

Tea Workers Movement: For Land & For Identity

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Abstract

A burst out such as Chunarughat tea workers reminds us about the struggle against the anti-colonial oppression from the below much of which remained hidden or ignored in the mainstream media. The slogans carried out by the tea workers display the demand for owning the rights to land as well as the identity. Some may perceive it as a protest which deals with a certain economic or political problem of the tea workers. In some points, it questions the socio-economic as well as socio-political context they are currently embedded within. Therefore, this paper tries to figure out what social conditions that drive these tea-workers in Chunarughat to come out for day long processions which continued for several days. Again, this paper will break down the relational dynamics of these tea-workers under the power structure that exists within the community, the company people and the state. Therefore, this paper deals with the tea workers life and their struggle. In doing such the paper will argue with different theoretical models that conceptualize the 'collective action' and the 'collective behavior'. Therefore, this paper will essentially tries to figure out whether we can theorize the outburst of the tea workers as a social movement or as a social protest.

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Introduction

Chunarughat burst out onto the Bangladeshi political scene on December 13, 2015 with one of the most unprecedented protests ever from tea garden workers after a declaration from the Chunarughat TNO office on December 12, 2015. The hearing explained that government officials would visit their (tea garden workers) farmland and would demarcate the land for economic zone the following day which had been earmarked for an economic zone sometime during October, 2014 through a newspaper. The hearing also said that the government officials want their help in demarcating the land for economic zone. Instead of lending any sort of help to the government officials or even to show up in their respective workplace, the tea garden workers assembled on the 'khet' a terminology used to define farmland by the tea garden workers with sticks, axes, placards, bows, arrows. Some even showed up on the assembly by writing on the body as –

“My Land, My Mother, we shall not let them snatch it away.”

The tea garden workers protested against the decision, establishing an economic zone in their farmland and they organized rallies from 13 November and onwards. The protest has clear demands and I have used the word - 'has' as it is still present, still vibrant in the present ground situation of Chunarughat. At the beginning, the demand was to secure the farmland for the tea garden workers. However, they soon came out demanding their land rights along with securing their 'Khet Land'. Since, 13 November, there have been a number of rallies both for and against establishing an economic zone on the 513 acres of farmland demarcated by the government officials for economic zone. Parallel to such protest or rallies, since November, there had been numbers of attempt to dismantle the protest against establishing the economic zone to this date. Yet, from instance above, one can easily identify collective behavior/actions. At this point, these collective actions may lead us to the question whether this outburst of the tea workers will come to an end if the proposed development project is postponed by the government or whether a demand for a structural change is being demonstrated through the outburst of thousands of tea workers of the 13th December on the farmland earmarked for SEZ purpose.

However, since the tea-industry of Chandpur-Begumkhana tea estates established in 1890 went through historical upheavals- notable among them are the partition of India in 1947 and the Independence War in 1971 and the tea- workers of the Chandpur- Begumkhana tea estates have a long history of oppression which undergone major changes of the socio-political structure through the historical upheavals. Therefore, this research holds an attempt to map the continuation of the oppression that these tea-workers are embedded within. Furthermore, this research will also include whether the outburst holds a possibility of establishing a new socio-political identity which differs from the ‘identity’ the tea-workers were embedded within.

This paper will also include the rhetoric’s of the crowd which came out within the texts of the placards, their lived memories through their journey as tea workers of the garden and the nature of oppression they have been through which will help us to identify whether there is enough tension exists within the tea workers throughout the years of which created a sense of deprivation or inequality within the crowd assimilated in the outburst. In order to do such, this paper will try to identify the existence of antagonism due to the different socioeconomic interests and desires among the actors related with tea-production and the actors related with the land grabbing of the farmland which will help to identify the outburst as a social movement. This paper also intends to identify the nature of this outburst and its relation with the tea workers life in current socio-political structure of Bangladesh, exclusively the notable features it holds, an outburst which did not originate in party politics or in any social movement organization (SMO).

Hence, the primary goals of this research can be break down into points given below –

- 1) To identify whether the outburst of the crowd, the continuous procession or the rallies hold an ideological position to bring about a radical or holistic change into the lives of the tea-workers.
- 2) To identify what sort of identity they want to establish through their demand.
- 3) To explore the features and the dynamics of the outburst by the tea-workers.

Preparing the Ground

To understand the tea-workers related with the outburst extensively is impossible within such a short time. Along these lines, the situation emerged to restrict the discourse to particular themes. In addition, the portrayal, examination, investigation ought to touch diverse parts of the tea-workers for coming to a better comprehension of this community gathering.

Hence, my ideas regarding the tea-workers were confined within the documentaries Television Channels especially 'BTV' provided the audience over the years. Scenario of green Tea-Garden with smiling Tea-Worker, tea-workers local songs used within those documentaries clearly produced certain knowledge which clearly needed an evaluation as I was listening to my friend Arefin Noman who told me about the incident in Chunarughat that took places on December 13th. He showed me an article from the Daily Star which was published on that and was written by Inam Ahmed and he asked me whether I was interested to go for an ethnographic research in Chunarughat on the tea-workers demanding for their land rights on their farmland.¹ As soon as I read the article, I felt an urge to go for it. We went immediately to Habiganj on the next day. We stayed there for three days. This visit clinched my interest to write the thesis on this movement which resulted in two more field visits- once during January and again in August, 2016. All the three visits were covered within only 7-8 days.

¹ For details info please visit url: <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/16000-tea-workers-face-uncertainty-189820/>

Methodology

My understanding of an ethnographic research is to identify the position of the self and the research group all through the journey. Therefore, in my paper, I will try to clarify my position with reference to the tea workers. It is important to explain my socio-economic and political position, so that the ethnography and its subject can be identified in light of the ethnographer's socio-economic position. Hence, reflexivity becomes very important for ethnography. The hierarchy created by the thinking that a researcher is going to 'study' a group produces impaired views and knowledge of that particular subject.

Yet, me being a student of a private university along with my own residence within Dhaka clearly explains my privileged position as a researcher with regards to the tea workers as located in a disadvantaged and remote position. Furthermore, me being a member of the majority community 'Muslim' and 'Bangali' clearly explains my hierarchical position within Bangladesh nation state with reference to the tea-workers who are not 'Muslim' and 'Bangali'. Therefore, as I went to collect interviews from the research locals in 'Chunarughat' a sub-district of 'Habiganj' district I had the experience to find out my privileged position even more as I was thought as a reporter coming from a newspaper agency although I have tried to mention myself as an undergrad student of Brac University.

I stayed in a hotel during the first phase of field work and in a house of a tea-worker in the second phase. Shaon Robidas, one of the son of a tea-worker left the job of the tea-garden and joined a lumber mill. However, her wife still works at the tea-garden. During, my stay in their house, they kept telling me about my privileged position of being one of the member of Urban middle class living in Dhaka. Yet, I felt the necessity to explain this incident because it will shed some light on my socio- economic position within the community space of my focus group.

Hence, my research area was primarily Chandpur-Begumkhana Tea Estates of Chunarughat. However, I had to go other place such as 'Shurma' Tea Estate and in 'Boikunthapur' within the same Habiganj District for cross referencing some of the data I have collect from 'Chandpur-Begumkhana' Tea Estate. Therefore, the population I had to work with was primarily the tea-workers of Chandpur-Begumkhana Tea Estate who used the demarcated farmland proposed for

S.E.Z. In addition to that I had the opportunity to meet some of the tea workers of ‘Shurma’ Tea Estate and tea-workers of ‘Boikunthapur’. Hence, I have mentioned earlier about the tea-workers that they are not either ‘Bengali’ or a ‘Muslim’. Therefore, these tea-workers are ethnically and linguistically distinct and divergent from the ones who hold the identity of being a ‘Bengali’ and ‘Muslim’. Hence, It is impossible to take an account from each of the members of these different segments. Therefore, I had to limit my interview within Santals, Karmakar, Rabidas, Ghosh between the age group from 18 to 50 for both male and female.² I have interviewed 7 male and 6 female tea-workers.

The research will primarily use secondary data to analyze the past situation of the tea workers and the ground realities present at that moment which will help us to understand the present context of the tea workers and their movement against the state. One thing needs to be mentioned here is that researches done on the tea-workers of Bangladesh are very few in numbers which is why I had to use some of the information from similar research done on the tea-workers of Assam, Jalpaiguri etc. This helped me to explain some of the information which I could not find in the research works done on the tea-workers of Bangladesh. Secondary sources include relevant texts like books on the history of the tea workers, articles in newspapers, texts of different NGO’s or research institutions who already have works on Tea Garden etc.

Primary sources include field notes during the ethnography, direct one-on-one interviews with leaders of the tea workers, general workers of the tea estate, recordings of interview groups, photographs documenting the resistance, and the area.

² For details info look at Annex I

Theoretical Framework

This paper will also try to analyze the collective behavior and the collective actions of the tea-workers and therefore it will try to identify the position of the tea-workers struggle in conceptualizing it as a social protest or as a social movement. In doing such, the paper will try to identify the difference and similarities between a social protest and a social movement. This paper will also try to connect with the existing theoretical models on social movement that already been defined in the academic fields such as the revolutionary social movement, the classical model (collective behaviour[Rudolf Heberle] and mass society), the political process perspective[Charles Tilly] and Max Weber's view of Charismatic movement.

This paper will try to connect with Marxism and Social Movements in order to explain the sense of inequality and by dissecting the existed antagonistic relation among the actors of the tea-production it will then tries to identify a whether the struggle of the tea-workers is a power struggle to come out of an structural violence. However, the paper will also be a critique of the gradual succession of revolutionary movement as Karl Marx explained through the formation of a trade union and its function to carry out the interest of the oppressed working class.

The Struggle of the Tea-Workers

Part A: 150 years of Servitude and the Tie with the Labor Line

At the very beginning of this paper I would want to state that from my position it was difficult to understand what a ‘landless community’ meant what sort of relation or interaction they have with the larger society. Hence, coming from a ‘landowning class’, the question of being ‘landless’ was very difficult for me to understand. However, as my research went on, I gradually understood that the question of being ‘landless’ cannot be understood only with a mechanical way by understanding only the fact that I and the research group are not in the same class position. Even if one looks at the cultural reproduction, the rhetoric through which one can identify a ‘landless’ in Bangladesh that is one having no ground to stand on is considered as ‘human with no identity’ or a ‘non-human’ will be able to understand why I am saying that the mechanical approach will not be enough to understand the question of being ‘landless’. Therefore, it needs to be understood through culturally as well.

How Past Explains the Present

To this point, the question remains why the tea-workers are still ‘landless’ although the tea industry and tea production has a history of 150 years and it had gained a significant achievement in exporting. From my view, it is essential to understand the past of the tea workers in order to understand their current situation. At this point, let us remind of ourselves how Michel S. Roth tried to explain what Foucault meant by “history of the present” through the works of Foucault made in examining the relation between the ‘past’ and the ‘present’ (Roth 1981:32). Again, I think I need to mention that my present is different from the one of the tea-workers as I have mentioned earlier about the difference of time, place and my position within the social ladder economically and culturally. Keeping this things in my mind, to me the emergence of the tea-workers demand for land rights and the urgency to secure the khet land is not independent of the relation between the ‘past’ and the ‘present’ of the tea-workers. Furthermore, the uprising of such demands carried out by the crowd gathered on the 511 acres of ‘khet land’ is not independent of the tea-workers ‘past’ and the ‘present’. Therefore a background of the research group was necessary in my research as I had to understand my

research group and their present condition. therefore , through the study of reading the ‘tea-workers’, I gradually tried to make a sense of their demands and the struggle.

Background:

Establishment of Tea Garden

The ‘tea-garden’ was introduced to this land by the British Emperor. Up until 1830, the only source of World’s tea was China (Haque 2013:393). In fact the words ‘China’ and ‘tea’ were virtually synonymous (Sharma 2008:1289). So, China had monopoly business in terms of tea production and they have managed to make it fashionable in Britain during the reign of Queen Anne. The Governor-General of India took initiative to grow tea in India commercially in order to break China's monopoly in tea-industry (Haque 2013: 393). The first commercial- scale tea garden was established in 1854 and it was the Duncan Brothers (Gain 2009:1). To break the monopoly market of China’s Tea Industry. Therefore, it had the intention of investing the lowest manufacturing cost to compete with China. As a result, it became necessarily put the tea-workers wage lower than any other tea-industry. Again, the company needed a labor force which would cut the jungles (Gain 2009:1). However, the company had hard luck to manage the locals (Haque 2013: 393). The reasons why the locals were not interested in joining the tea garden was lower wage and the working condition.

From Slave Trade to Indentured Labor System

They recruited ‘coolie’ labourers from different parts of British India especially radicalized ones via a penal and indentured labour regime (Sharma 2009:1288). According to Philip Gain, the ancestors of these workers were brought by these British Companies from Bihar, Madras, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and other places of current Indian State on the year, 1854 (Gain 2009:2). Through ‘coolie trade’ the tea workers received the identity ‘Coolie’ from the beginning of their entrance into the land.

“In the post-slavery plantations and colonial enterprises coolies came to be identified with the Asiatic labour from India and China, working under terms of indenture. The recruitment, transport and settlement of coolies was conducted under patronage of the

'Cooley' is partially similar with the discourse of 'untouchable' of India existed in the caste systems. If a tea-worker is identified, then he/she finds it very difficult to get a job as they are considered as unskilled labor.

Next, they had to face this narration about their 'origin' right from the beginning of their entrance into the land, both inside and outside the 'tea-garden'. Although, four generations have passed still they are thought as outsiders. I think the reason behind such identity formation is that their ethnic identity along with their diverse language. A study conducted by Haque Mahfuzul clearly stated out the fact that they were ethnically distinct, linguistically divergent and geographically different. I came to know that there are 92 different ethnic minorities (as mentioned by Swapan Santal, Chairman of the Indigenous Social Development Organization). Languages like Urishya (bunarji) in Shrimongol, Deshwali Nagri (Similar to Bhojpuri of India), Munda, Orao, Santali (as mentioned by Biren Mukherjee). However, these are people who have forgotten their roots, their father's dialect. (Haque 2013:392)

One can easily identify that the tea-industry is different from other industries. First, notice that the commercial production indicates this as an industrial one. However, garden related trades like weeding, cleaning, plucking, pruning and pesticide control indicates that there is agricultural side attached to it. Maximum portion of labor distribution is in the agricultural side. To my utter surprise, the workers of the garden are not perceived as 'peasants'. The State Tenancy Act of 1950 is the key to understand it as its annulment provided the right to own a land by the peasants. The tea-workers remained excluded in the State Tenancy Act. Therefore they were landless back then. Hence, they are still 'landless' which was also mentioned in the daily star Article.⁵

Hence, being 'landless' means to be an 'identity-less' people if we carefully look at the rhetoric are used about land and inheritance. 'Bap-Dadar-Vita', a common word used to describe that land is inherently owned and passed to the next generation of people is also a cultural production the tea-workers. One case study can be useful in this case. Two persons from the tea-workers community got chance in the police force by passing the examination to determine whether one is qualified to carry out this job. Yet, they were refused when their 'CV' failed to show any

⁵ For details info please visit url: <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/16000-tea-workers-face-uncertainty-189820>

inheritance or property (land). When the officers were asked about the case, the officer explained this is one of the key information that the police force take for recruiting new commerce and he had no option but to apply it in their case as it is the rule remained for years.⁶

Again, when we understand tea production with the word ‘tea-industry’ we perceive the tea-workers as ‘industrial-laborers’. However, the tea – workers are subject to separate laws (as mentioned by Hasnat Quyum, activist, Advocate). He added that they can form labor unions but they are deprived of the other labor rights.

Tea- Workers' Education

“Language difference also discourages the tea garden and ethnic minority children from going to school, the study said. Several local teachers and educated persons emphasised the importance of mother tongue in primary education.”⁷

Education is one of the reasons why the tea-workers are forgetting about their dialects. as the generation passes by their root became faded day by day as the state’s main education system fails to incorporate other language in its education system rather than ‘Bangla’. Brac and Shikhon uses our local people(as mentioned by Swapan Santal⁸) to teach the students where the students can interact with their mother tongue with the purpose to learn Bangla and English. However, in government school this is totally absent.

Almost 70 percent tea-workers of the garden are women (as mentioned by Geeta Dutta, Bangladesh Women Workers Tea Forum, Khurma Tea Estate) and the percentage of educated male-tea- workers are higher than the female tea-workers. She goes on saying that an overwhelming majority of the children of the tea plantation workers drop out from school before they can use education to step into other professions and thus they have to enter the tea gardens as laborers.

⁶ For details please visit url: <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/762466/>

⁷ For details please visit url: <http://archive.thedailystar.net/2006/01/15/d60115011611.htm>

⁸ For Details info please look at Annex I

Working Condition

Research done by Iftekhar Uz Zaman shows that the 'wage' from the year 1900-1919 remained almost stationary whereas the real wages of the tea-workers were dropping fast as the prices of other food-grains were increasing. It also shows that in the year 1915, an agreement was done by the Dooar's planters Association on the 'wage' issue which stated that 4 annas 3 annas and ½ annas hajiri [per day attendance along with working hours from 08:00 to 5:00 pm] should be considered as maximum which should not be exceeded in any garden. The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri reported that an average 'coolie' could not earn the nominal amount which can be called as a 'wage'. (Awal 1979:57).

Bangladesh Cha Shramik Union (BCSU) that represents the tea-workers makes agreement with Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA) that represents the employer's sign a memorandum every two years to fix the wages. The current working hours is from 9.00 to 5.00 clock and within it one worker can rest for one hour. The current wage is 85 taka/ day [Hajiri: means daily presence] (just a US\$) which was 69 taka/day [hajiri] up until March, 2016. A worker has to pluck 23 kg of tea- leaves per day. 2 tk is fined per kg of leaves if any one plucks less than 23 kg. This is known as 'Nirikh'. In addition to the wages the tea-workers receives some fringe benefit. The head of per tea-worker's [permanent] family receives a house. However, this house remains to the tea-workers family until there is a permanent worker in the tea - garden. In case any a permanent worker resigns from the tea-garden he/she has to leave the house along with his/her family. Other than houses fringe benefits like rations, provident fund, access to khet Land for production, medical care and pension etc. Therefore, the amount tea-workers earn on a daily basis could hardly meet their both-ends meal (as mentioned by Rajkumari Bin Permanent Worker) and to think of providing expenses of the children's education and other expenses is out of the question.

If we compare the current wage of the Indian tea workers, we will see that the wage of the Bangladeshi workers is much lower. In 2015, when the wage of the tea workers of Bangladesh was 69 taka , the wage of the tea-workers of India was 102 Rs and in the same year they managed A tripartite wage agreement which fixed a raise of 37.50 Rs(in phase of three years) to

the workers of Terai and Dooars Rs 42.50 to workers in Darjeeling.⁹What puzzles one is that the auction of prices of tea in Bangladesh is high compared to the international auction prices while its production cost is the most lower compared to the other tea producing countries like India, Sri Lanka and Kenya.(Gain 2009:3)

Legislation related to tea workers

Most of previous legislations such as The Maternity Benefit (Tea Estate) Act, 1950, the tea plantation labour rules, 1977, the tea (Amendment) ordinance, 1986, The Bangladesh Plantation employees provident fund ordinance, 1959 were later repealed and replaced by Bangladesh Labour act, 2006. However, the government has already informed the tea workers that the minimum wages announced in the gazette, 2006 was not for the tea workers and that a separate wage board has already formed to determine the wages for the tea workers. This was informed to the tea worker by a letter dated 20th July, 2008 by the Deputy Director of Labor, Tea Industry Welfare Department in Srimangal, Moulvibazar. The letter also informed that the minimum wage issue of the tea-workers is under consideration.(Gain 2009:3)

However, the labor rules that included the tea-workers are not being followed within the tea-garden. It explained that any labor should be given the payment for his ‘weekly-holiday’ which is not maintained for the workers of the tea garden although it had been annulled by the revised Bangladesh Labor Act, 2013.¹⁰ According to Section 3(8) of the Labour Act 2006, a worker after satisfactory performance for 3 months has to be confirmed as permanent worker. Instead of permanent work force, the tea companies are more inclined to use casual (as mentioned by Biren Mukherjee, Leader of Luskerpore Valley) because they are less demanding and the company has no headache for their ration, khet land, medical , education, gratuity and pension benefits”.

The owners of the tea-garden are supposed to provide the tea-workers adequate ration, wages, a decent home , sanitary latrines with medical and education facilities as per the Labor Act, 2006. When it comes to reality no companies are following the Act. Section 95 and 96 of the Act that

⁹For details info please visit url:<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kolkata/revised-wages-inadequate-say-tea-workers/article6966900.ece/>

¹⁰ For details info please visit url: <http://dailysylhet.com/details/120910/□□-□□□□□□-□□□□-□□□□□□-□□-□□/>

have made provisions that the tea- garden owners would provide housing, education for the children, medical and entertainment facilities. It is also mentioned in Section 100 and 103 that the daily working hours of the tea-workers would be (8 hours/ day and 48 hours/ week), with one weekly holiday (Sunday) with pay. These laws are yet to be seen implemented properly on the tea-workers.

Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union (Tea Workers Trade Union)

Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union (Bangladesh Tea Worker) was registered in 1948. From the text written by Hoque Mahfuzul, I came to know that the first election process to choose different posts of Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union held for the first on 26 October 2008. Before that it was a process of mere selection only , known as “Company Union” or loyal trade union. From every tea garden, Bangladesh Tea Workers Union takes toll regularly.

Hence, these are the background information I feel that a researcher needs to have in order to study the life of the tea-workers. Again, this information needs to be analyze in order to analyze the existence of the oppression, the existence of contradiction with different actors of the tea-production, trade unions, in short the overall socio-cultural condition of the tea-workers.

Part B: Social Movement & Social Protest in My Perspective

I feel the necessity to explain what I understand on the various aspects of a crowd gathering where particular demands are being manifested. This initiation is necessary for the clear placement of my own perception about a crowd gathering prior to the commencement of the ethnography. The target is simply to clarify how my perception identified a crowd gathering as a social movement or protest. Therefore this part of the paper will talk about what sort of lense I have used to read the tea-workers life and their struggle.

To my understanding, a crowd gathered with the intention to manifest a political expression of a particular desire or need can be called as a social protest. Yet, this particular desire or need can be an outcome of a newly emerged social problem imposed by a particular organization and faced by a particular community. For instance, a social protest in order to change the decision of imposing VAT on private university education that recently took place. Again, this can be a result of a recently developed social issue forced by a specific association and confronted by different groups such as a social protest due to an increase of gas bill/electricity bill. Alongside, this can also be an outcome of an existing problem caused by a particular organization. (e.g. social protest against price hike of daily commodities).

Hence, there are some key aspects to consider within a protest. First of all a protest does not hold an ideological position and therefore it does not bring about a change in the social conditions the protesters are embedded within. Secondly, a protest does not hold the promise of a structural change (holistic change) that will shift the parameters of different entities involved with the protest. Thirdly, there is no attempt to forge an identity through the crowd gathering. Fourthly, the duration of a protest is very short and has a very short term effect on the mass as it deals with only one or two particular social issues. To my understanding, these are the key things that distinguish a crowd gathering to identify it as a social protest.

Hence, I think it is important to explain what I meant as holistic change. Holistic can be described by understanding of the parts of something as personally interconnected and can be explained by referencing to the entirety of it. Therefore, a holistic change addresses the change

of the interconnection that exists within an interconnected body. Thus, I view holistic change from a functionalist perspective. Yet, a social movement is where we get to see an organized crowd with the intention to bring about a change within the existing interconnected relation they are embedded within. Therefore, the actors of a social movement bear the intention to bring about a structural change where the actors want to shift their existing position within the governed space they are embedded within. Thus, the crowd gathered for a social movement holds an ideological position to change both institutional and non-institutional relation. Next, the duration of a social movement is very long and its effect on mass can be identified and explained extensively. Undoubtedly, a social movement has a continuous nature to it. For a better understanding, let me refer to some social movement such the Occupy Wall Street, Arab Spring, Language Movement of 1952. However, a social movement may occur to resist a change such as the anti-globalization movement. Thus, these characters of a social movement are distinct from those of a social protest in my perception.

Prior to these features that I have mentioned above, I think the participants of both social movement or social protest group needs to become aware of what sort of structural violence are experiencing through their daily live. Therefore, the crowd engaging in a social protest or a social movement needs to be aware of the oppression they are experiencing in their daily lives. However, a social protest might be an outcome of newly emerged desire or need. Therefore, it is not mandatory for the crowd of a social protest group to experience oppression on a daily basis. In addition, I think that the nature of oppression creates the ground to have a social movement where organic participation of individuals as well as the possibility to have a solidarity among the participant is possible. Next, I think both groups of a social protest or a social movement needs to have an organizing body to carry out the interest of the protesters or the movement participants along with different functions starting from expence of crowd gathering, organizing crowd, printing leaflet to co-operate and build network with different groups or other organizations that shares the same agenda or goal. Therefore, communication is a vital element in the success of a social protest group or a social movement group, whether the type of communication is mass or interpersonal. The solidarity part reveals through the communication as we get to see several functions of an organization body to carry out different functions such as information exchange, mobilization, coordination and integration. However, interaction or

integration into a social protest or a social movement can be organic in nature rather than mechanical.

Hence, the features I mentioned above is what I knew about a social movement or a social protest. Therefore, to analyze the struggle of tea-workers life along with the dynamics and features of their outburst calls for an in depth research on how different theories conceptualize the struggle of a group as a social protest or a social movement. Therefore, I began to have an account of different theories on both social protest and social movement exists in the academic arena. However, due to shortage amount of time I only could manage read some of the schools of thought that conceptualize social movement

On my reading, I came to know that there are several competing frameworks to analyze social movement and each conceptualize movements differently. Next, I came to that scholars within same 'school' define social movements differently depending on different aspect of a social movement. Hence, there schools such as the collective behaviour view or mass society explains social movement as non-institutionalized social change efforts.(Morris 1984:5-6) However, I think non-institutionalized social change effort can not integrate individual to form a mass and revolt against the structural violence. Then again, without a institution, a social movement group can not form an agitation, coalition, build network with other organization or to engage in sporadic riots or localized violence. Therefore, I agree with the Marxist school of thought that explains that a well organized party is essential for a social movement to be channeled towards a revolutionary change. However, I also think that an organization plays a conservative role sometimes and there are times when organization itself becomes the obstacle to an organic development of a social movement. Furthermore, in times organization may act against the actors of the movement and it may act as a non-democratic institution in terms of taking consent of the actors of the social movement.

Hence, I was not in the group of studying social movement just as a phenomena rather I was interested in the continuous forming of it. Therefore, I do agree with Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian that movements character do change from day to day.(Morris 1984:15) However, I was concerned about how could I talk about the nature of an organization in a social movement.

Luckily I found Charles Tilly's argument which explains that a social movement is not a group that emerges and transforms over time.(Morris 1984:9) His remarks on political party (organization) and social movement is that they are identical representations in light of the fact that both are political on-screen characters seeking after power(Morris 1984:10). Then again Marxist view on social movement clearly focuses on the struggle for power as it emphasizes on the class factors, inequality and other properties of the society.(Morris 1984:3) Hence as I have mentioned above that I would want to view a social movement group by inspecting their experience of powerlessness and the point where they want to gain power changing the structural relationship, I had no trouble to agree with both Marx and Charles Tilly.(Morris 1984:10)

Last but not least, a social movement may turn out to be a charismatic movement where charismatic leaders becomes the proponent of the movement and attract followers by preaching ideological position and integrate them into the movement as explained by Max Weber. However, I do not think a social movement needs have a charismatic leader as a social movement might be an outcome of an organic solidarity group who overthrows the structural violation.(Morris 1984:4) Coming back to the context of tea- workers, I have related these argument with the tea-workers life and their struggle and attempted to conceptualize their struggle. Therefore, Part C of this paper will try explain the lifelong struggle of the tea-workers, the nature of the tea-workers struggle and it's dynamics.

Part C: Tea Workers Struggle as a Social Movement

Towards a Holistic Change

Tea workers are people with forgotten history, identity and language within their own community and the within the larger society of Bangladesh. The 150 years of belonging to the labor line and the experience of structural violence on a daily basis has made the tea-workers to come out as community and as individual and raise their voice against the structural violence for years after years. Therefore, this part of the paper will conceptualize with the nature of their struggle.

The condition of the tea workers life before S.E.Z involves a long struggle to increase their wage issue and other aspects of labor laws, as well as for land rights. For instance, Cha Shromik Shongho (CSS) of Moulvibazar have signed memorandum and send it to the prime minister of Bangladesh on issues such as land rights and labor rights before the hearing of S.E.Z. in their community space.¹¹ On the emergence of S.E.Z, the workers got involved with land issue more than ever. Therefore, demands such as land rights or labor rights are not instant reaction rather it develops within a community over time. Yet, on reaching the ground Chunarughat on 22nd December, 2016 as I began my ethnographic journey I notice that the two issues I mentioned above are not separated from each other as one is dependent on the other. Therefore, one is impacting on the other. Therefore, the tea-workers struggle can not be explained from the strikes, rallies or procession but needs to be viewed from a holistic approach by inspecting individuals struggle and the struggle of a community.

To understand it from a more empirical level we need to consider some of the facts. First of all the proposed land for S.E.Z purpose does not belong to them legally. However, the tea workers are refusing to let it snatched away from them. The reason behind is that they are dependent on the land. They are dependant because they receive 85 taka/day which hardly meets their families both ends meal. The tea-workers do not own any house. The income along with the incentives they receive does not support their daily expenses. Other expenses like child rearing, child education, medical facilities remains out of the question. Therefore, the amount of 'Khet Land'

¹¹ For more details please visit url: <http://www.jurineews.com.bd/>

they take from the company having their rations slashed is the supplement they use to fulfill the the gap, the expenses for their child rearing, medical purpose and issues such as debt. Therefore, the intensity of their dependency on the khet land and the urge to secure it has come out as slogan in their outburst : “We vowed to let their blood flow and yet they will not allow anyone take away their land.”

Yet, the aspects of numerous shrikes, procession, struggle as a community and the struggle as individual on the issue connected with the labor line and the issue regarding land rights, the tea-workers have managed to bring out demands that mirror their desire to change the structure they are embedded within. Their demands are given below -

Tea Workers Demand:

- Secure Khet Land
- Secure Land Right
- Increase of Wage
- Same Right in Labor Law
- Education
- Health

In the section of part B of this paper, I have argued that the participants of both social movement or social protest group needs to become aware of what sort of structural violence are experiencing through their daily live. Hence, if we look at the demands carefully that came out in number of procession , strikes and rallies the tea-workers are essentially talking about what sort of structural violation they are within. For instance let us consider the crowd(tea-workers) who raised their voice back in 2006, when they come to know that the minimum wage fixed for the industrial labor was 1,500tk (US \$ 22) and it was not followed in the garden. The tea-workers came out and raise their voice knowing that they were not given the position of labor wheres they work more than any industrial labor. They also know that their payment is the least although the tea-industry is making good amount of profit on their labor. Therefore, the crowd(tea-workers) engaging and raising their voice against the structural violence and the oppression

explains the contradiction of interest they have between the tea-workers and the owners of the tea-garden. Hence, if you ask a tea-worker about his/her payment, he/she may not tell you about the word 'structural violence' even if he/she is educated/uneducated but he/she will definitely talk about the tea-owners he/she work for and the government that refused to acknowledge about the shortage amount of payment the owners of the tea-garden provides to him/her. Therefore, it is not the government as well as the structure of the state had secured the interest of the tea-garden owners all along. According to Marx, such existence of contradictions inevitably leads to efforts geared towards the structural change. Therefore, I think knowing about the oppression and structural violence is to know about the points where one feels powerlessness and then desire to come out of it.

Apart from demanding for a wage increment when these tea-workers are demanding for having the same rights equal to all the other industrial labors, the tea-workers are essentially talking about a change of their position within the interconnected structure they are embedded within. Firstly, if you look at closely at the Labor Act,2006 has provisioned for quite number aspect such as working hours, payment for weekends, maternity leave, medical facilities and many more which I have mentioned in part A of these paper. Hence, if the tea-workers are not included within the same wage structure and other things that is applicable for the tea-workers then the tea-workers will remain within the structural relation the company has created for the tea-workers that exists all these years. Therefore, they are demanding for a change of their position and at the same time they want to break free from the oppressive relation they have gone through since they came to this land.

Hence, after the hearing of S.E.Z the tea-workers have come out with two demands namely: secure the Khet Land and secure the Land Rights. From my perspective the demand to- 'secure the Khet Land', does not indicate that they want to come out of a structural relation rather it is a demand to secure their position they existed over the years. Therefore, if the Khet Land does not go out of their hands then their position within the structure will be the same as it was in previous years. However, when we are seeing the demand of land rights, the tea-workers are essentially talking about their structural change. Why I am calling it a demand for changing their position within the structure? First of all, in Part A, I have already mentioned that the tea-

workers are landless. Therefore, they are without choice and entitlement to the property[land]. Hence, consider the fact that if any permanent tea-worker who receives a house from the company leaves the job, the house will be taken from him. Therefore, those who are dependent of the permanent tea-worker, they will also have to leave the house. Yet, they have nowhere to go as they are not entitled to any land. Again, with the shortage of payment they receive by working within the garden, it is impossible for them to buy a house outside the tea-garden or anywhere else. Hence, this relation the tea-workers have with the company from the beginning explains the tie they have with the labor line. Therefore, this also explain how the company, owners of the tea-garden has kept the tea-workers for years after years with such short payment. Therefore, it would be hard to keep these tea-workers within such short payment if the tea-workers are given land rights, entitlement to the property. Again, consider the fact that without an entitlement to the property, the tea-workers are without a 'permanent address'. In Part A of this paper, I have mentioned about a case study where two people of the tea-workers community was qualified for the post but they got refused just because they had no 'permanent address' as they or their fathers do not own any land. Therefore, through the demand to secure the land rights, the tea-worker are trying to change these institutional relation and the structural violence they are embedded within years after years.

Hence, if we are to think of the rights of a citizen under a sovereign nation, then the tea-workers remained without the citizen rights for over centuries. Yes, they have their voting rights, but they are people without land, without education, without health facilities as I have mentioned in part A of this paper. Again, they are without the language they want to speak in the schools they read. Hence, the constitution of Bangladesh claims that the state language is Bangla and then it does not speak of other language at any section of the constitution. Therefore, Bangladesh state is not acknowledging the language difference it has within its nation space. Hence, the tea-workers want their mother tongue for education in the government school . However, there has not been a strike or procession for the language issue((as mentioned by Swapan Santal, Adivasi Forum) but Adibashi Forum, the organization of the tea-workers community has sent a petition signed by the tea-workers to the the prime minister. Again, BCSU, the trade union of the tea-worker has handed out a list of gardens without primary schools to the government officials. Furthermore, Bangladesh Tea Workers Women's Forum (BTWWF) has has given an application signed by

women workers of the tea-workers community to increase the maternity leave up to six months (as mentioned by Geeta Dutta, leader of BTWWF) as it becomes impossible for the women workers to move into the hills and work for eight hours and more in the tea-garden during the pregnancy period. Therefore, all these efforts need to be considered as the struggle of the tea-workers as community as individual. Then again, I have already mentioned in Part B of this paper that a social movement is not something that takes its form overnight but it gradually develops in historical space and time. Even the changes of these efforts take its place gradually. For instance, the government has taken steps to provide education where languages of different ethnic groups can be studied in government schools.¹² Hence, it is yet to be seen implemented in the space for the tea-workers community. Therefore, these struggles of the tea-workers as community and as individual clearly goals for a holistic change. Therefore, these efforts and struggle as community and individual needs to be viewed from a holistic approach.

Yet, these efforts to change the structural relations of the tea-workers from the oppressed position the tea-workers are embedded within clearly indicates towards the ideological position of the tea-workers, to become an equal citizen of Bangladesh State. Therefore, the struggle of the tea-workers is the struggle to change their powerless position and to gain power through their struggle. Thus, tea-workers struggle has brought out slogans like - 'The struggle of the tea workers will continue until the demands for their land rights is fulfilled'. Therefore, these struggles develop and shape in a continuous process. Therefore, the tea-workers struggle needs to be conceptualized as a social movement rather than a social protest. Yet, in the course of their power struggle the tea-workers want to forge some of the identity. Therefore, I think, a researcher of a social movement needs to address how a social movement group tries to establish identities along their struggle for power.

Forging Identity through the struggle

As I have mentioned earlier the movements intention to bring about a change within structural and non-structural relationship talks about the point of departure of the participants of the movement. Therefore, social movements try to establish certain identities in its course which

¹² For details info please visit url:

<http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/00000000-00000000-00000000-00000000-00000000-00000000-00000000-00000000/>

differs from the previous. For an empirical view let us look at the tea workers position again. The tea-workers are still 'landless'. Therefore, they are people without a 'permanent address' and 'people without no identity' if one considers the cultural discourse of 'Payer Tolay Mati Nai'. Next, they do not get education in their mother tongue in government schools. Again, they do not have sufficient school or the income that is needed to send the tea-workers child at school nor they get medical facilities. Therefore, the citizen who are having these facilities are not same as the tea-workers community within the larger space of Bangladesh Nation State. Hence, if one inspects then the tea-workers demand for their rights to own Khas Land, rights to have education, rights to have medical facilities essentially indicates the struggle to identify themselves as equal citizen of this Bangladesh. Therefore, the tea-workers struggle holds the ideological position that dictates the state to incorporate and acknowledge different and distinct ethnic identities, language, laws and cultural practices.

Prior to this, the right to own Khas Land is not just only one of the demands to become an equal citizen, but it also includes the right to have an 'identity' the tea-workers struggle for ages. This right will not make them to own the land but it will allow them to speak of a permanent address, the one that will allow them to take jobs outside the tea-garden where addresses such as permanent address are required from the employers.

The tea-workers struggle also includes the demand to have the same rights as any other industrial labor receives. This is because they are subjected to separate laws than any other industrial labor. Therefore, to have the same position under the Labor Act, 2006. Therefore, this is a demand to change their relationship with the state at an infrastructural level. Needless to say that this demand talks about the change of the tea-workers 'labor identity' that they are embedded within and to be treated as any industrial labor. Therefore, tea-workers struggle to gain power tries to establish certain 'identity' in its development, forming and reforming. However, tea-workers movement has various dynamics and features to it. I think that a researcher of a social movement needs to address these dynamics and features in order to conceptualize social movement.

Feature and Dynamics of the Tea Workers Movement

The community of the tea-workers can be divided in three separate categories -

a. The leaders of BCSU (tea-workers trade union)

b. The leaders within Civil Society (Valley, The Panchayat, BTWWF, Chandpur Begumkhana Bhumi Rokkha Committee,)

c. General Tea- Workers

Hence, in my perspective the nature of the tea-workers struggle needs to be seen in three separate categories where they are functioning as separately and as united community in strike, rallies and procession. However, due to the shortage amount of time I have just made an attempt to talk different actors of the the struggle of the tea-workers life. Hence, let us first look at the nature of the tea-workers movement from strikes, rallies and procession day by day.

The account of the outburst of 13th December has already been mentioned above in the introduction part of this paper. On the rise of the sun, the tea-workers continuously assembled on the demarcated land by the government officials from 14th December to 19th December. At the beginning, mainly the tea-workers of the Chandpur-Begumkhana Tea Estate came out for securing the land. Gradually, tea-workers from Deobondi, Chondichora, Amu, Nalua, Chaklapunji etc joined in order to secure their land. Again, I found that the students joined the strike, rallies and procession on the following days. The participation of the general tea-workers in the strike was not mechanical as it did not need for any organization such as BCSU or BTWWF or any Panchayet or Valley leaders to call them and in order to join the strike. Rather the participation of general tea-workers were organic.

From my perspective, the crowd gathered on 13th December was an incoherent mass in which individual workers experienced self-estrangement and powerlessness as Karl Marx explained in conceptualizing social movement.[citation needed] Although, tea-workers gathered on the Land the tea-workers had not fixed program schedule for the strike on that day. Therefore, it was not well – organized. Hence, the program began to fix specific schedules on 13th December and began to follow the schedule till 19th December. The leaders of the BCSU (tea workers trade union) and BTWWF (Bangladesh Tea Workers Women Forum) were present there. Agin, members of Bangladesh Student Union (Bangladesh Chatro Union) group (as mentioned by Mahmuda Kha) were present there.

However, tea-workers movement cannot be described by from a charismatic authority perspective as explained in the Part B of this paper. The reason behind is that from my participant observation, the tea-workers have no charismatic leader who can attract followers nor their worldview serves as recruiting force that pulls and connects with the goal the tea-workers community wants to fulfill. Rather the tea-workers lives and their daily experience created the space, the desire to be recruited and raise their voice against the decision of making a S.E.Z on the Khet Land. To me, roots of the desire to change the decision of S.E.Z and demand for land rights were inevitable outcome of the history the tea-workers had gone through over years. Therefore, I completely agreed to the lines Hasnat Quaiyum (advocate, convenor of Cha Shormik Bhumi Rokha Shonghoti Committee) said about the struggle of the tea worker that this movement had uplifted land rights issue more than ever after being subject to continuous deprivation from rights over land for years after years.

During this one week long strikes and procession, the movement gave rise to two committees (as mentioned by Biren Mukherjee, Leader of Luskerpore Valley). They are -

- Chandpur Begumkhan Krishi Bhumi Rokkha Committee (CBKBRC).
- Bhumi Odhikar Rokkha Committee(Land Rights Committee).

Therefore, I agreed with the argument Heberle Rudolf (Chicago School of Collective Behavior) was trying to indicate that organization and culture takes its shape in the course of the movement's line. Again, from Charles Tilly (the political process model), one of theorist of social movement as I have also mentioned above in part B of this paper argument I find that the the two emerged organization namely 'Chandpur-Begumkhan Krishi Bhumi Rokha Commitee' and 'Bhumi Odhikar Rokkha Committee' became the actors of pursuing power and in the course of the tea-workers movement.

However, as the movement captured the attention of newspaper and TV-media and social media such as facebook, the incident of the outburst gained a wide circulation. Journalist and activist from Dhaka and other came to Chunarughat for inspection. Next, the activist coming from Dhaka formulated a committee and named it as 'Cha Shramik Krishi Jomi Rokkha Shonghoti

Committee' (CSKJRSC) and they made collaboration with CBKBRC 'Chandpur-Begumkhan Krishi Bhumi Rokkha Committee'. On 21st January, members of both committee stand in front of the BEZA (Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority) office and raised their voice against the forgery they did by claiming that the 'Khet Land' as Khas Land. They claim that the tea-workers needed to given ownership of Khas Land permanently and brought the tea-workers under the State Tenancy Act. Leaders such as the Hasnat Quaiyum (activist and advocate, convener of CSKRSC), Kanchon Patro, Mohan Robidas and Swapan Santal (leaders of CBKBRC), Jonayed Saki (Chief co-ordinator of Gono Shonhoti), Abdus Sattar (Chief Co-coordinator of Democratic Leftist Front), Arup Rahee (General Secretary of C.B.S) and other activist such as Rakhil Raha(Writer), Kafil Ahmed (Artist) were present on that day. These organizations jointly signed a memorandum and send it towards the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

From instance above, I think that the tea-workers are trying to create national and international networks which link them across localities enabling local struggles to take on national and international significance. Parallel to this time, through the memorandum and the petition signed by the tea-workers, the legislatures had begun to recognize the interest of the tea-workers. Again, within these activities different networks of informal interactions between pluralities of individuals came along with the same demand within a social movement.

The people of sub-district(Upazila) of Chunarughat (Bengalis) on the 16th January, 2016, created a human chain demanding economic zone in this particular area. In their view, if the economic zone is established, job opportunity for one lakh (as mentioned by Karim Sarkar, locals of Upazila) unemployed people will be created.

I was present on there on the day and my participant observation is that I saw the group from Upazila raising their voice so that the government would sticks with the decision of establishing S.E.Z. Therefore , I think these is sign of conflict of interest between the tea-workers community and the Upazila community. Hence, the people of Upazila are functioning as a proponents to establish S.E.Z .

Then, activities such as the Chandpur-Begumkhan Bhumi Rokkha Committee called for a meeting of students and youth on 16th February in 23 gardens.

1. There will be a convention of youth and student on 26th February on the school field adjacent to Chandpur stand.
2. There will be a committee for each garden consisting of youth and students.
3. Petition of 50,000 people will be collected.

From instance above, I think Chandpur-Begumkhan Bhumi Rokkha Committee is making its process as an institution to calls to integrate , organize and to agitate in times as the struggle of the tea-workers continues to take its form and reformation.

On 28th May, at 4 p.m. “Cha Sromik Krishi Jomi Rokkha Songhoti Committee”arranged a seminar at the R.C Majumdar auditorium Hall of Dhaka University where activists, journalist, and N.G.O’s from different parts of Bangladesh came . The seminar was on land laws and the tea workers land rights. I was present on that day in the Majumdar auditorium hall where I saw only some people from the tea-workers community. However, they were the leaders of Luskerpore Valley and the leaders of Chadpur Begumkhan Bhumi Rokkha Committee. Hence, this program got media attention and the tea-workers life and struggle were shown within tv channels. Therefore , the circulation of the news made national and international activist to look into the subject.

However, the only group that I found was trying to collaborate and co-operate was the Chandpur Begumkhana Land Security Committee which was run by the leaders of different Valley. members are making a network within the 23 garden under Duncan Brothers. Then we will go for other tea garden. We have already managed to provide a memorandum in different garden of the Duncan Brothers the take signatures about 30,000 tea workers from 19 gardens under Duncan Brothers If we manage around 1,00,000 then we will send an application to the DC office about the land rights issue. Through, this legislative functions of the body will acknowledge tea-workers interest and demand.

Hence , these were the movement functioning as community. Hence I needed an account of the strikes for wage increment and other issues that are linked with labour line. Yet, I could not manage to have a direct participation observation on the strike for wage increase issue. However, I have managed to find one account of the strike that dates back to 2006 that is written in short in the text named, “The Story of the Tea Workers.” The tea plantation workers raised their voice because the minimum wage of an industrial worker fixed by the Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006 was not being followed within the garden. One of my interviewer mentioned that twenty tea-gardens were put on strike continuously (as mentioned by Dulal Ghosh, Leader of Panchayet, Noyapara Tea-Garden) at that time. From my perspective these voices coming from the ones who raised their voices for the increase of wage clearly explains their individual experience of powerlessness due to shortage of income. According to Marx, the diametrically opposed interests produce inherent class antagonism which reaches the height to a revolutionary conflict between workers [tea-workers] and capitalists [owners of the tea-garden]. However, the conflict did gave rise to number of strikes and rallies however the struggle could not form into an well organized shape because the leaders of BCSU, trade union of tea workers had conflict within themselves. I however got this hint of their conflict from the text written by Philip Gain. Philip Gain states that BCSU became separated in two groups where rivalry was present within the tea-workers. To cross check this data, I asked the tea-workers about the issue. Both Dulal Ghosh and Shaon Robidas replied that BCSU got divided into two groups namely the Bijoy group and the Makhon group. They go on saying that it was due to the existence of this conflict the strike could not gain its natural acceleration and that the trade union did not let the general tea-workers to go on streets and protest. At the end, the general tea-workers withheld their involvement in the strike.

This incident help me to rethink about the the gradual succession Karl Marx had talked about that the workers will attack the machineries and then form a trade union and therefore it will gradually overthrows the power. In my view, an organizing body is needed in order to agitate organizedly but it does not have to be the trade union such as (BCSU). Again, in my view, a social movement is a continuous making of movement of different actors and therefore a social movement is not only about one or two organization. From instance above I think the trade union worked as hinder to a progression of the movement back then in 2008. However, i needed

to cross check more datas about BCSU and the other organization involved with the movement. Therefore, I started collecting what are the organizations involved within the tea-workers struggle. Next, I started taking account of what sort of conflict exists within the tea workers who are involved in both land and labor issue. This task involved the interest to inspect the responses of the power holders of tea-workers strike and procession and their ability to protect the interest of the tea-workers through coalitions, bargaining and cooperation. The task also included how the actors mobilize large number of supporters and make strategic choices. Therefore, both collective action of larger group, fragmented groups and individual engage in communication, co-operation or conflicts became my concern.

To begin with, I have already mentioned about the institution BCSU, the tea-works trade union who were involved with carrying out the demands of the tea-workers. They are the ones who negotiate with BTA. The tea-workers trade union, BCSU has a history of being known as ‘company union’ or ‘loyal trade union’ as mentioned in part A of this paper. Hence, I found that a hint of the BCSU in the text written by Philip Gain where he mentions that although BCSU demanded an increase of payment by up to 100% the owners refused to grant it and the BCSU agreed in the end. Therefore, I went on to take more info about BCSU. To my utter surprise, I found that the owners of the company who were bound by the Labor Act, 2006 to give payments for weekends from 01st January, 2015 to 30th September, 2015 managed to escape this amount of payment as BCSU signed the agreement BTA introduced to them. Therefore, BCSU claimed that they are the ones who managed the payment for weekends which was given to the workers from 30th September, 2015. This information was confirmed by not only Geeta Dutta(the leader of BTWWF) but also leaders like Dulal Ghosh and Shaon Robidash. Geeta Dutta mentions that the leaders are of BCSU are Freud and broker and they did not keep the promise to increase the wage up to 200tk. Again she mentioned that BCSU are quite about issues like maternity leaves and medical facilities within the tea garden. She added that if someone takes the account of the higher posts of BCSU, then he/she will not find any women leader in it. She goes on saying that the women leaders that exist within BCSU are merely representing the women tea-workers of the tea-garden whereas 70% of the tea-workers are women. Swapan Santal and Biren Mukherjee provided more important aspect of BCSU. They told me that BCSU remained conservative in terms of promoting land rights and same rights in labor laws and that in number of gardens we

stopped giving the subscription amount allocated for the BCSU. They added that BCSU does not talk about the fact that why the tea-workers are still having a cut in their rations whereas the company had lost their lease agreement on the Khet Land.

When I went and asked Nripan Pal (leader of BCSU), he explained to me that BCSU in its charter of demands of 2015, demanded increment of wage from 69 tk/day to 200 tk/per day. However, the BTA did not agree to their demand. He added that the BCSU has submitted 20 points within their charter of demand and the demands are selected from the outcome of sessions where Panchayet and Valley Leaders come and exchange their opinion. Yet, when I asked him about land issue he replied that we are ready to secure the Khet Land at any cost.

The organization approach to collaborate and co-operate with each other and form a coalition remained absent as the I found out that BTWWF will not go for a co-operation with the BCSU as the leaders remained Freud and Broker till this day(as mentioned by Geeta Dutta). Hence, when I asked the leaders of BCSU about collaboration with BTWWF, Nripan Pal answered that they are happy to collaborate with any organization that are willing to work with BCSU if the organization provides us with logical demand from the tea-workers. He added that it does not need to be an organization to provide demand and that any general tea-workers demand will be considered by the BCSU the leaders feel that the demand is logical.

From my participant observation on different aspect of the conflict within the tea-workers community is that BCSU has failed to protect the interest of the tea-workers through bargaining with the owners of the tea-garden and secure the interest of the tea-workers up until now. Therefore, in this process the general tea-workers has become aware of the fact that BCSU will not secure their interest but they have to secure their interest by themselves. As a result, more than seven garden has stopped the subscription that was allocated for BCSU (as mentioned by Dulal Ghosh).

Hence, these are all the efforts I have made to analyze the struggle of the tea-workers and the dynamics and features of the tea-workers movement as community and as individual. Therefore, as I have mentioned earlier that a social movement needs to be viewed with a holistic

approach as it shapes as a holistic approach by actions as a community and actions as an individual.

Conclusion

Tea -workers have passed a deceitful journey of 150 years and now they are in their fourth generation. This group has remained an alienated and isolated community with no skills for any other industry. The indenture labour line and the landless condition has been the focal story line ever since they have been brought here by the 'Coolie Trade'. There diversity of the culture, language, moreover laws such as community ownership of land has remained unacknowledged till this date.

Over the years they fought and struggle to get rid of this indenture labor system and tried to break free from the structural violence they are embedded within. Hence, there struggle did not form in overnight. Then again, there voice have turned down over the years as they tried to form and organize to bring about a change. Therefore the struggle of the tea-workers has to be seen from a distant past as in order to understand the present condition of their struggle against the oppression. This shared oppression and their goals to break free from the domination of the power holders such as the owner of the garden, Bangladesh Nation State, leaders of the trade union of the tea-workers (BCSU) and other leaders, those who made the community and the individual of the tea-workers realize about their self-estrangement and powerlessness.

Needless to say that the tea-workers are fully aware of the oppression they are embedded within. Therefore, these shared experiences made them realize that nothing can be achieved without a revolt against these oppressors. Therefore, in the course of their struggle against every odds has made them to formulate organization which has speaks out for the tea-workers interest. From my perspective, the efforts the tea-workers are bringing in together in order to challenge the roots of these structural violence, the established institutional and non-institutional structure needs to be seen with the lense of a social movement which speaks about their alienation, powerlessness and the power struggle to become an equal citizen of Bangladesh State.

Annex I

Geeta Dutta (Leader of Bangladesh Women Workers Tea Forum, Khurma Tea Estate)

Biren Mukherjee(Chairman of Chandpur Begumkhan Bhumi Rokkha Committee, Luskerpore Valley)

Swapan Santal(Chairman Indigenous Social Development Organization)

Nripan Pal (Joint Secretary, Bangladesh Cha Shromik Union)

Mahmuda Kha (Organizer : Chandpur Begumkhana Land Protection Committee)

Shaon Robidas (Ex-Tea-Worker)

Shitaram Bin (General Member of Bangladesh Tea Workers Union BCSU)

Rajkumari Bin (General Tea Worker)

Mohan Robidas (Research Fellow at Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust)

Hasnat Quaiyum (Advocate, Convenor of Cha Shramik Krishi Rokkha Shonghoti Committee

Annex II

BCSU - Bangladesh Cha Shromik Union

BTWWF- Bangladesh Tea Workers Women Forum

BTA- Bangladesh Tea Association

C.P. B - Communist Party of Bangladesh

CBKBRC- Chandpur Begumkhana Krishi Bhumi Rokkha Committee

CSKJRSC - Cha Shromik Krishi Jomi Rokkha Shonghoti Committe

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