

For a cup of tea: How to reduce tea garden workers' agony



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All of us take a cup of tea in the morning and during the day to charge our batteries. However, seldom do we realise the pain of the tealeaf pickers. Many of us might have seen the photos of tea gardens in the films or elsewhere.

But, have we realised the pain, thousands of women go through every day, while picking the leaves and putting them behind the back in the basket. The movement of the hands while putting the leaves could cause pain in the shoulders and elbows. Does it matter?

Perhaps the owners of the tea gardens might not realise how much improvement in the productivity can take place if only we could reduce drudgery and improve the process of tealeaf collection. Accordingly, we posed this problem to the students of masters of technology management, Cept University through professors Astad Pastakia and Harini Mittal.

There were many other problems of daily life posed to the students. I was deeply inspired by the effort of the students, Jay Purohit, Jaimin Upadhyay and Santosh Choudhary, with the advice of faculty and Rakesh Maheshwari of NIF.



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The students visualised two solutions. One, requiring a small vacuum pump connected to a bowl and a pipe. The lady fills the bowl in left hand and the leaves are sucked into the basket by a press of a button. The second solution was even simpler. A pipe with a funnel attached to a basket with a spring is pulled down, and leaves are put into the funnel.

You leave the pipe and the leaves flow back through the pipe into the basket.

Subsequently, I presented this problem to students of Design University at Gemund, Germany two weeks ago. Several of them, including Benjamin, Daniel, Bichler, Christina, Stefanie etc., came out with several other variations including small bags, which can be filled in, and slid back through ring or strap. Some

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thought of a small basket in the front which can be lifted with a lever to put the leaves back into the basket. The next step is to test these solutions in the field so that the feedback from the tea garden workers can help improve and implement these designs. Ministry of commerce, Spices and Tea Board are likely to show interest in this matter and hopefully century-old inertia will give rise to inclusive, Gandhian innovations.

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