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Rubber Plantation vs. Tea Plantation: A Comparative Growth and Progress in Tripura

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Abstract

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Rubber plantation is a farm or large piece of land where rubber plants are grown. Usually rubber plants are cultivated as rubber plantations in specifically maintained rubber estates. Tea is one of the most popular and lowest cost beverages in the world and consumed by a large number of people. The trend of world tea production was almost the same trend as in case of area. The Tea Industry in India derives its importance by being one of the major foreign exchange earners and for playing a vital role towards employment generation as the industry is highly labour intensive. India is the second largest producer of tea in the world and contributes to around 30 percent of the global tea production. The three most distinct known varieties of tea in India are: (a) Assam tea (grown in Assam and other parts of NE India); b) Darjeeling tea (grown in Darjeeling and other parts of West Bengal), (c) Nilgiri tea (grown in the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu). This paper discuss about growth and progress of rubber and tea plantation in Tripura.

Keywords: Development, Deforestation, Forest, Tea, & Rubber

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INTRODUCTION

Forest is an integral part of the culture and tradition of Tripura. It also maintains the environment, bio-diversity, land, soil, water, air regimes. Any imbalance in equilibrium of the components affects the system adversely and has an adverse impact on human life. The state has a geographical area of 10,492 sq. km of which 6,293 sq. km about 60 percent is the forest area as per legal classification in the state. As per report of the Forest Survey-2003 of India, only 52.2 percent are well stocked, the remaining forest areas are degraded. Tea and rubber plantations are often combined, with tea bushes on one side of the road and rubber trees on the other.

The forests in Tripura are mainly tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen and moist-deciduous. Substantial area is covered with bamboo and it forms the basis of tribal culture of the State. Forests maintain the environment, bio-diversity, land, soil, water, air regimes. Any imbalance in equilibrium of the above components affects the system adversely and has an adverse impact on human life. A significant number of persons and families in Tripura continue to depend on forests and jhum or shifting cultivation as their main source of cultivation. Almost 10 percent forests area in under jhum or shifting cultivation in the State. Tea and Rubber both are important cash crops in India. In India large amount of labours are directly depends on these two types of plantations. Tea is a tasteful drink. From the centuries past, this drink is used by the Chinese people. The tea produced in India has been found the best quality of tea and major part of demand of tea in the world is supplied from India. Many tea gardens have been established in Darjeeling of West Bengal and in Assam. In North-east India Tripura is known for rubber production (second position in India, just

after Kerala). Rubber is one of the most important cash crops, with multipurpose uses. Rubber plantation was raised for the first time in Tripura in 1963 by the State Forest Department as soil conservation initiative.

RUBBER PLANTATION

Natural rubber is an elastomer that was originally derived from latex, a milky colloid produced by some plants. The plants would be 'tapped', that is, an incision made into the bark of the tree and the sticky, milk colored latex sap collected and refined into a usable rubber. The tree requires a climate with heavy rainfall and without frost. If frost does occur, the results can be disastrous for production. One frost can cause the rubber from an entire plantation to become brittle and break once it has been refined. In the humid tropics, Hevea plantations are often considered a sustainable system which, in some cases, might even upgrade the level of soil fertility.

Rubber plantation **is** a farm or large piece of land where rubber plants are grown. Usually rubber plants are cultivated as rubber plantations in specifically maintained rubber estates. The plant is a medium-sized tree with a slender trunk and thick green foliage. About 250 trees can be planted in one hectare of land. Rubber is so essential that it has been used since the beginning of modern civilization. It is the third consuming product in the world after iron and petroleum. Its varied use has made life easier and comfortable.

TEA PLANTATION

Tea is one of the most popular and lowest cost beverages in the world and consumed by a large number of people. The trend of world tea production was almost the same trend as in case of area. Unlike area and

production, tea productivity did not show any significant increase over the two decades (Majumder et al, 2012). Tea is globally one of the most popular and cheapest beverages with major production centres in India, China, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Turkey & Vietnam. The tea industry is one of the oldest organized industries in India with a large network of tea producers, retailers, distributors, auctioneers, exporters and packers (Indian Tea Industry, 2014).

The origin of the tea bush has been contested by scholars. It is native to certain areas ranging from the interior of Southern China to the border of Assam. Tea has only one species which is called “Camellia Sinosis. It came to the light in Fourth century and by about 650 A.D. during the TS'ang dynasty the growing popularity of tea induced farmers in most provinces in China to cultivate Tea and subsequently became an article of commerce. The discovery of indigenous tea in Assam in 1823 led to the origins of the tea industry in India. The Calcutta Agricultural Society differs from the above opinion. It has consistently held that in the early 1700's, the ships of the East India Company frequently brought the tea plants in the country by way of curiosity. The birth of Indian tea industry was marked by the discovery of indigenous teas plant in Assam in 1823 by Robert Bush. In 1874 the land located in the East of Teesta River was explored with the foreign liability of growing tea plants. The Indian Tea Control Act 1933 was amended in 1938 and 1943, and subsequently in 1950. Both the Central Tea Board Act 1949 and Indian Tea Control Act 1938 were replaced by the Tea Act 1953 which came into effect from 01st April 1954 (Karmakar & Banerjee, 2005).

TEA PLANTATION IN INDIA

The Tea Industry in India derives its importance by being one of the major foreign exchange earners and for playing a vital role towards employment generation

as the industry is highly labour intensive. India is the second largest producer of tea in the world and contributes to around 30 percent of the global tea production. Tea in India is grown over an area of 600000 hectare (ha) which accounts for 16 percent of the total area under tea cultivation in the world. The Indian tea industry is having thousands of tea gardens spread across various states of India. In West Bengal and Assam there are around 8,500 tea estates, while in the southern states of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu there are another 5,500 tea estates. In India more than 50 percent sales of tea is routed through auction at various auction centres located in North & South India. Tea generally moves directly from factory either to auction centre for sale or for direct sale to national or international buyers. India is the fourth largest exporter of tea in the world with major export destinations as Russia, UAE, United Kingdom and Poland (Indian Tea Industry, 2014).

Production strategies of the two major tea growing areas of north east India and south India differ due to various factors such as soil, climate, plant growth, pests, diseases and cost of production. Harvesting in north east India is confined to nine months whereas in south India tea bushes are harvested throughout the year. There are remarkable variations in the chemical constituents of tea leaves due to climatic variables, soils, plant physiology and agro-inputs. In India, tea is grown in a wide amplitude of climatic variables, at latitudes from 8° 12' N in Nagercoil in Tamil Nadu to 32° 13' in Kangra in Himachal Pradesh and at altitudes ranging from near sea level in Assam to 2414 m (7920 feet) above mean sea level in Korakundha in the Nilgiris in south India. In north east India tea is planted in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys of Assam, plains of Dooars and Terai and Darjeeling hills in north Bengal (Hazarika & Muraleedharan, 2011).

The three most distinct known varieties of tea in India are: (a) Assam tea (grown in Assam and other parts of NE India) b) Darjeeling tea (grown in Darjeeling and other parts of West Bengal), (c) Nilgiri tea (grown in the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu) (Tea Industry, 2014). With the growth of the tea industry in the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, other suitable areas of North-East India were also brought under tea cultivation. Tea was first planted in the district of Darjeeling in West Bengal in 1839 and was spread over to Terai in 1862 and to Dooars in 1874. In 1838, the first commercial sample of Assam tea containing twelve chests weighing around 140 kilograms was sent to England and eight of them were auctioned on January, 1839. The Wasteland Rules were made as liberal as possible to encourage tea plantations. The rates of revenue for Wastelands were kept below those of traditional cultivation in the region in order to facilitate large-scale acquisition of wastelands. The gaining strength of the industry led to the establishment of The Indian Tea Association (ITA) in 1881 and the United Planters Association of Southern India (UPASI) in 1894. The ITA was the first association in tea that represented the North Indian planters (Growth of the Tea Industry, 2012).

The 142 year-old Bombay Trading Corporation entered the plantation business in 1913. Today its plantations in the hills of South India cover 2.822 hectares under tea. These plantations are located in prime plantation areas, producing eight million Kgs of tea annually. Preserving the aroma, flavor and district taste of classic Indian tea, BBTCL is one of the most experienced and highly respected business houses in the country. The Annamallai hill, where the Mudis Grioup is located, is the largest tea district in south India. The hills run parallel to the west coast and are accessible from the historic port of Cochin. On the eastern side, one descends into plains of

Tamilnadu, with the closest city being Coimbatore, well known for its cotton and textile industry. The hills themselves are forested and the tea area nestles in a bowl in the hills. This is one of the largest tea areas in South India, covering some 14,000 hectares and is home to the estates of many companies. The average elevation is about 3,500 feet above the sea level and the teas produced are typically medium elevation teas (Bombay Burmah, 2015).

Tea industry in India is at crossroad not knowing how to reverse the adverse trends in global markets that have directly affected its fortunes. There is fierce competition abroad, India's uncompetitiveness on account of high cost and poor quality, and changing consumer demand. India is a producer, consumer and exporter of tea. The Indian exports declined by 13 percent during 2003 but increased by four percent in 2004 over the previous year volume. During this period the Indian rupee had appreciated by seven percent thereby making Indian exports more uncompetitive. The situation in the world markets for tea can be characterized by over supplies, a slow growth in demand, and a fierce competition. It is necessary to reduce global supplies by increasing domestic consumption, curtailing production or at least limiting further extension of area, and developing new markets (Asopa, 2007).

RUBBER PLANTATION IN TRIPURA

Large-scale planting of rubber commenced in the Northeast in 1963 with plantations in degraded forestland are in Tripura as a soil conservation initiative. Soil conservation departments of Mizoram, Meghalaya and Assam took to planting rubber near about the same time. Low elevation regions of the Northeast, with the sole exception of Sikkim, with near tropical climatic features soon emerged as the principal rubber growing zone outside the traditional belt in the country, with Tripura turning out to be the

second largest rubber growing state in India. Rubber has been identified as one of the thrust areas in Tripura, in view of its suitability to the terrain and the acceptability amongst the people. Studies have shown that about 100,000 hectares of area in the state can be brought under rubber plantation. Tripura Forest Development & Plantation Corporation Limited is a Public Sector Undertaking of Government of Tripura. The Corporation is mandated for development of forests through plantations and upliftment of economically weaker sections especially tribal population of Tripura.

Rubber is an important commercial crop in Tripura. Government of Tripura earns

large amount of revenue from this cash crop. Kerala and Tripura are the two states which are known for rubber cultivation. A rubber plant has to grow for about seven years before it can be tapped on a regular basis. Rubber based agro-forestry involves a complex and diverse cropping system that combines the growing of rubber and other agricultural crops in the area in a sustainable manner. Rubber has been identified as one of the thrust areas in Tripura, in view of its suitability to the terrain and the acceptability amongst the people. Rubber plantation is a popular cash crop among the rural tribal's in Tripura. Rubber was introduced in Tripura in 1963 by the Forest department.

Table: 1 shows the year wise extension in area of Rubber Plantation

Sl. No.	Year	Area (in Ha.)
1.	1976-77	574
2.	1981-82	3590
3.	1986-87	10085
4.	1991-92	17860
5.	1996-97	23936
6.	2001-02	30576
7.	2006-07	35760
8.	2007-08	39670
9.	2008-09	46588

Source: Rubber Board, Tripura

The above table shows that in Tripura rubber plantation is expanding very rapidly from the initial stage. In Tripura, Jhumia rehabilitation is promoted primarily by the Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation (TRPC). TRPC was set in the year 1983 with the avowed aim of offering a settled livelihood to the tribal Jhumias of the state. It has chosen rubber plantation as a new means of achieving this goal in

view of its adaptability, large employment potential, comparatively shorter gestation period and ecological sustainability. Rubber Board started implementing Group and Block plantation schemes from 1992 and thus a revolution set off. Rubber Board kept on promoting rubber from village to village and a spectacular progress could be achieved.

Table: 2 Shows agency wise area brought under rubber plantation in 2007-08

Sl. No.	Name of the agency	Area promoted by the agency (ha)	Proportional share
1	TFDPC Ltd	10744	30.04
2	TRPC Ltd	6047	16.91
3	TTADC	1100	3.08
4	Rubber Board	17869	49.97
	Total	35760	100

Source: Rubber Board, Tripura

The above table shows that rubber board is more ahead in rubber cultivation in Tripura (Economic Review of Tripura, 2013-14, 2015). Rubber has already started influencing the socio-economic profile of rural tribal's. The state government, right from the beginning has been giving great importance to rubber and the Rubber Board has been implementing a variety of programmes for the development of tribal's through rubber plantation. The state government agencies like Tripura Forest Development and Plantation Corporation Ltd. (TFDPC) and Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation Ltd (TRPC) also have contributed significantly for the development of rubber plantation in rural areas.

The Rubber Board started implementing Group and Block Plantation Schemes from 1992 onwards and thus a revolution was set off. These schemes have changed the whole scenario of rubber cultivation in Tripura. The Rubber Board keeps on promoting progress. For tribal's, an integrated approach has been adopted, and a World Bank Project implemented in the period 1994-2000. A tribal development plan was implemented in Tripura covering about 4000 tribal families. These families, mostly comprising Deb Barma, Jamatiya, Reang and Chakma tribes were involved in Jhum or shifting cultivation. In a bid to settle these Jhumiya people, the Rubber Board along with the Tripura Government resorted to rubber plantations.

TEA PLANTATION IN TRIPURA

Tea cultivators in Tripura, hit by reducing profit margins over the years, are pushing for a shift to the economical and less labour intensive rubber plantation. A stringent land lease law and active labour unions in the state have till now prevented any major foray into the trade. In a classic case of profit-labour welfare seesaw, the unions are vehemently opposing the move, fearing a loss of livelihood of the over 14,000 strong tea garden workforce. Several owners, though, desperate to increase their dipping margins, are already cultivating rubber, sparking tension in the unions. It is an open secret of the Tripura tea industry that many owners, and even government co-operatives, cultivate rubber on land leased for tea. Though it is not legal as of now, it is a feasible route for revival of the industry. Through the last decade, our profit margins have dipped considerably with increasing costs of production, labour and transport. To produce one kg of tea worth Rs. 80, the input is around Rs. 70. At present, only 6,500 hectares of the 14,000 hectares leased for tea is under cultivation. If considerable profit is made through rubber cultivation, the amount in the long run can even be used for employing better and scientific methods to improve the quality of the tea produced (The Telegraph, August 22, 2011).

The agro-climatic conditions in Tripura are suitable for development of tea plantation.

The soil is generally fertile, without any major problems of toxicities or deficiencies. The average annual rainfall is about 210 cm. with a fairly even distribution over the year. Tripura has a history of tea plantations dating back to 1916. In fact, Tripura is categorized as a traditional tea-growing State – with about 55 Tea Estates and 4,350 small tea growers, producing about 8.9 million kg of tea every year. This makes Tripura the 5th largest, among the 14 tea-producing States, after Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. There is considerable scope to increase the productivity and area under tea plantation (Tea, 2015).

The Tripura Tea Industry is burgeoning into one of the industries of the northeast Indian state. The hilly terrains, fertile soil and climatic conditions of Tripura are conducive to the growth of tea plantations. Nearly 67 tea gardens and 4,346 small estates that stretch across an expanse of 6,000 hectares have mushroomed in the state. The state also receives adequate rainfall of over 2100 mm rains that is uniformly distributed throughout the year. Tripura thus ranks 5th amongst the 14 tea producing states in the Indian subcontinent. The Tripura Government claims that the production of tea in the state is currently estimated to 7.5 million kg. Some of the tea estates of Tripura also produce the non-toxic "Bio-tea" that has tremendous demand in the international market. The Tripura state government is currently attempting to increase the net tea production in the state. The fine blend of the tea leaves is what makes the Tripura tea special and augments its demand in the Indian as well as the international market. A couple of well-known tea estates, namely the Fatikcherra Tea Estate and the Ludhah Tea Estate have broadened their horizons to venture into the production of organic tea (Economy of Tripura, 2015).

BENEFITS OF RUBBER PLANTATION

The period of gestation of rubber is about seven years. After the commencement of tapping proper processing and profitable disposal of the crop create problems to the small growers. The system of grading is always manipulated by buyers and it often results in lack of realisation of fair selling price. The middlemen marketing chain also creates harm to the interest of the small holders. Low profitability is one of the problems faced by the Small Rubber Growers. Rapid rise in the wages of labours and increase in the price of fertilisers are the problems faced by the small rubber growers. In 1986 the Rubber Board promoted formation of small voluntary associations of small growers registered under the Charitable Societies Act called the Rubber Producers Societies (RPS) in 1986.

RPS assists in transfer of new technologies to members. It also assists common marketing of member s rubber grade-wise and at remunerative prices. There are economic as well as social benefits which are expected to get from the RPS. Members of RPS would get fair price for their products. It would create co-operative spirit and communal harmony as member would be from different castes and culture. The help from Rubber Board to cooperatives includes organisational assistance, share participation, working capital loans etc (Hameedu, 2014). Rubber plantation helps to fight against deforestation.

Tapping is the process of collecting latex from rubber plants. Those labours who involve in this work are identified as rubber tapper. Tapping work is normally done in early morning. Rubber sheet is the primary input of rubber industry. In rubber factory different types of goods are produce by using rubber sheets. In those factories large quantity of unemployed tribal's can get their work. Rubber seed is

a minor source of non-edible oil. The oil content ranges from 14-16 percent of the total weight of seeds. Rubber seed cake can be used up to 20% of the total weight of cattle feed. Rubber wood has emerged as an substitute source of timber. Processed rubber wood can be used in furniture panelling, flooring and household articles. Rubber tree is a rich source of nectar. It is found at the extra-floral nectar glands at the end of the petiole where the leaflets join. About 15 hives can be placed in a hectare of rubber. Common people can collect branches of the broken trees which they can be use as fuel. In every year during March-April all leafs of trees are generally falls and it also use as fuel in rural areas. In this way this will reduce pressure on forest for collecting firewood's.

BENEFITS OF TEA PLANTATION

Tea is the second most popular drink in the world, after water. For a number of developing countries it is an important commodity in terms of jobs and export earnings (Majumder & Roy, 2012). Tea cultivation on small holding is a recent development in Indian tea sector. The economic importance of small business in a developing country like India is much more than innovative and invention; they have been a vital source of absorbing unaccountable no of person at place in semi rural areas. In India, besides unemployment the economy is facing many other problems like poverty, illiteracy, poor health, etc. To overcome some of the basic unsolved problems like unemployment and income generation, country may encourage entrepreneurship through small business. The opportunity to enter into this business venture may cultivate the spirit of entrepreneurship which will empower the economic growth of the society as well as the economy. Entrepreneurs undertake business activities, employ themselves in that

business and open up employment avenues for the others (Borah, 2013).

In 1841 a Scottish surgeon, Dr. Campbell planted the first tea garden in the Darjeeling region of Northern India. For a century, the tea industry in India thrived, and Darjeeling tea was prized. After independence in 1947 the tea gardens fell into disarray under the Indian government's policy of rapid industrialization (Cheeseman, 2008). Regarded for thousands of years in the East as a key to good health, happiness, and wisdom, tea has caught the attention of researchers in the West, who are discovering the many health benefits of different types of teas. Tea is a name given to a lot of brews, but purists consider only green tea, black tea, white tea, oolong tea, and puerh tea the real thing. All these teas also have caffeine and theanine, which affect the brain and seem to heighten mental alertness.

Green tea's antioxidants may interfere with the growth of bladder, breast, lung, stomach, pancreatic, and colorectal cancers; prevent clogging of the arteries, burn fat, counteract oxidative stress on the brain, reduce risk of neurological disorders like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, reduce risk of stroke, and improve cholesterol levels. Black tea has the highest caffeine content and forms the basis for flavored teas like chai, along with some instant teas. Studies have shown that black tea may protect lungs from damage caused by exposure to cigarette smoke. It also may reduce the risk of stroke. One study showed that white tea has the most potent anticancer properties compared to more processed teas (Edger, 2009). Tea's antioxidants protect body from the ravages of aging and the effects of pollution. Tea may reduce risk of heart attack and stroke. Unwanted blood clots formed from cholesterol and blood platelets cause heart attack and stroke. Drinking tea may help keep your arteries smooth and clog-free, the same way a drain keeps bathroom

pipes clear. Tea protects bones. It's not just the milk added to tea that builds strong bones. One study that compared tea drinkers with non-drinkers, found that people who drank tea for 10 or more years had the strongest bones, even after adjusting for age, body weight, exercise, smoking and other risk factors.

Tea bolsters immune defenses. Drinking tea may help body's immune system fight off infection. Tea protects against cancer. Thank the polyphenols, the antioxidants found in tea, once again for their cancer-fighting effects. Tea helps keep hydrated. Caffeinated beverages, including tea, used to be on the list of beverages that did not contribute to daily fluid needs. Since caffeine is a diuretic and makes pee more, the thought was that caffeinated beverages couldn't contribute to overall fluid requirement. Tea is calorie-free. Tea doesn't have any calories, unless add sweetener or milk. Consuming even 250 fewer calories per day can result in losing one pound per week. Tea increases metabolism. Lots of people complain about a slow metabolic rate and their inability to lose weight. Green tea has been shown to actually increase metabolic rate so that can burn 70 to 80 additional calories by drinking just five cups of green tea per day (Today Health, April 5, 2005).

In 2011, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reported that there was very little evidence to support the claim that green tea consumption may reduce the risk of breast and prostate cancer. The US National Cancer Institute reports that in epidemiological studies and the few clinical trials of tea for the prevention of cancer, the results have been inconclusive. Meta-analyses of observational studies have concluded that black tea consumption does not appear to protect against the development of oral cancers in Asian or Caucasian populations, the development of esophageal cancer or prostate cancer in Asian populations, or the development of lung

cancer (Health effects of tea, 2015). Tea plantation industry of Assam and West Bengal, together constituting the most productive region in the world, is more than 150 years old. There are more than 1500 tea estates in these two states employing around 1.1 million workers. The tea industry in India has steadily prospered all through these years and is making huge profits even in the days of downturn. The tea plantation workers are still paid wages below the minimum wage of agricultural workers (Lahiri, 2012).

Tea plantations are not just economic production units, but rather social institutions which control the lives of their resident work force to a large extent. For the plantations do not just offer employment, they are also responsible for providing housing, water, welfare and many facilities that affect the daily lives of worker. One of the most remarkable features of tea plantations is the large number of female workers, who constitute about 50 percent of the total work force. Women are especially active in plucking, which is very labour intensive. Women are believed to be more efficient pluckers than men, but they are given hardly any opportunity for promotion (Tea plantation labour, 2012).

Tea plays a significant role in rural development, poverty reduction and food security in developing countries and is one of the most important cash crops in the world. Climate change is an important environmental issue and impacts greatly tea on growth and production as tea is mainly grown under rain-fed mono-cropping systems and weather conditions determine optimal growth (Chang, 2015). Rapid expansion of tea plantations in the pre-Independence era and deforestation problems during 'tea estate closures' further aggravated the ecological fragility of the area in the form of weakening of slopes, soil erosion and land sliding and other forms of environmental degradation. Since the inception of tea plantation, the workers have been like bonded laborers in

the plantation system. They constantly face livelihood insecurity not entirely due to tea planters' strategy but also due their over-dependence on tea plantation. This becomes more evident during bandhs (strikes) (Tirkey & Nepal, 2012).

The tea industry makes a vital contribution to the economy of the producing countries. The countries that produce tea are largely developing countries with large pools of low-cost labor. Many of the ASEAN countries are consumers of tea both green and black, and in some countries, particularly in rural areas it is a way of life. In countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam where tea is grown, the volume of local consumption has remained stable due to ready availability and also at lower prices. Tea is the most popular and cheapest beverage, next to water, in the world. It is consumed by a range of age groups in all levels of society. Traditional loose tea has been largely replaced by bagged tea in many forms, due to convenience. In particular the new types of herbal, fruit flavor and decaffeinated teas, as well as ready-to drink teas are becoming popular. The organically grown and healthful image of tea can be exploited, as can the utilization of active ingredients of tea as their functional properties and nature become better known (Hicks, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Rubber plantation is a farm or large piece of land where rubber plants are grown. Usually rubber plants are cultivated as rubber plantations in specifically maintained rubber estates. The Tea Industry in India derives its importance by being one of the major foreign exchange earners and for playing a vital role towards employment generation as the industry is highly labour intensive. Large-scale planting of rubber commenced in the Northeast in 1963 with plantations in degraded forestland are in Tripura as a soil

conservation initiative. Rubber is an important commercial crop in Tripura. Government of Tripura earns large amount of revenue from this cash crop. Kerala and Tripura are the two states which are known for rubber cultivation. In Tripura, Jhumia rehabilitation is promoted primarily by the Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation. TRPC was set in the year 1983 with the avowed aim of offering a settled livelihood to the tribal Jhumias of the state. It has chosen rubber plantation as a new means of achieving this goal in view of its adaptability, large employment potential, comparatively shorter gestation period and ecological sustainability. Rubber plantation helps to fight against deforestation.

Rubber has already started influencing the socio-economic profile of rural tribal's. The state government, right from the beginning has been giving great importance to rubber and the Rubber Board has been implementing a variety of programmes for the development of tribal's through rubber plantation. The Rubber Board started implementing Group and Block Plantation Schemes from 1992 onwards and thus a revolution was set off. These schemes have changed the whole scenario of rubber cultivation in Tripura. The agro-climatic conditions in Tripura are suitable for development of tea plantation. The soil is generally fertile, without any major problems of toxicities or deficiencies. The average annual rainfall is about 210 cm. with a fairly even distribution over the year. The Tripura Government claims that the production of tea in the state is currently estimated to 7.5 million kg. Some of the tea estates of Tripura also produce the non toxic "Bio-tea" that has tremendous demand in the international market. The Tripura state government is currently attempting to increase the net tea production in the state.

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