts, i.e. values, norms and sanctions. Such analysis requires special types of investigation. But, Dube(1967:34) mentioned that to understand social structure various units of society, i.e. religion, castes and family etc. need to be examined. Three elements of the ex-tea garden labour society, i.e. class, castes and family are proposed to be examined under the head 'social structure'. But before any attempt at analysing these elements it would be better to take an overall view of the ex-tea garden labour society.

There is no readymade terminology with which the ex-tea garden labour society can be characterised. The society has a different historical background which was discussed in details in Chapter III. A society with such an unusual historical experience must have basic differences with societies which are rooted in self-employment in family farms, i.e. in traditional
subsistence (or near subsistence) agriculture. So it cannot be termed as a traditional society. It is not a primitive society isolated from modern industrial influence.

The examination of the occupational pattern had revealed that a section of them is attached to the wage economy offered by the plantations from which they originated and others had reverted to the subsistence economy. In the words of Myint (1969:64) they have 'one foot in the wage economy and another foot in the subsistence economy'. Myint had said that wage economy in countries like Malaya and Ceylon had developed due to plantations and mines and the immigrant labour there had remained divided between the subsistence economy and the wage economy. Thus, in a sense the ex-tea garden labour society is a dualistic society.

The ex-tea garden labour society is a complex multi-caste, multi-tribe and multi-lingual in origin.

---

6 This study makes no attempt at comparing ex-tea garden labour society with any other ex-plantation labour society originating from indentured labourers from India in the plantations in the former British colonies. Historical, geographical and cultural situations in these places may not be similar. Apart from the social and cultural problems national and racial questions arise in case of Indian indentured labour abroad.

7 The 'dualistic' theory is being discussed elaborately by Higgins (1963:274-293) and Meier (1964:64-69).
and a complex process of social and cultural interactions is continuing among them. This society must be viewed in this dynamic setting.

The Class Structure:

The term 'class' is in common use to indicate economic position of a group in relation to other groups. Considering the economic position of the ex-tea garden labour population it will be proper to say that they, by and large, belonged to the lowest class in the society at large. They constitute the majority of the rural proletariat.

But, it was evident from the occupational classification of the households (Chapter IV) that the households were divided into several agrarian occupational groups and the wage earning group. There

---

8 The term 'class' had gained much currency due to its political use. Marx emphasised 'class conflict' as the basis of development of the society but he did not precisely define the term. The meaning was however clear. Engels (1973:133) mentioned that class is determined by the 'manner in which wealth is distributed and the society is divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged'.

9 The rural society in general consists of the lowest class comprised of the tenants, the agricultural labourers and the like. The agricultural labourers in the rural areas, particularly in the indigenous section of the population are in worse economic condition because they do not work in the plantations like the ex-tea garden labourers. The ex-tea garden labourers have this assured source of employment.
were differences in respect of property and income between the households in the sample. These differences were not of very high degree but they constituted the basis of class differentiations in the ex-tea garden labour society.

The agricultural classes consisted of the owner cultivators, the tenant cultivators and the agricultural rent receivers. The wage earning class was divided into agricultural and non-agricultural. It was evident that the non-agricultural labour had availed the existing opportunities for employment outside the agricultural economy i.e. plantations, workshops, constructions etc. Evidently, there is no middle class element in the rural section of the society.

In regards to class structure certain distinctions may be drawn between the ex-tea garden labour society in one hand and the tea garden labour society on the other. The tea garden labour society has comparatively a undifferentiated class structure because the tea garden labour work under similar conditions.\(^{10}\) They are under highly organised capitalistic industrial

Harlalka (1975) had discussed the aspects of the working conditions of the tea garden labour and the relevant legislations enacted by the Government from time to time.
management and under the pervs of industrial labour legislations. The tea garden labourers are organised under Trade Unions to press their demands. The class interests of the tea garden labour do not coincide with that of the ex-tea garden labour population. Even the outside labourers from the ex-tea garden labour population do not come under the Trade Unions.

The general rural society i.e. the indigenous society is apparently similar to the ex-tea garden labour society but the proportions in regards to labour engaged in wage economy and proportions of middle class elements in the two societies are not similar. Higher proportion of middle class elements in the indigenous section of the rural society constituted by households engaged in salaried jobs and lower proportion of labourers engaged outside the agricultural wage economy are the basic differences between the two. This however, is in a relative sense. Further, the overall economic position of the ex-tea garden labour society was found to be lower than the indigenous society.

Castes and Tribal Divisions:

Bhuyan (1960:15) stated that the tea garden labour belonged to the following Jatias (the word is used to mean both caste and tribe).
Pani, Tanti, Saor, Tosa, Kondh, Gond, Gond Tanti, Kalahandi, Bhuia, Koiri, Kumar, Komar, Hari, Tali, Mali, Bauri, Panika, Kisan, Munda, Mura, Santal, Turi, Orang, Saora, Proja, Godhoba, Raiput, Gowalla, Katni, Dom, Soral, Koya, Somar, Mirja, Habidas, Muchi, Kharia, Telanga and others.

Bhuyan further stated that the tea garden labourers were recruited from three different groups of people. They are - (1) those speaking language originating from Kol such as the Munda, Hos, Santal, Kharia and the Kurkha, (2) those speaking language originating from Dravidian languages (Tamil & Telegu) as the Oraona, Konda, Gonda and Malpaharias, and (3) groups originating from various other parts of India as the Bhuias, Kurmis, Tantis and Mushaharas.

Majumdar (1961) opined that many of the tribal groups like the Mundas, Oraona, Saoras, Projas, Khondas and Santals can be traced to Proto-Austroloid racial stock. Though they speak different languages their racial traits do not differ much.

Harlalka (1975:159) gave a list of 105 jatis among the tea garden labourers in Assam. But it might include sub-groups of castes and tribes with minor differences. Therefore, it is very difficult to say
about the jati differences among the tea garden and the ex-tea garden labour population. In the present study, the presence of about 40 jatis in 114 households speaks of the existence of many caste and tribal divisions among them.\footnote{The word 'jati' is being used because it embraces both castes and tribal sections. In fact, the respondents use the word to mean the both. There is, however, difficulty in regards to making a distinction between a tribe and a caste. A tribal in the present Indian context is one who belongs to such groups which are notified as tribals under relevant Articles of the Constitution of India which are known as 'scheduled tribes'. In that sense the tribal groups in the ex-tea garden labour population are no longer tribals. None of them is in the scheduled tribes in Assam. Further, these tribals have entered the caste in the Hindu society. This aspect is evident from the fact that the respondents made no distinction between a Hindu caste or a tribe.}

The jati compositions of the ex-tea garden labour villages are not identical. Some villages might present dominating number of households of a particular jati but ex-tea garden labour village: belonging to one jati was not found in the sample. It may be mentioned that the ex-tea garden labour population did not settle on the basis of castes or there were no regrouping on the basis of caste or tribe. But, it was noticed that people from same original district usually settled in the same village. For instance, ex-tea garden labourers originally belonging to Hajaribagh district settled near about. Even then, there were some regroupings on the basis of jatis.
But this was within castes/tribes of the tea gardens in the vicinity of the villages from which they came out. Thus the regrouping was limited. But a mixed castes/tribes character of the ex-tea garden labour villages had become the general pattern.

Caste Hierarchy:

One of the important features of the ex-tea garden labour society was that there were distinctions between jatis but the hierarchy was not so much evident. Each jati had adjusted its own rituals within its own group and therefore did not try to impose its ways on the others. The caste structure of the ex-tea garden labour society was horizontally diffused without any vertical axis in its own plane. This however, does not mean that there were complete absence of lower or higher jatis among them. They made distinctions between themselves on the basis of food habits and performances of certain rituals and sacrifices. The taking of bovine flesh was considered as a sign of lower caste. Rearing of pigs and in few cases of fowls was considered to be pursuits of lower castes. The absence of hierarchical caste order may be attributed to their common economic position and similar socio-economic status in the past.
When the situation is considered in relation to the total social situation in the rural areas, the ex-tea garden labour population, by and large, appear as one social group or one caste of the lowest status. It is difficult to take notice of their internal jati differentiations when their society is casually observed. There are various reasons for it. One of the reasons is that they present no observable differences in dress, behaviour patterns and physical appearances. The average Assamese people either term the ex-tea garden labour as Bongali (meaning an outsider) or Coolie (a derogatory term once used to mean the tea garden labourers but now replaced by Masdoor) in a sense equivalent to a caste.

Castes and Marriages:

Ghurye (1961:283) opined that openness of social structure is revealed by extent of marriage between different social origins. The institution of marriage is briefly examined in this context. The actual systems of marriages are not very important for the purpose but it can be said that there were formal and informal types of marriages in the ex-tea garden labour society.\textsuperscript{12} It

\textsuperscript{12} The formal marriage takes lengthy process. Negotiations and performance of the actual marriage take place at the initiative of the parents. Actual marriage function involves giving of a feast where haria and liquor are generally served. The informal marriages also take different forms with or without the consent of the parents. It may be simply taking the bride home or intrusion of the bride. A simple formality of putting sindur (vermillion) is enough. Such marriage costs much less than formal marriages.
It was already mentioned (Chapter IV) that there were no polygamy in the ex-tea garden labour society. Further, it was observed that there were no formal bars for widow marriages and divorces within the society were easy.

Superficial observations indicated that the ex-tea garden labour population was very much jati conscious and would not permit inter-jati marriages at any cost. But it appeared that they reconciled to inter-jati marriages very easily. The reason for this might be their past experiences (and present circumstances) which shaped their outlook. It was noted earlier that the ex-tea garden labour villages are multi-jati villages. Close living of different jatis leads to ties between boys and girls. Further, the society as a whole cannot exert much pressure to prevent inter-jati marriages as it is not a homogeneous society. Idea of romantic love marriages was alleged to have entered the society due to the influence of popular Hindi films. The ex-tea garden labour society does not prevent free mixing of boys and girls and facilities for such mixing arise in work sites, festivals, film shows etc. Inter-jati marriages had also taken place in the past.

Chatwar (1970) opined that the tea garden labour in the past had to marry without consideration to jati.
because of uneven sex-ratio among the recruited labour. In that sense he termed the tea garden labour as 'cross blood'. This means that lot of inter-jati marriages had taken place.13

Castes and Occupations:

The examination of the occupations of the sample households and their castes revealed that there were no restrictions on pursuing any occupation on the basis of castes. Only in few cases rearing of pigs and chicken was looked down upon in the traditional pattern of the Hindu society. There were few households which belonged to original fishing community. These households had taken to fishing as their secondary occupations. There were other caste groups of Kamar, Lohar, Karmakar etc. who now no longer follow their caste occupations.

Castes and Class:

The concepts of class and caste are different but in the present social and economic condition in

13 Inter-jati marriages had also taken place due to living proximately in the garden quarters and working together. Bhuyan (1960:18) reported that in the tea gardens many informal marriages according to wishes of respective boys and girls took place. If such marriages were not within the caste the boy had to pay much money for the girl. Girls from Munda, Oraon, Saora, and Santal involve payment of more than 4 times the usual bride price. Further, fines were imposed on the boys offending the caste. But the boy and the girl could live as husband and wife after paying the fine.
India the terms are interchangeably used. A broader term 'backward classes' is being used to denote all sections of the population who are in lower caste and at the same time in lower economic status. It includes the presently 'scheduled tribes','scheduled castes' and people in similar categories. The ex-tea garden labour population may be included in this category. They are one of the weaker sections of the population.

The Family:

The family is the basic social institution and it is also the basic economic unit. All the individual members of the family, in whatever occupations they might be, merge their individual identity in the family. The economists had discussed elaborately regarding the types of families and their relevance or irrelevance to economic growth and economic development. For instance, existence of extended family is considered as a sign of economic backwardness.

14 Beteille (1969:16) discussed this aspect and opined that caste and class are two different concepts which cannot be used interchangeably.

15 Bauer & Yamey (1959:64-67) discussed the aspects of advantages and disadvantages of the extended family system. Lewis (1955:113) stated that in the primitive societies the concept of family is very wide and it seemed to be the case that as a community grows more wealthy its family concept narrows. Extended family is appropriate to low subsistence economy and in absence of social security. Engels (1973B) had studied the development of the family.
Previous examination of the types of family in the ex-tea garden labour population (Chapter IV) had revealed that the population consisted of higher proportion of nuclear families. The joint families also, by and large, did not extend to long lines of kin-groups. On the other hand, all other adult members including the females preferred to be employed to enjoy their 'fruits of labour'. Thus it was evident that the ex-tea garden labour family had no traditional lags i.e. larger dependency on the income of few individuals. In fact, nuclear type of families with both the males and the females as earners were predominant. But that way they did not rise much because the employment did not bring adequate income. Thus, it seems that nuclear type of families by themselves were the result of certain economic transitions but not a sign of economic progress in the case of the ex-tea garden labour society.

The traditional concept of the authoritarian family did not appear to be applicable in case of the ex-tea garden labour society. The pattern of family authority was loose because it was not very much backed by property. It was only in the land owning class the main head of the family exercised control over other members (i.e. also over persons who were not his own children). There were also other reasons for loose family
authority. One of them is the fact that all adult members including the adult females were, by and large, wage earners and enjoyed economic freedom.

Another important aspect of the ex-tea garden labour family was the fact that the traditional functions of the family had contracted. Both the adult males and females worked in wage-paid employment and as such the family functions were necessarily limited to the basic minimum. This was one of the reasons for lower number of livestocks and poultry (and even complete absence of them) in households who were primarily engaged in wage-paid employment. The care of the children, their formal and informal education also stood neglected. It may be mentioned that when females take to outside employment some of the functions of the family (or services in household duties) need be transferred to outside establishments. But such transfers were not possible due to absence of such establishments in the rural areas. The activity pattern of the females had changed without corresponding economic development.

Status of Women:

The females in the ex-tea garden labour society enjoyed considerable freedom. Both married and unmarried females went out to work in the fields, factories
and construction sites without being escorted by their husbands and relatives. They also frequented the fortnightly tea garden markets and did the marketing for the households. In the family, there were usually no restrictions imposed by the father-in-laws and the mother-in-laws. They also visited the fairs and festivals. The unmarried girls enjoy freedom to mix with boys of their own society during these fairs and festivals. Some of these freedom were also enjoyed by women in other sections of the rural population but all sections of the population did not allow the females to work in wage-paid employment. It is generally held that the females are meant to attend to the household duties. But, in the ex-tea garden families, household duties were minimised to allow the females to work in the factories, fields and other places.

It is generally believed that the extent of women's employment outside the household depends on the degree of economic development. Lewis (1955:331) pointed out that economic growth emancipated women from the households. Household duties are transferred to outside establishments (i.e., tailors, schools, mills, restaurants etc.) and women take to outside jobs. Thus proportion of women employed increases with economic development. This may be in general true but it is not applicable in case of a class economically in the lowest category. In such
a society the women are forced to seek employment outside the households for their deplorable economic condition. Thus, higher proportion of women in employment outside the households may be present without contemporary economic development. The ex-tea garden labour society, as was indicated earlier, has a different historical background. They tried to revert to the subsistence economy from the wage economy. The wage economy in rural Assam was created by the plantations in the mid-nineteenth century.

Employment for women gave relative economic freedom and such economic freedom for the women is not generally found in society which depends on the subsistence economy. In the subsistence economy women generally work as unpaid family labour. Thus the traditional role of women in household work had necessarily changed in the ex-tea garden labour society. But, in spite of these, females generally allowed their husbands to have the domineering voice in most of the family matters. It was observed that some family discord arose when the females try to establish their equal rights.

It was already observed that divorce in the ex-tea garden labour society was comparatively easier than other rural societies and the divorced females could remarry if they desire.
THE BELIEFS

The beliefs among the ex-tea garden labour population were diversified and diffused. Most of the jatis reported totemistic clans and advent of each totem was explained by a legend. Some of these legends had mention of Hindu Gods like Shiva and Krishna. But each tribe had their own Gods, Deities, and Spirits. Some of the Gods, Deities and Spirits were malevolent and needed sacrifices of fowls to ward off diseases, loss of crops and misfortunes. Hindu Gods and Goddesses were revered in addition to their numerous Gods and Deities. Some ex-tea garden labour also took to the Mahapurusa Dharma of the Assamese propounded by the great Assamese Saint Sri Sri Sankardeva.

The general influences of the Hindu Philosophy and Mythology (mainly of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata) were found in their belief systems. This provided the basis of explaining present condition of the people. In the absence of scientific analysis all events and situations were explained with the help of mythology.

The ex-tea garden labour society, by and large, believed in the rebirth of the soul. The present sufferings of man were attributed to misdeeds of the previous life. This also helps explaining many of the
misfortunes and present economic condition. This provides fatalistic philosophical base but does not suggest detachment for wealth.

The changes in socio-economic condition were also explained by the idea of Kọga or Kala (epoch) i.e. the belief that the present epoch is the Kali-Kọga. As such divergences from norms were expected.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility either means mobility of an individual or a group from lower to higher status along the axis of social status. One is individual mobility and the other one is group mobility. If a society offers opportunities to individuals to move up the axis of status and power without any legal or social restrictions individuals of a low status group can move up to higher economic classes and attain higher social status or be members of a higher social group. This condition offers opportunities for individual social mobility. In fact, there are possibilities of individuals of the ex-tea garden labour society to move up the axis if such individuals can compete to attain higher occupations and higher economic status. This needs education and capital. Moreover, the individuals must change their life style. If the individuals move to urban areas such individual social
mobility is achieved at a faster rate. In fact, there are few cases of the ex-tea garden labour who had moved up to middle class and higher middle class society. One can also see some among them rising in the social esteem by attainment of political power, i.e. by becoming labour leaders and the members of the State Legislative Assembly. But the present sample revealed none among them who exhibited such signs of social mobility.

Individual social mobility in the broader social frame based on competition cannot be of general avail in a community which is not equally positioned in respect of cultural backgrounds and economic standings. This consideration is the basis of social and economic policy for providing special assistances to the backward classes in India. This points to the fact that ex-tea garden labour population needs such protective provisions as available to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in India.

The aspect of group mobility i.e. mobility of a lower caste to a higher caste may be examined. Betelille(1969 : 16) stated that two of the most important forces of group mobility are explained by
the concepts of Sanskritisation and Westernisation.\textsuperscript{16} But this process of Sanskritisation had no much relevance to the ex-tea garden labour society as this meant only certain positional changes within their own castes and tribal situations. They could not enter the social structure of the local Assamese section of the population. The process of Westernisation also needs higher education and higher economic position. This did not relate to group mobility. Only certain individual could move up by Westernisation. However, some Westernisation ideals were evident in the Christian section of ex-tea garden labour population. But, mention may be made of the fact that there were some evidences of lower caste groups changing certain practices here and there to attain social status. Mention may be made that the Kurmis claimed that they belonged to the Khastriva race.\textsuperscript{17} But this did not attain any significant response. Thus, the process of group social mobility was not a force in the ex-tea garden labour society.

\textsuperscript{16} The term Sanskritisation refers to a process by which a low Hindu caste, tribal or any other group attempting at attaining a higher position by changing customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of higher castes. This is generally followed by a claim to higher position.

\textsuperscript{17} Kurmi(1969) an educated ex-tea garden labour wrote a booklet which made a claim that Kurmis belong to the great Kurmi-Khastriva race of India. Evidently, this was inspired by an All India Organisations for the Kurmi-Khastriva race. This booklet was produced by a respondent at the time of field investigation.
VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS

The ex-tea garden labour villages in the sample had no village institutions excepting the primary schools. It was found that only 5 villages had primary schools within the village boundary. Most of the school buildings were not in good conditions and they had no furniture and equipments.

An average Assamese village has a Namghar (a common prayer house) which serves as the centre of all socio-religious activities of the villagers. It may be mentioned that the Namghar also exercises social control through the village elders. But the ex-tea garden labour being not followers of Sri Sankardeva, the great religious teacher of Assam, had no Namghar in their villages. Only one village had some followers of Sri Sankardeva and they constructed a token Namghar in the village. A sample village which was inhabited by Christian ex-tea garden labour had a Church. The building of the Church had bamboo walls and thatched roof. But it was very nicely kept. It may be mentioned that the Church plays an important role in unifying the Christian ex-tea garden labour in the village.

The absence of institutions in the ex-tea garden labour villages may be attributed to the existence of numerous castes and tribes.
LEADERSHIP

The ex-tea garden labour society had practically no leaders. The educated section of the ex-tea garden labour generally moved to urban areas. Further, the ex-tea garden labour leaders were more concerned with Trade Unions and politics connected with the tea garden labour class as a whole. These leaders were relatively in higher socio-economic status than the common ex-tea garden labour and therefore they could not gain confidence of the people. Absence of institutional and traditional leaders in their society may be attributed to the complex character of the villages.