

ABSTRACT

Post globalization, floriculture has become an important commercial activity in Horticulture sector. Presently, India along with China has majority of its area under flower cultivation. Though the contribution of India in global scenario is much less, nonetheless, floriculture in India and in different states of India has emerged as an alternate source of income. In India, floriculture is viewed as one of the upcoming industries and is accorded with hundred percent export-oriented status. Floriculture in other states of India like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal etc., is commercially done and has been able to secure leading positions in India.

Likewise, Sikkim located in the western most part of Eastern Himalayas, with its geographical and environmental conditions coupled with a skilled workforce give Sikkim a definite edge in the business of floriculture. Sikkim also with its advantage in terms of climate has paved its way for floriculture. The young minds have been showing keen interest in floriculture as they look at it as an alternate source of income, a scheme for self-employment.

The flowers grown earlier were mostly amateur type, in terms of the purpose for which it was grown; i.e., for beautification, or an aesthetic feel. However, things slowly and gradually changed over a period of time. People of Sikkim have always lived close with nature / have always shared a close connection with nature. The art of growing and producing from the available resources of nature has been a part and parcel of people residing in Sikkim. In the State, large number of farmers who were mostly dependent on agriculture at a point of time was involved in growing crops and vegetable as a means to sustain their lives. Over a period of time when the art of commercialization came to the fore, the crops and vegetable started to be sold in order to earn money. Likewise, Sikkim

witnessed a gradual shift from agriculture to that of floriculture. The commercialization of flowers were done because it was realized by the flower farmers that farming of flowers and selling it in the market will give a high economic return, also the feel of independence to many youth and women who wanted to earn for themselves now had a chance to liberate from the guilt of not having a job.

Floriculture means cultivating flowers and ornamental plant materials. It also means that these cultivated flowers and ornamental plants materials can be used for scientific purpose or for commercialization. It also includes production of their by – products such as oil, scents, medicines etc. Floriculturists are the people who farm flowers. Therefore, the present study has focused on the flower farmers/floriculturists in Sikkim.

Commercializing of flowers in Sikkim has changed lives of many people affecting the parameters like socio-economy, age, gender etc. Though flower share in the national/ international market may be disheartening but the demand for flowers is continuously increasing. Therefore, this increase in demand hint on the fact that flower decoration has become a ritual for the people of Sikkim. The involvement in floriculture has also acted as a therapy to some of the floriculturists who informed the researcher during the field survey.

In order to fulfil this Government of Sikkim has also taken up several steps. The support from the government's side has also helped the flower farmers to try this new avenue. It has indirectly encouraged them to accept floriculture in the state. The flower farmers are mostly middle and small scale flower growers. There are however people doing floriculture in large scale as well.

The present study tries to overview and highlight the progress of floriculture industry in Sikkim so far and its impact on socio-economic conditions of the growers. In this study, both primary and secondary data from different sources has been used in order to know the

present status of floriculture industries in Sikkim. In total 300 respondents were interviewed by the researcher. Apart from interview, discussion with the respondent was also included. Researcher has also included Case Studies as a part of data collection. At present Sikkim is producing cut flowers that include roses, anthurium, gladiolus etc., on a commercial scale. Sikkim is the only state in India that produces high – value cymbidium orchids. Analysis of data reveals that status in relation to income of floriculturist farmers has been changed and it shows a better picture regarding upliftment of people and a chance to earn their livelihood also providing a platform for budding entrepreneurs.

The study area of the present studies include, the area in which flower cluster exist. Different places from the district of east, west, south has been taken for the study. The north district has been kept aside for the present study because there are no flower clusters in north district. Flower farmers from other district are much ahead from that of north district. 100 samples who are flower farmers from each district (east, west, south) were interviewed. Apart from them, government officials who are directly or indirectly in relation with floriculture was also interviewed. They were part of discussions related the present study as well. Many important information regarding governmental schemes and initiatives were given by the officials from the department of Horticulture and Cash Crops. This also helped the researcher to cross check the facts and information on the initiatives taken by the government towards floriculture. The strategies that have been adopted by the department for improving commercialisation of flowers were also discussed.

Furthermore, the collection of data has been fulfilled; the analysis of the collected data has been done. Once the data from primary and secondary source was collected the analysis was made looking at both the primary and secondary data and has been highlighted and explained in qualitative and quantitative methods. This has been done through the help of tables, figures, narratives and case studies.

The thesis is divided into six chapters with introduction and conclusion. The chapters have been done in a way that it fulfils the research objectives of the present study. The findings are an attempt to bridge the existing gap in floriculture and to expand the knowledge with regards to floriculture through a sociological perspective.

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