

# **CHAPTER -VI**

## **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

## **6.1 SUMMARY**

### **6.1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Conflict is a dynamic process reflecting the interaction of two or more interdependent parties who have some level of difference or incompatibility between them. It exists within each of us (Blackard and Gibson 2003). Conflicts persist all around us. In us, our institutions and our society there is a pervasive fear of conflict.

Conflict is defined as conflict as a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect something that first party cares about (S. P. Robbins 1978). It can be conceptualized as existing along a continuous range. At one extreme, there is no conflict; at the other extremes is conflict's highest state, the act of destroying the opposing party. All intensities of interpersonal, intra-group and intergroup conflicts would fall somewhere along this continuum. According to this definition, conflict must be perceived by the involved parties. In other words, if there is opposition but the parties fail to perceive it, then it does not exist. Similarly, if a conflict is perceived, it exists whether or not that perception is accurate.

Blake and Mouton (1964) identified five conflict handling styles namely, smoothing, compromising, forcing, withdrawal and problem solving. This model was further developed and extended by Thomas (1976). He incorporated two dimensions namely, cooperativeness and assertiveness in the model developed by Blake and Mouton. According to Thomas (1976), Cooperativeness means intention to satisfy other party's concern and assertiveness means intention to satisfy one's own concerns.

Five Behavioural modes are identified in terms of these two dimensions; avoiding (unassertive, uncooperative); competing (assertive, uncooperative); accommodating (unassertive, cooperative); collaborating (assertive, cooperative) and compromising (intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness)

### **6.1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

West Bengal is the second largest tea growing state in India. It contributes 21% in the total tea production in India. With the scarcity of labour force in the tea growing areas, the labourers were migrated from outside Bengal. The tea plantation workers of Dooars are immigrants brought in the tribal belts of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The workforce of Darjeeling tea gardens are exclusively of Nepalese origin.

Being exposed to new place, these immigrated workers have been exploited by the tea gardens owners to the extent possible. They lived in sub-human conditions with inadequate housing accommodation, scarcity of drinking water, little or no medical and sanitary arrangement.

The government of India passed the Plantation Labour Act (PLA), 1951 with provisions for safety, welfare and health of the plantation workers. The Act requires the owner of the tea gardens to provide housing for workers, free medical help, education to the children of the workers etc. Other laws like, The Industrial Disputes Act 1947, The Trade Union Act 1926, The Payment of Bonus Act 1965 etc, which were protecting the industrial workers, have been extended to plantation workers as well.

Sadly, even after passing the PLA and extension other laws to Plantation, the workers do not get respite of the hardship. There has been gross violation of plantation labour law by the tea garden management. The workers are deprived of the basic amenities like drinking water, housing, health, education etc. The poverty, illiteracy, abysmal living conditions and deliberate exploitation of thousands of tea workers are the reality. Despite trade unions and social organisations being active, labour laws are openly flouted by the tea garden owners.

The tea garden workers work in the most hostile of environment and yet their wages are the lowest in the organised sector. The literacy among the tea garden workers is very low. After 1999, the tea industry is in the grip of crisis. With the crash of tea prices below cost of production and tea gardens closing down one after another, there have been cases of starvation deaths reported from many closed gardens of Dooars.

With no extension work undertaken by the tea garden owner and no new recruitment, the ever increasing population of the tea gardens is facing the problem of unemployment. There are no avenues for alternative employments available to the people of tea gardens.

### **6.1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To find out the conflict handling style of the manager of the tea garden.
2. To find out the conflict handling style of the Trade union office bearer of the tea garden.
3. To find out the conflict handling style of the workers of the tea garden.
4. To identify the different sources of conflict prevailing in the tea gardens.
5. To identify the five most important demand of Trade Unions.
6. To identify the organisational climate prevailing in the tea gardens.
7. To find out whether there is lack of functional conflict in the tea garden.
8. To identify whether the decision taken by the management is functional or dysfunctional .

### **6.1.4 HYPOTHESES AND TEST RESULTS**

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Results</b>
Hypothesis 1: The Other Monthly Rated Employees (OMRE) are able to communicate more openly with managers than the Daily Rated Workers (DRW).	Accepted
Hypothesis 2: Workers feel that management never consults workers before introducing any changes in the work process and there is no significant different in the responses of OMRE and DRW.	Rejected

Hypotheses	Results
Hypothesis 3: Male workers openly disagree more than female workers when the change brought in by the Management do not suit them.	Rejected
Hypothesis 4: Management threatens the workers of closure in the slightest of pretext to obey their policy and there is no significant difference in the responses of the workers of proprietary gardens and non-proprietary gardens.	Accepted
Hypothesis 5: Conflict in tea gardens has been attributed to problems of communication between the parties involved.	Rejected
Hypothesis 6: Workers feel that the management is driven by profit motive only and care less about the welfare of the workers and responses of both male and female workers are similar.	Accepted
Hypothesis 7: Managers feel that workers are worried about their own welfares and not bother about the welfare of the garden and there is no significant difference in the responses of the managers of Darjeeling and Dooars.	Accepted
Hypothesis 8: The trade union office bearers feel that the management is driven by profit motive only and care less about the Welfare of the workers and the responses of the Trade Union Leaders of Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai are not significantly different.	Accepted
Hypothesis 9: Male workers are more dominating than female workers in conflict situations.	Accepted
Hypothesis 10: An individual will more likely to use the avoiding style with superiors than with peers.	Rejected
Hypothesis 11: The problem of housing is acute in small gardens than in the large gardens.	Accepted
Hypothesis 12: Workers feel that housing is the number one reason for tension between workers and management and there is no significant difference in the responses of the workers of hill gardens and plain gardens.	Accepted

Hypotheses	Results
Hypothesis 13: Management applies power/dominating style more often than any other styles with workers to handle conflicts and it is true for all three regions.	Rejected
Hypothesis 14: There is no significant difference in conflict handling style used by workers of Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai with the superior.	Accepted
Hypothesis 15: There is no significant difference in conflict handling style used by trade unions office bearers of Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai.	Accepted
Hypothesis 16: There is no significant difference in conflict handling style used by managers of Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai.	Rejected

### **6.1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Tea gardens in west Bengal are located in two districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. There are three distinct tea growing areas: Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars. Darjeeling produces most distinctive and the world famous Darjeeling tea. Tea gardens located at the foothills of the Himalayas in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts constitute Terai and Dooars areas.

### **6.1.6 SAMPLE SIZE**

The tea growing areas of Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai have 294 major tea gardens. 50 gardens are selected from them as sample gardens. The principle of proportionate representation is followed while selecting these 50 sample gardens. Darjeeling area is represented by 14 tea gardens in the 50 sample gardens. Dooars area is represented by 28 tea gardens and Terai by 8 tea gardens

### **6.1.7 DATA COLLECTION**

The data were collected from the workers, trade union office bearers, management and office clerk through questionnaires. For the purpose, four set of questionnaires to be filled up by i) the management ii) the Trade union office bearers iii) office clerk and iv) the workers, were

prepared. The questionnaire for the trade union office bearers and the questionnaires for the workers were printed in English as well as in regional languages.

The Information was collected by personally visiting all the tea gardens. While collecting information from the workers, ten workers comprising male, female, DRW, OMRE, factory worker, garden worker are chosen from each tea garden to filling up the questionnaires. The questionnaires for the workers were printed in English, Hindi and Nepali.

One office bearer of each trade union operating in each tea garden was requested to fill up the questionnaire. Effort was made to collect data from trade unions affiliated to all political parties. From the fifty sample tea gardens, 76 office bearers of different trade unions participated in the process of filling up the questionnaires. The questionnaires for trade union office bearers were also printed in English, Hindi and Nepali.

The managerial staff of the gardens were requested to fill up a questionnaire meant for them. Before filling up the questionnaire, they were asked to go through the questionnaire once and clear doubts or confusions, if any. All the copies of the questionnaires totalling 412(286 for workers+76 for trade unions +50 for Managers) were scrutinized and coded. The coded data were fed into the computer using data software.

#### **6.1.8 PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The final analysis was done using software 'SPSS' and 'Microsoft office excel'. While processing the data through 'SPSS' and 'EXCEL', the following statistical tools were used:

1. Chi-square:- Chi-square is use to (i) test the goodness of fit; 9ii) test the significance of association between tow attributes and (iii) test the homogeneity or the significance of population variance.
2. Fisher's exact test: - it is an alternative test used when the chi-square is invalid for 2X2 table for having expected frequencies below five.

3. ANOVA: - Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to compare more than two means. It is very versatile. It is particularly friendly to experimental application, where we may be comparing the means of the populations group by examining the amount of variation within each of the theses sample, relative to the amount of variation between the samples.

4. Rank correlations: - Rank-correlation coefficient is a measure of the correlation that exists between the two sets of ranks, a measure of the degree of association between the variables that we would not have been able to calculate otherwise.

5. Standard deviation: - The variance and standard deviation are based on the deviations from the mean. The standard deviation are probable the most widely used and reported measure of dispersion.

6. Simple statistics: - Simple statistics like mean, mode, median, frequency, percentage, averages etc. are also used as and when it was found necessary.

While finding out the conflict management styles used by the workers, the trade unions and the management, the Rahim organizational conflict inventory- II ( ROCI – II ) ( Rahim , 1983 , Rahim & Buntzman 1989) was used. ROCI – II was designed to measure conflict with superiors, subordinates and peers.

## **6.2 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

1. The management never consults the majority of the Daily rated workers of the tea gardens before introducing any changes in the work process.
2. 43% of the workers feel that management threat the workers of closure of tea gardens in their policies are not obeyed. Workers live under the constant threat.
3. Almost 50% of the workers said that they never suggest new ideas to the management. 55% of the workers of Dooars never suggest new ideas that come up on their mind to the management.

4. The tea garden workers are not recognized and rewarded for good work they put in.
5. "Provision of housing to the workers and his family" is the most important reason for tension between the workers and the management.
6. Unemployment problems amongst the residents of the gardens have been the second most important reason for tension in the garden. However, the problem of unemployment is comparatively less in Darjeeling gardens.
7. 'Non-payment or irregular payment of wages' to the workers do not create much of a tension in the tea gardens as commonly believed.
8. 63% of the workers agree that there are tension in the garden due to 'inadequate medial facilities'. The responses of the workers of Dooars Gardens depict that the problem is acute in Dooars gardens.
9. There is a general perception amongst the workers that management only cares about their own welfare and do not care about the welfare of the workers and the tea gardens. This perception is high in case of proprietary gardens than in the non-prop gardens.
10. 86% of trade unions office bearers said they did not meet the management in a regular interval but did only as and when required.
11. Female workers are not well represented in the trade union. Only one female trade union leader participated in the survey of 76 sample trade union leaders.
12. When asked whether management consults the unions before introducing any change in the work process, only 17% of the trade unions office bearers answered in affirmative.
13. More than 22% of the trade union leaders agree that they suggest any new ideas to the management. However, only 5% of the trade union office bearers believe that management seeks new ideas from them.

14. Three most important demands raised by different trade union leader operating in Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai area are (i) provision of Housing to the workers and his family members. (ii) New employment in the tea garden / employment in the place of retired workers and (iii) Provision for Drinking water to the families of the workers.
15. 84% of the trade union leaders of Dooars believe that 'housing problem' is responsible for conflict in the garden indicating housing a serious problem in Dooars gardens. The percentage for Darjeeling and Terai gardens are 57 and 59 respectively. Again, compared to big gardens, small gardens have more housing problem. Almost 88% of trade union leaders of small gardens believe that 'housing problem' bring tension between management and the trade union.
16. 57% of trade union leaders believe that 'lack of medical facilities' do create tension between the trade union and the management.
17. Though 63% of the trade union leaders are of the opinion that tension erupt in the garden due to lack of cooperation by the management. Majority of trade union leaders of Darjeeling think that there is no tension between workers and management due to lack of cooperation by the management in Darjeeling tea gardens.
18. It is found out from the data that the integrating style is the most used style for the Trade Unions and avoiding the least used style. In tea gardens, trade unions are meant to be protecting the rights and welfare of the workers. In a conflict situation, they are always vocal in expressing their views.
19. More than 50% of the junior managers are of the opinion that people around them agree on everything they (junior managers) suggest.
20. 84% of the mangers of proprietary gardens believer that they must maintain peace in the garden at any cost.
21. 28% of the junior managers believe that popularity is more important than performance. Only 4% of the senior mangers believe so.

22. 64% of the managers feel that there is a lack of new ideas forthcoming from the workers.
23. 43% of workers are of the opinion that management never encourages new ideas from the workers. Workers are not provided the opportunity to express their views.
24. Only 8% of the managers of big garden agree that Non-payment / irregular payment of wages is the reason for tension between the workers and the management. However, the percentage is much higher (42%) in case of small garden. This is evident from the data that small gardens are more irregular in payment of wages than the big gardens.
25. The data reveal that the integrating is the most used conflict handling style of managers of Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai. The least used conflict handling style for the managers of Darjeeling is dominating and for managers of Dooars and Terai areas avoiding is the least used style.
26. It has been observed that out of 50 sample managers / assistant managers eight had post-graduate degrees and the rest forty two had graduate degrees. Surprisingly out of 50 managers / assistant managers who participated in the sample survey, none possessed the professional qualification like MBA or diploma tea management etc. The managers with these additional qualifications are better equipped to handle human resources.
27. In the plantation hierarchy men have monopolized all the responsible positions. Women are not appointed to the managerial, executive and administrative positions. A recent advertisement in a national daily for a post of woman Assistant Manager in a tea garden of Darjeeling is a welcome change.
28. According to managers, the most important reason for conflict between the workers and the management is 'indiscipline of the workers'.

29. Managers are of the opinion that 'Substandard performance by the workers' leads to conflict in the tea gardens. Even in the recent tripartite agreement where new wage revision was settled, management insisted on linking the wages with productivity so that it acts as a disincentive against the worker with substandard performance. However, this system could not be implemented due to intense resistance from the workers unions.
30. In the matter of appointment of managerial staffs, the tea garden owners use a practice of hire and fire rampantly. Owners appoint manager for a period of a year or two and for some unknown reason he is replaced by another new manager. Every time a new manager is appointed, people working under him have to adjust to his style of functioning. The frequent changes of manager do have adverse effect on the performance of the garden. In some cases, after having gained some experience managers leave the present job looking for the greener pasture. The data collected from the garden reveals that out of 39 managers who are aged between forty and sixty, 17 (44%) have experience of less than 5 years.
31. The analysis of data discards the notion that management always applies dominating style of functioning in the tea industry. Today's managers know fully well that using a dominating style to handle conflict will hurt teamwork and probably bring more conflict between the managers and the workers. Managers, therefore, think that integrating is the most appropriate style to be used in the organisations.

### 6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Daily rated workers though occupy the lowest strata of the plantation hierarchy but may have vast practical experience and knowledge about tea. The management, therefore, should consult them and

know their opinion before introducing any changes in the work process.

2. Almost half of the sample workers were of the view that they had never suggested new ideas to the management. It is highly recommended that an atmosphere of trust and opens should be crated in the industry by the management so that workers feel free to express their views and opinion to the management. Extra attention should be given towards female workers who are shy, neglected and often marginalized.
3. The management of the garden should reward the efficient, hard working and dedicated workers in some social gathering in recognition of their service to the tea garden. This method, only practiced by handful of gardens, will motivate the worker to strive for excellence and encourage others to follow his/her example.
4. 'The provision of housing to the workers and his family' being the most important source of conflict in the tea industry of Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai, the tea garden management has to find a way out to tackle this problem. Much of the problem could have been eliminated if the planters had seriously implemented the policy framed by the Central Government. The Central Government under Plantation Housing Scheme provided a maximum 80% of the total cost of the house and 20% of the total cost were to borne by the planters. But ever this 20% were not forthcoming due to alleged unprofitability of the gardens. (M. Dasgupta 1999) one cannot expect the workers to work to his full potential if his basic needs remain unfulfilled.
5. In order to tackle unemployment problems amongst the residents of the tea gardens, the garden management have to fill up the posts lying vacant and also increase the workforce by extend the tea growing areas, increasing the plant population per hectare etc. Management should help the State Government to implement various self-employment schemes in the garden.

6. The health of the worker is important and therefore should to be taken seriously. Absence of essential medicines, qualified doctors, ambulance and poor maintenance of dispensary are the common problems of many tea gardens. With the privatization of insurance sector, many new private insurance companies are operative in the country. A serious thought can be given to tie up with these insurance companies for insuring the health of the workers and his immediate family.
7. A perception of the workers that management is only interested about the profit and own welfare has to be dispensed with. The transparency of the financial transactions and taking the workers and the trade unions into confidence by the management should help tea industry to overcome this problem.
8. The Govt of India has to make essential modification in the Plantation Labour Act. The law should be more stringent so that planters do not violate the provision of the law and get away scot free.
9. Trade unions of respective garden should meet the management on a regular (fortnightly) basis so that good relations between the trade unions and the management remain secured and any problem between the workers and the management can be nipped at the bud.
10. Though more than fifty percentage of total workforce in tea industry are female, they do not occupy any worthwhile portfolio in the trade unions. Leader of the political parties should encourage female workers to hold the post in the trade unions of garden level. Female workers feel free and comfortable to express their views and grievances to the female trade union leaders.
11. Different trade unions operative in the tea industry should cooperate with one another to pressurize the managers for fulfilling the demands of the workers.

12. Managers should consult and obtain the views of different trade unions before introducing any change in the work process and also seek new ideas and views from the trade union leaders.
13. There are 3 basic demands raised by trade unions in the last five years – housing, medical facilities and Drinking water. All these provisions are mentioned in the PLA. Therefore, all trade unions should come together and put persistent pressures to the Planters and the Government to sincerely implement all these provisions of the PLA.
14. The role of the trade union leaders in the tea industry is under the scanner. There are instance where trade union leaders in connivance with the management reap personal benefits at the cost of hapless workers. People who are responsible for selecting and appointing these leaders should see that right kind of persons are appointed or nominated for these important posts.
15. Junior managers tend to feel happy when their sub-ordinates agree on everything that they suggest. However, to impress the boss and a desire to avoid conflict, sub-ordinates often remain silence over the poor decisions made by the managers. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the managers to create a healthy and conducive environment in an organisation where every major decision taken by the authority is thoroughly discussed, argued and shortcomings eliminated.
16. The managers of proprietary gardens believe that it is in their best interest to maintain the impression of peace and cooperation in the garden, regardless of the price. But little do they realize that only peace and tranquility in the organisation do not bring prosperity. An organization has to learn to adapt to changing environment and adoption is possible only through change and change is stimulated by conflict.( Robbins 1978)

17. Managers should encourage the workers to suggest new ideas and view which they have gathered from their long practical experience. If the ideas suggested are found to be useful and beneficial to the industry, it should be implemented in the gardens without delay.
18. While recruiting manager in the garden it is always desirable to select manager who has professional degree from business schools or universities in addition to formal qualification. A manager with professional degree can run the garden in a professional manner.
19. The "hire and fire" policy adopted by the owner with regard to appointment of tea garden managers should be discouraged. The practice of changing the tea garden managers frequently by the owner especially of proprietary gardens hamper the organisation in more than one ways.
20. Tea industry being agro-based, the production of tea in any year cannot be predicted with absolute certainty. Much of the productivity depends on the weather conditions. Therefore, it would be a prudent decision to save part of the profit earned during boom seasons for rainy days.
21. Managers feel that there is lack of new ideas forthcoming from the workers. This is a worrying symptom which indicates that the industry is becoming stagnant and inactive. In order to cure this disease two things ought to be done. Firstly, the workers should have representation in the decision / policy making body and secondly, active participation of workers in this body should be encouraged.
22. Managers have mentioned 'indiscipline of workers' as the reason of conflict between the workers and the management. When an individual or a small group of workers manifest their resentment to the management in the form of violent behavior, the managers should hand them over to police and criminal charges should be initiated against them rather than closing down the entire tea estate and holding the entire workforce in ransom.

23. The managers themselves have acknowledged that 'lack of housing accommodation to the workers' have been creating tension between them and the workers. The planters need to explore avenues from where soft loans can be borrowed and used to construct houses for the workers. Govt of India and Tea Board do have different schemes under which loan are sanctioned at interest rate well below market rates.
24. Manages of proprietary gardens use dominating style of handling conflict more often than managers of Non-proprietary gardens. Mangers should avoid using dominating style often because it will hurt teamwork and can bring more conflict between the mangers and the workers. Having said that, however, mangers can and should use dominating style sometimes to handle emergency situation.

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