The chief inspiration and the origin of my spadework for the research work, which I began to take from the two brilliant works; and one was the study by Sumit Sarkar’s *Modern India* (2002/First Published 1983) and Amalendu Guha’s *Planter Raj to Swaraj* (1991/First Published 1977). Sarkar’s classic study has unraveled many unknown trajectories of the national movement and particularly of its approach ‘history from bellow’ was astounding with its treatment of the subaltern people’s voices against their oppressors. Dipesh Chakrabarty has acutely described the text ‘as one of the best text book on Indian history written primarily for Indian Universities’. [Dipesh Chakrabarty: *Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for “Indian” pasts?* in R. Guha: *A Subaltern Studies Reader* (Delhi-1997) p. 267] Another work, Amalendu Guha’s *Plantar Raj to Swaraj* which was a path breaking work, in the field of the discussion of the plantation or non plantation labourers problems and its especial emphasis upon the electoral politics of Assam was also important in its analysis of the complex route which did led to the first independent government in 1947.

The chief reason of selecting the year 1921 as the starting point of the dissertation is candidly speaking a choice of mine to strike a line ‘pre’ or ‘post’ because of the singular importance of the year 1921 and only since then, the history of the national movement in Assam took an all India pattern with its high rise of the political consciousness of the masses or its low ebb, in each phase of the movement. But it does not mean, that I have curiously concerned to disvalue the importance of the pre-1921 events and in respect of the plantation workers, the difference between pre-1921 and post-1921 though did not matter much but for the native bourgeoisie, there was huge difference in their opinions regarding the subaltern people’s struggles, because whenever, the national movement got its momentum, the leadership tried to disavow the spirit of the subalterns by citing the idioms of the Satyagraha.
The chief difference of the India’s national movement and its leadership with other revolutions (e.g. October Revolution) and its revolutionaries was that the movement as a whole was not going to capture the state apparatus according to the demand of the moment but on the other hand, the will of the colonial state was supreme in granting the schemes of constitutional reforms. The movement did not give much importance in the seizure of power through the implication of the revolutionary methods of struggles and it disregarded the importance of the moment in the any people’s movement against the colonial rule.

The importance of the ‘moment’ in any radical type of ‘antisystemic’ movement can not be questioned but in the Indian national movement, its importance was never radically shaped by the leadership of the movement. The French philosopher, Louis Althusser has explained regarding the failure of the French Communist Party to capture the power in the late 1960s: ‘The precise moment the opportunity’ (Lenin) ‘have to be seized with both hands’ (Machiavelli, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao) since they may only last a few hours once they had gone and with them the chance to change the course of history in a revolutionary manner…” [Louis Althusser: The Future Lasts Forever (New York-1993), p. 231]

In India, the middle class politicians always ‘carried in their knapsacks a special constable’s baton’ (to use E. P. Thompson’s words) to discourage any form of workers or peasants resistance. The usual strategy of avoiding the workers consciousness was the illiteracy among the workers and hence violence among the workers; which the middle class politicians greatly feared. The debate of the illiteracy of the workers and the obstacle of forming consciousness among the workers has also been discussed in writing of the working class history in India. Thompson has said about the workers illiteracy that ‘illiteracy (we should remember) by no means excluded men from political discourse.’ [E.P. Thompson: The Making of the English Working Class (London-1991/ First Published 1963), p. 782]
So far we have known from the works of E.P. Thompson, Dipesh Chakrabarty that class consciousness is not the major criteria for the study of the working class struggle and that it largely does emanate from the process of their struggle against the expropriators. In their writings, the arbitrary role of the vanguard party namely the party of the communists here has not been given significance. In fact, the labour movement in India was not continued under a liberal bourgeois rule but it was started under the colonial British rule and the political education of the workers in the colonial India was strenuous and almost a difficult job to attain due to the hostility of the colonial state towards any move for political mobilisation of the workers. The politics of the bourgeois nationalists so far failed to touch the inner cords of the poor labourers and the ideological imbalance of the nationalists with the subaltern militancy eschewed the nationalists from entanglement in the subaltern resistance.

In writing about the history of the working class struggle, the academic labour historians obviously have to bear the keen sense of 'politics of interpretation' and one historian feels (Dipesh Chakrabarty) and he writes that 'every history is cross-cultural, that writing histories invariably involve the gesture of interpreting, which is something we academics call the politics of interpretation, holds, then some degree of self-reflexivity .... This is particularly so in the writing of history where the person who writes history is not from the social group whose history is being written.' [Dipesh Chakrabarty: *Culture in Working Class History*, in *Workshop Reading Material* (Noida-2005), p.12] But still the labour historians try to write the history of the working struggle out of some compulsions and those causes cannot be generalised concretely. The phenomenology of the labourers in their perceptions of their resistance is quite different from the historians' toolbox. The workers could build their philosophy of resistance out of the day-to-day experiences with the capitalists. We must not also forget that we are going to write the working class history without the direct participation or not coming from the families those who suffered at the hands of the capitalists. There are some exceptions in writing the working class history and in deciphering the relationship between labour and capital and of course he is none other than Karl Marx and 'a genius like Marx could analyze the labour process under capitalism without ever having been
immediately involved in it, and do so with unmatched brilliance and insight. For lesser mortals, direct experience is a sine qua non, as the dismal record of various academic “experts” and “authorities” in this area so eloquently testifies.’ [Foreword by Paul M Sweezy in the original edition of Harry Braverman's *Labour and MonopolyCapital- The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (2006/First Published 1974)] Ours is an attempt too to decipher the phenomenology of labour and capital relationship, without inhabiting in the body of the labour.

So far the effects of the capitalist crises also did not leave the fate of the poor workers untouched during the colonial period. ‘The essential instability of capitalism’ which has been the natural consequents of capitalistic pattern of world economy affected the daily lives of the poor works since the beginning of the industrial revolution (in the late 1920s the Depression came). The writing of working class history has now a contemporary relevance in the world because of the crisis in the global economy and the cutting of the jobs in the corporate sectors has brought darkness to many of the families, who have become penniless. The failure of the capitalism ‘to overcome the internal contradiction of this system on a world scale has again brought to the notice of the global citizens; the warning of Marx and his foresight regarding the internal contradiction of capitalism:

It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises, a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created products, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity- the epidemic of overproduction. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence, industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce.

The ‘intertext’ (to use Roland Barthes analogy) here in my work is the intermixture of the critical analysis of the events with the great help from the writings of the stalwarts like Marx to Ranajit Guha. It does not obviously mean that we have discarded the other intellectuals’ views in my work and I have quoted from their writings too without any reservations.

The chief aspect of my work is so far to give importance to the fact that the workers struggles in the tea plantations, of Assam who were always in disharmony with the tea capitalists and they continued their protests at the great hostility of the planters. The workers were not immune from the clutches of the capitalists and in spite of the agricultural farming base of the industry the workers were subjected to the same universal law which was in existence between labour and capital. In India as well in Assam, the workers resistance (in spite of certain lacunas in their framework of protest) showed its caliber whenever they faced capitalist crises or the atrocities at the hands of the capitalists but it was a irony that spirit of the subalterns was never utilised for the cause of the nation’s struggle for freedom or the emancipation of the working class itself. The basic fact of their disavowal (the nationalists) was that the bourgeois nationalist leadership would not encourage and embrace the working class and their violent methods of struggle with the disciplined crowd controlling measures of the national movement.

In writing the labour history (particularly in the Indian context where the workers class became ‘an object of knowledge’ only after the First World War) it becomes imperative to rely on the official records as because of the absence of sufficient records left by the labourers (most of them were illiterates). We have also observed that another reason for which now, we have failed to use any recorded evidence of the poor workers, was the fact that the capitalists would not prefer the labourers to speak out their agonies and material conditions before the enquiry committees set up by the government; lest the workers would got recognition of their efforts in the eyes of the public and government circles (this happened in 1920-22, ALEC Report)
At last, I am deeply grateful to all of the authors and due to their great creations, I have been able to pen down my lines in the dissertation. Some of them are no more in this world and for them and to their departed souls; I do convey my sincere respect.

The Indian Council of Historical Research gave the real material help during my research in crucial moment and I am thankful to the ICHR for granting the Fellowship.