

Impact of Globalisation in the Tea Industry of Darjiling: Study on the selected Tea Estates of Darjiling

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation has increased the process of integration and mutual interaction in the global scale with both positive as well as negative impact. The influence of globalisation can be seen in all the sectors of economy, one such sector is the tea gardens of Darjiling hills. The paper has highlighted on the impact of globalisation on the tea gardens of Darjiling as well as its work force. It mainly discusses on the globalisation playing a major role in the changing patterns of life of the labourers in these tea estates and the perception of younger generation is changing in respect to increasing influence of globalisation. which might be a major threat to the future of our tea industry.

1. Introduction

Tea industry is the major employment generating sector in the rural economy specially in beautiful hill stations of Darjeeling where more than half of its population is dependent on the majestic tea garden for their survival. Darjeeling is one of the district of West Bengal and is the most popular destination among the national and international tourists. Darjiling is located in the eastern Himalayan belt in the northern part of West Bengal. It is a "Hill town Headquarter" with a partially autonomous status within the state of West Bengal. It has an average elevation of 2,050 m (6,710 ft). The district comprises four subdivisions namely, Sadar Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Siliguri.

Darjiling Hills consist only of the first three subdivisions of the district and forms a significant part of the Eastern Himalayan System. The fourth subdivision Siliguri is mainly characterised by the Taraiportion and foothills of the district. The district is bounded by the state of Sikkim in the north, Nepal in the west and Bhutan on the northeast thus giving the district the shape of an irregular triangle. The exquisite scenic grandeur and invigorating climate in the area have earned the place the title of 'Queen of the Hill Stations'. Darjiling shares its international boarder extending 145km, 52km and 26km with Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh respectively. The district lies between the latitude of 26°31' and 27°13' North latitudes and between 87°59' and 88°55' East longitudes covering a total area of about 13,250km². The hilly part of this district has a soothing temperate climate. Due to marked variation in altitude with its cool and temperate climate with wet monsoon and cold winters provides an ideal condition for the growth of tea in this region. The history of tea industry dates back to 1830s when the tea was planted for experimental purpose by Dr Campbell. with the growth of tea industry, the population of this hill station also started rising because of large number of migrant labourer from Nepal and neighbouring areas. Today around 87 tea gardens are there in Darjeeling providing employment to large section of people. Since its inception the Darjiling tea industry has seen a lot of changes due to the influence of globalisation.

2. Objective of the study

With the increase in the globalisation and the increasing mutual interaction the main objective of the study is to:

1. To analyse the impact of globalisation in the tea industry.
2. To study the influence of globalisation among the labourers taking the sample village of Ging Orange Valley and Puttabong(Tukvar).
3. To study the perception of younger generation in respect to their future plans in the tea garden which hints directly to the influence of globalisation.

3. The Tea industry of Darjiling and the study area

Darjiling is renowned worldwide not only as a beautiful hill station but also as the home of the finest quality tea producing bushes of the world. Its moist and cool climate and rainfall ranging from 100 to 150cm contributes to the flavour of internationally famous 'Darjiling tea'. Also, the influx of cheap labourers from the neighbouring areas is an added advantage for the region in the flourishment of the tea industry.

Darjiling with this advantage produces the world best varieties of tea. Since the region has been cultivating tea for over 160 years, its tea has a flavor and taste of its own because of which there is a lot of demand in the international market. Unlike the most Indian tea, Darjiling tea has the variety of Camellia sinensis rather than the large leaved Assam varieties. Tea is grown over an area of 19,000 hectares at an elevation ranging between 700 to 2,000meters. Darjiling produces about 10 million kgs of tea every year for export, high quality teas are produced much lesser in number it produces approximately ten million kgs every year. The study area selected for this research paper is Tukvar, Ging and Orange valley tea estate. This tea gardens were selected on the basis of accessibility and the labourers were more open and affable. Puttabong Tea Estate, popularly known as the Tukvar Tea Estate, is located towards the north east of Darjiling town. It is approximately 7kms away from the main town market. This tea estate, bordered by Barnesberg Tea Estate in the west, interstate border of Sikkim in the north and Badamtam Tea

Estate in the south, has the garden with picturesque landscape. Ging Tea Estate is among the earliest commercial tea gardens to be established in this region. This tea garden is located to the northeast of Darjiling town in the Lebong valley in the lap of the majestic Himalaya giving a scenic beauty to the garden. It is about 13kms away from the main town and it takes about half an hour in vehicle to reach this garden. Orange Valley Tea Estate also known as Bloom Field Tea Estate (till 2000 it was Bloom field after that the company changed the estate became to be known as OrangeValley). This tea garden is located in the outskirts of Darjiling town to its southwest at about 4 kms distance from the main town.

4. Impact of Globalisation on Tea industry and the life of its labourers in Darjiling

- **Impact of globalisation on the tea industry in darjiling**

Globalisation means modernisation at the global scale which can affect the human beings at large across the nations and states. The term 'Globalization' is derived from the word globalize, which refers to the emergence of an international network of economic systems. In reality it is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture.

In common with many others industries the tea industry of Darjiling has also come under the so-called globalization process. Recently new methods have been introduced in this industry. Extensive uses of machineries have started. Way of living of the people associated with industry started changing subsequent to this modernisation process. But slowly there have been certain impacts which have been contributed by this globalization. They are both positive and negative.

As has already been mentioned tea produced in Darjiling Hills has special characteristics and has for long been known for the trade and the public in India and abroad as 'Darjiling Tea'. Over the years it has acquired a high domestic and international reputation. Hence, any member of the trade or public in India or abroad ordering Darjiling Tea or seeing tea advertised or offered for sale as Darjiling Tea will expect the tea so ordered, advertised or offered for sale to be the tea cultivated, grown and produced in the Darjiling Hills and having the special characteristics as branded.

It is a fact that Darjiling produces only 10 million kilograms tea annually but about 40 million kilograms of so called 'Darjiling Tea' is sold in the world market. This certainly means that the demand for Darjiling tea is greater than the production but because of the unholy trading this situation is being taken advantage of and the actual Darjiling Tea producers cannot fetch the right price. The term 'Darjiling Tea' is thus being used enormously in the global market. Teas like Lankan Darjiling, Kenya Darjiling, etc. are being sold widely. This is taking place widely to the industry back home and more than that the prestigious name of the Darjiling tea is being misused to make the consumers fool.

Darjiling Planters Association (DPA) has taken various steps in collaboration with the Tea Board of India (TBI) to overcome this hazardous situation. Under this attempt the Tea

Board of India is taking steps to protect the name 'Darjiling Tea' against wide use. Now the Darjiling tea is being monitored on a day-to-day basis on the production and marketing of the tea. Out of a total of 120 gardens in Darjiling district, only 87 gardens are on the hills. So, the Board of India has agreed that tea produced only in these 87 gardens would be termed as Darjiling Orthodox Tea. An electronic data processing (EDP) centre has been opened in Darjiling to collect data of products of these gardens. This data would be supplied to the TBI. The gardens of this hill wishing to export tea will be issued by the Tea Board a certificate of its origin, saying that this garden's tea originates from the Darjiling Geographical Identification area. That certificate would be given only on the basis of the collated data which the EDP would make available to the Tea Board. Another step is that the Indian Geographical Indication Act, 1999, has empowered the TBI to deregister any garden which is found to be adopting unscrupulous means.

The Central Excise department has also provision for conducting surprise checks in the gardens and their factories and the marketing points in order to ensure that the Darjiling Tea does maintain its originality and quality. The Tea Board of India has now tied up with almost all importing countries like Germany, European Union, UK, USA, Australia and Japan to fight adulteration gangs. "Earlier, there was a practice in Germany that if any tea, even if it was blended, contained 51% of Darjeeling Tea and 49 per cent other teas, it could be sold as Darjiling Tea. But that practice has been stopped after TBI's pressures on the German tea industry to honour the GI status of Darjiling Tea. The Tea Board is now also planning to collaborate with Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) for satellite mapping of tea gardens in India. This would enable to procure satellite data about the Darjiling Tea gardens and then match them with the data furnished by the gardens to the EDP centre. More so the board is mulling to revise subsidy to ensure quality Darjiling Tea producers are rewarded adequately for their efforts. Darjiling Tea gardens are also waking up to the growing global consciousness about the organic authenticity of agricultural produces. They have begun converting to organic tea production.

- **Impact of Globalisation on the changing pattern of life**

The impact of Globalization in the life and behavioural pattern of the tea estate labourers has been found to be quite remarkable. As has been mentioned earlier all the three tea estates in Darliling CD block are located within the walking distance of the main township of Darjiling in which the residents remain exposed to the behavioural pattern and culture of the modern generation of the people coming to visit as tourists almost round the year. So exposure of these tea garden labourers and the members of their families to the outside culture is inevitable. The changing lifestyle of the people in the urban areas developed around the tea estates particularly over the last three decades has exerted marked influence on the tea estate labourers and the members of their family in recent years. Perceptions towards the life of the people, particularly the present generation, who are now being educated in the schools and the other higher educational institutions outside, in Darjiling proper, are developing different notions towards their future. A certain state of apathy towards jobs in the tea estates continues to develop among the new generation. In order to

record this trend two types of data have been generated in the field through questionnaire survey. These are: a) proportion of young generation among the existing labourers in the tea estates and b) notion of the growing generation in the families about their desire for jobs in future. The results have been given below.

In order to work out the proportion of young generation engaged in service in the the tea estates data was generated in the field with classified years of service being rendered by the labourers in Tukvar, Ging and Orange Valley Tea Estates. The data generated thereby has been presented in the table below.

Table1: Years of service being rendered by the labourers in the three Tea Estates

Sample size: Randomly selected 50 labourers from each tea estates

Years of service being rendered	Tukvar(Puttabong) Tea Estate		Ging Tea Estate		OrangeValley Tea Estate	
	No. of Labourers	%	No. of Labourers	%	No. of Labourers	%
Up to 5 years	0	0	2	4	1	2
6 – 10 years	1	2	2	4	5	10
11 – 15 years	8	16	8	16	10	20
16 – 20 years	6	12	10	20	10	20
21 – 25 years	12	24	6	12	11	22
26 – 30 years	4	8	4	8	5	10
More than 30 years	19	38	18	36	8	16

Source: Data generated in the field by questionnaire survey

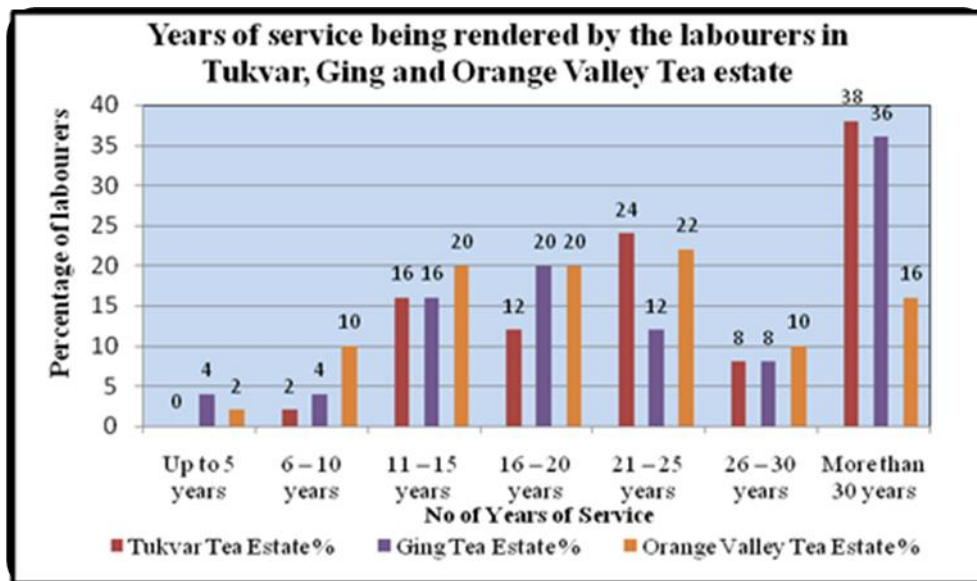


Figure 1: Years of service being rendered by the labourers in the three Tea Estates

The table and the figure above show that among the labourers in the three tea estates very negligible proportions (2% in Tukvar, 8% in Ging and 12% in OrangeValley) working for the tea industry are new comers; i.e., they have been appointed only a maximum of 10 years ago. Compared to these labourers serving in the estates; i.e., middle aged labourers (serving more than 16 years) are greater (82% in Tukvar, 76% in Ging and 68% in OrangeValley) in number. This clearly shows that the number of people coming in the tea estates is decreasing steadily in number. In other words, the young generation is now changing perception negatively

towards the tea garden jobs. This is a certain indication that under the impact of globalisation the tea gardens, as well as the estates are gradually losing the supply of young and energetic blood in the internationally famous industry of India.

Considering the above findings, a further study was conducted in which attempt was made to explore the present-day pattern of desire of the heads of the labourers families regarding sending their children in jobs (both plucking and manufacturing) in the tea estates. The data generated in the field in this regard has been given below:

Table 2: Desire of the heads of the family regarding sending their children in jobs

Sample size: 30 persons at random

Status of workers	Nos.	%
In jobs outside the tea estate	22	73.33
In tea estate job	8	26.67
Total nos. interviewed	30	100

Source: Data generated through field investigation

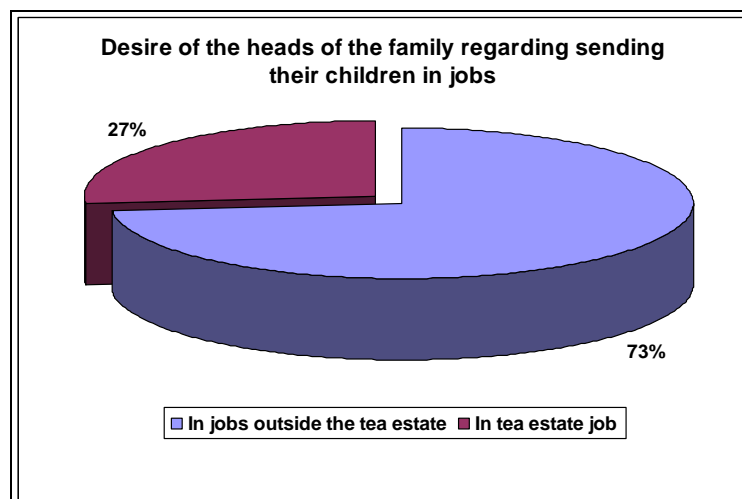


Figure 2: Desire of the heads of the family regarding sending their children in jobs

The above finding shows that notions of the people are now changing rapidly under the impact of advanced thoughts. Greater part (over 73%) parents of present day children are not willing to bring their children in this job which they consider hazardous and without having any bright future. Certainly, this is an indication of the impact of globalisation.

Being aware of this changing notions of the present generation garden labourers and trend as well the tea estate authorities are now trying to adopt new method in tea manufacturing. Most of the tea factories are being mechanized rapidly to shed dependence of labours in manufacturing. This is certainly a timely and positive response from the authorities to keep up with the changing environment. But the danger lies in the other side, i.e., in the works of tea plucking the art of which is entirely dependent on human power dependent. Mechanization is almost impossible in this sector. The trend in which the number of labourers coming as tea leaf pluckers is decreasing day by day is increasingly raising apprehension for the future of tea industry among the entrepreneurs of this

industry. This problem is virtually worldwide and gripping this plantation industry at the global scale.

5. Conclusion

The impact of Globalization in the life and behavioural pattern of the tea estate labourers has been found to be quite remarkable. Perceptions towards the life of the people, particularly the present generation, who are now being educated in the schools and the other higher educational institutions outside, in Darjiling proper, are developing different notions towards their future. A certain state of apathy towards jobs in the tea estates continues to develop among the new generation with increasing globalisation. This gives rise to a genuine cause of concern to the management as tea plucking, being entirely human labour and skill dependent work will certainly be profoundly affected with growing deficit in the supply of human labour in the garden work in the days to come.

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