CHAPTER-3

THE FORMATION OF THE INDIGENOUS TEA CAPITALISTS
AND THEIR NATIONALIST ROOTS

Tea as an export item became important after the second half of the
nineteenth century with other new items (exportable) like ‘food grains, jute, oilseeds,
hides and skins manufactured cotton goods.’¹ The production of those items was in
the category of ‘semi-manufacture’ as many of them received considerable processing
before they were internationally traded. This production of the semi-manufactured
item namely, ‘Tea’, was a ‘classic example of import substitution from a non-colonial
to a colonial era’ and ‘the industry owed its existence almost entirely to British
capital and enterprise’.² But, the prospect of manufacturing tea by recruiting
labourers from the other parts of the country had been a bad feature for both of the tea
plantation authority and the colonial administration.

The production of tea and the recruitment of the labourers from the
distant parts of India was exclusively preserved and controlled by the expatriate tea
capitalists. The development of the tea industry with the clear monopoly of the
expatriate business class, excluded the prospect of any deep involvement of the
indigenous entrepreneurs with the industry. This story of the exclusion of the
indigenous entrepreneurs from the heavily prosperous but unstable tea-trade should be
analysed from the standpoint of the lacking of basic facilities for establishing any big
industrial concern and there were other such primary factors of their small
participation in the race for establishing their own industries in the colonial Assam.
No doubt, the process of the middle class formation in Assam was quite slow in
comparison with the neighbouring Bengal. The colonial state’s prejudicial policies in
respect of education and economic transformation stultified any prospect of dynamic
progress.

¹ K. N. Choudhuri: Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments (1757 1947) in D. Kumar (ed): CEHI -
Vol-II (Delhi-1994), p. 844
² Ibid. (emphasis added), p. 854
The joining of the Assamese entrepreneurs in the race for establishing tea gardens did not hugely alter the existing economic situation of the province. The indigenous entrepreneurs faced some tremendous obstacles in the journey of their industrial ventures and the lack of state sympathy and in fact, in some instances, hostile attitude of the state towards the concerns of the indigenous ventures, made their dreams doubly difficult to achieve in a colonial set up. The lack of capital made the nascent attempt of the native capitalists highly risky: ‘Among the various constraints within which entrepreneurs operated, and which led to the collapse of some, the lack of capital was prominent’.3

The anger of the indigenous entrepreneur those who had started their small business turned itself into their protests against the colonial rule and some of them widely participated in the national movement. The chief importance of the study of the growth of the indigenous tea capitalist in Assam and their eventual rule as the leading trail-blazer in the nationalist politics after 1920s had become almost a great phenomenon. The tea capitalists faced huge difficulties in continuing their industrial ventures and the prejudices of the colonial state in this regard was singularly important.

The chief causes of the non-indulgence of the native capitalists in the tea industry or other ancillary industries has been discussed, generally with an angle of the underdeveloped state of the country’s economy and ‘the absolute poverty of ordinary people and the unwillingness of the rich to invest money for worthwhile enterprises’.4 In a colonial situation, the stagnant nature of the capital expansion forced the native capitalists to depend upon the colonial state for its survival and on the other hand it was also true that the pre-capitalist remnants of the ‘Colonial Indian Society’ did not become a hurdle for the native capitalists in overcoming the aesthetics of those remnants, which seemed to have paralysed the zeal of the emerging capitalists.

3 R.Chandavarkar: Imperial Power and Popular Politics (Cambridge 1998), p.52
The ‘comprador’ origin of the indigenous capitalists has been given too much stress in the traditional Marxist historiography and some historians have tried to observe that the comprador origin of the capitalists in particular regional or pan-Indian situations led to a belief among the capitalists’ in the benevolence of British rule:

Local Capitalists extremely poor in resources as they were tried to develop their business activities, not in competition but in co-operation with the British and like many other section of the Indians bourgeoisie, they had comprador origin to begin with.⁵

But there were several factors which determined the policy followed by the native capitalists and among those factors, certainly, the colonial prejudices played the crucial part. Amiya Kumar Bagchi has explained:

Political, racial and social relationships between the rulers and the ruled and did in fact play an important role in determining the relative performance of Indian and European business in India and the selection of Indian groups for collaboration with the British.⁶

So the actual reasons, for which the native entrepreneurs of Assam too failed to come out openly in the mad rush for establishing tea plantations, had not been fulfilled, due to the inequalities in political, racial and social relationship, with the colonial masters. The managing agency houses and their agents in respective fields got topmost favour from the colonial state and its officials.

⁵ A. Guha: Planter Raj to Swaraj (Delhi –1991), Pp. 59-60
Genesis of the indigenous tea entrepreneurship in Assam:

But despite of the various problems, some native entrepreneurs started their ventures since the second half of the nineteenth century and the foremost among those was the name of Maniram Dewan. The first Assamese tea-planter, Maniram Dewan who worked as a Dewan or the Chief Executive of the Assam Tea Company since its inception, was not a big planter either before the companies like the Assam Tea Company. It was doubtful, how far he would have been able to reap the fruits of his labour, because the colonial state and the tea-monopolists always were hostile to the idea of developing any simultaneous bourgeois development among the old feudal representatives (e.g. Maniram Dewan). When Dewan failed to make any progress in his field then he tried hurriedly to galvanise the latent spirit of the Assamese gentlemen for a speedy expel of the British rule from Assam, which he thought to be too prejudicial to the development of Assam but he lost his own life due to his radical efforts.

The fascination for establishing tea gardens and the prospect of bringing glories to their individual fortunes later lured some natives to enter into the tea-plantation industry. They even expressed their gratitude to the British Colonial ruling class for bringing prosperity to Assam by establishing the tea plantations which, they thought, opened the close doors of the economy of the province. One of

7 There has been a controversy going on among the locals of Assam that Maniram Dewan was the first man who discovered tea in Assam but the controversy has been fraught with a 'monolithic' assumption: 'From the later nineteenth century, a counter narrative of the discovery of tea was created by local nationalists, seeking to displace the European pioneer, whether Bruce or Charlton while placing his 'native informant' Moniram at centre stage. However, this nationalist Assamese mythology is almost as monolithic in its assumptions as its colonial counterparts, as it totally erases the unassuming figures of the Khamti and Singpho people, pioneers in inhabiting and using the original tea jungles.'
J. Sharma: British Science Chinese Skill and Assam Tea in IESHR 43, 4-2006, In her illuminating article, Sharma has discussed the episode of Maniram brilliantly.

8 Maniram who was the last of the aristocrats (Ahom monarchy) but was also the first of the bourgeois' of Assam indeed tried his fortune in establishing two gardens in the Sibsagar district. Mills in his report mentioned: 'There are in the district (Sibsagar) 3 plantations belonging to private speculations. Two are the property of Moneeram Dutta- an Assamese gentleman formerly an employee of the Assam Tea Company, and the other-- is owned by Mr. Morney..." Moneeram has not obtained a grant for the land forming one plantation, the land composing the other he has leased from a Mouzadar. These plantations are it is stated on a small scale.'
In the same report, it was mentioned: 'The total aggregated cultivated area for the Assam Company was 2,500 acres of which 1,000 acres are plants, under four years old.'
the earliest enlightened Assamese gentlemen, who participated in multifarious business activities, stated:

It is superfluous for me to state here that, were it not for the tea industry, Assam would not have been what she is to-day. The planting community have been the pioneers of progress and enlightenment in Assam. Their example has stimulated a number of my countrymen to follow as independent and honourable profession and I am glad and thankful to say that at the present moment, though their number is small, there are some Assamese tea planters who are doing a lucrative business and occupying a much coveted position, and that with the brighten prospects of the Industry, the number is sure to increase.9

Almost majority of the Assamese elites got satisfaction at the establishment of the tea industry under the colonial state's supervision. As early as 1847, people like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, one of the early apostles of modern thoughts in Assam appealed through the 'Orunodoi', the first Assamese newspaper published from Sibsagar(1846-1882) to the almighty to bring the spirit of civilisation to this country.10

But the enlightened hopes for further prosperity of Assam, envisaged by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, who through that message, urged the indigenous class also to actively participate in the region's modernisation did not become a reality 'because of government indifference at best and active obstruction at worst.'11

In the later day development, one of the apostles of the national movement who was himself a petty tea planter (Nabin Chandra Bardoloi) said in a speech given at the Assam Legislative Council:

Assam is a very poor province and the only outlet for the Assamese is to get waste lands, following the footsteps of the European planters and take to tea cultivation.

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9 Prafulla Dutta Goswami: Manik Chandra Barua (Guwahati- 2005), Appendix- B, p.72
10 Phukan appealed eloquently: 'Oh Gracious Lord of the world, do give there inhabitants of Assam the desire to render their land civilized, wise and pious.... do bring that day when Assam will cease to be a forest and become a garden of flowers.'
Anneandaram Dhikial Phukan: "Englander Biboron", in Orunodoi Apr. 1847- Quoted by J. Sharma: op. cit.
11 Ibid.
They are now coming out at a very late hour and they ought to be treated with all consideration and the same concessions as are granted to other must be given to them also.\textsuperscript{12}

Bardoloi in his speech also analysed the typical nature of the early protagonists of the Assamese society:

The natural conditions of the country and the easy means of subsistence made them dangorias. During the time of the Ahom Rajas... the dangorias were leading a very easy life and the advent of opium added still further indulgence to their lives. They passed that sort of life for some time and when the tea gardens began to spring up they began to take service as muharris in tea gardens and also service under the government.... But with the coming of the railway, the establishment of schools and colleges and with the idea of the people expanding along with their travels outside Assam, with higher English education....the mentality of these people have changed and the proverbial Assamese dangoria is no longer in existence now. The terrible question before everybody is how to eke out one’s existence and how to earn a decent living.\textsuperscript{13}

Bardoloi again gave answer to the question:

A muharriship in a tea garden or a clerkship in a government office would not satisfy everyone now. And higher posts are not plentiful. Consequently some sort of opening people are driving to find out and in that respect also they are now emulating the pioneers, I mean, the Englishmen who came to open out this country.\textsuperscript{14}

The main reason of quoting the long speech of N.C. Bardoloi, is that his speech demonstrated it superbly, that out of the scarcity of jobs and also because of the meager salaries of the educated persons of Assam, the Assamese gentlemen so decided to start an entrepreneurial career, largely, based in the tea plantations.

\textsuperscript{12} N.C. Bordoloi’s Speech in ALCP, 1927 March.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
The zeal for earning a decent living encouraged the entrepreneurs like Roseswar Barua of Jorhat sub-division to open a tea garden at Lahdoigarh. During the 1860s, he became one of the richest Assamese due to his large stake at the tea industry and his endeavours attracted the attention of the other fellow natives of the sub-divisions, and also, later by taking seeds from his garden, Hemdhar Baruah, who was doing also government service, opened the latter’s garden at Letekujan with only 30 acres of land.\textsuperscript{15} In a letter sent to the Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar district, (1870), a British official noticed the fact that ‘a large number of respectable natives burnt their fingers in tea speculation and have been shy of retiring in to any other since’.\textsuperscript{16} But the sad fact was that during the tea crisis of 1866-67, Roseswar Barua’s half a dozen tea gardens could not withstand that grave crisis.\textsuperscript{17}

The crisis which traumatised the novice attempts of the natives brought also the point that before the crisis in the market; the individual attempt of creating industrial scenario in the province would not succeed without creating a monopoly in capital formation. It also brought the point that the efforts of the indigenous capitalist would not be able to meet its success without the help of the colonial state. In contrast, though the Company owned tea estates also faced the same ‘temporary collapse’ but those tea estates had not been wiped out by the collapse and they started again and got a new lease of life after 1869. And after that period, it was ‘found that well managed gardens were yielding a good profit, and that even those which had belonged to the defunct companies were in many cases, turning out well under careful management.’\textsuperscript{18}

The rising speculative ventures made by the Assamese entrepreneurs failed to put their hold upon the tea industry because of their lack of control over the market forces and also the main ingredient of their concerns, ‘capital’, which had

\textsuperscript{15} Padmanath Gohain Barua: \textit{Assam Burunji}; Quoted by Jatindranath Goswami: \textit{Jagannath Barua} (Guwahati-1991), p. 12

\textsuperscript{16} Agriculture and Revenue Records, Letter No. 267, 15 December 1870 to the Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar, as part of answers to questions for the Bengal Gazetters, District Record Office, Jorhat cited in J. Sharma: \textit{Op. cit.} f. n. 100,

\textsuperscript{17} Guha: \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 21, Padmanath Gohain Barua wrote that Roseshwar Barua opened 7 gardens for his 7 sons.

\textsuperscript{18} Edward Gait: \textit{A History of Assam} (Guwahati-1997), p. 337
been under the control of the agents of the managing agency houses and the companies like the Assam Tea Company.

In the later part of the nineteenth century, some representatives of the old entrepreneurial class, tried again to make a new journey in their chosen fields, especially, in the tea plantations. Among those, the name of Jagannath Barua, who was interestingly the first graduate from the upper Assam and he had already played a great part in the field of early part of Assam’s political field. Jagannath’s father, though opened the Letekujan tea garden, but due to his untimely death, he could not be able to see the results of his labour and his illustrious son (J. Barua), who had a keen business acumen, tried his luck not by seeking government jobs but in opening tea gardens and he extended the average acres of the Letekujan T.E. from a mere 30 acres to the 400 acres.\(^{19}\) He opened two other gardens, in the same district (Sibsagar), namely, Tipomia and Bosabari. He also purchased the Roiroira Tea garden with Sibram Bora. Taking examples from J.Barua, Radha Kanta Handique, another great native entrepreneur, opened a new garden and later extended it to one-hundred and fifty acres of land.\(^{20}\)

Manik Chandra Barua, another close companion of J. Barua, and whose contribution to the development of early political and educational regeneration of Assam was immense, started his career also by purchasing some old gardens and from a British tea planter, A.C.Campbell in 1896, he purchased the Latasil tea garden (Gauhati). Manik Chandra Barua’s elder brother also managed a tea garden in the Nowgong district (Tapatjuri). The joint venture company, opened with Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, which was called as the Barua Phukan & Brothers sent raw tea from the small tea gardens of Gauhati to Calcutta. The Phukan Brothers Company managed the tea gardens like, Sapekhati, Lonmati, Panikhaati, Woodland, Mitoni etc.\(^{21}\)

\(^{19}\) Evidence before the Royal Commission on Opium-1893-(28 September)-cited in J. Goswami: Op. cit., p. 11

\(^{20}\) Nakul Chandra Bhuyan: Radha Kanta Handique; Cited in Ibid., p.25

\(^{21}\) Barua Phukan Brothers: Manik Chandra Barua with Annadaram Dhekial Phukan, the second son of the stalwart of the renaissance in Assam, Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan established this joint venture. Lakshminath Bezbarua in his autobiography said about this company that it was the first company from Assam constituted out of the total indigenous capital. Bholanath Barua was the first manager of the company. The company at first succeeded within a very short span of time and they also tried their hands at the timber business. The Company supplied majority of the sleepers needed for the construction of the Assam – Bengal Railway line. After the death of another proprietor, Annadaram, it was named after Manik Chandra Barua (M.C.Barua) & co. P.D. Goswami: Op. cit., Pp. 13-15.
The joint ventures of Barua and Phukan, did able to earn profits in its initial years, but in due course, the Company failed to make any big profit and the severe economic crisis forced Manik Chandra Barua to sell his own company. The problems faced by the joint ventures like the M.C & Co., were immense and it also showed that in spite of the entrepreneurial efforts of the natives, they were compelled to take help from the British managing agency houses. They worked just as a subordinate partner in the respective areas and in every spheres of their business, they were bound to accept a compromising situation vis-à-vis with the colonial administrators. Because of the lack of support from the colonial state and their (indigenous capitalists) uneven competition with the stronger counterpart, the great efforts of the capitalists like Manik Chandra Barua met only repeated failures. Manik Chandra Barua in his desperate hours, also, sought help from the Calcutta based agencies like King Hamilton & Co., when he failed to repay the debts which he took from various companies of Calcutta.22

Most of the native entrepreneurs maintained a cordial relationship with the colonial officials and representatives of the expatriate business community, out of the hope of getting some concessions in their business career. But, they did not get the equal treatment from their counterparts and the dominant position as enjoyed by the managing agency houses, in the political and economic sphere of the country, (chiefly Calcutta based), forced the natives who had been pursuing the entrepreneurial activities to bow down simply before the powerful counterparts (owners of the managing agency houses). Lakshminath Bezbarua, the doyen of the Assam’s literary renaissance, and also a successful entrepreneur, amply put this point in his autobiography, when he faced ill-treatments from the British businessmen and he did try to satisfy the agents of the managing agency houses by giving ‘boxes of fruits and vegetables’ frequently (he sent it for ten times in a month) and he gave those items even to the head clerks of the companies. He writes that though he did these things but he in fact, in return, received misbehaviours from those officials.23

22 Ibid.
Harivilas Agarwalla, another illustrious person of Assam who made significant contribution to the development of the Assamese society and who was one of the most famous entrepreneurs of Assam, established the Tamulbari Tea estate in the Dibrugarh sub-division, after facing great hurdles in the timber business, which he operated in the Darrang district (Tezpur sub-division).  

The actual number of tea-estates owned by local planters before 1903 was very scanty. B.C. Allen pointed out, that of the 112 tea estates in the Sibsagar and Jorhat sub-divisions, less than 20 were in ‘native’ hands, usually with individual proprietors rather than joint stock companies.

In the following table given below, a statistics has been provided showing the number of tea estates, with area and labour force they employed in their own tea estates (1911) in the Jorhat subdivision.

**Table: 3.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Gardens</th>
<th>Name of Owner</th>
<th>Area in acres in 31st Dec, 1911</th>
<th>Area in acres under plant (both mature and immature on 31st Dec, 1911)</th>
<th>Labour force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachabari</td>
<td>K.K. Barua</td>
<td>704.42</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahani</td>
<td>Nabin Ch. Gogoi</td>
<td>408.75</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balamajan</td>
<td>C.K. Bezbarua</td>
<td>303.97</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borchoikota and Baghchung</td>
<td>Narayan Bezbarua</td>
<td>408.11</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horusarai</td>
<td>Bisturam Barua</td>
<td>1,063.62</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakadanga</td>
<td>D. C. Barua, Nandalal and Kamal Ch. Kataky</td>
<td>279.26</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letekujan</td>
<td>Muralidhar Barua</td>
<td>1,749.42</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhapur</td>
<td>Raisahib Bisturam Barua</td>
<td>1,211.38</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudaijan</td>
<td>D. C. Barua</td>
<td>232.79</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowriya</td>
<td>Mrs. D. N. Barua</td>
<td>542.06</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thengalbari</td>
<td>Bisturam Barua</td>
<td>774.53</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Assam District Gazetters, Sibsagar – 1915.

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24 Devi Prasad Bagradia’s article in Poona Mahanta, et.al. (eds) : Rupantoror Silpi Jyotiprasad (Dibrugarh- 2003), p.6
In comparison with the company-owned tea estates, the resources of the native tea capitalists were in meager sum.

One of the forceful arguments offered by the noted Marxist historian of Assam, Amalendu Guha, in support of the comprador origin of the native tea planters of Assam is that 'many petty Assamese planters e.g., had no factories to process their tea leaves. They sent their leaves to neighbouring European gardens which had factories'. It would be too futile to assume that because of the absence of their own factories for processing the tea leaves, made the local planters comprador in relation to the expatriate tea capitalist, the real fact was that the hostile and unsympathetic attitude of the colonial masters and the large firms based in Calcutta those who had their natural abilities to throw their concern into any industrial ventures due to their close proximity with the colonial administration and the abundance of capital at their hands had made on the other hand, the prospects of the native capitalists to rise in the entrepreneurial concerns, one of the most toughest things to achieve:

Such local establishments did not have the resources to set up their own factories, they functioned as subsidiary concerns of bigger gardens owned by British managing agencies to whom they supplied leaves for processing. Such a dependent relationship was fraught with risk since the British planters could arbitrarily increase or decrease quotas, and were free to set prices as they wished. Many local planters went out of business and most tried to hedge their risks.

For example, the proprietor of Thengalbari Tea Estate only prospered with the help of Williamson Magor, was able to ‘set up his own factory with the outdated equipment supplied by the Williamson Magor’. The subordinate relationship with the Williamson Magor continued even after independence and in a letter given to the

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Company's London office, the wife of the proprietor of the Thengalbari, Shiva Prasad Barua (son of Bisturam Barua) wrote:

> In view of our long-standing relation with your Calcutta office and your personal relation with my late husband, I would request you to put a word for me asking your Calcutta office to revise their decision and finance us in 1951. I am depending on you for the survival of my business.\(^{30}\)

But the dependent relationship always did not carry the burden of comprador origin of the bourgeoisie of Assam in respect of their political activities, those who had to try their fortune in tea plantations. There were ample proofs where the small tea capitalists also took part directly or indirectly in the freedom struggle and tried to bring the nationalist consciousness among the people inspite of their cordial relationship with the expatriates.

The lure of earning big money through the opening of tea estate in Assam also attracted the attention of the enlightened Bengali elites and two Bengali elites of Calcutta, jointly opened a tea estate in the Tezpur subdivision, namely, the Monai Tea Estate.\(^{31}\) But with that tea estate also, the British tea planters engaged in quarrels due to the recruitment of labour because the labourers wanted to do work in the natives’ owned tea estates where they got some liberal benefits from the owners.

By 1915, it was observed that ‘the industry is attracting the attention of the people of the country and several well-to-do Assamese now own tea estates or are forming syndicates for the purpose of opening new or extending old gardens.’\(^{32}\) Though the indigenous tea planters tried to make a place in the tea industry but the preponderance enjoyed by the British managing agency houses made the endeavours of the indigenous capitalist difficult.

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\(^{30}\) Ibid.  
\(^{31}\) O. K. Das: *Jivan Smriti* (Guwahati-1983), p. 23  
The managing agency houses and their monopoly over the tea trade:

The biggest hurdle the indigenous capitalists had to face before the mighty colonial tea-planters was the total domination of the tea-estates of Assam by the managing agency houses, controlled mostly by the British capitalists and 'the capital invested in the European controlled enterprises was made up of the ploughed back profits of the enterprise, and the capital raised from European residents in India'.\(^{33}\) And the main interests of the agency houses were not concentrated only in one trade but they had also their large stake in industry and other trade activities, generally, it was comprised of both exports and imports. The names of the biggest agency houses can be cited here: Duncan Brothers and Company of Calcutta, Williamson Magor and Company, Alex Laurie and Company and Davenport and Company, Andrew Yule and Company, Shaw Wallace and Company, Jardine Skinner and Company, James Finlay and Company etc.\(^{34}\)

One of the major characteristics of the expatriates - controlled agency houses was that the companies were registered not in India but chiefly those were registered in London.\(^{35}\) The major agency houses did not focus their interest only on one trade and they in fact, performed multifarious duties to speed up the growth of their respective agencies. Though, those managing agency houses were controlled from their London based offices but in some instances, the main focus of interest and source of profits were shifted back to India from Britain. The size of capital also mattered in the growth of their trade activities and by dint of the availability of capital, they could jump into several fields of trade. For example:

James Finlay and Company, whose headquarter was based in London, the total size of their capital, between the period of 1896-98 was £4,458,400 and net acres of land under tea cultivation between the same period was 74,000 acres with a labour force of 70,000 (both in Ceylon and India). This company also sends money

\(^{33}\) Bagchi: Op. cit., p.159
\(^{34}\) Ibid., p.162
\(^{35}\) The total nominal capital invested in the joint stock companies producing tea in India in 1914, which amounted to Rs.302.3 million, only about Rs.43.1 million were accounted for by companies registered in India and the rest by Sterling Companies. G.D. Hope, Chief Scientific Officer, ITA, 'The Tea Industry Of Bengal and Assam' in Playne and Wright: Bengal and Assam, Behar and Orissa p.387, f. n.- 18, cited in Ibid., p. 178
to indigo planters, went in to sugar when the trade in indigo collapsed and carried on an extensive trade in imports of Manchester piecegoods and exports of Indian raw produce.\textsuperscript{36}

Another major example of the managing agency houses varied trade interests was the activities of the Andrew Yule and Company. In the official history of that Company, it was stated very clearly, Andrew Yule had most diverse range of interests of all the Calcutta business houses. At first it took agencies in cloth and insurance but came to act as managing agents in a wide range of Eastern Indian industries such as jute, cotton, sugar, paper-making and chemicals. And above all the 'Andrew Yule was one of the largest tea concern in India and controlled ship repair yards. It ran a river steamer link between Assam and Calcutta. Through its managing agency of the Bengal Coal Company, Andrew Yule became the leading coal mining firm in British India.'\textsuperscript{37}

Besides the Assam Tea Company and the Jorehaut Tea Company, the other big companies who operated in Assam were Shaw Wallace and Company and Williamson Magor and Company. The Shaw Wallace Company did diverse trade activities besides their primary interest in tea.\textsuperscript{38}

In fact, before the various trade interests, the British managing agency houses controlled in India with their available capital and with shareholdings from the British citizens raised in India, the industrial enterprises of the indigenous capitalists did not able to show any remarkable deliverance of their skills, in comparison with the resources of the expatriate business community. There were some other inner factors which emboldened the British managing agency houses and the planters to

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 162

\textsuperscript{37} The Statesman, the leading English daily which acted as the spokesman of the interests of the tea capitalists, was also published under its supervision. Andrew Yule and Co. Ltd. 1863-1963 (Edinburgh-1963); Quoted in Lionel Carter: Chronicles of British Business in Asia 1850-1960 (Delhi-2002), p. 130

\textsuperscript{38} 'During the Second World War, Shaw Wallace, probably did more work than any other firm in India. Its tea companies were involved in the construction of the Burma Road and the firm also transported cloth from Bombay to Assam. In Calcutta, Shaw Wallace was busy processing rice for governments in eastern and southern India and a senior member of the firm helped organise supplies for the Middle East and Russia.' A History of Shaw Wallace & Co. and Shaw Wallace & Co. Ltd. Compiled by Sir Harry Towerd. (Calcutta-1965); Quoted in Ibid., p. 125
embark on their business with full vigour and energy. Bagchi has analysed the aspect very brilliantly:

The European businessman very consciously set themselves apart from ‘native’ businessmen; they claimed a cultural and racial affinity with the British rulers of India which was denied to the Indians who might compete with them.39

The social and cultural distinctions which had been maintained by the representatives of the Capitalists (British) were immensely prejudicial to a harmonious growth of the indigenous capital. The society consisted of the tea-planters included only the Britishers (both officials and non-officials). In the European Clubs, the entry for the natives was not permitted. Though since the 1860s, station clubs, planters club or European clubs were a common feature across Assam but, no Indian was allowed to become member of the European clubs. For instance in Assam when a club was established in 1894 at Gauhati the entry of the Indians was strictly prohibited:

The only Indians allowed inside its premises were males, cooks, attendants and two barbers. Later, a few Indians were allowed as half members but they were deprived of voting rights and many other privileges. The discriminating attitude towards the Indians’ led to the establishment of the India Club (1933) by the elite section of Gauhati.40

All the European planters were united under the umbrella of the Indian Tea Association (ITA), which virtually controlled the labour-management relation also. The ITA’s powerful role even influenced the government’s policy-making mechanism regarding the critical labour problems. For instance, when the Labour Enquiry Commission was formed in 1896, to enquiry in to the anomalies of the 1882. (Act I) the ITA Chairman, Assam Branch, Mr. Buckingham strongly opposed the government initiative and observed:

The Committee consider that the time has not yet arrived for exceptional legislation to be abandoned. It may be sound in theory to restrict, as far as

40 Dipankar Banerjee: Heritage Guwahati (Guwahati-2004), Pp.103-104
possible, the scope of the penal contract system and I believe no one would be more glad than employers of labourers themselves, if the conditions were such that the whole of the labour law could be swept away, but the time has not yet come when the system of contracts can be restricted, without bringing injury to the employer and to emigration generally. 41

Even, the liberal minded Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Henry Cotton, at first supported the views of the ITA. In a government correspondence, it was clearly admitted that the opposition of the ITA and the Assam Branch of that Association was chiefly responsible for not accepting by the Government, the recommendations of the Labour Commission (1896).42

When Cotton, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, tried to amend the serious discriminatory policies that was inherent in the labour system, he had faced combined opposition of the tea plantation lobby and Cotton later had to resign from the Chief Commissionership after an eventful career in Assam.43 The colonial administration maintained a close collaboration with their co-partners in the tea plantations chiefly on the basis on their race and mutual imperial capitalist interests. The Viceroy’s of British India, like, Lord Curzon, even in the early 1900s did express clearly the erstwhile relationship of the colonial state with the planters:

Administration and exploitation when rightly viewed are parts of the same duty in the Government of India.... I look upon all Englishmen in this country (and if any Scotchmen or Irishmen are present pray do not let them think that I am excluding them) as engaged in different branches of the same great understanding. Here we are all fellow countrymen, comrades and friends. The fact that some of us earn our livelihood or discharge our duty by the work of administration and others by cultivating the soil does not differentiate as one from the other. They are merely sub-division of labour. They are not distinctions of object or purpose or aim.44

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41 Quoted in Letter from A. Earle, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam – June 1904, Revenue-A-No.77-117
42 Ibid.
44 Quoted in Hem Chandra Barua’s article published in Asomiya (Weekly) 25th May 1929
Curzon’s speech clearly pointed out the fact that the government’s sympathy would always in the side of the expatriate capitalists. It also proved the point that the colonial state played a significant role in protecting the interests of the expatriate capitalists.

The near monopoly of the managing agency houses and its representatives in Assam, did not only confine itself in influencing the higher levels of the administration but also in their control of the banking sector. Padmanath Barthakur, a small tea-capitalist and an important Congress leader of the Sibsagar district, described how he faced the difficulties in financing his small tea garden due to the lack of capital. Due to the absence of important banking facilities for the indigenous capitalists, tea capitalists of Assam generally went to Calcutta for seeking help from other Indian bankers. But, they did not achieve always successful results in their endeavours for bank finance of their tea-estates. For example, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, the famous businessman of Calcutta and under whom the Hindustan Cooperative Bank spent a successful journey, refused to lend money to the two Assamese tea planters (Jadav Prasad Chaliha and Padmanath Barthakur). Sarkar showed the reason of not giving the money to finance their concerns in Assam was that like the indigo industry of Bengal, the tea-industry of Assam would meet the similar fate. How far the constraints they had to face in Assam in respect of banking could be gauged that there was only a branch of the Imperial Bank in Assam and save that branch, there was no banking facilities in Assam up to the late 1920s.

A branch of the Imperial Bank which was opened in one of the central tea districts (Dibrugarh sub-division) in 1923 (May) but the popularity of the banking business in Assam was rather slow an even the Head office of the Imperial Bank’s branch instructed the officer-in charge of the branch to ‘popularise the banking habit amongst a people who are very little use to advantages that may be derived from dealings with a bank.’ In 1926, ‘the Gauhati Bank was established by a few

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47 Some important personalities of the province also opened their accounts in the Dibrugarh branch of the Imperial Bank. But it was rather doubtful, how far the indigenous capitalists got the equal benefits from the banking capital because the local British tea planters almost monopolised the business of that branch with a close cooperation also from the Marwari businessmen. Abhik Ray: Business Profile of Dibrugarh Branch 1923-55 in Souvenir-State Bank of India’s Platinum Jubilee Celebration, Dibrugarh Branch, Assam-1923-1998.
philanthropist of Assam’ and ‘the deposits in the Gauhati Bank consisted mainly the savings of the middle class Assamese.’

It was quite certain that the European controlled banks like the Presidency Banks or later the Imperial Bank (1921) only facilitated in the expansion of capital of the managing agencies. ‘It appears that most European managing agency houses had arrangements for cash credit or overdrafts for the companies under their control with the Presidency Banks.’ The managing agency houses also kept formal or informal links with the Presidency Banks and the exchange banks. The Assamese entrepreneurs, only, utilised their ancestral propertied concerns to invest in the tea cultivation and when they encountered with financial crisis, their enterprises also automatically suffered and sometimes their tea-estates also met the untimely death. Generally, the natives who had stake in tea plantations, were coming from ‘land owning and/or service-holders’ and lawyers’ families. It had become highly impossible for the small tea-capitalists of Assam to take high risks in investing their savings for better prospects of the tea-estates due to their limited capability of capital variations.

In the labour recruitment process also, the indigenous tea capitalists did not get any such high preference, unlike the European tea planters. The control of the managing agency houses over the labour recruitment process in the early years of the industry benefited only the expatriate community. In fact, the early period of the fully grown-up managing agency houses had shown that they started out and made their initial big profits only as ‘coolie-catchers’ and among these, the names of Andrew Yule, Williamson & Arbunthnot or Balmer Lawrie were important.

The share of the Indian proprietors in the tea industry was rather very small unlike the share owned by the expatriates. The Chairman of the ITA replied during the ITA meeting (Calcutta, November, 1920) that ‘small proprietors represent not more than 10% of the total area under tea. The concerns controlled by Calcutta

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48 P. C. Goswami: *The Economic Development of Assam* (Delhi-2003), p.359
50 Guha: *Op. cit.*, p.34
agency houses represented approximately 88% of that total leaving 12% for Indian concerns and proprietary concerns which he understood are all in financial difficulties now.\textsuperscript{52} The mere sum of the share owned by the Indian tea capitalists in the largely exportable items like the tea reinforced the convictions of the nationalist critics like B. C. Pal, about the role of foreign capital in the colonial Indian economy:

The introduction of foreign and mostly British, capital for working out the important natural resources of the country, instead of being a help, in fact, the greatest of hindrances to all real improvements in the economic condition of the people.\textsuperscript{53}

How precarious the conditions of the indigenous capitalists did become before the hegemonic control of the big foreign capitalists can be observed from the story of the early entrepreneurs from Bengal like Dwarakanath Tagore\textsuperscript{54} and, how, later, Dwarakanath Tagore’s entrepreneurship ended very miserably.\textsuperscript{55}

The factors that led to the slow growth of the indigenous capital in Assam can be analysed by taking into account two causes which has been held responsible for the low ratio of the participation of the indigenous capitalists in the entrepreneurial ventures and those factors were chiefly:

(a) the thorough orientation of eastern India to the raw material supplying functions associated with a colony and,
(b) the persistent advantages enjoyed by the Europeans not only because of their early start and acquaintance with external markets but also because of the racial

\textsuperscript{52} ITA Report- 1920, Pp. 128-129
\textsuperscript{53} Quoted in B.Chandra : \textit{The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India} (particularly Ch.III), (Delhi-1991), p.90
\textsuperscript{54} Even Dwarakanath Tagore with Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Rustomjee Cowasie, Motilal Seal and Haji Ispahani were the promoters of the Assam Company. Of them, Seal and Prasanna Kumar Tagore served in 1839 and 1839-41, respectively, as directors on the Calcutta Board of the Company. A. Guha: \textit{Medieval and Early colonial Assam} (Calcutta- 1991), p.173
\textsuperscript{55} Tagore also founded the Bengal Coal Company (1829), and the Union Bank and the managing agency house of Carr, Tagore and Co. in the 1840 with a wide range of interests but ‘Tagore Enterprises and other fledgling firms, were destroyed by a new wave of financial crisis after 1846, caused by unstable trading condition in Asia and Europe’ and thus the ‘phase of Indian entrepreneurship was ended’.
alignment of government patronage and the financial and other services supporting and reinforcing European control over trade and industry.\textsuperscript{56}

Through an inscrutable mechanism of capital diversification and its efforts to subservient all other competitive groups, like the Indian enterprises, in the world of commerce, because of the reasons as mentioned above, the colonial expatriate capitalists did accelerate the tempo of their own commercial gains and their hold over the natural resources of the colonial Indian economy. The British entrepreneurs ‘through their agency British businessmen and investors, resident both in the United Kingdom and South Asia, were involved in almost all sectors of the organised economy of the Indian subcontinent from the 1860s until the 1950s’.\textsuperscript{57}

But the situation was quite opposite in the case of the western India. Whereas in eastern India, basically, in Bengal and Assam, the stagnant pattern of the growth of indigenous capital occurred due to the various imperialistic inhibitions but in contrast, in Western India, the Parsis gave a new meaning to the newly established textile industry.\textsuperscript{58}

In western India, ‘other trading communities faced less competition from European businessmen then in eastern India’. The textile entrepreneurs also did not face any difficulties in the labour procurement.\textsuperscript{59} The endeavours of the Parsees, turned Bombay into one of the rising business centres in India and ‘the Parsis with their finance acquired since the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, and trade magnates are willing’ and ‘in a position during the founding years of the Bombay industry to invest their fortunes in the new economic branch of the textile industry’.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} Bagchi: \textit{Op. cit.}, p.205
\textsuperscript{57} Tomlison: \textit{Op. cit.}, Pp.116-117
\textsuperscript{58} There were some specific circumstances which helped the Parsis in their industrial and trading ventures: ‘During the struggle with the Marathas, the British needed Parsis as collaborations and sometimes as financiers; the British traders had less time to establish themselves in western India, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century, wider political considerations had already began to moderate the trading methods of European businessmen.’
\textsuperscript{59} The ‘industrial workforce was largely composed of the labourers recruited from the Southern Konkkan districts of Bombay presidency and the Eastern United provinces to the north’.
\textsuperscript{60} Eckehard Kulke: \textit{The Parsees in India} (Delhi – 1978), Pp. 56-57
After 1920s, a radical shift occurred and a ‘new brand of Indian
entrepreneurs challenged the hold of the expatriates on the institutional structures of
the organized colonial Indian economy and it very effectively weakened the hold of
the expatriates, decisively in the 1930s and destroyed it almost completely after
1945.'61 But this view of Tomlison has been criticised by the historians like Maria
Misra and Misra has also criticised the work of Bagchi.62 Though, Misra’s argument
has seemed to have proved that colonial capitalist had almost lost their monopoly over
the economy but we cannot assert it fully from her argument that despite the lack of
support given to the British business, their overall domination had been dismantled
after the First World War. Even, in some specific contexts, the expatriate managing
agency houses still continued their activities in the eastern India and particularly in
Assam. The managing agency houses like ‘Shaw Wallace was very successfully even
after Indian independence and some of its biggest profits were made in the early
1970s’.63

It was in a post-independent government report, it has been stated that
it was only after World War I that a really serious attempt to acquire the estates seems
to have been started by the Indians. The Indianisation of the tea estates proceeded at a
faster rate after the World War II.64

The colonial government had little control over the tea capitalists.
During the First World War period, when the colonial government tried to impose
income taxes upon the tea estates, the organisation of the expatriate tea capitalists, the
ITA vehemently opposed such schemes and it was reported that any such step of the

62 Misra writes: ‘These views are popular and widespread, but are not really supported by any papers
from the expatriate business houses themselves. When you look at these, you find that the
influence enjoyed by expatriate business interests over the colonial government has been
exaggerated. It is true that, in the period before the First World War, the British businessmen
enjoyed privileges as defence stores suppliers, railway contractors, and mail shippers, in the inter­
war period, however, this fairly limited kind of favouritism proved of little significance. Faced
with a revenue system buckling under the pressure to remit home charges and fund a much
enhanced Indian Army, the colonial government was unwilling to give any preference to British
business in India which would involve financial sacrifice.’
Maria Misra: Politics and Ex-Patriate Enterprise in India: The Interwar years in Dwijendra
Tripathi: Business and Politics in India (Delhi-1991), p.247
64 Report on the Enquiry into the Family Budget of Tea Garden workers in Assam, 1951-52 – Govt.
of Assam, p.14
government would have jeopardised the existing relationship both between the 
government and the tea plantation authority and that kind of offensive position 
followed by the plantation authority, made the tasks of further expansion of the 
jurisdictions of the government rather humble and the Indian tea planters were 
particularly worst affected because they had no such political leverage unlike the 
expatriate business to complain before the colonial government.

It was also true that the extreme monopoly rights enjoyed by the 
British tea planters almost brought disaster to the future growth of the tea cultivation 
by the indigenous capitalists of Assam. Above all, the total size of the acres of the 
land under tea cultivation of the expatriate tea planters was also large in comparison 
of the Indian counterparts. In a government report, it was observed:

Because of the advantageous position enjoyed by the Europeans from the very 
beginning in this industry, the average size of the European garden is bigger than 
that of the Indian garden. From the sample of gardens selected for the Family 
Budget Enquiry this average size worked out at 580 acres for the European garden 
and 343 acres for the Indian garden inspite of some big European gardens coming 
under the proprietorship of Indians in the meantime. Also in the European garden, 
the proportionate area under tea to the total area under grant amounted to 30%, the 
corresponding figure for the Indian gardens being 26%.

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65 The export duty imposed upon the tea, like the jute and hides rather infuriated the tea lobby. ITA 
and in a letter sent to the Editor of 'The Statesman' it was clearly stated: '....Export duties are 
generally condemned as being economically unsound and commercially undesirable. They may 
possibly be more or less tolerated when imposed upon a strictly monopoly article. ....And they are 
altogether indefensible, and without any sort of justification, when levied on an agricultural 
products, such as tea, the bulk of which is exported, for in such cases they simply mean an addition 
to the cost of production'. In that letter it was stressed that the increased cost of production 
influenced the fate of the labourers: '....they cannot afford to be taxed in this way. The only result 
will be that they will become discontented and from discontent to disorder is only a step among 
iliterate people'. The ITA even gone further and vice-chairman Mr. W.D. Smiles stated: '....The 
Assam Government, I believe, does wish to help the tea industry but the Iron and Coal Magnates in 
Bengal, Bihar and Orissa seems to be able to pull for more useful strings with the Central 
Government and the Railway than we can, If the Central Government refuses to give fair treatment 
to Assam I believe, we are justified in asking for Home Rule or some sort of a separation policy.' 

66 Detailed Report of the General Committee of the ITA for the year 1923, Calcutta
The number of gardens owned by the European was quite large, and there existed only 'a system of imperfect competition in the field of the tea industry'. In the following table, a comparative statistics has been provided showing the number of gardens, area under grant owned by the Indians and the Europeans (1928-1947). 67

Table: 3.2

Tea gardens and the acres under tea cultivation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Gardens</th>
<th>Area under Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>728</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>728</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Director of Agriculture, Assam – Report on an Enquiry into the family Budget of Tea Garden Workers in Assam, 1951-52

The table (3.2) has amply has proved that the Europeans, primarily the British had a total control over the major acres of land for tea cultivation and even at the time of independence, the number of tea-estates under the ownership of the European companies were 641 and the number of Indian owned were only 359. Another significant feature of the Indian owned tea estates in the Cachar district was that 'those tea estates were managed in the method the Zamindary system, the consequences of which in some cases have been the inability to muster resources at

67 Ibid
times of crisis’. The indigenous tea-planters tried to create some organisations among themselves namely the Assam Tea Planters Association and the Assam Bengal Indian Tea Association by following the footsteps of the giant Indian Tea Association but ‘none of these organizations however, commands the same standard of efficiency in their directional and technical set-up’ but ‘they work more or less on lines identical with the ITA’. But the indigenous capitalists of Assam always did not remain silent spectators of the monopoly rights enjoyed by the British tea planters and through their speeches in the Assam Legislative Council they vehemently protested against the prejudices practised by the British planters.

Protests of the indigenous tea capitalists against the expatriate capitalists’ prejudices:

The expatriate tea-capitalists in Assam particularly, maintained a cultural distance in respect of the general public and in the midst of their tea-estates, the entry of the outsiders was heavily prohibited. The Assamese tea-planters, especially, the nationalist minded planters, since the 1920s made a vehement critique of the British tea planters’ domination even over the public-paths and the bazaars. They warned through their speeches that if the problem of restricting the use of the ‘foot-paths passing through their garden’, was not tackled immediately, discontent and unrest would led to the ‘loss of lives sooner or later in some tea districts as a result of riots between tea garden proprietors or managers as the case may be and the neighbouring villages’. Rohini Kumar HatiBarua, the Congress member in the Assam Legislative Council appealed before the Chairman of the Council thus:

‘Sir, imagine for a moment the indignities offered by some of the tea garden managers to our people, including some members of this council by demanding salam, the closing of umbrellas and also demanding to get down from their cycles or horseback while they happen to pass through their gardens on some errand.’

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Speech given by R. K. HatiBarua- in the Assam Legislative Council- ‘Republic Foot paths existing in different tea gardens in Assam’ in ALCP- 1927.
71 Ibid.
He also made an emotional appeal through his speech to give a respect to the indigenous population of Assam:

Sir, do not think for a moment that our raiyats, are people, our people are not human beings possessed of flesh and blood and self-respect. Can they tolerate much indignities at the hands of the European planters at all times! Can they tolerate their representatives to this Council being insulted by these planters?  

The villagers of the neighbouring tea gardens did ‘often having to walk from 6 to 16 miles instead of a mile or so by a short cut across the tea gardens’. Even in some tea-districts, native population those had been living near the gardens was pushed back to some distant areas. Laksheswar Barua, a member of the Legislative Council, said in his speech:

There are vast tea gardens in the Upper Lakhimpur district. As soon as a man gets down at the Doom Dooma station if he wants to go to Kakopathar, he will have to go through different gardens for eight miles. In those tea gardens there were villages, but somehow or other the villages are not there, I do not know by what process of law they were driven to the hills.

Kuladhar Chaliha, one of the prominent Congress leaders of Assam and who was also the first president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee(APCC), narrated the story how Chaliha himself faced the indignation at the hands of the foreign tea-planters. The racial abuses, made by the British tea planters towards the Indians, even though some natives were leading a Western lifestyle, manifested itself in the open use of the abusive terms like ‘kala admi’. Chaliha in his speech rightly analysed the situation by raising three crucial points; viz., ‘the political aspect, social aspect and legal aspect’ of the consequences of such racial abuses. He said that ‘the most dangerous is the political aspect’. Chaliha said:

There is a feeling growing among the people of which perhaps they are not aware, that they are playing a dangerous game by insulting the people, by making them

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72 Ibid.
73 Lakhshewar Barua’s Speech, Ibid.
put down their umbrellas, by making them get down from their bicycles or horses. They think that they are safe because the British Government is behind them. They do not know what they are doing when they say that this road is not for the *kala admi* to pass through and I was told that the road was not meant for the *kala admi*. ... when I wanted to pass through a garden the chaukidar of the garden did not let me pass and I was told that the road was not meant for a *kala admi* and I was a *kala admi*. 74

Sarbeswar Barua, another representative of the Assam Legislative Council cited an example where the British tea planters obstructed the Satradhikar of the Kuruabahi Satra, to newly construct a road, which was intended to build through the two gardens in the Golaghat sub-division, namely, Basa and Bihora tea estates. 75

But against those objections and criticism of the members of the legislative council, and among them, some were planters themselves, the British Colonial representatives did not want to share equal treatment even to their fellow local planters. The British tea planters had a great fear about the opening of their garden roads to the common public lest that would bring inconsistence to the existing relationship between the labour and the management. In 1930, when the Royal Commission on labour went to Assam, one of the members, Dewan Chaman Lall, asked the question to one of the representatives of the tea industry: ‘If you believe in the function of the workers on your estate, would it not be better I ask (again) to have your roads open to the public. What do you mean by throwing open to the public?’ The representative replied: ‘I do not think it would be wise’. 76 The tea gardens were regarded by the expatriate tea capitalists as their own dominions where they did not think it wise to open those dominions for the general population of Assam. The tea estates were a regulated mini empire and there, the tea planters or the managers used the ultimate forms of coercion to bring the subaltern militancy and resistance of the poor labourers in to their subservience. Nabin Chandra Bardoloi graphically portrayed the existing reality in the tea estates thus: “A tea garden is like a small town by itself,

74 Speech Kuladhar Chaliha’s Speech- Ibid, (emphasis added)
75 From the letter written by his Holiness, the Adhikar Goswami of Kuruabahi to Mr. Kuladhar Chaliha, quoted in Sarbeswar Barua’s speech, Ibid
76 Royal Commission on Labour in India- Evidence (Assam part) (London-1930)
with their assistants. Nobody, not even the policeman can enter this kingdom without the manager’s permission”.\footnote{Nabin Chandra Bordoloi: “Condition of Labour in the Tea Gardens of Assam” in, India (London), 14 November, 1919; Quoted in Guha: Op. cit., p.106}

It was not only that the planters domination was overwhelmingly powerful in their respective tea garden areas but also in the local self government bodies the planters dominated the stage. For instance, in the Local Boards of Assam, too, ‘the planters’ domination over fifteen out of the nineteen local boards continued to persist.’ In the Legislative Council also, the planters lobby dominated over the proceedings of the Council. Seeing the misdemeanours of the expatriate tea-capitalists in Assam, Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri, made a prophetic speech but with much despondency:

In Assam, there is another sovereign power, which is known as the Planters Raj, before whom not only now but even in the past, the powerful European Officers had to tremble. We know that some English officials who tried to stand by justice against the planters had afterwards to mind their ways. What is the solution and what can we do?\footnote{Speech given by R.K. Chaudhuri, Op. cit. ALC P, (Emphasis added)}

Chaudhuri again answered to the question:

The planters are a determined body. They would not give up a pin point of land without having another Kurukhetra. They will fight....we shall ultimately have to go to the court of law and past experiences of the British dispensation of justice in India has shown as how justice will be dealt out to us between my friends on this side and our people who want a path.\footnote{Ibid.}

Chaudhuri very prophetically declared, ‘I cannot sympathise with Mr. HatiBarua who brought up the resolution regarding the Republic foot paths existing in different tea gardens in Assam, but I can assume my friend that he will never have access to the tea garden path till he has paved out a path of Swaraj and freedom for India’.

It was very interesting that the native planters though made fierce attacks against the domination of the British planters but they were indifferent to the problems faced by the poor labour folk of Assam, those who spent their youthful years in bringing prosperity to the colonial capitalist productive relations. The anger and indignation of the native tea planters of Assam never did able to break the existing status quo limit by bringing the labour issue into question. Their focal point of discussion, (as has been cleared from the ongoing explanations) made the point clear that there would not be any place for discussing the grievances and the causes and demands of the strikes led by the labourers. The usual discussion was based in the re-public the foot paths used by the indigenous populations for several generations, but the bourgeois computations of regarding the issue of the exploitations, which had been mutilating the body and the spirit of the poor labourers, there was no such emphatic circumspection in their discussion. The bourgeois leaders, as culturally, more influenced by their counterparts (expatriates), always hoped for safe private future that would be secured only by getting some equal opportunities in their only entrepreneurial concern and that was the tea plantation. In political matters also, the native bourgeoisie which ironically accepted the idioms of the early nationalist critique of the colonial economic policy, never did give much concern to the interests of the poor labourers.

The lack of interest of members of the Legislative Council towards the labour affairs was proverbial indeed and it was observed:

Questions have at time been asked on the subject of conflicts between the management and the labour force which had figured in the newspapers, but otherwise the Council proceedings have not given any indication of special interest in the industrial labour population as distinct from the general rural population of the province.80

Also, the labour-discipline in some of the natives’ owned tea estates was harsh indeed. In the big tea estates owned by planters like C.K. Bezbarua or Siva Prasad Barua, the labour-discipline was quite harsh and the wages and other concessions

offered to the labourers were not so liberal. C.K. Bezbaruah, who was the owner of the two estates, Boloma and Borsoikata, though stated: “Under the prevailing rates of wages in tea gardens, it is my honest conviction that the present wages are quite inadequate for the average coolies to keep their body and mind together. They cannot make any saving either for evil days or for the education of their children”, but the labour force had to face severe disciplinary action made by the subordinate staff of the native planters. A woman worker (Boloma T.E. owner C. K. Bezbaruah), named, Miriam Musulmani gave the evidence of canning her and her son. In respect of treatments to the labourers, there was no such huge difference between the European tea planters and the native tea planters because they were just the representatives of the capital with only certain differences in the variations of their capital mobility.

The ironical role played by the native Assamese tea-planters in the major debates, such as the republic foot paths those who did, also, lead the tempo of nationalist politics in Assam, was quite amazing. For instance, where members of the Legislative Council, like, R.K. HatiBarua, Kuladhar Chaliha, Lakheswar Barua, etc., through their speeches gave their own sordid experience of getting racial ill-

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81 Ibid.

82 Excerpt from the Evidence as taken from the women coolie (Boloma T.E.) before Sub. Committee (Royal Commission)- 10th June 1930

Q What do you wish to complain about?
A. I want to get my name cut off the books so that I can go back to my own country (Ballia district)

Q Diwan Chamanlal Call: Were you beaten?
A. Yes, by the Babu

Q What were you beaten with?
A. With a cane.

Q Have you any marks?
A. Yes, on my arm. (The witness exhibited a bruise in the form of a double line several inches long on the lower arm, which in Col. Russell (member of the Royal Commission) opinion was probably not caused by a cane)

Q Why were you beaten?
A. I was plucking old leaves at the end of the season and I have finished one block. I asked the sardar if I could go on to another block. The babu said I was to finish that block, turning round at head. I wanted to go another block.

Q Mr. Clow (another member of the Sub Committees). Was your boy beaten too?
A. Yes

Q Why?
A. Because he came to save me he was beaten too.

(The boy, Sumleman had what were in col. Russell’s opinion can marks on the thigh and hip and corroborated this statement of his mother)

Later the doctor of the garden, J. Chakravarti also said that the incident was true and she was beaten on the lower part.

Statement given by the woman labour, Miriam Musulmani, in Ibid, Royal Commission (Evidence)
treatments from the expatriate tea planters, but on the other hand, the people like Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, who was himself a petty-planter said:

At present I do not mean to say that there are no planters who allow the people to use the path; there are some who do actually allow the public to use the foot paths, and others will certainly allow the people to use them....I myself have had the pleasure of motoring from Dibrugarh to Sibsagar, the tea estates of my friend Col. Smiles and no one has said a word to me.83

Interestingly, Col. Smiles was the President of the ITA and in the Legislative Council; one Swarajist Party member ruefully said about Col. Smiles' that 'he was the de-facto Governor of Assam'.84 The cordial relationship, the petty tea planters like Bardoloi, maintained with the Colonial government's representatives did put a barrier between the espousal of the people's interests through the nationalist struggles and their cordiality with the ITA officials, made it superfluous their little concern about the labour issues. So, the strong fort of the colonial capitalist giants remained intact and only the labouring poor had to suffer.

The debate regarding the comprador origin of the indigenous tea capitalists:

The comprador origin of the native tea-capitalists of Assam has been analysed by some Marxist historians and it is too fraught with rigid Marxist connotations thus ignoring certain vital points regarding the development of entrepreneurship in a colonial economic set-up. The issue of the comprador origin of the bourgeoisie in colonial countries like India has got its theoretical support from the Russian Marxist scholars like A.L. Levkosky, who writes:

The comprador bourgeoisie is concerned mainly with trade operations connected with the export of indigenous raw materials and the import of manufactured goods

84 Quoted in the The Asomiya, 13th May, 1928
from imperialist countries as well as credit and money lending dealings. This sort of business cannot be classified as independent capitalist production.85

But the comprador origin of the Indian capitalist class, particularly, the tea-capitalist class in Assam, should not be taken as the serious tool for studying the indigenous capitalist development in Assam and because ‘such a neat division is quite untenable in the Indian situation, given the complex interlocking of finance, trade and industry in the managing agency system.’86

It was also true that after the 1920s ‘the necessity of containing economic and political discontent compelled the colonial authorities to give concessions to the Indian capitalist class, especially in fields where no major British interests were involved.’87 Even, where ‘major British trade interests were involved’, the expatriate capitalists wanted to grant some concessions to the natives in order to satisfy the discontented attitude of the natives capitalists those who had also been the chief players in the nationalist politics and some specific regions, just like in Assam, their political role was also important. In a report of the ITA, it was also conceded that ‘the percentage of the Indian owned tea estates (12%) should be maintained from a political point of view.’88

In Assam, the pace of the growth of the colonially inspired capitalism was rather slow, where even ‘vertical and horizontal integration’ of capitalist growth was absent due to total monopolistic control over the core sectors like tea, coal and oil and, there was no chance of the formation of a collective capitalist organisation among the indigenous capitalists to challenge the ‘collective monopoly’ of ‘alien

87 Bipan Chandra: Nationalism andColonialism in Modern India (Delhi-1999), p.159
88 Op. cit., ITA- Report -1920-21. The report also emphasised that the new Government would be more or less Indian and they would look on the tea industry as a purely European industry as they did at present.
The basic characteristics of the economy of colonial India and particularly, the economy of Assam, which was predominantly under the influence of the tea-capitalists and the managing agency houses has rather, reinforced the view put forward by the historians like Morris D. Morris who has pointed out that ‘the Indian economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was a private enterprise economy and the vast bulk of decisions about the allocation of resources was made by private businessmen’. But Morris has failed to mention that behind the privatised economic structure the protection given by colonial state towards the monopoly of the British capital in some sectors of the economy was also important.

Though much controversy has been raging on how far did the Indian capitalists become emerge as a class, with its relation to the expatriate capitalist class, it has been claimed by the historians that after 1920s, ‘the Indian bourgeoisie had started operating as a class with an overall perspective of its relations with imperialism’. Some historians have explained that ‘by this period(1920s) an Indian Capitalist class had emerged as a structured or class for itself though some sections still remained outside FICCI’. In Assam, the native capitalists were remained outside the orbit of the FICCI. It cannot be explained convincingly in the case of in Assam, where the indigenous capitalists controlled only a fraction of the total share in the tea industry and they had not involved in strong competition with the British tea planters. And save a few assembly debates, the native capitalists remained silent in vital issues of the province. The indigenous tea capitalists never emerged as a “class for itself” in the colonial period and in contrast, they remained as a “class in itself”, particularly in the context of some specific regions (e.g. Assam).

**Notes:**

89 Mukherjee explains: ‘While backwardness and late entry created an inherent tendency favouring large capital or even a monopolistic situation, the specificity of the colonial situation pushed this tendency further. For example, in colonial India British business interests as a whole had acquired a vice-grip like grip over the economy (particularly in the eastern region) by establishing control over diverse areas such as industry, finance, trade, banking and even labour recruitment.’ Aditya Mukherjee: *Imperialism, Nationalism and the Making of the Indian Capitalist Class* (Delhi-2002), Pp.43-44


91 Sarkar: *Op. cit.*, Logical

There was a near phantasm among the indigenous tea capitalists of Assam that due to the discovery of tea, the economic landscape of the province had been changed dramatically. But in that context, there was the great dearth of the objective analysis of the ‘collective monopoly’ of the managing agency houses over the Assam’s economy. They were too concerned with the individual prosperity. The collaboration with the expatriate capitalists which grew after the 1920s, has been explained recently as their (native capitalists) needs for getting some concessions from the expatriate capitalist: ‘It was (also) the day-to-day administrative authority in the country to which the capitalist class could not be totally hostile and on which it depended for innumerable purposes’.\(^9^3\) That dependence became acute after the First World War, when intense social turmoil, political and labour unrest followed due to the hike of the price of the basic commodities and the lower rate of wages, compelled a group of capitalists to be more collaborative with the expatriate capitalists and the colonial administration.

**The tea capitalists of Assam and the call of nationalism:**

The role played by the nationalists in Assam those, who had an interest in the tea industry has also been brought under close scrutiny by the leftist scholars. Their weak role in the labour front has been attributed to their own interests in the tea industry. That issue concerning the role played by the Indian capitalists in the freedom movement of India, has been still a complex debatable point, despite the historians’ efforts to seek the root of the problem. Since the 1920s, after the rise of the Communist influence among the Indian intellectuals and the leaders, there has been a consistent attack upon the Indian capitalist class for its diabolical role\(^9^4\) during the period of the national movement basically for three reasons:

(a) its dependence on foreign capital and interest in trade, especially in imported goods,

(b) its links with feudal landowning interests, and,


(c) its fear of the left or popular movements from below led it either to surrender, or to repeatedly compromise and collaborative with imperialism, rather than put up a consistent struggle against it. 95

In a ‘balanced’ and condensed ‘theoretical framework’ as put forward by Bipan Chandra, regarding the role played by the Indian Capitalists, it has been explained:

The two-fold relationship of the capitalist class to imperialism, i.e., long-term antagonism and short-term accommodation and dependence, led it to work for a non-revolutionary pattern of anti-imperialist struggle. The struggle was, however, to be always kept within safe and acceptable limits. Its aim was at no stage to lead to permanent hostility and total confrontation but the exertion of enough pressure to force a compromise leading to concessions and a period of peace in which to digest the concessions and prepare for the next round of struggle. Thus the struggle was to be based on the strategy of pressure (struggle) – compromise - pressure (struggle) or p-c-p and stage (or step by step) advance towards a bourgeois nation state and independent economic development. 96

So, obviously, ‘the political aim was to be achieved not through the sudden expulsion of imperialism or the seizure of power but through a negotiated settlement’. The political strategy as displayed by the Indian big capitalists during the national movement was never to ‘encourage prolonged mass political activity, even of the non-violent variety’ 97

Another very significant feature of the capitalists (big) was that they did not organise themselves by forming a political party. In the context of India, during the period of the national movement, the Big Business group never openly came out by forming their own political party. It reminds us of the analysis of

97 Ibid.
Gramsci regarding the political identity of the big business groups. 98 Gramsci’s analysis can be strongly corroborated with the role played by the Indian industrialists in the different stages of the national movement since the rise of Gandhi:

The Indian industrialists found Gandhi’s charm irresistible, as did other sections of the Indian population. His stress on truth, non-violence, peace and self-reliance appealed to them immensely as these virtues seemed to conform to their own cultural orientation. His saintly demeanour created the kind of aura around him which has always made a deep impression on the Indian people in general and business in particular. He symbolized the general urge among Indians for self-rule, but his determination not to deviate from peaceful means under any circumstances fitted in admirably with the businessman’s abhorrence of conflict.99

The industrialists or the Big Business group saw a new prospect in the advent of Gandhi in the Indian political scenario and slowly but thoughtfully, they changed their track of not negotiating with the Congress’ methods of struggle into a systematic collaboration with the political tactics followed by the Congress Party. But, the industrialists never thought of giving any strategic support to the Communist party of India, as they regarded the principles of the Communists, (‘enemy party’ to use the Gramsci’s term) antagonistic to the peaceful growth of industrialisation and the theory of class struggle, and the social turmoil in many instances after the post-First World War period, had forced the industrialists for seeking help both from the colonial rulers and the bourgeois political party, namely, the Indian National Congress. But interestingly, during the non-cooperation movement, the big

98 Gramsci writes: ‘The problem arises of whether the great industrialists have a permanent political party of their own. It seems to me that the reply is in negative. The great industrialists utilize all the existing parties turn by turn, but they do not have their own party. This does not mean that they are in any way “agnostic” or “apolitical”. Their interest is in a determinate balance of forces, which they obtain precisely using their resources to reinforce one party or another in turn the varied political checkboard with the exception, needless to say, only of the enemy party, whose reinforcement cannot be assisted even as a tactical move.’

industrialists did not work out a comprehensive policy regarding the movement and so they were hostile to the Non Cooperation movement.\textsuperscript{100}

But in some specific aspects, the native bourgeoisie had to play a crucial role in the advancement of the nationalist political consciousness among the masses. For instance, in Assam, in the context of the nationalist struggle, no such political astuteness was displayed by the native capitalists because they had not become a force in its overall composition of capital unlike their native counterparts in Bombay or in Ahmedabad. In fact, they did not make any tenacious attempt to subvert the tempo of the national movement, particularly by those who had a deep connection with the tea industry. Although, leaders like Nabin Chandra Bardoloi or Jadav Prasad Chaliha were active members of the Congress as well as the petty tea planters themselves, but it would not be correct to say that because of their disdainful attitude towards the labour struggles and their interests in the tea-plantations inhibited them to openly join in the labourers strikes. The petty-tea-planter never tried to analyse scientifically the effects of the colonial-capitalist relations upon the socio-economic formation of the province and some of the tea capitalists’ ultimate aim was not to become a big industrialist either, emulating the examples of the big managing agency houses. The petty bourgeois mentality forced themselves to look only into the momentary survival in a world of deep economic crisis (personal) and they did not go to the extent of waging a long-term struggle against the domination of the expatriate tea-capitalists by establishing rival monopolistic organisations and in a weaker colonial economic set-up, like Assam, where, industrial growth was always very sluggish (except the tea industry), and the participation of the petty group of industrialists in the national movement would not surprise us, as also they had in entanglement with the colonial state and the expatriate capitalists. Unlike the big business community of India, the native tea-capitalists did not concern in evolving a comprehensive political strategy vis-à-vis with the opponent (expatriate capitalists) and the petty bourgeoisie foundation of the Assamese society which had been already

\textsuperscript{100} S. Bhattacharya writes in his excellent piece of essay: ‘The appointment of the Congress Labour Sub-Committee at the Nagpur congress in 1920, the links between the Congress and trade-union leadership and unrest among Assam Tea Garden workers, railway employers, Madras mill heads (Buckingham and Carnatic Mills), Jharia Coal Mines and in western Indian Cotton Mills all this caused concern to employers, not only to European employers, who were gravely affected by unrest, but also to their Indian counterparts’

in a sluggish process of bourgeoisification, never did put a great hurdle for the colonial capitalist system. The leaders like Kuladhar Chaliha, whose political contribution to the national movement in Assam was noteworthy never did shy of playing the dual role of helping the masses to join in the peoples’ movement and of playing the card of petty-tea-capitalists’ functions as well.

The regional elites of Assam had no such prior experience before the arrival of the British in the trade related activities. The heavily restricted but self-sufficient nature of the economy did not bring any corresponding development in the trade activities and, only, the province had been able to develop a small relationship with Bengal that too in the later period of the Ahom Dynasty (1228-1826). The ‘cultural baggage’ of the past period did not help them either to solve their tangled problems in their personal economic set-up. The peculiar situation which developed in Bengal, after the permanent settlement, and there elites ‘by investing in land in preference to commerce, the elite revealed another piece of its cultural baggage: its belief in the superior prestige and security resulting from the possession of landed property’.  

But in contrast, in case of Assam, no such hunger for land acquisition took place because of the absence of the permanent settlement and though the new elites had been carrying the ‘cultural baggage’ but the heavier form of the control of the managing agency houses in the tea industry, made their pious attempts of following the footsteps of the colonial tea planters superfluous.

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101 J.H. Broomfield has revealed that ‘we are better able to understand the effects of the British intrusion if we take account of the fact that the pattern of relationships among Indian elites was subject to constant change in periods before the European arrival, as much as in the period of European dominance. We must recognize that in many areas, and certainly in the peripheral areas with which I am primarily concerned, there was considerable social mobility in pre-European Times, certainly the British presence affected the direction and possibly also the speed of movement, most directly by providing new opportunities for economic gain, but it is significant that the groups which took advantage of these new opportunities did so largely the terms of their old methods of action.... the group’s experience before the British intrusion and its situation at that time, ... largely determined what ‘Cultural baggage’ it carried with it into the new situation.’


102 Ibid, p.140
The elites of Assam those who did take part in the national movement as well as played simultaneously, the role of a petty-capitalist always were coming from a superior caste status and their ‘social roots’ were deeply embedded in the cultural imitation of the western codes. Behind their ‘benevolent paternalism’ towards the masses, they had a ‘beautiful disdain’ towards the lower order of the society too.

Interestingly, some members of the elite group paid a sincere attention to the appeal made by the British representatives in the Legislative Council to avoid the danger brought by the political teachings of Gandhi. When the Finance member made an appeal in the Council to all of the members to use their endeavours to denounce the pernicious teachings of Gandhi during the Non-Cooperation movement; then the members of the Council like Nilmoni Phukan said:

To be frank I should say, cooperation presupposes reciprocity I take this opportunity of publicly expressing a feeling of satisfaction that we in this council have realized this to a great extent. What we want most at this moment is larger sympathy and recognition of people’s aspirations for higher and freer life. I do not consider British connection a necessary evil, nor the sole outcome of “merchant adventures”. This connection has come to stay for the good of both Englishmen and Indians. Both should recognize this. 103

Another prominent members of the elites in Assam who had also a great contribution to the development of the Assamese literature, said after mildly criticising the repressive policies of the government against the non-cooperators: ‘A Government which provided itself so long as the “Ma-Bap” of the people, what should be its duty when its children have gone astray? Should it at once turn into a proverbial step mother and try to kill them, or adhere to win them back by such admonitions and chastisements only as are unavoidable?’104

Those two speeches had succinctly proved that the elites were quite indifferent to the interests of the lower order of the society and they had a faith in the

103 Nilmoni Phukan’s Speech in ALCP-1922.
104 Padmanath GohainBarua’s Speech in Ibid.
benevolent nature of colonial rule in Assam.\textsuperscript{105} They had only wanted to cultivate the prospects shown by the expatriate capitalists in order to make much development but without revolutionising the basic tenets of the caricatured form of the colonial capitalist relations.

The petty native tea planters had little knowledge about the ethics of the global tea market and the colonial government’s unsympathetic attitude, besides the lack of infrastructure needed for the development of their industrial concerns, brought an untimely death to some of the tea estates owned by them. The lack of maintenance of the tea estates they owned was rather also important. Nabin Chandra Bardoloi in his letter to Khetekdhar Barua (who later became the manager of Bardoloi’s tea estate in the Hatijan (Lakhimpur district) wrote: ‘.... It seems I learnt nothing about tea, neither does my men who are at the garden. As there is no certainty about my remaining outside for long, I want you especially to take charge of my garden for my sake, and to save me from utter ruination in case of eventualities’.\textsuperscript{106}

The formation of the capitalist class in Assam was unevenly burdened with a deep commitment to the progress of nationalism and as well as to the development of capitalist development in the province and that kind of dualistic role created the ambivalence in their larger aims of the nationalist struggle. But what they did not perceive at that period was that capitalism could not be developed in a country where political alienation obstructed in the healthy progress of the capitalist institutions. The commitment towards the dual form of struggle made themselves as a mere pawn in the larger aims of the capitalistic forces of the colonial rule. Their control over the part of the tea industry never crossed even half of the total tea plantations and in 1954, the percentage of area under Indian owned estates was only

\textsuperscript{105} Bipan Chandra writes: ‘Nearly all the major capitalist families of modern India developed during the nineteenth century from rather humble beginnings. None of them belonged to the earlier ruined families. Instead, their rather fresh memories of British rule were quite positive. This too created a psychology of overall satisfaction with British rule for at least the first or second generation entrepreneurs.’ Chandra: \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 157

\textsuperscript{106} Letter sent to K. Barua (an active member of the Congress and later also became a tea garden manager) 7-12-30 in K. Barua’s- Autobiography - \textit{Jivanor Batori} (in Assamese) (1978), Pp.117-119; Quoted by Debabrata Sarma in J.M. Dutta (ed): \textit{Op. cit.}, Pp.67-68 (emphasis original), Hatijan was later mortgaged due to its outstanding debt (1, 13,000).
So, the domination of the expatriate capitalism continued even in the post-independent India. In a newspaper report published in *The Statesman* it was found that 'not only the production and export of tea, even retail distribution was controlled and monopolized by two British firms, Lipton and Brooke Bond, which together handled 85% of the retail trade in India'. The lack of the 'centralised efficient management' weakened the position of the Indian tea estates and by the early 1950s it was revealed that 'many small and Indian-owned tea gardens in Cachar district had to close down'. But the position of the tea industry has become changed later due to the Indianisation of the industry and also the 'abolition of the managing agency system in 1970'.

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1. In 1954 out of the total area of 384.8 thousand acres under tea plantation in Assam, the European-owned gardens accounted for 299.5 thousand acres and Indian-owned for 85.3 thousand acres: the former producing 294.9 million lb. and the latter 58.1 million lb.  