CHAPTER – VII

SUMMERY AND CONCLUSION

The present work is on small scale tea cultivation and its impact on land use and socio-economic condition of the people of Sivasagar district of Assam. The study has been carried out in seven chapters.

The first chapter contains the introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the study, objectives, hypothesis and methodology adopted for the present study. A brief review of certain works connected with the problem has been incorporated in this chapter.

An introduction to the study area has been given in the chapter two. This chapter includes the physical background of the area, physiography, drainage, climates, soil, vegetation and socio-economic situation of the study area.

The third chapter devoted to the concept and present status of small scale tea cultivation in Assam. Extension and growth of small scale tea cultivation and how it helped in utilization of human labours and employment of sizeable number of workers are analyzed. This chapter is also associated with the Socio-economic characteristics of small tea growers of Sivasagar district.

The fourth chapter deals with the general land use pattern of the study area. The land use pattern has been discussed in to two phases – i) general land use pattern of the Sivasagar district and ii) land use pattern of selected small tea growers of the study area. Land used by small tea growers can broadly be classified in to four groups – i) virgin land, ii) crop replaced land, iii) marginal land and iv) unsuitable land.

Chapter five deals with the small scale tea cultivation and land use change. Most of the land used by the small tea growers for small tea cultivation in Assam was previously used for other purposes or waste lands. There has been reduction of the forest cover, sugar cane field,
bamboo forest, even paddy fields. Small scale tea cultivation has replaced the existing cropping pattern to mono cropping of tea. All these are elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter six studied the changes in occupational structure and income level of the people. The study reveals that the small scale tea cultivation has brought significant changes in occupational pattern and economic levels among the rural people of the area.

Summary of the entire work is put in the chapter seven.

The major findings of the study are summarized as under:

Small scale tea cultivation was initiated in Assam during the seventies and during the eighties in rural areas of Assam, especially in upper Assam. It has experienced a phenomenal growth in last decades. Initial foundation was laid during the eighties, but growth has picked up abruptly from 1990 to 2005. The rate of growth of small tea garden was at its peak during the year 1999 (95.60%) which was due to sudden rise in price of green leaf and profit. Small tea growers are distributed in five districts of upper Assam, viz, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat which is about 90% of the total. The rest 10% percent were spread over to the remaining 16 districts of Assam.

A small tea estate produces only green leaf. They don’t own factories or processing units. Small sector contributes about 85.15 million kgs. of made tea which is about 20% of the total tea production in the state. Total 56,871 hectares of land areas are under small tea cultivation in Assam and 6387 hectares alone in the study area.

Small scale tea cultivation provides ample avenues for self employment and engagement of family members directly in the production process. More than 2.40 lakh workers including family and hired are engaged in this sector. The positive effect of the emergent of small tea cultivation is controlling of migration from rural to urban centers. The growth of small tea
garden has created more job opportunities to the rural unemployed youths especially in upper Assam region. Thus it has stopped migrating youths to urban areas in search of petty jobs. Besides the direct employment it has also created many indirect employment opportunities in the field of manufacturing and supply of garden implements, transportation of green leaf and agro-chemicals required for these gardens.

Small tea growers were categorized into five groups on the basis of their socio-economic background.

a) Sedentary cultivator – adopted tea cultivation with an objective to augment their income.

b) Educated rural youth – more urbanized in engaging growing tea.

c) Educated youth from urban areas already engaged in various businesses.

d) In service personal – engaged as a hobby rather than income as motive.

e) Ex-tea garden workers – already trained in tea cultivation and settled within tea areas.

The total population of the study area is about 1598 persons, covering 243 small tea gardens (one garden means one grower). The average family size of a small tea grower is 6.58 percent. Percentage of literacy rate is high among the small tea growers compared to non growers. About 81.29% of people are engaged in tea cultivation which is above the state average of 64.28% (2001). The working force constitutes about 55.63% of the total population. The remaining 44.37% are non workers. The work force constitutes farming, services and business. Out of 55.63% total workers, 14.08% engaged in full time tea farming activities, 17.15% engaged as part time in tea, 10.57% engaged in agriculture, 6.88% engaged in business and 6.95% engaged in various services. The farming work force comprised of 11.26% male working as full time farmers and 2.82% female as full time farm workers. In the study area total area of small tea gardens are 1144.85 hectares, which comprises of own land, grazing land, ceiling surplus land and government land (both allotted and encroached). The average land holding sizes
are 4.71 hectares. The proportion of own land was found to be highest compared to government land, grazing land and ceiling surplus land. The small tea growers’ gardens are highly fragmented; about 50% of small tea growers own 03 – 08 bighas of land in place (0.13–1.07 hectare). The high lands which are used for tea cultivation in this region are mostly bariland and govt. reserved land.

The types of labours engaged in individual farms are -

a) Family members as supervisors,

b) Hired labours (regular, seasonal and casual)

Family labours are the major sources of labour in smaller size group of farms (up to 01 hectare). Hired labours are the major labour force in larger size group of farms and share of permanent hired labours increases with increase in farm size. May and August is the peak plucking season and in this period more casual labours are hired. Though employment opportunity is not uniform throughout the year, but most people are engaged.

The cost of operating or establishing small tea cultivation comprised of variable and fixed assets and investments. The average cost of managing one hectare tea garden is about Rs. 83,000.00. The human labour (31.61%) formed the major component followed by expenditure on manures and fertilizers (9.43%), fencing materials (0.81%), plant protection chemicals (4.43%), herbicides (3.08%) etc. The relative cost of human labour increases with the decrease in farm size.

The personal savings of a farmer is not sufficient enough to start tea cultivation. Hence, the growers borrow money from various sources.

The most common mode of transportation of green leaf is by jeeps, trucks and bicycles. Jeeps are most popular and commonly used mode of transportation for carrying green leaves.
Three major marketing channels through which the small tea growers market their green leaf are-
direct sale to factory, through commission agent and sub-agent. The marketing cost increases if
the length of channel is increased. Large size gardens sell green leaf directly to the factory.
Whereas the middle man have the privilege of purchasing green leaf from the small tea growers
and sub-agent purchases green leaf on behalf of the middle man.

Land under tea and rice are the most dominant forms of land use among small tea
growers. About 43.99% of the total sample gardens land holdings are for tea cultivation followed
by 38.07% rice cultivation. Remaining 17.94% of the total land holdings are under 4.52%
bariland, sugarcane (0.77%), bamboo (1.64%), mustered (2.70%), vegetable (2.12%), buildings
(4.72%) and fallow land (1.51%).

In the beginning, small scale tea cultivation in Assam was done on suitable high lands
only. But with the increase in numbers of growers, it has started occupying all type of high lands,
whether it belongs to their family or government. Bulk of the present area under tea have been
brought from cultivable fallow lands, sugarcane fields and land under plantation crops, bamboo
forest etc. People are replacing the high land crops even rice with tea as single dominant crop.
From 1993-94 to 2005-06, the forest covered area has decreased by 2.44% in the study area. In
the foothill zones, especially in Charaideo area of Charaideo Sub-division and Galekey area of
Nazira Sub-division shows maximum decrease in forest areas, since foot hills are ideal for tea
cultivation. Fairly large area was covered by sugarcane but it has been reduced to 0.77% in 2005-
06 from 4.78% in 1993-94. There are many small tea gardens in the area which were previously
bamboo forest. Most of the rural farmers converted their high land crops fields to small tea
cultivations. More than 90% fallow lands of this area were brought under tea cultivation
including government forestlands. Overall reduction of fallow land is 70.33 % during 1993-94 to
2005-06. During the last ten years pastures, grazing land decreased remarkably in the study area which is added to tea cultivation. From 1993-94 to 2005-06, 3.58 hectares of fallow land are converted to tea cultivation. It is also noticed in the study area that tea growers have applied the method of multistoried farming in their farm land. Plantation of Kadam, Sashi and Neem trees in the boundary of gardens are the typical character of small tea cultivation. The government grazing land, deforested area, ceiling surplus land and low productive paddy land and ahuland are used for tea cultivation.

From the field observation it is clear that the large proportions of workers are engaged in the small tea sector. The percentages of variations in the small tea sectors are between 1993-94 to 2005-2006 are 27.09%. It is also noticed that large number of working population from business and other agricultural sector are migrating to small tea sector in rural areas. The work participation rate in small tea sector is more than agricultural crops, business and services. Work participation rate is 31.23 % (both for full time and part time) in tea farms as against 10.57 % in other agricultural crops, 6.88 %, in business and 6.95 % in service sectors.

The major source of income is agriculture and its allied activities with a share of 89.81 percent. Agriculture is the most important source of income. Among the agricultural income tea has the highest share of 86.67% of income of small tea growers of the study area. Very few people are engaged in service sectors. This share is 8.64 % and business (shops, cottage industries, carpentry, govt. contractors, tea estates business, transports etc.) contribute 1.55% of the total family income. Average income per house hold has increased with the increase in farm size. Significant socio-economic changes have taken place among the small tea growers of the area. Among the social attributes, literacy and education, has gained high. Parents belonging to
tea grower's family could afford to send their children to private schools, where cost of education is high.

Occupational pattern of the study area is reflecting the prevailing economic character. The work participation rate has increased during 1993 – 2005. However, there is a spatial variation of distribution of workers in different sectors. The major shift of working population has taken place from other high land crops to tea cultivation.

The primary data of income pattern reveals that the average monthly income is significantly higher among the small tea growers than the other sectors. They could afford to spend major share of their income by the small tea growers for children’s education, food, clothing, and health etc. besides other entertainments and recreational expenditures.

Large section of the people use LPG fuel for cooking which was not the case before they took up tea cultivation. The urban atmosphere is slowly emerging among the rural people of the area due to better income and attainment of education. Better economic condition combined with the increasing impact of urbanization has also brought considerable change in the household amenities. In the past some household amenities like refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, inverters, telephone, car etc. were almost out of the reach of the people in the area, but today many of them possesses all such gadgets. Though small scale tea cultivation has brought many changes in socio-economic conditions of the rural people of Assam, it has also created many problems and disadvantages.

1) In many districts, the unsuitable lands and marginal lands were utilized for tea cultivation which affects the quality as well as productivity of the plantations. In many cases, productions of green leaf from small tea growers are not matched with the demand of tea markets.
2) As the small tea growers produce only green leaf and have no factories, they depend on big tea estates in Assam. The green tea leaf growers' sale their leaves to large tea estates through middle man. The price of green leaf varies depending on the factory and time of the year within the same district. Within three years of observation, it has seen that the rate of per kilogram of green leaf varies from Rs. 11.00 to Rs. 7.00/8.00. Such variation creates many unwanted problems to small tea growers of Assam. Such problems are:

a) The shortage of water supply in hill slope garden is a major concern.

b) There are wide technological gap between the skilled and unskilled small tea growers. Management of drainage, manuring, weed control, pest control, nursing of young tea plants etc. need skilled labours which enhances the productivity of tea.

c) There is ecological imbalances due to destruction of village woods, bamboo forests and other plantations in an around the villages. Many commercial crops like orange, pine apple, sugarcane have been replaced by tea. The traditional farming system has been replaced by unsystematic growth of the small tea units. The indiscriminate use of pesticides and agro-chemicals has polluted the rivers and water bodies. Thus destruction of bio-diversity is continuing with this small tea cultivation.

d) The growth and development of small scale tea cultivations are self financed and self motivated. Most of the tea growers are from low income groups and depend upon their family and relatives for finance.

e) In absence of marketing strategy and management most tea gardens depends on factory owners for selling of green leaf. Thus profit margin is always low. The problem is further compounded by the fact that some of the small tea growers tend to supply green leaf of inferior quality, which is also a deterrent factor for the buyers. The transportation of
green leaf is another associated problem where an agent who collects green leaves from the small tea gardens makes more profit out of this.

f) Most small tea growers occupy government lands by illegal means and later they get allotment.

g) The small tea growers' faces problems of non-allotment of land ownership documents and occupancy rights by the government to their allotted land, even on their own land for which they faces the problem of registration with Tea Board and thus they are deprived of credit facilities and subsidies provided by the Tea Board and Commercial Banks. The simplification of rules and regulations in getting registration could be taken up by the government. This will help the tea growers in particular and the industry in general.

h) If Tea Board set up nurseries and supply of suitable planting materials to the small tea growers will help in improving the current production.

i) Ceiling surplus land from large tea estates could be reallocated to the unemployed youths for tea cultivation in small holdings.

j) Subsidized supply of fertilizers, plant protection chemicals, agricultural machinery and implements for the small tea growers through co-operatives and state agricultural department may help them to do better.

k) To make the large growers independent the government can take measures to provide financial assistance and credit facilities to small tea growers intending to establish tea factories on co-operatives basis or under private ownership.

l) To identify associated problems with the production, productivity and quality of tea produced by small tea growers study need to carried out.
Conclusion: The introduction of small scale tea cultivation may be considered as a boon to the rural economy of Assam. It has brought remarkable changes in socio-economic scenario of rural Assam, particularly in urbanization, literacy and occupational pattern. Apart from self employment, the small tea cultivation has opened wide vistas of business opportunities, which provide not only direct employment but also indirect employment with steady income. The increasing number of small tea gardens in Assam and satisfactory production of green leaf indicated that this venture is more popular in rural Assam, especially in upper Assam. The study further reveals that land use change has also taken place in rural areas of Assam. Most of the rural farmers recognized their high land crops fields for small tea cultivation. Hundreds of hectares of sugar cane field, pineapple gardens, homestead gardens and bamboo forests disappeared from Assam due to tea cultivation. Most of the educated unemployed youths came forward for small tea cultivation without any help from government. Most of the poor cultivators of Sivasagar district became economically better due to tea cultivation. It is clear from the study that there is a considerable benefit from the small tea cultivations in raising income and the socio-economic status of the rural people.