

CONTEMPORARY

TEA TIME

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



THE GLORY
THAT IS **INDIAN TEA**





Errol O' Brien

TEA QUIZZY

QUESTIONS

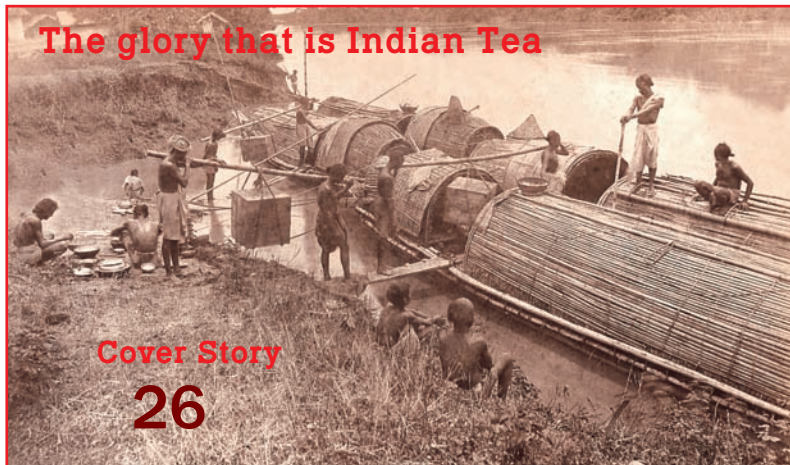
- 1) In early years of tea drinking in England what were known as Penny Universities?
- 2) Why are the entrances to the Japanese rooms meant for the Green Tea ritualistic ceremonies, very low?
- 3) An 'OP' in traditional tea connotations means Orange Pekoe. The word Orange has nothing to do with the fruit or the colour. Why was it incorporated into tea symbolisms?
- 4) How is a tea called Lapsang Souchong produced?
- 5) What in tea parlance is a Rang Ghar?
- 6) Where are Frost Teas produced?
- 7) Wah Tea and Him Tea are brands from which area in India?
- 8) During the dormancy period what type of undesirable leaf surfaces from the tea bushes?
- 9) Whose lyrical words are these " Come oh come ye tea thirsty restless ones/
The kettle boils, bubbles and sings musically?
- 10) Name the experimental tea farm opened by IIT Kharagpur manufacturing Orthodox, CTC and Green teas?

Answers

- 1) Exclusively for men (19th century gender bias) a tea drinking pub. One penny for a cup of tea. Newspapers and adda • 2) The participants are meant to cast off pride and accept humility by literally creeping in • 3) The Dutch who were one of the pioneers in tea purchases from South East Asia presented a gift of tea to the ruling dynasty in Holland – The House of Orange. The word Orange was added to the grade of tea • 4) Black tea is dried over smoking pine needles • 5) The fermentation room where there is a subtle change of colour from green to a coppery hue • 6) During the cold weather from the higher elevation of India's Blue Mountains: The Nilgiris • 7) Kangra Valley • 8) Banji Leaf • 9) Rabindranath Tagore • 10) Gopali



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Nilofer, wife of tea planter Hassan Khalid, was at death's door. But as she says, "Who can take anyone away, if it is not God's will?"

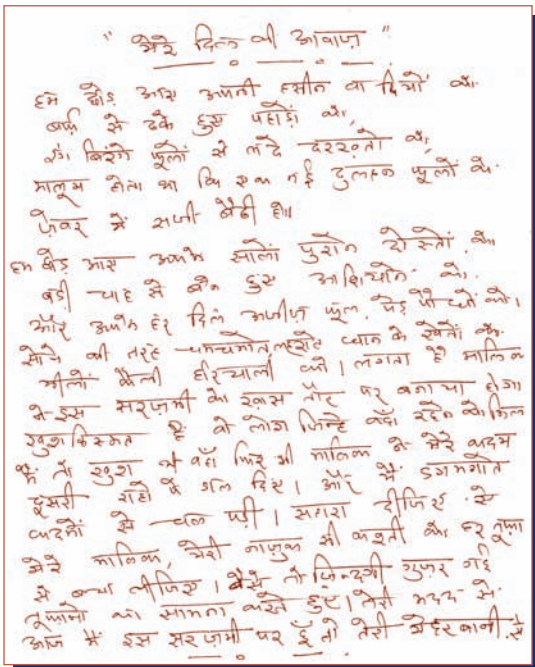
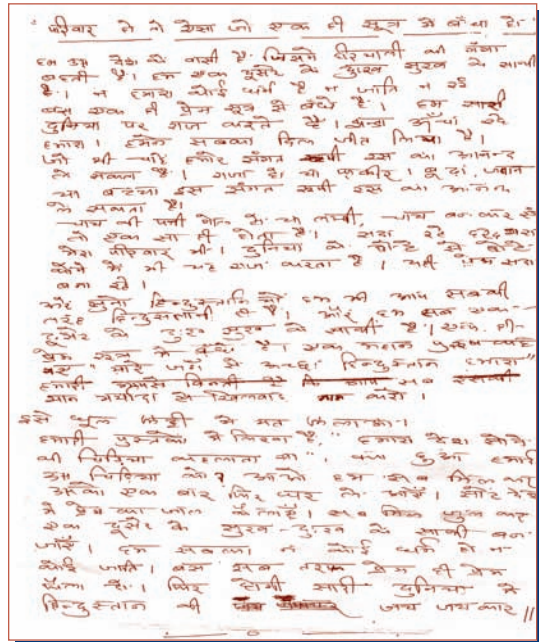


Nilofer Khalid

The Family must be our which has got uniting force in it

We belong to the nation which has got greenery all around it. We are fellow travellers supporting each other in happiness as well as sorrow. We don't belong to any particular religion nor to any particular caste but we are all tied together in a bond of love. We rule all over the world and let our flag fly high forever. We have won the hearts of all around us and whosoever wants can enjoy the pleasure of our company. There shall be no distinction between a king and a pauper. The old, the youth, as well as the child can similarly enjoy the pleasure of the company around us.

The tea leaves, whether it is round in shape or long, when it is brewed, the colour is the same. Let my family always remain hail and hearty. Love rules the world even in the remotest corner of the world. Let this love be eternal.



The Inner Voice of My Heart

We have left for good our beautiful homes covered with white peaks of snow on the mountains where the trees were laden with beautiful flowers of myriad colours like a beautiful bride, decked with ornaments of flowers. We had left behind our age old friends as well as our beautiful homes built with our choices. We had also left beautiful flowers, trees and fields of paddy crops where greenery was in sight around us for miles together.

It appears that the Lord has created this beautiful landscape for such good fortunate human beings including me, who lived there with pleasure and happiness. I was also happy there but alas, my Lord had put me on an unknown path on which I moved ahead with trembling steps. O my Lord, give me courage so that my fragile boat of life be saved from the tsunami. As it is, my life has whirled away facing the vagaries of nature. But I have implicit faith in your blessings and only on account of it, I am still alive on the earth.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

The year That was

The year began with a promise of good prices, the carry forwards had been consumed. But alas, March harvested its best crop ever in north India. And while wages and inputs cost spiralled upwards, the prices of tea chose the downward spiral. Just when the excess available went into the pipe line in August, September produced an unprecedented harvest. The weather Gods were smiling on the supply side of the equation.

In September, Pan India Auctions and a new settlement banking process was rolled out by the farsighted Tea Board, just as demand seemed to return on news of weak supplies from south India and Sri Lanka on the national and international fronts respectively. This Pan India platform was probably the first ever e-commerce platform to go live without having been fully tested and produced problems of Herculean proportions, some of which are yet to be resolved. Over confidence on the part of the NSEIT and Bank of India, were later diagnosed to be the real viruses. Thankfully this was rolled back a month after its introduction and normalcy prevails there on.

Come November 8th and the much discussed and debated demonetization followed.

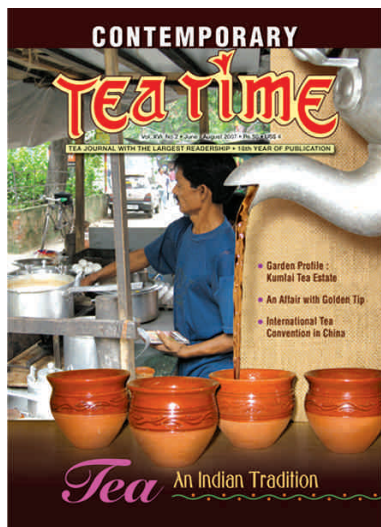
As the season draws to a close, two questions come to mind, more frequently than others. For how long can an industry be dependent on the generic and simple economic equation of supply versus demand or on the gods of weather, for its wellbeing? Does the answer to these questions lie somewhere between aggressive irrigation and innovative marketing?

We take this opportunity to wish our readers a happy, healthy and happening 2017.



A Nandkeolyar





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Prafull Goradia takes us back to his gunny and tea days at J Thomas

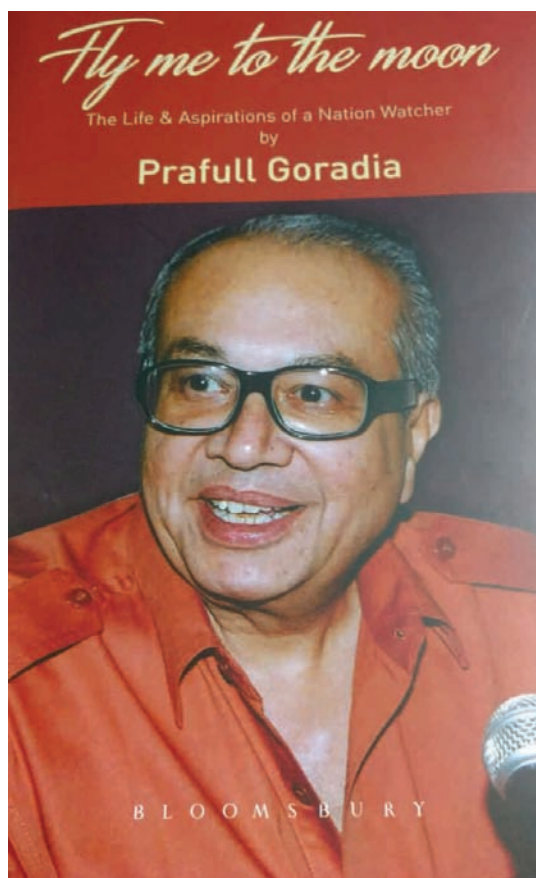
It was on 25 November 1957 at 8.30 that I entered number 8 Mission Row (now 11, R N Mukherjee Road) to join the Gunny department of J. Thomas and Co. Amiya Chakravarty, the Jute and Gunny office manager was already there to show me my seat in the room, mainly occupied by John F Roger; he arrived by 9 o'clock. I was on a year's probation (instead of the normal three months) because the department had never before tried an Indian covenanted assistant. It was a den of Scots with an earlier exception of only one Englishman.

I was an emergency recruit because the head of department was ill which left only two others to service the business. A couple of months earlier I had lost a tea department appointment to Bheem (M K D) Varma, the nephew of once the Maharajah of Tripura and Cooch Behar plus a Doon School alumnus to boot. Those were the days when Calcutta's expatriate ethos preferred an Indian prince if a public school boy from Britain was not available. About the same time joined such a boy called Charles Sleath also on the tea side and the future Maharaj Jai Singh of Jaipur.

The office building was an 18th century house which had once belonged to a Mr. Clavering, a member of the well known Warren



entry to the Boxwallah World



My training as a gunny broker began immediately on 25 November. Four weeks in the office with the clerks, three weeks at India Jute Mill and a week at Birla Jute Mill, at Budge Budge. Thereafter, three weeks of introduction to the buyers who were exporters of gunnies and sellers which were the mills. In the twelfth week of my work, I was asked to service these clients and do business. This was mid-February 1958. Every transaction was individual, separate and virtually had to be fought for. It was fun, though full of hard work. One had the satisfaction of totaling at the end of every week how much brokerage one had earned for the Company; a pleasure and pain that was lost in tea broking. By July then onwards, I was scoring some 6,000 rupees per month or more than four times my

cost to the employers.

Everyone was keen and active but I feared the department was not earning enough, although I had no access to the figures in those early days. One stumbling block that I encountered frequently was from the so-called underbrokers. Unlike in tea, these men were actually banyans or also underwriters. If an Indian buyer failed to pay his dues in time, the banyan had to pay up. Every European or British company who traded in India had a banyan or guarantor because the European young men who came out to work could not know easily the Indian

Hastings, India's first Governor-general appointed by the East India Company, Council or cabinet. The old sprawling structure was called Nilhat House because J Thomas's first business was broking indigo (no connection with the current Indigo Airlines). Then was added shellac broking, then jute followed soon by gunnies, then tea, then tea quotas, later rubber, shipping and stocks/shares etc; an illustrious catalogue of businesses.

or the bazaar traders and their reliability.

The gunny department underbrokers were two cousins Sagarmall Almal and Ram Narain Almal. They got 20 percent of all the brokerage, whether earned through Indian or European buyers. By the time I came on the scene, the Company had only one Indian buyer, admittedly big, and that was the family who owned a part of Jardine Henderson. Surely he did not need a guarantor! I therefore felt that the Almals were enjoying a picnic. All the Indian buyers I called on like Ispahani and F. Gangjee, they would reject; a privilege to accept or not they were given. Quite a bit of the orders I got they did not accept and the brokerage was missed.

The real big disadvantage was that most brokers had also turned

high. But all this was not to be and the department was closed with effect from 31 March 1959. Thirty four days before that I was transferred to the tea department. I worked there for nearly twelve years. Knowing about tea was very interesting although commercially the years were not half as exciting as in gunnies.

There was however one very exciting event early in my tea career. That was the laying of the foundation of the new auction room in December 1961 by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He came straight after addressing the annual meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce at what is now known as India (then Royal) Exchange. A charity auction of six chest lots of tea by six brokers. Each lot had been donated by a producer of a separate tea growing district



Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the foundation of the new auction room of J Thomas in December, 1961

into jobbers. Whereby if a mill wanted to sell a quantity of a particular fabric, the broker himself, on the spot, bought it at his risk, albeit at a discount. And later sold the stuff when the opportunities came. This my employers did not do as a matter of policy. Here a less conservative firm might have got the banyans to bear the risk. If the current ones declined others would have been prepared since the goodwill of J. Thomas in the jute trade was

namely Assam, Cachar, Dooars, Terai, Darjeeling and Tripura. The proceeds were donated by the Calcutta Tea Traders Association to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. On behalf of the organisers, I was told to assist the official security men. It was already recognised in the Company that I knew more auction buyers than anyone else. So I was told. Could it be that my colleagues would rather avoid the responsibility if anything went wrong with the security? Perhaps

not!

While addressing the tea trade, Mr. Nehru said that someone should write a history of the industry. I took the advice seriously but could not implement it until about four years ago. Looking at the volume called *Saga of India Tea*, a friend remarked 'now why not a story of your life?' I didn't do anything until Bloomsbury, the British publishing house with a branch in India, agreed to publish a biography. Nevertheless, I have believed that the story of self may be taken as an exercise in egotism. To dilute such an impression, **I have four chapters that reflect contemporary times. One on who actually demolished the Babri Masjid; two, an insight into the Muslim mind, a lot of which I gained through eight years of trying to learn spoken Urdu; my teachers were excellent and articulate; three, Prime Minister Modi as I knew him until his election in 2014;** four, how to get the Indian economy moving faster especially keeping the problems of eastern India in mind. My long years in Calcutta and in tea and tobacco plus other chapters are extra.

I had been only four months in my job – April 1958 – when I had a most flattering taste of British impartiality and sense of justice. Gordon Gay was the managing director of the gunny department; he was ill and in a nursing home when I joined. He had opposed my recruitment because I was not Scottish. The Company chairman had overruled his views because of the emergency. Yet Gay never displayed any prejudice with regard to me. And he confirmed my contract although he could have waited for another eight months. I had been given an appointment on the basis of a year's probation. I last called on him and spent a few hours at Brighton. I travelled from London especially to see him in April 1961, I shall not forget!

Excerpt from the book Fly me to the moon by Prafull Goradia, published by Bloomsbury



High Points

Special events
down south



P S Sundar



Ramamurthi and Rajeswari serving food to the inmates of their free upgraded Old Age Home in the tea-hub of Denalai village in the Nilgiris in November

The dedication to the needy in November of the upgraded Old Age Home of M N Trust in the tea hub of Denalai village near Sogathorai, Coonoor, deserves special mention in south Indian tea history. For, it is an orphanage for deserted elders from poor families, created and run by a small tea grower family in the tea heartland of the Nilgiris.

N Ramamurthi hails from a small tea grower family belonging to Badaga, the predominant community of the Nilgiris. When caring for leprosy patients for the Tamil Nadu Government, he realised the reality of such patients being neglected in homes and accommodated a couple of elders

in his house with the support of his wife Rajeswari. This led to more demand for such accommodation and that is why they formed M N Trust in the name of Ramamurthi's parents with Rajeswari as Managing Trustee.

What happened thereafter is a valuable lesson for all. The couple converted an old house in their tea garden in Denalai village into the Old Age Home and started accommodating more elders. Ramamurthi siphoned substantial portion of his salary and Rajeswari almost the entire income from the tea garden, for running the Old Age Home. It is now 13 years since they began caring for deserted elders. Many small tea growers or

workers in tea estates have also deserted the elders in their homes. In the last couple of years, Ramamurthi has taken loans from all possible sources and Rajeswari has pledged her jewels and with the finance so raised, are running the Old Age Home to their best mental satisfaction. The re-dedication of the Old Age Home in November highlights the dedication of the couple to give the best possible facilities to the inmates. Now tangible expansion and improvements have been done to the infrastructure at the Home. Presently, there are 30 inmates – 19 of them women. They are anywhere above 60 up to 94 years old. Doctor on call, visit to the nearby Public Health Centres for treatments, regular medicine administration and nursing are now part of the system. Separate wards have been created for women and men with attached toilets with hot water facility. Each inmate has a specific place with cot and storage space. A 'Water Doctor' equipment gives them hot and safe



Tea delegates from various countries, dressed in their national attires, presented highlights of their culture at 'Global Galaxy' programme conducted by Nilgiris Cultural Association (NCA) with Kothari Agricultural management Centre (KAMC) in Coonoor.



At the IITC, Indonesian Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture Musdhalifah Machmud posing with delegates from tea industry and research institute of Indonesia who underwent training at KAMC, Coonoor.

drinking water. The spacious dining hall has tables for the elders to enjoy their meals in comfort. The entire campus is kept spic and span. The inmates stroll around the natural surroundings of Ramamurthi's tea garden, The Managing Trustee Rajeswari does not sit in an office but works in the kitchen and washes the clothes of the inmates.

"We need a minimum of Rs 45,000 monthly to meet the running expenses. Small tea growers in the neighbourhood who also grow vegetables donate some to us. Tea factories give some tea. Philanthropists from all walks of life support us with cash and kind. Thanks to this couple, deserted elders enjoy a comfortable lifestyle totally free of cost in the evenings of their life."

Another interesting happening was that Indonesia has invited global tea producers and consumers to meet in Bali for serious discussions on sustainability in international tea trade. "I used the India International Tea Convention (IITC) to invite them all. Indonesia wants tea consuming countries also to be part of the dialogue. Indonesia wants trade understanding with India, China and others", Indonesian Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture Musdhalifah Machmud said.

Earlier, delivering her Chief Guest address at IITC valedictory session, she introduced the group of 17 tea professionals from Indonesia currently undergoing training at Kothari Agricultural Management Centre (KAMC) through Government of India scholarships.



Tea Board Vice Chairman Bidyananda Barkakoty honouring Mariam Agnish in the presence of KAMC Director Dr A V K Iyengar (*extreme right*)

The Indonesian officers were part of the delegations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar and Nepal, attending a programme on tea plantation management at KAMC, Coonoor. The Nilgiris Cultural Association (NCA) helped them with a cross-ventilation of their culture at its 'Global Galaxy' programme. "NCA is rendering a yeoman's service in helping them showcase their cultural highlights", KAMC Director Dr AVK Iyengar, who was the Chief Guest, said.

Tea Board Vice Chairman Bidyananda Barkakoty who was the Guest of Honour, hailed NCA's efforts at providing the much-needed opportunity for presenting authentic information about culture of various countries.

The delegates, who came dressed in their traditional attire, thrilled the full-house audience with their National Anthem, country folk songs and dances.

"This is NCA's 145th programme in its 18th year of service to the cause of cultural uplift. NCA offers its programmes free-of-cost to the public as cultural enrichment is the goal", NCA Convener S Ananthkrishnan said.

At this function, Tea Board Vice Chairman Bidyananda Barkakoty honoured Mariam Agnish, a tenth standard student and daughter of A J S Kumar, billiards marksman of Coonoor Club, which has many tea planters, traders and brokers as members, on her becoming World No: 10 after representing India at World Snooker championship for women at Belgium. She is the first and only sportsperson from the Nilgiris to participate in an official international sports contest in cue games all these years! At the NCA function, she led the international tea delegates in lighting the traditional lamp.

Photos : Author



Tidings from **BANGLADESH**



Monjur Hossain

Some important issues

Revitalising tea export

After a period of continuously declining production, record high yield of tea last year and another expected record crop in the current season is a welcome change, as observed by the tea producers. An industry source suggests that the way things are moving, production this year is expected to beat this record too. Rise of production in any sector is good news – and more so in this case as tea production started declining from about a decade ago due to certain complications. During the dull period, domestic demand of tea outstripped the declining production and made Bangladesh, once its major exporter, a net importer. Tea had to be imported to meet the increasing demand at home. The authorities then took certain measures and production of tea started rising again, and reached a record 67.38 mkg in 2015. The amount may exceed 75 mkg this year, according to experts.

The country has over 56,846 hectare of land under tea cultivation and 172 commercial tea estates. The industry accounts for three percent of global tea production and employs more than 0.4 million people of which nearly 75 percent are women. Once tea was the second major foreign exchange earner of the country after jute and the export markets included USA, UK, France, Switzerland, Kuwait, Oman, Sudan, Pakistan, India, Poland, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Belgium. The industry accounts for one percent of gross domestic product.

Tea being one of the most important non-alcoholic beverage drink worldwide, has been gaining further popularity as an important 'health drink' in view of its purported medicinal value. It is served as a morning drink for nearly two-thirds of the world population everyday.

Tea had been one of the major contributors to our national exchequer for a long time. But the industry is confronted with a multitude of problems like lack of capital and modern machinery, lower market value, lower yield per hectare and lack of adequate source of water for irrigation throughout the year. In addition, lack of medical facilities for labour and infrastructure are other major constraints.

To address these problems the government undertook some policy initiatives and tried to revive the sector that brought some success, but much remains to be done to fully revitalise the tea sector. The tax system is too complex and rates are high. Trade policy needs to be revised to allow imports of made tea and exports of green leaf. In addition, there has been a phenomenal rise in domestic consumption due to swelling urban population and emergence of a burgeoning middle class. Total domestic consumption is around 50 mkg.

The increasing local demand led to the growth of a lucrative domestic market that attracted new investment in production and marketing of tea. Local conglomerates have come forward with huge

investment, bought new lands and set up new gardens.

These investors, along with some multinationals who were already in the business for nearly a century, not only arrested the decline in production but pushed production to a new height. Bangladesh lost edge in tea exports mainly due to increasing domestic consumption that takes up around 90 percent of its annual production.

Industry insiders believe that Bangladesh will require to import tea for next five to six years if the current pace of internal consumption continues.

Apart from the problems facing the tea industry as mentioned above, there are some other factors that work as deterrent for growth of production to the desired level. These include, among others, low hectare-wise production, lack of development initiatives and replacement of century-old saplings. Bangladesh is lagging behind in hectare-wise production of tea, compared to major tea producing and exporting countries such as Sri Lanka, India, China and Kenya according to Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh.

“No possibility of losses in tea cultivation”

Recently Chairman of Bangladesh Tea Board, Major General Md. Shafeenul Islam, visited the tea regions of northern Bangladesh. While inaugurating a new tea factory there, he said there is no possibility of losses in cultivation of tea following its increasing demand both at home and abroad. The farmers should be trained in tea cultivation that has ushered in a new hope to achieve self-reliance, he said, while exchanging views with tea farmers at 'Soma Tea Estate' in a village Purbo Bichhondoi under Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat. Ferdous Ahmed, the owner of this new tea factory, plans to process tea of his own plantation and also process the green leaf of the neighbouring small tea farmers. On this occasion Ashraful Islam, Ahad Ali and Aminur Rahman also spoke on the prevailing prospect of tea farming and other related issues on behalf of the local farmers. The BTB Chairman said, "Tea cultivation will change the fortune of the local farmers speeding up development of Lalmonirhat district". He put emphasis on popularising farming of the profitable cash crop and increasing number of tea gardens in the sub-Himalayan region. Earlier, the BTB Chairman inaugurated a new tea garden 'Three MT Plantation' on three-bigha land area at village Dulali under Aditmari upazila and visited different tea gardens in Lalmonirhat district and discussed with the local farmers.

Seminar on Tea

The School of Business of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), organised a seminar on 'Tea Industry in Bangladesh: Prospects and Challenges'



Major General Md. Shafeenul Islam, Chairman, Bangladesh Tea Board

recently at the IUB campus in Bashundhara, Dhaka. The legendary figure in tea industry of Bangladesh, Mirza Salman Ispahani, Managing Director of MM Ispahani Ltd, was the Keynote Speaker of the seminar.

Through an in-depth presentation, he discussed the evolution of the tea industry in Bangladesh. He also underscored the challenges and opportunities; export potentials; employability and career opportunities of the industry. He emphasized the need of having appropriate financing and favourable environment in order to make the tea industry comprehensively successful in Bangladesh.

Prof M Omar Rahman, Vice Chancellor, IUB, and Prof Sarwar Uddin Ahmed, Dean, School of Business, delivered the welcome remarks. Among the guests, Rashed Chowdhury, Chairman, Board of Trustees, IUB, spoke on the occasion. Towhid Samad, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Chittagong Independent University, delivered the vote of thanks. The seminar was followed by a question-answer session in which experts from the tea industry, members of the faculties, management and a good number of students participated. On behalf of the University, A Matin Chowdhury, Chairman, IUB Founding Trust, along with other guests, presented a crest to the distinguished speaker.



Mirza Salman Ispahani, MD
MM Ispahani Ltd
Chairman, IUB Founding Trust, along with other guests, presented a crest to the distinguished speaker.

The writer is Managing Director of PMTC (Bangladesh) Limited



The charm of IRANI Chai

Irani Chai is a true fusion of Indo-Persian culture, says ERROL O'BRIEN

The former kingdom of Persia now Iran, is a picturesque trellis work of historical masterpieces with India. Indo - Iranian involvement display a scintillating touchstone of cross-

culture elevation over the centuries.

Whilst India's priority today is the importing of over 400000 barrels of crude oil from Iran per day and the formation of trade routes, Irani *chai* is a true fusion of Indo-Persian culture. This *dosti* is a time turner in tradition.

More recently, our Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Iran and gifted the Grand Ayatollah a seventh century manuscript of the Holy Quran written in Kulfic script and attributed to the Prophet's son-in-law Hazrat Ali.

On meeting the Prime Minister Hasan Rouhani, he signed an agreement of \$500 million towards the development of the south eastern port of Chabahar as India's gateway to Afghanistan. This route

enables India to bypass Pakistan and also gain access to resource rich Central Asia.

Turning to religion and architecture, the Lotus Temple in New Delhi was designed by a Canadian of Iranian origin. He spent ten years in emulating the beauty of a flower creating a flowing visual impact.

Persian immigration to India dates back at least 1500 years. The Zoroastrian followers of the prophet Zarathushtra arrived in Gujarat to escape the religious atrocities from the Arab invaders.

The story goes that the local ruler Jadi Rana said to the Zoroastrian high priest representing the community, "The kingdom is already full and could not accept refugees. How could they blend in with the local people?" The high priest asked for a vessel of milk filled to the brim to which he added a pinch of sugar. "Watch the vessel. It is not overflowing but like the sugar we shall blend in and sweeten the lives of the citizens". Sweeten indeed they did. The local ruler asked that the womenfolk adopt the local dress - the *sari*. The immigrants



were to learn the area's language and arms carrying were forbidden.

India was once the largest diaspora of the Parsis. Together with other immigrants from the Iranian province of Yazd and Kerman, they set up the Chai Cafes.

Tea saplings were smuggled out from India and propagated in Iran in 1882. Kashaf Imami was the Iranian Ambassador to India during the Raj. He watched how jealously the British guarded the secret of tea growth and manufacture. So he went in disguise and worked as a labourer in the plantations in the Kangra Valley to learn their trade secrets. On departure from India he was not searched claiming diplomatic immunity and smuggled out 3000 saplings which were planted in the Gulan region of Iran.

Today Iran produces 84000 mt of tea and imports around 23000



prominent chunky golden tip was displayed to the visitor indicating, 'This is the extravaganza for you'.

A great famine struck Persia in the 1890s in which millions starved to death and a desperate caravan like walk began across the Hindu Kush mountains on foot. The Persians fled their homeland to arrive in a land known as Hindostan. The desperate walk had one aim – survival.

We follow the footsteps of one Haji Yezdi who passed through Quetta and Karachi and at last finally landed in the city then

These were the roots of the present day Irani Chaiwallahs in Mumbai. The cafes serve this unique tea brewed in a special way. The accompaniment is a Brun Maska Pao which is simply a bun spread with butter. The bun is eaten after being dipped in the strong Irani Tea - *Pani Kam Chai* or a very strong tea - *Khari Chai*.

Tea leaves were added to water and boiled extracting flavour, essence and the entity of leaves till it became a decoction. Proportionately it was filtered into milk boiled over a low flame and thickened with *mawa*.

During the early years, the owners were always present, There was the murmur of the elderly and young, the rustle of newspapers, lack of fancy décor and the old but serviceable wooden furniture with tea cups on every table. For some, this was soothing and comfortingly reminiscent of relaxing times.

The last century saw the springing up of Irani cafes in every showcase street corner of Bombay (Mumbai), Poona (Pune) and Hyderabad. The distinctiveness and trademark of a typical Irani café were the high ceilings, red and green criss-cross table cloths, large mirrors to give a feeling of space. Patrons sat on European bentwood chairs.

The ambience was relaxed and cosmopolitan with cultural barriers and social taboos ingrained elsewhere in newly independent India, falling away.

There was a leisurely pace of business in the early 20th century with low profit margins. Once upon a time there were over 1000 cafes in three cities. Now a little over 100 survive giving way to fast food and coffee chains.



mt from India. In the 1960/'70s the Iranian buyers in the Calcutta Auctions concentrated on tippy teas. They paid exorbitant prices for golden tips from the Assam Orthodox offerings.

It was fashionable in Iran in the mid 20th century to entertain guests with tea but before the sipping started, a lavish show of dry tea leaves embedded with

known as Bombay after an eight month journey.

There was no money, home, work or family. He would sit at Apollo Bunder near the Gateway of India close to the port area. He carried with him a large *chula* with flaming coals at the bottom to heat up his unique preparation of Irani tea to workers on break and the passers-by.



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Empire of Tea

By Markman Ellis, Richard Coulton and Matthew Mauger



It is probably the first book of its kind written on tea. The authors are Markman Ellis, Richard Coulton and Matthew Mauger. All the three are college teachers at Queen Mary University of London. None of them has worked in the tea fraternity and yet they appear

singlo (standard green tea). It could not complete its order of 33 tonnes because it was one of the first ships when the East India Company's monopoly over China's trade had just begun.

At page 100, chapter three, covering China trade, one would incidentally know a good deal about shipping of those times. Names like Cuninghame and Chusan belong to that era which continued into the 20th century under the flag of P & O. To go on, John Ovington, a chaplain appointed for a ship of East India Company, was so scholarly as to have been a student of Trinity College, Dublin and St. John College, Cambridge. He arrived in Bombay in 1690 and later happened to travel to Surat where he discovered the unique Baniya banking system

practiced by the Baniyas of Surat. "The Baniyas", a Gujarati caste or community of merchants and traders, operated an extensive commercial system offering banking, intermediation, money-lending and financial services for both English factors and their Indian counterparts. The principal trade of Surat was silk and other textiles, but they also dealt in spices, pepper and diamonds."

Such are the interesting discoveries that the reader makes while reading the *Empire of Tea*. The bibliography carries hundreds of references, indicating the enormity

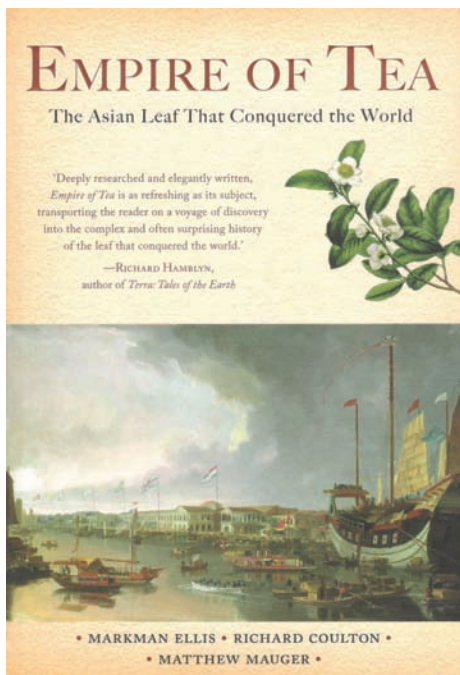
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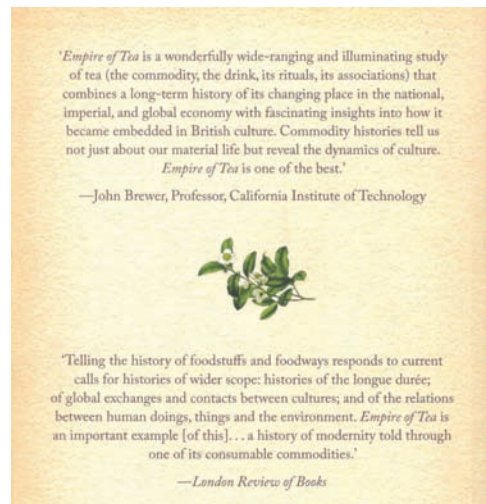
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of the research. Not to say that there is not plenty on tea included in this. The London Review of Books has this to say about the book *'Telling the history of foodstuffs and foodways responds to current calls for histories of wider scope : histories of the longue duree; of global exchanges and contacts between cultures; and of the relations between human doings, things and the environment. Empire*



to have taken enormous trouble to research into the history of tea. Whether by design or by coincidence, they have hit upon a great deal of the happenings in other spheres of life.

For example, *Stretham*, presumably owned by one Thomas Flint, had a dead weight of 350 tonnes. Its crew numbered 70. It had on board 40 guns for its protection against pirates, unscrupulous competitors and who not. The ship was sent out on its journey in 1704 to return and anchor in the Thames river in November of 1705 having brought only 13 tonnes of bohea (semi-oxidized leaves) and 12 tonnes



of tea is an important example [of this] ... a history of modernity told through one of its consumable commodities.'

For a person not greatly educated but after 58 years in tea, I am fascinated by the book. I recommend to every tea person; rather than going to a university, read books like this.

Prafull Goradia



Missionaries of Charity

The loving touch of Mother Teresa in the dedication of the nuns and the smile of the children at Shishu Bhavan



Nayana Goradia

In neat little orange-coloured metal cribs are 50 babies, five of them prematurely born. "This one came out of a dust-bin," says petite Sister Jose-Bennet of Kerala who helps to look after the infants. She picks up a chubby two-year-old for my inspection. "No one thought he would ever live. But look at him now!" She tickles him under the chin. I am rewarded with a puckish grin.

This is Mother Teresa's Shishu Bhavan on Calcutta's bustling Lower Circular Road. It is for children orphaned, abandoned, afflicted, disabled. But the general atmosphere is of marked cheerfulness. Feeding, washing the babies and changing their nappies

are a band of delightfully happy nuns, treating the little waifs as though they see in each one of them the Child of Bethlehem.

Sister Jose-Bennet simply says: "The poor want our love. Not service only."

Along with 350 other nuns of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, Sister Jose-Bennet lives in the congregation's convent also on Lower Circular Road. She, like the other nuns, eats the same Indian style food that is distributed among "the poorest of the poor". Her only worldly possessions are her sari, a prayer book, a bucket for washing clothes her own and a share of the washing for the orphans and the lepers. She speaks Bengali and

Hindi.

The children shriek in delight at the unexpected arrival of the Sister in their midst. One clutches at her sari wanting to be picked up. She laughingly pushes her way through them. "Tapus! Tapus! Come here!" she shouts to make herself heard above the merry din. A little urchin of three toddles



Tribute to Mother Teresa by St. Xavier's College, Kolkata in 1979. Standing second from right is D Mitra (Rana) of Contemporary Brokers – a student of first year then



up to her. She swings him atop a small medicine chest and says, "Say Good Morning to the lady!" Turning to me she says, "Our Tapus has been adopted by a nice home." This means he has a monthly stipend of Rs 25 and will be able to go to an English-speaking boarding school.

The story of the Chatterjee sisters is worth telling. Two girls aged 15 and 12 were brought in by

their guardian, a young housewife. With tears in her eyes she explained that the girls were her own sisters whom she had given shelter upon the death of their school-teacher father. Her husband, a labourer in a jute mill, had sullenly grumbled about this extra burden, until the older of the two girls began blossoming into a pretty young woman. He went after her and threatened to kill his wife if she came in his way!

A young mother squats outside the medical clinic at Shishu Bhavan, suckling a child. Her belly is bloated with another child. One more sits on his haunches in front of her and she picks out the lice from his sore-infested head. "When the burden of looking after so many becomes too much for her, she will try to leave one of them with us." says the Sister who is measuring out a medicinal mixture for her. "What am I to do?" wails the young mother. "My husband drinks and hates me. If I say I don't want children he beats me and says he will take another woman."

"What happens when they grow up?" I ask thinking to myself that for abandoned children they, in their oversized dresses, look curiously adorable.

"We try to rehabilitate them," says the Sister. "Sometimes the healthy ones are adopted and taken away to live in new homes. We try to send them to schools.



*Excerpts from an article
by Nayana Goradia*





The 52nd Annual General Meeting of Tea Research Association was held in Kolkata on September 30, 2016. Two hundred and three members of the tea industry were present at the AGM.

Prabhat Bezboruah, incoming Chairman of TRA, highlighted the research work carried out by the Association in the last one year. The Chairman stated that as per a pilot study done by TRA in association with ETP and Tata Global Beverages, certain regions of Assam will be extremely vulnerable to climate change effects by 2050. He added that TRA has brought out a package of practices for mitigating climate change effects. He also stated that TRA is opening up different verticals including outsourced research from overseas countries for revenue generation and self sustenance.

Chandra Mohan Patowary, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Transport and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Assam, who graced the occasion as Chief Guest, stated that the Association should be provided proper funds either from the Government or from the industry. He said that TRA should be brought either under ICAR or CSIR

for proper funding. He stated that he has already taken up the issue of release of funds to TRA with the Union Commerce Ministry and received assurance. The Minister urged Tocklai to start a course on tea for the benefits of students.

Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, Member of Parliament from Jorhat, who was the Guest of Honour for the AGM, appreciated the R&D work of Tocklai and stated that

52nd AGM of TRA

Tocklai should start soil health card system for all Assam gardens as the tea soils are being used for more than 150 years. He urged the small tea growers to provide full wages and benefits to workers employed by them. He also requested the heads of tea companies to start Jan Dhan Yojana for the benefit of tea garden workers in Assam. The Assam Government should allocate some funds to Tocklai for small tea grower training, he added.

Bidyananda Borkakoty, Vice Chairman of Tea Board, graced the meeting as Special Guest and stated that Tocklai should aggressively market itself to get more research work from the Government and international agencies. He suggested that Tocklai should also approach medium and small gardens to make them members and give advisory services. He supported the idea of having a tea course at Tocklai for students to learn about tea. He stated that Dr APJ Abdul Kalam had given his full support for making tea a national drink.

Dr A K Barooah, Director TRA, gave a round up of the research activities. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks by Jagjeet Singh Kandal, incoming Vice Chairman.

A Whiff and Sip of

VIETNAM

A day in a small tea farm in Thai Nguyen

the visibility of Thai Nguyen tea to the international community.

Outside, in the tea garden, a few women were picking tea leaves. We were shown how to tell when tea leaves and buds are ready to be picked and how to judge its quality grade. They allowed us to pick for a few minutes and then we came back inside for more cups of tea. We soon learned that any time you set down an empty cup of tea, it will immediately be filled up again. We also learned how to hold the little tea cups at certain heights compared to other drinkers and when you should cover the cup with your hand to show respect for the other tea drinkers present. Essentially, the younger members and those of less importance hold their tea cups lower and cover their mouths when drinking with elders and those of higher status.

During lunch time a big feast was awaiting us in the kitchen area located outside the house. The feast was prepared by Mr. Dai's wife and included mango salad, chicken, vegetables, seafood, rice and a few other dishes. It was specially cooked for us guests, and would not be a typical everyday meal of

During my recent visit to Vietnam I had the opportunity to travel to Thai Nguyen province to witness the promises of a new wave of tea and tourism in the area.

also for its beautiful Nui Coc Lake and mountains. About two hours drive from Hanoi, the region is a popular vacation destination for local Vietnamese travellers but has yet to be widely promoted as an tourist destination international. There is much to do in this scenic province, but my focus was to specifically visit tea-related attractions. My private tour from Hanoi was organised by a local tour company with an English speaking guide. I had the privilege to spend a day in a tea farm and visit the plantation and processing plant. I also visited a well established tea museum – the cultural space of the Thai Nguyen tea, established few years back.

We drove through Thai Nguyen and arrived at a tea farm in the Tan Cuong commune called Tien Yen. We were welcomed by the owners Mr. and Mrs. Dai who run the tea producing establishment and live adjacent to one of the tea fields. This family is one of the most successful tea making families in the Tan Cuong commune of the Thai Nguyen province. After meeting a few members of the family we sat down at a table in the production building and had traditional Vietnamese tea. It was interesting to learn more about the family and the history of the tea farm. Mr. Dai explained to us that he is helping a group of growers in improving production methods and increasing



Lunch with host



the family, but one served during special occasions. We were offered strong rice wine. Our plates were refilled as soon as they were emptied.

After lunch, we moved back into the production building and had a few more cups of tea and some sesame treats. We then learned the steps of making and processing tea and were able to actually witness and take part in most of them. The processing is mainly done by Mr. and Mrs. Dai. They are producing green tea. Since this is a small farm, they are using small tea machinery imported from Taiwan. While several regions within Vietnam produce tea, the tea from the Thai Nguyen province (specifically from Tan Cuong commune) is the most well-known and is regarded as having the finest quality.

After we said goodbye to our hosts, we headed to the Thai Nguyen Tea Cultural Space. The Tea Cultural Space is a tea museum located near Thai Nguyen city. This large museum and cultural space is dedicated to Vietnamese tea and was opened in 2011 after the first annual International Tea Festival was held in the region. The museum complex is divided into three main sections: the welcome area, the display space,



and the space for tea culture and products. The museum illustrates the history of tea in Thai Nguyen as well as the tea making stages consisting of planting, collecting and processing. The museum section currently displays over 500 objects, mostly tea pots. In the separate tea cultural space, the visitors can sit and have tea in the traditional Vietnamese manner. We also visited the site of the very large outdoor

mosaic teapot fountain. This teapot provides for a great photo opportunity and is the largest ceramic teapot in Vietnam. This relatively new museum is still expanding and adding display items and does not currently charge any admission fee to visitors as one of its primary goals is to better educate people about Vietnamese tea.

Monjur Hossain



Display in Tea Museum

Our consumers are well aware of the health benefits of tea and consume it at much higher prices than in other countries

**Interview with the Dr. Nguyen Huu Tai,
Chairman of Vietnam Tea Association**

Q How long have you been the Chairman of the Vietnam Tea Association? What is the key role of the Chairman of Vietnam Tea Association?

Q I worked previously with the government owned Vietnam National Tea Corporation, popularly know as Vina Tea. When Vina Tea disinvested to private sector, I voluntarily retired and the stakeholders of the tea sector wanted me to join as Chairman of Vietnam Tea Association. This Association has the representation of both private companies and small firms. So my role is to protect the interests of both the groups and the overall development of the tea sector.

Q What is the present tea production of Vietnam? How much tea is internally consumed? What is the export volume and earnings from export?

Q Our total tea area is now 135000 hectare and production about 190000 tonnes. We export approximately 150000.00 tonnes annually. The export price is around USD 1.50 per kg. We consume about 40000 tonnes with a higher buying cost of USD \$ 5-7 dollars per kg. The most expensive special tea is "Lotus Tea" consumed locally by the elite class, price about USD \$ 500 dollar per kg.

Q Which are the normal export destinations of your teas?

Q We export to almost 130 countries in the world, but mostly to Pakistan and Russia.

Q What is the share of the tea production of the private companies and small farms?

Q Private companies' share is 20% and 80% comes from small farms.

Q Value-addition and consumer tastes are the mantras in a market driven economy. Is the Vietnam tea industry planning any initiatives in this area?

Q We mostly consume value added packet teas internally and export loose tea.

Q Is there any long term strategic plan for the rejuvenation of the industry? If there is, what are your views on the plan and are you optimistic about the implementation? Is there any progress? If there is no plan do you need one?

Q Farmers' initial thrust was to increase the tea area and now they are concentrating on quality. Vietnam Tea Association is supporting them all the way.

Q Smallholding tea cultivation is one of the initiatives in your country and playing a vital role in the economy and livelihood of a good number of population. What are your views on the development of this sector?

Q We are planning to implement the Kenyan KTDA model for our small farm sector.

Q The health benefits of tea need to be communicated to the general public. Is VTA planning any action in this area?

Q Yes. Our consumers are well aware of the health benefits of tea, and they consume tea at much higher prices than in other countries.

Q How do you market your tea? Through auction or direct sale?

Q There is no auction system in our country. We sell directly through super market and groceries.

Q What is the contribution of tea in the national GDP of Vietnam?

Q About USD \$ 5000 billion dollar per year.



The immense job of converting jungle land into gardens of tea plant and of cultivating them through the seasons of the year required a huge labour force that was not available in the sparsely populated areas. So, the planters recruited labour from over populated districts in far flung regions of the country. While such shifts of population served the purpose, problems of alienation and physical impairment among workers became chronic. This was especially acute in the remote tea producing region in Assam.

The wage rates in the 1840s - the early years of the Indian tea industry - of Rs 3/- per month at the bottom level, which the *chowkidars* and *pykes* got, may seem atrocious today. The first piece of labour legislation of importance that was extended to the tea industry was the Workmen's

Compensation Act, 1923. The government enacted it largely due to international pressure as India was then the only civilised nation in the world without such a law. Following this, the Trade Union Act came into being in 1926. Subsequently, several labour legislations were enacted under pressure of the Indian public opinion regarding the conditions of the industrial workers in the country.

A comprehensive labour legislation that provided for real welfare measures to the tea workers was actually enacted in 1951. Tea plantation workers in Assam were paid (and continue to do so till date) on a daily rated basis either at weekly intervals or at the end of each fortnight. The minimum wages for such workers were first fixed by the Government of Assam under the Minimum

Wages Act of 1948 in 1952 on the basis of the Report of a Committee headed by the Parliamentary Secretary, Labour. The Committee recommended a minimum wage for unskilled labour, taking into account the daily requirements of the tea plantation workers. The Assam Branch Indian Tea Association (ABITA) and its member tea gardens were largely responsible for the benefits of the welfare measures incorporated in the Act to reach the plantation workers through the framework of the voluntary welfare measures provided by them. These greatly benefitted the millions of plantation workers and their dependants. The Act also provided weekly rests, facilities like canteen, crèches, compulsory primary education, housing, medical benefits and also items like umbrellas, blankets, raincoats etc. Subsequently, several

Tea *and* Labour Welfare

Monetary and in-kind benefits for its workers have been interwoven from the very beginning of the Indian tea industry, observes **MRITTIKA BOSE**



amendments were made to make the benefits more liberal. Overcoming the shortage of labour and its migratory nature, a vast committed labour force was formed by offering competitive wages, job security, happy working conditions, comfortable housing facilities, comprehensive medical care and educational opportunities for workers' children. The food allowance supplemented by free housing and medical care, no-cost dry tea and bonus added to a good package for the labour force. The tea workers - mostly *adivasis* from Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, happily merged into a tea community with its own dialect and culture.

The daily wages of the tea garden workers in Assam are revised from time to time through collective bargaining agreements. The rate of daily wages thus arrived at is notified by the State Government as the minimum wage for the ordinary unskilled workers employed in the tea plantations.

The Minimum Wages Advisory Board sat on March 25, 2015, to form a core/sub committee under the Chairmanship of Commissioner and Secretary, Labour and Employment Department, Government of Assam, with all stakeholders to examine and advise the Board on the following issues:

- ✔ Monetisation of amenities to the permanent tea garden workers in kind
- ✔ Monetisation of benefits made available to the temporary workers in kind
- ✔ Examine whether permanent and temporary workers should be paid different rates of cash wages in light of different level of amenities/benefits that are made available to them in kind
- ✔ Assess in consultation with all stakeholders the total monetised value of wages paid in cash or kind. Subsequently, after discussions at length, the following views of the industry were put across to the Committee for consideration:
 - ❖ Unlike other industries, the pay



packet of daily rated tea garden workers in Assam customarily consist of cash wages as well as in-kind benefits, the value of which constitutes a significant portion of the workers' pay.

- ❖ The Minimum Wages Act permits an employer under certain conditions to pay the wages either fully or partly in kind.

- ❖ The non-cash components provided to the tea plantation workers under various provisions of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, and other applicable laws consist of:

- a. Free housing and water supply
- b. Free medical facilities
- c. Recreational facilities inclusive of national and festival holidays
- d. Children's education
- e. Protective clothing such as umbrella, footwear, blanket etc.
- f. Earned leave, which is wages in kind
- g. Sickness benefit which is part of medical facility
- h. Maternity benefit
- i. Provident Fund and Gratuity which are meant for old age provision
- j. Bonus

In addition, workers are also provided certain non statutory

benefits such as ration, free firewood, dry tea, HRA, Pay of Post. These benefits are being provided for a very long time now and have become customary.

The industry feels that except the value of the house accommodation, medical facilities, provident fund and gratuity, all other non-cash components, both statutory and otherwise, that are all capable of being expressed in terms of money and are enjoyed by the tea plantation workers as a condition of their service, should be taken into account while determining the cash component of the minimum wages.

Since the small tea growers do not get the in-kind benefits, a higher wage has been recommended for them by the Minimum Wages Advisory Board.

Discussions and debates notwithstanding, the tea plantation workers have come a long way from the days of being indentured labour, transported in remote, inhospitable areas, far away from their native place. Today, they have begun receiving online payment of their wages from banks within easy reach of their workplaces!

Acknowledgement: Monojit Dasgupta for valuable inputs

Photos courtesy : Targett Archives

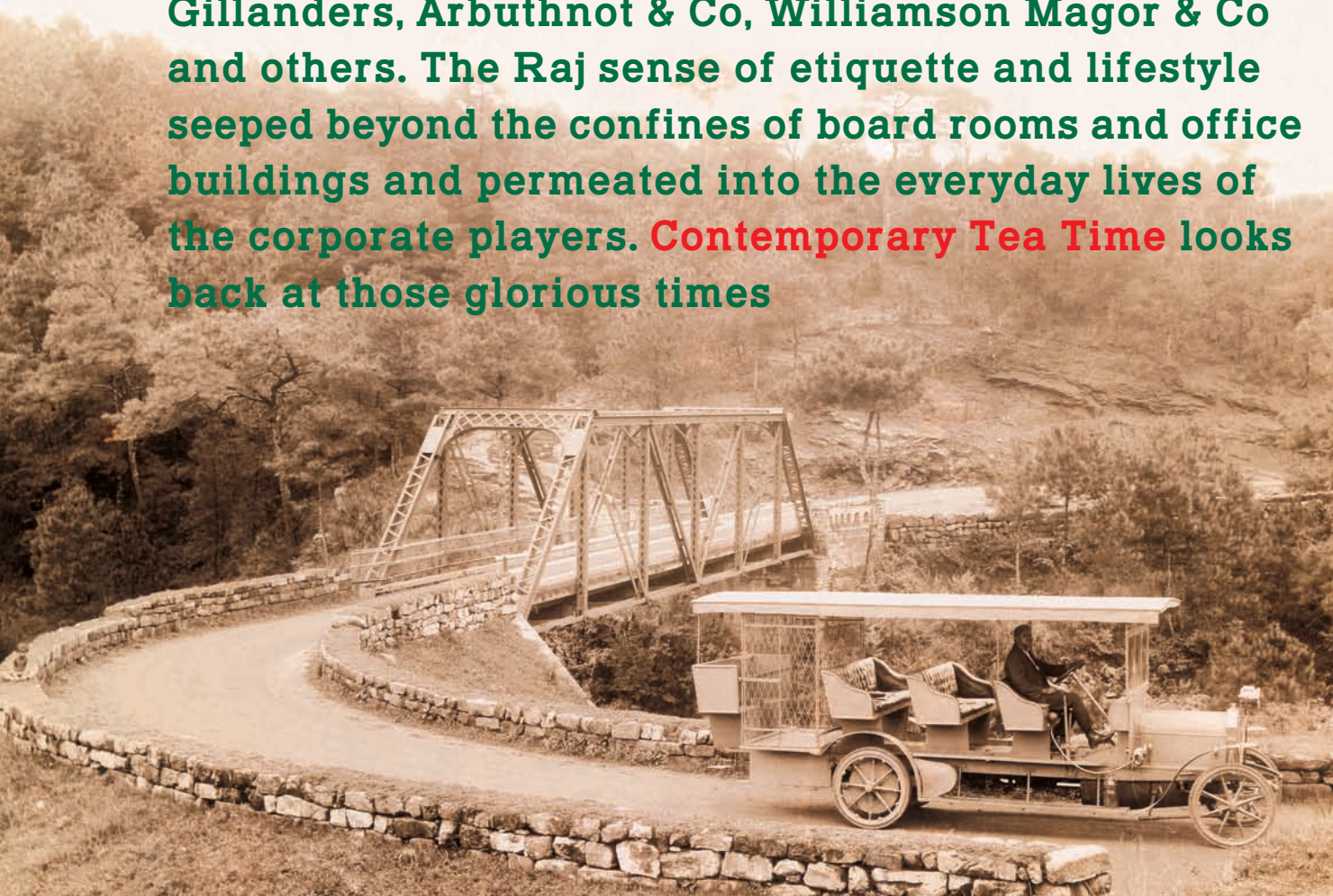


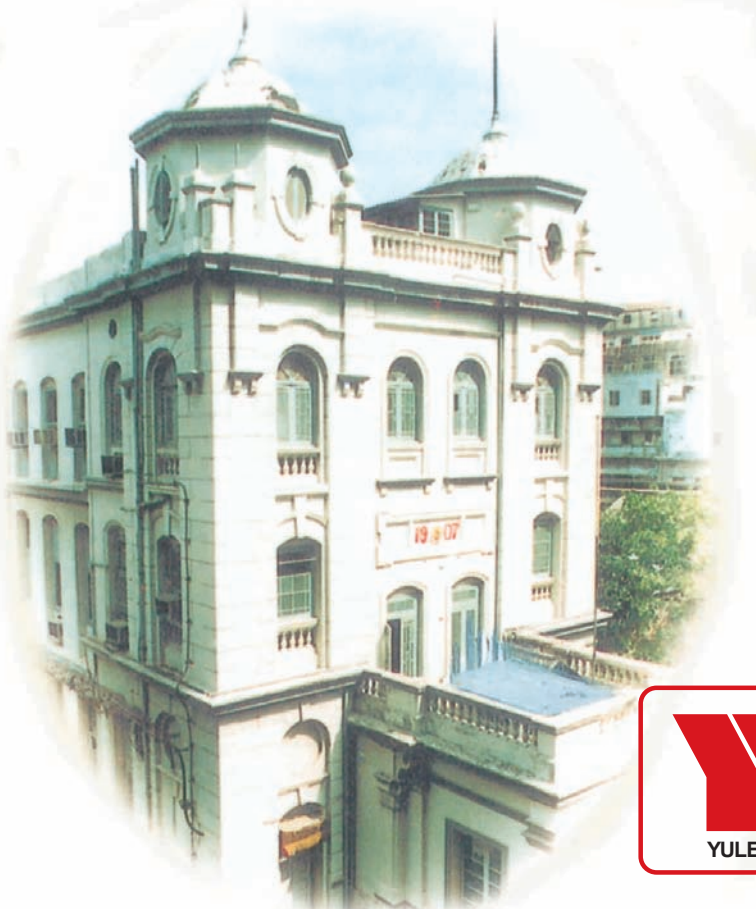
COVER STORY

The glory that is

INDIAN TEA

Those were the days of the Calcutta Boxwallahs. All tea companies were managed by agency houses. The boxwallah culture grew around these agency houses. Stalwart firms ruling the Calcutta corporate scene included Andrew Yule & Co, Duncan Brothers & Co, Gillanders, Arbuthnot & Co, Williamson Magor & Co and others. The Raj sense of etiquette and lifestyle seeped beyond the confines of board rooms and office buildings and permeated into the everyday lives of the corporate players. **Contemporary Tea Time** looks back at those glorious times





Andrew Yule & Company

From a merchant house to a manufacturing base, the dramatic changes featuring the Yule, provide an insight into the economic history of the eastern region. The first lot to be sold in the centenary auction in 1961 was the produce of Hoolungooree Tea Company Limited, one of the earliest enterprises that had some quantity to sell at the first ever auctions held in Calcutta. The Company then and now is under the management of Andrew Yule and Co. Ltd. which goes to show the Company's long association with the tea industry, the mother of several other industries, in eastern India.

Today, Andrew Yule is a multi-divisional and multi-product, professionally managed corporate body with varied interests, encompassing belting, engineering, electrical equipment, tea, lubricants, power generation, finance and leasing and digital systems. Founded by a Scot, whose name it bears, its history through

various phases finally becoming a Government of India enterprise in itself marks an industrial epoch.

The epoch starts with the end of the direct rule by East India Company. That was the time when Andrew Yule arrived in India to set up a merchant house in his own name. Just before he did so in 1863, the major industries which were to shape the economy of the region were coming into existence. The first jute spinning plant was set up in Calcutta in 1855. The Calcutta tea auction began in 1861. Large coal deposits were located in Bihar and Bengal. The East Indian Railway had started operation. The region was on the threshold of changes which were propitious for an enterprising young man to venture into business. Though little is known of how the two brothers George and Andrew Yule started their enterprise, but by 1866 they were well established to join the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. Beginning with agencies for insurance and long cloth, the

farsighted Andrew Yule saw a great future in building up business around jute, cotton, tea and coal. The elder Yule, George, was a great liberal of his time and radical by the standards of the Raj. In 1888, he presided over the Indian National Congress, which later led the national movement to freedom.

A succession of Yules followed the pioneering brothers to expand their business. They went into the development of forests, roads, schools and hospitals and owned zamindaris which were in the control of the companies they held until the government abolished the zamindari system in the early fifties.

David Yule's successor T S Cato restructured Andrew Yule and Company delegating greater powers to senior executives and ushered in another major phase of expansion. On India becoming independent, Andrew Yule and Co. stepped up its activities particularly as regards coal, pepper, engineering and electricity supply.

Andrew Yule and Co. became a Government of India enterprise in 1974 when the shareholding pattern of the Company underwent a drastic change. Because of heavy losses, the foreign shareholders decided to dispose off their holdings and started negotiations with groups and finally with the government which acquired 49 per cent of the equity capital with effect from April 1974.

Five years later, the government acquired 51 percent of the capital and the company thus became a state enterprise. Thus the once Scot-owned Company which had involved itself in all leading industries of its time, transformed itself into a large modern industrial house under government control.

Today the group manages power generation and distribution, pollution control system for underground mines, engineering projects, tea estates and complex software projects. Yule tea is familiar to connoisseurs worldwide. Its legacy of tea estate management is reinforced by its management training programmes in all estate activities. It has raised a corps of garden managers who have turned around several sick gardens.

The Division recently ventured into the business of horticulture, floriculture and tissue culture. The Company has adequate cultivable land and expert services at its disposal to undertake t h e

development and supply of special plants and flowers and seeds. The Company has land in areas like Assam, Dooars and the Gangetic plains in eastern India that provide suitable climatic conditions conducive to the growth of special horticulture/ floriculture products. Mim Tea Estate owned by Yule is an old estate – the only Yule property in

Darjeeling district.

Thus the genesis and rise of a merchant house and its corporate journey to a manufacturing enterprise engaged in sunrise industries while developing its traditional business make an interesting chapter in India's industrial history.



Duncan house



DUNCANS

the company made a bid for the goodwill of the market place, to sell loose bulk tea in branded chests, through its network. That is not all. In 1976, the concept of minim auctions crystallised. The auction centres facilitated the outreach of Duncans tea to a larger number of wholesalers and retailers than ever before, in the quickest possible time. The urge to provide something novel to the market was spelt out in the introduction of mini chests and baby chests. The market was quick in its acceptance because of their easy transportability, low financial risks, smaller investment and quicker profits for traders.

Another trend was set for the trade when Duncans introduced the Boeing bags, which became popular in the entire industry. In 1991, Duncans introduced jumbo bags made of laminated jute for transporting polypacks. Another innovation of the group was packet tea. Packaged in the gardens ensuring freshness and consistency of

quality, the Duncans pack proved that blending is after all not so vital for maintaining consistency, it is the quality control systems developed within the company that do the trick. The results justify the efforts. This modest beginning has made Duncans the fourth largest company after Brooke Bond, Liptons and Tata Tea.

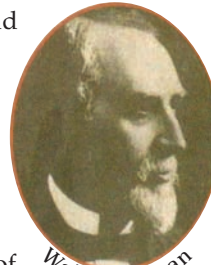
Pioneering and innovation, was the key to the success of Duncans for close to 125 years. The company had many 'firsts' to its credit. It was the first producer company to make consumer marketing of tea successful. It produced the first set of packed teas ready to drink with cup quality without any blending. It had achieved such a level of standardisation that it is difficult to distinguish between a CTC produce of one season from that of another or that of one garden from another.

The development of jute bagging by Duncans has saved, enormous quantities of wood and changed the concept of bulk packing. The mini chest was Duncans' prize gift to the tea industry.

With such initiatives in corporate performance, Duncans Agro Industries Limited (DAIL) – a unit of Duncans – excelled in a range of areas. Its turnover (inclusive of exports) had soared close to 265% in a five-years span. Production-wise too, it took

significant strides. It had 12 gardens, all in West Bengal, with a total cropped area of 6,600 hectares. The production from this land ranged between 13 mkg in 1987 to an estimated all time high of 14 mkg in 1991-'92. DAIL always attached highest importance to professional training in all functional areas such as quality control, industrial relations and management development.

DAIL's originality and enterprise had been most strongly pronounced in the area of marketing. It introduced direct marketing through devices ranging from baby chests to jumbo bags. Over a three-year period beginning in 1975, Duncans made available loose tea of consistent quality at a reasonable price through franchise outlets to consumers in central and western India. For two years prior to 1975,



Walter Duncan



William Duncan

COVER STORY





The Assam Company

The genesis of the Assam Company is traced from a meeting of East Indian merchants at 6 Great Winchester Street, London, on February 12, 1839. It was known that it was the intention of the Hon'ble East India Company to experiment with the growing of tea only to prove that the tea plant would grow in India, and that tea could be produced as a marketable commodity. Once successful it would be left to private enterprise to produce it on a commercial scale. At this first meeting February 12, 1834, a provisional committee was constituted comprising of 18 persons who were to obtain information about the quality and production of tea in Assam and to ascertain what support the East India Company would give to an association for its cultivation and manufacture.

A resolution was passed for a company to be called "The Assam Company" with a capital of Pounds Sterling 50,000 in 10,000 shares of Pounds Sterling 50 each, of which 8,000 were to be allotted in Great Britain and 2,000 in India.

The Assam Company was fully launched with Pounds Sterling 125,000 of its capital subscribed or promised. The Calcutta Board

proceeded to engage a superintendent and junior European staff, to recruit labour in India and tea markets from China, to order stores, to have boats built, to appoint agents at various stations on the river route to Assam, and generally to put in train all those operations that they regarded as requisite for a vast undertaking. As early as October 1839, their first superintendent, J W Masters reported that he had acquired on about 100 acres of land at Naziraghat and had some 100 *coolies* clearing jungle and building huts and *golahs* (store houses).

Development

1840 to 1855 - The company's activities and performance showed an all round upward trend. Area of tea cultivation in the southern division (Mazengah, Kachari Pookri, Hatti Pooti, Cherido, Gabroo Parbut, Deepani and Gelakey) was 2,454 acres, in Rokang Division (Rokang, Dubba, Dooma Dullang, Burrah Gosain, Towkok and Hatti Ghur) - 434 acres, Northern Division (Tingri, Hoogrijan, Keyhung and Kato) - 261 acres and Eastern Division (Tippum and Hoogrijuri) was about 160 acres. The Board

sanctioned the planting out of an area of 10 to 20 *puras* as an experiment in the cold weather of Tezpur and Nowgong districts of 1855-'56.

1856 to 1865 - Upward trend in all activities and performance continued. The first tea in Cachar was put out at mauza Basarjan in 1856. Later in 1857 another two gardens Telaghur and Malnicherry were put out in Sylhet district. There was profitable trading with increased payment of dividends and rise in crop.

1866 to 1870 - At the beginning of the period the tea industry suffered a set-back due to over-rapid expansion. The laws of demand and supply also prevailed.

1871 to 1880 - The running of tea companies had become commonplace, and the tea industry had expanded until the total imports of Indian tea had risen to over 40,000,000 lb a year. In this period the company did satisfactory trading with large profits.

1881 to 1890 - There was profitable trading with dividends varying from 25 percent in 1881 to seven percent in 1888, giving an average over the ten years of 12 percent.

1891 to 1900 - This period

marked profitable trading on the whole. Dividends varied between 20 percent and 25 percent with an average of 13 percent over ten years. The total crop produced exceeded 4,000,000 lb in 1900 for the first time. Total area of tea cultivation was increased from 8,000 acres in 1890 to over 11,000 acres in 1900.

1900 to 1910 - During this period, price of tea dropped to the lowest. But it was remarkable to note that the cost of production was cut down to a figure so that even with the market price at its lowest point, a profit was made and dividend paid.

1911 to 1920 - All these years with the exception 1920, showed a profitable trading with dividends ranging from 12.5 percent to 25 percent including the bonus. In 1915 a profit of Pounds Sterling 105,626 was made, the highest ever made up to that date.

1921 to 1930 - From 1922 onwards, the company's profits showed an upward trend. But by the end of 1930, owing to the market condition, the company's trading dwindled away again towards another slump.

In 1923, the profits rose to a then unheard of figure of Pounds Sterling 183,105 and the shareholders had received dividends of 20 percent plus a bonus of 20 percent - the highest ever paid.

1931 to 1940 - The period opened in an atmosphere of unrelieved gloom and depression, due to the severest slump in the tea industry caused by over-production in the Empire countries and by the flooding of the market with cheap tea from foreign countries. The situation was aggravated by excessive stocks from previous years already in the London warehouses. To overcome the situation, economic measures were undertaken. Ever since 1931, negotiations had been in progress with the governments of the three main tea producing countries to try to restrict output so that an equilibrium could be obtained in

the world between supply and demand. As a result of these measures, market conditions improved and the average price realised for the 1933 crop rose.

1941 to 1950 - At the beginning of this period it was a matter of coping with the complex difficulties of tea production under war-time conditions. Under various enactments, the British Government became sole purchaser of tea for UK and for Allied Forces and made contracts with producers for shipment of supplies to this country, it being left to each producing country to arrange supplies for their own internal consumption.

Because of various enactments and control by the government there had been enormous increase in the cost of production. While this upward trend in cost was started because of war conditions, it continued partly because of the high cost of rice and other cereals during and since the war and also on account of the imposition by the Indian Government of excise and export duties as well as higher wages imposed under Minimum Wages Act to Labourers in tea gardens. These were the conditions under which The Assam Company operated in the war years.

1951 to 1963 - Since the end of the war the company had concentrated on rehabilitating its estates by replanting and putting out such new areas of new extensions as were permitted under the Tea Central Act. The most notable event was the reopening of the London Auctions on April 16, 1951. A bulk purchase of UK's requirements of tea and to permit its sale by public auction was warmly welcomed by the industry and trade. The Assam Company's contribution to this opening sale was a notable one, for it was the only company to put up any tea from Assam, and its 2,482 packages comprised invoices from 10 out of its 12 gardens, and realised an average price of 3s. 9.17d per lb.

There was a record profit of Pounds Sterling 467,335 in 1950



and a record profit of Pounds Sterling 467,335 in 1950 and a dividend of 10 percent with a bonus of five percent.

1951 to 1963 - Since the end of the war, the company had concentrated on rehabilitating the estates by replanting and putting out such new areas of new extensions as were permitted under the Tea Control Act. The most notable event was the reopening of the London Auctions on April 16, 1961. The Assam Company's contribution to the opening sale was a notable one, for it was the only company to put up any tea from Assam, and its 2482 packages realised an average price of 3s 9.17d per lb. There was a record profit of Pounds Sterling 467,335 in 1950.

Current Scenario

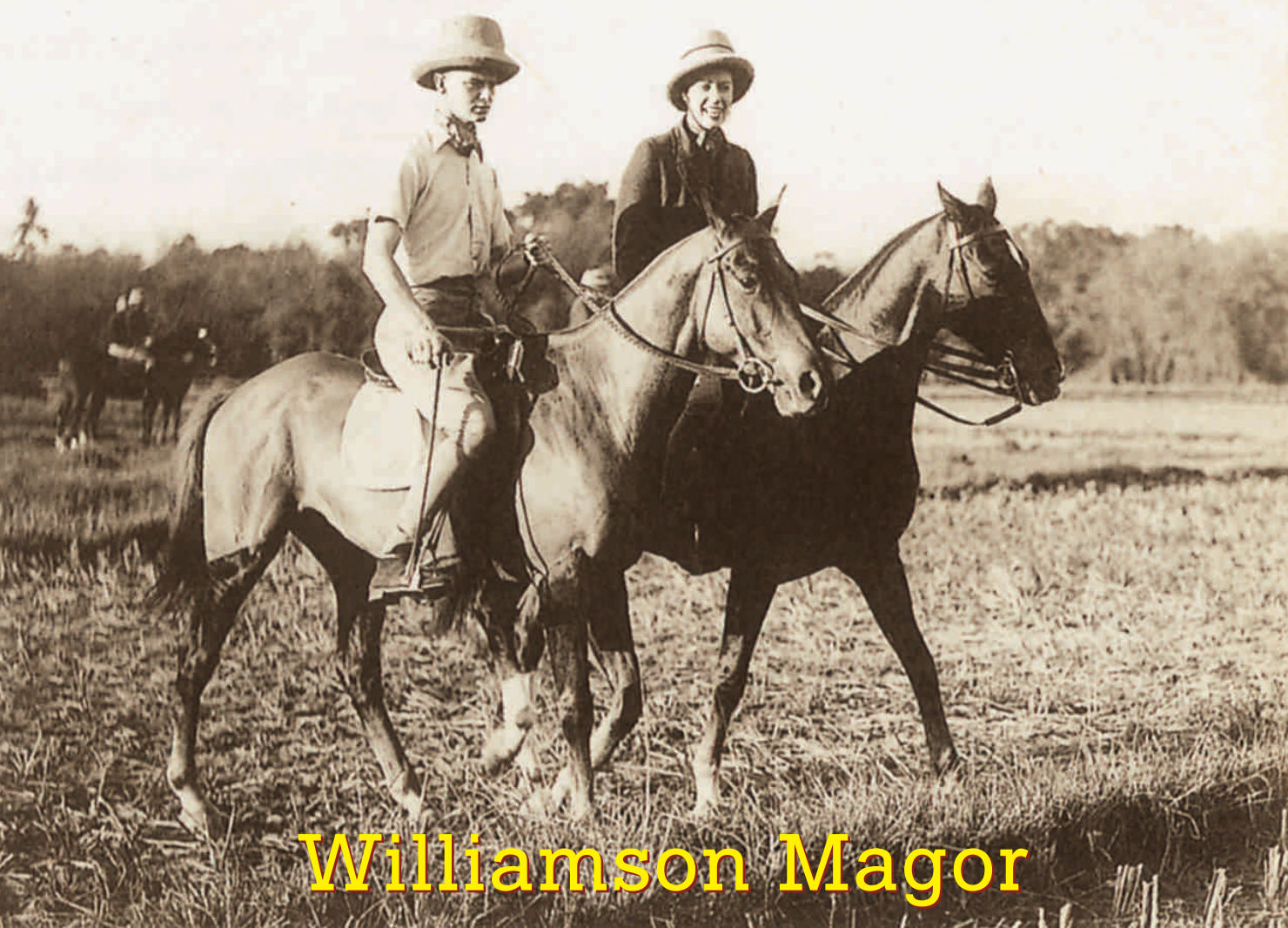
The Assam Company owns 17 prime tea estates producing over 160 lakh kg of world class tea, manufactured in 15 highly modernised, well equipped state-of-the-art factories. The Assam Company's bench mark is quality. Total Quality Management (TQM) is applied at every stage from plucking to dispatch and so, Assam Company's tea commands top notch premium in the world market.

Research and Development

The Company has a full-fledged Research and Development set-up dedicated to exclusive research in tea, recognised by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.

The Assam Company is professionally managed, with a dedicated team of professionals and the spirit of pioneering that started in 1839 continues with renewed zest and enthusiasm.





Williamson Magor

Among the all-time greats in the tea industry were the founder of Williamson Magor and Co. The WM Group comprised 55 estates of which 45 were in Assam, four in Darjeeling and six in the Dooars. It produced 60 mkg of tea every year, grown on 25500 ha in Assam, 950 ha in Darjeeling and 3600 ha in the Dooars and employed over 70,000 people. Over 21 million kg were exported and it earned over Rs 210 crore in foreign exchange.

The group was made up of three tea companies – George Williamson (Assam) Limited with 17 Estates, Bishnauth Tea Company Limited with 15 estates and Eveready Industries India Limited with 23 estates. George Williamson & Co Limited in London were the selling agents for the group's export sales. They were a holding company of Williamson Tea Holdings London, who in turn held a 70% interest in George



Williamson (Assam) Limited.

Around 1853 the three Williamsons – George Williamson senior and his cousins George Williamson Junior and James Hay Williamson appeared on the Assam scene. At that time tea seeds received from China had been planted in Assam. Chinese labourers were employed – some skilled and some without skills. The Assam Company formed in 1839, was the first in the field and after many failures managed to establish itself by the 1850s. The Williamsons learned their business by being associated with the Assam Company for a number of years.

Meanwhile, George Williamson acquired interests in other gardens. In 1853 the three

Williamsons applied for a lease of 720 acres of land at Cinnemara and began cultivation at once. They purchased other properties including Oating and Koliabar. These three gardens, in fact, were the foundations of the Jorehaut Tea Company to which they sold these estates in 1859.

George Williamson then resigned from The Assam Company and on February 10, 1860, became Superintendent of the Jorehaut Tea Company, This business was presumably the management of his own garden in Cachar and acquiring more and more tea land. These lands ultimately led to the formation of the East India Tea Company. Its main garden was Dufflating, just 12 miles from Cinnemara. This led to the resentment of the Jorehaut Company as they feared their interests would suffer. George Williamson retired from the Superintendence of the company

in 1862. Meanwhile, George Williamson Senior had been leasing land and establishing tea gardens. Capt. James Hay Williamson who had in 1861 founded the River Steam Navigation Co Ltd had after three years given up his enterprise and began acting as the Calcutta agent for the East India Tea Company and George Williamson's other interests. These by now represented vast holdings of land in Jorhat and Sibsagar districts. Soon after his retirement from the Jorehaut Company, he returned to England for good and in 1866 he founded the London firm of George Williamson & Co, as an Agency for sale of the products of his estates in Assam.

James Williamson who had become Director of the East India Tea Company continued to run an agency. In 1866 he met Richard Blarmey Magor, who worked for the Great Eastern hotel, then called Wilson's hotel, in which the Williamsons held interests. His acquaintance with James, led to a burgeoning interest in tea, which was Williamson's main business. James Williamson and Richard Magor decided to form Williamson Magor & Company.

The foundation of the Tea Division was laid in 1868 when George Williamson and R B Magor formed a partnership in Calcutta to act as Agents for several proprietary tea companies and estates in Assam. Under the title of Williamson Magor & Co. Limited and spanning more than a century of growth, expansion and innovation through a commitment to ideals of excellence and quality,

On April 14, 1868, the first agreement of the company was signed for a period of two years. The company began their enterprise as agents first for the East India Tea Company, which had been formed on August 7, 1861, comprising Dufflating and Soraipani. It was bought by George Williamson. The Soom Tea Company was incorporated on November 20, 1862 and the Bishnauth Tea Company founded

on May 16, 1863. These three companies were the stronghold from which the Williamsons and Magors built up their vast empire of tea. Between 1868 and 1875, the reputation of the company gained momentum due to the adroit management of the two friends and the company secured Kettela, Kurseong and Terai, Longview, Majaram. Mini, Munjha and Panbaree in 1875, a further agreement was signed on March 25, when Williamson and Magor agreed to become co-partners for a term of five years. They had a modest office in New China Bazar Street, Calcutta.

In 1877 George Williamson (then in London) who had already been doing business with Williamson Magor entered the partnership, but he retired in 1880. In 1881, his son-in-law, Alexander George Watson was admitted to the partnership. In 1862, J H Williamson withdrew from the firm. In 1885 the firm of George Williamson & Co. and Williamson Magor & Co. amalgamated. The George Williamson & Company office was at 138 Leadenhall Street and in Calcutta at 3 & 4 Mangoe Lane.

Control by the International Tea Committee was a useful prelude for the conditions that prevailed during the Second World War. In Britain the government requisitioned all tea stocks and set itself up as the sole importer. Any tea producer who wanted to supply was invited to contact. The war proved as beneficial to the industry in India and production rose from 466 million lbs in 1939 to 529 million lbs in 1945.

From Williamson Magor's point of view it meant that a market was guaranteed for the tea from the estates they managed, but they still had to cope with the usual war shortages and the loss of key personnel. They soon lost the only family representatives in the business to the armed forces.

One of the most significant development for the Williamson Magor group was the partnership

between Richard Magor, grandson of the joint-founder of the original Williamson Magor partnership, and Briju Khaitan, the Indian introduced to the group in the late 1940s by Pat Williamson. Khaitan formed a relationship that lasted for over 40 years. Khaitan knew the partners at Williamson Magor, in Calcutta and he also began to supply the agency's estates with tea chests as well as fertilisers. He was in a position to advise and help when the partnership found itself under threat later in the decade. Before that the partnership in India incorporated itself into a limited company.

The 1954 Companies Act laid down rules about the number of companies for which managing agents could act. B Bajoria, an investor, accumulated nearly 25% of the flagship in the Williamson Magor tea estates, the Bishnauth Tea Company. Williamson Magor owned 26% themselves but if they had lost this estate it would have had a devastating effect on their interests in Assam. Khaitan saw it as a turning point in the company's affairs. During the incorporation in Calcutta in the fifties and the reorganisation in the sixties the senior partner in London was Peter Roy.

In the mid sixties, Williamson Magor made a major investment in redeveloping the site of 4 Mangoe Lane. The original building was pulled down and a nine storey block erected there.

Meanwhile, the Indian Government introduced laws enforcing foreign companies to relinquish major stakes in their companies to Indians. One of the company's reactions was to start acquiring shares in Williamson Tea Holdings with its major interests in Assam. The vehicle used was the Romai Tea Company, whose major shareholder was George Williamson. The next major step was to buy the tea companies within the group.

The Williamson line died out with Pat as he never married and had no children.



From James Finlay & Co. Ltd. to Amalgamated Plantations Pvt. Ltd.



The James Finlay Employees International Tea Day

The company has a long history. Beginning as James Finlay & Co. Ltd., it became Tata-Finlay Ltd., before becoming Tata Tea Ltd. Tata Tea set out to enlarge its global reach. It readied plans to extend its production base to other tea growing regions of the world. Value addition and customer tailored marketing tie-ups were fashioned on a global spread. Tata Tea House continued to sell the beverage of the next century and was a major supplier, taking on the MNCs.

Quality upgradation, added value for the consumer and commitment to the welfare of the community have always been the key areas of Tata Tea. Testimony to the multi-hued success of this company's corporate mission lay in the manifold increase in its created assets, the range and intensity of care of its work force, and the yield to the shareholders and in the earnings for the nation since Tata Tea Ltd. assumed full ownership and management of its assets. Tata Tea owned 52 tea estates and one coffee estate, covering approximately 24 hectares of planted area spread over the states of Assam, North Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The Tata Tea sign board was up in nearly every tea growing state in the country as



AMALGAMATED
PLANTATIONS
A TATA Enterprise

the company set its sight abroad. Production was constantly on the rise.

Investment in R&D resulted in the most comprehensive research and development programme undertaken by any single company in the tea industry. The R&D efforts provided sustained inputs at the fundamental level of operations. Quality upgradation remained one of the central and continuing policies of the company. As a result the Company pioneered the paradigm shift in the tea industry – from being production-led to being market-led. Since this shift in focus preceded the liberalised regime in the national economy, the company was equipped to meet in time the challenge of multinational competitors.

Illustrative of the shift in focus in consumer marketing was the introduction of polypacks. It has since been followed by other companies, but the pioneering effort in estate packed polypacks led to substantial expansion of packet tea consumption. Tata Tea Limited had a lot in store in the form of proposed

plans launched through the ITA, for the generic promotion of tea. The objective was two-fold – to increase the stimulus for tea, and to increase the stimulus for quality tea.

Tata Tea Ltd. was determined to involve itself with the tea industry in different parts of the world. Alongside the commercial operations, the corporate mission of the company put emphasis on improving the quality of life of all its employees by the propagation and implementation of health and welfare projects. These were done through community development and social welfare schemes.

Thus on the strength of a reinforced technical and technological base and the guarantee of performance from a vast work force along with the commitment of the company to involve itself in their welfare, Tata Tea scanned the international horizon for emerging opportunities. Constant exercises for planning and managing Tata Tea in tomorrow's world, and taking advantage of the winds of global change to grasp these opportunities continued to keep the company ahead of competition.

On January 29, 2007, Tata Tea became Amalgamated Plantations Pvt. Ltd.

Liptons



Thomas Lipton was born in 1850. His parents were Irish immigrants who settled in Glasgow to escape the terrible potato famine. Though poor, they were solid, honest, churchgoing folk. The surroundings in which they lived were dingy from the blast of furnaces belching soot into the air. But within their tiny four-roomed apartment the atmosphere was one of prim respectability. Soon after Tom's birth, his father set up his own grocery shop. As a child, Tom first displayed his extraordinary advertising flair when he suggested to his father that his mother should be deputed to sell the eggs as they looked much larger in her small hands! At 15 Tom was out of school and sailing to America. For four years he worked on various jobs from a plantation labourer in South Carolina to a tramcar driver in New Orleans. When he returned to Glasgow he brought back with him that flamboyant salesmanship which was to catapult the name of Lipton to giddy heights.

Before 40, Tom was a millionaire. But he was still very much a ham and bacon man. His romance with tea did not begin until 1890. He was on his way to Australia when his ship made its routine halt at Colombo and the aroma of tea assailed him. Tea was then selling at three shillings a lb in UK and was very much a rich man's drink; it was cheaper to serve beer in the servant's hall. But the boom in tea was beginning. Tom made a snap decision. He got off the ship at



Colombo, travelled upcountry and bought several tea gardens. He was not quite aware of what he was getting into. He still looked upon tea as he looked upon ham and bacon – as something that would attract greater custom to his chain of shops. By cutting the middle man he felt he could reduce the price to one and seven pence.

He prepared his campaign accordingly. A showman first, he concentrated – after he was satisfied with the quality – on the appearance of his wares. At that time tea was sold loose. Tom had a better scheme – to sell it in packets. Tea would be fresher, the brand standardised and the packet easier to handle. He visualised an attractive label of a Tamil girl with a basket on her head. He had his slogan ready: "Direct from the tea gardens to the teapot."

After that there was no looking

back for the grocer from Glasgow. In 1898 he converted his business into a public limited company. It is said that when the announcement of going public was made, applications were received for £40 million worth of shares. That same year, Queen Victoria knighted him.

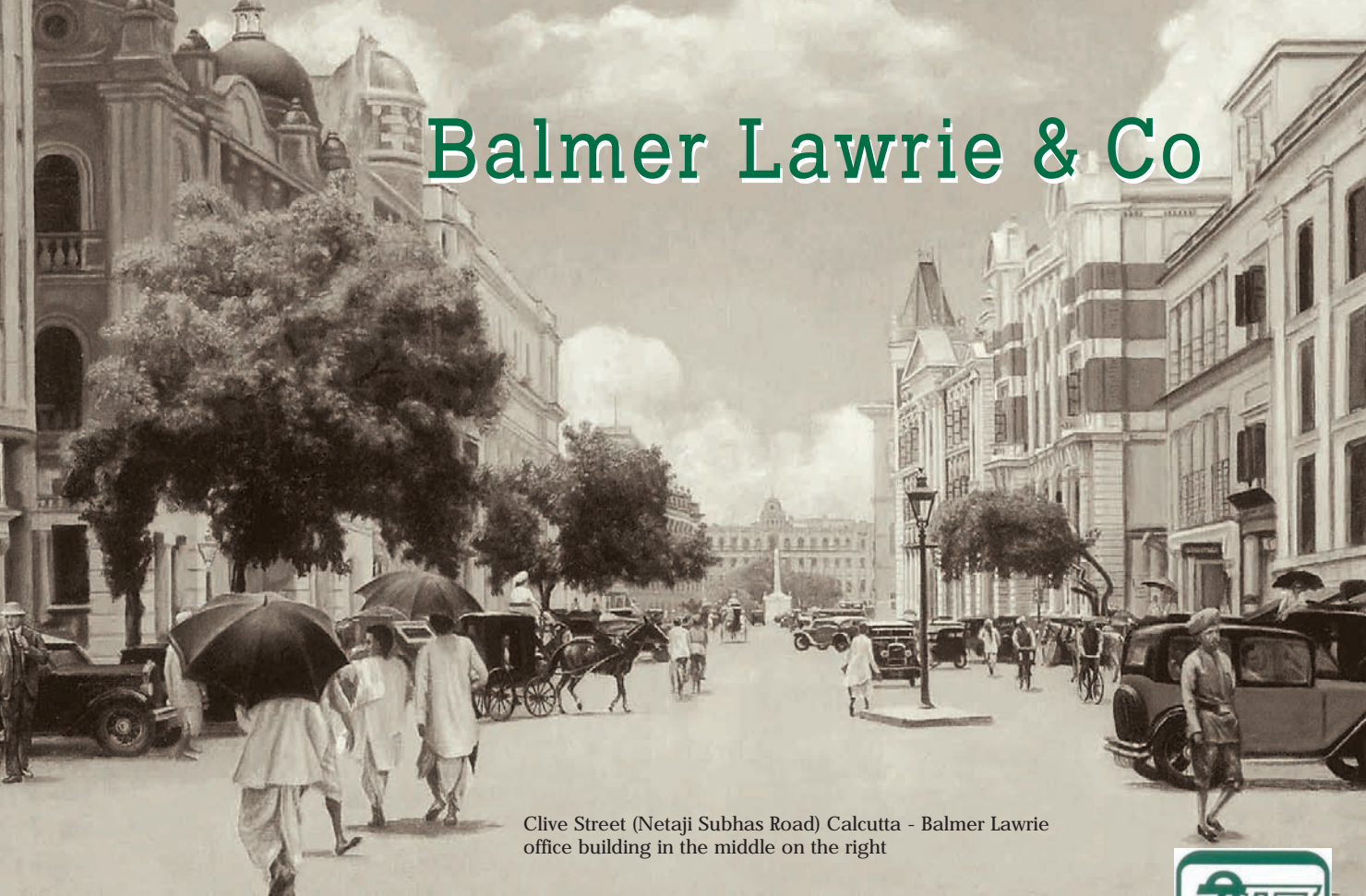
Rumour goes that the knighthood was conferred as a reward for Lipton's cheque of £25,000 sent in a flamboyant gesture to the Prince of Wales' charity fund. Nevertheless it was a characteristic Liptonian gesture and very much in keeping with the style of a man who, when his ship had run aground off Aden, had first thought it fit to paint on some floating bales, "Drink Lipton's Tea," before jumping to safety.

At Lipton's, business expanded but alas Sir Thomas's style of management did not change with the demands of the 20th century. In the 1920s, he continued to manage his giant conglomerate in the same one-man showy style in which he had run his Glasgow business 40 years ago. What had seemed strengths then were now turning into glaring defects. In 1927, Sir Thomas finally sold out to a syndicate headed by Van der Bergh interests and Meadow Dairy. He was 77 and the fight had gone out of him. He signed his abdication in the stateroom of his new yacht 'Shamrock'. Four years later, he died. The name of Lipton however remains synonymous with tea the world over even today.

Source : WH Targett, Archives



Balmer Lawrie & Co



Clive Street (Netaji Subhas Road) Calcutta - Balmer Lawrie office building in the middle on the right



The fascinating story of the Lawrie inheritance dates back to 1867, when Alex Lawrie, a 24 year-old Scot, founded a business that bore his name for 132 years. The company that he launched in Calcutta, is one that everyone is familiar with — Balmer Lawrie & Co. At the time that Alex Lawrie came out to India, there were other equally intrepid Scottish entrepreneurs like Walter Duncan and Octavius Steel, who had come out to seek their fortunes. Walter Duncan set up his own business in 1859 and Octavius Steel in 1876. These three Scottish gentlemen, did not have any common roots, but the businesses that they began, were one day brought together under the banner of the Lawrie Group.

Soon after, Alex left Smith Barry to set up his own business. In January 1867, he formed a partnership with Stephen Balmer, who was a year older to him, and named their firm, Balmer Lawrie & Company. To this day the logotype of Balmer Lawrie & Co Ltd. (a Government of India undertaking for many years) has remained the same — a logo said to have been created by

Alex Lawrie himself.

A major figure in the tea industry, he was founding member of the Indian Tea Districts Association, formed on July 22, 1879. As an investor, Alex was a shareholder in Jokai Assam, of which he was director in 1884. Managing Agents Balmer Lawrie themselves were shareholders in Jokai, Jhanzie and British India. Stewart Holl also a shareholder, consolidated a number of tea gardens — Dejoo, Doolahat, Harmutty, Sephinjuri Bheel and Meleng. Balmer Lawrie also bought, blended and packed tea on their own account from the very beginning in 1867. Alex Lawrie continued to head the firm till he died of cancer in 1908.

After the golden years of the Edwardian era, the First World War heralded economic and social upheavals to challenge the new generation of Lawries, Stuarts and Gemmells. But the businesses weathered the difficulties, and shortly before the Second World War they were successfully floated as public companies. Satish Chandra Mitra became the first outside Director of Balmer Lawrie. Percy Lawrie

succeeded James Nicholson Stuart as Chairman and Managing Director. Arthur Stuart became the Senior Director in Alex Lawrie when Percy Lawrie died. Balmer Lawrie went public in 1936.

Meanwhile, tea came to be regarded as an essential commodity in Britain, so the British Government took over as the sole importer of tea, having requisitioned all stocks in the UK.

There was some relatively modest diversification into East Indian tea estates but little else until, in 1962, Alex Lawrie Factors was formed in London as a joint venture with Gordon Fox — the beginning of a very much deeper association over the following 36 years. 1967 culminated in the merger with Walter Duncan & Goodricke, and Alex Lawrie became their subsidiary. Keith Fitzgerald had joined the Alex Lawrie Board in 1965, taking over responsibility for Indian tea gardens, after nineteen years with Balmer Lawrie in Calcutta, mainly in their tea gardens department.

Information courtesy : Camellia : The Lawrie Inheritance

Warren Tea



At together life was easy and pleasant, with polo twice a week and tennis both at the club and in private bungalows, excellent fishing and shooting when one was fortunate enough to get a few days of leave.

We used to have club dances during the cold weather. Those were the days of dance programmes when duty dances were almost obligatory. At race meetings and other occasions the Gurkha Band of Assam rifles was always in attendance.

During the whole of my active period as a planter in Assam, particularly in the early years, polo was our chief recreation, other than shooting and fishing. In those days there was excellent fishing on the rivers coming out of the Himalayas such as the Dehong, the Debong, the Lalhi, the Sisseri and Sibiah and several other smaller rivers and also the Lohit, into which the Noar Dehing and Tenga Pani entered on the south bank some distance



above the frontier post of Sonpura.

The shooting in the Sadiya area was also very good. There were even rhinos on the Lalhi Choppery as well as mithun (bison) and buffalo and various kinds of deer, including sambher and swamp-deer known as Burrah Singha (large horns) and also florican. The rhino and florican are now almost extinct and there is very little left of anything else since the earthquake of 1950 and the following terrible floods.

"Mellah Shikar" was known in the days of old Assam as the "sport of kings" reserved for "Rajahs". It consisted of the use of fast elephants for hunting down and

stampeding a wild herd in the jungle and then cutting out a young elephant from the rest and chasing it through the forest until the leading Mahout or Pandi on the fastest trained elephant caught up with it and the animal brought to a halt by the tame elephant.

In a few moments the next trained elephant would have arrived on the scene and the Pandi would also throw his rope around the elephant's head and thus secured it between the two hunting elephants. The second man on each elephant would then slip off and rope the wild elephant's legs to the nearest tree. It would remain in this position for a day or so until it got really hungry and then the Mahout allotted to it would approach and offer it food and water and continue to do this regularly so that the elephant gradually got to recognize him and have some confidence in him.

*From W. Kenneth
Warren's Tea Tales of Assam*



Turning a DREAM into REALITY

Tea taster, ace hockey player, a true lover of sports - **Abdul Samad** is still striving to build his dream sports academy for the young

I am a retired tea taster, age 63+ having worked in our tea industry for about 40 years. As once mentioned by Mr. Prafull Goradia, retired from service but not from work. In my capacity as a tea taster, I have been first a broker, producer, broker, buyer, broker and finally to top it as a producer in my second innings as a quality control and marketing head of a small tea garden of Dam Dim Sub District of Dooars.

My father Late Md. Omar Ali was a famous *zamindar* of Jalpaiguri district, a man of vision and widely respected. I was born in Malbazar village in 1953. From my childhood my first love was outdoor games and I grew to become a first division hockey and football player. My father did not allow me to pursue a sports career in 1974 as there was no money in such careers then and rightly advised by him I took up a corporate job and joined tea in 1976 in the first Indian tea broking company Sudhir Chatterjee & Co. P. Ltd.

A sporting quality gave me the opportunity to captain my school, college, university and district teams both in football and hockey - a feat rarely achieved. I was very



Abdul Samad with his wife Ruby

passionate about hockey and from then dreamt of playing for India. At class VIII I represented the school 'A' team. Our school Goethals is the only school in India to have produced three hockey Olympians. When I finished school in 1970, our coach asked me if I would do my graduation in Kolkata. He wrote to the Secretary, Mohan Bagan Club, telling him

that I could play for the club and had the talent to play for the country. I was just 17 then.

My father allowed me to study in Kolkata on condition I get college hostel accommodation. I took admission in St. Xavier's Kolkata. But as I was not given hostel accommodation, I returned to Malbazar. That was the end of my dream to play for India.

My father had donated a High School in the village in 1974 with an aim to mainly educate Muslim, tribal, *adivasi* and Nepali girls of our village who could not study after the primary level. My father expired in June 1975. For 12 years our family ran the school with a voluntary teacher. In 1986 the school was recognized by the Bengal Government and made a government aided school. Today it has a strength of 1000 students, 70% of them girls. The school has a full fledged world cup size football ground.

For the love of the games I coach the school children in football and hockey without any monetary benefit. We have plans to make Omar Ali High School the best sporting school in Bengal with game's like football, hockey, basketball, volleyball, badminton, table tennis and cricket in the same school campus.

We also have plans to start a sports academy in Malbazar. I am sure some major tea companies will come forward to make this possible. I will organize the land if required. It takes a lot of sense of charity to come forward with such benevolence for betterment of our society.



A STORY of diligence and SERVICE

From tea warehousing to his own packet tea brand, **Kamal Tewari** talks about his tea journey to Contemporary Tea Time.

My forefathers hail from the district of Unnao in Uttar Pradesh. This district is located about halfway between the two major cities of Lucknow and Kanpur. I came to Kolkata to study. I completed my graduation from Bhawanipur College, Kolkata in the year 1974.

My father was then engaged in the business of C & F Agency for most of the Gujarati buyers, and I joined my father's business. Later when Siliguri auction commenced in the year 1976, we came to Siliguri and started our C & F business in Siliguri. Soon we began purchasing tea in Siliguri on behalf of the Kolkata based buyer at Siliguri Tea Auction Center. We continue to



Proud grandparent



Kamal Tewari



Pankaj Tewari



Family on vacation



Pavan Tewari

carry out this business till today.

In the year 1980 I started my own tea warehouse in the name of Tiwari Tea Ware House with an area of 15000 square feet in Sevoke Road, Siliguri. Two years later in the year 1982 I opened my tea business in the name of Tewari Tea Corporation and since then we are in tea trading business. Our branch offices are in Guwahati and Kolkata.

We have tea warehouses in

Kolkata apart from those in Siliguri. At Siliguri we have constructed the first tea warehouse in India in the Tea Park with modern facilities like conveyor belts, in an area of approximately 120000 sq. ft.

We believe that for our future growth we will need to extend our tea warehouse facilities in Kolkata. Our clients are Magors, Goodricke, Andrew Yule, Tata, Duncans and many of the other Dooars and Assam gardens, who trust our reputed warehouses.

My sons Pawan and Pankaj joined our business in the year 2000. Pawan now looks after the Siliguri office and Pankaj, the Kolkata office. They feel that we need to increase our packet tea business. We have been selling our brand 5 Star in the rural markets, for the past several years.



Inside Tewari Tea Warehouse



Unloading bay



More TEA Tales to TELL



KALYAN SIRCAR regales with snippets about the English and their tea



Kalyan Sircar

experimental pastry chefs. One traveller is ecstatic: "All of my experiences with high tea in London have been anchored in the past. In Paris, innovation is tasteful, yet definitely with a more palpable feeling of modernity."

Alessia visits and finds in one café 'velvety cheesecake with a confit passion-fruit centre, gold leaf, edible flowers and hibiscus syrup.' At Acide Macaron, at 10 am, the chef patissier is busy shaking up the classics. The result is elegant cakes that are luscious, and the taste lingers on the lips. At Sebastien Gaudard she had crunchy caramel that stuck to her fingers and cream dotted with vanilla seeds. Here they are also serving gooey meringue and dark chocolate ganache with opulent blends of tea. Further down at Segur she had Genmaicha tea that made the best partner for super-sweet matcha choux buns brimming with green crème patissiere. Note the change at the famous Ritz. Here the chef has come up with a sweet-tooth tea, based on delicate petits fours, designed to give French clients that Proustian moment of nostalgia and "elevate biscuits, cakes and other teatime treats to new heights." It kicks off with an amuse-bouche of a tiny madeleine doused in lemon milk and continues with three tiers packed with buttery chocolate barquettes, a slab of unctuous marble cake, crumbly rosewater meringues, broche with cocoa beans and lemon sugar-coated madeleines, like the poshest Krispy Kremes.

And so on. The lady had 'five enormous teas in one day.' Her conclusion? "London will always be good at afternoon tea – there is nothing wrong, after all, with a scone and a slice of Battenberg. But for the ultimate afternoon indulgence – inventive, languorous, even a little sexy – do as the French do and get yourself to Paris."

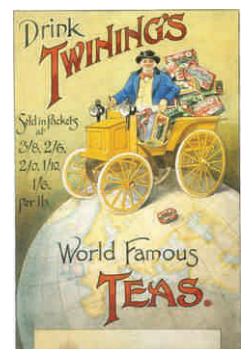
Love thy neighbour as thyself (Mark 12:3). Yes, but when it comes to the French, the neighbour across the Channel, the British have some difficulty. There falls the shadow of jealousy tinged with admiration. The French are so good when it comes to life's many pleasures: their steaks are juicier; their wines are smoother; their love life is charming. But their recent intrusion into the Englishman's celebrated Afternoon Tea is unacceptable and annoying. So enraged was one English woman, Alessia Horwich, that she rushed to Paris for some on the spot investigation. Alas! They are better at it too!

These days "Le Tea Time" features on the menu across Paris. While the restaurants in the capital city are stuck in old formalities – 'What Afternoon Tea should be' – the Parisians are taking a more artistic approach, made possible by a new generation of

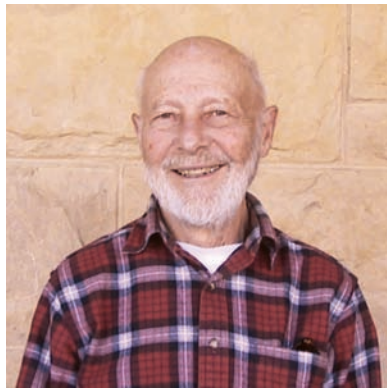
Three hundred and fifty eight years ago, on September 23, the first advertisement for tea appeared in an English newspaper, Mercurius Politicus, that described tea as a China drink where it was called *Tcha*. Soon after that, Pepys wrote in his diary (1660): "I did send for a cup of tea, a China drink, of which I had never drunk before." Google celebrated the nation's favourite drink with a Doodle. The funny animation shows a tea bag with the Union Jack tag, followed by a strainer, sugar, milk and honey, tea

being drunk in a succession of cheerful cups.

However, Independent, an online newspaper, sounded a more cautious note. The British are falling out with their favourite drink, being victim to propaganda against sugar, biscuits, and cakes. You are safe with coffee. Can you imagine coffee with biscuits and cakes!



Why do teapots drip? Professor Keller can answer the question. Joseph B. Keller, who died recently aged 93, was an immensely distinguished scientist. He was Professor Emeritus in Engineering and Mathematics at Stanford University. Awarded many honours and prizes for contributions to his branch of science, yet Keller had a sense of playful perpetual curiosity. Like, why teapots dribble? We know the annoying problem of that little bit of tea that always seems to run down the outside of the spout and drip into our laps. Earlier it was thought that the problem was caused by surface tension. Not so, according to our professor. The effect occurs through fluid and mechanical forces. "It is simply that at the pouring lip the pressure in liquid is lower than the pressure in the surrounding air." In 1999, he and a colleague calculated where gravity makes the drop fall off the pot. For this, Keller won his first Nobel Prize from Harvard,



Prof. Joseph B. Keller

which celebrates the unusual and imaginative in science. His second Nobel Prize was awarded in 2012 for calculating why a jogger's pony tail swings side-to-side while her head is moving up and down.

Prof. Keller suggests three remedies for the dripping problem. (1) If the tea pot spout points up and then straight down at the pointing end, then the tea will flow back into

the pot when the pot is turned upright again and a drip would be almost impossible. (2) If the lower lip of the spout is sharp, as is the case with metallic tea pots, then the trouble is avoided. The sharp edge would help prevent the tea from turning the corner. (3) To avoid the drip do not have the tea pot too full. Tea from a less full pot will flow with greater velocity. The faster the flow, the less likely it is that the tea will cling to the lip.

Nothing annoys an Englishman more than a delay or block that prevents him from having a cup of tea. Richard Gibbs from Somerset complains: "My pet hate is when in hotels the kettle won't fit under the basin tap (failing which try filling it from the shower), and when it has flex so short it can only be used on the floor."



Some major tea companies are predicting that our favourite drink will undergo a major transformation. They will bring out, what they say, "satisfying new tea formats",



enriched with vitamins designed to cure everything from hangovers to hair loss. They

say that soon we will be taking our daily cuppa in the form of jelly, tablets, and even sprays. Really? The pleasure of tea is in the peace that comes with the ritual of making it. Tea gives us the opportunity to break up the monotony of daily chores; at work it provides an excuse to get up from one's desk; face awkward moments ('let's have a cup of tea'), or delaying difficult decision making. Tea Tablet, Tea Syrup, Tea Spray? Give us a break! Will a pill on your tongue cheer you up in the same way? You don't need to smart up tea by mixing/adding this and that; teas of all kinds - black, white, green and Oolong - are rich in antioxidants just as they are.

Lastly, our brave tea lover, Karamjit Sangha. Mrs. Sangha runs a newsagents shop in Hull. One day a knife-wielding robber entered her shop and demanded she hand over money. Let us hear her account of the incident. "I was just sitting there having my cup of tea when this man came in holding this seven inch kitchen knife. He told me to give him all the money, but I was relaxed. I told him I was having a cup of tea. He demanded I put it down and give the money. I said ok and picked up the craft knife (that I use to open papers) and waved it at him. He started shaking and then he ran off.

Stuart Gleeson, the burglar, was jailed for five years at Hull Crown Court.



Tea Shares and Tea Share Trading

It took years to establish in the public mind the merit and value of tea shares as investments. Many reliable sources of information and ready means of negotiation available today – how the market has grown – some remarkable dividend records – share lists and handbooks of information for investors – the tea industry on a basis which is regarded as financially sound – continued steady growth appears reasonably certain

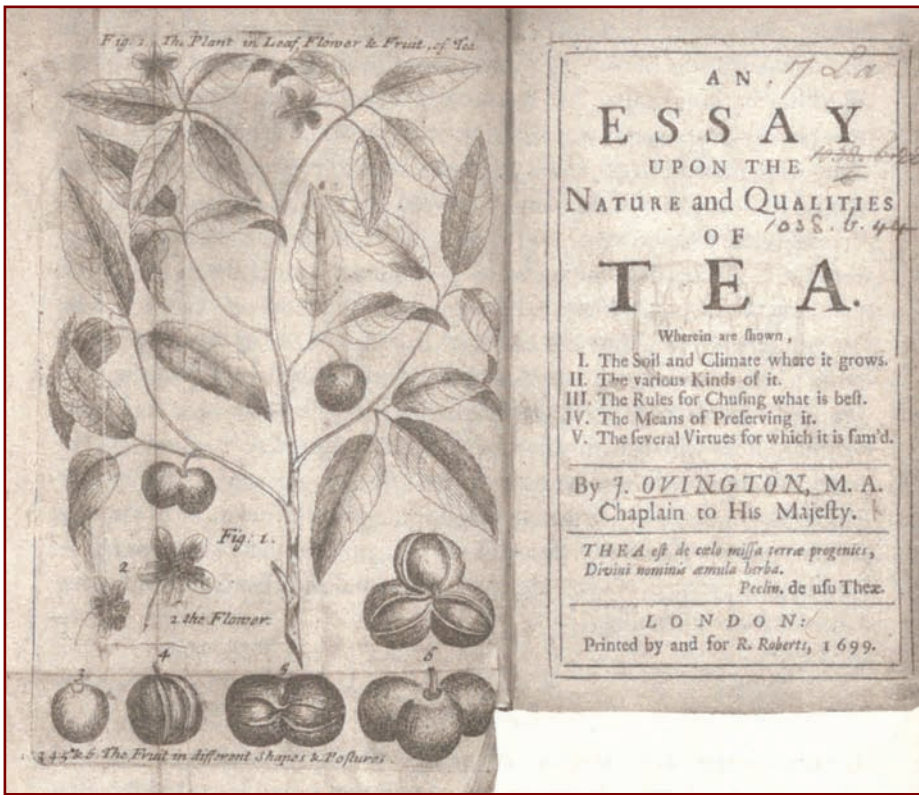
Upto a few years ago (i.e. prior to 1935) the shares of most tea companies were held by the people who opened up the estates, their friends and relatives, and were kept well within limited circles; indeed, in many cases this is the situation today. Tea shares were dealt in fairly regularly during the period mentioned, but there was not a free market for them. However, the prosperous years from 1922 to 1928 greatly increased public interest in tea shares as an investment, and broadened the market.

Trading in Tea Shares - The bulk of tea share trading is confined to London, and the London Stock Exchange is the principal market for such trading, although a certain amount of business in tea shares is transacted by the General Stock Exchange at Amsterdam, the Mincing Lane Tea and Rubber Share Brokers' Association, Ltd., London, and the shares of Scottish companies are dealt in to some extent at Glasgow and Edinburgh. The rupee shares of India and Ceylon are traded in at Calcutta and Colombo.

How the Market Has Grown -
The chief developments in the



East India Warehouse at the N E corner of Crutched Friars on the site of the Navy Office. May 1806



history of tea shares have occurred during the last 30 to 40 years, and the most important, since 1922. The first company to be formed was the Assam Co., founded in 1839, while the next was the Jorehaut Tea Co., in 1859. Both were sterling companies. During the sixties, 10 more companies were formed. Nine were added to the list in the seventies, 22 in the eighties, while a boom during the nineties brought 103 more.

Some Record Dividends - The sterling shares of some fifty British tea planting companies out of about 230 are officially quoted on the London and provincial stock exchanges. Many of them have been consistent dividend payers for years. A remarkable record is that of the famous old Jorehaut Tea Company which was formed in 1859, and paid its first dividend in 1860. During seventy-three years it only thrice missed paying dividend - in 1866, 1880 and 1932. The 100th dividend was paid in 1927. In 1919, the capital was increased from £100,000 to £200,000 by the distribution of 50,000 bonus shares and the issue of 50,000 shares at the par value of £ 1. In 1921 and 1928, additions to

the capital authorised and issued brought it up to £ 400,000. The highest annual dividend paid by any company in the post-war period was 130 percent, free of tax,



the equivalent of 150 percent less 20 percent tax, paid in 1922 to shareholders of the Ghair Allie Tea Company, Ltd. Dividends of 75 to 80 percent and even higher are by

no means uncommon, and have been paid at various times in the last ten or fifteen years by such successfully managed limited companies. Borbheel, Brahmapootra, Chubwa, Deamoolie, Dima, Doloi, Pabbojan, Rajmai, Romai, and Rungajaun companies in India.

There have been a considerable number of alterations in the capital of tea producing companies owing to the issuance of bonus shares and, in some cases, the acquisition of fresh properties. A particularly striking example is afforded by The Assam Company Ltd., whose capital of £200,000 in the old company is represented by £1,000,000 in the new; each shareholder having received one hundred £1 shares for every original £20 share.

In conclusion, it may be said that the tea industry is on a basis which conservative investors regard as financially sound in spite of occasional depressions and the prospects for increased tea consumption throughout the world

are good, thus concluded Ukers then.

Extracts from WH Ukers publication All About Tea, 1935.





CISTA at World Food Expo



The World Food Expo was held in Moscow from September 12 to 15, 2016, at Expo Centre, Moscow. Food and beverage items from different countries around the world were displayed here. Indian tea has a traditional market in Russia. Mainly CTC tea is sold in the Russian market. Last year India exported nearly 49 mkg tea to Russia. This year for the first time, three small tea growers' Self Help Groups producing CTC tea and Green tea produced by small tea growers of Assam, were showcased at the Expo in a stall provided by the Tea Board of India. These Self Help Groups were Panbari Small Tea Growers Society, Jai Jalpesh Small Tea Growers Society and Nabajagaran Small Tea Growers Self Help Group of Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal. The three factories of these SHGs were installed in the year of 2012 with financial help from Tea Board of India, with annual production capacity of eight lakh kg CTC tea per factory. A total of 1230 small tea growers are involved with these factories.

Thirteen Indian tea companies displayed their teas at the Expo. China had 20 stalls displaying Green, Oolong, White and Black CTC Tea. Tea Board of Srilanka and Tea Board of India also had their own stalls. Local big brands also displayed their teas at the Expo. Many local packeters and super markets enquired about the tea of the Indian Self Help Groups. SHGs can produce low cost quality tea that has a good and promising market in Russia. Already three companies of Russia have shown interest in building business relationship with SHGs. A six member delegation from the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations (CISTA) was present at the Expo.

Alternative Crop Cultivation Seminar

Jalpaiguri Small Tea Growers Association organised a seminar on alternative crop cultivation in small tea plantation for sustainable income generation at its association's office at Kadamtala in Jalpaiguri town. The seminar was organised on the occasion of International Tea Day. More than 200 small tea growers from all blocks of Jalpaiguri district participated in the seminar. Personalities from the Centre of Floriculture and Agri-Business Management of Biotechnology Department of North Bengal University delivered speeches before the farmers.

Papaya, strawberry and banana cultivation was widely discussed in the seminar as alternative crop cultivation in the small tea plantation area. These are very easy to grow and income generating, so that farmers get a huge profit from these crop cultivations.

Small tea farmers are facing losses for the past few years as the price of tea leaves are coming down day by day. Alternative crop cultivation in the tea plantations area will help them sustain tea farming. We are greatly benefited from the seminar," said Bijay Gopal Chakraborty, Secretary of the Jalpaiguri Small Tea Growers Association.

Beauty of the Bhaar



RANGE
PRESENTS

CHAI CHRONICLES

RANGE Gallery dedicates its first anniversary show to the humble clay cup – the 'bhaar'

We cordially invite you to the opening at 6:00 p.m. on **Wednesday, 14th Dec 2016**
The show continues till **Sat, 14th Jan 2017**

Daily timings : 12.30 to 7.30 pm , Monday to Saturday

RANGE Gallery, 54 Lower Range, between Beckbagan and Gurusaday Road, Kolkata 700019.

e-mail : aban.desai@gmail.com
Ph: 9830049825
fb page : RANGE / rangegalleryin

A one-of-its-kind art exhibition Chai Chronicles, presented by Range, on the ubiquitous *bhaar* - the small clay tea cups, in which tea is savoured across India, is on at Kolkata. Renowned artists Aditi Saraogi, Anirudh Sagar, Avijit Mukherjee, Asish Chowdhury, Ashwika Kapoor, Atish Mukherjee, Bhaskar Chitrakar, Dhiren Sasmal, Harendra Kushwala, Falguni Bhatt, Ram Kumar Manna, Srila Mookherjee, Tamal Bhattacharya, Vinita Dasgupta, Viraag Desai and Vitesh Naik have lent their creativity to the *bhaar*.

Super Humidifiers

For enhancing fermentation

JetSpray humidifiers from Condair are maintaining an optimum 95% relative humidity (%RH) above the continuous fermentation machines at Bajrang Tea in West Bengal, maximising the quality of the tea produced there. The improved humidity control has resulted in enhanced fermentation of the tea with better infusion and liquor, and ultimately a higher market value.

Before the humidification system was installed by Regent Humidification, Condair's representative in India, Bajrang Tea was maintaining around 74% RH in the fermentation area. The previous humidification system was failing to provide the high level of humidity required in the area, resulting in the tea losing 10% of its weight from moisture loss during fermentation. As the leaf's internal moisture content is the catalyst for oxidation and

improving the tea's fermentation and enhancing the quality of our finished product. We've found the JetSpray humidifier very easy to operate and the use of compressed air in the aerosol ensures we never get any drips from the nozzles or wetting on the floor. We are very happy with the system and the service provided by Regent Humidification and Condair."

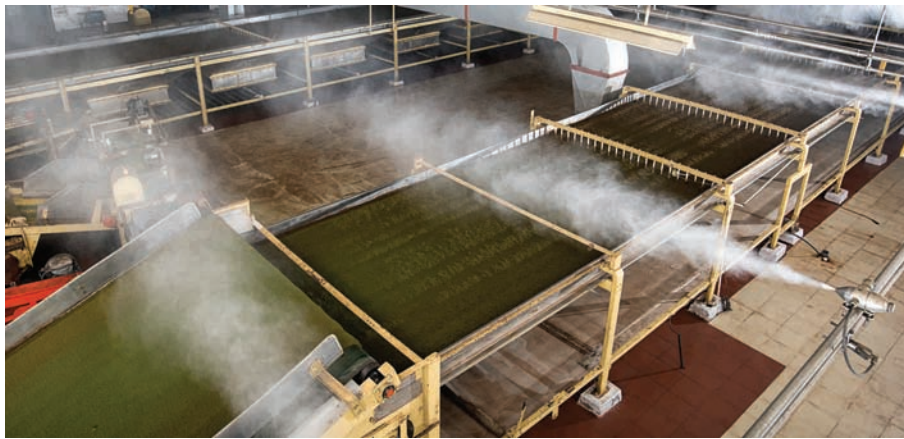


Shantanu Bhattacharya (left), Manager Bajrang Tea Factory and Jaydeep Dasgupta (right) of Regent Humidification

The humidification system installed at Bajrang Tea is capable of providing up to 187 litres of moisture per hour to the atmosphere. Rows of precision engineered nozzles are located in the ceiling space above the CFM machines and combine compressed air and water to produce the finest sprays that rapidly evaporate.

As many nozzles are located throughout the area, the optimum humidity is achieved evenly across the room. This is unlike spinning disc humidifiers or other types of "spot" humidification systems that provide a large quantity of moisture from a central point and rely on air movement to disperse it.

As fermentation areas are typically experien-



Humidification above the CFM machine improves tea fermentation

therefore vital for successful fermentation, any loss in the tea's moisture level will have impact on the quality of the final tea.

Aditya Agarwal, Director of Darshanand Holdings Pvt Ltd, the company that owns Bajrang Tea Factory, commented, "We constantly monitor and record the humidity levels in our fermentation area as we know how vital it is for our production quality. Before we had the JetSpray humidifier, we were unable to achieve the high humidity levels we needed. Our previous humidification system also tended to cause wet patches on the floor nearby. However, since we had the JetSpray humidifier installed, the area is consistently at 95% RH and we've managed to virtually eliminate weight loss from the tea during fermentation.

"This means the moisture stays in the leaf,

cing around 15 air exchanges per hour, the room needs an extremely high humidification output to successfully maintain 95-98% RH, which is the ideal condition for tea fermentation. A single JetSpray system can deliver up to 600 litres per hour making it ideal for use in these areas. The humidifier incorporates automated flush and drain cycles, which prevent water from remaining in the system to stagnate and ensure hygienic operation.

Condair is the world's leading humidification specialist for tea processors and provides free consultation for manufacturers looking to enhance their tea production through improved humidity control. A free 10-point guide to improving tea fermentation through enhanced humidity control is available online from www.condair.co.in/teaguide.



Homestays in Makaibari Tea Estate

Travellers and tea experts flock to the Makaibari Tea Estate, which holds the record for producing the most expensive tea in the country. Located in Kurseong district, the estate produces the finest quality organic tea. To make it easier for visitors, most of the families of the tea pluckers have opened up their homes to guests, so that they experience



tea-tasting sessions and also see how their favourite beverage is produced in factories. Other interesting activities include wildlife spotting and birding.

High tea menu



Few things are as elegant and refined as the ritual of High Tea. Steeped in tradition and finesse, this age-old rite finds new roots at The Chatter House in south Delhi, as the culinary team takes one through a fresh journey to the art of High Tea. Meeting like minds and sharing great thoughts over a cup of tea is always a good idea. Taking breaks from hectic schedules and unwinding over delectable tea and good company. Pairing your exquisite tea or the nettare coffee with a selection of elegant finger sandwiches and decadent desserts, the menu has a wide selection of delicacies catering to both with a sweet and savory tooth.

Courtesy : The Statesman

Crop insurance scheme for small tea growers

The Centre is planning to roll out a crop insurance scheme for small tea growers. Initially, a pilot will be run in three regions in Assam, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu for one crop-cycle spread over two years commencing 2016-'17.

The Tea Board would be the nodal agency for the

scheme and the cost will be shared between the Centre, the State Governments and the growers in the ratio of 75:15:10. However, the growers would have to pick up the State Government's tab in case the Government declines to contribute its share.

The scheme aims to protect growers from anticipated losses in revenue caused by drop in international/domestic prices, yield loss due to adverse weather or pest attacks or any other reason beyond human control. The Tea Board, which has invited bids from insurance companies for the project, said, there are 57,355 small growers in the targeted districts. During the pilot period, the scheme would benefit these growers, covering about 44,223.6 hectare of plantation area. Large growers can also join the scheme, but will have to pay the entire premium.

Courtesy : The Hindu



Online Payment to tea estate workers

Menoka, a 100-year-old tea estate, became the first tea estate to open bank accounts and paid all tea estate labourers online. The tea estate is located in Baksa a district on the Indo-Bhutan border.

“We are happy that we have been able to do it first. The biggest achievement is that all our labourers are happy. They were worried after hearing about demonetisation but last week we managed to pay them in cash with the help of the district administration and they have received wages online,” said Pradeep Kumar Singh, Manager of Menoka. Following the online transfer of wages, the labourers drew the money they needed for the week from the local Customer Service Point of SBI.

Most tea estates in Assam disburse wages on a weekly basis. “Besides Menoka, three other tea estates in the district, Nagrijuli, Fatemabad and Doomni have managed to get bank accounts opened for more than



Tea estate labourers receiving online payment

50 percent of their workers,” said Sanjeeb Kumar Gogoi, Deputy Commissioner of Baksa.

The labourers have quickly adapted to the new system.

Courtesy : The Indian Express

Tea lounge with a view

Goodricke Group Ltd, a brand synonymous with the finest teas that are heralded the world over, has come up with its tea lounge – The Goodricke Tea Pot, Margaret’s Deck. It is nestled amongst the misty greens of the scenic tea estate – Margaret’s Hope. The visitors at the tea lounge can experience the picturesque Himalayan peaks, gushing streams, swaying orchids while they sip on the choicest selection of teas.

The tea lounge, a perfect blend of elegance, incomparable experiences with a dose of heritage and mystique, is bound to appeal to all, be it a gourmet tea specialist or just an inquisitive visitor. Located in Kurseong district of Darjeeling, Margaret’s Deck will give its patrons an experience to remember with its handpicked range of teas as well as chocolates, pastries, tea accessories on offer. Connoisseurs, blenders and laymen can all walk in for an experience of a lifetime with home brewed teas and a host of menu items prepared in accordance with world renowned standards.

The lounge was inaugurated by Malcolm Perkins, Group Chairman of Camellia Plc in the presence of A N Singh, Managing Director; Goodricke Group Ltd.

Malcolm Perkins, Group Chairman said, “We are excited to launch Goodricke Teapot, Margaret’s Deck

in Kurseong today at one of our premium tea estates and we hope to provide an unforgettable experience to our patrons.”

Speaking on the occasion, A N Singh, Managing Director of Goodricke Group Ltd. said, “Goodricke’s Teapot is designed in such a way so as to give the tourists, connoisseurs and the patrons a wholesome global tea experience, while providing them with a stress free, premium environment where they can be introduced to the rich heritage and the culture of tea drinking. With this launch, we hope that the north Bengal tourism also gets another feather in its cap. The UNESCO certified World Heritage Site, Darjeeling Toy Train can also be enjoyed from the tea estate and will be a major draw for tourists wanting to enjoy the view of toy trains crossing the steep slopes”.

Margaret’s Hope Tea Estate is a 150 year old tea estate, fondly remembered as the Bada Rington, which was named Margaret’s Hope in fond memory of the daughter of the then manager of the tea estate in the early 20th century. After 150 years, Margaret’s Hope continues to produce its renowned first flush (spring) tea, which has a flowery aroma and golden colour. Its second flush produces a mellow cup with a muscatel character and bronze colour.



TEA Divas

Radhika Batra Shah and Dr. Rupali Ambegaonkar have stormed their way into tea cups

You've been a pioneer of fine teas in India for over a decade. How did it all start?

The trigger was the desperation for a fine cup of tea. Having been brought up in a typical Punjabi household, in which so many important activities and the best of conversations revolve around a cup of tea, it was but natural to crave a good cuppa outside home too. But there weren't any outlets in Mumbai that served a good cup of tea. This vacuum was an opportunity to jump in and get started.

What is Radhika's Fine Teas and Whatnots all about?

Our teas are personalised and therefore, called fine. As a tea sommelier, I am trained to understand blends. I travel and source teas myself. I work with the gardeners and curate the blends. We do not serve the mass produced CTC (crush, tear, curl) variety of tea.

Which is the most exclusive tea in your collection?

It is this fermented and aged dark tea called Pu-erh, that comes from Yunnan Province in China. It's actually an investor's tea, because the more it ages, the more expensive it gets. I have one that is 25 years old, and it is worth lakhs!

How do you think tea consumption has evolved in India over the years?

These days, people are well travelled and more open to experimenting with and trying different kinds of teas. Earlier, we would only get enquiries for green tea. I had to train my staff to inform clients about our other offerings and also encourage them to understand the requirements of the clients. This simple activity led to clients buying other teas and not limiting themselves to just different varieties of green tea.



Step into Radhika's Fine Teas and Whatnots for a good cup of tea

What is the relationship between tea consumption and wellness'?

Tea and wellness go hand in hand. Each leaf has a purpose and a story. Green tea is known to boost metabolism, while white tea makes for an excellent antidepressant. Oolong tea takes on properties of both green and black tea, and is known as the champagne of teas. It's very good for those who have cardiac diseases and diabetes. Tea plays a crucial role in holistic healing.

Which tea would you recommend for fitness freaks?

White tea. It tastes great and is packed with antioxidants that boost cardiovascular health, help lower cholesterol levels, reduce the risk of cancer and aid in weight loss.

A must have tea for men?

We recommend Oolong tea. It boosts your metabolism far more than green tea and is great for building muscle. We have beautiful Ginseng Oolong tea that is a big hit around Valentine's Day, given its aphrodisiacal properties. While women prefer to indulge in rose teas and the like, men actually try the aphrodisiac tea, since they are a lot more adventurous.

Your favourite tea?

Silver Needle White Tea from China.

Courtesy : Asia SPA

Dr Rupali Ambegaonkar's Tea Culture of the World has been wowing connoisseurs with its luxury blends

Her love for tea and wellness led Dr Rupali Ambegaonkar to forgo her medical practice and set up a luxury tea brand. Six years and 17 stores later. Tea Culture of the World continues to cater to discerning Indian palates with some of the finest blends and teas.

From the mild-mannered rose and green teas to the exotic floral blends and robust Oolongs, her range makes for interesting wedding gifts and giveaways. "There is a lot of focus on the health benefits of each tea and where it comes from," she says. "Each blend focuses on aroma, appearance and taste."



tea with its velvety texture provides "just the right balance between its delicate aroma and taste." She also loves the Matcha, which is Japan's ceremonial tea and the healthiest tea in the world.

The Advice

Among the usual assortment of wedding gifts, she suggests gifting luxury teas. "They make unique and memorable gifts."

The Piece De Resistance

The Wooden Chest is a one-of-a-kind gift set that's designed to replicate the many layers and notes of rare and exotic teas. Crafted from pinewood and embellished with gold plated hinges, the handmade box is the ideal wedding favourite.

The Owner's Favourites

"The silver needle blend is definitely a favourite," says Ambegaonkar. Rare and exclusive, this mellow

The Lead Time

Ambegaonkar suggests a two-month window to enable them to come up with customised and unique design and packaging ideas.

The Perfect Wedding Gift

For a winter wedding: She suggests the Maharaja Oolong for its rich flavours. "A famed tea sourced from Mt Wuyi in China, this blend is mixed with warm spices such as cardamom, ginger and crushed peppercorns."

For a spring wedding: "Song of Serenity is a signature blend of chamomile, lavender and sage."

For a summer wedding; "Cooling Cucumber is a refreshing blend of white tea, cucumber and mint with a hint of jasmine."

For an autumn wedding: "Choose something more ; robust such as t h e Lemongrass – Ginger tea."





A Birthday to Remember



A usual birthday treat at home or a treat for her new friends in the orphanage? The choice was strictly Madhavi's. NAYANA GORADIA reminisces

I am in the midst of a long-due cleaning session of the children's room. Among the dead would I come across a broken pink plastic whistle.

Our younger daughter, Madhavi, had received it as a present from one of Mother Teresa's children at Shishu Bhavan, in Calcutta, almost three years ago. I am immediately reminded of that happy rumbustious hour. Madhavi was four when we had taken her to Shishu Bhavan. The place did not, at first sight, present any exuberant scene. In the spacious first-floor dormitory was a row of metal cribs. In each crib lay a forlorn, little waif, sometimes howling for a mother it would never know. In incubators were the premature babies, shrunken, shrivelled beings with ghoulis smudges for eyes; seeming corpses before they were dead.

Romping in and around the cots were the older children, one with sore-infested limbs, another with the vacant eyes and drooping chin of the retarded. But these children played with gay abandon, oblivious of the cruel and turbulent world outside that had chosen to forget them.

We watched Madhavi, make her way through them, clutching the large bag of sweets she had brought for distribution. Spying the goodies, the children stopped indulging in what seemed to be like a merry civil war and made a beeline for the new corner. Getting

within touching distance they, however, formed an orderly circle. They then waited politely but expectantly for the next move.

Madhavi now decided to hold a quick consultation. The nearest heads came down together in a conclave as the finer points of peaceful distribution were dissected. The preliminary round over, the bag was swiftly emptied, the numbers counted and divided. "Stand in a line, all of you." shouted a self-styled leader. The circle rapidly uncoiled into a straight line. "Put your right hand out".

The operations were in full swing when the distributors made an alarming discovery. The queue of recipients was continuing to stretch in a never-ending line with stocks dwindling rapidly.

The fun continued, for well over an hour. When it was time to go home, we put a question to Madhavi. Would she, this year, forgo her usual birthday treat at home to let her new friends at Shishu Bhavan enjoy a party instead? It had to be either one or the other. The choice, however, was strictly hers ... Madhavi readily opted to forgo a party at home.

Three years have passed since. Getting onto seven, Madhavi is now a veteran party-goer. Increasing years have bred a blaseness. No more frilly dresses with pink satin sashes for her, thank you. The cake for her next party is to be, kindly note, shaped like Cinderella's pumpkin coach.

And, of course, there must be a mini Gogia Pasha magic show to round off the party.

I think a little wistfully of that other party at Shishu Bhavan. Had Madhavi completely forgotten her friends? How much had she understood of the spirit of giving? That it was not merely a question of buying a bag of sweets and distributing them. That, it was a question of sharing – a parting with something of one's own to bring happiness to someone else? Or was hers merely an impulsive response to the infectious joyousness of the place? Perhaps, her memories of past birthdays were yet vague and fleeting and had not crystallised into a tangible forsaking of candles and cake and a cartload of presents.

These thoughts chase my mind as I open a generally unused bottom desk-drawer. A sickeningly sweet smell stings the air. I gingerly push aside the small bundle of comics on top. Hidden underneath is an enormous pile of the much-coveted sweet bags; the variety ritually given to each child-guest at the end of a birthday party. The collection before me seems to have been gathered over a considerable period. Time and weather have conspired to disintegrate their contents. The outer paper has decomposed but not so totally as to unable me to decipher Madhavi's little scrawl on every bag. It says: "For Mother Teresa's Child."

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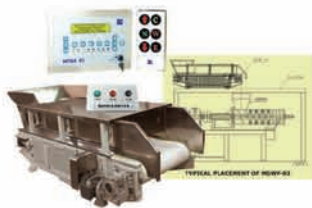
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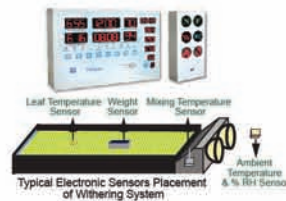
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