CHAPTER 7

PLANTATION SYSTEM AND LABOUR

The plantation System is a product of colonialism as it was initially started in the tropical and subtropical areas with the aid of foreign capital imported from temperate lands. In the early period, the Europeans had played the managerial and the proprietary roles while mostly the impoverished Asians constituted the labour force. Indubitably, the plantation system was an enclave economy which had some special requirements in respect of labour. These necessities led to the imposition of a definite mode of production and management over its labour force which in its turn imparted to the latter some qualitative characteristics differentiating them from other segments of the wage-earning labour force (Das Gupta, 1986, p.E-1). Plantations were labour-intensive and so cheap, docile, and highly malleable labourers capable of doing hard labour under severe and difficult conditions were essential. As stated by Breman, plantation enterprise depended on the bondage of labourers. Subservience, servility and malleability were the characteristics of the labour force (Breman, 1989, 131). Almost all over the world, by and large, plantations were primarily established with forced immigration and allurement of labour under strict, authoritative control of the management with the direct and indirect support of the
colonial states for the sole interest of the planters with intention to exploit labour and resources. The system was involved with the transfer of the population from a variety of non-capitalist economies to the command of capital. Two more features of colonial plantations were the maintenance of links between the pre-capitalist or non-capitalist subsistence economy and the plantation sector, and the externalisation of at least part of the cost of reproduction of labour power (Deere, 1979, 133-48).

The very nature of plantation system is crucial in shaping the life of the plantation labourers and determining their evolution and character as a separate labour class. The plantation system itself to some extent is a constraint and stumbling block in the all-round development of plantation labourers.

7.1 MOBILISATION OF LABOUR

To establish plantations in colonial Assam, land and capital, the two factors of location presented no difficulty, but the mobilisation of labour for the growth and development of tea plantations was a crucial problem. First, as Assam was thinly populated, a substantial landless agricultural labour class and a large labour market were absent. Secondly, comparatively high wages demanded by local labourers and labour unrest were critical problems which led to the search for a source of labour outside the province.
from hundreds of miles away. It was because of the labour shortage that the colonial planters adopted a policy of organised recruitment of labour from tribal, semi-tribal, as well as non-tribal low-caste peasants, service groups, artisans, landless castes and communities inhabiting an extensive area spread over the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (particularly Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas), the eastern part of the United Province (the present Uttar Pradesh), certain areas of the Central Province (the present Madhya Pradesh) and the districts of Ganjam and Vishakapatnam in the Madras Presidency (in the present Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh respectively).

The mobilisation of labour force for the tea plantations of Assam was carried under the 'indenture' system. Initially the European contractors supplied labour to the Assam Company (the first British Tea Company of Assam) recruited through paid native agents. The rapid growth and expansion of tea estates during 1860-65 period, demanded huge supply of labour for which the tea planters resorted to Indian recruiting contractors. During the 1860's, the planters also used to send some of the labourers from their own tea estates to collect labourers from the latter's home districts. This system of recruitment commonly known as Garden Sirdari could not fulfil the demand for labour and the number of Sirdars (labour headmen) declined.
Under another form of recruitment popularly known as arkattis, recruitment was done by the licensed contractors and their agents (arkattis). The area of operation of an arkatti was normally an area of a weekly market place. This type of recruitment was too expensive and the planters found it inconvenient. Above the village arkatti was the sudder arkatti in which financial dealings were performed through local agents of the labour contractors. The local agents were empowered to finance the sudder arkatti through cash advances. The poverty-stricken, debt-trapped poor people were given loans to clear their debt to landlords and other money lenders, and to meet their travel expenses. This system involved three to four levels of transaction from recruitment to transfer through various intermediaries. This system was also expensive, yet labour mobilisation through this system lasted for several decades due to the ever increasing demand for labour.

Most of the colonial critiques are unanimous in the point that the entire system of recruitment was based on cruel means. The contractors and their agents resorted to forms of deceit and trickery (enticement), intimidation, violence and even abduction of man and women, to secure labour. Methods of recruitment allowed hardly any element of free choice on the part of the labourers. Once men and women were recruited by any means, they were kept in transit camps and latter despatched to plantation districts under strict
control. Das Gupta stated that from the very beginning, not only men, but also women and children were recruited through a system based on coercion. Instead of market mechanisms, force both overt and covert and politico-legal mechanisms became crucially important in mobilising labour (Das Gupta, 1992, p. 180). The cruel means and coercive methods were not the sole factors for labour mobilisation. There might have some objective situations for large-scale mobilisation of labour. The sheer scope of labour migration indicated that far-reaching socio-economic transformation of agrarian relations in the Central Plateau and in the countryside of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Bengal had been well underway. The geographical circulation of labour on a large and expanding scale was not possible until capital penetration had breached the seemingly impenetrable walls of village autonomy (Murray, 1992, 50). To quote Das Gupta: "The Santals and other tribal groups provided the missing element as they were more vulnerable to pressure and inducement and least tied to particular plots of land" (Das Gupta, 1992, 137). Circumstances pushed other tribal groups also out of their own territories reducing them to the status of wage-labourers in plantation and other sectors of industrial economy. The immigration of labour from the remote tracts of India might be the direct result of polarisation of the rural society into landowners and landless labourers because of the insertion of a new form of capital into the socio-economic
fabric of village life. On the one hand, the propertied classes were involved in the accumulation of cultivable land in a particular historical situation and on the other hand, because of loss of land as a result of growing pauperization, the poor villagers were compelled to sell their labour in order to live hand to mouth. The expansion of money-lending business did play a significant role in this process. The money-lenders used to give money to the marginal peasants at usurious rates. Such a process ultimately accelerated the growing polarisation between creditors and debtors (Murty, 1992, 51). It can be seen from another angle that the sudder arkatti system was probably introduced just to free the potential migrants from debt and bondage. In this connection, mention may be made about the emergence of the landless wage-earners before the British colonial rule in India. Das Gupta mentioned that the emergence of landless wage-earners and spatial mobility of the labour were not unknown prior to the British colonial rule in India. Considerable historical evidence is available to indicate that for a variety of economic, political and social reasons, a large number of people including peasants and artisans moved from one place to another. Even long-distance migration was not totally unknown (Das Gupta, 1976, 277). The extensive areas that spread over the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa provided suitable grounds for the mobilization of
labourers on a large-scale for the growth and development of tea plantations in Assam.

7.2 CONTROL OF LABOUR

Once the labourers were removed from their original homeland and brought to the plantations, they were subjected to stringent control, because in the beginning they were unwilling to work in plantations for barbarous and harsh conditions of work and unhygienic living conditions prevailing in the midst of the jungles of Assam. But for the planters, it was quite necessary to recruit a large number of cheap and regular labour force for developing plantations. So, they exercised both legal and extra-legal powers. It was relatively easy to keep the labourers under strict control as the ethnic differences among the immigrant plantation labourers weakened their united force to resist their forced recruitment.

The planters resorted to coercive measures for the recruitment of the labourers. The Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, 1859, and section 490 and 492 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which were introduced to help European Planters solving their labour and servant problem, may be mentioned in this context. The Transport of Native Labourers' Act, 1863 and its amendments and the Assam Labour and Immigration Act, 1863 and its amendments, the Inland
Emigration Act of 1882 and its amendments and the Assam Labour Immigration Act, 1901 - in fact, a whole series of labour legislation was directed toward legitimizing and extending a bonded (indentured) form of labour in the Assam plantations (Guha, 1980, 67).

The extensive use of the penal contract was the characteristic feature of the labour system in Assam. Under this system, the labourers had no freedom at all and the planters were armed with immense legal power over the labourers to punish and to charge penalties at their whims. No leaves for sickmen were allowed, and the labourers for their prolonged illness were penalised by a pay-cut. In most of the tea estates, for non-completion of tough work schedules, labourers were punished with fines and substantial pay-cuts. The labourers were treated as private property by the planters. The plantations were mini kingdoms for the planters in the colonial realm. The labourers had to be confined within the tea estates. Most of the tea estates, specially in the Upper Assam, were physically isolated units, separated and often fenced off from the neighbouring villages. The Chowkidar visited each coolie line every night to keep watch on the movement of the coolies. Contact with the outside world and even with the neighbouring tea estates and villages was virtually prohibited. For all practical purposes, the coolies were prisoners under guard, day and night.¹
The exercise of extra-legal power by the planters was very often condoned by the colonial Government on the plea that 'the planter as the master of a large and irregular labour staff must enforce discipline by occasionally taking severe measures which should not be looked into too closely, because they were substantially just and for the good of the general body of coolies\(^2\). Forcible capture of absconding coolies and corporal punishment were viewed by Sahibs (European Planters and Managers) as their rights. Beating, flogging and other kinds of coercive measures were considered the most effective way of dealing with labourers. Even rape and sexual coercion were also used in the brutal regime of the plantation system (Das Gupta, 1992, 182).

The planters were empowered to arrest the absconders; but this private power of arrest in the plantation of Assam was abolished in 1908. It was only in 1926 that the Workmens' Breach of Contract Act, 1869 and indenturing of labour were finally abolished. But another form of extra-legal control of labour which was popularly known as girmit (agreement) or contract money system continued after the abolition of indenturing of labour which was originated under the indentured system. The practice of paying a bonus or contract money usually gave labourers the impression that they had no freedom to leave the tea estates which was strengthened by the practice of taking thumprint at the time of payment of bonus\(^3\). Usually Rs. 12.00 for a
male labour and Rs. 8.00 for his wife were given to a new worker on his arrival at a tea estate or to an old worker at the end of his service.

By various means, the planters continued to exploit the labourers who were poor, weak and bonded. They were under strict control of the planters. The 'labour rules' which were framed by the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association did not sanction any form of bargaining either individual or collective. Till independence (1947) virtually the labourers had no liberty and even the freedom of movement was curtailed. Diverse forms of compulsion were maintained by stringent control over the labourers in the plantations.

It also deserves mention that poor peasants, agricultural labourers and displaced artisans who became plantation workers were subjected to a regimen quite unlike pre-industrial rhythms of work dependent on variations of weather and seasons. The planters imposed on them the 'tyranny' of the gong. The day began with a gong at sunrise and ended with a gong at sunset. Every worker whose name was on the roll had to report for work regularly and to work hard. Illness was no excuse for not reporting for work (see Gupta, 1992, 183). In the preindependence period, such strict measures were taken to keep the plantation labourers under regimented control. After independence, rigid control has
been slackening to a great extent due to the change in political arena on the one hand and increasing consciousness and unionism on the other. But the colonial legacy has not been remaining in one form or the other. In the early period of development of tea plantations, it could not be expected that the labourers would be organised into trade unions to protect their interest. After independence of India, the planters tried to maintain a stable labour force for production by restraining their freedom by force but by giving some relaxations. This entailed not only the provision of freedom but also granted minimum facilities to cater to the needs of the labourers. In the ultimate analysis, the history of sufferings of the tea plantation labourers in Assam in the pre-independence days is a history of dominance of the planters over the labourers to ensure the production in a pre-capitalistic way without giving a chance to form an organised trade union movement in the plantations.

7.3 MANAGEMENT OF LABOUR

The pattern of labour management needs to be understood in terms of three important aspects of work in the plantations, namely, wage payment, freedom of movement of the labourers and their relations to their employers. In the early period, the labourers were lowly paid and the mode of payment was weekly. The labourers spent what they earned at the end of the week. So, by their earnings they could not
manage their family expenditure. For any casualty, they had to take help from the employers as they had no alternative. The labourers were solely dependent on the employers. So the relation between the labour and the management had been established on the basis of the dependence of the labourers on the mercy of the employer.

Secondly, the freedom of movement of the labourers was strictly limited. If a worker's daughter was to get married to a resident of another tea estate, the Manager's permission was necessary (Guha, 1981, 84). The planters restricted the mobility of the labourers even within the plantation area. This was done by maintaining a strict physical control through the supervision of 'coolie lines' by the watchmen during the night and at the work place by the Assistant Managers, Sardars (Headmen) and Mohoris (field staff). It was a common practice to engage night chowkidars (security guards) to keep watch over the lines and prevent labourers from leaving the estate. The impression had been created in the minds of the labourers that they had no right to go out of the estates at their own will. This constant restraint on their right of the free movement had reduced them to a state of slavery (Guha, 1977, 243). To keep the labourers under control, the planters did not hesitate to adopt unfair means, such as opening up of drinking shops near the tea estate, free gambling, etc.
Finally, the racial bias and discrimination in the employer-labour relations were important features of the functioning of the tea plantations. This provided the basis of extra-legal authority within the plantations structure. The labourers were considered inherently inferior by the planters. This attitude was akin to that of the white masters towards their black slaves in the ante-bellum era in the Southern U.S.A. The British tea planters established an omnipotent, super authority over their labour force within what has been termed as 'paternalistic' framework (Griffith, 1967, 356). It was assumed that the labourers were conservative by nature, prone to violence, suspicious for change, unambitious, easily excitable and unresponsive to incentives. Therefore, the planters assumed extra-legal authority to protect their labour force from outside influence and at the same time to discipline them in various ways: (1) they were compelled to reside within the vicinity of the tea estates, (ii) their mobility within and outside the plantations was severely restricted, (iii) they were isolated from the outside world, and (iv) they were made completely dependent on their employers for every necessity of life. The planters considered intervention in the social and personal lives of the labourers as a part of their 'paternalistic obligation' (Behal, 1985, 20).

Under such conditions, the freedom of the plantation labourers is limited which is uncommon in any
other industry. Structural organisation is an important feature of the industrial management. An industry has an organised structure of different hierarchically arranged positions along with the specific responsibilities. Although the structure is not similar in every industry depending on its nature, it has some common features of industrial management structure. The plantation has also such structural organisation, but it differs from that of other industries due to its agro-industrial character. This industrial management in plantation is a unique feature not very much related to that of the industrial capitalism.

In the plantations of Assam, the structural organisation is almost same as it was in the early period of the inception of the industry. The hierarchial structure has the Manager at the top and daily-rated wage labourers at the bottom. A group of labourers are maintained by the Sardars (Headmen) who is usually armed with long bamboo sticks. Above the Sardars, there are Mohoris (field staff). The Mohoris are of two types: one who supervises the male labourers is known as Mota Mohori and the other who supervises the female labourers is known as Maiki Mohori. Above the Sardars and the Mohoris, there are Jamadars who look after the plantation works. The Assistant Managers supervise the labourers and take care of various works of the plantations. The Manager is an overall head of the plantation who takes the whole responsibility of the
plantation. For day to day work, the Assistant Managers ask the Jamadars to run the works. The Jamadars along with the Sardars and the Mohoris supervise the works of the labourers in the field. Finally, the Sardars and the Mohoris control and supervise the works of the labourers. Every morning before starting the works, the Sardars are asked by the Mohoris or the Jamadars to complete the entrusted works by a group of labourers and then similarly the Sardars allot the works for each labourer. Generally Sardars are recruited from the high castes who have no formal training or management. The Sardars and the Mohoris are the managerial apparatus at the lower level who actually control and manage the labour force. Various means are adopted to control the labourers by the uneducated and untrained Sardars in a manner unheard in any other industries. The labourers are treated not better than serfs or bonded labourers by the management personnel. So the labour management relation may be termed as serf-lord relation. A non-industrial labour management system is still prevailing in the plantations of Assam.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that the tea planters are like big land-owners whose role seems to be dual - on the one hand, they are capitalist entrepreneurs of plantations and on the other, they are feudal agriculturalists. It is already mentioned earlier (chapter IV) that the planters possess considerable amount of paddie land within the plantation which is given to the plantatio
labourers for cultivation - sometimes on rent and sometimes in lieu of ration. The planters and the labourers are tied through the agrarian feudal relations. The planter does not have any interest in increasing paddy production, mechanization of agriculture, use of fertilisers and high yielding varieties of paddy in those cultivable lands which are distributed among the labourers on rent or sharecropping basis. Anyway there are some of the features of non-industrial labour-management relations which result in agrarian relation and pre-capitalist mode of production.

7.4. MANAGERIAL PATTERN AND LABOUR-A FUTURISTIC VIEW

The influence of managerial pattern on labour is worth to be discussed. It is an established fact that the management and labour stand at opposite poles to each other. Both the management and labour have their different interests. As a human being and a productive force, the labourers have the right to get certain amenities. As such, labourers demand higher wages, good working and living conditions, security of life and other welfare measures. On the contrary, employers want to maximise their profits by hook or crook. Thus there arises a clash of interests between these two groups. It is, thus, the different kinds of management in the plantations of Assam, namely the company ownership—both Indian and non-Indian (public and private), partnership farms, corporations managed by the government
(ATCL), Employees' Co-operative (ATEICOL) and individual ownership (proprietorship) may have different kinds of influences on labour, since the motives of these different managements are not the same.

The ownership pattern of the tea plantations of Assam has undergone basic changes since 1947. A large chunk of the capital invested in the tea estates had passed from British to Indian hands. Before that the entry of the Indian entrepreneurs were few, partly because of lack of capital and partly because of non-patronizing character of the colonial government for the Indians. It is worthwhile to mention that Maniram Dewan was the first native Assamese tea planter who opened two tea estates, namely Cinamara near Jorhat and Senglung (now Singlo) near Sonari in 1841. Maniram's two tea estates started manufacturing tea some time before 1850. A packet of two pounds of his tea was sent to the Great London Exhibition held in 1851. However, the specimen could not be displayed in that exhibition because of delayed arrival. The consignee refused to pay the duty of twenty-five pence per pound, and the packet languished in bond for ten years. Then it was sold at the auction and was probably purchased by some concern. It was exhibited in the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of 1886. Thus his little packet of two pounds of tea survived him, but not his two tea estates which were confiscated after his martyrdom (Dey 1988, 107). Maniram Dewan was hanged by the British in 190
lebelling the charge as a participant in Indian Freedom Movement of 1857. His two tea estates were auctioned at a nominal price which were purchased by the Williamson Manor and his partners to include in their plantations. Execution of Maniram Dewan apparently acted as a setback from which native Assamese businessmen took some time to recover. However, towards the end of the last and early part of the present century, a number of native Assamese entrepreneurs took up tea cultivation. Many of the reputed industrial houses in India like the Tatas, Birlas, Podgars, Pals, Sethias, etc. have become the main producers of tea in Assam and India. Thus a British-dominated industry of the pre-independence period has metamorphosed into one dominated by the tea industrial houses of the country (Barua, 1993, 12-13).

The tea industry in Assam is dominated by well-organised large plantations. About eighty-five per cent of the area under tea were owned and managed by the well-established British Companies which were known as 'Sterling Companies'. But at the direction of the Central Government, some shares have been sold out by these companies to Indian entrepreneurs and these shares have been converted into rupees without affecting the size and the growth of these companies. Among the Indian Companies, the number of Public Ltd. Companies is more. But a good number of Private Companies is also there. The plantations owned by the older Sterling Companies are the largest on the average followed by
the Indian Public Ltd. Companies and Private Companies. The average size of the plantations under proprietorship or partnership are smaller (Bhatty, 1978, 95).

For over a century, tea industry has been managed by what may be called 'remote control system' in the three primary areas of management, namely production, finance, and marketing. Among these three areas, only production is in the tea plantation, finance being controlled mostly from Calcutta, and marketing till recently from Calcutta and London (Venkatakrishnan, 1981, 68). In the early days, the length of the journey from England to India made it practically necessary to have a Calcutta agent to look after the business interests of the tea estates in India. In spite of recent development of transport and communication, the importance of these agency houses still continues, because such a system gives the benefits of a steady policy in estate management (Harler, 1964, 135-36). In the plantations under company ownership, the structure of management has important implications for labour management, particularly with respect to the location of authority for decision-making and for formulating policies and procedures to be followed at the operating levels. The Board of Directors generally determines the policy and the Manager or the General Manager looks after the execution of those policies. In such tea estates, very often it is seen that the matter of labour management is dealt with by a separate department called 'Personnel.
Department', under the overall charge of a Personnel Office (Barua, 1981, 72). In small estates, generally the owner or the Manager himself deals with the various matters concerning labour management. The method of labour management in the tea plantations differs in important respects among the tea estates under different managerial and ownership patterns. Tea estates under company ownership (both Indian and non-Indian) being generally large, operations are based on a division of labour and specialisation in certain areas. The management at the top is usually done by the persons who have made management their profession and are well versed in the principles and the methods of business management. In the individually owned or partnership tea estates, usually the owner or the operator himself performs all the major tasks of the management (Barua, 1981, 72). The tea estates which are managed by the corporations of the government, are inefficient, small and expensive. There is only one tea estate in Assam which is managed by the Assam Tea Employees' Industrial Co-operative Organisation Ltd. (ATEICOL). This tea estate is also small (527.71 hectares) and inefficient. Welfare facilities of the labour are inadequate. The tea estate incurred a loss of Rs. 4,15,621.58 in 1992-93.

The big companies enjoy certain advantages, such as ease of securing finances and establishing industrial relations. Whereas the big companies have better financial position because of their easy access to the financing
institutions, the smaller ones remain in a disadvantageous position in this regard. Under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, on the estate management, a number of welfare obligations have been imposed, such as, housing medical, industrial facilities, etc. When the Act was brought into force in 1954, plantations were expected to make the necessary investments and other arrangements to comply with the requirements of the Act within a certain period of time. The bigger companies due to their sound economic background could meet the obligations better and more speedily which cannot be provided by the smaller ones (Dutta, 1983, 37).

From the analysis in the foregoing two chapters (Chapter V and VI), it is found that the plight of the labourers are not satisfactory under different ownership patterns. There is always a clash of interests between the profits of the owners and the welfare of the labourers. The management tries to neglect the interest of the labourers. So the labourers do not get the actual benefit. The Government has been playing a passive role in this regard, and does nothing practically except the enactment of the Plantation Labour Rules. It has been maintaining the policy of laissez faire and does nothing to enforce the owners to implement the welfare policies and schemes effectively. For considerable development of the labourers, it is necessary to resolve the profit versus welfare contradiction with a socialistic view. In order to elevate the condition of the labourers, the
profit has to be minimised for the sake of labour welfare. In the present context, it can be done by increasing the control and regulation of the Government. Otherwise both the industry and the labour will suffer. Productivity cannot be raised without improving the efficiency of the labour and the efficiency cannot be achieved without uplifting the socio-economic and cultural standard of the labourers. The production in tea plantation is directly related with the management of labour as labour is one of the four essential factors of production. Its importance in an industry like tea where complete mechanization is impossible, lies in the fact that labour involves multitude of human beings whose active participation definitely ensures good production and development of the industry. Because of this labour intensiveness, labour management do play a vital role in increasing the efficiency and productivity of the workers.

In this connection, it can be mentioned that small-scale farming of tea (green-leaf) is gaining popularity in Assam. The Government has also shown sympathetic attitude towards this farming system by providing plots of land to the unemployed youths although the tea estates owners have been opposing this move of the Government on the plea that it may preclude the organised sector of tea industry. Anyway small-scale production of tea (green-leaf) by the smallholder farmers under directed body can be a farming alternative. Directed smallholder farming system is one where small
farmers are organised under a directed body who look after the different aspects of farming and give technical advice, material and cash advance and the important market outlet for their products. Eaton (1988) described elaborately that such directed smallholder cultivation is a farming alternative which has been pursued in Fiji for tobacco production. He argues that the constraints of smallholder production (principally, capital, marketing and expertise) can be overcome by using this mode of management. Eaton (1988) outlines the organisational structure, and management style of the Southern Development Company (SDC) which, since 1977, has successfully directed local farmers in the growing of tobacco on small farms in Western Viti Levu, Fiji. The SDC has been involved in this farming for over twenty years. In 1985, 616 farmers grew 377,000 kg of leaf, equivalent to 78 per cent of Fiji's manufacturing requirements. The author observes that need for capital and financial security is paramount and essential condition to organise smallholder farming, which can be provided through directing body. Eaton (1988) emphasises that if the capital inputs or funds are made available by the directing body to the smallholder commercial farming can be operated successfully. He also explains that the directing body can offer advice on matter of farm management, cost-effective farming technique and forward planning. The author notes that the Government of Fiji has also helped in financing a number of directed
smallholder projects. In short, the smallholder system is seen by the Government as an efficient way of transferring wealth and employment throughout the country.

Eaton (1988) has examined the SDC's operational structure, and tobacco cultural practices in order to understand small-holder tobacco growing in Fiji. He has shown that the company employs personnel at management level, permanent staff including administrative staff, field officers and technical workers and a seasonal employees. A Resident Area Manager is appointed to manage field extension activities, who have college training in agriculture. The Field Officer, who is the key link between the 'doer' and the 'director' is also appointed to control each sector of area. He has shown that the basic responsibilities of the Field Officers are to plan, organise, direct and control all facets of company's agronomic practices. The SDC also has appointed Research and Training Officer who in consultation with the General Manager, initiates and implements research projects. The Research and Training Officer trains both field staff and growers through lectures, individualised field visits, field days and film shows. The managerial philosophy of SDC has been moulded to solve many problems faced with in directing and guiding the rural community. The author has observed that to the Fijian society, where Chiefs have traditionally had the role of a director, the concept of being led or directed is not perceived as a sense of disrespect or alienation.
For the Indian rural population, direction is also a part of their background, although community's acute sense of individualism must be taken into sympathetic consideration.

The author has shown that SDC has demonstrated a good example in Fiji for the well-being of the smallholder farmers and the local economy through its long and successful operation and its contribution. Eaton (1988) suggests that smallholder farming system can be seen as a practical solution to utilising arable land areas of variable sizes and as an agricultural alternative for providing an avenue whereby the social and economic goals, the managerial organisation and society as a whole may be realised.

The tea plantation in Assam can also be developed through this farming alternative of directed smallholder system. Only thus can a very large proportion of Assam's most hardworking tea labour population be protected from hapless condition and overdependency on the planters for their social and economic progress.

NOTES

1. Royal Commission of Labour in India, 1931, 15-16
2. Government of India, Emigration Department Proceedings, B,1-3 September, 1983, para 1
3. Royal Commission of Labour in India, 1931: p.376
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