Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Tea industries of India and Bangladesh are significant for contributing a remarkable share in industrial progress in both countries. As a result of Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26), a stream of population of different ethnic stock began to fill up the vacuum. Tea industries emerged in the first one third of the 19th century. After hundred years, the garden population in Barak valley and Sylhet zone of Bangladesh are now abundant with migrated labourers of tea industries. They are no longer floating population or immigrants. They are now domiciled citizens owing to their long stay and have already adopted local culture, manner, customs and languages as their own. Initially, these all labourers were recruited as in all other areas in Barak valley: they were required to work in the gardens for some years. The socio-economic paradigm of change which dominates all spheres of life with change of management, ownership of tea industries, change of government and its initiative for solving different problems in society especially in social life of laborers are the evaluating factors of this study. This chapter introduces the study of the tea garden labourers in India and Bangladesh.

I. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Work is productive or purposive economic activity performed for return. In the scheme of the classical economists work or labour is considered one among five fundamental factors of production; namely, (i) land, (ii) work/labour, (iii) capital, (iv) organization and (v) enterprise. However, Karl Marx considered labour to be the only active element of production and land as an inactive element. Therefore, work or labour is most important factor of production. Work is organized at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of production. As society passes from the agrarian to the industrial state, more attention is focused on work behaviour, work performance, work appraisal, social security, welfare, work culture, work environment etc. for harmonious development of the personalities in the wake of increasing importance of production in industrial set-up. Industry being a complex set of activities, the characteristics, both, positive and negative, of the behaviour related to work are observed. The positive features of work behaviour are like sincerity, regularity, co-operation, satisfaction, efficiency etc while the negative features are like go slow at work, long leave, and indulgence in leisure frequently, indiscipline, unrest and lack of efficiency. These behavioural aspects affect work performance or expression of work behaviour because it is the employee’s performance in the work place which is evaluated or highly rewarded by the employer. For industrial growth there are hindrances like absenteeism, disinterest and alienation as well as facilitators like job commitment, job satisfaction, getting life style and life chances, education, health and hygiene, motivation for work, good communication and social security. In industry the
worker’s duty, responsibility, good faith, emotion, obligation towards his work makes work culture. The satisfaction he derives, regularity in job, time-boundedness and extra remuneration for good performance, harmonious relations with the co-workers, etc. include work-culture. When the worker does not attain or fulfill his duty and responsibility in a proper way various industrial disputes like labour unrest, labour absenteeism, strikes etc arise. When work culture deteriorates, industrial growth hampers to a great extent. When the worker is more motivated to perform job, only then his performance is better. The motivation in the workers leads to job enrichment. Job enrichment is related with the motivation of the employees. The notion of satisfying employee’s need as a way of designing job comes from Fredric Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation. Work culture also involves employee’s environment of work. Their participation in trade union movement by way of selecting members and leaders and their indirect involvement in Indian political system through Panchayati Raj system should also be taken into account. Tea plantation in undivided India’s Assam dates back to 1839 while the first experimental tea garden on the side of Bangladesh was set up in 1854. Since then the tea industry has passed through some historical upheavals like partition of India into two nations and, later on, in 1971, emergence of Bangladesh as independent nation.

Poor economic condition is a problem, though every year the workers’ wages increase. It is not sufficient for the workers to maintain the family as their family size is generally big. They face problem in maintaining a minimum level of food, clothing and education. This is the common scenario now-a-day in the industry from North Bengal to Assam where decline in work sentiment is reflected through frequent problems of violence, closures, gheraos, strikes, lockouts, absenteeism etc in tea industry. The similar scenario is witnessed in Bangladesh tea industry. The labourers think that they are born only to work and get exploited. Though the workers of tea industry are migrants from different regions of India, all of them are residential workers despite the difference of language they celebrate pujas, festivals etc. united and participate in every festive occasion throughout the year, even by neglecting their work. A common habit of these people is drinking alcohol which makes them rude, jealous and violent by nature. Information reveals that the tea industry in both India and Bangladesh has provided various facilities for better living like fringe benefits, education, daily wages, house accommodations and so on, yet, the workers’ work behaviour is either constant or becoming vulnerable for the industry day by day.

Thus, work culture determines work behaviour of the workers in tea industry, or otherwise work culture decodes the way in which its members of industry have to act with respect to work. Then, work culture broadly means what a worker thinks, believes about work and the satisfaction or dissatisfaction he derives from his own performance. Such type of feelings and thinking is very
abstract in nature. At the time of fulfilling the task he faces some problems in the work sphere and solves them by applying the knowledge, values and beliefs. All this constitutes the cultural milieu of workers. The demonstration, willingness and quality of performance are interlinked with one another. Workers’ choice, their outlook and understanding among co-workers are the necessary part of work-culture. There is a close relationship between work culture and work behaviour in the tea industry of the two countries, which has been examined in the present study.

II. SURVEY OF LITERATURE

Karl Marx gives stress on material pursuit in life. His main conceptions of class, labour process, exploitation or alienation have played a major role in sociology of work and industry since 1860s. He gives emphasis to materialism or material conditions as the substructure upon which society’s superstructure is based. He says that the forces or means of production (land, labour, capital, organization and enterprise) and modes of production (ancient, feudal, capitalist and socialist) are the substructure whereas ideas, religion, legal and political institutions are superstructure. According to him, material comfort or force gives wing to ideas. Marxist political values are primarily concerned with problems of class, exploitation and large scale historical changes (Watson 1995: 69). Thus, according to Marx, material culture/conditions determine work behaviour as well as non-material culture.

Max Weber states that the moral tone of an individual determines his material status. His view gives stress on non-material things like feelings, ideas, values, sentiments, cultural orientation, etc. In his study “Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” (1904–05), protestantism is one of the factors which gave rise to capitalism but it is not the sole cause of it. He has shown that cultural or subjective aspects of social life have to be seen as equal partner in any analytical scheme (Watson 1989: 65–66).

Emile Durkheim gives over-emphasis on ‘organic solidarity’ or ‘organic integration’. Thus, collectivism, i.e., social conscience inherent in social norms determines social and material development (Watson 1995: 50–51).

Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), too, a classical sociologist in the field of social thought, gives importance to workers’ sentiment, rather than the reason, that influences their work behaviour; its systemic integration would be maintained. He stresses on ‘behaviour’ sentiment of the workers. ‘Job behaviour’ is believed to be a function of ability, motivation and the opportunity afforded in a specific organization setting (Campbell et al. 1970).
Elton Mayo (1881-1949), who was anxious to develop effective and scientifically informed managerial elite, believed that if management could ensure fulfillment of the workers’ social needs by giving them satisfaction of working together; by making them feel important in their work organization and by showing interest in their personal problems, then, both, social breakdown and individual conflict would be minimized (Mayo 1949: 55–130).

According to A. Maslow (1954), the starting point is the belief that scientific investigation of human behaviour should be oriented to realizing the people’s various potential they possess. His main observation is ‘self-actualization’, i.e., “to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.” The basic scheme which has been taken from Maslow and used by numerous enlightened management writers and teachers is the ‘Hierarchy of Needs’ model. This suggests that there are five sets of genetic or instinctive needs, which people possess and that as one satisfies most of the needs at one level, one moves up to seek satisfaction of the needs at the next level. The five sets are as follows: (Maslow 1943: 50–96).

(i) At the first level, there are physiological needs such as food, drink, sex and sensory satisfaction.

(ii) At the second level, one has safety needs which motivate people to avoid danger.

(iii) At the third level, there is what Maslow calls love needs. These include one’s needs to belong to and to affiliate with others in both giving and reviving a sense.

(iv) At fourth level, there are esteem needs which cover prestige, status and appreciation from external sources, as well as internal feeling of confidence, achievement, strength, adequacy and independence.

(v) At the fifth level, there is the need for self-actualization, which is the desire to realize one’s ultimate potential.

The most outstanding work of Goldthorpe et al. (1968), “Affluent Worker”, has given sociology an important concept of ‘orientation to work’, a notion with a great potentials for searching relations between actions in the workplace and external community and cultural life of the employees. The term ‘work orientation’ was examined by Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1968). They found that the workers displayed different attitudes and behaviour in specific work settings. The workers show ‘instrumental orientation’ to work. The sources of this orientation were the
According to Goldthorpe et al., work orientation takes employee’s own definition of the situation as an ‘initial basis for the explanation of their social behaviour and relationship’. When they suggest that all work in industrial societies has an instrumental basis, a single physiology cannot be applied to all. So, they have given the following three types of orientation (Watson 1995: 120–21):

(i) An instrumental orientation associated with the “Affluent Manual Workers”.

(ii) A bureaucratic orientation reflecting patterns found among white collar employers.

(iii) A solidarity orientation inferred from the understanding of more ‘traditional working class employment situation like coal, mining and ship building’.

The two-factor theory of job satisfaction or work satisfaction as explained by Herzberg and his associates received considerable attention in industrial psychology. The theory hypothesizes that satisfaction and dissatisfactions are two polar and independent dimensions. He has pointed out an important distinction between the two factors: one group of factors deal with the nature of the job and other is related to the environment in which the work has been done. One set of the factors that contributes to satisfaction is called intrinsic job content consisting of motivators or satisfiers – achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and mental peace. Other set of the factors that gives dissatisfaction is called extrinsic job content consisting of hygiene factors or dissatisfiers-working condition, salary, relations with subordinates, relations with supervisors, company policy and practices, job security, status and personal life. Motivators bring about satisfaction and hygiene factors contribute more to dissatisfaction (Mukherjee 1985: 50–51).

In a review of number of studies on work satisfaction conducted by different scholars and sociologists, Blauner (1960) found that professionals and businessmen claimed a relatively high level of satisfaction than manual workers whereas skilled workers appeared more satisfied than unskilled workers (Watson 1995: 143–44).

In a survey Parker (1983) notes some additional factors of satisfaction such as opportunities (i) to create something, (ii) to use skills, (iii) to work wholeheartedly and (iv) to work together with people who know their job. Parker locates the specific factors causing satisfaction; namely, (i) doing repetitive work, (ii) making only a small part of something, (iii) doing useless task, (iv) feeling a sense of insecurity and (v) being too closely supervised. Many research works have
been done to study the workers’ involvement in the work field; their intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are always related with their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In the middle and high class jobs the workers and employees give importance to prestige, status and non-material objects, which give intrinsic satisfaction but the working class or the lower class people always seek to get material and monetary rewards (Watson 1995: 145 – 46).

In India decline in the tea yield in spite of the area increase owes to poor work culture of the labour. Alcoholism and tobacco chewing are common habits in their population ranging from children to old persons. These habits, specially, alcoholism, lead to poverty, absenteeism and quarrels in family and outside and alienation from work, culture and society. The working class people are becoming more conscious of their interests under their unions. There is a decline of work sentiment generally reflected through frequent problems of violence, closures, gheraos, strikes, lockouts, absenteeism, etc. in the tea industry. This is a common scenario now-a-days seen in the tea industry from North Bengal to Assam (The Assam Review & Tea News, 94(2): 35 – 37). Due to growing need of literacy in tea workers education scheme came out of reports of experts by the Ford Foundation in 1957. The object of the scheme was to create over a period of time, despite lack of general education, a well-informed constructive and responsible labour force, capable of running and organizing trade unions on sound lines, without leaning heavily on outsiders and without lending themselves to exploitation by extraneous interests. The Central Board of Workers Education has also made arrangement to give grant-in-aid to institutions which run workers’ education programme. Attempts are now being made by the Central Board of Workers Education to ask the Regional Boards (i) to open centres in sub-regions in the outlying areas; (ii) to extend the activities by opening sub-regional centres in small industrial townships; (iii) to pay subsistence allowance of Rs. 20 to Rs. 40 per man sum at the regional and sub-regional centres and (iv) to establish new permanent regional centres (Sharma and Kohli 1997:122–24). Barbora has presented in the Indian context in his article that one chronologically rooted in history and the other in the present day, to understand the continuity of the resistance against capital as well as the political maneuvers that seek to break this unity (2009: 3).

In Bangladesh Lucille Sircar, Shamimul Islam and Philip-Gain (2005: 7) describe the tea workers’ living conditions and write, “A century later they find themselves still as illiterate. Their poor housing conditions, low wages, long working hours (compared to their Indian counterparts), social discrimination and de facto restriction on free movement deprive them of many basic human needs and writes that every human being must have for personal and societal progress”. 
They said, “There are constitutional safeguards, laws and mechanism intended to ensure human dignity but for tea workers human dignity is only a dream”.

British human rights activists Dan Jones (1986:14) writes about managers of tea gardens: ‘Managers have anything up to a dozen labourers as their personal, domestic servants. They are made to tie the manager’s shoe laces to remind them that they are under managerial control and that they are bound to do whatever they are asked.

Francis Rolt (1991: 149), a British writer, gives a vivid description of the severe discriminatory conducts of the hierarchy towards the tea workers: “The gardens are managed as an extreme hierarchy, the managers live like gods, distant, unapproachable and incomprehensively. Some began to believe that they were gods who could do exactly what they like”.

Jiban Krishna Saha (2000: 40) has undertaken a study organized by B.T.R.I. & B.A.R.C of Bangladesh on socio-economic status in the context of working efficiency where he suggests providing short term supervised credit for purchasing rickshaw or van so that labour can do additional work in off-time and earn more money.

Philip-Gain (2009) says in his article: “When they came first they got into four years’ contracts with the company that was the beginning of their servitude. More than a century and half or four generations have passed since the tea plantation workers settled in the labour lines…… They are people without choice and entitlement to property. The tea communities are one of most vulnerable people of Bangladesh. Unfortunately they continue to remain socially excluded, low paid, overwhelmingly illiterate, deprived and disconnected. They have lost their original languages in most part, culture, history, education, knowledge and unity. In the labour lines of tea estate they seem to be living in islands isolated from the majority Bengali community who sometimes treat them untouchables. With fertilization of mind, they have lost dignity in their lives. These are perfect conditions for the profiteers from the tea industry to continue exploitation of tea workers. Deprived, exploited and alienated the majority of the tea workers live in an inhuman life”.

From the above survey of the literature it is clear that there are broadly three views about work behaviour; namely, (i) Marxian and (ii) Weberian and (iii) Holistic. For Marx material conditions determine work behaviour whereas for Weberian scholars ethic/values/moral principles determine it. Durkheim, Pareto and Goldthorpe et al., more or less, fall in the Weberian line of ideas’ primacy whereas the studies conducted by Elton Mayo, A Maslow, Watson and Herzberg follow a holistic path by incorporating abstract (non-material) as well as tangible (material) elements of work culture. The workers in tea industry have been
generally studied in terms of their life and living conditions but no study on their work culture and work behaviour has been undertaken. A question arises: **What relationship between work culture and work behaviour is perceived in the tea industry in India and Bangladesh?**

III. **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following objectives were formulated to achieve in the study:

i) To understand the work culture of the workers in tea industry.

ii) To analyze the work behaviour patterns among the workers in tea industry.

iii) To examine the relationship between work culture and work behaviour in tea industry.

iv) To explain the social source (caste, class, community and family) of work culture in tea industry.

v) To suggest solutions for the work related problems of the workers in tea industry.

IV. **THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study mainly addresses the following research questions:

i. Are the tea labourers satisfied with their wage?

ii. Do the tea labourers resort to strike of work?

iii. Do the tea labourers make gherao of the tea garden management?

iv. Do the tea labourers use violence against management?

v. Do the tea labourers involve in closure of gardens?

vi. Do the tea labourers remain absent from work?

vii. Do the tea labourers force management to lockout the tea industry?

viii. Do the tea labourers resort to long leave from work?

ix. Do the tea labourers work at their full potential?

x. Are they addicted to alcohol?

V. **THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study is designed to collect and analyse data in the Weberian frame of analysis. Therefore, ideal types of work culture and work behaviour have been constructed and their interrelationship is examined in terms of conditioning variables like family, caste, class and community.
Work culture consists of worker’s work choice, outlook towards work, understanding with co-workers, sense of duty and responsibility, good faith, emotion, obligation towards work. Work behaviour consists of the aspects like (i) worker’s work performance, efficiency, regularity, sincerity, culture and contentment and (ii) absenteeism, leisure, unrest, strikes, go-slow etc.

According to Indian Tea Association Office Record 2012, in India high performing tea industry refers to the one which produces tea above 7,50,000 kg/year; medium performing tea industry refers to the one which tea from 3,50,000 to 7,50,000 kg/year and low performing tea industry refers to the one which produces below 3,50,000 kg tea. According to Bangladesh Tea Board Report 2001, in Bangladesh the industry producing tea above 1250 kg/hectare annually on an average is categorised as the high performing industry. The one producing tea from 950 to 1250 kg/hectare annually on an average is categorised as the medium performing industry. The one producing tea below 950 kg/hectare annually on an average is categorised as the low performing industry.

a) **Sources and Types of Data**

The data have been collected from the workers and the managerial staffs of six tea gardens, three each, from India and Bangladesh as well as documents available at Tea Association of India (TAI), Indian Tea Association (ITA) and Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA).

b) **Universe of the Study**

In India, Assam is the major tea producing State and in Bangladesh three eastern districts are known for tea production. Assam’s Barak Valley comprising three districts; namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi and three districts-Sylhet Sadar, Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj- of Sylhet division in Bangladesh constitute a common historical region, i.e, Sylhet region. In Barak valley, Cachar district is having the largest number of tea gardens and in Sylhet region it is Moulvibazar district. Three tea gardens comprising one each from the categories of the high performing, the low performing and the last from the medium (average) performing gardens in Cachar district of Assam and from Moulvibazar district in Sylhet division in the two countries, India and Bangladesh, constitute the universe of the study. In Bangladesh, Moulvibazar district contains the highest number (92) of tea gardens (Bangladesh Tea Board, 2005) and therefore three gardens have been selected out of a total of 92 tea gardens. On the other hand, three gardens have been selected from Cachar district of Assam in India out of a total of 206 gardens (Tea Board India, 2006); namely, the Roseckandy Tea Estate, the Silcoorie Tea Estate and the Bazrangpur Tea Estate. According to
the criteria of selection, among the high performing industries Rosekandy has average production of 15,66,004.2 kg per year; among the medium (average) performing industries Silcoorie has average production of 6,74,254.57 kg and among the low performing industries Bazrangpur has average production of 3,11,144 kg yearly for the 5-year period from 2007 to 2011 (Report collected from Indian Tea Association, Silchar 2012).

On the other hand, Bangladesh has 163 tea gardens, out of which 92 tea estates are situated in Moulvibazar. The three tea industries in the Moulvibazar district of Bangladesh have been selected on the basis of the Bangladesh Government’s approved criterion; namely, the Gazipure Tea Estate among the industries producing above 1250 kg per hectare as the high performing industries, the Kaliti Tea Estate among the industries producing above 950 kg per hectare as medium (average) performing industries and the Rehana Tea Estate among the industries producing up to 950 kg per hectare as the low performing industries. The criterion of the selection is based on the average production of last 5 years (According to Gazette Notification from Government of Bangladesh, 12/12/2001).

c) Units of the Study and Their Selection

Workers and managerial personnel constitute the units of the study. The units are the tea garden labourers, categorised into males and females and religious groups.

The units or respondent are selected from religious and gender categories of the workers on the basis of stratified random sampling. Main sample consists of 10% of the total workers. At first stage six tea gardens were selected for the study - three from India; namely, Rosekandy Tea Estate, Silcoorie Tea Estate and Bazarangpore Tea Estate and three from Bangladesh; namely, Gazipure Tea Estate, Kaliti Tea Estate and Purbapahar/Rehana Tea Estate. At the second stage, permanent labourers from each tea garden were divided into two religious communities; namely, Hindu and Muslim. The labourers from these two religious communities were further divided into male and female categories and then 10 percent labourers from each category were selected by using simple random sampling method. Thus, in all, there was selected a sample of 231 labourers out of a total of 2257 labourers in the six industries from both the countries: India- 87 and Bangladesh-144. By the categories of industries the sampled labourers are divided under the high performing tea industry 123; the medium performing tea industry- 83 and the low performing tea industry- 25. Industry wise their distribution is such as the Rosekandy Tea Estate (India)-43, the Silcoorie Tea Estate (India)-22, the Bazrangpore Tea Estate (India)-22, the Gazipure Tea Estate (Bangladesh)-90, the Kaliti Tea Estate (Bangladesh)-51 and the Rehana Tea Estate (Bangladesh)-03. Industry wise sub-samples of the labourers are shown in the following table:
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d) **Tools for Data Collection**

A structured interview schedule was constructed to collect data from the workers divided into communities and genders.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Assam state is the abode of tea industry in India and Barak valley is the land of tea industries, next to Brahmaputra in Assam. The tea product is essential for domestic consumption in India as well as for foreign exchange. The Bangladesh tea industry plays a similar role in that country. But the industry in both countries is burdened with a number of problems related to workers’ work behaviour and, as a result, not only the tea production is deteriorating but tea industries are being closed. The closure further leads to social and economic problems. This scientific study of work culture and work behaviour carries substantial value to development of tea industry in India and Bangladesh. It contributes to sociology of work, labour and industry.

**REFERENCES**


