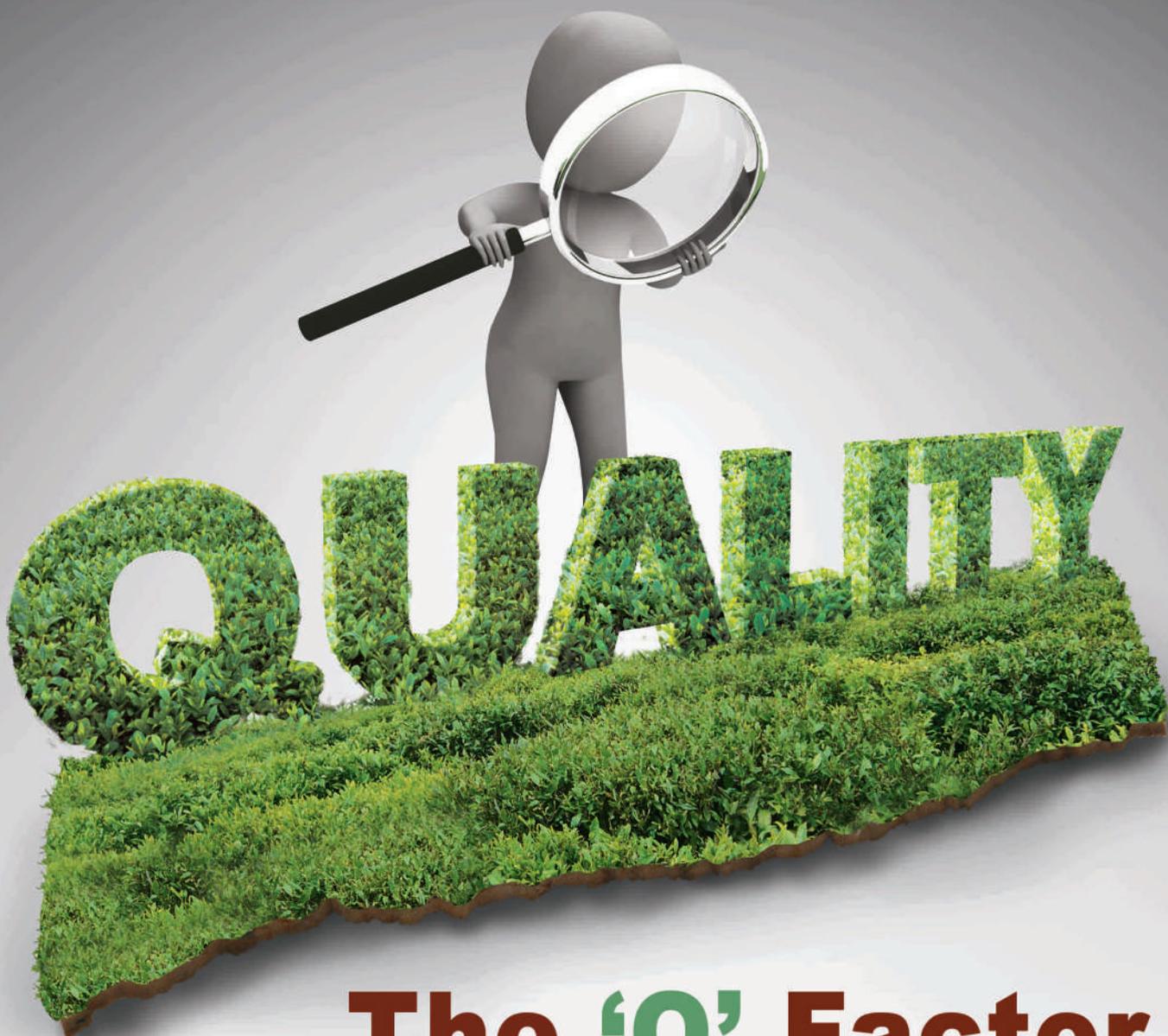


CONTEMPORARY

# TEA TIME

Vol. XXV No. 1 & 2 • January - June 2016 • Rs. 80 • US\$ 7

TEA JOURNAL WITH THE LARGEST READERSHIP | 27th YEAR OF PUBLICATION



## The 'Q' Factor

QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY PAYS



Errol O' Brien

# TEA QUIZZY

## QUESTIONS

- 1) The Game of *Chukkers* is played seasonally on which Kolkata ground named after a Tea Nabob?
- 2) Which city in Sri Lanka was reminiscently referred to as 'Little England' during the era of the British planters? When translated from Sinhalese into English it means 'City on the Plain (Tableland) or City of Light. It is surrounded by tea plantations.
- 3) Which famous American President's wife's quote is this: "A woman is like a tea bag. You never know how strong it is until it's in hot water"?
- 4) In keeping with the inaugural day/ night Adelaide test match series between Australia and New Zealand, what other innovation followed besides the use of the Pink Ball supplanting 138 years of tradition in the break intervals?
- 5) Derived from the bark of the Willow tree, which philosopher referred to Salicylic (Aspirin) as tea around 400 BC?
- 6) The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company which marketed 'Eight O'Clock Coffee has been taken over by which Indian firm?
- 7) Which particular tea estates are closest to the highest horse racing tracks in the world?
- 8) What is the brand name of the Sustainability Tea Program which cares for the environment, safety and livelihood of the tea industry?
- 9) What is land used for growing tea, coffee or rubber which measures five hectares or more and in which 15 or more persons are employed in any day of the preceding month, called?
- 10) How would a tea taster describe in a word a tea which is lifeless, flat and uninteresting - the result perhaps of soft withers or over fermenting or old age?

## Answers

- 1) The Pat Williamson Ground adjacent to the Racecourse.
- 2) Nuwara Eliya
- 3) Eleanor Roosevelt
- 4) The tea break came first followed by supper or dinner. The practice is lunch before tea
- 5) Aristotle
- 6) Tata Global Beverages
- 7) Lebong in Darjeeling
- 8) Trustea
- 9) Plantation
- 10) Soft



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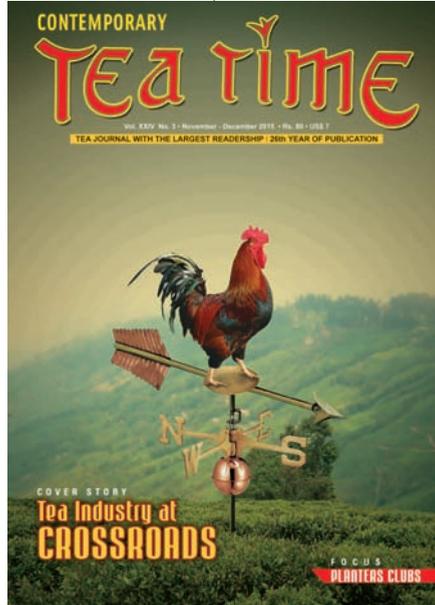
# Readers Write

Dear Sir,

The cover story *Tea Industry at Crossroads* of the October - December 2015 issue of *Contemporary Tea Time* is interesting, comprehensive and illuminating as you have brought together views from experts across the industry. Now it is up to the decision makers whether the suggestions given by the esteemed members of the tea fraternity will be heeded to find solutions to the problems ailing the industry.

Yours sincerely

B Suresh  
Bhubaneswar



Dear Sir,

*Contemporary Tea Time* is surely looking brighter and smarter day by day! Great articles, neat page layouts, crisp pictures have made it a magazine worth storing way after the date of issue. Keep it up!

Yours sincerely

Kavita Mansata  
Kolkata

Dear Sir,

*Trans Siberian Tea* published in *Contemporary Tea Time* October - December 2015 issue took us on a wonderful virtual journey across exotic geography like the Gobi desert and Lake Baikal. It is interesting to note that Irkutsk in far away Siberia not only has a Tea Museum but it also displays old Indian tea packs!

Yours sincerely

Rishi Dholakia  
Mumbai



Dear Sir,

*The Story of T* by Jim Glendinning published on the last page of *Contemporary Tea Time* October - December 2015 issue was a delight to read. Do publish more such articles regaling us with tea tales from the glorious past.

Yours sincerely

Pradeep Dasgupta  
Agartala



FROM THE PUBLISHER

# A Quality Conscious Relationship

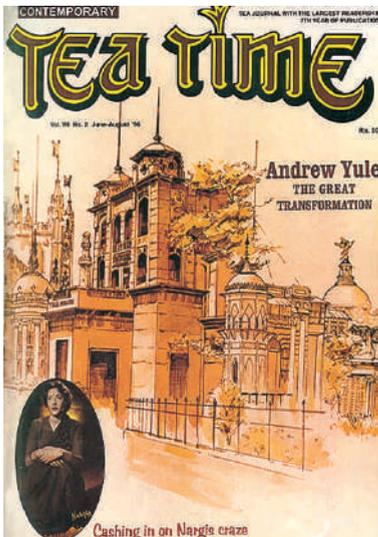
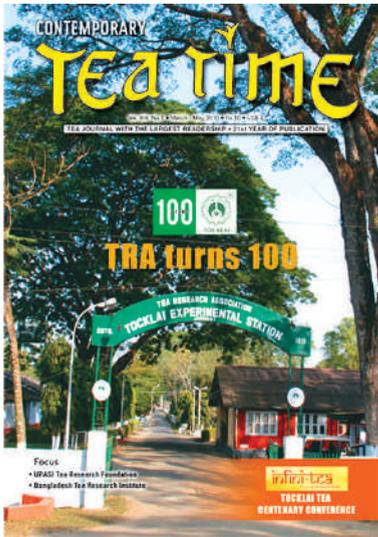


**O**ur focus in this issue is on the symbiotic relationship between the small grower and the producer. The industry believes that one of several major challenges before the industry are responsible small holders' inclusion. Some facilities with services to upgrade quality and quantity are necessary. As is a need for small growers to educate themselves in business practices so as to make themselves bankable. This could provide them with extra opportunity with investment capital through banking channels for upgrading productivity. The call is for quality and not quantity any more, therefore productivity needs to be the key ingredient.

Among the bonuses in this issue are articles on the early tea bags, a recently held flower show in Kolkata and the Sirish Festival in Assam. This is apart from our usual columns from London, Dhaka and Coonoor.

A Nandkeolyar





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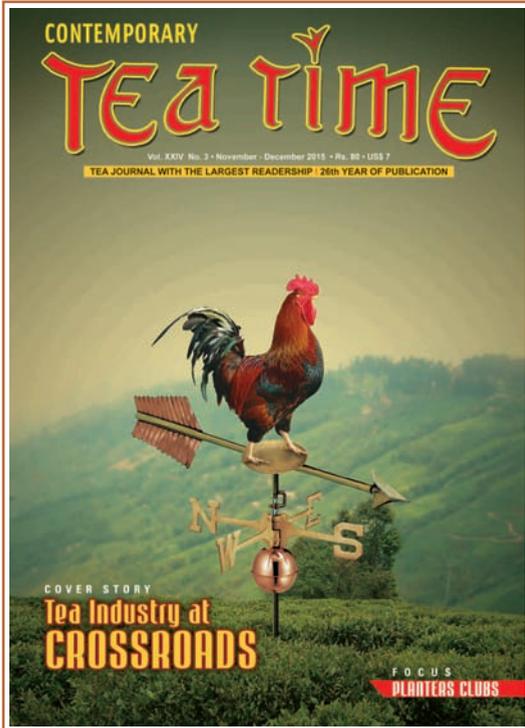
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Dr Shanmugamurthy Lakshman (second left) receiving 'Star of the Universe' award at New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA

# Making a Mark

## Tea fraternity gets global recognition



P S Sundar

**F**our contributions to take tea fraternity to global recognition deserve special mention. Of them, two relate to culture, one to tourism and the other to education.

**The education scenario first.**

**Dr Shanmugamurthy Lakshmanan, a scientist hailing from a tea growing family in a small hamlet Jagathala near Coonoor, has done his village, the Nilgiris district and India proud by bagging the coveted 'Star of the Universe' honour.**

This honour was conferred on him at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA, by the Society

for Universal Oneness, an intellectuals' organisation of scientists, researchers, engineers and doctors, working to use technology to create a eco-friendly and peaceful world. The citation said that the award was to hail Dr Shanmugamurthy's initiatives to bridge the gap between ancient and modern science.

"My endeavour is to make available for the benefit of mankind the best of Eastern and Western sciences through the Vetha Centre for Trans-disciplinary Studies. This is a unique educational facility offering comprehensive curriculum based on fundamental axioms found in Ayurveda, Siddha, Yoga and similar scientific traditions of the East which will be used with modern western scientific approaches", he said. "This award hails my initiatives to establish a Vetha University in the USA with global partnership to facilitate students from all over the world study courses. For the Indians, this is a great honour as most of their traditional sciences will now be learnt by foreigners", said

Dr Shanmugamurthy Lakshman, who holds a Ph.D. in Applied Physics.

He said that this will open new doors for children from the tea industry and trade to study life-oriented courses covering healthcare, lifestyle management, architecture, agriculture and the arts, to name a few. They can contact the Vetha University for admissions.

**The contribution to global tourism by a tea estate happens because of its well maintained meteorological outfit. Discerning tourists visiting the Nilgiris this summer are benefiting from a direct orientation with climate behaviour at the meteorological centre in Palaniappa Estate in Colacambai, 26 kilometres from Coonoor.**

"This centre was established 23 years ago and we are able to give useful forecast of climate behaviour as a conglomerate of day-to-day weather recordings. Our daily recordings of the data are supplied to Tea Research Foundation of the United Planters' Association of Southern India and are further used in Indian Meteorological Data



Palaniappa Estate Executive Director Ashwin Babu (extreme right) explaining the working of Pan-evaporimeter to visitors



Delegates from various countries attending the cultural presentation of KAMC in Coonoor

compilation", Palaniappa Estate's Executive Director Ashwin Babu told the author.

"We are thrilled to see the serving of Pan-evaporimeter and rain-gauge as vital tools on showers to farmers. The Stevenson's Apparatus helping farmers plan their operations based on temperature behaviour is equally exciting. We are shocked to see recording of temperature in the Nilgiris this month at around 32 degrees Celsius", noted Chennai-based software engineer V Soundharya.

"The anemometer showing less wind flow and the sun-dial burning 'measurement papers' prove that the days in the Nilgiris are too hot. The soil temperature is high causing moisture level to fall posing challenge to farmers. This meteorological centre is a mini university on climate study", added Coimbatore-based engineer V Karthik.

"In the interest of promoting tourism, we have been throwing open to tourists our Palaniappa and Sultana estates comprising tea, coffee, spices, medicinal herbs and a variety of trees. We have also been helping them stay within the estate to taste 'plantation life' and spend time with birds and animals, water and mountains, trekking through the picturesque bliss of nature", the group's Managing Director M Lakshman said.

**A major contribution to cultural promotion was made by Kothari Agricultural Management Centre**

(KAMC) which has now entered its Silver Jubilee year of educating executives, researchers and planters of tea from various countries. Its international courses on advanced programme on tea plantation management, tea tasting and quality assurance, agricultural project management and computer applications for plantations are highly popular.

"Our programmes are sponsored by Government of India.



Women from tea families celebrating Holi in Coonoor

We have had over 500 foreign delegates from over 20 countries in the last 24 years. Besides imparting hard-core subject-oriented education, we encourage cultural exchanges through Nilgiris Cultural Association (NCA)", KAMC Director Dr AVK Iyengar said.

"The performers at such cultural programmes are our participants. They come dressed in their traditional attire and give live demonstration of their folk dance

and music. They show their currency and present audio-visual highlights on customs, food, tourism, religion, festivals, marriage and lifestyle in their country. This helps greater understanding and respect for the cultural variance", he detailed. "We throw open these presentations to all interested as a service to the cause of promoting culture and they have been well received", Dr Iyengar disclosed.

**Another contribution by the tea fraternity is the bridging of northern and southern cultures. Many north Indian families living in the Nilgiris are engaged in tea trade for several decades. The way they celebrate Holi gives a fitting orientation of northern culture to the south Indians.**

"As usual, our friends came to our house and we played, rather than celebrated, Holi by spraying colours. Then we also hopped on to our friends' homes for similar 'play with colours'. We greeted one another and wished a colourful

life, Sheetal Gupta of Global Tea Brokers' family, said.

"Our south Indian friends also joined us. Tea trading and producing fraternity, transcending north-south divide, were all dressed up in colours. We exchanged greetings and sweets with south Indian residents here", tea producer and former Chairman of Coonoor Tea Trade Association Sunil Goyal said.

Photos : Author



# PACKS

# & Bags

William H Ukers traces the evolution of tea containers and tea bags in USA



## Tea Containers

Paper containers of one sort or another are much in use by European packeters, who are located close to their retail markets, where the turnover is rapid. Tin containers are used to some extent, but not as much as in the United States, where tea often travels long distances to reach the retailer, and where the turnover is slower, owing to the general use of coffee.

The practice of packing in lead, once the universal wrapping for tea, has been practically abandoned; for, besides being costly, the lead discolours badly and gives the appearance of old stock.

Corkboard cartons are widely used because they lend themselves to economic handling with automatic machine. The cartons usually are lined with lead, aluminium or tin foil and wrapped with parchment paper. Some packers are using containers having fibre sides with tin top and bottom.



There is considerable difference of opinion in the United States as to what constitutes the most efficient container for package tea. Foil or cardboard packages that do very well on wagon routes and in chain stores, where there is a quick turnover, are not necessarily effective in retail stores where tea remains longer on the shelves, or for shipment to great distances. For the latter uses the slip-top tin container for many adherents.

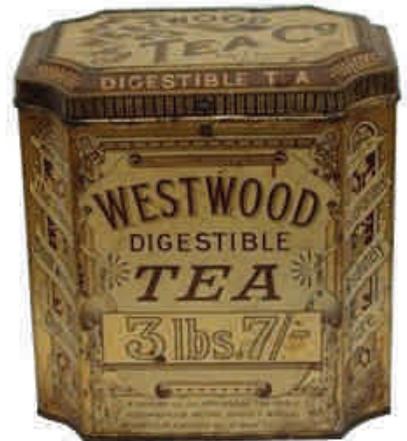
American tea packers devote much more attention to creating showy containers for their package teas than packers in England and other countries; both colour and design are freely invoked, to give striking individuality to the packet teas of many well known American blenders. This applies to the paper packages as well as to cartons, composite and tin containers.

## Individual Tea Bags

In the United States, where much tea is brewed in little game bags, there are at least a dozen concerns that make and pack tea bags for the trade, obtaining the tea from wholesale distributors. A score or more of prominent tea packers also have installed tea-bags making and packing machines. There are three makes of these machines, the most popular of which costs twelve thousand dollars.

The different makes of tea bags on the American market are grouped under four distinct types. The first, known as the "tea ball",

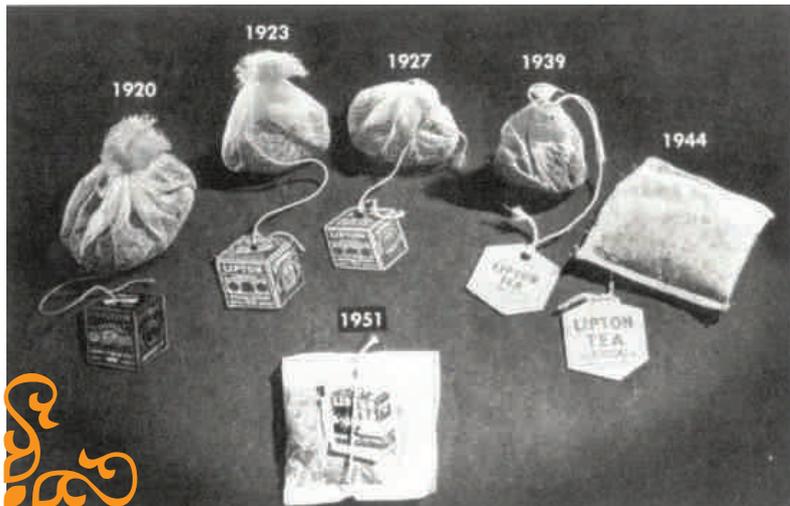
or pouch type, is an unsewed piece of circular gauze that is gathered at the top and tied with a thread. The second is the "tea bag" type. It is made by stitching the gauze on two sides, so as to form an oblong bag, and then gathering the open end after it has been filled. A



popular bag of this type is gathered at the top by means of an aluminium band, this being a patented feature. The third type is circular in shape. The fourth type is pillow-shaped, and is made from an oblong piece of gauze, folded and sewed on three sides without being gathered. Each of the four types is regularly equipped with a string having a small tag attached, which indicates the kind of tea, brand and the name of the distributor. The string serves as a means for removing the bag from the liquor when the infusion has



A Pneumatic Tea-Ball Machine in action in a New York factory



Various types of individual tea bags

reached the desired strength.

The fifth and sixth types of individual tea containers utilise perforated cellophane in place of muslin. These are made in both the square and circular shapes.

The packing of the bags by machines has been so perfected that, in some instances, it is fully automatic; the machines handling the bulk tea, string and gauze and delivering the finished bags in one continuous operation. A machine of this type receives the tea from an overhead hopper via a rotating

tube, rifled on its inner surface like a gun barrel. This rotating tube preserves an even flow of tea into an automatic scale that tilts when the required weight has been filled into it and deposits the tea on a measured piece of gauze. The gauze is automatically cut to the correct dimensions by a knife; the machine being adjustable to cut any size desired. By means of the adjustable features of the machine there is no difficulty in producing the number of tea balls wanted from each pound of tea.

In action, the tube through which the tea is fed, plunges the tea and the gauze through an opening, forming the pouch. The top of the pouch is grasped in a scissors-like device, and is carried along to a point where the top is trimmed off evenly; to another point where the neck of the pouch is tied; and then to a third point, where the identifying tag is led from a magazine, the string threaded through a hole in the tag and tightly knotted. After this a knife trims the bag top, and the filled bags are carried to girl operators, who pack them in display shipping containers. The machine delivers 18,000 filled tea bags in an eight-hour day.

In the early days almost any kind of gauze was used in the manufacture of individual tea bags, but exhaustive experiments by the cotton factors have produced a bleached absorbent gauze that gives the best results. More than eight million yards of this material are used annually by the tea bags trade in the United States.

Excerpted from All About Tea by William H Ukers



# 45th AGM of North Bengal Branch TAI

The 45th Annual General meeting of North Bengal Branch, Tea Association of India (TAI) was held at Central Dooars Club, Binnaguri on January 30, 2016.

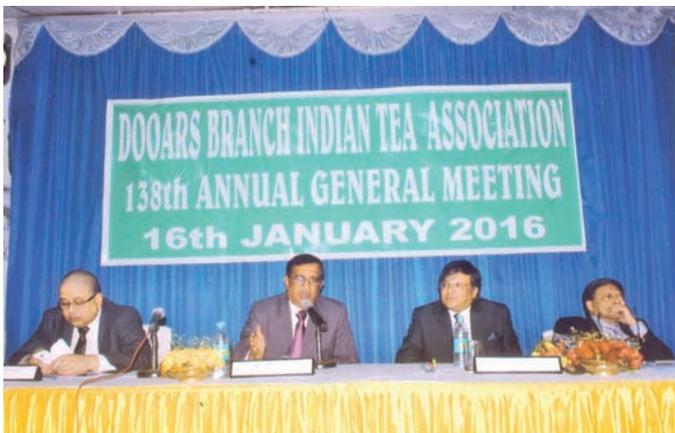
Manas Bhattacharya, Chairman, TAI, North Bengal Branch, welcomed the Chief Guest P Gupta IFS, Consul General of India to Bhutan and other distinguished guests. He touched upon lower price realisation compared to the previous year, NFSA 2013 and

minimum wages and deliberated on the subjects. He welcomed the Tea Development and Promotion Scheme for 12th Plan period, which has come into effect from December 20, 2014. He said, "The introduction of version five of the Plant Protection Code is a welcome step by Tea Board and TRA, which will help the planting community immensely."



# 138th AGM of DBITA

The 138th Annual General Meeting of Dooars Branch Indian Tea Association (DBITA) was held at the Central Dooars Club, Binnaguri on January 16, 2016. Reflecting on the issues affecting the tea industry, S K Ghai, Chairman, DBITA said, the industry was facing myriad challenges ranging from climate change, changing financial policies, new legislations to issues regarding workers. He said that the government and the managements have to come forward with a pro-active mindset and deal with the issues strongly and courageously.



(L to R) S Guha Thakurta, Secretary, DBITA; S K Ghai, Chairman, DBITA; A Raha, Secretary General, ITA; T K Choudhury, Chairman, West Bengal Regional Committee, ITA

S K Ghai, Chairman, DBITA

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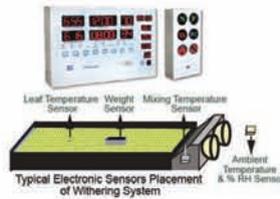
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# My Take On Tea

Errol O' Brien takes us through the three interlocking circles of tea trade

As a young assistant in tea I watched Prafull Goradia exemplifying the three aspects of the tea trade. A three dimensional creation which already existed but which needed projection. Three interlocking circles which represented the tea trade - planters, brokers and buyers. It reminded me of the founder of the modern Olympics, Baron Coubertin, who devised the Olympic flag - five coloured interlocking circles representing five parts of our world from which athletes compete.

Little did I realise then that my tea career would traverse around all those three circles! As a young assistant in the tea broking firm of Carritt Moran, tea tasting schedules began at 8.30 AM. My privilege was to work under David Panter, the last British Chairman of a tea broking firm in India. Carritts at that time had the topmost Darjeeling teas on offer, particularly from the Williamson Magor Group, Castleton and Jungpana.

Excitement would begin when samples of the second flush teas came in from the Darjeeling estates for tasting. David had the uncanny knack of picking out the winner,

the muscatel flavoured tea that would be a record breaker for that particular season. Large pre auction samples would be sent out to particular Darjeeling buyers with covering comments. And then the friendly banter would begin. On one occasion he covered a sample of tea with the favouring epithet: "Pick of the litter is the tea from Garden X". Back came the reply from a friendly British buyer: "Litter means a lot of rubbish". The tea concerned secured a record price in the quiet sanctum of the Darjeeling auction room.

Tea broking meant jealously guarding and nurturing the teas in one's catalogue particularly from other pirating brokers; it meant trying to secure the business of gardens with finance and educative friendly persuasion.

Tea tasting 1000 cups a day, making up one's mind about the character and value of the tea within seconds was the norm of the day. Garden visits were the work holidays we had. There were lighter moments too after office hours when the tea trade got together at the clubs -- CC&FC, Tolly and the Rackets Club with

the added attraction of the Merchants Cups in various sports and sessions of binging. The auction room at the J Thomas building was our weekly haunt.

A few weeks back I visited the auction room and to my dismay it had the ethereal deafening silence of bidding on computers.

Gone was the roar of 300 buyers trying to secure a particular tea at the drop of the auctioneer's hammer? Gone was the incisive bid buying of the Brooke Bond and Lipton buyers, the domination of the Russian troupe and the gentle ribaldry and social activity that relieved the tedium of a full day at the auction room. Gone was the speed and rapid hammer knock down by an auctioneer at four lots a minute - a record achieved by Prodosh Sen of J Thomas, gone was the art of false bidding trying to push up a rival's bid to a maximum.

The next circle in my next career was in the tea garden of Amgoorie. The spreading greenery of verdant tea bushes was not my lot. The manager assigned me to the factory. For the next year I had to change my sleeping habits and

open the factory at 3 AM. The all seeing eye of the manager was his Mali who would come down to the factory to see if I was on duty and give me a knowing grin. The grinding duty was well worthwhile as now the entire process of tea making was before me.

Garden life has its own highlights and moments of hilarity. The manager of a neighbouring estate once invited me over to dinner with his family when some of his staff ran in and clamorously cried out that a tiger had entered into the Burra Babu's area of residence. The manager quickly unhooked two Enfields, asked me to come with him and jumped into his Jeep. He drove at breakneck speed over the garden's bumpy roads.

A blood curdling scene awaited us. There was the tom toming of drums around us. The labour told us that the tiger had entered into the little patch of green in front of the Babu's house.

The sound of the drums, the roar of the tiger and the cries of the victim. We approached and ducked behind separating hedges. The tiger had his front paws on the chest of the Babu. It sensed we were near but appeared confused with the sound of the drums.

"I can't shoot," the manager whispered, "I might hit the poor man".

We were close enough. The tiger snarled viciously and turned its head towards its victim.

In that split second I witnessed a movement out of a Superman movie. The manager took a mighty leap, kicked the tiger on its butt and simultaneously fired into the air. The surprise, being kicked indignantly and the sound of the rifle played their part. The tiger scooted into the bushes. It was never seen or heard of in that garden area. Later the manager sheepishly told me that he had once captained his university rugby team at Oxford.

The next morning whilst having a cuppa on the verandah of the bungalow, a welcome sight

enraptured us. Assamese womenfolk are conservative but the manager's lawn was filled with the garden staff, labour and music to the sound of the peepa (horn). It was the festival of the Rongali Bihu and the womenfolk danced gracefully in gratitude for a life saved. This scene of garden life is etched in my tea memories.

The third circle of tea now beckoned with an advertisement for the post of a tea taster and buyer in a public sector organisation in Calcutta.

The world of exports opened new vistas. Tours of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East followed. After concluding a packet tea order in Tripoli, directions came to visit an island in the

marketed in the island and my samples. One look at their teas and I knew I was in trouble. The teas they had put on the tasting table were bright Kenyans. My samples were Indian CTC teas. Heaps of ridicule! I made the excuse that I was not fully aware of the type of teas these excellent importers were treating their country to. On my request another tasting session was arranged for the next day. There were all round derisive smiles at my failure. The only way out to secure the order was to put up a credible prank.

I went into the main stores of the island and bought a diverse variety of teas on offer. I took the packets to the room of my hotel, ripped open the tea bags and made



The roar of the tiger and the cries of the victim greeted us in front of the *Burra Babu's* house at Amgoorie Tea Estate

Mediterranean. The Government there wanted to import teas from India and divert buying their supplies from the UK.

On arriving, a hostile set of tea importers faced me. They were obviously reluctant to change their source of suppliers of many years and willingly accept the entropot trade of Britain. The first question they asked me if I had any tea experience and under whom I trained.

The obvious defence adopted was that the tea industry in India was set up by the British and that it was their training that had guided me.

A tea tasting session was laid out with the teas that were

a comparative standard to match their teas. I knew that once I returned to India the teas could be matched with coloury, thick second flush CTC teas.

The next day I presented my new standards fully matching theirs in color, taste and depth brought out by the addition of milk. The room was quiet but the Government official was in ecstasy. Four hundred metric tonnes were ordered of my standard.

Mischievously I enjoyed the sun, sand, the blue green ocean surrounding the island and the Megalithic temples.

My shipment of teas were met with great approval at the destination!



# A Healthier Tea Industry

## A possible roadmap

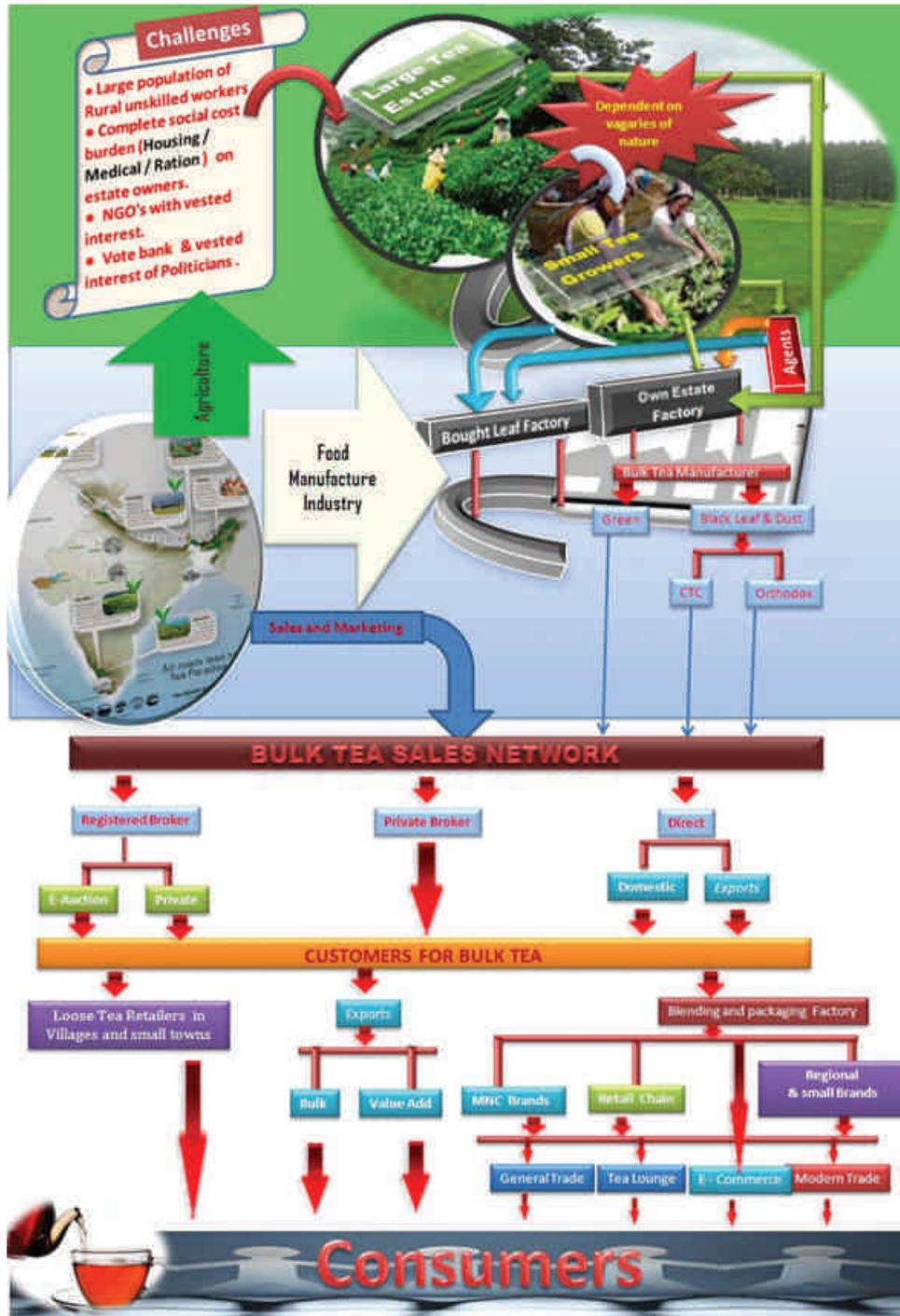


Sanjib Das

### The Value Chain

This unique beverage is not a dietary requirement but for hundreds of years now has been playing a critical role in the social life of the Indian sub-continent in particular and the world at large. It is therefore a huge contributor to our country's rural economy. business is a combination of pure agricultural activity and manufacture in a processing factory. Raw material being the green leaf grown in the field, plucked and brought to the tea factory for processing the bulk production of tea. Like all other industries, tea has been experiencing its up and down swings but for the past few years has been facing severe challenges especially at the farm level that need to be collectively addressed by all stake holders of the industry.

This industry has three major interdependent functionalities (a) Agriculture (b) Processing factory (rural bulk production and blending packaging factory) (c) Sales and Marketing - with the ultimate objective of each of these functionalities being customer satisfaction. Unfortunately over the years we seem to have built insulated silos of



(i) Own plantation with factory (ii) Bought leaf factory (iii) Traders and blender packeters operating independently, perhaps overlooking the interdependence bit and responsibility towards each other.

### Plantation with Factory

Presently the tea industry is burdened with spiraling costs owing to adherence to the age old government regulations, modern food safety regulations, increased demands from the huge organised work force and the uncertainties of the weather. This situation has naturally lead to lack of investments on agriculture (with few exceptions) and sourcing green leaf from small tea growers for sustenance.

### Bought Leaf Factory

On the other hand we have the mushrooming of the exclusive bought leaf factories with investments from individuals or companies with little or no knowledge of quality tea processing (again with handful of exceptions). Majority of these are very poorly equipped both in terms of infrastructure and human resource. The sole intention of this silo is - churning green leaf into black granules thus encouraging sourcing of poor quality of leaf - only to make a quick buck as long as possible, having no long term plan or labiality towards the small tea grower.

### Blender and Packeter

This segment of the industry dictates the fate of the producer's commodity. It surely has its own business compulsions but is definitely on a much better wicket as compared to its primary value chain partners. Thus one observes new branded packets in small towns and cities growing in huge numbers. The various private buying agents , touts and so called regional packeters (with few exceptions) involved in these uncontrolled packet business are

creating confusion among the economically weaker section of the society who are compromising with quality for low rate or with schemes /gift items luring consumers, thus posing possible health hazards.

It is high time that all the stake holders of this segment of the industry who have been enjoying a reasonably decent return on their investment year on year wake up and co-operate with their raw material producing partners by ensuring ethical sourcing of tea and genuinely taking interest in social upliftment of the remote tea workers who toil hard to bring cheer and smile on each consumer every morning.

#### Points to ponder :

1 The various private agents, brokers, buyers, packeters, CNF's and dealers should contribute towards increasing public awareness especially in villages, small towns on the complete value chain involved in their cup of tea so that



consumers not only appreciate the much needed social upliftment of the rural tea community but also gain basic knowledge to be able to distinguish between good and bad tea, avoiding their dependence on the kirana shop.

1 The various tea planters associations, tea buyers and traders associations could leave aside their vested interests and consolidate to form a single strong and effective national consortium with effective representation from each of the above mentioned silos. This strong force could have (a) Tea declared

as the national drink which will help release government fund on TV advertisements and documentaries on the tea value chain increasing awareness about tea among all consumers (b) Better influence the government to turn attention towards the welfare needed in plantations and other areas of taxes.

1 Have a control mechanism on the various private tea commission agents spread across the length and breadth of the country - who in most cases are only a baggage in the value chain with little or no value addition.

1 Create consumer centric culture among the management at the plantation level which must truly cascade down to each and every worker. Use of modern software data management, CCTV etc in as many functions as possible towards controlling possible fraud and better management.

1 Attract and retain good talent in the industry.

1 Drive other subsidiary activities

in tea plantations such as eco-tourism, health herbs and fruits etc., to generate employment for non-tea workers in plantations. The government skill development scheme may be utilised.

1 Modernisation of factories with addition of machines and revitalisation of fields for increased land productivity.

1 Bulk producers should invest in their own tea brands (packets in the market) to establish their own brand equity.

The author is G M Tea Buying & Quality Control @ Mohani Tea Leaves (Pvt) Ltd., Noida





Monjur Hossain

# Tidings from BANGLADESH

## 175 Years of Bangladesh Tea Industry

The tea industry in Bangladesh has a long history. 175 years have passed since the experimental pioneer garden of Chittagong was established in 1840. A Scone, the then Collector of Chittagong, imported plants of China type from the Calcutta Botanical Garden and seeds from Assam and established the garden. The first plantation in Chittagong was rightly named Pioneer.

The first commercial plantation started in 1854 in Sylhet. The plantation in the territory now within Bangladesh, concurrently developed with the Indian tea industry. Tea cultivation in India that started in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam in 1835, spread to its tributary, the Surma Valley, now part of Bangladesh.

The genesis of Bangladesh tea may be divided into distinct eras:

### The First Phase (1854-1887)

Malnicherra Tea Estate, the first commercial tea plantation in Bangladesh was opened by Walter Duncan & Rodrics Company in 1854. After that some other tea

estates were gradually established. The development was impeded by the fact that much of the land at Sylhet had been permanently given to the zaminders by the Government, who in many cases were willing to lease their land, but the prospective planters wanted allotment directly from the Government. However, certain areas in Sylhet were not covered by the permanent settlement. Thus, about two thirds of the tea land in Sylhet was on land leased from the Government under the Old Assam Clearance Rule of 1845 and only about one third was established on the land leased from the zaminders.

In the early phase in Bangladesh, the local labour was not willing to serve in the plantations. In Sylhet, though the first plantation started its operation in 1854, progress was slow because the merit of Sylhet as a producing district was not immediately recognised. Still, due to sincere efforts of the pioneer planters, within the next 30 years another 12 estates started their journey. The output in Sylhet in 1884 was

2,527,750 kg.

Progress in Chittagong was also remarkable. In 1862 Dr. J Barry caused 8,093.7 hectares of land to be taken up on this account. Speculation on tea planting from 1962 to 1865 gave a great impetus to the buying of wasteland to form tea gardens. A number of plantations were soon opened. Thandachari, which still exists in

Due to sincere efforts of the pioneer planters, within the next 30 years another 12 estates started their journey in Sylhet



Old planters of Duncan's Shamshernugganer Tea Estate

Chittagong, was opened in 1864 and Karnafuli in 1880.

At first emphasis was given to the introduction of Chinese seeds. But survival percentage was low. Experts thereafter continued their efforts with indigenous plants. Assam brand tea obtained the seal of imperial approbation in 1851. In Sylhet 'wild' or 'indigenous' tea was discovered on January 4, 1856. This discovery created enthusiasm at the local level and particularly the European planters and officials envisaged an extension of the tea frontier in Sylhet. In his report to



the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, the Magistrate of Sylhet, T P Larkins mentioned that, tea plants in great abundance were growing in Chandkhanee Hills. He sent specimens to the Agricultural Society of India for analysing.

Initially, tea plantations were the outcome of individual ventures. But following the depression and slump of the 1860s the development of new plantations came to a standstill and the tea industry became the monopoly of big companies. The Europeans were obviously the pioneers of tea plantation in this region. Towards the close of the 19th century, development was directed towards the creation of many limited liability companies, such as James Finlay & Co Ltd., Messrs Duncan Brothers & Co. Ltd, Octavius Steel & Co. Ltd. and Messrs McNeill & Co. Ltd.

James Finlay dominated the plantation venture in Sylhet after the depression. The Company's origins date back to 1882 with the incorporation in the UK of the North Sylhet Tea Co Ltd. and the South Sylhet Tea Co Ltd. By 1886 the areas under tea amounted to 2,873.27 hectares and 3,253.67 hectares respectively. The estates were managed from the outset by Finlay Muir & Co., Calcutta with Sir John Muir as Chairman of both

MALNIOHERRA ESTATE	
1854	
MANAGERS	YEAR
1. MR. WINSTONE	1854 - 1884
2. " J.T. BJLL	1884 - 1919
3. " F. FLORANCE	1919 - 25
3. " J. MINTO	1925 - 27
4. " G.P. STEWART	1927 - 30
5. " H. PATTERSON	1930 - 51
6. " G. MC BRUCE (ACTG)	1951 - 53
7. " A.N. ARCHIBALD	1953 - 55
8. " G. MC BRUCE	1955 - 63
9. " Z.A. MULLAH (ACTG)	1963 - 65
10. " S. KHAN	1965 - 68
11. " M.H. CHAUDHURY (ACTG)	1968 - 69
12. " A. RAHIM (ACTG)	1969 - 70
13. " I.A. SIDDIQUI	1970 - 71
14. " M.H. CHAUDHURY	1971 - 72
15. " M.S. HUDA (ACTG)	1972 -
16. " A. RAHIM	1972 -
17. " N.U. AHMED	1972 -
18. " A.Q. AHSANULLAH	1972 -
19. " T. HOSSAIN	1972 - 91
20. " M.L. RAHMAN	1991

companies. The two companies were merged in 1896 to form the Consolidated Tea and Lands Co. Limited.

At the end of 1910 a notable addition to the tea plantations of Duncan was made in Bangladesh, part by the acquisition from the McMeekin family of a controlling interest in Allynugger Company and three tea estates known as the trio-estates, Madhabpur, Patrakhola and Kurma. At the end

of 1923 the estates in the firm's agency increased to about 60, the planted area to 20,000 hectares and the crop to 14.5 million kg per year in all India territory.

However, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, a small group of local entrepreneurs were involved in tea plantation. Eventually, the European planters and companies faced new competitors, but the local planters could not stand in their way because of their dependence on the European planters for technological know-how. There developed an interaction of the Europeans and local entrepreneurs. The partition of India in 1947 and the subsequent dislocation of the Hindu entrepreneurs, paved the way for the dominance of some capitalists of West Pakistan and a group of north Indian Muslims migrating to Pakistan.

## The Second Phase (1887-1916)

After 1887, a great change took place. More plantations were established and production started to rise rapidly. The period after 1887 witnessed the establishment of the Assam Bengal Railway connecting Sylhet with the port of Chittagong. There was also a great deal of development in the internal communication system. This gave impetus to the quick establishment of many plantations in Sylhet in the early part of this period. From 1887 to 1916 about 44 estates were established in Sylhet and 24 in Chittagong. Gradually machinery was introduced in the manufacturing process.

## The Third Phase (1917 - 1947)

This period is the most important of all. It starts just after the end of the First World War and ends with the Independence of the subcontinent after the Second World War. At the time of the First



World War prices of tea were high and the wages of labour were constant. The result was an era of profits. The first two years of this period were good but then came another severe depression. This continued till 1921. From 1922, prices again increased and continued up to 1925. Then came another slump. This slump was somehow faced by the planters by controlling output up to 1928. Then in 1930, an international agreement was reached restricting the output by the producers and continued up to 1939.

During this period, 30 tea estates were established in Sylhet, one in Comilla and two others in Chittagong. The most interesting



thing to note was that almost all the plantations established in this period both in Sylhet and Chittagong districts were locally owned. But generally the tea industry was dominated by the British entrepreneurs and passed through strife and tribulations. During 1947, when the Great Divide of the Indian sub-continent came into being, with a sister state, Pakistan (now Bangladesh), the second phase of hierarchical occupation set in.

### Period of Pakistani Enterprise (1947-1971)

During the partition in 1947, Bangladesh owned only 133 estates, covering 30,353 ha (75,000 acres) of plantation with an annual

production of 18,844 mkg. The industry had to struggle through manifold constraints to meet the internal demand and West Pakistan, which led to a mandatory extension of area by three percent in 1961. Consequently there was a sharp decline in exports. The industry enjoyed the bounty of an artificial bonanza from West Pakistan and was virtually sheltered from the competition in the world market and did not secure the desired stability and independence as a viable productive sector in the country. However, the plantation area in 1971 had increased to 43,398 ha, (107,234 acre) with an increase of production by 18%. When

Bangladesh became sovereign nation in 1971, the era of Bangladeshi enterprise began.

### Bangladesh Era (1971 till date)

In 1971, after Bangladesh emerged as an independent following a liberation war with the Pakistan Army it embraced a land of tea having 153 estates of 43,398 ha and war-ravaged factories. Most of the estates had suffered heavily and were in a state of ruin and financial collapse. Many gardens were closed, many were abandoned by Pakistani owners, some estates were nationalised and taken over by the government from the original owners. During the last decade, the organisational set-up

and ownership pattern has changed considerably from monopolistic to cosmopolitan enterprise. Many new owners from other business houses came to tea.

At present, the 166 estates in Bangladesh are located in two divergent ecological zones, namely, the Sylhet Zone in the Surma Valley and the Chittagong Zone in the Halda Valley. The Surma Valley is traditionally sub-divided into six circles, namely, North Sylhet, Juri, Lungla, Monu-Doloi, Balisera and Luskerpur, which have 135 gardens, while there are 24 estates in the Halda Valley in Chittagong and one in Brahmanbaria District. The total grant area of all gardens is around 114,014.39 ha, of which 44.27% is used for tea cultivation.

The major breakthrough in this phase was the creation of new tea producing zones in northern Bangladesh.

Besides Sylhet or Chittagong the extreme northern districts of Panchagarh and Lalmonirhat also became tea producing regions. This tea journey started from Tetulia upozilla in 2000 by a pioneering initiative of Tetulia Tea Company for their noble venture of integrating marginal farmers into small holding tea cultivation. This is a successful venture as there are now 12 tea estates and about a thousand small tea farmers are making sustainable livelihood from tea. Many farmers there are gradually converting their unproductive paddy land into tea cultivation. The region has already added about two mkg tea to the national production.

Bangladesh tea, despite its low yield, weak infrastructure, liquidity problems and age-old dependence on foreign enterprise, is now being consolidated and recognised as an important agro-industry of the country. Today, Bangladesh tea is occupying about three percent of the plantation area, producing as much as two percent of global production.

The writer is Managing Director, PMTC (Bangladesh) Limited

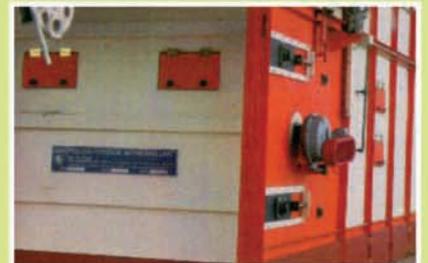
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Labour	Standard requirement	15% of standard requirement
Spreading	Manual	Automatic
Shuffling	Manual	Automatic
Spillage	Large	None
Leaf damage/wastage	Yes	Nil
Supervision and control	Multi station and difficult	Single point and easy
Quality of tea	Inconsistent	Absolutely consistent
Maintenance	Constant and expensive	Periodic and less expensive
Feed & Discharge	Manual	Conveyorized



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# AFRICA'S LOVE AFFAIR *with* TEA

In Africa, tea is big business

From the year-round plantations in Kenya to the centuries-old bushes in Malawi, Africa has a rich and growing tradition when it comes to crafting the perfect brew. We look at some of the biggest tea-producing countries in the continent, and explore what makes their blend quite so special.

## Kenya

Kenya isn't only the largest tea producer in Africa, it's one of the biggest exporters in the world. While the country trails behind China and India in terms of how much it produces, it still is a leader when it comes to exports.

"The UK imports over 50% of its tea from Kenya - it's an



Kenyan Tea Garden

important region," says Angela Pryce, an independent tea consultant and former master buyer and blender for Twinings.

"Interestingly, when you look at the world of tea production, China and India are big tea drinkers, so most of what they produce they consume internally. Kenya is different in that most of what they produce is exported,"

she adds.

Though booming, Kenya's tea industry is fairly new, according to Pryce, who says that it only really got its start in the 1950s.

"Kenya's teas are newer, brighter, brisker. The terroir gives them different characteristics," she says. Almost all of the tea produced in Kenya is black tea and produced with a modern method known as CTC, or Cut-Tear-Curl -- a method that gained popularity in the mid-20th century as a filler for tea bags.

Kenya's location also makes it advantageous, says Pryce.

"It's right on the Equator, which means teas are produced all year long and are non-seasonal, which is great if you're looking at it from a buyer's perspective. The further south of the Equator you go, the more seasonal teas become."

## Malawi

Malawi has the oldest plantations in all of Africa, with some bushes dating back to the 19th century. As such, notes Pryce, Malawian teas are richer and deeper than those produced from Kenya.

"Malawi's tea industry came about in the 19th century, around the same time that the coffee crop in Sri Lanka failed. At that time, coffee planters moved away from



Moroccan Mint Tea

Sri Lanka and moved to Malawi and started planting tea," says Pryce.

The soil in Malawi is a rich red, and the "liquor" takes on the same vibrant hue.

"Malawi teas are renowned to buyers around the world for the deep red colour," notes Pryce.

## Morocco

Morocco, though not a tea producer, is regardless famous for its unique mint tea blend.

"They take gunpowder green tea imported from China and add Moroccan peppermint to create something unique," says Pryce.



South African Rooibos Tea

## South Africa

Though South Africa is a pretty minor player in the global tea trade, it is a major exporter in Rooibos. Though often confused with tea, Rooibos is actually a herbal infusion that is often blended with tea or else drunk as a caffeine-free alternative.

"Rooibos is a herbal infusion and not, strictly-speaking, a tea, but it's taken and prepared in very much the same way, with milk and sugar," notes Pryce.

Rooibos is native to the Cederberg, a small mountainous region in South Africa's Western Cape.

Source : CNN



Weighing tea in Malawi



COVER STORY

# The 'Q' Factor



Quality, not quantity, pays

Quality leaf is the key to industry survival. With 40% of our north Indian production coming from leaf grown by the small growers and the twin issues of Plant Protection Code and Trustea / Rainforest Alliance compliance becoming mandatory what are the mechanisms in place to ensure that the stringent expectations from the growers are adhered to, by them?

This journey of compliances necessarily begins on the fields. The moot point is that all the banned substances namely chemicals such as fertilisers and pesticides are available in the markets. And most of the times they are not only the most economic but the most effective as well. The certified substances are much more expensive - so should the Tea Board consider subsidies to bridge this gap? Subsidies which can be phased out over a period of time?

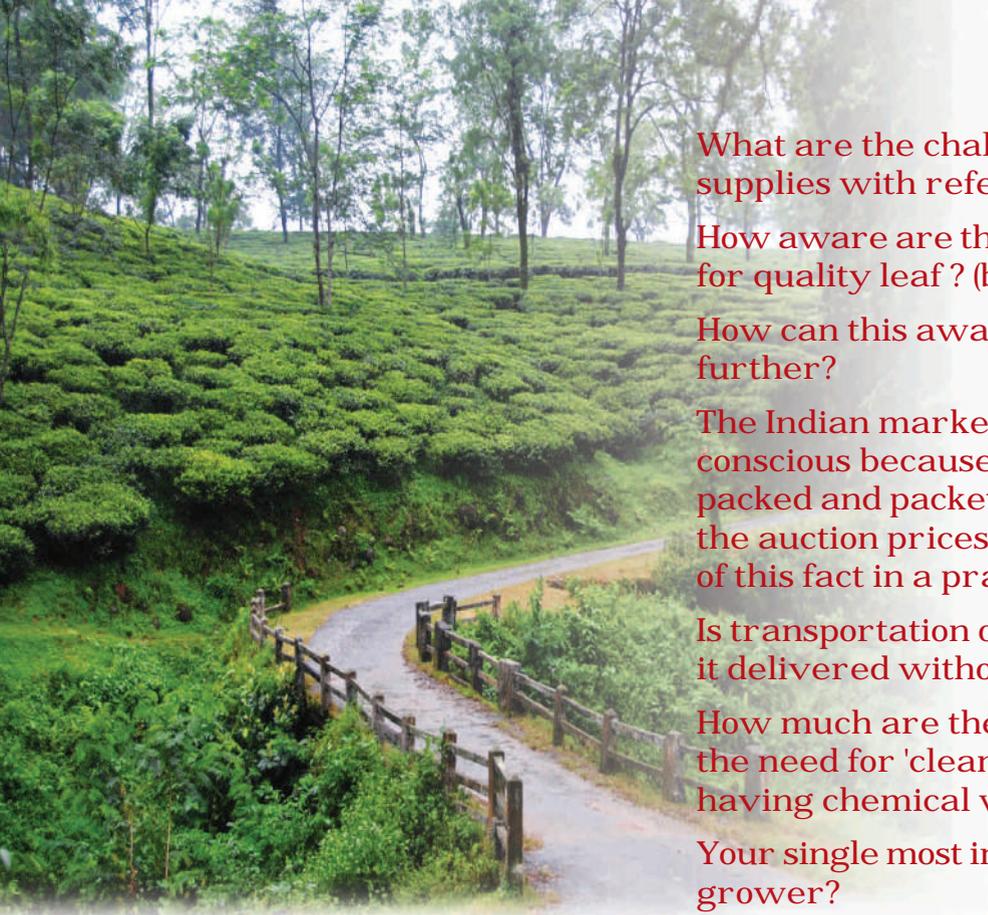
Should it be mandatory that all the shops that sell any chemicals to the small growers be registered with the Tea Board? Or the larger supporters of these small growers partner with them with the help of Tea Board subsidies? To what extent are the small growers knowledgeable on the detrimental effects of such residues in the long run, to themselves and to others? Already marketers including well known godmen are advocating very actively that tea along with tobacco and alcohol are unhealthy for human health. Perhaps, it's the knowledge of such residues which gives him the courage to advocate such restrictions?

Another practical suggestion which is heard is that testing laboratories should be set up in sub-districts so that tests can be done at the green leaf stage.

This is just one aspect. The other begs the question, what are the exact parameters that make up quality leaf? The definition must be explicit. And what percentage of this quality constitutes 'fine', practically, must be cleared without ambiguity.

There must be a short term, medium term and a long term approach to these issues.

*Contemporary Tea Time* seeks answers from industry experts



What are the challenges you face in your supplies with reference to leaf quality?

How aware are the small growers of the need for quality leaf? (by the factories)

How can this awareness be brought about further?

The Indian market has become very liquor conscious because of the proliferation of pre-packed and packet teas and this is reflected in the auction prices. Are small growers aware of this fact in a practical way?

Is transportation of green leaf satisfactory? Is it delivered without damage?

How much are the small growers aware of the need for 'clean teas' – chemical free or having chemical within limits?

Your single most important message to a small grower?

## Small Growers must maintain plucking round and minimise unwanted chemicals for good quality teas

Satish Mitruka, President, North Bengal Tea Producer's Welfare Association

The development of small tea growers in north Bengal started from the early '80s and the maximum planting was carried out between 1990 and the early part of 2000. The favourable market condition at that time accelerated the growth and development of the sector. There are about 40000 small tea growers scattered in the four districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Uttar Dinajpur of north Bengal covering around 50000 ha producing around 520 mkg of green leaves. However, the largest concentration of growers is in Uttar Dinajpur district. It is still an emerging sector, the full potential of which is yet to be exploited since large areas of small tea growers' plantations are yet to attain full bearing stage. Hence, the upward trend in production will continue for some more years. The

production of the estate sector has been stagnating and the ever increasing demand of our domestic consumption could be met with the contribution of the small tea sector.

With the development of the small tea grower sector, the bought leaf tea factories came into being during mid nineties. The first bought leaf tea factory in north Bengal was established in 1994 at Bidhan Nagar in Darjeeling district and from then onwards factories started multiplying and by the end of 2010 factories were set up in all the tea growing districts of north Bengal. The growth of this sector was also quite fast and till now about 129 factories have come up. However, the pace of setting up of more factories has reduced and come to a saturation point. As in the case of small tea growers, many



entrepreneurs of this sector were also not engaged in tea manufacturing and came from other trades. Conceptually, the small growers and bought leaf factories together constitute the small tea sector in as much as both are interdependent and complimentary to each other. The bought leaf factories do not have captive plantations of their own and depend entirely on small tea growers for the raw material. Similarly, the small growers also depend largely on these factories for disposal of their green leaves. The production of bought leaf sector in north Bengal now estimated to be around 130 mkg of made tea, accounts for 40% of the total tea production of the region.

#### Challenges of small growers:

- 1 Lack of technical know-how on cultural practices
- 1 Misconception about quality and more dependence on quantity
- 1 Use of excessive plant protection chemicals.
- 1 Shying away from competition and dependence on government for price protection
- 1 Exploitation by middlemen due to small holdings
- 1 Non-availability of financial support from financial institutions due to complication of land conversion
- 1 Problem of transportation of green leaves.

#### Challenges of BLFs :

- 1 Non-availability of uniform raw material
- 1 Inadequate withering due to heterogeneous quality of raw material
- 1 More dependence on middlemen for procurement of green leaves
- 1 Inadequate technical know-how on good manufacturing practices and energy savings
- 1 More dependence on quantity and less dependence on quality unless otherwise compelled
- 1 Lack of direct and transparent relation with the growers
- 1 Lack of initiative to provide extension service to the growers
- 1 Over dependence on marketing through private routes for quick realisation of sale proceeds which at times turn out to be risky.

#### And for synergy

- 1 For synergy between small growers and BLFs, cooperation and involvement of other institutions like government agencies, NGOs are also extremely essential
- 1 Imparting extensive training to the growers on cultural practices like pruning, plucking, judicious use of plant protection chemicals and chemical fertilisers to improve quality and productivity. The role of government agencies and NGOs is very important in achieving those twin objectives
- 1 BLFs need to take initiative in developing



- 1 direct and transparent relation with the growers so as to develop mutual understanding and trust
- 1 BLFs may provide transportation facility for transportation of green leaves from growers' fields by setting up leaf collection points at different locations so as to reduce damage of raw materials during transportation
- 1 To ensure quality of raw material the BLFs may provide extension services to the growers on cultural practices and Plant Protection Code compliance
- 1 Individual factories may provide inputs to the growers supplying leaves to the factories and the cost may be realised from the sale proceeds of green leaves of the growers. This will ensure loyalty of the growers to the respective factories and develop healthy relation, which will ensure continuity in supply of leaves and also the quality
- 1 BLFs to organise regular training programmes for

- 1 the factory personnel on good manufacturing practices including energy saving by hiring resource persons
- 1 BLFs to exercise strict control on quality rather than aiming at quantity
- 1 BLFs to maintain absolute transparency on price determination of green leaves to avoid any misunderstanding with the growers
- 1 The small growers in order to overcome the disadvantages of transportation of green leaves as also to maintain uniform and proper plucking rounds for ensuring quality may collectivise themselves into groups

- 1 The growers may put more emphasis on quality production of raw material rather than depending on price protection from government since quality will protect the price
- 1 The BLFs may market teas proportionately through auction and private route so as to minimise the risk connected with the private sale
- 1 BLFs to avoid the tendency to manufacture more quantity at the cost of quality at the time of favourable market condition.

My only message to our small grower friends is that whatever you deliver to us, we have to process. However, we are very possessive about quality parameters. Hence our earnest request to small growers is to maintain plucking rounds and minimise unwanted chemicals so that we receive good quality leaves and ultimately good quality teas are made.



# Small growers and BLFs need a strategic partnership of mutual economic benefits

Raj Bansal, Director, Balason Tea Co. Pvt. Ltd.

Getting quality leaf is the most challenging factor in running a BLF. The weather along with the supply and demand plays a crucial role for the small tea growers plucking and supplying good quality leaf. If the tea leaf



prices are low then the STG will not pluck fine leaf as they will then calculate their earnings in kilograms and then switch over to coarse leaf plucking to get more

quantity.

Today's small tea growers are fully aware of the need for quality leaf. But they will pluck quality leaf only if they are assured of reasonable remuneration for their produce and effort.

This awareness can only be brought about if the BLF and the growers get into a strategic partnership assuring each other of mutual economic benefits and co-operating and trusting each other. The main factor in this relationship is integrity and honesty towards each other.

The STG sector is fully aware of the packeters' buying pattern in the auctions and in the private market. They know that good liquoring and bright tea can only be made by providing quality leaf. But in this scenario, they look after



their own interest and will pluck as per the conditions that suits them. Therefore, the only way to bring in quality leaf is to partner with the small tea growers.

Transportation is the weakest link in the supply chain between the growers and BLFs. Proper transportation ensures that half the battle has been won. But at present 70% of the damage in the leaf is due to overloading and bad transportation.

Regarding PCC limit, the small tea growers are still new to this subject. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in this area. But one thing must be kept in mind, that the growers do not get pleasure in spraying chemicals, which are very expensive, but do so out of compulsion. Therefore, it is the duty of the TRA along with all stakeholders to educate the growers and provide safe alternatives.

The message that should go out to all stakeholders namely BLF factories and small tea growers is that they must co-operate and enter into a long term partnership with each other for enhancing their own economic interest without the interference of any outside agencies or government departments.



# Good leaf, good price and good made tea - should be the single goal for small growers

Prabir Seal, Seal Tea Exports Pvt. Ltd.

**L**ack of education and sincerity are the main drawbacks of the small growers. They run after quantity and are only concerned about the profit margin without thinking about quality. It is a challenge for us to refuse bad leaf and to motivate them to produce good quality leaf.

Nowadays most of the small growers are aware of quality leaf but to curtail the cost of production they do not maintain round and do not use prescribed pesticides, timely manuring, irrigation etc. As a result the said leaf produces unremarkable made tea.

Tea Board with the help of Tea Research Association needs to take steps by way of training small growers/suppliers, campaigning and rapid checking and solve these problems.



The Indian market has indeed become very liquor conscious and bloom and brightness of the liquor matter a lot to tea packeters. But the small growers are yet to realise this and take the deep route.

Transportation of green leaf is not satisfactory. Most of the time suppliers to the factories deliver damaged leaf especially in the rainy season to curtail transportation cost. They overload vehicles with green leaf causing

damage.

The responsibility of raising awareness among small growers about the need for chemical free (or withing limits) 'clean teas' lies with the Tea Board and associated concerns.

The single goal of small growers should be - good leaf, good price, good made tea.



# Suggestions from Assam

**A**ssam Bought Leaf Factory owners that include Ashok Sharma of Satya Naryan Tea Estate, Raja Sonowal of Raja Tea Ind, Noor Ullah of Horujan Tea Co, Mr Kalita of Dhapi Tea Co, Sudeep Chitlangia and Ajay Patodia of Sarda Tea, Mr Sharma of Naharkatia Tea Estate, Vijay Singh of Malimara Tea Estate, Mr Malhotra of Hafjan Tea Estate and Mr Borah of Jaipur Tea Estate feel that the following points need to be addressed:

- 1 Growers need to pluck leaf of better standard
- 1 Presently 12/15 day rounds are being maintained so that the stems are larger and hard which adds up in weight. But this causes the leaf to become too big and hard
- 1 Quality cannot be 'manufactured' with the higher rounds - quality is made in the plantations
- 1 Presently only around 20/25 % fine leaf is supplied which is grossly inadequate for any factory to manufacture quality tea
- 1 The growers associations claim that they supply 65% fine leaf. This can always be verified by authorised executives of Tea Board at the time of delivery of green leaf to factory
- 1 They need to stop use of banned chemicals



truck should be stopped as this heats up the leaf

- 1 They should also properly handle the plucked leaf and ensure early delivery. Overloading the

- 1 Tea Board should change the fine leaf counting system from five leaf and a bud to the industry's norm of two leaf and a bud, which has been the plucking practice since long
- 1 TRA should provide them with knowhow on better field practice methods and also use of chemicals in the gardens and emphasis should be given on shorter plucking lower quality tea.





# India Tea Trade Dinner



Arjun Mitra of Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd.; June Gohain and Indrani Ghosh of Tata Global Beverages at the dinner



Iqbal S Sukarchakia Head Marketing & Quality, Amalgamated Plantations; Madhavi Goradia Divan Director Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd; Amitava Sen CFO Amalgamated Plantations and A Nandeolyar Director Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd. at the dinner



The audience



A K Bhargava, Chairman, ITA addressing the gathering

## 'Chai Ho Jaye' in Kolkata

Following the grand success in seven colleges in 2015 and two colleges in 2016, Indian Tea Association (ITA), brought to the City of Joy, Kolkata, the second chapter of India's first ever tea carnival - Chai Ho Jaaye, during the annual fest of Jadavpur University - Sanskriti 2016 - from April 26 to 28. With the idea of popularising tea consumption and sensitising the youth on wide ranging benefits of tea, the carnival was inaugurated by A K Bhargava, Chairman, ITA along with Azam Monem, Vice Chairman and Vivek Goenka, Additional Vice Chairman.

Keeping in mind the altered

positioning of tea as a versatile drink catering to the needs of modern Indians and their lifestyles. ITA aims to bridge the gap between the tea industry and the consumers, conveying to them the ways in which tea can be consumed.

The carnival had exciting activities conceptualised on infotainment related to tea including flash mobs, games, competitions, interactive sessions, tea tasting and sampling. The highlight of the carnival was the live demonstration of tea inspired mocktails by well known mixologists who rustled up some marvellous tea infused mocktails prepared with different flavours from Green to Darjeeling Tea, CTC and Orthodox teas namely - Green Peppermint Cool, CTC East Meets West, Darjeeling Honey Cooler and Orthodox Mojito - a big hit with the young crowd.

Speaking on the occasion A K Bhargava, Chairman, ITA, said, "The idea of the tea carnival is to

create a long term movement for tea consumption in India. ITA with participation from local packers aim to roll out the activity to many more schools, colleges and youth hang-out places in various cities in future. We aim to make this B2Y campaign a success and culminate into an interesting interaction with the college students where a

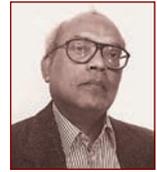


student can experience what it is like to 'sip their cuppa' quite like an English Tea Room, 'slurp their chai' at an Indian dhaba or attend a tea party. Along with engaging in on-ground activities we are also following it with social media."



# Tea is all, all is ...

In space or on earth, in schools or in battlefields, for health or for pleasure, while stressful or while ecstatic -- tea it must be



Kalyan Sircar

Let us start by leaving the earth behind and venturing into the outer space. Here one struggles to adapt oneself to microgravity and experiences a sense of isolation. This was the experience of the first British astronaut Major Tim Peake who launched from Kazakhstan on December 15, 2015, aboard a Soyuz FG rocket, docking at the international space station accompanied by the Russian Yuri Malenchenko and American astronaut Tim Kopra. Life on board was hard. Sleep was often disrupted due to bouncing off several times and flashes from the cosmic radiation. As Peake looked out into space, 'It is just the blackest black and that was a real surprise to me' he felt. 'Yet the space - limitless and incomprehensible - is absolutely spectacular'. He recounted



Major Tim Peake

disorientation and dizziness, often losing sense of direction. Then there was the skill involved in mastering the zero-gravity somersault. But help was at hand. Major Peake

reported back that he had settled into life in space with some earthly comforts - tea and a bacon sandwich. Lesson: don't leave the earth without a good supply of tea.

'In or Out?' Should we leave the European Union and assert our sovereignty? Definitely 'Out' because Brussels threatens to ban high powered kettles and toasters. This is nothing but meddling with British people's life. In 2014 the EU published its proposal for making kettles and toasters more energy

efficient, more easily repairable and longer lasting. This will make these products conform to eco-design and energy saving norms. 'What we want is to let the free market reign and not be governed by diktats of bureaucrats, an angry Member of

Parliament thundered. Watching a kettle boil has never been so boring.' Mind you, Brussels has merely delayed the plan. Once we vote 'Yes' the proposals will be back on the table and we will be powerless to say no. If you love your cuppa vote 'No.'

Warning sounds are ringing. The great tradition of British afternoon tea is falling by the wayside as 'we are getting healthier.' No longer are we enjoying a nice cup of tea around 4 pm and something to dunk into it to counter the mid-afternoon slump. Sales of tea have fallen by almost a quarter over the past five years and biscuit consumption is down by 10 percent. Young people do not drink tea anymore for it has

'a rather uninspiring image.' Advice given: avoid afternoon tea with biscuit and cakes; instead drink



bottled water, and nibble on a piece of fruit or a

handful of nuts, not forgetting twice a week visits to the gym.

Remember what delights you are foregoing - the beauty of afternoon tea. Have a nut, if you must or a biscuit or two. But far better is to choose a scone, slathered with butter, jam and cream or a slice of Victoria sponge. And of course, cups of freshly made good tea (preferably Earl Grey) in teapot and served in the best of China cups and saucers.

One journalist blurts out: 'Don't forget your great unique British tradition, The Afternoon Tea. The afternoon tea carries one through the post-lunch hours until the evening meal at 8 pm.

**And next door, in the Netherlands, tea is increasingly being drunk on health grounds.** The country's Health Council has published new guidelines recommending that people drink

**Do you know that there is no facility for visitors to have tea at the Royal Windsor Castle?** But this is about to be rectified. On the occasion of the Queen's 90th birthday 27 million pounds have been allocated to revamp the

**Tea is British and will always be British** - so often the British remind the rest of the world. Indeed, tea isn't much to do with China at all. 'We have adopted it. And now it's ours' - such is the constant reminder. 'We are champions at imbibing the stuff - a nation which fires up the kettle even in the midst of a heat wave, keeps its fingers permanently wrapped around a mug of tea when winter sets in and takes a stash of tea bags on holidays.' China grew the tea, the Dutch brought it to Europe first. But it's in Britain that tea became most popular outside China. Dutch import of tea declined rapidly and Britain became the biggest importer of the stuff and the largest in its consumption.

Tea is Britain's national drink. From royal parties to the building



Bring it all back, she clamours out. Let's return to the days when Tea Rooms were the rage. When meeting your friends for a cup of

tea was the thing to do. Come, put on your dancing shoes, come to the Tea Room for the afternoon Tea Dance. It is 4 pm, put the kettle on.

between three and five brews each day. In the Netherlands school children as young as four are already served milky tea as lunch time drink. The Health Council's research-based advice is that adults

should drink tea, three to five cups a day, as this will reduce blood pressure, diabetes and risks of stroke. The guidelines state that the tea must be green or black - herbal teas do not count.

Castle, including its first café. Each year the 1.3 million visitors who pay to visit the palace have to manage without so much as a cup of tea. After the facelift the 14th century undercroft (built by Edward III in the 1350s, as the

Castle's main cellar and larder) will become a restaurant that will offer refreshments, including tea - a godsend for visitors who currently have the choice of bottled water or ice cream from a kiosk.



sites, tea is the indispensable beverage. It is the subject of the favourite children's story books (The Tiger who came to Tea), and movies like Brief Encounter. And the age-old debate remains unresolved. Do you put milk in first? With sugar or without? Tea bags or tea leaves? Should tea be served in a cup with saucer? Are tea mugs unsightly?

One drinks tea for pleasure. One drinks tea when in distress.

One drinks tea for its health-giving properties, to prevent and fight illnesses. Tea improves one's power of concentration and memory. Tea, surely, is a wonder drink.

**And lastly, a senior leader of the British Labour Party** has said that 'Britain would be safer if it was to have cups of tea with terrorists rather than bomb them. The soldiers should get the tea bags out to solve the Syrian crisis rather than resorting to air strikes.'

The writer is an academic based in London





# Sirish Festival



The second Sirish Festival, by APPL Foundation, was organised this year at Powai Tea Estate in Upper Assam on January 30 and 31. Sirish is a colourful extravaganza of cultural songs and dances of the various tea communities in Assam and north Bengal.

Preliminary regional rounds were held in six venues across Assam and north Bengal with the final folk dance competition at the cultural venue. Teams from estates of APPL and other companies participated. An eminent jury panel from within the tea community judged the competition. The team from Powai Tea Estate won the folk dance competition. Two 'Icon Awards' were presented where the award for excellence in the field of literature was presented to Sananta Tanty while Subil Barg was the recipient of the Cultural Icon Award. They were both presented with citations and a cash prize of rupees one lakh each. The prize distribution ceremony was attended by various dignitaries and a large local audience at the cultural venue.

Tribal communities were brought to the plantations from the Chota Nagpur Plateau region and other parts of India over 200 years ago in order to meet the shortage of labour in the plantations. These communities collectively came to be known as the Tea Tribes. They emerged with the tea plantation in



Assam and have since then, immensely contributed not only to the growth of the tea industry but also to the State Exchequer. The Assam tea community



At the festival Contemporary Brokers conducted workshops. P K Das issued tasting certificates

constitutes 24% of Assam's total population. As these tribes were initially inducted from different parts of the country, the tea estates became a melting pot of diverse cultural practices. The Sirish Festival is an attempt to promote, exhibit and preserve these distinct cultural and art forms and facilitate their integration into mainstream Assamese society.



Deepak Atal and S Hazarika with a certificate winner

The idea of Sirish is to recognise and unearth hidden talent of the tea community in Terai and Assam Valley. A community embedded in its ethos, they give their lives to hand craft Assam tea. They have literature, poetry, song, music, art, food and dance. Sirish is one such initiative to integrate them culturally and is an effort to evangelize their rhythm of life.



# The 189th Annual Flower Show

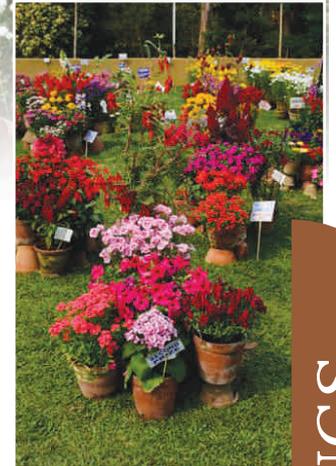
The Agri-Horticultural Society of India held its 189th Annual Flower Show from February 4 to 7, 2016 in Kolkata. The total entries and other details are given in a comparative table.

## Main Participants

Heritage Group of Institutions

1 Karan Paul 1 NTPC 1 Kolkata Municipal Corporation 1 Apeejay Surrendra Group 1 GM Eastern Railway 1 Subhendu Chowdhury 1 Park Hotel 1 Amra Sabai 1 Sonali Roy Chowdhury 1 M/s Kristal Farm 1 South Eastern Railway 1 M/s Exotica Nursery 1 Nikhil Kumar Hazra 1 Sajal Sarkar 1 Kabita Jhunjhunwalla 1 Laxmi Kanta Das 1 Kartick Chandra Sarkar 1 Debobrata Biswas 1 Sayan Jati 1 Srinath Sinha

- 1) Best Group of Annual won by NTPC, Farakka, From Sec. 92
- 2) Best Group of uncommon Annual won by NTPC, Farakka, From Sec. 96
- 3) Best Pot Rose of the Show won by Maa Bhavatarini Nursery, From Sec. 64
- 4) Best Bonsai of the Show won by M/s Exotica Nursery, From Sec. 75
- 5) Best Dahlia of the Show 'Yellow Monarch' won by NTPC, Farakka, From Sec. 97
- 6) Best Group of Dahlia of the Show won by NTPC, Farakka, From Sec. 97
- 7) Best Orchid of the Show 'VENDA' won by M/s Exotica Nursery, From Sec. 50
- 8) Best Cactus of the Show won by Amra Sabai, From



- Sec. 15 (Obregonia Denegrii)
- 9) Best Succulent of the Show won by 'Amra Sabai, From Sec. 27 (Cyphostema Elephantopus)
  - 10) Best Cut Rose of the Show 'Bahurupi' won by Debnath Banerjee From Sec. 191

This show covered all sections of Horticulture starting from winter annual flower, bonsai, rose, cactii, succulents, periniels, dahlia, large flowering chrysanthemum, herbal plants, potted vegetables, fruits in pots, uprooted vegetables and cut flowers. There were some exotic flowers in pots as well as in cut flowers. In cut flower section there were tulips, oriental lily, different shades of Aethurium and Gladioli along with other winter annuals, rose, dahlia etc.

The highlight of this year's show was the participation of Horticultural Department of Meghalaya.

HAPPENINGS

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP AND OTHER PARTICULARS ABOUT THE NEWSPAPER ENTITLED CONTEMPORARY TEA TIME, AS REQUIRED TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE FIRST ISSUE OF EVERY YEAR AFTER LAST DAY OF FEBRUARY.

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Dated : 1-03-2016

A Nandkeolyar

Publisher





# Celebritea

Celebrity chef Nigella Lawson recently starred in the new brand advertisement for Typhoo tea. First images of the shoot showed the 56-year-old pouring herself the perfect brew before tucking into a spot of afternoon tea. She proved herself to be the perfect host as she poured some freshly-brewed tea from an impressive height and into a pretty china cup.

Talking about the new collaboration, the star commented: 'Typhoo has always been my everyday tea of choice, so when I was approached to work with them, it felt like a natural and happy fit.

'Everyone who knows me knows I never go anywhere without Typhoo in my handbag and I never leave the country without a box in my suitcase. Everyone has their own way of savouring a moment of peace and quiet, and for me it's over a cup of tea, my essential luxury. A slice of cake is an indulgent extra.'



# Chai Talks



The new venture ChaiTalks, Green Blades Ventures took off in June 2016, with the vision of uplifting the entire culture of selling tea on Indian streets. 'Mobile Tea Stalls' selling 11 varieties of hot, iced and bubble tea have been introduced. Home delivery of ready-to-drink tea and snacks has also been introduced for the first time in Kolkata. Just two months since its inception, it has attracted plenty of appreciation and kudos from customers and vendors alike. Repeat orders have enhanced the zeal to serve the chai lover better.





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## Ashoke Kumar Sengupta, a Tea Board of India official, played a key role in the actual evacuation of Indians from Kuwait during its invasion in 1990

**A**shoke Kumar Sengupta, a Bengali from Kolkata, acted as the officer in-charge of the Indian Embassy in Kuwait from August 24 to November 7, 1990, facilitating the evacuation of 100,000 Indians who were stranded without passports. He took about two months and a few days more, but he evacuated each one of them successfully, without any casualty.

When Sengupta recounts the hair-raising days in Kuwait, one has a glimpse of the panic, devastation and destruction that lay behind the spectacular images of Scud missiles crisscrossing the Baghdad sky that beamed directly into our living rooms.

“At the time of the invasion, there were 1,70,000 Indians living in Kuwait. Of them, around 50,000 were on vacation, as schools were shut for summer. Of the remaining 1,20,000, the majority was clamouring to get out of the country,” says Sengupta, who had reached Kuwait in 1988 to take charge of the Tea Board office in the country as Director of tea Promotion in West Asia and North Africa.

Tension between Iraq and Kuwait was mounting over the latter’s refusal to overwrite a debt it had extended during



Ashoke Kumar Sengupta

the Iran-Iraq war. Iraq also accused Kuwait of drilling oil from its reserve and producing more, thereby pulling down the price of crude oil. Iraqi troop build-up began along the Kuwaiti border and the invasion happened in the wee hours of August 2, 1990.

“Dalbehua, an assistant manager of State Bank of India in Kuwait, called to say that the Emir’s palace was being bombed.” Sengupta says, “I ran to the roof and saw fighter jets flying low. Tanks rolled in later in the day. After stocking up my home from the supermarket, I went to the embassy in Safat as my office in central Kuwait city was inaccessible. From that day, I would go to the embassy from my home in Jebria every day till as long as I was in Kuwait.” Sengupta recounts.

When then Indian foreign minister I K Gujral met Saddam to negotiate the safe evacuation of Indians, the Iraqi president insisted that all Indian diplomats would have to leave Kuwait. Since Sengupta was the only senior-ranking Indian official left in Kuwait after Air India and SBI officials left, he was asked to take



# The Real Airlifter

charge of the embassy and all red or diplomat passport holders (Ambassador, First Secretary, Second Secretary, Counsellors and Section Officers) shifted to Basra on August 23.

In a letter to the Tea Board Chairman P K Bora on November 3, 1990, Indian Ambassador A K Budhiraja wrote. "On August 20, 1990, I was informed by the Minister of External Affairs of India to move all diplomatic

officers from the Indian embassy in Kuwait to a camp office in Basrah, southern Iraq. It was obvious somebody had to be made officer-in-charge of the Indian Mission in Kuwait. I requested A K Sengupta to take over this difficult responsibility and he performed extremely well."

Communicating through a HAM radio, Sengupta and a team of embassy staff began organising the evacuation. His job was to inform the foreign office official in Delhi about the morale of the people, the electricity and water situation and finally the evacuation plan for the next day before getting to do the ground work.

"Delhi had sent two planes for evacuation. Ships began arriving a lot later. With nearly a lakh people stranded, I had to look at the alternative of bulk evacuation by road. Sunny Mathews, an extremely resourceful Indian working in Toyota, did a great job negotiating with private bus operators for evacuation via Iraq to Jordan by road, a 2,000 km journey that was dangerous.

Prioritising the order of evacuation was a big challenge, as everyone wanted to be the first to get out. Finally, pregnant women, single women, nurses and dialysis patients were given preference. Every day, 80 buses would roll out, carrying Indians to Jordan via Iraq. "We would do the paperwork for undertaking the journey in the morning before getting the list of passengers ready for the next day. Since I was in charge, I received numerous requests, including some funny ones. Once, a Punjabi

## Beyond duty

On the 24th of August, 1990 the Indian Embassy at Kuwait had "formally" closed and moved to Basra. However, it had to continue working in every other sense. At stake was the welfare and evacuation of thousands of Indians wanting to leave Kuwait. To meet this exigency, Mr. A. K. Sengupta, Tea Board's Director of Tea Promotion, Kuwait, was appointed as Officer-in-charge of the Indian Embassy. From the 24th of August to the 2nd of September, Mr. Sengupta was the only Officer in the Embassy. Thereafter from the 3rd of September, diplomatic officers other than the Ambassador were allowed to attend to Embassy work but were not allowed to stay on in Kuwait continuously. Mr. Sengupta, therefore, continued to be Officer-in-charge till 7th November when he left Kuwait on completion of his assignment in Kuwait.

As Officer-in-charge of the Indian Embassy at such a critical time, Mr. Sengupta faced a stupendous task. Thousands of enquiries had to be answered; relief and facilities had to be provided, sometimes at the cost of great personal



Mr. A.K. Sengupta.

discomfort; detailed, painstaking work prior to planned evacuation to be undertaken; travelling documents to be prepared in record time. All this and much more was facilitated by the leadership, tact and resourcefulness of Mr. Sengupta. He also had the responsibility of keeping up the morale of the staff at all times. This was all accomplished at the risk of his own and his family's safety. Working into late hours at the Embassy required his family to be left alone in the insecure and tension ridden environs prevailing in Kuwait during that time. It called for great self sacrifice on the part of Mr. Sengupta. Indeed, Tea Board is proud of Mr. Sengupta's role as leader, administrator and friend of the thousands of our compatriots who faced the traumatic drama of Kuwait.

Mr. Sengupta was supported throughout by his family and Tea Board staff members and it was this team spirit that finally won the day. His efforts have been greatly appreciated by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce.

**During August 24 to September 2, 1990, Sengupta was the lone officer holding fort. He faced the angry and frustrated crowd of Indian nationals thronging the chancery premises with tact, patience and courage**

lady called demanding that I forge an agreement where she could keep the Rs 50,000 that she had collected in a kitty party before the Iraqi invasion and she would refund the members once they reached India," Sengupta chuckles. Also, he says nearly all the women claimed they were pregnant. He says he made if mandatory for women to furnish a medical check-up report or prescription.

Even as evacuation was on in full swing, Sengupta received an urgent request from Delhi seeking the evacuation of one Shiv Shankar. After a lot of enquires, he was finally located in an oil refinery, but he refused to be evacuated before his colleagues.

It was by early November that the mammoth evacuation seemed to be finally drawing to a close. Around 20,000 Indians refused to leave Kuwait because they had nothing to look forward to at home. Around 70,000-80,000 had been transported by road and another 20,000-odd by air and sea. With the number tricking down to double digis, Sengupta received the go ahead from the foreign ministry to leave Kuwait. On November 7, after more than two months of nerve-wracking tension, he finally relinquished charge of the embassy and left Kuwait.

As the Indian embassy's then charge d'affaires. R S Mukhija, wrote in his letter of appreciation to Bora, "During August 24 to September 2, 1990, Sengupta was the lone officer holding fort. He faced the angry and frustrated crowd of Indian nationals thronging the chancery premises with tact, patience and courage. As officer in charge of the embassy, Sengupta was also responsible for the welfare of 30 staff members. He showed great qualities of leadership in keeping the morale high and flock together in very trying circumstances."



# BREWED HISTORY

## Digging into the treasure trove of tea

Invite Romita Ray for a cup of tea and you will undoubtedly want to share a second cup - although you may be waiting a while for it.

An associate professor of art history in Syracuse University's College of Arts and Sciences, Ray is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowship for 2016. Her one-year grant award will support travel and research for an upcoming book, tentatively titled *Two Leaves and a Bud: The Visual Cultures of Tea Consumption in Colonial and Modern India*.

Spanning more than two centuries of strongly brewed history, *Two Leaves and a Bud* traces the origins of the tea industry in India from the late 1700s onwards; follows it during the British Raj from 1858 to 1947; and brings it forward into Post-Independent India where tea is widely recognised as a national drink.

"It will be a great detective hunt," says Ray, who has been pre-occupied with this topic for more than a decade. "While lots of books have been written about the history of tea in India, no one has studied the visual histories that have sprung up around the tea plant, the tea plantation, and the teacup. I am particularly excited to meet with a wide array of experts on the subject. My conversations with them will, no doubt, be inspiring and as eye-opening as my archival research."

Her passion for the evergreen shrub seems to run in the family, her great grandfather, Tarini Prosad, being the founder Chairman of the Indian Tea Planters' Association in Jalpaiguri. Ray has been fascinated by the visual and contextual representations of tea that has evolved in India over the past three centuries. Many of these involve silver and porcelain utensils, furniture, painted portraits and landscape views,



Romita Ray

photographs, postcards, advertisements, commercial packaging, and the landscape architecture of tea plantations.

"I am humbled, delighted, and eager to fulfill the expectations that come with receiving this highly competitive fellowship," says Ray who would like to develop an art history seminar around tea and possibly a digital huma-

nities project down the road. "I look forward to the experiences that await me and to drinking lots of tea."

Ray is not oblivious to the crisis ailing the tea industry. "These are a reality of the industry but one needs to balance the bleakness with identifying tea as a botanic exotic. After all, it's a living history that continues to connect Kolkata and Britain even after so many years," said the Loreto House alumna.

Ray delivered her first "tea talk" in Kolkata on April 11, 2016, at Victoria Memorial Hall, on Botanical treasure, ornamental wonder: *Aestheticizing tea in Britain and Colonial Calcutta*. "My book is about the visual cultures and landscapes... it is about consumption of tea in colonial and post-colonial India."

The book will not be launched soon. Extensive research will be done at museums, archives, private collections, tea estates and libraries in the UK, India and Sri Lanka and the epicentre of the Indian tea industry, Kolkata, housing the Tea Research Association, Indian Tea Association and the Tea Board, along with auction house J Thomas and even tea companies McLeod Russell and Goodricke headquartered here. This is where she will find the East India Company records. Ray has visited Assam, Darjeeling and the Dooars and will travel to south India as well as Sri Lanka and dig out family records with the help of multi-generations of tea families.



**TRADE  
ENQUIRES  
SOLICITED**

# Super AusKelp

Certified Organic Australian Bull Kelp  
**FOR TEA PLANTATION**

**NASAA**  
certified organic



## CUSTOMERS' SPEAK



**RUCHIRA PARSHAD, M. D.,** Shakomato Tea Co. Ltd.  
Super Auskelp is an organic Boron based Cytokinins derived from sea weed stems of Australian Kelp, which is very much compatible with all Agro Chemicals and Micro nutrients. It improves the plant vigor, growth and yield. In SHAKOMATO, we found its application very encouraging.



**SANJAY BANSAL,** Chairman, Ambootia Tea Group  
We have used 'Super Auskelp', an organic certified natural sea weed extract made from Australian Bull kelp, in few of our group tea estates in 2015.

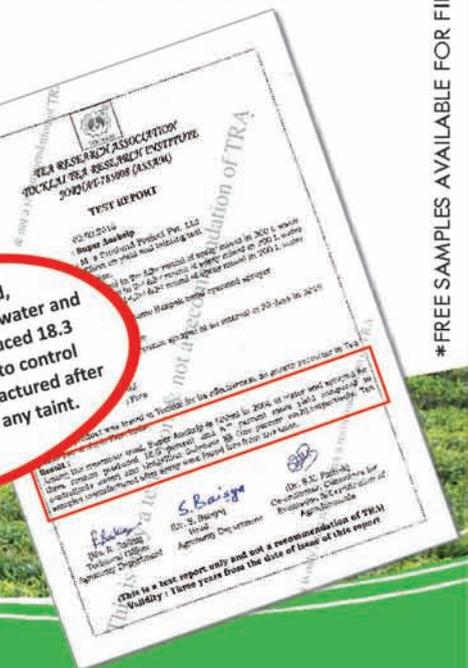
The tea bushes, upon application of Super Auskelp, showed luxurious growth and better pest resistance. Regular use of Super Auskelp may impart enhancement in production as well as in quality.

Super Auskelp is the magical seaweed fertiliser. Scientifically documented observed effects include:

1. **INCREASED** Nutrients uptake by converting unavailable insoluble forms of nutrients into useable soluble form.
2. Increased **SHELF** life, Improves **QUALITY** of fruits and vegetables
3. provide drought and frost resistance
4. Helps develop plant **RESISTANCE** to sucking **INSECTS** and **FUNGAL** attack also work as **HERBICIDE**.
5. Helps grow stronger root systems resulting in more **ABUNDANT PRODUCE** and **RICHER FOLIAGE**
6. Approved by **Tea Research Association (TRA)** and **Certified Organic by NASAA**.

**TRA, Tocklai Reports Says**

**Result :**  
Among the treatment tried, Super Auskelp@500ml in 200L of water and sprayed for three rounds produced 18.3 percent more yield compared to control (only water) Tea samples manufactured after spray were found free from any taint.



For further details, please contact  
**Auskelp Organics**  
**Sunland Projects (P) Ltd.**

124A, Motilal Nehru Road, Kolkata-700029  
Ph:+91 33 2455 9780, Fax: +91 33 2455 9781  
Mobile: +91 98302 64232, +91 96740 12200  
+91 98300 63524, +91 97486 03889  
Email: ausbullkelp@gmail.com

Super AusKelp can be used over a range of plants including vegetables, flowering plants, compost, orchards, vineyards, tea, tobacco, cereal crops, dairy and in farms growing organic produce.

\*FREE SAMPLES AVAILABLE FOR FIELD TRIAL

# Tea Stains

“Will no one tell me what tales they tell?”



Gopika Nath

Gazing at the sky and observing the clouds taking on different shapes and hues can be very absorbing. One can spend hours conjuring and colouring the clouds with one's imagination as they join and separate and break up into pieces and go adrift.

For artist Gopika Nath, it was the dregs in her tea cups that fired her imagination. Her exhibition "The Piercing Needle" held recently at Gallery Sanskriti, Kolkata, has been inspired by left-over marks in her tea cups. For the last seven years these marks have framed her exploration of self, in the contemporary world through tea, the tea-cup and dregs within. It has been a fascinating journey, shared through textiles, video, installation and poetry.

Over the years, Gopika worked with many textile making techniques to find a whole world within the ancient art of embroidery. Her work is autobiographical, but through the depth of exploration - which 'The Piercing Needle' enables, she has found that much of what she feels, thinks and expresses, is universal to the human condition.

In an on-going project, to creatively translate the textile saint poets Kabir, Namdev and Dariya Sahib, she has found resonance with their use of cloth, dye, stains and sewing as metaphors for life. Her work has been emboldened and enlightened by their wisdom.

In her own worlds Gopika says :  
“I enjoy my cup of tea and have a cupboard full of various teas from Jasmine to Darjeeling, Nilgiri, Assam, Herbal teas, Japanese Sencha and Genmaicha and I also enjoy a cup of good old desi masala chai. All of them have a different texture or leaf. The Jasmine leaves uncurl their sly tendrils under the influence of hot water, looking suspiciously serpent like. Remnants of various condiments of a rich masala chai, stain the cup with lines so evocative that I have spent the better part of two years, recording them. Photographing marks left in the cup, half drunk or emptied of all the liquid content. In the process I have also studied dimensions of the cups and mugs that I have drunk from. I pondered on these images for a long



Photo : Mrittika Bose

time, wondering how to translate them into something I could share and decided to have them digitally printed onto fabric. I then worked with layered images, using the stains to reflect a state of mind. These marks became evocative of guilt, shame and blame, the kind of thoughts we carry around us that come up under self-reflection or introspection; of thoughts mulling over a cup of tea.

There have been many instances in my life, where I think of what it would have been like had I done things differently. The list is endless and the marks in the tea-cups thereon, allowed me to go back in memory, delve deep into my psyche revealing familial histories and national influences; making me realise I could not have done any different. Life played herself out such that this is what it was meant to be. I have never really accepted the concept of destiny but started realising that the only choice one ever has is the attitude with which we accept what occurs in life.

This exploration was not necessarily comforting and dealing



with various feelings and thoughts, I would tear the fabric, pull it into different directions, distorting the weave, creating bunches and

something new. It allowed me the grace to pick up old memories, wounds and issues, deal with them through the process of tearing,



Photo : Mrittika Bose



bulges which the running stitch that I have chosen to work with, often exaggerated or quelled, depending upon the mood I wanted to portray. I discovered the wonders of the running stitch through an article I read three decades ago, on the Sujnis of Bihar. I liked the idea of taking the old and making something useful from what has been, fashioning it into

layering and stitching to lend another perspective to things, renewing the spirit, taking control of the past towards deeper realisations which empowered through the process of looking.

These meditations on tea, tea leaves, tea cups and the process of drinking became a fascination; you could even call it a kind of obsession. Each day there seemed to be yet another nuance that I absolutely must have in my photographed collection."

The one-of-a-kind expression of art left the viewers looking at their tea cups with new wonder.

Reporting : Mrittika Bose



# Iron Filings in Tea



## Measures to control the problem



Dr Baby U I

### Factors influencing accuracy of test result

There are various factors influencing the accuracy of the test result of iron filings in tea. The first and foremost is the inadequacy in the procedure. Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) prescribes IS 3633: 2003 and FSSAI prescribes DGHS Manual (Lab Manual 4) : 2005 for determining iron filings in tea. Both the procedures are essentially the same specifying the separation of iron particles from a known quantity of tea sample with a 'powerful magnet' and estimating it gravimetrically (ie., weighing and expressing the mass of iron filings in mg/kg (ppm) following the formula :  $M1 \times 1000 \times 1000 / M2$ , where M1 is the mass in grams of iron filings and M2 is mass in that grams of sample taken for the test). The major factors influencing the accuracy of the test result are summarised below.

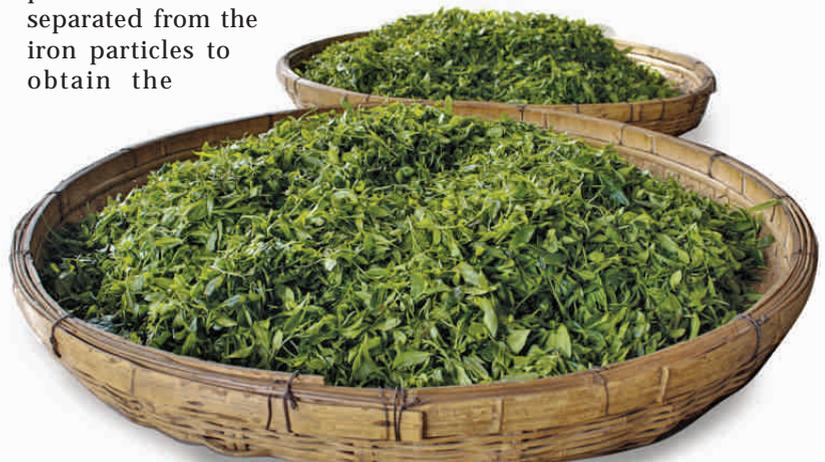
- 1 Sampling method : Sampling from bulk tea as well as the preparation of sample for laboratory analysis (IS3611 : 2000) have a direct bearing on the result.
- 1 The power of the magnet : Since

the power of the magnet is not specified in the standard, the labs might be using magnets of different magnetic strength (2000 Gauss, 4000 Gauss etc) and shape. The more the power of the magnet the more will be the out turn (ie., more particles will be attracted by the powerful magnet and hence get higher values), resulting in variation in the result of the laboratories.

- 1 The so called 'iron filings' (particles removed through magnetic separation) are not iron per se. It includes iron filings as well as iron particles entrapped in tea leaf bits during the manufacturing process. So it is obvious that the tea particles should be separated from the iron particles to obtain the

actual weight of iron filings. For this, the segregated particles need to be ground and the process of magnetic separation is repeated till all the tea particles are eliminated. This crucial step is not specified in the standards (both IS 3633 and DGHS). So the laboratories that are not doing the post magnetic separation grinding tend to report higher values.

- 1 The initial grinding of the sample as described in IS 13852: 1994 is not enough to separate all the tea particles from the 'iron filing'
- 1 Size and shape of the magnet : The Board suggests using magnet of 3" length 1" width and 0.5" thickness or of any convenient size that can be held easily for operation.
- 1 Readability of the balance (0.1 mg or 1 mg) used for the weightment also influences the accuracy of the result.
- 1 It is necessary to use rare earth magnet for lab testing as the ferro magnet tends



to lose its magnetic power over a period of time.

## Sources of iron contamination

The iron content present in made tea may be classified as 'inherent iron' and 'iron filings.' The former is of plant origin (non magnetic part), while the latter is extraneous in nature (magnetic part). Inherent iron forms the nutritional part and does not contribute to metal magnetic contamination.

The main source of iron contamination is the wear and tear of machineries. Among these the most important contributory factor is CTC rollers which involve a great deal of grinding action between the two toothed rollers. In addition to the wear and tear of machineries, pieces of iron find their way into the green leaf during handling and transportation. Hair pins and safety pins of pluckers, nuts and bolts from the transporting vehicles, pieces of wire meshes from withering troughs; accidentally entering the manufacturing process can contribute to this malady.

## Limit for iron filing in made tea

Many countries do not have limits for iron filings in tea. Some of the developed countries have fixed it as 120mg/kg. As per the Egyptian standard the limit for iron filing is 150 mg/kg. According to the Indian standard for black tea (IS3633 : 2003), the limit is 250mg/kg. Recently, FSSAI, India's premier body that sets food safety levels, through its interim order, has fixed the limit as 150mg/kg (FSSAI 2014). On the contrary, certain countries have specification for iron as 'total iron' which represent inherent iron (non magnetic) as well as iron filings present in the sample. Accordingly,

The main source of iron contamination is the wear and tear of machineries



it is 150mg/kg for iron, 300 mg/kg for Libya and 500mg/kg for Sri Lanka.

## Health hazard

There is no scientific evidence that the iron filings in tea pose health hazards. Iron particles will not dissolve in hot water and so, during brewing it will directly sediment and settle in the bottom of the tea pot. Since brewed tea is strained before drinking, iron filings need not pose any nutritional or toxic health hazard.

Natesan and Ranganathan (1990) observed that only <10% of the iron content present in tea plant tissue (tea dhoor) is diffused into the tea brew. Further, in the author's observation there was no correlation between the iron filing content of tea dhoor and total iron content in tea brew.

Iron is not enlisted as poisonous metal under Part XI, Rule 57 of the PFA rules. In fact, iron is an essential micronutrient which plays a vital role in many physiological processes. Non magnetic iron ingested through normal dietary source, does not cause any health hazard. Iron deficiency leading to anaemia is a major health problem

in human beings. This is common in children and pregnant women. On the other hand, iron filings in food products can cause health hazards. Ingestion of greater than 50 to 100 mg of iron per day may result in pathological iron deposition in body tissues. Overdose of iron may cause vomiting, abdominal pain, bloody diarrhoea, vomiting blood and lethargy. Studies are in progress at the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, on the impact of iron filings in tea on human health.





# The 'Chemistry' of Tea

There are some moments when tea and life converge perfectly

**F**ebruary 1993, midnight, 20 days to Class XII Board exams

Tonight, it is Chemistry. What am I doing, looking at these equations? Organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry - why am I even learning this stuff? I know what I am going to do once I am out of school. I will study literature. I will read poetry and novels and then be graded on how well I understand them. This Chemistry is just purgatory, before I get to the real stuff. Alright, let me open the sample papers, and good god, why do I have to stare at these reams of notes? I mean, I am happy that there are so many chemicals and compounds and what not... but did I have to know about them all? Definitely not.

And now it's been half an hour, and all I have done is go through this meaningless existential crisis. Wait...someone is pushing the door open.

Ten minutes later  
So that was the pater. Father.

Baba. Whatever. Pretty much the reason why I am in this purgatory because he had said I should study science in high school. But today I forgive him, finally. Why, you ask? Well, when he walked in, I gave him my best steely glare. Believe me, I am getting really good at it. He and I are always arguing these days. Or rather, I am launching into a rant and he is looking resigned to having a teenage daughter losing her mind before the exams. Anyway, so I pulled my book closer when he came in and barely glanced up, mad as I was about Chem and all. But all he did was ruffle my hair and place a steaming cup at my elbow and then he quietly left the room. He didn't even comment on the radio tuned to Vividh Bharati that I have taken to listening



while studying.

I am looking at the cup. It's filled with strong, hot tea. Steaming. I will bring my face right on top and just inhale the steam and feel it fog up my glasses for a while. Sniff the vapours and let them fill my lungs. Only after that will I take my first sip, once the tea has cooled a bit. Yes, I am a wimp, I can't drink it hot. I know he has made it just the way I need it right now - strong, sweet and with the correct amount of milk.

Suddenly, this horrible subject I have to study doesn't seem so bad. After all, this is the last hurrah before I am rid of it forever.

I wonder how a brown liquid in a cup can change my thoughts, emotions and even how I feel about life? How does putting some leaves in water of just the right temperature and adding some sugar and milk create this wonderful concoction? Oh dear...could it be...dare I say the word...CHEMISTRY?!

Sudeshna Shome Ghosh

# The click of convenience



Log in to the all-new Contemporary Brokers website <http://www.contemporarybrokers.com> for

- Auction info from Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri
- Statistics, production, price analysis from India and other tea growing countries
- Cover story of *Contemporary Tea Time*
- Glimpses of tea history and a lot more....

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### Brief History

The firm was originally registered as Contemporary Tea Company Private Limited in 1975 and it began to assist producers in selling tea by February 1976. The beginning evoked a great deal of interest and excitement. It held its first auction in Calcutta in April of the same year.

This new entrant to broking was founded in response to the trade's needs at a time when it would be interesting to recall that one of the four major Calcutta-auctioneers, namely, W. S. Crosswell was declining rapidly. There were rumours that its finances were in a turmoil and therefore its days were numbered. As it happened, Crosswell collapsed in 1970 leaving behind a debt of some 50 lakh rupees, a much bigger figure than would appear today after two decades of inflation.

In the several years following 1981, when the first tea auction was held in Calcutta, four brokers came into being. One of these was Crosswell, whose sad story we have just told. There was yet another of the quartet which was also showing signs of emaciation. It was losing business, as it were, by the month and its chief executive was going around appealing to producers to support him.

Marketing has often been defined as the exchange of satisfaction for money. Surely a similar definition holds in relation to the mechanism of Auctioning.

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### Important Information

- Tea Auction
- Tea Warehouse Licensing Order-1999
- Tea Marketing Control Order-2003
- Tea Distribution Export Control Order-2005
- Tea Act and Rules
- Approved Guidelines for registration of Factory including BLP
- Plantation Labour Act amended
- FFA Act & Rules
- LIST OF NABL ACCREDITED LABORATORY FOR TESTING TEA UPDATED
- LIST OF FPO AG UNDER TDEC OS
- IMCCP

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### Team of Executives

Kolkata

Guwahati

Comp

- Social D
- Group P
- Team of
- Our Office

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### Tea Broking

More than one-third of all tea auctioned in India is handled by Contemporary...

Latest News: [Kolkata City - 11/1/2016](#)

Our single minded group is on how best to achieve a remunerative exchange of the seller's tea for the buyer's money.

The medium has largely been the auction which is a great forum that reviews tea and spontaneously distributes it to whichever buyer in the world that wants it.

Transparency, fairness and punctuality of payment have been our instances. We rejoice to find changes as they take place like the switch to E-auction.

Gallery of photographs

INTRODUCTION	BUSINESS	REFERENCE	LEISURE
About Us	Kolkata	Statistics	Contemporary Tea Time published quarterly since 1988.
Brief History	Guwahati	Company Profile	Gallery of photographs
	Siliguri		

# The stirring tale of Indian tea



Captured in words and rare archival photographs, **The Saga of Indian Tea** by Prafull Goradia and Kalyan Sircar, records the splendour of Indian tea.

The flavour of the British era, the trials and tribulations, toil and hardship and the nurturing and flourishing of the industry comes alive in this panoramic story of tea.

