

A STUDY ON THE PROBLEM AND PROSPECT OF SMALL TEA GROWERS IN ASSAM WITH SPECIAL REFERANCE TO JORHAT DISTRICT.

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Introduction:

The newly emerging entrepreneurship in Tea plantation of Assam in homestead garden and unutilized land along with other crops is the concept of Small Tea Garden (STG). These gardens are mostly confined among young and upcoming local entrepreneurs, thereby solving the unemployment problems of educated and uneducated youths of the rural as well as urban areas. The concept of small tea garden is a recent phenomenon and the first small tea garden was established in Sivasagar District (present Golaghat district) of Assam in the year 1978. Late Soneswar Bora an MLA from Golaghat and the then Agriculture Minister of Assam was the pioneer in the establishment of the Small Tea Garden. These gardens (STGs) were come into existence after an arduous wait of 150 years since the introduction of tea in Assam. Within a short span of just over two decades it has spread to almost all the districts of Assam, thereby adding around 50 thousand hectares additionally under tea and producing around about 25 percent of total tea production in Assam and significantly converting the small tea sectors to a major player. According to All Assam Small Tea Growers Association (AASGA) official- "more than 9,00,000 people are involved in the small tea growing business in

Assam. Almost 2,50,000 hectares of land is covered for such plantations. They contribute to 29percent of the total tea productions of India." Even farmers in villages, who traditionally grew vegetables , are now opting for tea cultivation . Tea cultivation brings much higher profits and is a steady source of income. According to

Rakesh Saini (Tea Board Executive Director) "1686 big gardens of Assam (organized sector) produce 723 million kg (from 4, 16,027 hectares) of tea yearly amounting for more than 26 percent of the countrys total tea production. The concentration of small tea garden is largest in Assam followed by West Bengal, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Bihar.

Problem of the study:

The small tea growers are an important and integral part of the tea industry of Assam. But a small tea grower have been confronted with multiple existential challenges via finance, land problem, labour supply, lack of training in tea culture and practices, marketing of green leaves, natural disasters like flood, erosion, climate change, poor infrastructural facilities etc.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To find out the economic condition of the small tea growers in the Jorhat district.

To study the growth of tea industry of small tea growers with respect to area, production and productivity of tea.

To study the employment and productivity of small tea growers of tea industry of Assam. To study the marketing of small tea growers and problems Associated with it;

Review of Literature

Bose (2011) said that job characteristics – such as safety and welfare measures, incentives, promotional opportunity, task clarity and significance, transport facilities and skills utilization characteristics such as commitment and relationship with supervisors and co- workers- have a significant effect on job satisfaction. Several studies have been made on various aspects of tea industry. These are mainly on financial and geographical aspects of tea industry. Till date, a very little effort has been made to find out the problems and prospects of small tea growers located in the North Bengal of West Bengal.

Sir Percival Griffiths (1967) "The History of Indian Tea Industry" conducted by was a complete study on the historical growth of Indian tea industry. While describing the evolution passage of the growth of the tea industry in India, the study also described the origin of plantation labourers, recruitment systems and the state of planters' oppression on which the workers had to undergo during the pre independence period. This study had not separately discussed the relationship between the productivity of labours with the absenteeism and labour turnover rate in the tea plantations.

Haber and Levinson (1956) designed a study of labour relations and productivity in the building trades'. They found that the labour relations pattern in the building trades differs materially from that perfected in other industries. The only suggestion to improve the labour relations in the building trades is the progress in assuring steady employment.

Saxena (1964) in his study entitled, 'Industrial Relations in five Industrial Units of Meerut District' has brought to the forefront the fact that the problems of industrial relations should not be tackled merely on the

economic front. These are sociological problems depending for their solution on the mutual trust and confidence among the workers and the employers.

Singh (1966) in his published doctoral thesis entitled, 'Labour Management in Sugar Industry' has observed that there is no initiative on the part of employers willfully (excepting legal obligations) to provide welfare facilities to workers.

Nair (1973) conducted case studies to ascertain the labour management relations in Kerala. He pointed out rich diversity in the pattern and composition of labour management relations that prevail in the state. It shows that Kerala has forged ahead in the matter of evolving a system of labour management relations, which can well be a guide and model for the rest of India.

Das (1983) in his research makes an intensive study of industrial relations in six textile mills of Indore. He found that industrial relations are sociological problems, depending for their solution on the mutual understanding between the operative and managerial staff.

Chand (1989) designed a study of industrial relations in the public sector in Andhra Pradesh. He suggested uniformity in the wage structure of all public sector units in the Andhra Pradesh (to reduce many labour problems

The study of Umanand Phukan on "The Ex-Tea garden labour plantation in assam" 1948, attempted to how labourers from different parts of the country enter in to the various tea plantation of assam and how there number grew with the passage of time during the 19th century which constituted a sizeable segment of the rural population of assam. It explains the historical circumstances under which the immigrant Tea garden workers left there regular employment.

Research Gap

From the foregoing review of literature it can be understood that though many studies have been conducted on different aspects of problems of small tea growers in Assam and even in foreign countries, a study specifically for problems of small tea growers of Assam is missing in literature. Similarly, no study has made a comparative analysis of degree of satisfaction among the employees of public, private and government owned tea industry of Assam. Moreover, till date, no research has been conducted on any aspects on problems of small tea growers sampled for this study. Hence, the present study examines empirically the vital issues affecting the relationship between labour and management in selected tea estates of Jorhat District of Assam and suggests measures to make them more effective contributions for the productivity and prosperity of tea estates of Assam.

Research Methodology:

Construction of the interview Schedule: The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were collected from the sample respondents. For this purpose, a separate comprehensive interview schedules was prepared.

Technique of collection: The interview schedule for the workers in vernacular language was administrated by the researchers personally visiting the study area. Since most of the workers are illiterate and do not understand English well, a copy of interview schedule was translated into vernacular language. All respondents are able to understand the question and give answer. Any difficulty faced by the workers respondents made cleared by the researchers.

Sampling Design and size: In the study area, there were 400 no's small tea growers in the study area. 200 small tea growers have been selected for the study which was 50 percent of the total small tea growers from them one person from each small tea growers have been randomly selected for the study.

Hence, the total numbers of respondents have been 200.

Statistical Tools: The researchers stated analyzing the data manually with the help of calculator. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and Chi-Square test and choice based ranking were employed to draw inferences.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Table: 1.1: Parmanent Ownership

| Sl No | Factors | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|-------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 40 | 20 |
| 2 | No | 160 | 80 |
| Total | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

It reveals from the table 1.1 that 20 percent respondents have the ownership of land while 80 percent of them do not have the ownership of the same. It is analyzed that majority of the respondents do not have the ownership of land in the study area.

Table: 1.2: Loans from Bank

| Sl.No | Factors | On of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------|---------|-------------------|------------|
| 1` | Yes | 20 | 10 |
| 2 | No | 180 | 90 |
| | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

It is transparent from the table and figure 1.2 that 10 percent of the respondents have availed bank loan from the financial situations while 90 percent of them do not avail the bank loan from the banks in the study area. It is therefore analyzed that majority of the respondents do not availed the bank loans as they do not have the own land or Patta land in the study area.

Table 3.3: Use of Own Funds

| Sl .No | Factors | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 150 | 75 |
| 2 | No | 50 | 25 |
| TOTAL | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

It reveals from the table and figure 1.3 that 75 percent of the respondent basically uses their own funds while 25 percent of the respondents do not use their own funds. As some of the respondent below from a well to do family so they have enough money to use their own funds while the other respondents are financially weak so they do not have the ability to use their own funds.

Table 1.4 Subsidy From Tea Board

| Sl .No | Factors | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 60 | 30 |
| 2 | No | 140 | 70 |
| TOTAL | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

It is seen from the table and figure 1.4 that 30 percent of the respondent have received subsidy from the tea board of India while 70 percent of the respondent have not received any subsidy from the tea board. It is therefore analyzed that majority of the respondents have not received subsidy from the tea board of India.

Table No. 1.5 Loan Scheme

| Sl .No | Factors | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 40 | 20 |
| 2 | No | 160 | 80 |
| TOTAL | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

It is depicted from the table 1.5 that 20 percent respondents have availed bank loans while 80 percent of them have not received the bank loans from the any financial institutions in the study area. It is therefore analyzed that majority of the respondents have not received bank loans .

TABLE NO. 1.6 Regarding Registration Scheme

| Sl No | Factors | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|-------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 40 | 20 |
| 2 | No | 160 | 80 |
| TOTAL | | 200 | 100 |

Source: Field Study.

It is observed from Table1.6 that 20percent of the respondent consider that the schemes are registered by the tea board while 80percent of the respondent have said that the scheme is not registered by the tea board. From the above analysis, it is understood that the majority of respondent are more in regarding that the schemes are not registered.

Table No.1.7 Subsidy Scheme Of Tea Board

| Sl .No | Factors | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 40 | 20 |
| 2 | No | 160 | 80 |
| TOTAL | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

The Table 1.7 shows that 20 percent of the respondent got subsidy scheme from the tea board while 80 percent of the respondent have not got any subsidy scheme from the tea board. Hence it is seen that majority of respondents are more in considering that the subsidy scheme has not been provided by the tea board.

Table No.1.8: Sell Of Tea Leaves

| Sl.No | Factor | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|-------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Local | 120 | 60 |
| 2 | Outside | 80 | 40 |
| TOTAL | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

The table 1.8 shows that 60percent of the Tea leaves are sold in locality while 40percent of the Tea leaves are sold outside. Due to poor working conditions the quantity of tea leaves sold outside is very less. Hence it is sold in huge quantity in the locality.

Table No. 1.9: Satisfaction Price of Tea Quality

| Sl .No | Factors | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 40 | 20 |
| 2 | No | 160 | 80 |
| TOTAL | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

It is observed from the table 1.9 that 20 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the price of tea quality while 80percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the price of the tea quality. The customer did not pay good price for the tea as the tea leaves are sold in locality and so they do not get good price. Moreover due to poor working conditions and absent of grievance redressal procedure etc the price of tea quality is minimum.

Table No. 1.10 Market Information

| Sl .No | Factors | No Of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 160 | 45 |
| 2 | No | 40 | 55 |
| TOTAL | | 200 | 100 |

Source: field study.

The Table 1.10 shows that 45percent of the respondents' gets market information while 55percent of the respondents do not get market information. Because the majority of tea growers do not understand or keep the information in the market area.

Major Findings of the study:

- 20 percent respondents have the ownership of land while 80 percent of them do not have the ownership of the same.
- 10 percent of the respondents have availed bank loan from the financial situations while 90 percent of them do not avail the bank loan from the banks in the study area.
- 75 percent of the respondent basically uses their own funds while 25 percent of the respondents do not use their own funds.
- 20 percent respondents have availed bank loans while 80 percent of them have not received the bank loans from the any financial institutions in the study area.
- 20 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the price of tea quality while 80percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the price of the tea quality.
- 20percent of the respondent consider that the schemes are registered by the tea board while 80percent of the respondent have said that the scheme is not registered by the tea board. From the above analysis,
- 20 percent of the respondent got subsidy scheme from the tea board while 80 percent of the respondent have not got any subsidy scheme from the tea board.
- 60percent of the Tea leaves are sold in locality while 40percent of the Tea leaves are sold outside.
- 20 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the price of tea quality while 80percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the price of the tea quality.
- 45percent of the respondents' gets market information while 55percent of the respondents do not get market information.

Major suggestions of the study:

Many of the workers of this tea industry derive low level of satisfaction on working conditions because there grievances are too many. Hence, it has been suggested that the management should create grievance- redressal cells to redress the workers' grievances a grievances box can be maintain to receive the complaints from workers and such complaints can be placed before the grievance cell for timely discussion and appropriate solution. It will help to settle the issues then and there.

The study reveals that the majority of the tea tribes' women workers in tea industry of Assam were not satisfied with the deduction of wages for provident fund.

During the data collection, they expressed their dissatisfaction with this practice; even though there money was getting saved; but it is reduced the amount of the take home wages.

It is very significant to note that the management's contribution to the providend fund is very less. So, the workers find it very difficult to cover their house hold expenses.

Bonus is an inevitable problem, which usually arises during the Durga puja, Kali puja and Deepavali festival. The study shows that most of the women workers not satisfied with the bonus given by the tea industry in Assam.

The bonus should be dispensed well in advance rather waiting for the festive occasion . A part from giving out such a provision at an appropriate time , the amount that is being given should also be adequate .

Women workers need care and rest during their maternity period , which can be approved by providing adequate maternity leave . it is essential for the management to be magnanimous and generous in providing leave with normal wage that assist their medical expenses and their health risk .

Workers fail to take care of their health due to insufficiency of money as well as time . If the management conducts a frequent medical camp , the confidence of workers will improve if they are physically and mentally well . So , provisions for help checkups will upgrade their concentration and dedication , which leads to job satisfaction resulting in benefit of management also.

The analysis indicated that the family environment has a significant influence on the level of satisfaction in the job and the work environment.

The management can arrange for counseling of women on the matters pertaining to their family problems. This would help in improving the satisfaction of women workers.

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