CHAPTER VI

Summary of the findings

Suggestions
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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above findings the following suggestions are offered, which if implemented will improve the position of palmgur societies vis-a-vis the members thereof.

Where there is sweet, ants will group. Where there is slope, water will flow and where there is income the artisan is ready to shed his sweat. This is the law of nature. Palmgur too is sweet. Why then the artisans are flocking? It is seen that traditional artisans are carrying on the palmgur work in all palmgur units in villages. The new and young generation is not at all interested in his own profession. Despite years of planning the problem of rural poverty is still continuing. Palmgur Industry holds scope by creating more jobs for artisans but correspondingly the income generating capacity of the artisan has not improved. There are many reasons for the above facts like Government policy, removal of prohibition, illegal toddy traders, quality and market problem, etc.

It is really a wonder that thousands of items could be manufactured out of the palm trees, edible and non-edibles
having uses in many spheres of human life. Conversion of neera into various edible products is carried out by people hailing from the lowest strata of the society. They have no other avenue for earning their livelihood and are solely and wholly depending on this industry. They are poorest of the poor. In majority of the cases it is found that those who are engaged in such industries are able to supplement their family income considerably. Similarly a good number of utility products are made out.

It can be stated that through the support of KVIC this industry has been trying to find a place for itself in the national industrial map.

By the various actions people are becoming aware for going into the conversion of palm neera into many readily accepted edible items instead of toddy making. This is possible because the tappers are also becoming conscious and educated and at the same time the State Governments are showing keen interest on development.

If the weightage of support is intensified this sector will enlarge substantially for producing jobs to poor at a very low cost. Nothing goes waste of palm trees. Right from its
tender root up to the leaves they can be converted into utility or edible products. These utility items viz. palmyrah leaves, coir, brushes etc., have got large potentiality even to earn foreign exchange. In fact they do fetch even now in a limited way. If all positive support and inputs are extended this can be increased considerably.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Commission should take various steps to encourage research in products of khadi or in the development of village industries or to provide facilities for the study of the problems relating to village industries.

STRESSED AREAS FOR IMMEDIATE RESEARCH:

i) Neera being a biological product and it should be preserved from fermentation. If neera can be preserved and bottled in its natural condition, or even by necessary treatment and converted into acceptable beverages as aerated water etc., it can really benefit the industry by attracting more people to take to the industry from virgin areas as also enabling the existing artisans to increase their level of income. The existing preservative is slaked lime a
substitute for which is still to be found.

ii) As palm jaggery and other edible products are hygroscopic, the existing storage method like smoking godown and packaging in paddy straw or palm leaf mattings are not convenient. Hence, effective and economical storage system should be introduced.

iii) The gur boilers are facing the high cost of fuel to convert neera into jaggery. Very scanty work has been done in the past to utilise solar energy or other types of energy sources cheaper than firewood which has become prohibitively costly. Work on fuel economy or other sources of cheaper energy needs to be done.

iv) The artisans engaged in this industry is that they do not have employment during off season. Work on utilisation of non-edible items which should be competitive in the market of consumer articles is necessary eg., products made out of palm leaf are likely to fade out in damp weather. The longevity of the palm fibre made palm fibre brushes is very less compared to brushes made out of man made fibre. R&D work in these areas will be of much value.
The quality of non-edible products could be improved by better designs, better treatment in processing of raw-materials, etc.

v) Designing more efficient and standardised equipments for production of items like palm sugar, palm candy, palm syrup, etc. employing standardised processes will be another area of R&D work. Development of a process to produced improved jaggery, powder or syrup blended with other nutrients or flavouring agents and standardisation of processes of manufacture could benefit the industry. Production of palm candy with modified flavours acceptable to the modern taste, even medicated with ayurveda formulation and the like are other areas of R&D work. Preparation of glucose, vinegar etc. are also potential areas of R&D work. Production of industrial alcohol or ethyl alcohol from palm juice need to be explored.

vi) In the field of palm agronomy, palm plantations, improved tapping techniques, storage facilities, improved furnaces and boiling trails and continuous trials are required for better productivity and improved quality for more attractive
products to the consumer both rural and urban for eventual higher income to the artisans.

When KVIC's palmgur institute is fully equipped with men and material, it would be possible to seek the solution of technical problems which palmgur industry is facing at present. However, it may be clarified that even when this institute is fully equipped, sincere efforts are to be taken for keeping close liaison with similar organisations, institutions which are engaged in the palm research. Many of the projects as cited earlier may be referred to by various reputed research centre of University and laboratories. Action plan may be chalked out involving technologist and scientists of the field. System should be built in for constant interaction with concerned researchers.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION:

It is experienced that the results of the research do not flow down to field as expected but remains within the four walls of laboratory only, neither positive and rapid steps are encouraged for skill transfer to the artisans. Hence, priority should be given to these aspects. One way of propagation is the adoption of lab to land programme. Mobile R&D van may be
designed for display, demonstration of work at the spot, testing of materials at the spot, on chief aspects free of cost and providing a week's training to the artisans at their village.

Impetus should be given in the matter of allocation of funds even, if any society adopts improved technology for the betterment of artisans through product diversification and improvement of productivity.

The knowledge of the many and varied techniques of production of edible and non-edible palm products led to studies and efforts for exploring the chances of the maximum utility of the various palm products. This has been made possible by the departmental centres of KVIC, viz.

1. The central palmgur and palm products institute of Madras.
2. The Demonstration-cum-Training Centre at Dahanu in Maharastra, and
3. The Palmgur Extension Centre at Alathur in Kerala.

In order to develop palm products industry on scientific lines with the help of modern science and technology and to put it on a sound economic footing technical research has been taken-up by the Directorate of Palmgur Industry of the KVIC. It is quite
relevant in the varied edible and non-edible products of the industry. In the four decades of the development programme of the industry various types of technical research are undertaken for getting better results as mentioned below:

1. Agronomical treatment to palm for better yield of Neera and parts of the palm for source of raw materials in better quality and quantity.

2. Systematic palm plantation for higher tapper productivity in terms of higher output for increased income.

3. Pruning of foliage say 30% of leaves at the rate of 10% in a phased manner yielding neera better in quality and quantity.

4. Fuel economy or improved furnaces and boiling pans.

5. Purification of juice for removal of suspended matter excess lime and for better colour of products like gur, sugar and candy.

6. Palm sugar boiling viability is still under trials though technique is almost perfected for maximum recovery of sugar.

7. Confectionery and aerated beverages utilisation of palm sugar as sweetening agent with other usual ingredients are still
worth exploring.

8. Palm fibre extraction by mechanised process for larger percentage of extraction and quality with no human drudgery.

9. Burushwise production unit based on principles and practice or work study and motion study can be introduced.

10. Packaging of all edible products in conformity with the legal requirements on food.

There is an acute competition from the toddy trade faced by neera tappers for gur production and neera sales.

Policy support from State Government in the following directions alone will ensure the above results.

1. Preservation, propagation and census of palm wealth in India, preservation of palm trees on Government /Panchayat/ Local body land for neera tapping, raising palm plantation under social foresting scheme.

2. Exemption from levy of excise duty on palm sugar based products like aerated water.

3. Institutional support for individual entrepreneurs or artisans through even commercial co-operatives formed under central and state laws in addition to the co-operatives and registered
institutions. Establishment expenditure of such bodies are to be met by State Government.

4. Exemption from levy of tree taxes and other taxes on palm products.

5. Uniformity in state laws, regulation in respect of issue or non-issue of licence for tapping palm trees for neera, fixation of tree rent, local taxes, etc are needed.

IMPERATIVE NEED FOR REVISION OF PATTERN:

It is felt that the present pattern of assistance is insufficient even to meet 25% of the actual need. In addition to this the provision made presently in the pattern could not fulfil or ensure the entire requirement of artisans. It is essential to create more avenues in the pattern for providing funds to artisans under the following heads.

1. Infrastructural assistance.
2. Promotional assistance.
3. Managerial assistance.
4. Marketing assistance.

In this connection the heads of assistances may be
revised and classified according to the need of individuals. It will facilitate to get proper assistance in proper time by more artisans in each societies under different categories.

In the existing pattern of assistance there is a provision for the construction of houses for tappers. The quantum of assistance is insufficient to construct even a hut. This may be enhanced to at least Rs.10,000 including a subsidy component of at least 33.33% so as to construct low cost houses.

The primary societies or district Federations may be permitted to function as housing society, in this regard and necessary amendments may also be made in the existing bylaws. It will facilitate the society for easy and prompt recovery of housing loans from tappers.

The palmgur societies may be permitted to provide petty loans and advances to the producers whenever they need and the same may be recovered at the time of delivering their produce to the society.

MARKETING:

Reorganisation and constitutional changes are necessary
for improving the marketing techniques and for increasing the efficiency of the marketing management. It is necessary to organise a separate marketing cell in Apex level and middle level with efficient marketing staff to establish a stable market for palm products. For this purpose State and Central Government may liberally provide sufficient subsidy and guidance for the creation of new markets.

In this connection the Government should adopt the vital communication media such as T.V., Radio and documentary films. They may extend cordial co-ordination for the propagation of the nutritive and medicinal values of palm products. It will facilitate for the creation of new markets in all spheres.

Usually the producers rely upon the petty merchants for the fixation of price. They do not know the price prevailing then. It leads to exploitation and resulting in loss to producers. To avert this deadlock and handicap still prevailing in this industry, the grass-root level primary palmgur societies need rejuvenation, reorganisation and financial stability for marketing and assisting to the members to avoid price fluctuations. Market Research may be undertaken to find out the new techniques for
increasing the efficiency of marketing management. It will be better if the State Government will allow 20% rebate on sale of non-edible palm products for 30 days in a year which will help the palmgur industry in a big way to increase their sales.

OFF SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT:

The tapping of neera is seasonal. Hence, the tappers are idling their time during off season or move to other places to secure employment. Sometimes the tappers settle in the new places which leads to dormancy of societies. To obviate this problem the tappers may be provided with

1. Off seasonal employment through palmgur societies.
2. Financial assistance during off season to start small business or trade ensuring them to eke out their livelihood.

It is therefore, felt that the palmgur co-operative societies be converted into multipurpose societies so as to provide employment to their members. These societies may also be permitted to undertake any industry or craft in accordance with the environment such as cattle rearing, poultry farming, dairying, weaving, knitting, etc.

The major reason for the dormancy of primary societies
is under-employment. If provision is made to provide employment through other industries and the primary societies are allowed to do any business other than palm jaggery, it would pave the way for the viable existence of present palmgur co-operative societies.

INSURANCE COVERAGE:

The tapping operation is hazardous. All the tappers in the Palmgur societies may be insisted to enrol themselves in 'Janatha Insurance Scheme'. The premium may be equally distributed for a period of five years between the tappers and the state government. It is necessary to encourage the enthusiastic young generation from the tapper community to take part in the functioning of the societies for the benefit of the members.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR EXPORT BUSINESS:

India is one of the major producer of vegetable brush fibre which is the most valuable gift of the palmyrah tree. Palmyrah fibre is used for the manufacture of scrubbing, flue, sink, horse, garage, brewery, dairy, sanitary and foundry, brushes and brooms for house hold and industrial applications. Palmyrah
fibre can be handled fairly in all methods of manufacture because of its adaptability. Because of its adaptability and wider usage in industrial and house holds it has its own and special demand and market in India and abroad.

The future palmyrah industry depends upon maintaining a measure of stability in prices. By doing so foreign exchange earning capacity of the palmyrah fibre can be enhanced.

The KVIC should approach the Ministry of foreign trade for channelisation of exports of palm fibre through the proposed federation. Port facilities like arrangements for the transport of the cargo from wharf to ships and godown facilities near the wharf may be provided.

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL MARKET:

Production of palmyrah fibre can be increased if the internal market is expanded. KVIC should mount organised efforts to tap the potential user industries such as municipalities, corporations, railways, automobile industries, textile mills, industrial establishments, etc.

The Tamil Nadu State Palmgur and Fibre Marketing
Co-operative Federation is alone exporting palmyrah fibre to over 30 countries like U.S.A., European countries and Asian countries. The Export of Palmyrah fibre in other States is undertaken by private exporters unlike in Tamil Nadu. Hence, the co-operative institution in Tamil Nadu can be encouraged to expand its export activities by the KVIC. Moreover the Central Government is imposing Rs.380 per ton as customs duty and sales tax at 5.5% plus 10% surcharge on exports. These duties and tax may be eliminated to expand the export of palmfibre.

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. The Government should bring strict enforcement of prohibition to avoid the conversion of neera into toddy. It is known that if all the palm trees in the country are tapped and sugar is produced 75% of the sugar demand of the country can be fulfilled by which much of land can be saved to grow paddy, wheat, etc. Wherein sugarcane is produced for sugar presently.

2. Systematic palm plantation should be encouraged. As palmyrah trees are grown on non-agricultural waste lands without much efforts it can be undertaken on the banks of
rivers, canals and bunds of fields either side of Railway lines.

3. New institutional agencies like money-lenders and indigenous bankers play a dominant role in rural financing even today by which the real artisan is the sufferer and affected. It will be success only when adequate financial resources are supplied to the industry in right time by a right agency.

Competition among artisans can be arranged for State and National awards to give necessary encouragement to the artisans as well as the industry.

CONCLUSION:

Khadi was upheld as a symbol of a nation's struggle for freedom. A symbol that signified the pride, self respect, hopes and aspirations of people who demanded the right to determine their own future.

In KVIC, Khadi is still the symbol of quest for freedom—freedom from unemployment. The KVIC has three main objectives.

1. The social objective, to provide employment to people at the village level.
2. The commercial objective to market high quality goods made in the khadi sector.

3. The Higher objective to promote self-relience by encouraging entrepreneurs to take-up village level industry.

And KVIC is not just khadi. KVIC encompasses other village industries producing among other items, top quality leather articles, soaps, honey, pottery, cane and palm products. Goods carefully made by craftsmen with generations of experience. A production worth of Rs.1200 crores at present, with an employment level of 40 lakhs. All these pose a continuing commitment to improve the basic fabric of rural life.

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