



#BehindTheCup

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My grandfather started tea cultivation 35 years ago, as a small tea grower.

I studied mechanical engineering but chose to be a part of the tea industry. I believe with the kind of innovation we are bringing as a new generation, a lot of impact on the lives of workers and small tea growers is possible.

I joined Sanjeevani in 2017. My first responsibility was the trustea certification and implementation.

It's been quite a journey, from the fear of trustea as a body trying to scrutinise us to seeing its benefits, seeing it as a tool to be quality conscious, to be the kind of factory the industry needs in this current time.

When we first considered trustea, we had no idea how to get certified. We were new. We wanted to approach it in line with our thought, of taking care of the environment, being safe at the workplace, and changing the livelihoods of our employees.

We were also told that being a trustea verified factory meant we would be looked at as a unit which is hygienic, innovative and upto the mark. That was important; as an entrepreneur, I want to brand myself as such a factory.

As a bought leaf factory (BLF), we are completely dependent on the small tea growers (STG) for the supply of green leaf. Our CTC factory has an installed capacity of 1 mn kilos per year, which needs about 3.5 mn kilos of green leaves. This is supplied by around 120 small tea growers. After trustea, my interaction with STGs and other stakeholders has increased tremendously.

The biggest impact of trustea has been on the mindset of stakeholders, whether in the factory or the STGs. We are thinking about safety, about protecting the environment, and wearing protective gear... There is a care element. If someone refuses protective gear because it's hot, I explain why he has to protect himself from the chemical he is spraying.

Another important change has been with women workers, who are a big part of the industry. trustea has provided them a mechanism where they can speak up and not keep things to themselves. This has brought a sense of security among them.

BLFs and STGs are two sides of the same coin. The relationship between the two has weathered many tides. As a BLF, I want to impact the livelihoods of the small tea growers we work with, and trustea, for me, is one of the most important tools to achieve this.

