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Entrepreneurship in Small Tea Plantation: A case of Assam

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Abstract

The tea industry of Assam is more than 180 years old by now. The cultivation of tea on small holding is comparatively a recent development. This Small tea cultivation is an integral component of large scale tea industry of the entire state by producing nearly 25 per cent of total tea production of the state. It provides ample avenues for self employment of educated unemployed youth besides engaging family members. The high profitability coupled with the prospect of getting steady income with minimum effort have attracted a large number of educational youth both rural urban. In many empirical researches, it has been observed that small scale tea cultivation was widely recognized as an integral part of economic development of many countries and region of the world.

There is a large scope for entrepreneurial involvement as it provides employment, generates income, wealth and act as a key force for economic growth of a region. It has also been found that there are 68,465 Small Tea Growers in Assam contributing nearly 5 lakh families associated with small tea plantation. It has the potentiality of the transform of socio-economic condition of rural Assam. The cultivation of tea on small holding is the green revolution of Assam which empowering many people for the first time and rejuvenating the state's economy. These private initiatives taken up by small tea growers may cultivate the spirit of entrepreneurship and would strengthen the backbone of the rural economy of Assam.

Present paper will try to explore the opportunity of tea entrepreneurship and its impact on the rural economy of the state.

Key Words: Entrepreneurship, Small Tea cultivation, Small Tea Growers, Socio-economic development.

INTRODUCTION:

The typical plantation economies an outcome of Colonial era could be witnessed in different sectors and across the globe. In Brazil and Malaysia it was *rubber*, in West Indies it was *sugar* and in India it is *tea*. The

tea industry of India is one of the oldest and perhaps the most efficiently organized agricultural enterprises in the country. The credit for the growth of tea industry goes to the British entrepreneurs who invested large capital during the initial days of plantation. After the Yandabo Treaty (1826), British had

acquired full control over the entire territory of Assam; which has given incentives to the British traders to expand their area under tea plantation by acquiring Government land at a very favourable term. After losing legal monopoly of the tea trade between China and Britain (1833), the East India Company began to look for other sources of supply in the newly conquered regions. Assam was selected as the most accepted region for tea cultivation because in the early 19th century tea was discovered growing wild at many places of Brahmaputra valley. The first experimental tea cultivation in Assam was started in 1836. In 1839, and first made tea was sent to London Auction and received a very positive feedback. This important development was the starting point of the tea industry of Assam.

In tea plantation, the regulations enacted by the then colonial rulers were extremely favourable to the European entrepreneurs. Due to lack of capital and knowledge over tea cultivation, local entrepreneurs have taken little initiatives in tea cultivation during the initial days. Even after the independence, the situation has not change much as British companies were taken over by the private parties/companies who belong to main land of India. Therefore it is rightly said that “the plantation sector in Assam thieved on alien interest, employed capital, labours from outside the region and catered to the needs of external market” (Nath,1997).

From the modest beginning, Tea Industry of India at present has a total business of Rs.19000 crore and expected to reach Rs 33000 crore by the year 2015 (estimated by

Table 1: Tea Industry in India at a glance (2011)

	Number of gardens	Area under production (in hectare)	Total production (million k.g)	Employment
Small Tea Garden	157504	1.62 lakh	260 mkg	1 million
Big Estates	1686	4.18 lakh	728 mkg	2 million

Source: Tea Board of India

ASSOCHAM, 2011). It is the second largest producer in the world (988.32 mkg) after China and fourth in world export. Tea (*chai*) has become a common beverage for the country which consumes around 90 per cent of her total production. It is one of the oldest industries and among the largest employers in organised sector. Over 12 lakh permanent and almost same numbers of casual and seasonal workers are employed by the industry (Gothoskar, 2012). The growth of this industry in India was responsible for the development of infrastructure and the regional economy of many backward regions like- Assam. Tea is produced mainly North and South India. Assam dominates the country’s tea map by producing more than half (51.48 per cent) of total tea production.

In recent year, tea industry of India has witnessed many structural changes, which includes emergence of tea cultivation on small holding, rising competition in domestic market, introduction of Bought Leaf factories(BLFs), (Das,2009). Now, production of tea in India takes place in both large and small scale. Cultivation of tea on small holding of land is a new concept in India. According to Tea Board of India (TBI), Small Tea Growers (STGs) has been defined, as a person or group having plantation area up to 10.12 hectares .At present STGs are became a very important constituent of tea production as it produces nearly 24 per cent of the total tea production of the country and nearly 1.58 lakh small cultivators are directly engaged in tea cultivation.

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 Indian tea industry during the colonial period by the British planters. Until 1950's, it was thought to be the only way to produce tea on commercial basis where production to sale was controlled by the tea planters themselves. Tea cultivation on small holding belongs to a farm or production unit that allocates its labour, land or other resources for subsistence or semi subsistence income from it. Thus, a small grower is the owner and worker as well (Ahammed, 2007). The growers produce only green leaves; manufacturing and distribution parts are managed by different persons or groups. Cultivation of tea on a small holding is a usual practice in many major tea producing countries like- China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, etc.

The concept of small tea cultivation came into existence when Kenya in 1950's, had decided to produce tea for export. The Kenyan successful experience had created a model of small tea growers in developing and underdeveloped countries. Since then, there has been a steady shift in tea cultivation from big plantation to small holdings (CDPA, 2008). Today, in most of the tea producing countries, tea cultivation on small holding significantly contributes to

the country's total tea production along with the large estates. Inspired by the contribution of STGs in leading tea producing countries, many developing countries like Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, etc. are also utilising their unexplored vacant lands in the vicinity of traditional tea growing areas for plantation of tea on small holding.

Small Tea Growers (STGs) In India:

Tea cultivation on small holding is a recent development in Indian tea sector. This concept was initiated in 1930's, beyond the traditional tracts of cultivation in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu (Chai Time, 2007). It was only late 1980's or early 1990's, the cultivation spread to the other tea producing states of India like - Assam and West Bengal. After independence, during the successive five year plans the TBI has spent all its resources in trying to mobilise big tea estates/plantations to increase production or expand area under tea. Most of its efforts borne little result (Bhowmik, 1991). Even with the Government investment through TBI and other agencies, there has been a marginal increase in production. From the 8th Five year plan (1992-1997) TBI has laid down some emphasis on the promotion of STGs. It has decided on this scheme because all other attempts to increase area under tea have failed. Therefore, it is proposed to encourage landless labourers and unemployed youths to take up tea cultivation in the tea growing areas of India.

Table 2: Distribution of Small Tea Growers in India

<i>State</i>	<i>Number of STGs (2008)</i>	<i>Registered with TBI (2010)</i>	<i>Area in Hact (2005)</i>
Assam	64597	4561	41,249
West Bengal	9990	1032	9500
others	9354	8865	7355
Total North India	83941	14458	58104
Tamil Nadu	68147	10404	43,157
Kerala	5402	7412	4,810
Karnataka	14	14	83

Total South India	73563	17830	48050
Total India	157504	32288	106,154

Source: Source: Tea Board, 2010 and All Assam Small Tea Growers Association

Growth of STGs in Assam:

The tea industry of Assam is more than 180 years old, but cultivation of tea in small scale is a new development. During the initial days, tea cultivation was quite colonial in nature without the involvement of native people. Few initiatives were taken by the end of 19th century by the local entrepreneurs. This was limited within the influential classes and not permissible to common people (Gogoi, 2011). The local people never got prime land for tea cultivation (Deka, 2008). After positive feedback of London Auction (1839), the Government encouraged British entrepreneurs to invest in tea cultivation. The investors were given land on easy terms and the policy of Colonial rulers was to favour their own people. Labourers also hired from outside the state like- Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and other parts of the country. There was a dearth of indigenous labour and capital and the commodity market did not evolve within the region (Nath, 1997). Besides, tea cultivation was a new concept for the local people; they might have lack of knowledge and interest to take tea cultivation. Having their own land, they did not want to work as a tea labourer in the gardens. This stigma remained with local people more than 150 years. The mistake they have committed during the initial days of tea cultivation deprived the whole indigenous community from the industry and became the silent observers of the growth and development of tea industry of Assam.

After independence, certain restrictions were imposed on cultivation of tea to keep control on quantity and quality of tea produce in India. Under Plantation and Labour Act (PLA) 1951, restrictions were imposed on tenure system, land holding, land transfer, minimum wage, etc. and PLA-1953, which necessitates a prior approval from Tea Board

of India for tea cultivation. Tea Board of India is responsible to regulate output, quality and marketing of tea. It gives approval on cultivation of tea on virgin soil, subject to fulfillment of certain conditions such as proof of ownership of land and size of the holding on which plantation of tea is proposed, proof of suitability of soil for cultivation of tea, proof of financial soundness etc. All these restrictions stood as hurdles to the growth of tea cultivation on small holding.

Traditionally agriculture sector of Assam was underdeveloped and subsistence in nature due to lack of irrigation and investment, small holding, difficult terrain, insufficient Government intervention. It compelled the agriculturists to look for alternative livelihood. Tea cultivation on small holding was one of the alternatives for the agriculturists to sustain their livelihood in the long run as cultivation of tea provides works and income throughout the year. This can be termed as the beginning of an Indian entrepreneurship in the tea sector (Deka, 2008). In the present context, in India there are limited scopes for the growth of big tea gardens as after independence a lot of changes have taken place in the Government legislations to improve the socio-economic framework of the country. So, the alternative for the growth of tea industry in India is left only setting up of small tea gardens (Baruah, 2008). Finally, the Government of India as well as Assam Government allowed the local people to open small tea gardens by abolishing all the barriers relating to the growth of this sector (Saikia, 2008).

The first effort to popularise tea cultivation in small holding in Assam was made in 1978 by Late Soneswar Bora (the then Agriculture Minister of Assam)¹. His intention was to utilise available fallow land and attract

young generation to agriculture sector and thereby to solve unemployment problem (Baruah, 2011). The abundance of uplands, suitable climate, availability of agro-technology services, skilled surplus labours from nearby big tea estates, ready market to sell the green leaves in the estates factories, the advantage of plantation crop over the seasonal agricultural crops were the factors that encouraged the small and marginal farmers who were engaged in other economic activities to take up tea plantation (Das, 2010). The initial success was

phenomenal. At present there are 70000² (approx) STGs in Assam with a land coverage of 1, 18,000 acre; contributing nearly 30 per cent of the total tea production of the state. On the other hand, the acreage under big tea estates declined from 4,09,684 hectares to 4, 01,512 hectares (1.99 per cent) during 1991-2006. According to a survey conducted by the Government of Assam, the major concentration of STGs (94 per cent) is found in Upper Assam districts (*Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivsagar, Golaghat and Jorhat*).

Table 3: Growth of STGs in Assam

Year	No of Growers	Area (in hectare)
1978	16	60.836
1983	279	1154.871
1988	875	3359.637
1993	4594	14051.838
1998	16759	41423.303
2003	45444	89334.217
2008	67463	118058.304
2011*	68465	NA

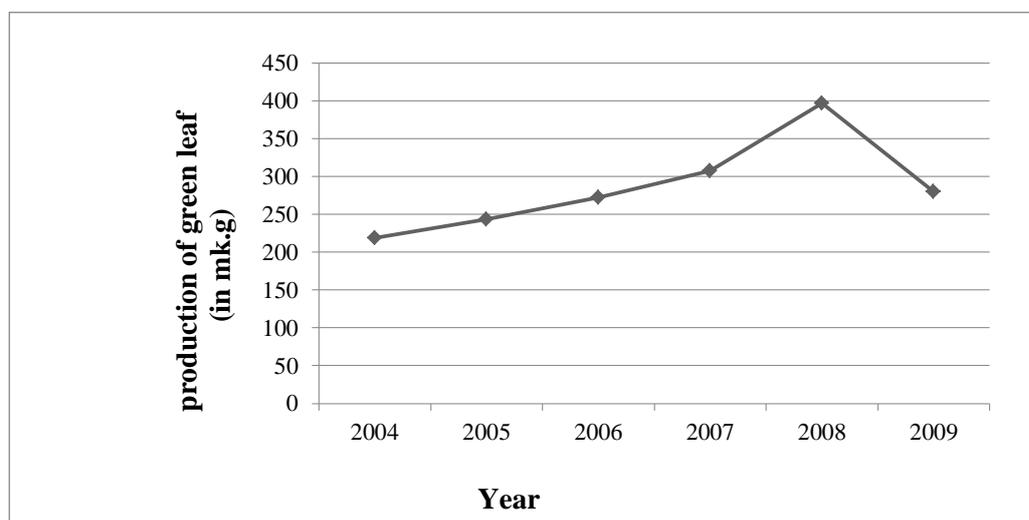
Source: E- directory of Small Tea Growers Department of Ministry of Commerce Govt. of Assam

*Small Tea Growers Data Bank, Published by Govt. Of Assam based on the survey on 14 districts of Upper Assam.

From the table: 3, it is observed that the growth rate of STGs over the years is phenomenal. It has grown from mere 16 small tea gardens in the year 1978, increased to 68,465 in 2011. Figure: 2, shows the trend

of green leaf production (mkg) from the year 2004-2009. In the year 2004 production of green leaf was 218.41mkg and it rose to 396.574 mkg in the year 2009.

Fig 1: Growth of green leaf production by STGs (in mill k.g)



Source: Economic survey, Assam and All Assam Small Tea Growers Association

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SMALL TEA CULTIVATION:

The economic importance of small business in a developing country like India is much more than innovative and invention; they have been a vital source of absorbing unaccountable no of person at place in semi rural areas (Maurya, 2001). It requires low capital and low level of barriers to entry. In India, besides unemployment the economy is facing many other problems like poverty, illiteracy, poor health, etc. To overcome some of the basic unsolved problems like unemployment and income generation, country may encourage entrepreneurship through small business. They are characterized by the relatively labour intensive choice of production, which contribute to the society by enhancing the employment capabilities of skilled and unskilled, educated and uneducated labour force which may otherwise remained unutilized. The opportunity to enter into this business venture may cultivate the spirit of entrepreneurship which will empower the economic growth of the society as well as the economy.

Entrepreneur is an economic agent who plays an important role in the economic development of country. It is very old concept according to which, anyone who runs business is called an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is basically concerned with creating wealth through production of goods and services, which in turn helps in the growth of per capita income of a country. It speeds up the process of activating factors of production leading to a higher rate of economic growth, dispersal of economic activities and development of backward regions. Entrepreneur looks for innovative ideas and puts them into effect for economic development. Therefore entrepreneurship occupies a crucial part of economic development by triggering the economic activities for the development of a region. The relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development is very simple

i.e. entrepreneurship creates new business; new businesses on the other hand create new jobs, intensify competition and may increase productivity. As a result, entrepreneurship will lead economic growth (Acs, 2006). Both empirically and theoretically it has been proved that entrepreneurs are the key force for the economic growth of a country (Karlsson, Friis, Paulson, 2004). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) also supports this view and observed that there is no country in the world with higher level of entrepreneurship and low level of economic growth (UNCTAD, 2004).

In order to know how entrepreneurship is good for development, it is necessary to aware the types of entrepreneurial activity in a region or a country is actually involved. According to GEM, Entrepreneurship may be divided into two:

- (a) Necessity based
- (b) Opportunity based

It is observed that in every country, there is some level of necessity and opportunity entrepreneurship. When a person becomes an entrepreneur because he has no better option is called necessity entrepreneurship. On the other hand, opportunity entrepreneurship is an active choice to start a new enterprise based on the perception that an unexploited or underexploited business opportunity exists. Opportunity entrepreneurship is one of the important factors for employment creation and acceleration of economic growth. It is possible that necessity entrepreneurship may not lead to economic development because being pushed into entrepreneurship (self employed) as all other option for work either absent or unsatisfactory can lead to underdevelopment. On the other hand opportunity entrepreneurship represents the voluntary nature of participation and therefore entrepreneurs expect their venture to produce more growth firms and provide more jobs (Acs, 2006).

Therefore, it can be said that entrepreneurship plays an important role in the economic growth and development of a nation. It is purposeful activity which includes initiation, promotion and distribution of wealth and services. An entrepreneur is a crucial factor in economic development and an integral part of socio-economic transformation. It is a risk bearing activity and challenging task, needs utmost devotion, total commitment with fullest involvement for his personal growth and prosperity (Baruah, 2009). Entrepreneurs undertake business activities, employ themselves in that business and open up employment avenues for the others. Therefore, it plays a fundamental role in a country like India. It is now widely accepted the fact that the active and enthusiastic entrepreneurs can explore the potential and available resources of country such as labour capital and technology. Entrepreneurship helps in the process of economic development through increase in income, mobilizing the available resources, creating wealth, generation of employment, etc.

Cultivation of tea on small holding can be one of the most convenient sectors for developing entrepreneurship culture among the rural people of Assam. Tea growing in any scale, either big or small is an enterprise since it encompasses all elements of production viz. land, labour, capital and organization (Taparia, 2003). Many studies (Mwaura and Muku, 2007; Amartunge and Shiratake, 2002), has highlighted the fact that small tea enterprises are playing a major role in reduction of poverty, generation of employment etc., more effectively than their large counterparts in many developing and under developed countries. In Assam, the cultivation of tea in small scale is an outcome of the entrepreneurial ability of a group of local youth in the latter part of 1970's (Goswami, 2006). Active participation of the indigenous people since its inception provides

sustainable livelihood opportunity to large number of rural population. It provides avenues for self employment to educated unemployed youths, generating additional sources of income to the farmers and engaging family members directly with this enterprise.

Assam has been experiencing a social revolution in the field of tea cultivation on small holding for the last 30 years. It is an active choice of the farmers because, Assam is one of the finest places of producing tea in the world. Tea, as a commercial cash crop, has an increasing demand in and outside the country. Natural factors like -soil, weather is highly favorable for tea cultivation in Assam. Infrastructural facilities like factories for tea processing, auction market for made tea, available land for tea cultivation, cheap labour in and around tea growing areas, technical and other necessary technical knowhow, incentives provided by the State for small tea cultivation are the biggest advantages available for the local entrepreneurs. These opportunities act as a big push- factor to many rural unemployed youths to take tea cultivation on small holdings.

Tea cultivation on small holding is a family run enterprise. Family members are actively involved in maintaining the garden; only seasonal labours on temporary basis are engaged in these gardens. Small tea gardens are not coming under the domain of PLA, 1951 which gives an advantage to the STGs and thereby reduces the cost of production³. Initial Investment for tea cultivation on small holding is very less as investment requires only for plantation. Crop failure in agricultural sector is a regular phenomenon in Assam due to lack of irrigation, flood, lack of technology in production, etc. But in tea cultivation, crop failure is limited very occasional pest attack and natural calamities (Banerjee, 2011).

Tea cultivators have used suitable areas which were either un-utilised or under-utilised. It is estimated that nearly 20 million

hectare of land in upper Assam has been brought under tea cultivation by the small growers in the last decade.

According to All Assam Small Tea Growers Association (AASTGA), at least five workers are employed in each small tea

garden. It is estimated that about 2.40 lakh people are directly employed in this sector out of which 1.45 lakh is ex-tea garden labour or excess number of workers from the nearby big tea estates, specifically women pluckers.

Table 4: Estimated Engagement of workers in Small tea sector

Category	No. of Workers
Engagement of family member	81792
Additional workers (extra of neighbouring tea estates)	145692
Engagement of sub staff categories	11520
Total direct employment	239004

Source: Statistical Hand Book Assam, 2006

Engagement of tea cultivation by the STGs also contribute additional income to the total income. The average income of the STGs is Rs.49,598.26⁴, which is much higher than the per capita income of the state (Rs. 27,197) at current price in 2009-10.

With the increase in the production of green leaf in the state, manufacturing facilities like Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs) has been set up to help processing the green leaf in the tea cluster. There are 220 BLFs in Assam with average employment ranges between 20-25 workers and producing nearly 29 per cent of the total made tea production of the state. Many new business opportunities and services like- supply of garden implements, transportation of green leaf and retail outlets of agro chemical and manures, leaf agents, packaging, etc.

Additional output of tea coming from STGs will help to meet the national and international demand for tea and also support in maintaining exportable surplus which will help in earning foreign exchange for the country. Average production of green leaf at STGs is 3500 k.g per hectare; which is much higher than the average productivity of the big estates (i.e. 1690 kg per hectare). Price of green leaf has also an important motivator in taking up tea cultivation in Assam. In the last decade the price of one k.g green leaf was

sold in the range between Rs.8 to Rs.24 per k.g. It also gives positive attitude for utilising their available lands suitable for tea cultivation. Involvement of local youth in tea cultivation will create some role models in the rural area which will encourage the future growth of entrepreneurship in tea sector. Establishment of tea gardens in new areas will improve the local and regional environment. It will help to check soil erosion and destruction of natural vegetation since tea plantations would cover land.

MAJOR CONSTRAINTS:

Tea small holdings are never expected to assume the mode of dominant producers. They are seen only as a means for providing some additional earnings to the peasantry, and thus absorbing of rural surplus labours (Das, 2012). In Assam tea cultivation on small holding is still in nascent stage. There are some hindrances for the growth and developments of this sector which include – ownership of land, lack of finance, low price realisation of green leaf, unorganised nature of cultivation, etc. Most of the growers are cultivating tea on Government ceiling land without having formal ownership. The Land Act of Assam restricts the transfer of ownership right to the growers. This restricts the growers to qualify for registration under Tea Board, unable to take the advantages of various schemes of Government, financial intermediaries. Whatever the growth has

been taken place in small tea cultivation in Assam, the credit goes to the private initiatives of individual growers. Since, STGs do not possess their own processing unit; and have to sell their produce to the big estates or BLFs. being placed in the situation of dependent subcontractors, tea small holding remain in a stage of disadvantaged. Tea small holding have just become a convenient source for outsourcing by the estate sector, which set price for raw tea leaves. Sometimes these factories simply return raw leaves, citing inferior quality or compel small holders to accept the unremunerative price (Das, 2012). Therefore they are bound to sale their produce at whatever the prices, offered by the estates or the BLFs. the deceleration of the price of green leaf so rapid in recent years that the price offered by the large tea estates /BLFs has come down from Rs 21/k.g (in August) to Rs.4/k.g (in October),2011. BLFs enter into agreement for green leaf mostly with intermediaries like leaf agents or growers for volume of supply of green leaves. As the STGs are un-organised and un- unionised, they have the little bargaining powers with the factories. Lack of market information, absence of proper storage facilities, transportation problem, etc., ultimately bring down the price of green leaf. Moreover, the Government imposes cess like leaf cess (0.20 paisa/k.g), land cess (Rs.22/k.g) on the growers. Other than, this they have to pay a fine of Rs 200/ bighas if they put the tea under government fellow land. Unregulated growth of this sector in Assam has given raise the problem of price fluctuation of green leaf in the market. Without going through the marketing and economic holding etc. many small tea growers started cultivation of tea in the remote areas of Assam enthusiastically without technical knowledge; which ultimately leads to the uneven development of this sector.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION:

- It is observed that small tea plantation may rebuild the socio-economic structure of the rural

indigenous people of Assam. The problems which are highlighted like land ownership problem; can be shorted out by the Government taking example from other states.⁵ The only thing needed here is the sincere effort from the Government side and look this small tea gardens a new development initiative for the state.

- If we can solve the land ownership problem in Assam, we can also minimize the problem of finance to some extent of this sector; which is one of the most important factors for the growth of an industry. The institutional finance and financial assistance from Tea Board of India is totally based on land ownership of the cultivator in Assam.

- In case of marketing, the All Assam Small Tea Growers Association (AASGA) can set up co-operative form of cultivation and a standard for production of green leaf and their price before every tea-growing season. For proper price, Government can come to rescue the small tea grower with a minimum support price concept, which is applicable with other agricultural products. Regulation such as adoption of a formula for fixing the price of the tea leaf to the STGs would suffice.

- 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.

- To restrict the unregulated growth of small tea gardens, Tea Board of India or the Government of India should set up a *regulatory authority* to look into the uneven

growth of this sector. In a liberal economy, a regulator is must for the proper development of a particular sector, who will guide the development process. Recently, the State Government proposes the idea of separate Tea Board for STGs to ensure institutional supports for the growers.

CONCLUSION:

The emerging regime of small holding by the growers could be considered a bonus for Indian tea sector. Establishment of small units of production would provide fruitful opportunities for self expression and increasing their material wellbeing of the local rural youths. In Assam, younger generation feel frustrated because they do not have assurance that their education and other skills and talent would be fully utilized. Therefore encouraging these youths in taking up small/ medium level tea cultivation would

strengthen the backbone of the rural economy and will also curb social unrest. Economic benefits from the tea industry enjoyed by the British before independence and people from outside the state (Assam) after independence. Native people did not get their due share from the development of tea industry. Tea industry of Assam can be termed as oasis in a desert. The first generation cultivators who have taken up commercial cropping of tea are a radical step towards a new social system in Assam. This will empower the people of Assam with dignity. This silent economic revolution by small tea growers in the rural areas across Assam has helped to tackle unemployment problem apart from using unproductive land in an environment friendly manner. Therefore support should come from every quarter to sustain this socio economic revolution.

Notes:

1. In the year 1978 the Agriculture minister of Assam made an announcement in the state Assembly that there was no bar in the cultivation of tea in a land measuring 10 bighas i.e. 1.35 hectare.
2. According to the first official survey on STGs conducted by the Government of Assam covering 14 districts found that there are 68,465 STGs in Assam. It may be noted that in upper Assam districts, the growers has gone for large scale conversion of homestead land in to tea plantation in recent times.
3. Tea production involves three different costs - cost of cultivation, manufacturing and social costs. STGs are involved with cultivation only, the manufacturing and social costs like education, health, housing, subsidised food, fuel, pension, etc. for the labourers (under PLA, 1951) are not coming under their cost production.
4. According to the estimates of All Assam Small Tea Growers Association (2010), there are 68465 STGs; producing 279715417(000k.g) of green leaf. The average price of green leaf is Rs.12.14; therefore the average income of the grower is [(279715417* Rs.12.14)/68465] Rs.49598.26.
5. The individual registration of STGs with TBI is linked with the availability of proper land documents. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the Village Administrative Officer certifies and issues of land possession to an individual grower. Only with land possession certificate they can apply for Tea Board registration. In West Bengal, a No Objection Certificate from the Land Reforms Department, Government of West Bengal is the prerequisite for registration.

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