

## Role of Small Tea Growers in The Socio-Economic Development of Udalguri District of Assam



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### A B S T R A C T

*An attempt has been made in the present study to examine the role of small tea growers in the Udalguri district of Assam. At present tea industry is the only industry of the district. Although small tea growers has developed in the district, yet efforts are to be made to change the socio-economic condition of the district. The role that can be played by small tea growers to minimize the socio-economic problems have been highlighted in the article.*

**Keywords:** Tea growers, Socio-economic development, barrenland, nursery, leaf seller, bought leaf factory.

#### Introduction:

The small tea growers occupy an important place in the economy of the Udalguri district of Assam. Assam as producer of tea and employer of employed work force is highly remarkable. It is found that if proper government policy is adopted with certain flexible regulation for the steady growth of the small tea growers then it would not only help in solving the problem of chronic unemployment to a great extent but also in the generation of income to the people of the district. There are sufficient amount of high barren land (Sandy and foringoti mati) found in most of the tea growing districts of Assam. If these lands are bought into tea cultivation by setting up small tea garden then it would provide a number of benefits.

#### Objectives of the study:

- (i) To find out the social aspects of the small tea growers in the Udalguri district of Assam.
- (ii) To find out the economic condition of the small tea growers in the Udalguri district.

#### Methodology:

The study is mainly based on primary data. The data were collected from the "Udalguri district" which consists of 6 Blocks and 94 gaon panchayats. From the study area, various information were collected with the help of schedule cum questionnaire

The main source of secondary data were books collected from libraries of Udalguri and Gauhati University. Data were also collected from All Bodoland Small Tea Growers Association, Tea Board, Tea Research Association, Tocklai and Journals of tea. According to the objective of the present study, I have adopted "Survey Studies" based on analytical and descriptive research model.

Result And Discussion

#### 1. Employment:

Tea industry is a labour oriented industry and it requires huge manpower to run the plantation. More than 42000 workers are directly or indirectly employed in the industry. Other than the workers who are main actors in the plantation, some skilled supervisor, office staff, accountants etc get gainful employment. It will increase the opportunities of self employment to a number of educated youths who are exhausted of seeking to various organizations. The educated youth can open up own tea garden and get himself engaged in the plantation and earn their livelihood. Not only self-employment but also create employment opportunities for others. It provides wage employment to the local male and female youth. The small tea growers need wage employers from the very first year. The local people easily can find work in the gardens. Another remarkable prospect of small tea garden is that it provides employment to 32+age people and helps in a great way to this people to earn their livelihood. Here people with higher age group can find their jobs if they are physically fit.

#### 2. source of Livelihood:

It can be a source of livelihood to numerous illiterate and under matric people of the region. For both male and female it can be source of livelihood.

**Income:** It provides an opportunity to increase the income of the people of the entire area directly and indirectly. Those people who are directly employed in the garden are earning their income in the form of salary those who are permanently employed and those who are employed in daily basis that is non-permanent earn income in the form of daily wages. There are another large number of people are earning their income by providing transport facilities, leaf selling, etc.

**1. Nursery:** Nursery can be another source of income to the people of the area. This business can reap a

higher income means higher profits. People by using 2 to 3 bighas of land can earn a huge profit.

**2. Leaf Sellers:** Lots of local youth can earn a huge income by taking up the profession of green leaf seller. As the small tea growers do not have their own factories so they sell their green leaves to the factory garden. The green leaf seller purchase the leaves from the small tea garden and sell them to the factories of big garden at a higher rate than at what rate they have purchased. In this way they earn a handsome amount in the process.

**3. Market:** It provides ample opportunity for the development of business establishment and township in the area. As a result the people of the area can increase their income in manifold by opening up new shops and business establishment. As population is increasing the scope of wider market is also increasing as demand for different products is rising.

**4. Barren Land:** There are lots of barren i.e. not use for cultivation land found in the northern parts of the district. If these barren lands are brought into cultivation then the land owners can earn a good amount either by starting tea plantation or leasing it to others for tea plantation or selling it to others.

**5. Productivity:** The small tea grower through their production of green leaves help in increasing the production of the state and country tea production. This in turn will yield huge revenue to the government exchequer of the state.

**6. Bought Leaf Factory (BLF):** The district has ample scope for the growth of Bought Leaf Factory. Only one BLF is established so far, but according to the number of small tea garden and their production there is a great shortage of BLF who can utilize the green leaf of the small tea growers. At present thousands of green leaf are sent to other districts.

**7. Government Revenue:** The government can earn a good amount of income from the small tea growers in the form of tax and revenue. Most of the growers come under the net of income tax as a result now a day's government in receiving a good amount of tax. One thing to be noted that the Bodo people after the BTC accord has got the privileged of income tax exemption completely so the government loss a portion of revenue in the form of income tax from the Bodo people. Other tribe people have to pay tax. The government can

generate new revenues by providing new land patta to the pattaless small tea growers. Most of the small tea growers are using the land without any land patta. The government can earn a huge amount of tax by developing this industry. The central government can earn more in the form of corporate income tax and tea cess. The state government can also increasing it earnings in the form of agricultural income tax, cess on green leaf and value added tax.

**8. Transport and Communication:** Transport and communication is the backbone of modern civilization. The economic prosperity of a country depends on the well developed network of transport and communication network. Earlier the transport system was horrible but with the development of small tea garden the roads system has been developing. Hence, if small tea gardens are developed then along with the small tea growers it will be benefited to all section of the society residing in the district.

**9. Conservation:** Another prospect of small tea growers is that it helps in the conservation of natural resources. It helps in abolition of shifting cultivation and the degradation of forest area. This in turn helps in preventing soil erosion as it enhances the water holding capacity of the soil. If all the areas under shifting cultivation are brought under tea plantation it would not only increase revenue, but also conserve the natural resources. Tea cultivation helps in the transformation of the barren land into green areas. Tea industry is completely non-polluting. It protects the bio-diversity and helps in maintaining ecological balance.

#### **Conclusion:**

Small tea growers can play an important role in the socio- economic development of the district. By raising the income of the people of the district the standard of living of the people can be increased, poverty can be reduced to a great extent. The anti-social elements of the society can be brought to the mainstream line and different social problems of the district can be solved to a great extent. Realizing the significance of small tea growers in the economy of Assam, the Tea Board, the State Government, the financial institutions associated with the supply of finance to the tea industry and small as well as big tea growers should make a concrete effort for the rapid development of small tea plantation in the district.

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