This work is an analytical and sometimes comparative study of the Social History of the Tea Garden Labourers in the Barak Valley: from 1856-1947. The present study of social history will examine labourers' capacity for innovation and creativity in socio-economic political transformation, their receptivity to change in social and family relations in the newly settled land, to maintain continuity and the ability to utilise human, technical and physical resources for industrial development of the valley and to co-exist with others in the gardens and in the neighbourhood. The study will also take into account the attitudes of the British Government and the European garden management towards the solution of the problems such as immigration, ethnicity, change in socio-economic-politico, cultural development.

No living society, certainly not a vast and complex one, actually works as smoothly and rationally as an abstracted flow chart might imply. An individual fulfils many roles in various systems. There are myriad interrelations among the roles and systems in which any person takes part. Indian society is complex but tea society of the Barak Valley between 1856 and 1947 was not beyond reasonable understanding then. What is attempted is to sort out several of the principal institutions of the tea society enumerated above. They are to be understood as systems and sub-systems of the larger society and examine their contribution towards Indian society. Labourers also had
been strongly affected by the worldwide tides of change. It flowed from the choices, decisions and dilemmas faced by individual man and woman. New experiences had enriched their folk literature.

So the social history has become a total history with new flavour and theme. The Chapter 1 will try to conceptualise this aspect and locate the gap for further research.

This space will be followed by the span. The closing date is known to all. But the commencing date has its significance in the life of the tea garden labourers of the Valley. First, tea garden was established in 1856 at Burhangun in the neighbourhood of the headquarters of Cachar district.

Very little work on the social history is done on pan-Indian space not to think of North East India or local level as our discussion in Chapter 1 will prove. So this is a new and unexplored area. Further, there is much debate, but little correlation of data, concerning the tension created by the impact of modernity or westernisation and Sanskritisation over tradition within the context of the need and desire for economic and social change. Effort is made to judge the root cause of these anomalies for ameliorating the tragic conditions of the labourers objectively. For the sake of objectivity subjective influences have to be minimised. Repetition of ideas may occur in different chapters but that has become unavoidable.

After discussion on space, time and objectivity comes methodology. The present study differs in several ways, both in context and in presentation. The five parts of the thesis conform to a mosaic pattern dictated by the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. Implicit in the idea of a mosaic is the
relation between its components, which make up a unified field. This approach requires that each be examined in various contexts. That is done in different perspective. Continuity in socio-economic-politico factors serves as a basis to trace the origin and nature of change. This leads towards a study in multi-dimensional level. But the lack of materials of study retard that venture and confine to selective study with the debate of change, continuity, contradiction, conciliation and assimilation. Old and new approaches of history have to be taken for discussion of this social history of the tea labourers. Official and non-official documents are verified sometimes by conducting interviews with the old people of the area.

Search for source-materials is made first from locality to distant places. In that case documents available in the Record Room of Deputy Commissioner of Cachar; Assam State Archives, Guwahati; Record Office, Shillong; West Bengal State Archives at Writers Building and College Street; National Library including its annexed Building (for documents), Calcutta; National Archives, New Delhi are consulted and found valuable for one purpose. Besides, for the books and other records, libraries and offices were visited and located the study materials. They are Assam University Library; District Library at Silchar, Surma Valley Branch of Indian Tea Association, Silchar; Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, District Library, Assam Branch of Indian Tea Association; Labour and Employment Cell, Secretariat, Guwahati; INTUC, Guwahati, Dibrugarh University Library; Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi.

Theme is arranged in the following manner in the chapters mentioned below:
Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter. It opens with the concept of social history, its theme, probable gaps in regional and national level.

Chapter 2 delineates immigration of the tea labourers in the Barak Valley, their predicaments, labour legislations and recruitment policy.

Chapter 3 deals with its socio-economic-politico conditions of the tea labour of the Barak Valley, their actions and reactions against the European management vis-à-vis British government.

Chapter 4 devotes on ethnicity, social systems, kinship and family relationship, identity crisis, interaction, interchange and counterchange.

Chapter 5 places the folk-culture in its manifold characteristics in proper perspectives.

Chapter 6 is a concluding chapter which depicts the major rays of the spectrum.