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**NON-INCLUSIVE TRADE UNIONISM IN THE
TEA ESTATES OF ASSAM**

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PREFACE

This is an endeavour to encourage research in diverse areas of human interest in the context of the community and society. This research activity underlines not only latest academic excursions into the world of ideas but underscores its pragmatic possibilities and applied relevance. While poverty is a pan-Indian reality, it is discrimination and inequality which demand proactive measures. These things can be addressed by different media and there is an intrepid exemplar in an Assamese fortnightly Prantik, a socio-literary journal that has stood the test of time and created a niche in the popular Assamese mind. Education exploiting the available technologies with a view to making it accessible to all is the thrust of technologically equipped societies. This necessary emphasis is highlighted in papers dealing with, among others, our own institution of open education, KKHSOU.

The focus of the papers ranges from alternative journalism to distance education to ethical media exploitation and the ubiquitous discriminations practiced in the Indian scene and the inequalities which continue with different faces. Reality in India continues to be religious and communal by and large. The divine juxtaposed with the carnivalesque can definitely yield fresh insights into our reality. Even after owning the persistence of discrimination and inequalities, the identification and appropriation of spaces in the context of ethnic assertion and identity have also been adequately looked into in one of the papers. This is quite close to the existing exclusivity of even trade union organisations in certain sensitive areas like tea estates. The sad annals of tea and its commodification in Assam by the colonisers had only been added to by native planters till certain initiatives taken by the government. In the perspective of the socialist democratic polity, all organisations especially dealing with labour must be entirely inclusive. This aspect is also emphasized in one of the papers.

The papers are distinct because of a holistic exploitation of the available means of education and learning and the faith that informs them is accessibility and inclusivity. This is no utopian wish but a pragmatic reality in institutions like ours which challenge discrimination and not only advocate but practice accessibility. This is a humble step which I believe is in the right direction. While acknowledging the individual efforts of the researchers, I also would like to congratulate them on their emphasis on realities which are not merely academic but which inform our very existence as individuals and as members of the community.

Dr. Arupjyoti Choudhury
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Content

1.	Introduction- The Rise of Trade Unionism	1
2.	Unionism- in the Context of the Tea Plantation Industry	5
2.1	Origin of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS)	8
3.	Non-Inclusive Trade Unionism	10
3.1	Women Workers' Lack of Representation in the Trade Unions	10
3.2	Non-Inclusion of the Casual Workers	12
4.	Conclusion	15
	References	15

NON-INCLUSIVE TRADE UNIONISM IN THE TEA ESTATES OF ASSAM

Abstract

Assam produces nearly 53 per cent of the total tea production in India. Around one million workers are engaged in tea industry in India. Tea, a commercial product, was first cultivated and expanded by the British. It is an outcome of the toil and struggle of the Adivasi workers or indigenous people of central and east India who were made to migrate to Assam under extremely brutal conditions and they form one of the most oppressed communities in the state. This section of the population has been waging struggles to protect its rights in the state. Tea production is a labour-intensive enterprise in which trade unions should ideally play an assertive role at every stage. However, it is seen that the trade unions in the tea estates are gradually being questioned on their functionality in shaping industrial relations and upholding rights of the workers. The key respondents, comprising plantation workers, trade union members, owners of the tea estates and management staff, belong to the major tea producing districts of the state, viz. Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Sonitpur and also a less producing district, Kamrup. The present study ascertains the role of trade unions in dealing with key issues faced by the plantation workers such as non-inclusion of women workers, casual workers and its failure to play an effective role in the negotiation or collective bargaining process with the management and the state. The trade unions function under the principles of the political parties and acquisition of political power has become their sole motto.

Key words: *trade unions, tea industry, plantation workers, industrial relations*

1. Introduction- The Rise of Trade Unionism

The tea industry in Assam is one of the major economic contributors to the region. Assam produces more than half the total of tea in India. The commercial

production of tea was initiated by the British. However, they were confronted with the problem of shortage of labour as the 'local' people residing in the region were not much interested to work in the tea plantations. Thus, the British Government was left with the last resort to procure labour from the famine- and poverty-stricken regions of Central and East India. The Adivasi workers were brought to the plantations in Assam and made to settle down in the estates as groups completely cut off from the neighborhood and other indigenous groups inhabiting in the state. The plantation workers have been subjected to domination and subordination in the hands of the powers. However, the workers lack consciousness of the problem. There is emaciated possibility of workers' expression of grievances in an organized manner. They have been conditioned to be submissive in nature, surviving on the subsistence wages preset by the then British estate owners and later the Indian owners. The workers lead a restrained life where their mobility or any form of communication with each other to converse their tribulations was clogged. Gradually, the process of 'class formation' started to take place in the estates. As time elapsed, trade union movement in India gained its momentum also having its impact in the tea industry of Assam. Sidney and Webb (1900) in 'A History of Trade Unionism' define trade union as 'a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining the conditions of their working lives'. In general, the objective of a union is to secure better living and working conditions for the workers who are employed in a particular industry. With reference to this, the social dominance theory finds its relevance in the present context.

The social dominance theory attempts to integrate many of the psychosocial insights of the various theories into a single framework (Sidanius, Pratto, Martin, & Stallworth, 1991). This theory deviates from the classical sociological approach in signifying that traditional class conflict, rather than being the central form of conflict in human societies (as classical Marxists have long argued), is actually derivative of a much more general tendency for humans to establish relatively arbitrary ingroup-outgroup boundaries and to subsequently engage in various acts of ingroup favoritism and outgroup denigration on the basis of these distinctions. According to this perspective, conflict between economic classes derives from many of the same psychosocial forces driving conflict between different races, genders, ethnic groups, religions, ages, nationalities, geographical

regions and any other socially constructed group divisions. The social dominance theory asserts that socially constructed groups are almost always hierarchically organized, such that certain dominant or hegemonic groups can be identified that enjoy a uneven allocation of positive social value (e.g., wealth, power, privilege, good nutrition, good health), whereas a number of subordinate groups are burdened with a disproportionate share of negative social value (e.g., low status, poor health, poor nutrition, prison sentences). The tea industry flourishes on the racial prejudices and exploitative practices meted out to the workers by the owners and the management. Social Dominance Theory assumes that we must understand the processes producing and maintaining prejudice and discrimination at multiple levels of analysis, including cultural ideologies and policies, institutional practices, relations of individuals to others inside and outside their groups, the psychological predispositions of individuals and the interaction between the evolved psychologies of men and women. The tea industry functions saliently on these principles; started in the British Raj upto present.

Bhowmik (1981) highlights the phenomenon of class formation among people who are tribal in origin and among whom the basic tribal distinctions still persist. His attempt is to unravel the conditions of the tea workers of Sonali Tea Estate of Jalpaiguri district also known as Dooars of West Bengal. The Oraons, Mundas, Kharios (sections of the Adivasis) and others who constitute the labour force in North Bengal are losing tribal attributes. The tribal societies get transformed through the operation of huge economic forces like globalisation – smaller units get subsumed under the larger whole, and the growth of capitalism that has dithering effects on smaller units. Capitalism, a type of economic organization in its pure form, may briefly be defined as a system where private ownership and control of the economic instruments of production exists through the accumulation of capital. There is gearing of economic activity to making profits. It is a market framework that regulates these activities as appropriation of profits, the provision of labour by workers who are free agents (Nicholas, 2006).

The history and continuation of 'class-struggle' cannot be ruled out as one of the most significant factors of gradual formation of trade unions. According to Cole (1953), under capitalism class struggle is indispensable and irrefutable whether we like it or not. He says that the class struggle is preached not on the ground

that it is desirable but on the ground that it is a monstrous and irrefutable fact. Perlman (1928) argues that many workers in Europe have stepped beyond this 'job conscious' bread and butter unionism into 'class conscious' political trade unionism. It is only because of outside influences, whereas American unions have demonstrated how free they are from those outside influences. He believes that the future of any trade union lies in sticking to genuine bread and butter trade unions. This theory is also known as 'scarcity conscious' of manual workers. He rejected the idea of class consciousness as an explanation for the origin of the trade union movement but substituted it with what he calls job consciousness.

Marxist theory is known as 'Political Revolutionary Theory' of labour movement. The theory goes around the concept of class struggle. According to Marx (year), "Large scale industries concentrate in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their interests. But the maintenance of wages, this common interest which they have against their boss unites them in a common thought of resistance combination". After the industrial revolution when machines were used for production, labourers or working class came under one roof as a measure of job security. Their frequent gathering under the same roof starts automatically bringing them closer and closer. They concentrated on the sale of their labour power, thus the unity started among labourers. Its short run purpose is to eliminate competition among labour and the ultimate purpose is to overthrow capitalist business men. "This organization of the proletarians into a class is continuously being upset again by competition between workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer mightier", such is the birth of trade union because of the struggle between two classes of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The ambition of Marx is that working class by achieving political power would abolish the hitherto-existing class disparities in the society.

The unitary approach asserts that the industrial enterprise as one, where management and workers strive to achieve common objective in spite of the fiction or conflict between management and workers. This is usually attributed to factors such as poor communication, inefficient management or disruptive or politically motivated workers. The supporters of this approach further say that unionism may be justified for manual workers to improve their

economic conditions and standard of living in case they are denied their legitimate demands. While the pluralist view differs from unitary view in holding that conflict in industry is inevitable, as the interests of the employees inevitably differ from those of the employers and that trade unions have an important role to play in representing those interests by regulating both market and managerial relations.

The radical approach rejects both the above analyses. It denies that there is reality in a system of checks and balances reconciling the conflicting interests of employers and workers. Rather, it asserts that fundamentally capitalism is the system of exploitation of the propertyless classes by the propertied classes. According to this view, a balance of power between employer and worker is an illusion which helps legitimize a system of gross inequality and privilege. No arrangement or system can alter the fundamental imbalance of control. The process of 'collective bargaining' provides a mechanism for resolving marginal disputes only but it cannot eradicate the roots of imbalance of capital and labour.

According to Munro (1991), trade union is an important social institution and performs significant social, economic and political functions. It constructs a body of rights for the working class using different methods of action such as political, legal and social. For Marx, trade unions are perceived as a weapon through which working class revolution can be brought about.

According to Bhowmik (1981), classes are not found readymade, not even in the most advanced capitalist societies. They are created by conscious and organized human action. Trade unionism, according to Mitra (2010), a worldwide movement, was borne out of industrialization. The trade union movement has a greater role in the revival and sustainability of the industry.

2. Unionism- In the Context of the Tea Plantation Industry:

The workers were forced to work in an alienated, monotonous and unhygienic work environment where their activities are closely monitored and controlled by the managerial personnel. In most of the tea industries, there developed a

tendency to exploit the workers and deprive them of their rights. The formation of trade unions can be accredited to this factor. As a result, the workers formed associations to protect their rights and fight against such gross exploitation. These associations are generally known as trade unions. In India, the right to form union was made statutory under the Trade Union Act, 1926.

Trade unions since the 1990s have been going through major changes. There is a decreasing trend in the number of trade union members. With increasing awareness and education among the workers, trade unions have become more rational and realistic in their approach. Now, they do not oppose economic reforms but the adverse effects of the reforms. The growth of trade union movement among the tea workers has broken down the isolation of the worker and helped in organized political action, within and outside the plantation. The workers are better aware of their rights as workers and more conscious of their identity as a class. But the main drawback seen is the division within the trade union movement and rivalries among political parties. In order to emerge as a 'class for itself', there has to be unity not only in their work or economic activity, but it also has to extend to their social life.

In this context, it is imperative to note that the isolation of the plantation from the wider social system was to the disadvantage of the labourers but to the advantage of the management. If we refer to Fordism style of work pattern, Fordism referred to the mechanized, mass production manufacturing methods developed in the USA by Henry Ford between 1908 and 1914. He divided previously complex work tasks into a number of simple operations, applying the principles of 'scientific management'. Special purpose machinery and moving assembly lines were its distinct features (Abercrombie and Nicholas, 2006). Labour costs were lowered, because work simplification increased output and also substituted cheaper, unskilled labour for expensive skilled workers, while production volumes were higher as a result of mechanization. The repetitive type of work brings in a monotony of work pattern to the plantation workers.

Plantation pattern of work is different from organization of work on the farm. It has five categories of people involved in the system. They are employees, management, staff, sub-staff and labour whose members are clearly differentiated

from each other and arranged in a strictly hierarchical order. The relation between the planter and the worker is of master and servant and not that of employer and employee, although the plantation is an industry. The relation between the owners and the workers is generally oppressive in nature. In the plantation, to a greater extent as compared to the factory, the management exercises direct control over the labourers not only at work but also outside of it. It was so because the labourers have no choice but to live on the plantation; in-house accommodation provided by the employer as they were far off from their native places. Since independence the wages and level of living of the tea workers have been improving slowly through the workers' organized effort and intervention of external political forces. A disjunction between the 'homogenous economic activity' and 'heterogeneous social life' can be seen.

"The tea gardens are managed like an extreme hierarchy: the managers live like Gods, distant, unapproachable, and incomprehensible. Some even begin to believe that they are Gods, that they can do exactly what they like." – (Rolt, 1991)

Rolt (1991) states how the British tea planters or owners are looked up to; not in respect but with fear. The plantation workers perceive them to be extremely powerful, often closely to any superpower and that things happen as they want them to be.

Bhowmik (2012) states that 'trade unions are a product of the Industrial Revolution'. Trade unions are an outcome of workers' need to protect their rights. In the present scenario, political parties and the trade unions which are founded and based on the ideologies of the powerful political parties in the country are playing a crucial role in identity politics of the Adivasis in Assam. These unions have been succeeding in creating class consciousness among the plantation workers in the state. The Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) based on the principles of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) based on the ideologies of the Communist Party of India hold strong influence on industrial relations in the tea estates in the state. Apart from these political parties and the trade unions, many students' groups have also come into effect that interfere or control the issues faced by the Adivasis in the state. The most influential ones are: the Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association

(ATTSA) and the Assam Adivasis Students' Association (ASSA) formed in the 1990s have been demanding for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for Adivasis in Assam. Field study shows that maximum number of trade unions in tea estates in Assam are registered under the ACMS.

2.1 Origin of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) :

The ACMS came into being under the All India Trade Union Congress. After the Trade Union Act was passed in 1926, post independence, there was a felt need for a strong labour union among the in factories and other organized as well as unorganized sectors in India. The AITUC came into existence on 4 May 1947 in New Delhi. The party took interest in organizing the tea workers into a formal union to safeguard their rights and protection from hazardous work conditions. Congress members like Kamakhya Prasad Tripathi, Bijoy Chandra Bagowati, Omeo Kumar Das, Mahendranath Sharma, took up the first initiative to register the body under the Trade Union Act of 1926. On 9th August 1958, the The ACMS extended its branches to a place named Bordubi in 1958 and later to Tinsukia, Margherita, Moran, Nazira, Sonari, Nagaon, Tezpur, Dhubri, Kamrup and many other places. There are 22 branches, around 150 members of the trade union from each district in Assam and around 600 members in total. It is the main body for initiating the process of bargaining and negotiation between the management and the plantation workers.

The ACMS has certain set of objectives: 'On the applied principles of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) to establish an order of society which is free from hindrances in the way of an all round development in its individual members which encourages the growth of human personality and education in all its aspects and goes to the utmost limit in progressively eliminating social, political and economic exploitation and inequality.' Thus, ensuring all round development of the plantation workers, protecting their rights and fighting against injustice and exploitation meted out towards the workers are some of the major objectives of the ACMS.

Apart from the ACMS, the Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) on the ideologies of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), has influence over some tea estates

in Upper Assam.

The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 also directs and emphasizes the role of the Trade Unions. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 is the major legislation that guides the administration in the tea estates. Other legislations which are supposed to be followed in the Tea industry are The Provident Fund Act (1952), Bonus Act, Maternity Benefit Act.

The Secretary, Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha, Head Office in Dibrugarh believes that the management has provided with many facilities though there was excessive exploitation of the workers earlier. Nowadays the workers class is gaining education and exposure and they are becoming aware of their rights. The workers put forth their demands and complaints usually through the ACMS and the union takes up the issue with the management. The management representative organizations are Assam Branch Indian Tea Association (ABITA), Bharatiya Chah Parishad (BCP) and Assam Chah Karmachari Sangha (ACKS) for the staff workers. The ACMS also analyses and considers the managements' problems and constraints and comes to a mutual understanding after collective bargaining process. A major problem faced by the workers is no good educational facility for their children. The Primary schools are nearby but the M.E. schools are quite far off from most of the labour lines. So the ACMS has put forward a demand to the management asking for bus facility for the workers' children to have access to higher education. Education among the tea workers brings about a lot of change in the workers' attitude and creates awareness about their rights.

The ACMS has a good rapport with the managements' organisations and grievances are settled through discussions and meetings usually. The AATTSA also encourages and at times instigates the workers to fight for their rights. The management usually tries to meet the demands of the workers as much as within their capacity. It is not like how it used to be earlier. Nowadays there is better understanding between the management and the workers though some level of unrest still exists. The management listens to the ACMS members and tries to solve the problems that crop up. Sometimes both the sides compromise and come to a mutual settlement of grievances. In case of major conflicts between the

management and the workers, when it does not get settled through discussions, the case is referred to the Labour Court.

Trade Unionism is not encouraged by the management. There are few workers who are members to the ACMS in the estate. The membership to the union is not encouraged in the estate. The workers of this estate are not much involved or active in the trade union matters. Few members go to the meetings held by the trade union. Usually there is no ill-treatment from the management. In case there is any problem among the workers, they directly go to the management.

3. Non-inclusive Trade Unionism :

In this context, non-inclusive unionism refers to the practice of deliberately excluding some groups, interests or concerns. Based on the primary data collected from the field, it has been found that the women workers and the casual workers have extremely fewer chances of representation in the union as well as the issues they are usually confronted with.

3.1 Women Workers' Lack of Representation in the Trade Unions :

The women in the estate do not take active participation in Trade Union activities and thus their issues remained marginalized. The women workers usually only attend meetings whenever called upon by the TU members. The Trade Union finally took side with the management. Women feel that they were bribed to take their side. Women's issues are not dealt with separately. Any kind of grievance taking place is usually settled in a collective way. Collective action takes place in such cases. They approach the management with the problems. Therefore, she feels that the TU is unable to protect their rights and the members are corrupted. The workers put forth their demands and complaints usually through the ACMS and the union takes up the issue with the management. The management representative organizations are Assam Branch Indian Tea Association (ABITA), Bharatiya Chah Parishad (BCP) and Assam Chah Karmachari Sangha (ACKS) for the staff workers. The ACMS also listens to the managements' problems and constraints and comes to a mutual understanding and bargaining. the ACMS has a good rapport with the managements' organisations and grievances are settled

through discussions and meetings usually. The All Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (AATTSA) also instigates the workers to fight for their rights. The opinions differ as some of the respondents believe that the management tries to meet the demands of the workers as much as within their capacity. There is a trade union in each estate and the matters are supposed to go through the same.

One of the respondents stated that she is a member of the trade union in the estate. There are around 20 members in the trade union of which seven are women. The Estate Managers are usually under the pressure of the workers' union. The trade union members are active in dealing with the matters of the union. But the management is quite diplomatic while dealing with the problems of the workers. They first assure the union that things will be done as per the agreement. However, finally issues remain pending and problems of the workers are hardly solved. Some of the members believe that the trade union has a powerful hold over the management. Equal participation of women is encouraged in the Union but the female workers hesitate to become active members of the same. They are apprehensive to talk in public and are able to hardly manage time for any other work than working in the estate plus doing the domestic chores. Five to six members represent the union in times of negotiating with the management. The present members are quite active.

In the recent past, there have been cases of suicide of some members residing in the labour lines due to some personal problems, sometimes also for financial burden. The estate witnessed various cases of theft, physical violence among the workers which are discussed and solved in the workers meetings. Some of them are reported to the police. In the case of sexual harassment of the women worker by the Assistant Manager, the case was taken to the management by the union. There are monthly meetings of the ACMS members held in the major towns of Assam and discussion of the various problems of the workers take place. Some cases are also referred to the Labour Courts and others are settled through formal Negotiation process between the workers and management.

Women workers have always been discriminated and remained marginalized in the tea plantations and most of the times they used to be treated as only cheap

labour. The managers and the supervisors always have the tendency to exploit and abuse the women workers. The main issue in the management labour conflict is they try to bribe the leaders of the trade union to settle the dispute internally and wash their hands off. She was rigid to stand against these cases of abuse and exploitation of the workers. If the case would have been referred to the labour court, legal action would have been taken on the manager. But most of the times irrational actions of the agitated workers make the situation out of control.

The women are less active in the affairs of the trade union and only few come up with their problems in the meetings of the union. Work in the plantation and at home takes away all the time and energy. The women are also discouraged at home to go out and attend the meetings or any other public gathering for that matter. Many are found to quit the union's memberships due to 'dirty' politics within the union members. The management also pressurizes the members of the trade union to suppress the problems of the workers. There is always a tussle between the management and the workers in which the union members are left stranded.

At present though a union exists, it is less active and the grievances are not settled well. Many workers from the labour lines have joined the Communist Party of India (CPI). Some years ago they gave a Bandh and it was accompanied by a strike. The estate was on a lock-out and the workers suffered loss of pay and bonus. At present no other political party operates in the estate. It is the ACMS that is there for namesake. The union body does not function in a transparent way. Mostly, the workers are not at all aware of the union's activities. The members are greatly influenced by the management and do not serve the purpose of the workers.

3.2 Non-inclusion of the Casual Workers in the Trade Unions in the Tea Estates :

'Casual workers' are non permanent workers in tea estates who are employed seasonally in large numbers; especially during the 'season time' i.e. when production of tea is at its peak (approximately from May to October every year).

The management exploits them during the season time when they have to pluck leaf but are not given any facility. They do not receive any benefits from the estates except few kilos of subsidized ration from the management and daily wages for the period of engagement at work. The casual workers are referred to as 'faltu' and they feel discriminated both by the management and the permanent workers mostly look down upon them. The casual workers are usually family members, relatives of some or the other permanent workers of the estate or sometimes not. Therefore they stay either at the labour lines in the quarters or are settled in nearby bastis. Even the basic necessities like quarters, firewood and medical facilities are not provided to these casual workers. It is extremely difficult when some casual worker or his/her family member is seriously ill.

Table: Number of respondents who are casual workers

Serial number	Categories of Respondents	Number of casual workers
1	Male Workers	16
2	Female Workers	14
3	Trade Union members	08
TOTAL		38

Total number of respondents of workers and trade union members' category is 96 including permanent, casual workers and ACMS workers. The given table shows that out of ninety six respondents under the workers and trade union member categories interviewed for the study, there are thirty eight casual workers. There are very few casual workers who are employed during the off season. In- depth interview with the casual workers have brought to the forefront core issues that are faced by the casual workers.

The casual workers believe that they are discriminated not only by the management, but also by the trade union and the permanent workers. Usually most of the casual workers are family members of the permanent workers staying in the labour lines. However some casual workers who are not relatives of the permanent workers feel left out from rest of the others. They face problems in staying in the labour

lines and look after their families since they are not provided with any housing facility. The tea industry in Assam employs more casual workers than permanent ones as discussed above. However, they are not represented in the trade unions in a justified way. Even in the table given previously shows that there are very few casual workers who hold membership to the trade unions. A probable reason for this could be that since most of the casual workers stay outside the labour lines in nearby settlements, they do not have easy access to organize meetings and discussions. Most of the casual women workers are almost unaware of what is occurring in the estate premises. It is seen that sometimes the casual workers are apprehensive to approach the trade unions to discuss their problems with the management. In the previously mentioned case of abuse on a casual woman worker by the estate Manager, the workers first approached the union and then the mob turned violent and directly attacked the Manager. However it was found that the trade union came to negotiation and the manager was not suspended. Most of the casual workers have to seek work outside the estate for about half the year. They become completely detached for a long duration of time and thus lose interest in actively participating in the affairs of the estate.

During the 'season time' the workers- permanent as well as casual, are involved in the production process and are extremely busy. The pluckers earn incentives if they are able to collect more than the minimum quantity of leafs fixed by the management. At that point of time there is hardly any scope for the workers to discuss the issues and problems faced by them. It is during the off season that the workers are more involved in discussing their issues. Most of the unrest between the management and the workers is found to be occurring during the 'off season'. The casual workers have to seek other employment or work for their sustenance. Some are involved in smaller tasks within the estate, while most of them move out of the estate for work. Thus, the casual workers lose out on the opportunity to actively participate in the affairs of the union. The cause for this can be said to be for their mobility and non permanency of work and stay at the estate. Few of the casual workers also complained that the trade unions in the estates are dominated by permanent workers. The needs and issues of the casual workers are hardly discussed in union meetings. Therefore, the casual workers feel ignored by other workers and members of the trade unions. They are apprehensive to approach the union and this is reflected on the

limited number of casual workers seeking membership to the estates unions. As a result of this, the casual workers are forming a class of their own, where their conflicts are not only with the management, but also with the other permanent workers and trade union members.

4. Conclusion :

Inclusive Management is an ideal form of management strategy in the present scenario where there is adequate valuation of the various groups in an organization during the decision-making process. However, in the plantation industry, the practices of non-inclusivity have been leading to grievances and industrial unrest among the workers and clashes with the management. Practice of non-inclusivity in the trade-union is creating hostility among the permanent and casual workers. The issues faced by the women workers remain marginalized. Another view is that the Trade Union is inactive and usually do not initiate the dialogue between the workers and the management. For the trade union, the president, secretary and other important positions, elections are not held and the management chooses them as per their liking and convenience. There is interference from various political parties and the ATTSA. A union should be formed to take up the issues of the workers and act as a medium of communication between the workers and the management. However, the main problem with the trade unions in the tea sector in Assam is that they become instruments of gaining political power and forget that they have to work for the cause of the workers. Many trade union members also appear to function under the influence of the management and act as their puppets. Hence, they are not able to play any significant role in the bargaining process with the management.

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