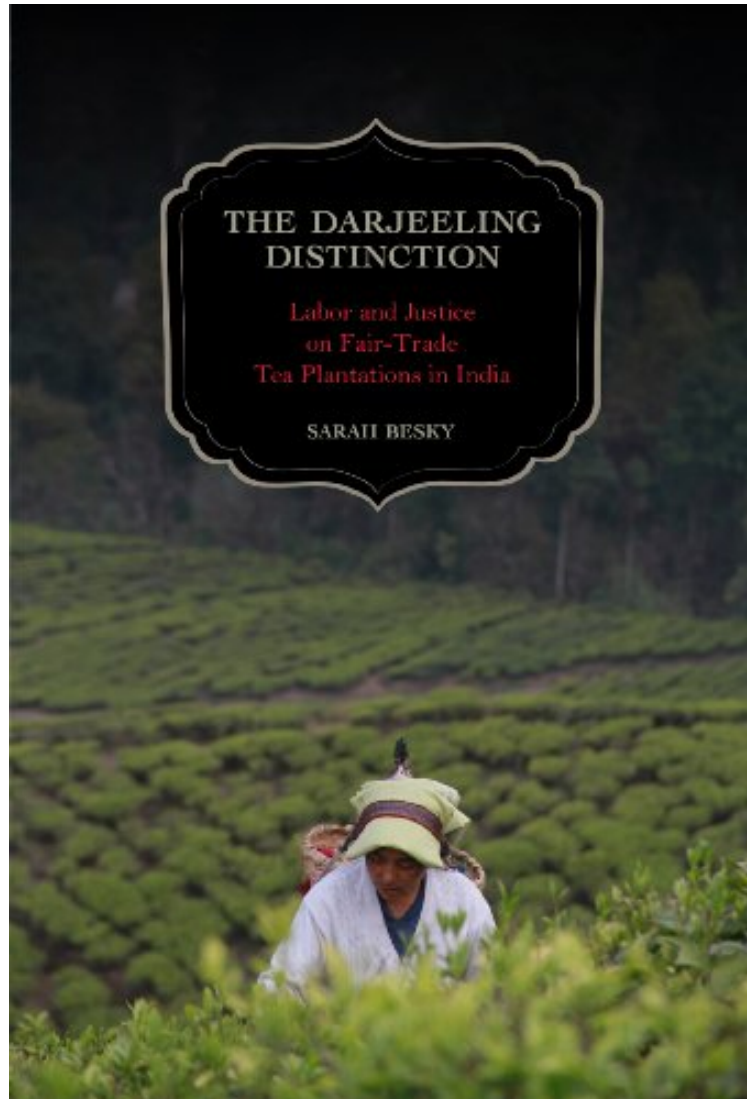


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(California Studies in Food and Culture Book 47)

## **The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India (California Studies in Food and Culture Book 47)**

*Sarah Besky*

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**Sarah Besky : The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India (California Studies in Food and Culture Book 47)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India (California Studies in Food and Culture Book 47):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Must-Read for Anyone With An Interest in TeaBy James ThorneSarah Besky does a great service to the tea community with this book. After years on the ground on tea estates in and around Darjeeling, Besky has written a book that is at once academically valuable, and eye-opening for the average consumer. In this book Sarah sheds light on the labor practices in post-colonial tea plantations in Darjeeling, as well as three systems that claim to bring justice to disenfranchised workers: Geographical Indication, the Fair Trade movement, and the Gorkhaland movement. What sets this work apart is Besky's use of flowing prose and vivid first hand descriptions to describe realities that otherwise might have been set down in the faceless statistics of a droll academic paper. She is no slouch in the research department either, presenting a deep and nuanced history of the Nepali/Darjeeling/Gorkha people for the first time that I am aware of in the English language. As someone who has worked in the industry I concede that there are only a few relatively minor oversimplifications. GI, for instance, from the North American import side, was only ever seen as a marketing ploy. But this is really nothing to quibble with. Besky has done a wonderful job in exposing the uncomfortable realities of plantation life to consumers of Darjeeling tea round the world. I hope that this bears fruit in meaningful change for laborers who produce some of the world's finest tea.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommended for allBy Emma McDonnellThis is truly one of the most ethnographically rich and theoretically rigorous ethnographies I've read. And this is a lot considering I'm a PhD student in anthropology of food and have read a ton of ethnographies of food and agriculture over the past couple years! Based on extensive fieldwork on the Darjeeling Tea plantations working alongside planters, as well as analysis of marketing materials and interviews with diverse actors involved in the reinvigoration of Darjeeling Tea production, Besky's book will be of interest to a wide range of audiences interested in food justice, anthropology of food, and rural agriculture studies. Highly recommended for all, and could also be used in upper-division undergraduate courses with some guidance.

Nestled in the Himalayan foothills of Northeast India, Darjeeling is synonymous with some of the finest and most expensive tea in the world. It is also home to a violent movement for regional autonomy that, like the tea industry, dates back to the days of colonial rule. In this nuanced ethnography, Sarah Besky narrates the lives of tea workers in Darjeeling. She explores how notions of fairness, value, and justice shifted with the rise of fair-trade practices and postcolonial separatist politics in the region. This is the first book to explore how fair-trade operates in the context of large-scale plantations. Readers in a variety of disciplines—anthropology, sociology, geography, environmental studies, and food studies—will gain a critical perspective on how plantation life is changing as Darjeeling struggles to reinvent its signature commodity for twenty-first-century consumers. The Darjeeling Distinction challenges fair-trade policy and practice, exposing how trade initiatives often fail to consider the larger environmental, historical, and sociopolitical forces that shape the lives of the people they intended to support.