LIVELIHOOD SECURITY OF TEA PLANTATION WORKERS

Gayathri P¹ - Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.
Dr. R. Arjunan² - Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

Abstract: India is the second largest producer of tea plantation and biggest consumer of the tea. The biggest production of tea in India is in Assam, west Bengal Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Most of the tea workers in India are descendants of schedule caste and tribal communities, who were brought from various Indian states to the tea estates as bonded or forced labor during India’s colonial period. For majority of tea garden dwellers (workers and dependents) tea garden wages constitutes the central livelihood. Jobs on the tea plantations are traditionally passed from one generation to the next. Having limited access to education or economic opportunity outside the tea plantations, tea workers are highly dependent on their employers. Livelihood of tea plantation workers are not less than pathetic they have been keeping away from all the basic needs like drinking water, toilet facility, proper sanitation, clean environment, they also not provided basic health and medical facility. This paper will offer a clear analysis of the condition of tea plantation workers and tried to find proper remedies to improve their livelihood. This paper will explains the livelihood security and insecurity, challenges faced by the workers in the plantation fields and helping workers to get necessary basic livelihood.

Key Words: tea plantation, workers, wages, security, livelihood.

I.INTRODUCTION

Tea workers community, called by different names, such as ‘tea garden coolie’, ‘tea tribe’, ‘drunkards’ and so on is a section that derive ones livelihood resources from tea plantation works. Tea garden workers are fearful and anxious about their basic subsistence, due to dependence or over-dependence on low and insecure income, inadequate social services, and a shrinking labour market which is faced with melancholy. An example of livelihood challenge can be found among the tea plantation workers of Nilgiris. Studies shows that wage cuts or delay in wage payments, increasing job reduction leading to more unemployment, and above all, rise in malnutrition and starvation deaths are producing a negative effect on the livelihood of tea workers. Moreover, in recent years, a large number of these workers are threatened by further tea plantation closures; while in plantations that remain open, workers are suffering wage cuts, picking demands, increased short-term insecure contracts and appalling living and working conditions (Goddard: 2005). Livelihood insecurity among marginal communities constitutes a serious issue in different tea region of India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka and with all probability in as well.

Livelihood: Understanding the terms and concepts

The term ‘livelihood’ is closely connected to the concepts of economic development and poverty alleviation. According to Carney (1998), Davies (1996) in their development studies, explained livelihood concept which is a valuable means of understanding different factors that influence or impact lives of people especially the poor households in developing countries. This understanding in turn helps in grasping the complexity related to dynamics and processes involved in household livelihoods. Despite its early history, it was only in 1970s that the term ‘livelihood’ became significant in the development lexicon. As a matter of fact, before livelihood issues became global concerns with some NGOs and international organization, nutritional and food security were considered more important issues at poor household levels. Brundtland Commission in their report “Our Common Future” (1987) gave stimulus to the concept of livelihoods by substituting the term “jobs” with “livelihood” and later substantially spoke about ‘securing the livelihood of the rural poor’ (Chambers: 1992). Later other phrases, such as ‘adequate livelihood’, ‘livelihood opportunities’ and ‘livelihood security’ came into use. However only after five years, that is from 1993, that many influential organizations like OXFAM, CARE International, IIISD Canada and UNDP picked up the term and used it and gave it meanings so that ‘sustainable livelihood’ became as a practical concept. It generally accepted that livelihoods deals with ways and means individuals and households ‘make their living’ while meaningful livelihoods is that which sustains and ensures that poor households live with dignity and hope for the future. In the field of development, as is the wont, various definitions have been provided, with some consensus as noted earlier. the most widely accepted definition of livelihoods stems from the works of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway: which Carney (1998) has put succinctly: ‘A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and it the future, while not undermining the natural resource base’ (Carney: 1998, p. 4). Ellis (2000) defines the concept as “the activities, the assets (eg., natural,
physical, financial, human and socio-political capital), and the access that jointly determine the living gained by an individual or a household”. According to IFRC a livelihood is a means of making a living. It encompasses people’s capabilities, assets, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life. A livelihood is sustainable when it is able to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses (such as natural disaster and economic or social upheavals) and enhance their well-being and that of future generation without undermining the natural environment or resource base.

Household Livelihood Theoretical Framework
The concepts of livelihoods, livelihoods security, and livelihoods analyses are relatively new concepts in social science discourses. The concept of livelihood security issues were closely twist with the concept of ‘sustainable livelihoods’. Brundtland Commission Report (1987), has conceptualized ‘sustainable development’, contains an early yet basic definition of sustainable livelihoods. However, the concept came into trend only in the 1990s, closely associated with poverty reduction strategies (Hiremath: 2007).

According to the United Nations’ Declaration on Rights to Life and Livelihoods (1986), securing of one’s livelihood is considered as an important human right issue that needs addressing especially with reference to the rural poor. Livelihood security constitutes various ways and means which the rural households utilise to obtain their necessities of life. These necessities of life include food, water, shelter, clothing, health care and education. Thus, livelihood security is a broader concept, and is much more than just food security, which concerns chiefly with the procurement of food for living. Livelihood security, on the other hand, deals with the procurement of food, shelter and clothing, besides the ability of the households to cope with shocks without the permanent depletion of assets (Ellis: 2000). It encompasses food security, social security, and psychic security. ‘Livelihoods’ as defined by Chambers and Conway (1992) and Ellis (2000), and IFRC comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities that are required by households and individuals for a means of living. These definition primarily focuses on three basic component elements of livelihoods: work and employment, poverty reduction, and well-being and capabilities. At a very basic level, one’s livelihood may include wide and diverse range of activities were people engage in to find sources of food, fuel, animal fodder and cash to make or improve their living (UNDP: 1999). Pursuance of livelihood strategies involves the possession of basic material and social, tangible and intangible assets, generally understood as capital, natural, economic, human and social. Non-possession of any of the capitals, say for instance, lack of proper physical or mental health (an element of human capital), is apt to jeopardise livelihood opportunity or create a situation of livelihood threat to an individual. Nonpossession of the assets as stated above may owe to a number of factors. One, though subtle in its appearance, is the process of ‘otherisation’ of a group, or a community by a dominant ‘other’. Various socio-cultural factors embedded in the social structure reinforce the process of otherisation and perpetuate ‘exclusion’ of a community/society in terms of their share of social, cultural and economic resources in society. Such social exclusions have led to denial of rights of some communities in India (Nagla: not dated) for centuries, including the rights to livelihood. Therefore, without any doubt, the concept livelihood security remains as an essential component in the economic development of a society or community. Any threat to livelihoods opportunities causes stress in the social and economic development of a community, making it vulnerable, if no viable livelihood alternatives are available.

Tea Plantation Workers in Nilgiris
In Nilgiris majority of the tea workers are tribal, schedule castes and migrants. So they are not able to protect against the atrocities and to enjoy the special status as they are suppressed. For a tea plantation workers whose forefathers were immigrants and where born and brought up inside the tea gardens and dismissal means not only the loss of livelihood but threat to their general existence. Eventhough the plantation workers are considered as Tea labor and Ex-tea working community, their children are compelled to join the Tea. According to the 2011 census, the Nilgiris district had a population of 735,394 with a sex-ratio of 1,042 females for every 1,000 males, much above the national average of 929 females/es. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes accounted for 32.08% and 4.46% of the population, respectively. There were a total of 349,974 workers, comprising 14,592 cultivators, 71,738 agricultural labourers, 3,019 in household industries, 229,575 other workers, 31,050 marginal workers, 1,053 marginal cultivators, 7,362 marginal agricultural labourers, 876 marginal workers in household industries and 21,759 other marginal workers.

Tea industry: Among beverages perhaps tea is the most consumed after water. Though China is credited with planting of the first tea plant, it is the British in India that commercialized the plant as cash crop as well as internationally drunk brew.

Livelihood Instability of Tea Workers
Indeed, the Indian Tea Industry, since its inception in mid-nineteenth century, has contributed significantly to the national and provincial economy. In more than a century old industry, perhaps many ordinary entrepreneurs have become successful businesspersons and industrialists. And government coffers must have been filled with the revenue generated from the sale of retail tea in the domestic market. Likewise, government exchequer has been complete with the foreign exchanges earned by export quality tea from various hilly terrains, particularly the world famous Darjeeling Tea in India. If even a small percentage of the profit generated from this commercial cash crop was invested back for the well being of the workers, their descendents
would have pioneered a new way of life with high standard of living as it happened to the proletarians of European countries. However, from the beginning of the Indian tea industry, the workers’ community world over but especially in Indian tea plantations has faced livelihood insecurity. It is true that apart from the rising production and labour cost, falling tea prices due to oversupply of tea and decline of demand in the global market, combined with stiff competition from many tea producing countries and other factors have caused a huge slump in the profit, leading to the crises in the India’s tea industry (Goddard: 2005; ). It is true that apart from the rising production and labour cost, falling tea prices due to oversupply of tea and decline of demand in the global market, combined with stiff competition from many tea producing countries and other factors have caused a huge slump in the profit, leading to the crises in the India’s tea industry (Goddard: 2005; Khawas: 2006). Tea producing companies in the Nilgiris, is the largest tea growing district in the South, have informed the Tea Board that their production in calendar 2017 has increased by 28.81 per cent over 2016. This happened because they produced 15.38 million kg (mkg) in 2017 against 11.94 mkg in 2016. The production was also more than the normal as measured by the five-year mean which was 14.03 mkg. That marked a gain of 9.62 per cent over the normal production in a year. This was despite the weather playing truant in December, when tea companies in the district produced 0.86 mkg against 0.95 mkg in December 2016 and the five-year mean of 0.96 mkg. 2018 has opened with adverse weather conditions in many plantation areas of the district. Severe frost conditions in Korakundah with temperature dropping to -6 degrees Celsius. More than 150 acres of our tea estate have been severely affected by frost,” D Hegde, Director, The United Nilgiri Tea Estates Co Ltd (Unitea), which owns Korakundah Estate, (BusinessLine)

Notwithstanding, it can be said that even in the worst scenario, the large tea producing companies have not lost profit-making margin although smaller tea producers have suffered quite a bit on profitability due to different recurring expenses. In the face of crises tea plantation owners have decided to reduce the permanent resident workers and instead take more seasonal, casual and contract workers including women workers who are cheaper and not entitled to any benefits (Sankrityayana: 2015). The same can not be said about the tea workers and their dependent households whose livelihood almost exclusively depends on plantation work. That is why, whenever tea plantations face uncertainties in the form of “sickness of tea gardens”, temporary or indefinite lock-outs and ultimate closure, more than a million tea workers in India not only face acute livelihood insecurity but also threat to their very survival. According to the UK based Actionaid, “Tea is a national institution in the UK but the tea plantations of India there lies a tale of poverty, hunger and a denial of workers’ rights” (Goddard: Khawas: 2005).

Livelihood Security and insecurity of tea workers:
Livelihoods of tea plantation workers around the world constitutes chiefly of daily labour wage from tea plantation work. For majority of tea garden dwellers (workers and dependents) tea garden wages constitutes the central livelihood activity while for many others it provides ancillary jobs. As a matter of fact, the tea industry has played pivotal role in the India’s economy by providing livelihoods to thousands of households through direct employment as well as indirect sustenance in the form of ancillary jobs (Sarkar & Lama: 1998; Ghosh: 1987). Besides wages, tea workers have been dependent on the tea management for ration (rice/flour), medicine, firewood, water and electricity supply. In most, during the normal operation of tea gardens, tea worker also enjoy small percent of bonus from the management as dividend of profits. Additionally, permanent workers also get fringe benefits in the form of housing, medical care, equipment and others which constitute different ‘capital’. On the other hand, workers’ lives seems to go haywire whenever tea gardens become “sick” or are indefinitely closed down. Sole dependence or over-dependence on wage labour for livelihoods has not only hampered economic development in the tea regions but has also led to the livelihood insecurity among tea workers at a time tea industry is undergoing a crisis and uncertain future, especially in India. It is under these circumstances that they face acute socio-economic crises as the management cuts down on the wages even while the statutory benefits are withdrawn.

Analysis of Livelihood Capital Assets: There are generally five to six livelihood capitals, also referred to as resources or assets. According to Ashley (1998) these are natural capital, physical capital, economic/financial capital, human capital and social-political capital, the availability and accessibility of which ensure livelihood security or insecurity of a household or a community. Natural Capital: Natural Capital refers to the natural resource flows that provide livelihoods to people, particularly, the indigenous people or forest dwellers that directly or indirectly depend on forest product and land. Most tea plantation workers are deprived of natural capital as they do not have rights to land or other natural resources in the tea gardens that are leased out to tea planters by government. Study conducted by ICIMOD (2003) concludes that the plantation workers have no legal property or ownership right; they are mere daily wage earners with no control over plantation assets, or participation in decision-making processes. Therefore, Subba (2001) maintains that tea workers are not able to engage in agricultural activities or raise livestock to diversify their livelihood sources because they have no ownership right of the land they occupy. Furthermore, they can not claim rights over common properties like water, vested land, and forest lying in the vicinity of their tea gardens due to denial of common property rights to industrial workers category under which tea workers community falls.

Physical Capital: this capital refers to the infrastructure (road communication, access to electricity, water,) and production units etc. that helps in pursuing and enhancing livelihoods. Unfortunately, majority of tea gardens are located in far-flung and remote areas where transport is inadequate; electricity and other infrastructural facilities are often limited to company offices,
factories and managerial bungalow depriving the labour colonies (Khawas: 2006). Health centres (hospitals, dispensaries etc) across tea estates more often than not lack basic medical facilities, required by the garden labourers. The lack of these physical capitals becomes a big hinderance in accessing good education, health and other faculties for the well being or raising the living standard of tea workers. Consequently, their livelihoods get diminished instead of enhancing and income shrinks instead of getting diversified.

Economic/financial capital: this refers to the banking, credit, cash and other financial power that strengthens a household besides working as intervention during the crises or vulnerability period. Tea workers with such low wages and paltry economic entitlement can barely save or invest for the future security. Their assets in the form of cash, bank is either very poor or almost nil; consequently, their poor purchasing power makes them vulnerable during any crises period, such as tea garden closure or abandonment. In “sick tea gardens” workers are paid irregularly or half wages while in closed and abandoned tea gardens they are not paid wages and other associated entitlements (Khawas: 2006).

Social capital: this refers to the social network and organizational membership or affiliation that households have in a social system and how they help in accessing and enhancing their livelihood and social security. In tea gardens with “island” kind of society, mostly excluded from other rural social groups, workers can have organization membership or social affiliations only among themselves (even the managers have their exclusive group). These group affiliations may bring the group together for social functions but can not enhance their social or livelihood security.

Political capital: These refer to the political connection etc that help in the pursuit of livelihoods or in accessing some benefits. While, with the wind of changes in recent years political parties have entered the tea gardens through trade unions, tea workers are still insulated from political influences. In many regions, outsiders enter into political foray while illiterate and ignorant workers are only used as vote banks before or during election to be forgotten soon afterward.

Human capital: refers to skill, knowledge, and other facets that help enhancing the livelihoods of individuals and households. Unfortunately most tea workers and their households are still kept in illiterate or semi-literate state. While according to PLA in India, while the existence of a good number of primary schools is commendable, technical/vocational, professional and higher education institutions are conspicuous by their absence. Moreover, due to inaccessibility of good high schools and poor socio-economic condition or other circumstances among tea garden households, most students either drop out or are forced to discontinue their education. So they are not able to acquire skills to compete with the outside world. Workers themselves are unskilled daily wager but companies neither send them for skill-driven trainings nor equip them with any latest technique. Consequently, during crises in tea gardens they become vulnerable due to their inability to pursue any other profession or engage themselves in meaningful livelihood strategies to secure their livelihoods.

Livelihood Insecurity/Challenges

There are various factors that contributes to the livelihood insecurity/challenges of tea garden workers of Nilgiris. Centre for Education and Communication (CEC), New Delhi, in 2003, undertook a fact-finding study on the closed and abandoned tea gardens in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala along with central trade unions and other stakeholders. The report shed light on the inhuman living conditions and starvation deaths in these gardens and invited much of public attention and interventions. From a preliminary observation, it was found that in 2007 in West Bengal there are 13 closed and abandoned tea estates in Jalpaiguri district and two tea gardens in Darjeeling district are under ‘suspension of work’. In Tamil Nadu there are two closed tea gardens in The Nilgiris. In Idukki district of Kerala 14 tea estates and 11 factories are abandoned, in Thiruvanathapuram district 2 tea gardens are closed and 3 are abandoned and in Wayanad district 2 tea gardens are closed and 4 tea gardens are abandoned respectively.

In most tea gardens of Nilgiris, the tea workers belonging to these marginal and scheduled groups are not even granted Below Poverty Line (BPL) status despite losing their only livelihood source after the closure or abandonment of gardens (Rasaily: 2008). Thus, they are deprived of even short-term livelihood alternatives. That is why, despite being associated with tea industry for so long there is no real noticeable change in the socio-economic condition of tea workers nor has economic development of tea regions occurred. As a result, they have remained dependent on tea plantation for their food and livelihood security.

Firstly, for generations of tea workers in Nilgiris, wage labour has been the main source of livelihoods. Consequently, they suffer livelihood threats whenever tea industry faces crises in the form of tea garden lock-outs or abandonment by owners or proprietors. During these periods, tea workers, besides losing their daily wages, are also deprived of the benefits enumerated in the Plantation Labour Act (PLA) 1951, such as, ration, bonus, medicine and firewood while electricity and water services are withdrawn from them (Goddard: 2005). Palanithurai. G (2006) pointed out that there is much more labourers unwilling to work in tea estates in Nilgiris District. Because, the unhealthy business trend reflected by the profit and loss account of plantation companies have necessitated rewriting and overhauling of the estate management systems. Eventhough, plantation labour unions consented to have downward revision of social benefits offered to the labourers, labourers who seek employment for industrial (plain) areas like, Erode, Coimbatore, Tirupur are very high.

Probably the most important factor for the livelihood insecurity of tea garden workers is the lack of land and other resources ownership. Ownership of land and access to other resources are essential not just for the economic development but also for
the enhancement of livelihoods security. Ownership of resources, particularly land, water and forest, provide livelihood security and aid the intervention against economic crises, besides, providing regular subsistence income for improving the livelihoods (Hiremath and Anand: 2007). Tea workers in the Nilgiris tea regions (as elsewhere in the world with all probability) have been deprived of land or other natural resource ownerships since the inception of tea industry in India. As a matter of fact, they are, as it were, part of the plantation assets that are sold or bought from one owner to the next, without having any legal property rights of their own (ICIMOD: 2001. The argument for the denial of land rights is that tea cultivation fields are government lands given in grants or lease to the tea planters for a fixed period. Ironically, for reasons known only to garden owners and government, even the vacant and unutilised lands in most tea gardens are not made available for workers for cultivation and other uses. With such low wages, not many households have land purchasing power to diversify their income sources. That is why, tea workers’ socio-economic condition has not improved in the tea regions of Nilgiris despite unquestionable role played by the indentured migrant workers in the past and by their descendents in subsequent years (Bhadra: 1992; Mukherjee: 1997).

Social exclusion is a process through which certain groups are systematically discriminated. Social exclusion keeps a social group outside the power centres and resources. The notion of social exclusion may be widened to incorporate the notion of rights, for instance, the right to livelihood, etc. In India, the process of social exclusion involves some sections of population like the Dalits and the Adivasis who are forced in to isolation, discriminated, and deprived of equal access to social and economic opportunities (ibid). Whenever the tea industry faces some crises, such as garden lock-outs, the plight of tea workers is ignored while government shows apathy towards the marginalised workers. During the crisis period, sustaining the tea industry that generates huge revenue is of paramount interest for the tea producers and government. But addressing the problems of (cheap) labour always becomes a very low priority mainly because workers do not enjoy any significant bargaining power in the political arena. Moreover, in the entire plantation economy wherein the labour class is the single most important factor in the growth of the tea industry, the cheap labour is not only deprived of the due share in the total revenue earned but is also treated as a commodity (Mukherjee: 1997). This deliberate act of social exclusion and marginalisation is deeply embedded in the social structure which has systematically marginalised these sections of the society for centuries. In this age of globalization, social protection of workers is kept out as the profit-making becomes the central concern. Case in point is the transformation of Chandmani Tea Garden into ‘Satellite Township’ near Siliguri. The land promised to the permanent workers was given only to those with some political clout while ordinary workers were deprived of even casual work in the construction sites (Ghosh: 2007). The acquisition of the tea cultivated land and displacement of the workers became possible because the majority of the workers belonged to voiceless ST/SC communities without any real political backing (ibid). Rishi Iyengar (2015) stated that as one of the world’s most popular beverages reportedly second only to water, the production of tea is vastly important. But the living conditions of many tea-plantation workers in India - the world’s second largest producer of the drink - are not given nearly as much importance, an investigation by the BBC has revealed. The workers, who help supply to massive global brands like Tetley’s, Lipton, Twinings and PG Tips, are paid about $1.50 a day - far lower than India’s already low minimum wage - with many malnourished and prone to diseases as a result of their unclean existence. The BBC also found workers spraying harmful chemicals without using protective gear, and said that child labor was being used on some estates.

Thus, it can be said that there are a combination of factors that create insecurity of livelihoods of tea workers in Nilgiris, even during normal operation of gardens. During closure or lock-outs, the challenges to livelihoods are compounded. For majority of tea workers, the tea plantation labour work constitutes the only livelihood sources in the “enclave economy” created by the early planters. Secondly, the labour wages in the tea gardens are very low to allow for savings for future to counter any livelihood insecurity in case of any crisis like garden lock-outs. Thirdly, due to isolation and remoteness of many tea gardens, workers can not access alternative sources available in urban centres while livelihood options within a garden are rare. Land being one of the most precious natural resources can serve as the means of tackling the problem of long-term livelihood problems. However, despite living in the tea gardens for over a hundred years, tea workers have not been granted any land ownership rights of even some unutilized lands. Most of the workers do not have land purchasing power due to low wages and lack of savings. Moreover, tea plantation sector is still considered outside the purview of government welfare schemes or statutory benefits. Consequently, tea workers are neither considered landless labourer nor people below poverty level despite the loss of their only source of livelihood, that is, plantation labour wage. Since these factors have not been addressed in Nilgiris the tea workers continue to feel threatened and insecure when it comes to sustaining their livelihood.

II.RECOMENDATIONS

- Initiate an institutional mechanism with representation of multi-stakeholders from the tea industry, Government bodies and nodal agencies to provide better social infrastructure for workers in all tea gardens.
- Development schemes meant for workers such as training programmes and skill upgradation programmes, healthcare, adequate housing facilities and other necessary welfare measures.
- Institutional support for governing promotional schemes for workers is required and workers should be adequately represented in such schemes.
• Initiate programmes to create awareness among workers regarding personal and domestic hygiene, occupation hazard’s and various water/seasonal related diseases and its preventive measures.
• Initiate participation from workers to the major decision-making process and programme for sharing the short-term benefits of their productivity.
• Stop privatisation of government operated tea gardens. Grant legal ownership of housing space to workers.

III. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS
From the above discussions it is revealed that the tea plantation workers of Nilgiri Tea Region, most of who belong to the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes groups have been subject to a vicious cycle of livelihood insecurity, which gets reinforced by socio-culturally embedded processes. There is a need to break this vicious cycle to enable these marginal communities come out of livelihood insecurity. Several possible remedies have been recommended by several social scientists. Scoones (2001), Mohanty (2001), and Bakshi (2008) stress on land as the most viable as well as valuable source of livelihood security in rural areas of India. Roth (2008) shows that there is a direct as well as indirect relationship between land/property tenure rights and food security; he identifies how securing of land rights and improving land access helps in providing wage and income to buy food. Hanstad and Lokesh (2002) while linking poverty and landlessness suggest that land reform is the answer to securing better livelihoods through the allocation of small homestead or garden plots. Subba (2001), Sircar et al (2002) and Rasaily (2008) in their studies show that wage labour is the only source of livelihood for most tea garden workers. Wickermassinghe (2003) on the other hand, speaking on the similar plights of Sir Lanka plantation workers states, “the workers’ housing question has changed into a land question, with demands by unions and political groups for alienation of plantation land for landless Sinhalese villages”. Therefore, Bhadra (1992), Talwar et al (2003) and Goddard (2005) argue that vulnerability of tea garden workers is mainly due to their over-dependence on tea management for securing their livelihoods.

N.P. Hariharan and S.Siva Kumar (2014) “the Economic status of workers in large tea estate with special reference to the Nilgiris District of Tamilnadu” studies apart from the primary data collected from 158 tea workers of four tea estates in Nilgiris District. It is found that debt position of workers is high and monthly expenditure constitutes 50% are more in all the blocks of the study area and further female respondents are illiterate which proves the low economic status in Coonoor block. M.G. Srinivasan (2016) argued that a separate board had to be set up by the government to take care of the tea labourers of the Nilgiris district. He revealed that the labourers were denied their basic rights and benefits. Awareness about the daily wages and relevant benefits must be created among the tea labourers by which they could claim their rights from their management. Since the tea workers have no ownership right on the land they occupy, they are not able to engage in agricultural activities nor raise livestock to diversify their livelihood sources (Subba: 2001). Exploring and establishing some viable alternative livelihood opportunities in and around tea plantation in Nilgiris is a must which may act as livelihood interventions, thereby, lessening the workers’ vulnerability to stress and shocks, through sound planning and proper implementation of programmes and policies should be developed from time to time.

Notes
[2] This concept of capabilities is taken from Amartya Sen. Sen (1987) has explained the concept of ‘capability’ in terms of what people can do bearing with their entitlements.
[3] In 2003 the tea workers’ families of Chandmani Tea Estate, located about three kms away from rapidly growing Siliguri Town were forcibly evicted with police help and settled near Nepal border with no proper housing or any access to water, electricity and market centres.
[4] Well being is a component of the livelihoods. The concept of well being as integral to livelihoods has found its best exposition in Chambers (1997).
[5] The term exclusion was originally used in France in 1970s to refer to various categories of people, labelled ‘social problems’, who were not protected by social insurance. The process of social exclusion is embedded in the social structure and its relations to people’s capability. Social exclusion has two basic characteristics: (a) the deprivation caused through exclusion in multiple spheres, showing its multidimensionality; and (b) it is embedded in the societal relationships (Nagla, B.K., n.d; Peace, Robin: 2001)
References