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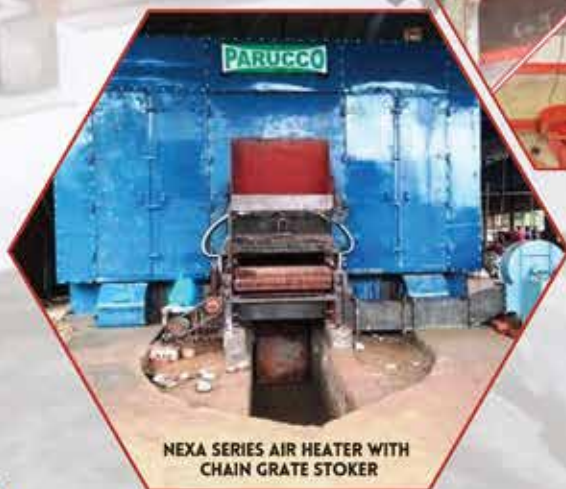
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## First Flush

**T**ales from the Teapot of Our Time Tea doesn't just sit in cups. It moves - quietly, insistently - through stories, through memory, across borders and generations. It is not merely a beverage but a bearer of meaning, a silent witness to history, a companion to solitude and celebration alike. In this edition of Contemporary Tea Time, we invite you to sip from a brew of perspectives - brewed fresh, steeped deep, and poured with care - tracing tea's eloquent presence in lives near and far, in moments both monumental and mundane.

At the center of our pages bubbles a spirited cover story: **"The Great Sip-Off: Tea vs. Coffee."** A cordial contest between two global giants, it offers more than comparison - it's a meditation on ritual, resilience, and the comfort tucked inside the swirl of steam. Coffee may jolt, but tea lingers. It listens. It holds its own with quiet strength, a calm that endures. In this thoughtful *tête-à-tête*, we explore not just taste but temperament, not just culture but character.

Beyond the headline, a world unfolds - layered, lived-in, and lovingly steeped. Soldiers at the frontier draw warmth from enamel mugs under cold skies; families in America's heartland cradle quiet traditions passed down like heirlooms; and in **Paris**, on **International Tea Day**, ceremonies bloom where the past perfumes the present, and every pour is a poem. Closer to home, an unmanned desi tea stall - unattended for four decades yet unwavering stands as testimony to trust, time, and the unspoken social contracts that tea so often seals.

These are not just vignettes. They are living archives. They remind us that tea is not only consumed - it is shared, remembered, and revered.

Voices from the trade speak, seasoned with experience and steeped in insight. They stir thoughts about the industry's future and its old-world soul, navigating the delicate balance between innovation and tradition. In a delicate unfolding of time, we also explore the tea-drinking tales of **Winston Churchill** and **Agatha Christie** - early chapters in an ongoing series about tea in remarkable lives. These are stories not simply of cups, but of character. Of how tea has accompanied decisions of states and strokes of genius, how it has soothed nerves and sparked ideas.

This issue also welcomes **new sections**, new voices, and new ideas. Columns that converse, features that invite, reflections that simmer. The magazine grows - not as a departure from its roots, but as a canopy expanding to hold more stories, more shade. We believe that as the world changes, so too must the ways we tell its stories. But the essence remains: tea, as ever, connects.

It doesn't clamor - it calls. It doesn't demand - it draws you in.

So brew yourself a cup. Let the aroma rise. Turn the page, and let the leaves lead the way.

Chitto Ghosh  
Editor



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# TEA IN TIMES OF TRIAL

## An Officer's Revitalizing Cuppa in the War Zone.

In the chronicles of military history, amid tales of valor and strategic brilliance, there exists a humble yet steadfast companion that has journeyed alongside soldiers through the most arduous terrains and dire circumstances: Tea. From the dense jungles of the Manipur–Burma border to the icy expanses of the Siachen Glacier, tea has transcended its role as a mere beverage to become a symbol of resilience, unity, and solace. My memory bank holds a wealth of such invigorating encounters with tea during times of trial. Today, I choose to revisit two poignant anecdotes from 1984 and 1987, sipping down memory lane to reflect on how this simple brew has played a pivotal role in sustaining the spirit and strength of our forces.

### 1984: Manipur–Burma Border

It has been over twelve hours we have been slashing our way through the dense undergrowth in the Manipur–Burma border on the heels of a militant group, and dawn is just breaking through the clouds in the valley down below. No food to eat, only survival rations and water in our plastic bottles. I am dead tired and can see the fatigue on the faces of the men I lead; the body screams rest, but the mind, being stronger, still commands that we keep moving. Another 200 yards and

we stumble upon a small makeshift camp left behind by possible ivory smugglers, and we spot a kitchen fireplace with dry firewood; a spot decision is taken to halt and make tea. Some of the men immediately get down to the business of making tea from the survival

rations and the utensils that come along, and in twenty minutes, tea is ready for everyone.

The first sip is like an “elixir of life,” and the mug of tea with a few biscuits gets us back on our feet, and the chase continues as heretofore till we hit the tail elements of the militant

group, and the rest is history.

### 1987: Siachen Glacier

Somewhere in the Siachen Glacier, altitude 19,000 feet. Lack of oxygen, temperatures between 4 degrees centigrade and minus 28 degrees centigrade, and rapidly changing weather make it a challenge to stay alive day after day. To stay awake, alert, and alive needs fuel for the mind in terms of food, but the bigger challenge is making water from ice, as there is no snow at that height. We have lots of tinned food rations, but all are frozen solid and need to be thawed to be fit to cook. A cup of tea needs twenty minutes to create water from ice, then another fifteen minutes to



*Defence Minister Rajnath Singh enjoys tea with troops*





*Writer (in plain shirt) with his battalion at Tea Time*



**Lt. Col. (Rtd.)  
Abhijit Bhattacharya**

get it to boil, and then the lovely cup of tea reaches your hands.

No one asks about Darjeeling/Assam/Dooars. Tea is just TEA, and that keeps you alive mentally and physically as a leader, as the team takes guidance from the officer for the daily war against the enemy and the weather.

Cut to the present, be it Balakote or Operation Sindoor, forces have to remain vigilant to thwart the enemy's attempts to disturb the country's peace. Be it the sentries on the border, or the pilot sitting next to his fighter aircraft for the whole night, or the captain of a destroyer somewhere in the Arabian Sea, or the captain of the nuclear submarine moving silently in the depths of the Bay of Bengal, it is the "cuppa tea" that keeps the men behind forces and machines going on day after day.

In the crucible of conflict and the solitude of sentry posts, rationality becomes the compass guiding decisions, and tea serves as its faithful ally. This unassuming beverage, steeped in tradition and camaraderie, offers more than warmth—it provides clarity amidst chaos, a momentary respite that rejuvenates the weary and fortifies the resolute. As history has shown, from the battlefields of yore to the strategic operations of today, tea remains an enduring testament to the human spirit's capacity to find strength and solace in the simplest of rituals.

**Jai Hind... Jai Hind Ki Chai.**







# 50 years or half century!

**50** years or half century! There is something incomplete about a half. Should we, for example, assess the Ganga River half way down from Gangotri to Bay of Bengal? Or should we really look at it after it has completed its voyage? The only thing good about half is that it is also midway and gives the opportunity to not only look back but also to look ahead at the other half.

50 years ago, the auction average price of Indian Tea was about Rs. 3 per kg. Today it is about Rs. 70. Over 23 times when the general inflation has been 100 times. The retail price of the standard popular packet equaled approximately Rs. 6. Today it is Rs. 136. Even less than 23 times. In other words, tea has remained cheap.

What is the secret of this, call it success, call it failure? Success for the consumer and failure for the producer. To my mind, the magic was in the yield per hectare. Crop, crop, crop was the slogan of the wise tea planter. The average Indian Yield today is some 1800 kg. per hectare. When India became independent, it was only about 800 kg. The crop today multiplied by its average price would therefore total Rs. 5,600 crore. In 1947, it was only Rs. 75 crore. This is the secret. Some 75% of the cost of production is in direct or overhead and only about 25% is direct or related to extra production. As a result the cost per kg rapidly comes down as the yield per hectare goes up. Few layman realize that maintain (as distinct to pluck) a hectare is cheaper as its yield is high and costlier when the yield is low.

The reason is that high- yielding hectare will have ground fully covered by the thick canopy of bushes. This does not let any sun light through to the floor below the bushes. No sunlight on the ground and hence no weeds for example. No expense on weedicides! There were well over 3 lac hectares under tea in India. Today, 50 years later, they have gone up by only about 1 lac. The increase in national production has been more due to more kg. per hectare and less due

to more hectares under cultivation. Incidentally, the national production today is 800 m kg. in contrast to some 250m kg. half a century ago.

Indians certainly have learnt to drink much more tea over these five decades. Some 650 m kg. compare with only about 60 at the start of our story. The only

area in which there has been a reverse was in exports which hit a high of 242 m kg. in 1981. Of, incidentally, shipments at the turn of independence were also a good 200. Last year they had dipped to 154 m kg.

London continued to be the world's largest auction centre until about 30 years ago. Today it is perhaps the world's smallest. It is just about surviving. Nearly all of Indian tea in 1947 was black long leaf or the Orthodox variety. Whereas most of it today is brownish grainy called CTC or crush, tear and curl. All the tea was then packed in wooden chests. Today probably 80% is carried and sold in jute bags with polythene loose liner inside. Instant tea is made and exported today whereas it was not in 1947. That more or less is the total of the change in the course that the river of tea has undergone.







Almost every time I think of tea, I think of the river Ganga. For me, it is my professional mother. I did 14 months in the jute trade, but, otherwise, a lot of my career has been tea, tea and tea. Mind you, I have also dabbled in tobacco, in tooth brushes, in computing and what not. If tea is my mother, all these have been only girl friends. Hence the thought of river Ganga.

Much as I worship the Ganga of tea, I also worry for her. Perhaps it is the devotion which makes me anxious. In contrast to the rapidly moving times, the river is flowing very slowly. If you look at her, it would seem unchanging. It would seem as if it flowing only because you know it is river and not a lake. It must soon move or it may begin to silt as the river Brahmaputra is really silting up near Dibrugarh. Or the Ganga's final brunch Hooghly is silting down near Calcutta.

The auction remains the major medium of tea disposal. In fact, more tea is sold through the auction than any other way. It is a lovely mechanism of sale. Transparent fair. It reaches all the world's buyers and it guarantees timely payment to the sellers. It is difficult to think of anything more sound and effective. But remember, the tea auction began in the 19th century at a time when there were no highways, no automobiles, only a few tracks of railway, no telephones at least in India.

The system has hardly changed since although around it there has been revolution upon revolution in transportation as well as communication. The televisions, jet aeroplanes, fax and the email, nothing has made the auction system changed. No one, for example, has thought of an auction on the television or on the telephone. Or maybe a lot of us have thought. But as a great man once said that thought without action is sterility. Just as action without thought is abortion.

Tea has played it very safe, is playing safe and will probably continue to play safe in the next 50 years. But my worship of the Ganga will go on inexorably.



**Prafull Goradia**  
Founder Editor



# BREW UP SOME FUN

## Test Your Tea IQ!



1. Approximately how many cups of tea are consumed in India each day?

- A) 100 million    B) 500 million    C) 1 billion    D) 2 billion

2. Which of the following is not a true tea derived from the *Camellia sinensis* plant?

- A) Oolong    B) Chamomile    C) White    D) Black

3. In Louis Chu's novel *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, which was adapted into a 1989 film, what does the act of "eating a bowl of tea symbolize"?

- A) A traditional Chinese wedding ceremony    B) A remedy for insomnia  
C) A metaphor for confronting life's challenges    D) A literal practice of consuming tea leaves

4. In traditional Tibetan tea, what is commonly added to black tea?

- A) Honey and lemon    B) Yak butter and salt    C) Milk and sugar    D) Mint leaves

5. What is the traditional Japanese Tea ceremony called?

- A) Chanoya    B) Chado    C) Sado    D) All of the three

6. What is the process called when tea leaves are exposed to air to develop flavor?

- A) Fermentation    B) Oxidation    C) Steaming    D) Roasting

7. In Disney's *"Beauty and the Beast,"* what is the name of the teapot character?

- A) Mrs. Kettle    B) Lady Teacup    C) Mrs. Potts    D) Madame Brew

8. At what time is traditional British afternoon tea usually served?

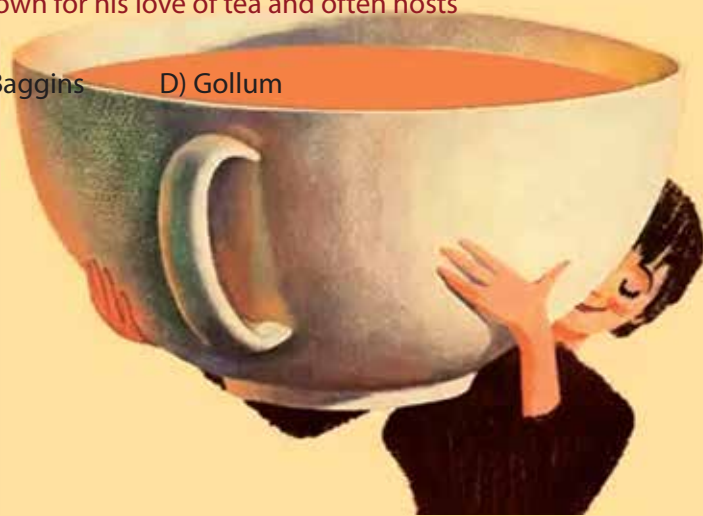
- A) 12:00 PM    B) 2:00 PM    C) 4:00 PM    D) 6:00 PM

9. Which of the following beverages, similar to herbal tea, was commonly consumed in medieval Europe for its medicinal properties?

- A) Chamomile infusion    B) Coffee    C) Black tea    D) Hot chocolate

10. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, which character is known for his love of tea and often hosts unexpected guests for it?

- A) Gandalf    B) Thorin Oakenshield    C) Bilbo Baggins    D) Gollum



1.C    2.B    3.C    4.B    5.D  
6.B    7.C    8.C    9.D    10.C

ANSWER





# TEA vs COFFEE

The Great Sip-Off





## Cover Story

The day unfurls, often accompanied by the gentle hiss of a kettle or the rich burble of a coffee machine. For billions across the globe, these sounds aren't just background noise; they are the overture to a daily ritual, a comforting anchor in the ebb and flow of life. Tea and coffee, two distinct yet intertwined beverages, permeate our cultures, shape our social interactions, and even reflect our inner landscapes. They are more than just a source of caffeine; they are liquid stories, poured and savored in a myriad of ways, each sip carrying echoes of history, geography, and personal connection.



From ancient leaves to global obsession Tea's origins trace back to ancient China, where legend says Emperor Shen Nong discovered it around 2737 BCE when tea leaves accidentally fell into his boiling water. Fast forward to the colonial era, and tea became a global commodity, thanks to the British East India Company. In India, tea was introduced by the British in the 19th century, who saw the potential of Assam's fertile lands. The first commercial tea plantation was established in 1837 in Chabua, Assam. Over time, tea became deeply ingrained in Indian culture, evolving into chai, a spiced milk tea that is now a staple across the country. Today, India is one of the largest tea producers, famous for Assam, Darjeeling, and Nilgiri teas.

Whereas Coffee's story begins in Ethiopia, where legend has it that a goat herder named Kaldi noticed his goats becoming energetic after eating coffee berries. By the 15th century, coffee had spread across the Middle East, fueling intellectual discussions in Ottoman coffeehouses. India's coffee journey started in the 17th century, when Baba Budan, a Sufi saint, smuggled seven coffee beans from Yemen and planted

them in Chikmagalur, Karnataka. Coffee gained popularity in South India, especially in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, where filter coffee became a cultural icon. The Indian Coffee House, established in the 1940s, became a hub for intellectual debates and social gatherings. Today, India is a major coffee producer, particularly known for shade-grown coffee from Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. The rise of café culture, led by brands like Café Coffee Day, has transformed coffee into a modern urban experience.

Tea and coffee have shaped economies, traditions, and daily life worldwide. Whether it's the British afternoon tea or the Italian espresso culture, these beverages continue to evolve, blending tradition with modernity. Let's begin with tea, a brew steeped in millennia of tradition. From the misty slopes of Darjeeling to the meticulously manicured gardens of



Japan, the journey of a tea leaf is a testament to human ingenuity and nature's artistry. The "how" of tea preparation is as diverse as the cultures that embrace it. In a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, chanoyu, every gesture is imbued with grace and mindfulness, a meditative practice that transcends mere refreshment. Contrast this with the hurried dunking of a teabag in a mug during a British office break, a pragmatic yet comforting pause in a busy day. The "where" of tea consumption is equally varied. Imagine the bustling chaiwallahs of India, their cries echoing through crowded streets as they expertly pour sweet, milky tea from great heights into small glasses. Picture a serene Moroccan courtyard, where mint tea, heavily sweetened and poured with theatrical flair, is a symbol of hospitality and shared moments. Consider the quiet contemplation of a scholar in ancient China, finding inspiration in the fragrant steam rising from a delicate porcelain cup. Each setting imbues the act of drinking tea with a unique flavor, a sense of place and belonging.





But perhaps the most compelling aspect is the "why" behind our tea consumption. For many, it's the gentle awakening, the subtle lift that prepares them for the day ahead. For others, it's a moment of solace, a warm embrace during a quiet afternoon. Tea is often the lubricant of social interaction, facilitating conversations and forging connections. Think of the afternoon tea tradition in Britain, a social event as much as a culinary one, or the countless business deals sealed over cups of green tea in East Asia. Beyond the physical benefits, tea offers a psychological comfort, a familiar ritual that soothes and reassures.

Now, let's turn our attention to coffee, a beverage with a perceived 'bolder, more assertive character'. From the high altitude plantations of Ethiopia, where legend places its discovery, to the volcanic slopes of Colombia and the lush landscapes of Vietnam, coffee beans embark on a global journey before finding their way into our cups. The "how" of coffee preparation has undergone a remarkable evolution. The simple act of boiling ground beans has given way to an array of sophisticated methods: the rich crema of an espresso pulled by a skilled barista, the slow, deliberate pour-over that highlights nuanced flavors, the immersive experience of a French press, or the convenience of a drip machine.

The "where" of coffee consumption paints a vibrant picture of modern life. Consider the bustling coffee shops that have become ubiquitous in urban landscapes, acting as temporary offices, social hubs, and places of quiet contemplation. Imagine the lively conversations unfolding in a Viennese coffee house, a tradition steeped in intellectual and artistic history. Picture the solitary enjoyment of a strong espresso in a Milanese bar, a quick shot of energy to fuel the day. From the communal buzz of a café to the quiet intimacy of a home kitchen, coffee adapts to its surroundings, becoming an integral part of the daily rhythm.

The "why" behind our coffee obsession is multifaceted. For many, it's the jolt of energy, the sharp focus that cuts through morning fog or fuels late-night work sessions. Coffee is often associated with productivity, creativity, and a sense of drive. But beyond the caffeine kick, there's a sensory pleasure in the rich aroma, the complex flavors, and the comforting warmth of a mug held in hand. Coffee breaks offer moments of respite, opportunities to pause, reflect, and recharge. The culture surrounding coffee is often one of exploration and connoisseurship, with enthusiasts delving into bean origins, roasting techniques, and brewing methods, seeking the perfect cup.

The cultures and lifestyles of tea and coffee drinkers, while distinct, often overlap and intersect. Tea drinkers are sometimes perceived as seeking tranquility and tradition, embracing rituals that offer a sense of calm. Coffee drinkers, on the other hand, might be seen as driven and dynamic, fueled by the ambition and energy that coffee provides. However, these are broad strokes, and the reality is far more nuanced. Many individuals seamlessly weave both beverages into their lives, choosing tea for moments of relaxation and coffee for a boost of focus.

The rise of specialty tea and coffee has further blurred these lines, fostering a culture of appreciation and knowledge that transcends simple categorization. Just as wine lovers discuss terroir



In India, tea isn't just a beverage; it's an emotion, a social lubricant, an integral part of daily life. From the humble roadside chaiwala to elegant tea estates of Darjeeling and Assam, tea permeates every stratum of society. It's the welcoming gesture for guests, the companion during study sessions, the fuel for bustling markets. Bollywood often portrays tea breaks as moments of camaraderie and conversation, solidifying its cultural significance.

Globally, tea's narrative unfolds with similar depth, albeit with regional nuances.

In Britain, it's synonymous with afternoon tradition and polite society. In Japan, the intricate tea ceremony embodies mindfulness and respect. Across Southeast Asia, from the milky *teh tarik* of Malaysia to the sweet iced tea of Thailand, it's a ubiquitous refreshment.

Tastes aside, much differs in the way tea and coffee are

## TEA Vs. COFFEE

## A Global Brew-Off of Culture, Commerce and Health

**"Coffee gets you going, but tea knows where you're going - and brews a plan"**

and vintage, tea and coffee aficionados now delve into the specific origins. Coffee, on the other hand, often carries the aura of modernity and productivity. In the West, it's the quintessential morning ritual, the fuel for the corporate world, the centerpiece of bustling cafes. Think of iconic scenes in movies and television shows set in coffee shops, where deals are struck, friendships blossom, and creative ideas spark.

While coffee has made significant inroads in urban India, particularly among the younger generation, it hasn't yet achieved the same pervasive cultural ubiquity as tea. However, the rise of coffee chains and a growing appreciation for specialty brews are steadily changing this landscape.

processed, as well as in the flavor profiles of their preferred brews. Yet, a shared passion for quality and craftsmanship brings them onto common ground uniting drinkers in their pursuit of the perfect cup, regardless of whether it contains steeped leaves or ground beans. Ultimately, the enduring appeal of tea and coffee lies in their ability to connect us – to ourselves, to others, and to the world around us. They are beverages that carry stories, traditions, and personal memories. Whether it's the comforting ritual of a morning brew, the shared moment over a cup with a friend, or the quiet contemplation inspired by a fragrant infusion, tea and coffee offer more than just sustenance. They offer a moment of connection, a pause in the everyday, a taste of something deeply human. They are, in their own unique ways, beverages with soul.



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## Executive Summary: 2-Year (2023-2024) field study in Assam and West Bengal by TRA Tocklai

- Highest yield increases were recorded with 350 ml/ha BIOKAD: 5.63% in Assam and 5.02% in Dooars, compared to Urea + Zinc (Current TRA foliar Recommendation).
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- BIOKAD reduced the residue of several pesticides in green leaves by 6% to 83%, demonstrating significant detoxification potential.
- Treatments with BIOKAD had a high benefit-cost ratio, 2.45 (Assam) and 2.88 (West Bengal), proving profitable economic viability.
- BIOKAD application significantly enhanced chlorophyll content in tea leaves.
- Tea made from treated bushes showed improved biochemical quality, indicating better liquor characteristics.
- Recommendation: Apply BIOKAD at 300–350 ml/ha for enhanced tea yield, quality, and chemical residue reduction in NE Indian tea estates.

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TABLE  
The Indian Agro-Industry: Tea's Stronger Leaf

Feature	Tea	Coffee
Domestic Consumption	Dominant (85% of total production)	Minor (30–35% of production)
Geographic Reach	Pan-India	Southern India-centric
Employment	~1.2 million workers	~0.35 million workers
Cultural Penetration	All classes, all regions	Youth-urban, elite clusters
FMCG Penetration	Deep, longstanding	New, growing

THE POPULARITY STAKES  
A Matter of Taste and Habit

Globally, both tea and coffee boast staggering consumption figures. However, tea consistently ranks as the second most consumed beverage worldwide, after water. Its widespread cultivation across Asia and Africa, coupled with its affordability and diverse preparations, contributes to this dominance.

Coffee, while incredibly popular, generally trails behind tea in overall global volume. Its consumption is heavily concentrated in North America, Europe, and increasingly in emerging economies. The "coffee culture" phenomenon, with its emphasis on barista skills, latte art, and diverse brewing methods, has fueled its popularity in urban centers worldwide.

In India, tea reigns supreme in terms of sheer volume consumed. The sheer accessibility and affordability of tea, particularly the ubiquitous masala chai, make it the beverage of choice for the masses. However, coffee consumption is on a steady rise, especially in South India, where filter coffee holds a cherished place, and in metropolitan cities with a growing café culture.

MARKET COMPOSITION  
From Leaf to Cup

The tea market is characterized by a vast network of small-scale growers, particularly in regions like India, Sri Lanka, and East Africa, alongside large estates. The industry encompasses a wide range of tea types, from black and green to oolong and white, each with its unique processing methods and flavor profiles. The Indian tea market is dominated by domestic consumption, with significant exports of black tea.

The coffee market, while also involving numerous smallholder farmers, particularly in Latin America and Africa, sees a greater influence of large multinational corporations involved in processing, branding, and distribution. The market is segmented by bean type (Arabica, Robusta), roast level, and preparation method, with a growing emphasis on specialty coffee and sustainable sourcing. In India, coffee cultivation is concentrated in the southern states, with a significant portion of the produce being Arabica and Robusta varieties. Both domestic consumption and exports are important for the Indian coffee market.







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## SIPS OF WELLNESS

### Advantage Tea

Both tea and coffee offer a range of potential health benefits, though their active compounds differ. Tea, particularly green tea, is rich in antioxidants like catechins, which have been linked to various health benefits, including improved heart health, reduced risk of certain cancers, and enhanced cognitive function. Different types of tea offer their own unique profiles; for instance, black tea contains theaflavins and thearubigins, also potent antioxidants.

Coffee is well-known for its caffeine content, which can enhance alertness, improve focus, and boost physical performance. It also contains antioxidants like chlorogenic acids, which may have protective effects against type 2 diabetes and certain liver conditions. However, excessive caffeine consumption can lead to anxiety, insomnia, and digestive issues.

In India, traditional Ayurvedic practices have long recognized the medicinal properties of certain teas and spices used in kadha (herbal concoctions), often incorporating tea leaves. Coffee, while not traditionally a part of Ayurvedic medicine, is increasingly being studied for its potential health benefits in the Indian context.

## BEYOND THE BEVERAGE

### Commercial Ventures

Beyond their primary role as beverages, both tea and coffee find applications in various commercial sectors.

Tea extracts are used in the cosmetic industry for their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, appearing in skincare and haircare products. Tea seed oil is also valued for its moisturizing properties. Tea waste can be composted or even used to produce biofuels.

Coffee grounds are increasingly being recognized for their potential in various applications, including as a natural exfoliant in cosmetics, a soil amendment in gardening, and even as a component in bioplastics. Coffee extracts are also used in some food and beverage products for flavoring.

In India, tea estates often contribute to tourism, offering visitors a glimpse into the tea-making process and the scenic beauty of the plantations. Similarly, coffee plantations in South India are also attracting tourists interested in agritourism.







In the evolving landscape of health and culture, while both tea and coffee have their loyalists, there's a compelling case - grounded in science, lifestyle alignment, and cultural nuance - that tea offers a more balanced, beneficial experience. Tea is quietly reclaiming the crown. Here's a brewed-to-perfection comparison that reveals why tea might be your ideal daily companion.

## HEAD-TO-HEAD AT A GLANCE

Benefits	Tea	Coffee
Caffeine Content	20–50 mg + L-theanine = sustained alertness No jitters or crash	80–100 mg = fast spike Often followed by an energy crash
Antioxidant Power	Catechins, flavonoids, polyphenols Fights inflammation, supports heart health, Low acidity	Contains antioxidants but is less balanced for daily wellness
Digestive Friendliness	Aids digestion & hydration Gentle on the stomach	High acidity Can cause reflux and dehydration
Focus & Calm	L-theanine promotes relaxation and mental clarity	May lead to anxiety, jitteriness for some individuals
Cultural Depth	Emblem of mindfulness across India, China, Japan, and the UK	Energy symbol in fast-paced cultures often consumed "on the go"
Range & Versatility	A ritual of grace vast natural options: black, green, oolong, white, herbal, iced, fermented	Fewer variations: Often modified with sugar, syrups, cream

## Why Tea Triumphs

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Tea supports alertness without overstimulation, nourishes long-term health, and encourages mindful living. It's as suitable for morning focus as it is for evening reflection. And unlike coffee, it offers a gentler ritual- an invitation to pause, breathe, and connect. Tea isn't just a beverage- it's a lifestyle. It fuels focus, nurtures the body, and offers peace in a cup. So next time you sip, make it mindful. Make it tea.



## TEA TRIUMPHS IN INDIA

### From Cultural Roots to Market Dominance

In India, tea isn't merely a beverage- it's a vibrant tradition that unites generations and flavors every moment with its rich legacy. Flourishing across vast estates in Assam, Darjeeling, and Nilgiri, tea is woven into the nation's cultural tapestry, its vibrant presence felt in both the lively banter of bustling street stalls and the serene intimacy of home rituals. Every cup of chai stands as a living tribute to history, proudly embodying a deep-rooted legacy and everyday comfort. Its power to evoke nostalgia and spark community spirit has firmly established tea as the drink of choice for millions. Yet, while tea holds its crown in India, the ongoing dialogue between tea and coffee transcends borders and centuries, blending innovative energy with timeless tradition. Together, these iconic beverages remind us that every sip is not just a taste of the past, but also a spark for connection, creativity, and endless possibility.



**Chitto Ghosh**  
Editor



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## Chai Corner

# GHOST OF GOODNESS

## Unmanned Tea Shop Serving Trust for 100 Years

In the quaint, time-honored town of Serampore, approximately 25 km from Kolkata, nestled along the banks of the Hooghly River, a quiet revolution has been brewing for many decades. It's not a political upheaval or a technological breakthrough, but a humble tea stall, Naresh Shomer Cha er Dokaan, that has defied the very principles of business and become a heartwarming testament to honesty, integrity, and communal responsibility. It's a place where the "ghost of goodness" seems to linger, guiding unseen hands and fostering a century of unwavering trust.

Right in front of the Chitrakali Babu cremation site, this unassuming 5-by-7-feet hole-in-the-wall shop stands as an outlier in an increasingly profit-driven world.

Founded by Naresh Chandra Shome, a former employee of the colonial-era tea giant Brooke Bond, this self-service chai shop was, for decades, a cherished gathering place for 'comrades' to exchange ideas and party programs over steaming cups of tea. Though Naresh Chandra Shome passed away in 1995, his unique legacy has endured, nurtured by the present owner, Ashok Chakraborty, who quietly carries on the tradition.

What makes Naresh Shomer Cha er Dokaan truly extraordinary is its radical approach to commerce. The shop is run by a rotating roster of men, each taking turns for a few days as their schedules allow. Ashok Chakraborty is one of these samaritans. Every morning, whoever is on duty meticulously lays out the wares – a modest menu of milk tea (with or without sugar), black

tea (plain or with lemon), and the spiced Kobiraji cha, accompanied by jars of biscuits.

Then, he heads off to his other work, leaving the entire operation in the other volunteering hands of local customers.

Here, the roles of patron and owner beautifully blur. Customers don't just drink tea; they brew it themselves, pour for others, and settle their payments by simply dropping money into an unguarded wooden cash box. There are no contracts, no watchful eyes, no

CCTV, just an unspoken agreement governed by something far more potent: personal honor. It's as if the spirit of Naresh Chandra Shome and a collective belief in human decency act as the invisible proprietor, ensuring fairness.

In a world where trust often feels like a fading currency, this unconventional model doesn't just survive; it flourishes. Despite the potential for abuse, Chakraborty







attests to remarkably few payment defaults. Visitors often return to clear unpaid balances, a testament to the deep-rooted social contract that binds this community. It's a powerful illustration of how, under the right circumstances, a community can collectively nurture a business they value as much as its owner- all without a single employee on site.

Little has changed in the shop's hundred-year journey, save for a few whitewashes and a ceiling repair. The walls still bear the dark stains of soot and smoke from the traditional coal-fired clay stove, and tea is still served in humble clay cups, alongside paper ones, with a refill costing a mere 5 rupees.

This unique trust-based practice, while remarkable, isn't entirely isolated in India. One can find similar unmanned vegetable stalls in Nagaland or

community-driven stores in Kerala, where goods are exchanged based on need and trust. Yet, the enduring charm of Naresh Shomer Cha'er Dokaan lies in its simplicity and its steadfast message: in the right environment, where community, friendship, and trust are the primary ingredients, a business can truly thrive on shared values rather than mere profit. It's a century-old sip of honesty that continues to refresh the soul of Serampore, a place where the "ghost of goodness" remains a very real and tangible presence.



**Subhendu Sarkar**  
Freelance Writer





## Chai Corner

## FROM OBSCURITEA TO A TEA EMPIRE

## A Visit to India's Largest Chai Haven: Café Niloufer

What started as a modest tea stall in 1978 has today brewed its way into history - Café Niloufer is now India's largest tea café, with its newest outlet sprawling an impressive 40,000 square feet in the heart of Hyderabad's bustling Hitech City. A Babu Rao, the man behind this iconic brand, has poured passion into every cup, and his ninth café outlet is a testament to how far a love for chai can go.

Step inside the grand three-storied space, and you're greeted with a beautiful blend of tradition and modernity - a far cry from its early days in the old city of Secunderabad. Back then, Café Niloufer was a modest nook serving rich Iranian chai and melt-in-the-mouth Osmania biscuits to a buzzing crowd. I remember that first outlet vividly- basic interiors, hectic servers, and unforgettable tea.

Fast forward to today, and the experience has transformed into something far more opulent. The new café caters to Hyderabad's fast-paced, tech-savvy crowd while still holding on to its old-world charm.



## A Sip-by-Sip Tour

The ground floor is a whirlwind of energy- open kitchens, self-service counters, and tea being brewed in full view for enthusiasts to admire. Digital kiosks line the entrance, letting customers place orders without a wait. Outside, a large seating area invites casual catchups over cutting chai and khari.

Upstairs, the first floor offers a more relaxed setting, ideal for meetings, leisurely outings, or family time. Expect a 20–25 minute wait on weekends, but the ambiance and experience make it worth it. The prices are slightly higher here, but so is the comfort.

The third floor, still under construction, will soon host private gatherings and parties - further cementing the café's reputation as a social hotspot.

## Menu & Memories

The menu is a delightful balance of nostalgia and new-age cravings. Alongside signature Bun Maska and classic Chole Kulche, you'll find Cheese Poppers, Sabudana Vada, and more. We tried the café's signature "Special Niloufer Tea," served piping hot in a flask for two- accompanied by crunchy Potato-Cheese Croquettes that hit all the right notes. While prices may feel a bit premium, the quality, service, and setting make it a fair trade for the experience.

## Design that Speaks

The café's earthy charm is hard to miss - terracotta walls, Athangudi tiles, and a striking 2-ton installation called the Niloufer Kettle of Love suspended from the ceiling. The view from above opens into a glitzy neighborhood dotted with tech giants and luxury towers - elevating the regal vibe of the space.

## The Last Word

Café Niloufer's latest avatar isn't just a tea shop- it's a cultural landmark. It blends the warmth of 1978 with the aspirations of modern Hyderabad. Whether you're a chai purist, a foodie, or just someone looking for a good hangout, this place deserves a stop on your city itinerary.

**Next time you're in Hyderabad, let Café Niloufer steep you in a cup of history, heart, and heritage.**



*Sukanya Das*  
*Tea Enthusiast*



## Flavour from Far

# US MIDWEST TEA TALE

**W**hen you think tea, images of quaint English cottages, delicate porcelain cups, or vibrant Indian street stalls likely come to mind not exactly the American Midwest. But nestled among the cornfields and bustling cities of America's heartland lies a surprisingly rich tea culture, steeped in history, innovation, and charm.

Tea made its Midwest debut like a fashionably late socialite, arriving via transcontinental railways in 1869, fresh from sunny California docks carrying aromatic crates of Japanese green tea. Chic Midwestern cities like Chicago, then bustling with newfound wealth, were sipping Japanese green tea, America's top choice at the time. Japan, supplying nearly half the tea consumed stateside by 1880, found its largest audience in the Midwest (Coletti, 2024). Tea wasn't merely a drink- it symbolized gentility and status, served elegantly in parlors influenced by refined British and Irish traditions. By the 1880s, Midwesterners quickly established themselves as the nation's foremost green tea connoisseurs (Coletti, 2024).

By the turn of the century, the Midwest was ready to stir in a bit more magic. Cue the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, where Indian black tea famously met ice cubes for the first time, creating an iconic American love story-iced tea. A sweltering Missouri summer inspired an enterprising tea vendor who decided that a steaming cup simply wouldn't do. He decided to pour hot black tea over ice, sparking an instant sensation, setting the stage for a national obsession that thrives to this day (Rahman, 2024)

Jump cut to the roaring twenties when tea rooms became the Midwest's trendy antidote to Prohibition-era nightlife, offering women a respectable yet fashionable social venue. Owned predominantly by women entrepreneurs, these establishments cultivated a social culture that blended elegance with empowerment (Tea-Less Tea Rooms, 2017).

As delightful as green tea was, fashions inevitably change. By the 1920s, Americans turned their backs on their once-beloved Japanese leaves due to rising anti-Japanese sentiment and savvy marketing that pushed robust black teas from British India into center stage. Soon, hearty cups of English Breakfast and Earl Grey filled delicate porcelain, cementing black tea as America's- and particularly the Midwest's- go-to brew. A comforting cup of hot tea became as quintessentially Midwestern as wheat fields and Sunday suppers (Coletti, 2024).







But what's steeping in Midwest cups today? The current Midwest tea culture deliciously mingles the vintage with the vogue. Afternoon tea, with its Instagram-ready trays of scones, sandwiches, and dainty pastries, is staging a revival in stylish venues like Chicago's luxurious Langham Hotel or Minnesota's iconic Saint Paul Hotel (Kehoe, 2023). Local festivals, like Kansas City's Heartland Tea Festival, attract enthusiasts and artisans, turning tea sipping into vibrant social experiences. Unsweetened iced black tea is the winner, capturing around 80% of the region's tea consumption, a refreshing staple from picnics to front porches (Steeped Content, 2020). Herbal wellness blends, calming chamomile, zesty matcha lattes, and bubble teas round out Midwestern tea menus (Kiel, 2022), mirroring America's evolving tastes with a delightful local twist.



**Suchetana Ghosh**  
Cincinnati, USA

Midwest America might not be your first thought for tea adventures, but its brew is rich, diverse, and delightfully surprising. Each cup tells a story of immigrant dreams, entrepreneurial spirit, and timeless sophistication, reminding us that in the Midwest, tea is more than just a beverage; it's an experience stylishly steeped in history.



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# TRIPURA TEA STORY

Tripura's tea industry is witnessing a quiet but determined revival, led by the Tripura Tea Development Corporation (TTDC), a government organization with a renewed vision for sustainable and modern growth. Under the leadership of Chairman Sri Samir Ranjan Ghosh and Managing Director Manik Lal Das, the corporation is addressing longstanding structural challenges while positioning the state's tea sector for long-term resilience.

Chairman Ghosh, an alumnus of the renowned Tocklai Tea Research Institute, brings a deep background in tea plantation management. His practical experience and academic insight are proving instrumental as he steers the organization through a complex transformation. One of the most pressing challenges has been the cultural shift away from traditional tea labour. With fewer people willing to continue in conventional tea work, TTDC is focused on building a future-ready workforce. The Chairman has proposed the introduction of vocational courses in partnership with Agartala University. These programs aim to equip new generations with technical and mechanical skills tailored for the evolving demands of the tea industry.



Recognizing the need for consistency and efficiency, TTDC is also advocating for the mechanization of tea plucking and increased reliance on modern machinery. Factories like BTPF have already adopted updated protocols and serve as models for this transition. Mechanization will not only address the labor shortfall but also enhance productivity across the sector.

Strategically, TTDC is placing strong emphasis on promoting orthodox tea manufacturing, aligning with global trends. This shift is expected to deliver more stable revenues, especially since most Tripura teas are already naturally compliant with safety standards. The state could see a significant uptick in interest from

major orthodox buyers if this focus is maintained and expanded.

Given Tripura's logistical constraints due to its location, transportation has always been a cost concern for tea producers. To mitigate this, TTDC is setting up a new auction centre in Agartala, which will eliminate the need to send teas to distant auction houses. This move is expected to reduce costs and facilitate local trade. Additionally, plans for a centralized warehousing system are underway, offering better control over inventory and smoother distribution channels.







TTDC's revival efforts extend to the land itself. The corporation is taking steps to reopen abandoned tea estates, rehabilitate them with proper infrastructure, and invest in in-filling programs using young, high-yielding tea plants. These efforts are coupled with a commitment to fair pricing and transparent engagement with local growers, fostering a healthier supply ecosystem. The government is also supporting small tea growers through targeted initiatives, recognizing their role in the industry's grassroots revival.

Amidst all this, there is a growing interest in leveraging Tripura's scenic, largely pollution-free terrain to promote tea tourism. With proper planning, the state's tea gardens could offer immersive, eco-friendly travel experiences that benefit both visitors and the local economy.

TTDC's multi-pronged approach - balancing modernization with tradition, inclusivity with innovation - signals a renewed future for Tripura's tea sector. With strong leadership, community engagement, and government backing, the state is poised to become an emerging name in India's tea story, ready to make its mark in the global market.



**Niladri Saha**  
*Contemporary Brokers, Kolkata*





# BEYOND THE CUP

## The Estate-to-Cafe Story

On South Kolkata's Purna Das Road, **The Place 1860 - By Namring** is a culinary highlight. More than a restaurant, it's a haven for Darjeeling tea enthusiasts, dedicated to tea culture's rich heritage. Complementing their stellar tea, they offer delectable European and Asian-Continental bites in a cozy, refined setting.

Sushmita Poddar of Contemporary Tea Time recently spoke with visionary owner **Soumyajyoti Saha** to learn about his passion for tea and what makes this spot a true gem in Kolkata's vibrant food scene.

### 1. Mr. Saha, let's start at the beginning - what inspired you to open this cafe, and how did its unique concept come to life?

**The Place 1860** is my tribute to my family's deep legacy in tea cultivation, rooted in our recently acquired Namring estate, which has produced exceptional **Darjeeling teas since 1860**. I envisioned a unique space where tea lovers could experience the finest Darjeeling teas alongside a fusion of continental Italian and French cuisine- an immersive celebration of both tea heritage and fine dining.

### 2. What's the significance behind your cafe's name, logo, or design?

The name, The Place 1860, directly references the year our Namring tea estate was founded, honoring its history and our family's multi-generational legacy in tea production. Our logo features a stylized tea leaf, symbolizing the purity and authenticity of our tea. The cafe's design blends traditional teahouse charm with modern touches, creating a warm, inviting atmosphere where history and contemporary culture converge.

### 3. What makes your menu unique compared to other cafes in the area?

Our menu celebrates the exceptional teas from Namring Tea Estate, expertly paired with continental Italian and French dishes. What sets us apart are



the exclusive, handpicked teas we offer- each with a story tracing back to the hills of Darjeeling. These teas are complemented by gourmet meals designed to enhance their delicate flavors, creating a refined and authentic experience.

### 4. Are there any signature dishes or drinks that you would recommend as a must-try for first-time visitors?

For first-time visitors, I highly recommend our signature **Second Flush Muscatel** tea. Pair it with our Italian and French dishes- like our signature **quiches** or **fresh pasta**- for a perfect harmony of refreshing and unique flavors.

### 5. How did you come up with the concept for your tea lounge, and what makes it different from other cafes or tea spots in the area?

The concept for The Place 1860 stemmed from my personal passion for tea and the desire to share the authenticity of our family's tea estate. Unlike other cafes, our direct connection to Namring Estate means we offer an exclusive, curated tea experience. Every cup tells a story of craftsmanship, from cultivation to brewing. What truly sets us apart is our commitment to delivering an experience that goes beyond just drinking tea- it's about appreciating its origins, nuances, and cultural role.

### 6. Can you walk us through your tea menu? What types of teas do you offer, and how did you decide on this selection?

Our tea menu is a carefully curated selection of Darjeeling teas, including black, green, white, and oolong varieties. These are handpicked and sourced directly from our estate, ensuring the highest quality. The selection aims to showcase the diverse flavors found in Darjeeling teas - whether the bold richness of a black tea or the delicate sweetness of a white tea, we offer something for every palate.

**7. How do you educate your customers about the different types of teas and brewing methods?**

We believe tea is a journey of discovery, and our knowledgeable staff is dedicated to guiding customers. They not only help guests choose teas based on flavor preferences but also share insights into brewing methods, the nuances of each tea type, and the rich history of our estate's offerings. It's important to us that our guests don't just drink tea - they understand and appreciate what makes it so special.



**8. What are some of your signature teas or blends that you think visitors should try?**

Wonder and Rare Muscatel are two signature teas I highly recommend. These teas are celebrated for their distinctive flavours, perfectly capturing the essence of Darjeeling's terroir. Wonder, with its floral, light notes, and Rare Muscatel, with its complex, fruity undertones, offer exceptional experiences for both the tea connoisseur and the curious newcomer.

**9. What's the role of tea in your personal life, and how does that influence the way you run your lounge?**

Tea has always been central to my life, growing up surrounded by the rich tradition of tea cultivation. This personal connection greatly influences how I run the lounge. For me, tea isn't just a beverage - it's a ritual, a heritage, and a way to connect with others. I bring that same love and respect for tea into every

aspect of The Place 1860, ensuring every cup is crafted with care, passion, and knowledge passed down through generations.

**10. Do you make any efforts to source organic or fair-trade teas? How do you ensure quality and ethical sourcing?**

At The Place 1860, we prioritize sustainability and ethical sourcing. Our teas are Rainforest Alliance certified, ensuring high quality and environmentally friendly production practices. We ensure our customers enjoy teas that are both delicious and responsibly sourced.

**11. What have been some of the biggest challenges in opening and running a tea lounge specifically, as opposed to other types of cafes?**

One of the biggest challenges has been educating our customers about the subtle complexities



of Darjeeling tea. Unlike regular tea bags, Darjeeling teas are a work of art requiring careful brewing to unlock their full flavor potential. Helping guests understand this, as well as the unique characteristics of each variety, has been both a challenge and an opportunity to share our expertise and passion for tea.

**12. If you could share one piece of tea wisdom with someone new to the world of tea, what would it be?**

Tea is all about exploration. I encourage newcomers to try different types of tea and pay attention to the flavors, aromas, and brewing methods. This will help them discover personal preferences and deepen their appreciation for the world of tea. Each cup is an experience waiting to be understood, and the more you explore, the more you'll appreciate its richness



**13. How does being associated with a tea estate influence the teas you offer in your lounge?**

Our direct association with Namring Tea Estate ensures we have access to the freshest, finest teas available. This direct connection gives us an unparalleled advantage, as we can offer customers teas sourced right from the estate. It's a privilege to share these teas, knowing they represent the culmination of years of expertise and dedication to the craft of tea making.

**14. Do you offer any immersive experiences, such as virtual or physical tours of the tea estate for customers who want to learn more about the origin of the tea they're drinking?**

We are in the process of offering immersive experiences, including tea tastings and workshops that allow guests to learn about the tea-making process from start to finish. Additionally, we're planning virtual tours of our tea estate, which will give customers an inside look at where their tea comes from and the meticulous care involved in producing each batch. This hands-on approach will help deepen their connection with the tea they enjoy.

**15. Are there special events or tea tastings in the lounge that highlight the estate's teas and their journey from farm to cup?**

Yes, we regularly host tea tastings and events that showcase the teas from our estate. These events offer a deeper dive into the tea's journey, from plantation to cup, allowing guests to appreciate each variety's nuances. We also share the stories behind each tea, explaining its origin, flavor profile, and the meticulous process involved in its creation. It's an educational and immersive experience for all tea lovers



**16. Before we conclude this insightful conversation, what message or story do you hope customers take away after visiting your tea lounge, especially regarding the connection between your lounge and the tea estate?**

At The Place 1860, we invite you to experience tea beyond a beverage. It's a refined alternative to coffee culture, offering a unique culinary journey for all, especially a younger generation seeking new flavors. Explore the endless possibilities of pairing our exquisite teas, directly from our estate, with vibrant continental dishes. We want guests to discover how tea can truly complement and elevate their meal, creating a unique and memorable experience.



*Susmita Poddar*  
Contemporary Brokers, Kolkata



## Roundtable

# INDIAN TEA CONCLAVE

## Brewing Possibilities: ICC India Tea Conclave 2025 Sparks a New Era for Indian Tea

The foothills of North Bengal pulsed with new ideas and timeless aromas as the ICC India Tea Conclave 2025 unfolded in Siliguri - bringing together legacy brands, modern entrepreneurs, marketing icons, and young changemakers. With its timely theme "Tea for Youth," the two-day summit didn't just talk about change - it stirred it.

### A Centennial Celebration, A Future-Ready Outlook

Commemorating 100 years of the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the conclave opened on a note of reverence and renewal. Umang Mittal's words captured the mood perfectly- "Tea", he said, "is not just a beverage but India's cultural ambassador". Industry veterans like Gopal Dalmia and Rajiv Baid were honored for their contributions, while thought leaders such as Sanjay Shah and Swapan Chowdhuri urged the next generation to claim ownership of tea's evolving identity.

Their message was loud and clear: Indian tea is poised for reinvention, and the baton is ready to be passed.







Even Tea Gallery





## Flavourful Dialogues and Powerful Ideas

### 1. The Rise of Premium and Purposeful Teas

One of the standout sessions focused on how specialty teas are winning over younger consumers through storytelling, health consciousness, and experience-driven branding. In a session led by Susmita Das Gupta (*Tea With Susmita*), Anamika Singh (*Anandini Himalaya*), and Vidit Jain (*Toyo Kombucha*), the conversation shifted from price points to purpose. Entrepreneurs like Snigdha Manchanda (*Tea Trunk*) and Perna Kumar (*ChaiVeda*) showcased how their homegrown labels are blending heritage with design to appeal to millennial and Gen Z audiences. Shraddha Vishwas More of Sailo Wines highlighted cross-category innovation envisioning floral teas that evoke the sophistication of wine.

### 2. Indian Tea on the Global Table

The second major theme focused on India's place in international tea markets. Speakers including Viren S. Shah (*Jivraj Tea*), Hemant Shah (*Girnar*), and Shashikant B. Shah (*Shah Brothers*) shared strategies for elevating Indian tea's global brand presence.

Joydeep Phukan of the Tea Research Association guided the dialogue, emphasizing the need for collaborative branding, digital storytelling, and standardization to ensure that both heritage and quality remain at the forefront.

Hasmukh A. Shah (*Premier's Tea Ltd.*) spoke passionately about leveraging geographical indications, ethical sourcing, and product traceability to carve a premium niche for Indian teas worldwide.

### 3. Brewing Real Talk: The Industry's Unfiltered Truths

The conclave didn't gloss over the industry's longstanding hurdles. From low wages in tea-growing areas to the lack of regional focus from the Tea Board, speakers offered frank assessments of the ground reality. Names like Anand Tebrial, Bijay Gopal Chakraborty, and Mahendra Prasad Bansal brought much-needed clarity to issues like economic disparity, insufficient promotional support for Darjeeling and Terai teas, and the rise of coffee culture as a lifestyle threat. Their verdict: unless Indian tea reinvents itself through innovation, wellness positioning, and brand storytelling — it risks being over shadowed.



### Advertising Met Aromas: Pahlad Kakkar Steals the Show

The legendary Pahlad Kakkar brought the house down with his anecdotes and ad wisdom, describing Darjeeling tea as "a ceremonial, almost spiritual experience." He called upon marketers to rekindle the emotional value of tea - turning every cup into a narrative.

One of the most unforgettable moments of the conclave was the high-voltage session with him, India's legendary ad man. With his trademark wit and fiery presence, he didn't just speak - he performed.

Mr. Kakkar's passion for the medium was infectious - calling upon creatives, content makers, and youth to build campaigns that turn everyday tea moments into aspirational experiences.





## Final Pour: More Than an Event A Movement

The ICC India Tea Conclave 2025 wasn't just about panels and networking - it was a declaration. A belief that Indian tea can reclaim its cultural pride, global relevance, and economic strength - if it embraces change collectively. From Darjeeling's fragrant leaf to Assam's malty boldness, the future of Indian tea is being rewritten- not just in factories or fields, but in boardrooms, cafes, and conversations.

Let this be the beginning of many more shared cups, collaborative ideas, and a movement that places Indian tea where it belongs - at the heart of the world.

## Youth at the Forefront

What struck many was the sheer energy and involvement of young founders, students, and emerging brands. Their fresh perspectives - from D2C platforms to tea-based experiences and social media campaigns - infused the conclave with contagious optimism.

Sanjay Dhanutia's "One Extra Cup a Day" initiative sparked curiosity, while Swapan Chowdhuri urged the industry to pivot from selling a product to curating an experience.



**Ena Bandyopadhyay**  
Assistant Editor, Tea Time



**Kaleidoscope**

# **FITMA**

## **Federation of Indian Tea Manufacturers Association formed on 26 April, 2025**

A new all India body of tea manufacturers was formed on 26.04.25 at HM Resort, Dibrugarh.

Constituent members are

1. Assam Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers Association
2. North Bengal Tea Producers Welfare Association
3. The Niligiri Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers Association

### **Motto**

One Association, One Vision,  
Shared Future.

### **Office bearers**

#### **Chairman**

Shri Deven Singh

#### **Vice Chairmen**

Shri Sanjay Dhanothi

Shri Dhananjayan Krishnamoorthy

#### **Secretary**

Shri Vikash Agarwal (Mandhania)

#### **Niladri Saha**

*Contemporary Brokers, Kolkata*







# WITDA

## Western India Tea Dealers Association 35th AGM 2025 24 May, 2025

**Mr Paras Desai**, *President*  
and Members of Executive  
Committee of **Western India  
Tea Dealers Association**

have organised the  
Tea Seminar on the occasion of  
35th Annual General Meeting

**Chief Guest**  
**Mr Bijoy Gopal Ckkraborty**  
*President*  
Confederation of Indian Small Tea  
Growers Association, Jalpaiguri, WB

**Guest of Honour**  
**Mr Rabi Ram Boro**  
*President*  
All Bodo Land Small  
Tea Growers Association  
Udalgiri, Assam

**Guest of Honour**  
**Mr Khanindra Saikia**  
*Vice President*  
All Assam Small Tea Growers  
Association, Jorhat, Assam

**Special Guest**  
**Mr Krishnarao Buddha**  
An experienced Markeeter  
Mumbai

# INTERNATIONAL TEA DAY 21 May, 2025

Income Tax  
Commissioner  
Visiting  
Siliguri Tea Traders  
Association office on  
International Tea Day



## Amalgamated Plantations Pvt. Ltd.

Tea  
Tasting  
Session  
at Misa  
Club,  
Assam.  
5 June,  
2025



“

*A good tea taster doesn't stop at the obvious...  
doesn't just accept the first impression of the tea.  
They question its aroma, taste, appearance, and overall  
experience, looking for any flaws or inconsistencies.*

”





Kaleidoscope



## CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL TEA DAY 2025 “Tea for Harmony – Yaji 2025” China–Sri Lanka Cultural Gala

In honour of International Tea Day on May 21, 2025 the grand event titled “**Tea for Harmony – Yaji 2025**” brought together the rich cultural traditions of China and Sri Lanka at the elegant **Hotel Marino Beach Colombo**. This vibrant gala served as a testament to tea’s timeless role in fostering global harmony and cross-cultural connections. Gracing the occasion as the **Chief Guest, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya**, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, delivered a compelling keynote speech. She paid tribute to **Ceylon Tea’s remarkable legacy**, celebrating its **150+ year journey** and pivotal contribution to Sri Lanka’s national identity and economy.

Organized in collaboration with the **China Cultural Center in Sri Lanka**, the event saw enthusiastic participation from the **Sri Lanka Tea Board**, which led engaging promotional activities centered around Ceylon Tea.



Guests were treated to an immersive tea-tasting experience, sampling the distinctive flavors of **Seven Regional Ceylon Teas** at a specially curated tea stand. The experience was further enriched with the distribution of **complimentary tea samples** and **informative brochures**, offering visitors a deeper appreciation of Sri Lanka's tea heritage.

The gala beautifully blended tradition, diplomacy, and the universal love for tea, leaving a lasting impression on all attendees.



*Ena Bandyopadhyay*  
Assistant Editor, Tea Time





# Tea Tasting session at Central Dooars Club

Hosted by  
Contemporary  
Brokers  
Pvt. Ltd.  
on 21 June  
2025 Saturday





## PARIS BREWS UP A STORM WITH INDIAN TEAS

### First Tea Festival Leaves Lasting Flavor

Paris, the global capital of gastronomy, has added a new aroma to its repertoire: the rich and diverse scent of tea. The inaugural Paris Tea Festival 2025, held on June 14–15, has drawn its curtains, leaving behind a legacy of cultural exchange, innovative insights, and, of course, exceptional tea. Organized by renowned tea sommelier and consultant Maria Kockmann, the force behind the successful Brussels Tea Festival, and supported by Wanderlus Tea, this two-day event transformed the city into a buzzing hotspot for tea enthusiasts and professionals alike.

The festival kicked off on Saturday with an innovative "OFF Festival" that saw tea experiences unfold across various Parisian locations. Highlights included unique tea journeys like a visit to Les Terrasses de l'Arrieulat in the Pyrenees and captivating themed cultural walks such as "Japanese Tea in Paris" and "French Tea."

The main event on Sunday took over the beautiful Maison Internationale (14 arrondissement), bustling with over 50 exhibitors from 14 countries. Attendees explored everything from artisanal blends to handcrafted ceramics, with notable guest brands including Akzélée, Moychay (NL), Palais des Thés (FR), and Comptoir Bantu Desi, which championed women-led cooperatives and ethical sourcing.



The Maison Internationale played host to over 20 workshops and presentations, offering a deep dive into the world of tea. Enthusiasts enjoyed multisensory tea and cheese pairings by Thé Merveiller, alongside traditional brewing sessions like the Japanese cha-no-yu and Chinese gong fu cha led by Olivier Nuttens. The festival also featured matcha latte styling and a unique East Frisian tea ceremony, showcasing the global tapestry of tea traditions. Expert speakers like Hasan Önder and Jeff Fuchs enriched the experience with insightful talks on Turkish tea culture and the historic Tea and Horse Road.

Beyond the sensory delights, the festival served as a dynamic meeting point for tea sommeliers, importers, and artisanal brands. A strong emphasis was placed on ethical and sustainable practices, with stories from Comptoir Bantu Desi's commitment to women-led cooperatives to socially driven initiatives by Solidari 'Thé and BRITA taking center stage.



## Indian Teas Make a Mark

Indian teas, in particular, made a significant impression at the festival. Beyond the classic regional varieties such as Darjeeling, Assam, and Sikkim, exhibitors like Comptoir Bantu Desi, The Chai Walli, Tea Gardenia, and Sanskriti Collection highlighted the impactful narratives around cooperative empowerment and ethical values, blending tradition with social innovation.

The warm, cultural ambiance at the Maison Internationale fostered a welcoming space for sharing knowledge and passion, creating bridges between terroir-driven producers and curious drinkers. The Paris Tea Festival 2025 has unequivocally underscored tea's rising status within France's renowned gastronomic landscape.

The debut of the Paris Tea Festival has set a compelling precedent. Organizers anticipate the 2026 edition will expand with even greater international reach, deeper educational tracks, and a continued emphasis on ethical and terroir-driven narratives. With its successful premiere, Paris is now firmly establishing itself alongside Brussels and Berlin as a must-visit destination for tea lovers worldwide.



**Susmita Poddar**  
Contemporary Brokers, Kolkata



## Tearrific Teas

# THE EMERALD ELIXIR

## Enduring Magic of Matcha

In a world constantly seeking wellness and a touch of ancient wisdom, one vibrant green powder stands out: Matcha. More than just a tea, this finely ground emerald elixir, steeped in centuries of tradition and bursting with health benefits, has transcended its origins to become a global phenomenon. From serene Japanese tea ceremonies to bustling city cafes, matcha is enchanting palates and promoting well-being, proving its enduring magic in both ancient rituals and modern lifestyles.

### A Journey Through Time: From Zen Monks to Ceremonial Grace

The story of matcha is a captivating odyssey that begins in 9th-century China, where powdered tea first emerged. Yet, it was in Japan, through the dedicated hands of Zen monk Eisai in the 12th century, that matcha found its true home. Eisai, recognizing its profound ability to foster a state of calm alertness – perfect for meditation – introduced it to the archipelago. Over centuries, the Japanese meticulously perfected every facet of matcha's cultivation and preparation, culminating in the revered Japanese tea ceremony, or Chanoyu.



Within the Chanoyu, matcha transcends its physical form, becoming a spiritual experience. Each precise movement, from the whisking of the chasen (bamboo whisk) to the gentle offering of the chawan (tea bowl), embodies principles of harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility. It's a mindful dance, a silent conversation between host and guest, fostering a deep connection that speaks volumes without uttering a single word. In this sacred space, matcha is not merely consumed; it is revered.

**The Powerhouse in a Cup:** Unlocking Matcha's Health Secrets Beyond its cultural significance, matcha has garnered immense global attention for its impressive array of health benefits. Unlike traditional steeped teas, where leaves are discarded, matcha involves consuming the entire leaf, unlocking a concentrated dose of its potent properties:

**Antioxidant Powerhouse:** Matcha is a treasure trove of catechins, particularly EGCG (epigallocatechin gallate). This remarkable antioxidant is celebrated for its potential to combat cancer cells and safeguard cardiovascular health, making every sip a proactive step towards wellness.

**Sustained Energy & Laser Focus:** While it contains caffeine, matcha offers a uniquely smooth energy boost thanks to L-theanine. This remarkable amino acid works in synergy with caffeine to promote a state of calm alertness, enhancing concentration without the unwelcome jitters often associated with coffee. Imagine a focused mind, without the crash!



**Metabolic Boost & Detoxification:** For fitness enthusiasts and those seeking a natural cleanse, matcha is a formidable ally. It has been shown to support metabolism and aid in fat burning. Furthermore, its high chlorophyll content acts as a natural detoxifier, gently purifying the body from within.

**A Symphony of Nutrients:** Every vibrant cup of matcha is a symphony of essential vitamins and minerals, including Vitamin C, selenium, chromium, zinc, and magnesium, contributing to overall well-being.

**Matcha's Modern Renaissance:** From Bowl to Global Icon In recent years, matcha has undergone a magnificent transformation, shedding its purely traditional image to become a bona fide superfood and a captivating lifestyle trend. Its journey from the tranquil tea room to the global stage is nothing short of remarkable:







**The Rise of the Matcha Latte:** A creamy, energizing alternative to coffee, matcha lattes, whether made with dairy or plant-based milks, have become a staple in cafes worldwide. Their vibrant green hue is as appealing to the eye as their flavour is to the palate.

**Culinary Creativity Unleashed:** Matcha's versatility knows no bounds. It's now seamlessly integrated into a myriad of culinary creations, from refreshing smoothies and nutritious breakfast bowls to decadent baked goods like cakes, cookies, and ice cream. Even chocolates are getting a matcha makeover, adding a unique earthy note and a healthy twist.

**Beauty from Within (and Without):** The antioxidant prowess of matcha extends beyond internal consumption. It's increasingly being incorporated into natural skincare products, promising glowing, healthy skin, reinforcing the idea of holistic well-being.

**The Instagram Effect:** Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have played a pivotal role in propelling matcha into the mainstream. Aesthetic photos of vibrant matcha creations and easy-to-follow recipes have captivated a global audience, transforming it into a highly shareable and desirable trend.

From its ancient roots in Zen Buddhist monasteries to its contemporary reign in health-conscious cafes and kitchens, matcha continues to captivate hearts and minds. Its vibrant green hue, profound health benefits, and adaptable nature have solidified its place as a beloved elixir, a testament to the enduring power of tradition beautifully blended with modern innovation.



So, whether you seek a moment of mindful tranquility or a healthy energy boost, the emerald elixir awaits, ready to unveil its magic in every sip.

So, those who want to elevate their everyday with the earthy richness and vibrant energy of Tea can pick Matcha - packed with antioxidants and calm, clean focus- it's more than a drink, it's a ritual.

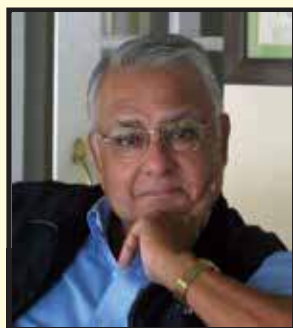
**Matcha your mood. Fuel your glow.**



**Sharmistha Chakraborty**  
Editorial Coordinator



## A LIFE STEEPED IN GRACE



*Farewell to  
Ranabir Sen*



**Ranabir Sen**  
1948 – 2025

We mourn the loss of Ranabir Sen, a respected figure in the tea industry and beyond. He joined J. Thomas & Co. at 17 and served as Chairman from 2001 to 2004. A master taster of Darjeeling teas, his expertise was widely revered.

An accomplished sportsman, he represented Bengal in school cricket and later captained the Royal Calcutta Golf Club.

He passed away peacefully on May 12, 2025, survived by his wife, Doel. A true gentleman, his legacy lives on in every life he touched.

**May he rest in peace.**

## OPENING READER'S MAIL BOX

We'd love to hear from you!

Share your thoughts  
on tea, ideas for stories,  
or suggestions to  
make Contemporary  
Tea Time  
even better.

Your cup of words  
might just feature  
in our next issue.

Write to us at:  
[editor.ctt@gmail.com](mailto:editor.ctt@gmail.com)



## UPCOMING ISSUE

July - Sept, 2025

CONTEMPORARY  
**TEA TIME**

### What's Brewing Up Next?

Where the Kettle  
Never Sleeps: Inside Kolkata's  
Unstoppable Tea Culture  
There are stories sip into  
stir up traditions  
and discover a city that  
lives one cup at a time.  
And there's much more  
to keep you entertained.

**Subscribe. Read. Experience.**



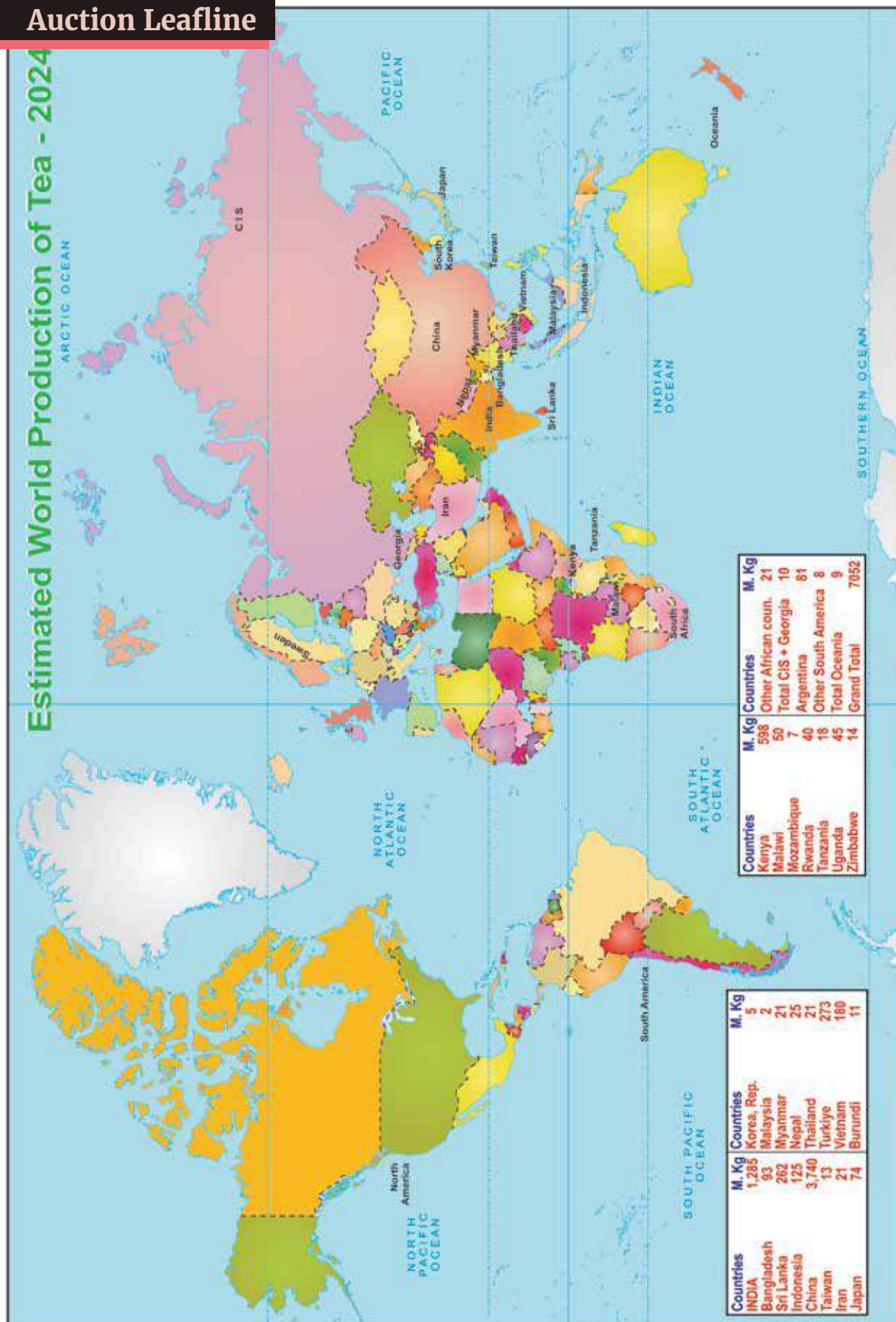
### Cover Story

Revel in city's deep-rooted  
relationship with tea -  
not just as a beverage,  
but as a ritual,  
a conversation-starter,  
and a cultural icon.  
From roadside bhaanrs  
to colonial-era tearooms,  
Kolkata's tea journey  
has layers worth exploring.





## Auction Leafline



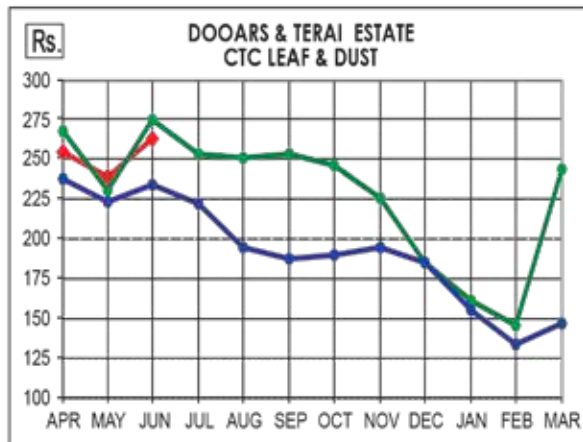
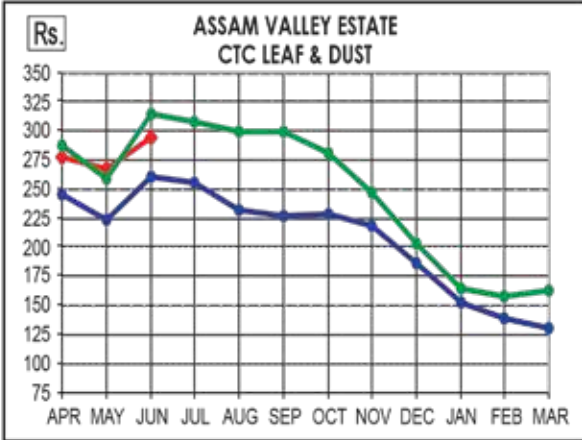


## Month-wise District-wise Auction averages

### North India-Assam Valley - CTC Leaf & Dust Estate

Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	276.45	285.90	-9.45	244.19	32.26
MAY	267.31	258.39	8.92	222.36	44.95
JUN	293.21	312.92	-19.71	260.34	32.87
JUL		307.82		254.00	
AUG		297.77		231.61	
SEP		298.69		226.82	
OCT		279.86		227.03	
NOV		247.00		217.70	
DEC		201.76		184.95	
JAN		163.45		152.17	
FEB		157.36		137.84	
MAR		161.41		129.58	
April to June	282.39	286.01	-3.62	244.98	37.41

# Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust



### North India-Dooars & Terai - CTC Leaf & Dust Estate

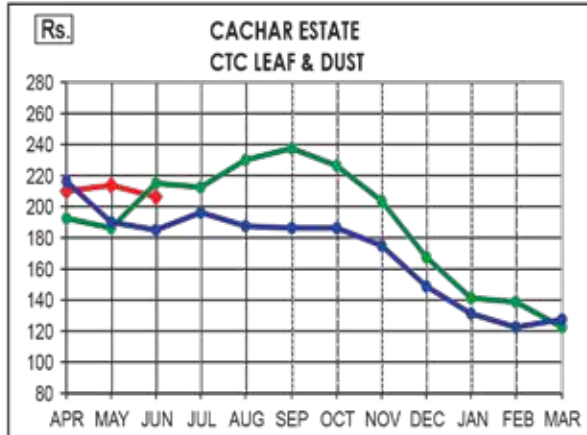
Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	253.74	267.43	-13.69	236.62	17.12
MAY	238.72	229.91	8.81	222.35	16.37
JUN	262.86	274.66	-11.80	234.06	28.80
JUL		252.76		221.91	
AUG		250.71		193.90	
SEP		252.52		187.22	
OCT		245.54		189.80	
NOV		225.74		194.10	
DEC		184.76		184.75	
JAN		160.93		154.40	
FEB		144.45		133.46	
MAR		243.29		145.98	
April to June	252.94	251.98	0.96	230.51	22.43

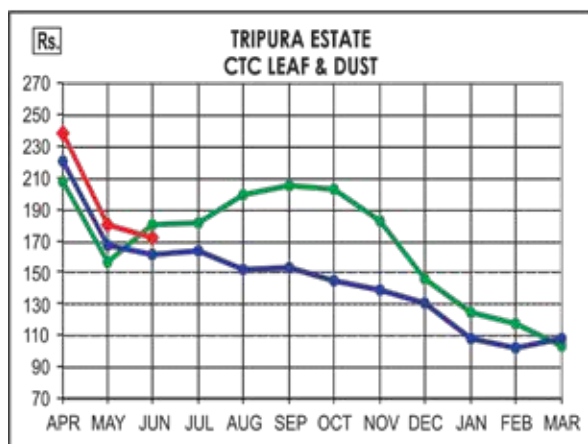
# Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust

### North India-Cachar - CTC Leaf & Dust Estate

Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	210.13	192.24	17.89	216.51	-6.38
MAY	213.55	186.66	26.88	189.60	23.95
JUN	205.70	214.51	-8.81	185.48	20.21
JUL		212.44		196.29	
AUG		229.55		187.43	
SEP		237.22		185.72	
OCT		226.50		186.64	
NOV		203.12		175.38	
DEC		166.93		148.95	
JAN		141.58		131.23	
FEB		139.15		122.75	
MAR		123.22		127.93	
April to June	208.83	200.37	8.46	188.10	20.73

# Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust





**North India-TRIPURA - CTC Leaf & Dust Estate**

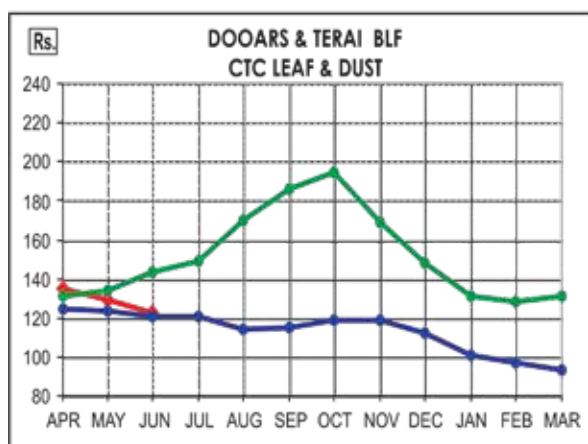
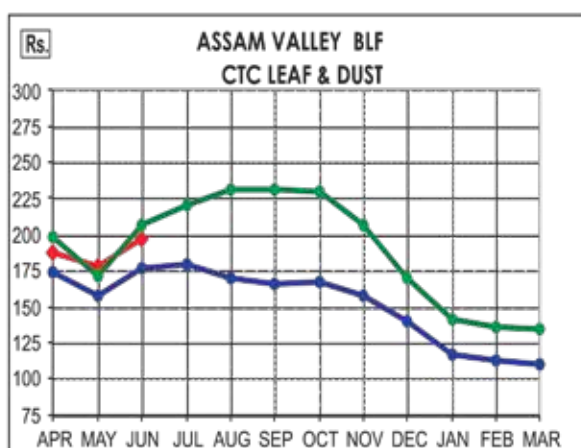
Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	237.77	207.75	30.02	219.71	18.06
MAY	179.93	156.19	23.74	166.51	13.41
JUN	171.48	180.39	-8.91	160.76	10.72
JUL		180.86		163.42	
AUG		199.16		152.07	
SEP		205.47		152.98	
OCT		202.91		144.38	
NOV		182.64		138.62	
DEC		145.39		130.26	
JAN		124.70		107.95	
FEB		117.92		101.61	
MAR		102.71		107.34	
April to June	185.02	170.73	14.29	168.56	16.46

# Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust

**North India-Assam Valley - CTC Leaf & Dust BLF**

Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	187.27	198.46	-11.19	174.26	13.01
MAY	177.43	171.34	6.10	157.16	20.27
JUN	197.41	206.39	-8.97	176.01	21.40
JUL		220.42		179.67	
AUG		231.04		170.25	
SEP		230.70		166.23	
OCT		229.86		167.45	
NOV		207.09		157.21	
DEC		170.42		139.66	
JAN		140.54		116.98	
FEB		135.37		111.99	
MAR		135.00		109.63	
April to June	189.39	190.86	-1.47	168.82	20.57

# Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust



**North India-Dooars & Terai - CTC Leaf & Dust BLF**

Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	134.54	130.74	3.80	124.14	10.40
MAY	129.47	133.54	-4.07	123.86	5.61
JUN	122.62	143.39	-20.77	120.64	1.98
JUL		148.75		121.10	
AUG		169.99		114.38	
SEP		185.58		114.70	
OCT		194.81		119.16	
NOV		169.29		118.41	
DEC		147.75		111.90	
JAN		131.08		100.60	
FEB		128.33		96.74	
MAR		131.52		93.23	
April to June	128.10	136.96	-8.86	122.66	5.44

# Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust



Compiled By  
Soumen Bagchi





## Teapot Tales

# IN TIMES OF WAR AND WHODUNITS

## How Tea Stirred Churchill and the Queen of Suspense

In the shadow of war and the echo of sirens, one man famously held fast to a single, steamy solace: a cup of tea. Winston Churchill, Britain's indomitable wartime leader, found refuge in Lapsang Souchong, a smoky, assertive brew said to reflect his own tenacious spirit. More than just a beverage, tea became a ritual of resistance - a symbol of calm amid chaos. With a splash of scotch added for good measure, Churchill's teacup became a quiet weapon of morale.

"Tea is more important than bullets," he once declared. And indeed, throughout World War II, tea rations were protected fiercely. Morning meant a robust English breakfast crowned by a large cup of tea. Afternoon tea often unfolded at Blenheim Palace, where the clinking of china offered respite from the weight of history.

Though the phrase "Where there's tea, there's hope" originates from playwright Arthur Wing Pinero, it found poignant new life when quoted in Churchill's wartime addresses. It was not just a platitude - it was policy. Tea kept the soul warm, even as the world chilled with uncertainty.

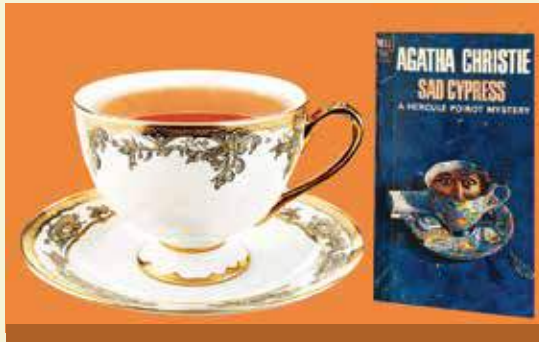
But Churchill wasn't the only literary titan to find inspiration in a tea cup.

Across the Channel - and the bookshelf - the Queen of Suspense, Agatha Christie, was busy steeping her mysteries in the rituals of tea. In *A Pocket Full of Rye*, the word "tea" appears a remarkable 113 times. It's more than a drink in her novels - it's a clue, a setting, a motive, even a murder weapon. In *At Bertram's Hotel*, Christie crafts an entire ambiance around afternoon tea, where the genteel clink of porcelain belies secrets lurking beneath the surface.

Curiously, despite Christie's personal fondness for strong black tea, she gave her meticulous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot a taste for chamomile - perhaps a nod to his fussy disposition or a contrast to the darker brews of English tradition.

And yet, in both Churchill and Christie, tea represents continuity. For Churchill, it was defiance in a cup. For the Queen of Suspense, it was the rhythm of English life, disrupted only by the clever twist of a plot. Whether leading a nation or plotting the perfect crime, both understood this truth: tea is not merely a beverage - it's a state of mind.

"You'll never find a cup of tea big enough or a book long enough to suit me," Churchill mused. In that sentiment, one imagines Dame Agatha might have smiled - and brewed another pot.





## Leaf Library

There is no more refined ritual than that of tea drinking in Asia. In *Tea in the East*, Carole Manchester, author of *French Tea*, invites you on a journey to the earliest tea-producing countries - China, Japan, India, and Sri Lanka - to savor the pleasures of the ancient brew. Lavishly illustrated with beautiful full-color photographs of tea ceremonies and their exotic settings, *Tea in the East* evokes the tranquility and unique pleasures of the Eastern tea. In China, aged tea leaves are steeped for seconds in a tiny clay pot and poured into doll-sized handleless cups, the earthy taste savored as if it were a rare wine. In a still, silent room in Kyoto, powdered green tea is reverently whisked in a ceramic bowl in preparation for the tea ceremony. On the lawn of a planters' club in India, tea is served in cups covered with tiny beaded doilies to keep the tea free from dust. Eastern tea ceremonies embody a rare grace in both their gentle choreography and in the decorative and functional beauty of the tea service. In China, the fashion of drinking tea inspired the craftsmanship of exquisite porcelain and ceramic teaware. In Japan, artisans create starkly simple teabowls, whisks, lacquer trays, and boxes. The teas of India are served in teacups made of silver. As delicate and elegant as the utensils of the Eastern tea ceremony itself are their sweet and savory accompaniments. Dim sum, tiny stuffed delicacies, are served with a Cantonese tea; a bitter Japanese tea is balanced by

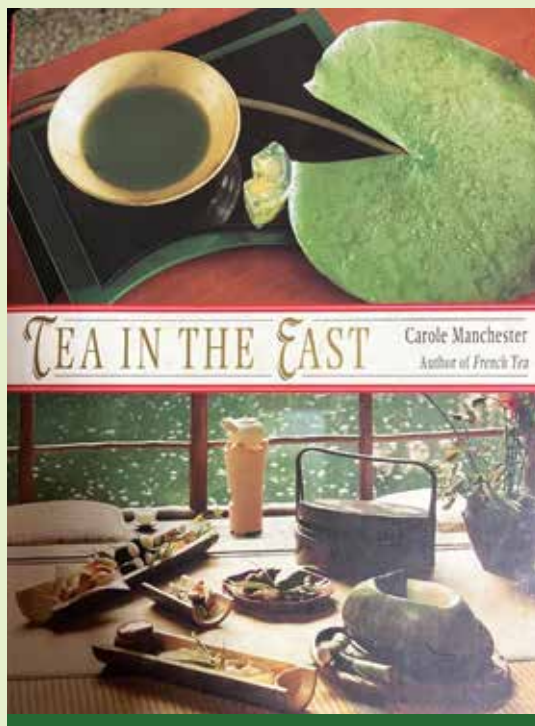
seasonal bean curd sweets; Indians serve hot and spicy pastries with milky, sugary tea; and Sri Lankans drink their tea with crepe-like pastries called *hoppers*. Together with the story of tea in the East, you'll find recipes for tempting and unusual tea accompaniments, including a savory Green Tea-Marinated Chicken Sandwich, Marbled Tea Eggs, and the Russian Tea Room Spice Cake. The varieties of Asian teas are as distinctive as their traditions. Using *Tea in the East* as a guide, you can explore the many satisfying tastes of the flowery *Pai Mu Tan*, a rare mix of two white tea plants from China. Japan's finest green tea, *Gyokuro*; *Genmai-cha*, which is mixed with roasted rice that gives it a popcorn flavor; *Darjeelings* and robust *Assam* teas and the exquisite afternoon teas of Ceylon. Also included

are recipes for iced teas and tea remedies, as well as suggestions for the many practical uses of tea, storage methods, and a buyer's source guide.

**Publisher:** *William Morrow Cookbooks*

Now living in New York and Connecticut, **Carole Manchester**, a widely read writer, began her career in fashion at *Vogue*, later becoming fabric editor at *Glamour* and fashion director at *Seventeen* and *Elle*.

*Carole Manchester, author of French Tea, invites you on a journey to the earliest tea-producing countries - China, Japan, India, and Sri Lanka - to savor the pleasures of the ancient brew.*





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