

Tea Growing States in India and Assam

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Abstract: It is perhaps cliché to talk to about Tea Growing States in India and Assam. This Research paper is an attempt to highlight the evolution of Tea Growth of India and Assam. The Tea keeps an important place in the Indian economy. It employs about 3.5 million people across India and produces nearly 30% of the world's annual tea production. The estimated demand is above 850 million kg. in the year 2011. India is one of the largest consumer, of Tea globally. India's share of the global tea trade in on the lower side, as over 85% of the counter's tea output is consumed with in the country. Tea is produced in 14 States in India out of which five of them are Assam, and west Bengal in North India and Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnatak in South India. The tea growing states of India concentrated in two widely separated region of India: North East and South India. In the North East-Brahmaputra Valley is the single largest tea growing area in the world. In Assam there are 68,465 small tea gardens in 14 Districts of the Brahmaputra Valley. Tea is grown in Assam all most-27 Distincts of the state.

Keywords: Tea estate of North East, South India, Tea Auction Guwahati.

INTRODUCTION

Tea is one of the most popular beverages in the world. Tea brew is a divine remedy for many ailment since the emergence of Tea In inking. Tea has originated in China and it has become popular as a beverage in many European countries particularly in the United Kingdom. In Assam originally tea seeds brought from China were tries in Assam for cultivation but tea plant were found to be growing widely in Assam and the tea made from them found to be. Quite good. Tea is mainly produced in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu. And Kerala and also produced to a small extent in Tripura, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Total area under tea stood at 331 Thousands hectares of which North East and Eastern India contribute. 77.6% and South India 22.4% in 2002. Beside tea is also cultivated in Mizoram, Manipur, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Uttaranchal. Etc. Tea ecteates are distributed according to the various sige groups. Ninety eight percent of the total tea estates be long to the size group of up to 10.12 hectares and remaing 2 percent falls in the size group of above 10.12 hectares. Tea growing areas in North East region in between 24 degree and 27 degree latitude and 88 degree and 95 degree longitude. South India, Tea area lies between 8^oc and 13^oc on the slopes of Western Ghat Mountains and adjoining plateaus at elevations varying from 800 to 2000 MSL. Some Tea areas are situated above on below this.

The tea keeps an important place in the Indian economy. It employs about 3.5 million people across Indian and produces nearly 30% of the world's annual tea production. The estimated demand is above 850 million kg in the year 2011. India is one of the largest consumers of tea globally. India's share of the global tea trade is on the lower side, as over 85% of the country's tea output is consumed within the country. Exports have a crucial role to play in maintaining the demand-supply balance in the domestic market. Tea is produced in 14 States in India out of which five of them are Assam and West Bengal in North India and Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka in South India. It accounts for over 98 percent of India's tea production. North India alone accounts for around 75 percent of India's total tea production of which 85-90 percent is consumed in the internal market. The balance much of it is of high quality which is exported. Tea is the most labour intensive plantation crops in India and Assam.

So far the agro climatic conditions are concerned, it may be said that Agro climatic Conditions are found in the Tae growing Sates of India. Production of tea is concentrated in two widely separated regions of India; North East and south India. Besides this, tea is grown in a limited area in Kangra (Himachal Pradesh), Tripura and Dehradun Valleys (Uttaranchal), In recent years tea has also been grown in some non-traditional areas

like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Sikkim and Orissa etc.

North East

Tea growing areas in North East region is between 24 degree and 27 degree latitude and 88 degree and 95 degree longitude. Tea growing areas can be divided in several distinct regions like Brahmaputra and Barak Valley in Assam, North Bengal Plains of Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling Hills. In the Brahmaputra valley,

tea is grown on both the banks of the river on flat land between 50 and 120m (160-400ft) above mean Sea Level. In South India, tea areas lies between 8^oc and 13^oc on the slopes of Western Ghat mountains and adjoining plateaus at elevations varying from 800 to 2000 MSL. Some tea areas are situated above or below this. Following are the several climatic conditions of tea growing states of India and Assam which are given below :

Table-1: Climatic Conditions of Tea Growing States of India and Assam [4]

Tea Districts	Location of meteorological stations	Average Rainfall (MM)	Wet Months	Range of mean Monthly Temperature	
				Max(^o c)	Min(^o c)
North East India					
Including					
North of West Bengal					
Assam Valley	Jorhat	2642.10	8	32.60	8.30
Cachar	Silcoorie	2994.60	8	32.20	10.60
Dooars	Nagarkata	3956.70	7	31.00	10.40
Terai	Gunagaram	3178.00	7	32.20	8.90
Darjeeling	Nagri Farm	2371.70	7	24.90	7.70
Kangra (Himachal Pradesh)	Palampur	2667.40	8	29.40	4.90
South India					
Annamalai	Cinchona	3686.30	8	29.30	11.50
C Travancore	Vandiperiyar	1145.00	5	31.60	13.40
High Ranges	Munnar	3843.00	7	25.00	5.90
Karnataka	Durgabetta	2914.00	6	33.90	11.10
Nilgiris	Coonoor	1452.00	6	25.40	9.50
Nilgiri Wyanaad	Gudalur	1782.00	6	40.00	7.00
Wyanad	Meppadi	2230.7	5	32.90	4.8

From the above table it is found that from the beginning, improvements in field cultivation practices and processing technology have been a direct result or research activities of the Tocklai Experimental station, Jorhat, Assam and united planters' Association of south India, tea research in state, Tamil Nadu. Subsequently, the council of scientific and industry of Himalayan bioresource technology in palampur, kangra, Himachal Krishi Vishwa Vidyalay, Assam Agriculture University, Jorhat , Tea board's Darjeeling research center at Kurseong and tea husbandry department at north Bengal university played important roles in this regard. Further, Research center were also started by Tata, Goodricke Tea Company etc. Many important agro-techniques developed in plucking, pruning, shade, soil management with emphasis on drainage and conservation have made a recode impact on increase in tea crop production and yields.

Tea growing areas in North east lie between 24 degree and 27 degree latitude and 88 degree and 95

degree longitude. Tea growing areas can be divided among several distinct regions viz. Brahmaputra and Barak valley in Assam, among North Bengal plains of dooars and Terai as well as Darjeeling Hills. In the Brahmaputra Valley, Tea is growing on both the banks of the river on flat land between 50 and 120 m (160-400 ft) above mean sea level (MSL). While in South India, tea areas lies between 8^oc and 13^oc on the slopes of western Ghat mountains and adjoining plateaus at elevations ranging from 800 to 2000 MSL, Some tea areas are, however, situated above or below this.

Tea Board statistics has shown that Darjeeling has made a record 9.7 million kg in 2011 as compared to 8.86 million kg in 2010, Dooars 143.23 million kg (144.56 million kg) and Terai 73.33 million kg(76.35 million kg) while total production in West Bengal 226.36 million kg in 2011 as against 229.78 million kg in 2010. In 2011, Tamil Nadu has shown recorded a total production of 167.22 million kg .The Brahmaputra Valley is the single largest tea growing areas in the

world. Out of the total area under tea in the Brahmaputra Valley, 31 per cent are owned by small growers, According to a survey by the Assam Government, there are 68,465 small tea gardens in 14 districts of the Brahmaputra Valley. Tea is grown in almost all the 27 districts of the State. There are 825 large tea gardens in the state. There are about 1.58 lakh small tea gardens comprise size below 10.12 hectares in India, cultivating tea on around 1.62 lakh hectares and producing nearly 260 million kg annually at 440 bought leaf factories, which account for about 26 per cent of the total tea produced in India (according to Tea Board statistic), Mr. Barkakoty said. Tea is known as a State Drink of Assam [1].

Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal grows tea in high altitudes of the Himalayan foothills. The Darjeeling tea is the most sought after in India and through exorbitantly priced, it makes for an interesting and valued gift or souvenir. The teas are often forwarded as the champagne of tea due to their extraordinary flavor and quality, Darjeeling grows and manufactures some of the finest, most aromatic and often expensive varieties of tea on the planet [3].

Assam is a state in northeastern India. A part from China, Assam is the only place in the world that can boast of a native tea plant *Camellia assamica*. Unlike Darjeeling tea, the Assam tea is normally grown in the plains and is widely known for a strong and malty flavor. Assam's tea is generally harvested twice in a year into two flushes: first flush and second flush. The first is picked during late March. The second flush, harvested later, is the more prized tippy tea, named thus for gold tips that appear on the leaves. This second flush, tippy tea, is sweeter and more full-bodied and is generally considered superior to the first flush tea. The leaves of the Assam tea bush are dark green and glossy and fairly wide compared to those of the Chinese tea plant. The bush produces delicate white blossoms. Over 800 tea gardens in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam are affected due to lack of rain. Tea industry experts think a huge production loss across the state if bad weather condition prevails. The plucking season starts by early March.[8] The weather across the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam sometimes becomes very bad. With no rains, the plucking season delays by over two or three weeks. Accounts for 13 percent of the world's total tea production. Around 800 tea gardens in Assam produce more than 51 percent of India's total tea production. In 2012, the state's total tea production was 587.27 million kg, of which 534.42 million kg came from the tea gardens in the Brahmaputra Valley. In 2013 there is loss of five to seven percent of the crops due to lack of rains. Tea production in the Barak Valley in Assam has been seen a sharp decline of 67% for the period unto April 24 from 6.49 million kgs in 2012 to 2.16 million kgs in 2013. According to Tea Board from all the 63 tea

manufacturing units consisting all tea gardens of Barak Valley, the total tea production is only 2.16 million kgs. on 24 April 2013 [6].

Tea Production starts in Barak Valley in the middle of March and the tea is processed in April. The decline in Production is mainly because of the drought conditions prevailing in the valley. If rainfall does not occur, there may be a fall in Production in the Barak Valley.

A report of Tea Association of India also shows 54% decline in the production from 2.04 million kgs in 2012 to 0.93 million kgs in 2013 from 1st March to 24th April covering their 35 tea factories. Tea production in Assam's Brahmaputra Valley excluding Barak Valley recorded a drop of 16 million kg (mkg) in 2010 at 429 mkg as compared with to 445 mkg in 2009, according to Mr. R.K. Gogoi, Chairman of Assam Branch of Indian Tea Association. Addressing the 121st annual general meeting of ABITA held at Dibrugarh on Saturday, Mr. Gogoi attributed the drop to heavy rain in early plucking season resulting in pest manifestation particularly in Upper Assam. The lower availability of exportable crop also contributed to the decline in exports through the Amingaon inland container depot (ICD) -21mkg in 2010 as compared with 25 mkg in the previous year. But however, there is a record average price realization of Rs 113 a kg at Guwahati tea auction during the period [6].

Emphasizing the need for reducing the cost of production at the grass-root level the State Government has to do something to reduce the social cost estimated at Rs 9 per Kg of tea produced in the State which is eroding the competitiveness of Assam tea in the international market. National Rural Health Mission and Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan Partnership supported by the State Government have partially helped the tea industry in this regard.

The climate change and the shortage of labour are other challenges facing tea growers in Assam. With a total production of 480 mkg, out of a total of 977 mkg in 2010, Assam accounts for nearly 50 per cent of the country's total production and the State's 170-year old tea industry has employed over one million people with around 50 per cent of the workforce being women.

Of the agriculture-based industries, tea occupies an important place in Assam. In Assam, tea is grown both in the Brahmaputra and Barak plains. Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Nagaon and Sonitpur are the districts where tea gardens are mostly existing. Assam produces 51 % of the tea produced in India and about 1/6th of the tea produced in the world.

The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre was established in the year 1977 for better marketing of the tea produced in the region. This is the world's largest CTC tea auction center and the world's second largest in the terms of total tea. It now auctions more than 150 million kg of tea valued at more than Rs 550.00 crores annually. Tea industry has contributed substantially to the economy of Assam. About 17 percent of the workers of Assam are engaged in the tea industry. After three years, production of Assam

Tea has once again crossed the 500-million kg mark. The state has recorded a total production of 508.74 million kg for the year 2011. The figures for last three years were: 480.28 million kg in 2010, 499.99 million kg in 2009 and 487.49 million kg in 2008. This is for the third time that the production of Assam tea has crossed the 500-million kg Mark over the past 11 years. Total tea production in the country for 2011 is 988.32 million kg which is the highest over the past 11 years.[7] The credit for the increase in Assam tea production goes to small tea growers. Production from small tea growers accounts for about 30 per cent of total production in the State.

Himachal Pradesh is a petite hilly state in the northern India. It is one of India's most stunning states attracting a large number of tourists every year. The states have also a major tea producing region in India. The Kangra region in Himachal Pradesh was first introduced to tea in 1849 by means of a Chinese thyroid plant. Light green tea is largely produced in the Kangra Valley of Himachal Pradesh.

SOUTH INDIA

Tea is also cultivated in Tamil Nadu at altitudes as high as 800 to 2000 meters above sea level. During the dry season, this tea takes on a superior, slightly lemon flower. The quality of tea produced here tastes quite like the tea produced in Ceylon, Sri Lanka, Nilgiri tea is originally grown in the jungle and mainly cultivated by small farmers and cultivators.

Karnataka with a total geographical area of 19.17 million hectares lies between 74°-78° 30' E longitude and 10°58' to 18°30' N latitude. Generally, the state has a million surfaces on gentle slopes with occasional monad rocks. Plantation crops are cultivated mostly in the Malnad region which consist Chikmagalur, Hassan and Kodagu district. It holds a unique position of economic development of the state. Amongst the plantation crops Karnataka holds an enviable position in coffee in terms of acreage and production. Beside coffee, tea, arecanut, pepper, vanilla and cardamom are the other major crops grown in the Malnad region. Tea plantation in Karnataka is scattered, interspersed by coffee estates. Tea is grown at present only in those areas where coffee is not performed well.

Elevation of the estates ranges between 750 and 1000 m. It means annual rainfall in the Chikmagalur and Kodagu zones is about 2,000 to 3,500 mm. The tea estates in Hassan district receive exceptionally high rainfall of around 7,500 mm. Due to the peculiar type of rainfall distribution, the tea estates experience prolonged dry spell, at times extending even up to 180 days, the minimum temperature does not fall below 11°C during the winter season and maximum temperature goes as high as 38°C in April/May [2],

Regional Centre was established in 1986 at Durgabetta, Chikmagalur District, to meet the long-felt need of the tea planters in Hassan and Chikmagalur districts. In the year 2001, the center was shifted to its own new premises at Koppa, a little away from the previous location. With the setting up of the regional center, all the tea growing areas in south India are covered by the Tea Research Foundation with regard to extension programme. This center advises, the estates on the cultural aspects of tea husbandry with special reference to crop production and disease control. A number of researches relating to screening of tea clones/bi-clonal progenies, rationalization of soil inputs and irrigation are being conducted [8].

Tea is gradually becoming the preferred drink of the South. It is by choice. Tea consumption has shown an annual growth of 3 percent with both registering thumping increase in hitherto lean consumption regions.

Karnataka has made record of per consumption of 822 gm and features in the second highest tea consuming states category. These are in the 800 -1000 gm category including Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. India is the world's largest consumer of tea in terms of volume. The domestic market growth has been very significant with non-southern states definitely showing a substantial growth. There are some reasons for shift of Tea is high on medicinal value. Cities like Bangalore boast of a huge youth base, with access to literature and online information and they're perhaps making a conscious decision to switch to tea. Tea contains anti-oxidants which are beneficial to the human body. In southern States, with a rise in migrant population, tea is being preferred.

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