

A Study on Small Tea Growers Satisfaction Level and Problems with Special Reference to the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: *The tea industry of India has had a long trip since the 18th century. In spite of having a strong base as manufactured product, it allows a bigger gain for the country as agricultural output. Among the tea producing states of India, Assam is well known internationally since a long time ago. The state dominates the country's tea map by producing almost half (50 per cent) of the total tea production. In the recent years, Indian tea industry has witnessed many structural changes such as the replacement of small tea plantations by large plantation. The Nilgiris district resides inside the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and a part of a larger mountain chain known as the Western Ghats. The Nilgiris district is mainly an agriculture district and its economy mainly depends upon the success or failure of crops especially the plantation crops like tea and coffee. The climatic environments and troposphere of the area make the Nilgiris District the appropriate place in South India for cultivation of tea as a result the zones under tea cultivation in Nilgiris are massive and spread. The cultivation of tea is mainly based on the tea plantation workers and the study is to analyze about the a study on small tea grower's satisfaction level and problems with Special reference to the in the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu”*

Keywords: Plantation Labour, Productivity, Saplings, Tea Growers, Wastage

1. Introduction

The Nilgiris district resides inside the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and a part of a large mountain chain known as the Western Ghats. The Nilgiris district is mainly an agriculture district and its economy mainly depends upon the success or failure of crops especially the plantation crops like tea and coffee. The climatic environments and troposphere of the area make the Nilgiris district the appropriate place in South India for cultivation of tea as a result the zones under tea cultivation in Nilgiris are massive and spread.

Tea plantation is located in Darjeeling and Assam, Terai and Dooars in the North Bengal and Mysore, Coorg, Manjsholai and Nilgiris. The Tea industry in India has given occupation to the major work force in which Nilgiris is also take part. Out of total 172000 hectares under tea cultivation in South India, Nilgiris individually accounts for about 9000 hectares and these results in produces tea of about 30 million kg of tea annually which is nearly 60 percent of the total population.

Nilgiris tea plantations are represented by the Nilgiris planters Association, which is an organizational member of the United Planters Association of South India (UPASI), headquartered in Coonoor. UPASI is the peak body representing plantation owners in South India. However, plantations only account for around 30 percent of tea production in Nilgiris District. The vast majority of production is undertaken by small growers, who typically own less than one hectare each. The majority of Nilgiris tea small growers are the Badagas, a local community of agriculture.

The work timings in the tea estates are from 8 am to 5 pm in standard Indian time. The legally permissible lunch interval is 12 – 1 pm. But during the season of high growth of tea leaves, the workers are ordered to report for work nearly 12 hours from 6 am to 6 pm or even sometimes it exceeds to 7 pm with a very short lunch break without any rest intervals. The legally permissible temporary leave and medical leave are not granted. In some places, if leave beyond the granted leave are taken due to ill health without medical certificate, then 5 days wages are deducted from the salary. Every year hundreds of tea plantation workers are affected from water-borne diseases, like Gastro Enteritis. There are no drinking water facilities and drainage systems are most of the plantations. Most of the Workers are suffering from Anemia and Tuberculosis, where malaria is widely spread. It affects the children and the women mostly. Leech bite and Snake bite are the major problem in the plantation field but no proper medical treatment and prevention measures are totally out of clutch. Wild animals are often seen in the plantation field and no proper security measures are provided. The death ratio due to the above said bites and the wild animals is consistent. The health system is not effective.

Most of the tea workers are tribal, schedule castes and repatriates. So they are not able to protect against the atrocities and to enjoy the special status as they are crushed. For a tea plantation worker whose forefathers were indentured 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. Even though the plantation workers are considered to Tea labor and Ex-tea working community, their children are compelled to join the Tea. Labour work force as unskilled workers after passing from the lower primary schools of gardens. In

addition, the children not receive any educational and alternative employment opportunity; of late certain slight exemptions are happening in this district.

Objectives of the study:

- To analyze small tea growers Satisfaction level in Nilgiris district
- To find out and analyze the working conditions of the plantation labour with respect to wages
- To study about the factors that influences the tea growers to involve in tea cultivation and to know the satisfaction level of the tea growers in Nilgiris district.
- To identify the problems faced by tea growers in Nilgiris district.

Statement of the Problem

Small Tea Growing Industry in Nilgiris has immense potential from the points of both providing employment as well as generating revenue. It can be a lucrative profession and can play a vital role in improving the socio-economic condition of the economically backward state. But the small tea growers are facing many problems related to availability of finance, processing of tea leaves etc. They are forced to sell their tea leaves to big tea gardens at through away prices due to the absence of tea factories of their own. The study aims at identifying the constraints faced by the small tea growers in Nilgiris district. The study is focused on factors that influence the tea growers to involve in tea cultivation, satisfaction level and problems faced by small tea growers. To identify the problems faced by tea growers in Nilgiris district.

Methodology

The tea plantation workers working in Nilgiris district are considered as the target audience for the research study. The primary data collection is done by person administered survey for analysis and interpretation, the secondary data collected from various magazines and journals discussed earlier related to the research study. The size of the sample is 100, who are small tea growers. Simple percentage average methods have been used in this study.

Limitations of the Study

- The study is purely based on the views of 100 respondents only and hence the results may not be generally pertinent.
- The findings and conclusions are based on knowledge and experience of those particular respondents.

2. Review of Literature

Nilgiri district popularly known as the “Blue Mountains” is a tiny district, with an area of 2545sq.km, forms an integral part of the Western Ghats was a part of Coimbatore district till 1868. In August 1868 the Nilgiris was separated from the Coimbatore District and brought under the control of a Commissioner. In February 1882, the Nilgiris was made a district and a Collector was appointed in the place of the Commissioner. The District form part of the Western Ghats in western Tamil Nadu, at the junction of Karnataka and Kerala states in Southern India. Over 2,700species of flowering plants, 160 species of fern and fern allies,

countless types of flowerless plants, mosses, fungi, algae, and land lichens are found in the sholas of the Nilgiris.

In 39 percent of the land in Nilgiris is used for agricultural purposes. The Nilgiris District is basically a Horticulture District and the entire economy of the district depends upon Horticulture Crops like Potato, Cabbage, Carrot, Tea, Coffee, Spices and Fruits. The main cultivation is plantation Crops, viz., Tea and Coffee. Potato and other vegetables are raised in Udthagai and Coonoor Taluk. Paddy and Ginger are grown in Gudalur and Pandalur Taluk. Paddy is also grown in Thengumarahada area in Kotagiri Taluk. Besides these crops, Ragi, Samai, Wheat, Vegetables etc., are also grown in small extent throughout the district.

Small Tea Plantation

Traditionally tea is best known as plantation crop. Tea plantation is often called tea estates/gardens. Plantation comprises a large area, producing a single agricultural product as a commercial venture. This model (plantation) was introduced in India during the colonial period by the planters and until 1950's it was thought to be the only way to produce tea on commercial basis where cultivation as well as processing was done by the planters.

Tea exports in India

Tea exports from India reached 42.06 million kg during April-June, 2016 a growth of 2.56 percent year-on-year. In value terms, the performance was even better – exports rose by 14 percent year-on-year to reach Rs. 856.57 crores during the same quarter.

This performance is indicative of a continued momentum in exports of tea. During 2015-16, tea exports reached 232.92 million kg, a growth of 17 percent year on year. In value terms, exports were recorded at US\$ 686.67 million, growing by 9.7 percent year on year.

Per unit realization of tea has also shown a marked improvement during the quarter. At Rs 203.65 per kg, per unit realization reached a growth of 11.14 percent year-on-year. The results show the positive impact of efforts taken by Tea Board towards promotion of tea. Key markets include Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Iran, UK and Pakistan.

Besides exports, the Tea Board has intensified promotional efforts in domestic markets. It has taken up exhibition space in the 4th World Tea & Coffee Expo 2016 in Mumbai during October 20-22. The domestic promotion campaigns are targeted at promoting tea in rural India as well as the increasingly affluent middle class youth in urban centre. While India is the largest producer and consumer of black tea, its per capita consumption is only around 0.73 kg (ranked 43rd globally), which is indicative of the huge potential yet to be explored.

Tea Board to showcase the best of Indian tea at World Tea and Coffee Expo

The Tea Board of India will be showcasing the best of Indian teas at the World Tea & Coffee Expo (WTCE) being organized from October 1-3, 2015. The event will be held at Bombay Exhibition Centre, Goregaon, and Mumbai. Some

of the major Indian players participating in the pavilion are Golden Tips Tea, Simla Tea Co Ltd and Makaibari Tea.

The expo will have exhibitors from eight countries and visitors from more than 10 countries. In its third edition this year, it will host buying delegations from Sri Lanka and Dubai and a 20-member delegation from Vietnam led by Mr. Vu Van Tam, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, and Vietnam. Apart from the expo, the event will have a 2-day high-level conference and workshops on tea and coffee.

Strength of Small Tea Cultivation

- 1) Scope for entrepreneurship
- 2) Source of Income and employment to the rural mass
- 3) incentives provided by the Tea Board of India
- 4) Utilization of land
- 5) Major constraints of small tea plantations
 - Low Price of green Leaf
 - Land ownership problems
 - Financial Problems
 - Marketing of Green Leaf
 - Lack of Technical Knowhow of the Growers
 - Lack of Co-ordination between Producer and the Buyers of Green Leaf
 - Unregulated Growth of Small Tea Growers

3. Analysis and Interpretation

1. Gender of the respondents

Sl.No	Gender	No. of the respondents	Percentage
1	Male	68	68
2	Female	32	32
	TOTAL	100	100

Source: primary data

From the above table reveal that the 68 percent of the respondents are Male and 32 percent of the respondents are female.

2. Income per annum from Tea cultivation

Sl.No	Income level	No. of the respondents	Percentage
1	Below Rs.2,00,000	53	53
2	Rs.2,00,001 to Rs. 4,00,000	24	24
3	Rs.4,00,001 to Rs.6,00,000	15	15
4	Above Rs.6,00,001	8	8
	TOTAL	100	100

Source: primary data

From the above table reveal that the 53 percent of the respondents are income level below Rs. 200000, 24 percent of the respondents are income level between Rs. 200001 to Rs. 300000, 15 percent of the respondents are age group between Rs. 400001 to 500000 and 8 percent of the income level above Rs. 600001.

3. Satisfaction level of respondents

Sl.No	Satisfaction level	No. of the respondents	Percentage
1	Marketing Facilities	22	22
2	Profit	12	12
3	Loan facilities	17	17
4	Price of Tea	09	09
5	Availability of Saplings	22	22
6	Storage facilities	8	8
7	Activities of tea board	10	10
	Total	100	100

Source: primary data

It is evident from the above table that 22 percent of the respondents are satisfied with marketing facilities. 12 percent the respondents are neutral in their satisfaction level towards profit earned 17 percent of the respondents are satisfied with loan facilities, 9 percent of the respondent are satisfied with price of Tea, 22 percent of the respondents are satisfied with availability of Saplings, 8 percent of the respondents are satisfied with availability of Storage facilities and 10 percent the respondents are satisfied with Activities of tea board.

4. Problems faced by tea growers in tea cultivation

Sl.No	Problems	No. of the respondents	Percentage
1	High cost of manure	13	13
2	Poor saplings	11	11
3	Soil Erosion	9	9
4	Poor rainfall	11	11
5	High cost of pesticides	5	5
6	Lack of skilled labour	14	14
7	Lack of co-operation from workers	16	16
8	Transport	21	21
	TOTAL	100	100

Source: primary data

From above table reveals that the 13 percent of the respondent are problem faced by the high cost of manure, 11 percent of the respondents are poor saplings and rain fall faced by the problems, 9 percent of the respondents are soil erosion, 5 percent of the respondents are High cost of pesticides, 14 percent of the respondent are lack of skilled labour, 16 percent of the respondents Lack of co-operation from workers, 21 percent of the respondents are problems faced by the transport.

4. Suggestions

- Educational status is very poor and separate wing has to be formed for the same to improve the skill.
- Separate with sanitary good condition toilets are required and first aid boxes, 3 – 4 time free medical Checkup per year are also needed.
- The marketing related aspects are not at par with International standards. The best way of marketing tea is through auction system. Auction centre acts as a single window where the quality, quantity and prices are regulated. However the Government of India should see to it that the entire tea produce should come to the auction floor. The auction systems should further be strengthened.

- Two major and short intervals are necessary for the workers. Wastage disposal should be proper. Drinking water, bore well should be planned properly.
- Educational and housing facilities has to be improved with transportation facilities should be provided.
- The wage of the workers is very low. There is a need for policy measures to increase the wage of the workers in the estates.
- Looking into the technical problems of the small tea growers, the Tea Board of India, Tea Research Authority and corporate tea producers should take the responsibility to train different aspect of tea cultivation to the small tea growers. This will improve the technical knowhow of the cultivators

5. Conclusion

Tea is the most widely consumed drink in the world. 3.5 billion cups of tea consumed every day. Tea is one of the - workers in this district are paid very less and least beneficiary measures are given to them. In India tea is the main beverage for each and every house hold. The study also revealed problems faced by tea growers at Nilgiris district. The various problems faced by tea growers such as lack of Co-operation, unavailability of loans, lack of transportation facilities. The study also brought out some suggestions as to how the production of tea by small tea growers has to be improved small tea growers should bring down the cost production and improving the workers productivity through various reforms. It is suggested to introduce some promotional campaigns so as to make people aware of the quality of Indian tea abroad and value added products can also be market in International markets.

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