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TEA TIME

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OF ASSAM



GTAC

VOL. XXXIII NO. III * JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023 * RS. 80 * US\$ 7

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Nagar, Siliguri- 734403.
Phone: 0353 251 3095/3521
E-mail : ade@contemporary.co.in
Published for Contemporary Brokers Pvt Ltd by A Nandkeolyar.
Designed & Printed by Espace (www.espacedesign.in)
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



The moot question is what should be done to increase tea consumption in India?

T

he tea industry in India faces several pressing challenges. Labor shortages and rising labor costs, aggravated by the migration of workers to other industries, impact tea cultivation and production. Climate change disrupts weather patterns, leading to erratic yields and changing flavor profiles. Pests and diseases threaten tea crops, necessitating increased pesticide use. Additionally, issues related to fair wages and working conditions for plantation workers persist. The industry also grapples with insufficient modernization and inadequate technology adoption. These challenges, combined with market fluctuations, affect the overall sustainability and profitability of the Indian tea industry, necessitating innovative solutions and sustainable practices.

The supply and demand dynamics of Indian tea in India are complex. While India is a major tea producer, domestic demand is significant. Excess supply of a commodity has led to a drop in prices, reduced profitability for producers, and financial losses. It results in surplus inventory, storage costs, and waste. To mitigate these issues, strategic planning, demand forecasting, and market diversification are essential for maintaining a stable commodity market. Not only balancing demand, but pacing it with accelerating supplies remains a challenge for the Indian tea industry.

The moot question is what should be done to increase tea consumption in India?

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'K. S. S.', written in a cursive style.



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Technical Details

Frequency : Quarterly | **Language** : English | **Material Required** : Hi-Res PDF/EPS/TIFF for Color Advertisement & B/W advertisements | **Lead Time** : 30 days prior to the date of issue | **Bleed Advertisement** : Must allow extra margin of 0.3 cm on all sides for trimming. B/W advertisements are not accepted in bleed size.

For further details contact

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Editorial & Marketing Office : Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd.
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QUESTIONS

1. Which tea type was once produced with a tobacco cut, and no wither?
2. Purple Tea from Kenya is well-known to tea lovers all over the world. Which area in India also has natural presence of this plant?
3. There is a store point for teas on the Himalayan Railway route on a small station in Darjeeling for chests to be dispatched to Kolkata. Name it.
4. If the liquor of a tea is described as 'Dry' what are its attributes or defects?
5. In which country was it once the practice to spread Orthodox tea covered with Golden Tips before guests as a prelude to tea preparation and tea service before tea time?
6. Which city in Sri Lanka was reminiscently referred to as 'Little England' during the era of the British planters? When translated from Sinhalese into English it means 'City on the Plain (Tableland) or City of Light. It is surrounded by tea plantations.
7. To which famous American feminist icon is this quote attributed: "A woman is like a tea bag. You never know how strong it is until it's in hot water"?
8. Tea was a vital part of the British soldiers' ration during the trench warfare of World War I. What was used to purify the water carried in petrol cans to the front lines?
9. Which garden in Assam under the Grob Tea Company shares its name with a lake bordering Nagaland? This lake is an ecotourism centre where birds like the Amur Falcon traversing through Nagaland from South Africa to Mongolia can be seen together - millions of birds in just 30 seconds?
10. 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?



Errol O'Brien

Quiz

1. Legg Cut
2. Cachar
3. Jorebunglow
4. It has been fired at slightly higher temperature.
5. Iran
6. Nuwara Eliya
7. Eleanor Roosevelt
8. Chloride of Lime
9. Doyang Tea Estate
10. 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.

ANSWERS





The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre

A large imposing building on a bustling avenue in Guwahati houses what can be called the lynch-pin of the tea trade in Assam. The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC), which recently celebrated 50 years of tea-trading in 2020, is one of the busiest tea trading facilities in the world. In fact, it has seen the largest volume of CTC tea auction in the world. Established on the 25th September 1970 as a result of the commitments of a few pioneers, the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) has been nurtured and sustained through the joint efforts of the State Government and the four segments of tea trade - sellers, brokers, buyers and warehousemen.

A Brief History

The first auction at the GTAC was held on September 25, 1970. On the opening day, the first lot of the commodity produced by Haroocharai Tea Estate was bought by Jafar Ali, proprietor of Diamond Tea Company in Jorhat in upper Assam.

Though the auction centre started its journey in 1970, efforts were on to establish such a unit in the city of Guwahati since the 1960s. After receiving huge demand from the local tea planters to open an auction centre in Guwahati, the Assam government decided to open such unit on August 11, 1970, and appointed former chief secretary Dharmanda Das as the first chairman of its committee. In the first year of its operations, the GTAC had sold 9.1 million kg of tea at an average price of Rs 5.68 per kg.

It was on 11th August, 1970 when Government of Assam decided to open a Tea Auction Center at





Auction Centre

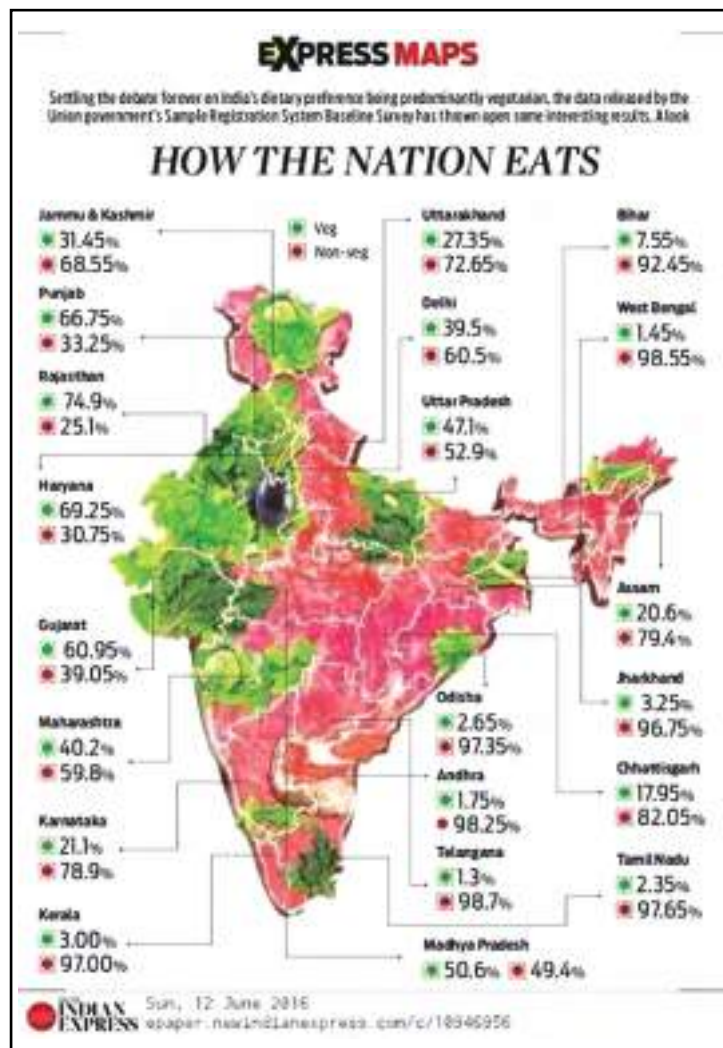
As the world gradually moved towards digital trading, GTAC also adapted to the needs of industry. In the year 2010 when Tea Board of India introduced an e-platform for buying and selling teas as a Pan India Auction System (Bharat Auction), and GTAC became the first auction centre in India to sell its tea globally and introduced a digital settlement prompt payment system.

Guwahati and appointed Late Dharmanda Das as the First Chairman of the Committee following huge demand from the local tea planters to open an auction centre in Guwahati.

In its earliest days GTAC used the stadium Guest House (adjacent to Nehru stadium) as the auction hall to facilitate its tea trading (buying and selling). Later on GTAC shifted its auction to its own building where two separate auction halls were built one for CTC leaf section and another for CTC dust section.

Efforts were on from 1960s for establishment of the Tea Auction Centre in Guwahati, the Gateway of to the Northeast India. A group of Assam's best tea planters were determined despite of all constraints that an auction centre must be set up and worked very fast towards achieving the objective and now Guwahati Tea Auction Centre is proud to have its own building and world class infrastructure.

Now GTAC is the second largest CTC Auction Centre in the world and GTAC is described as having a record of being well maintained and rule follower of Government and Tea Board guidelines. Recently this auction centre also introduced a GTAC Tea Lounge where the best quality Assam teas from the finest gardens of





Guwahati Tea Auction Committee (GTAC)

The current Secretary of the Committee, **Mr. Priyanuz Dutta**, was kind enough to speak to Tea Time about the GTAC as well as his own experiences.



Dr Lakshmanan
24.08.2022 Present

Q. Many of the movers and shakers in the tea industry have a family history in tea. How did you get started in this line of business?

A. I started my journey in the Tea Industry with William Tea Assam Ltd as a management Trainee in 2004. I already had several relatives working in the Tea Industry and since the time I was a kid, whenever I used to visit them, I used to be fascinated with their lifestyle and the abundant greenery they were surrounded with. As I grew older, this fascination grew with me until finally I ended up joining the estates, albeit only for seven years.

Q. What was the journey like - traversing the length of the ladder in a competitive agro-commercial industry?

A. Since joining the industry, I have seen several challenges every now and then, ups and downs in the Tea Industry and have spent some very pleasant times with colleagues who went on to become great friends for life. In 2011, I joined Guwahati Tea Auction Centre as an Assistant Secretary and my entire role in the industry changed i.e. from being a planter to assuming an administrative role. However in my near two decades journey with this Industry, one thing I have observed is that the industry faces challenging times

TEA TIME

every now and then, but it has the capacity to bounce back on its own.

Q. By and large, the consensus is that it's a somewhat precarious time for the tea industry in India due to current economic and weather conditions. What are your thoughts on this?

A. Like I said just now, it may be facing some precarious time at the moment, but it will bounce back.

Q. If it were possible, what are some of the changes you'd like to see in the industry/organization?

A. I would like to mention here that innovation and evolution are two things which one has to adapt to. The world evolves, we humans keep evolving, and all this is for a reason. Similarly, we also need to go through the

same process. We need to keep trying new things and if something is not successful, we need to acknowledge the same, go back to the basics and start all over again.

Q. Are there any developments in GTAC that seem remarkable to you during this time?

A. The most significant development in GTAC since the time I have been associated with it is the launching of the GTAC Tea Lounge, thereby giving access to the general public to those teas which they normally were not able to taste and also giving a facility to our producers to encourage them to get into the retail packet business.

Q. Away from the office, what are some interests or hobbies that you pursue?

A. When away from office, I have several hobbies, some of which are reading, travelling, riding my bike etc.



In the early days flat bottomed barges were towed behind paddle steamers, ideal for carrying tea boxes and garden labour
Courtesy: The Saga of Indian Tea





The Growth Prospects of the

Guwahati Tea Auction Committee (GTAC)

from the pen of *Mr Dinesh Bihani*

Dinesh Chandra Bihani, a veteran member of the GTAC, took over legacy of his family tea business which his grandfather started in the year 1935. He is associated with Guwahati Tea Auction Centre as a buyer for the last 50 years. He is currently active member representing various committees of GTAC. He is also the Secretary of Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association and Chairman of GTAC Tea Lounge. He also served as Vice Chairman for two terms of Federation of all Indian Tea Traders Association. He shared some his thoughts of the future of the GTAC and his own experiences from his long years in the Assam tea trade.



Dinesh Bihani

GTAC at a Glance

Active Trademarks -	1245
Buyers -	239
Warehouses -	31
Brokers -	8
Employment -	15,000 plus (Direct & Indirect)

“Since its inception in 1970, Guwahati Tea Auction Center has slowly become the World’s second largest tea auction centre and India’s No. 1 Tea Auction centre in terms of the quantity sold for CTC tea. The Assam tea industry has many stellar points which are attractive to for major investments.

It is well-connected – Assam is the gateway of North-eastern states and North East Asian Countries. Guwahati is among the top 10

busiest airport in India and is well connected with all the major business hub cities. Recently the Government of Assam has also announced the building of new infra-structure to connect Guwahati with all the North East Asian Countries through roads and international flights. Guwahati is emerging as a logistics hub and teas are moving much faster than Kolkata. The various opportunities for logistics are helping teas in moving to all over India in a much faster way.

TEA TIME

The city also has a facility for direct exporters through Indian Containers Depot at Amingaon with extra export incentives. Export through ICD is much faster than other ports. The Assam Govt also announced subsidies to orthodox producing manufacturers, vastly improving the exportability of Assam tea.

For the current year of 2023-24 only, an enhanced production subsidy of ₹12 per kg will be extended. ₹100 crore has been earmarked for this scheme. Tax holiday extended on Agricultural Income Tax for a period of the next three years to extend infrastructure assistance of Rs 2 cr. per garden to 50 tea garden for building guest house, renovating their Bungalows for Tea Tourism, etc.

GTAC is a favourable destination for all the tea producers/manufacturers for sale of teas because this is the fastest and most transparent selling system in India. GTAC platform is fully computerized. Any registered buyer of GTAC can buy tea from any other auction centres of India under Pan India Tea auction system. GTAC has a Capacity to handle 280 million kgs of tea and store 16 lakh plus packages at a time. GTAC warehouses are fully capable and in-line with the trade requirements.

Guwahati Tea Auction Center is a Specialty Tea Hub, where the specialty tea was sold at a world record price of Rs. 99999/- per kg.

Celebrating Spring 'Bihu Festival'



Q What role has the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre played in promoting of Assam tea?

The GTAC is the second largest Auction Centre for CTC teas in the world. There is a huge responsibility of GTAC to sell teas at good prices to become the largest Auction Centre.

GTAC has set up a tea lounge in their building premises where single origin Assam tea of various gardens are sold in their packets. There

is lot of speciality tea such as Golden, White, Oolong, Green, Orthodox teas etc which are sold and available for drinking in the tea Lounge. The lounge has become very popular and ultimate destination for good quality tea drinkers. GTAC Tea Lounge also actively participates in various trade fair platform such as India International Trade Fair held at Pragati maidain (IITF) New Delhi and various G 20 Summits etc to promote Assam Tea. It has now become a tourist hub for Tea lovers.

Q. What is the status of the tea produced by the small tea growers in the GTAC? How can they improve their quality?

A. Small tea growers have now become the reality producing more than 50% of green leaf. TRA and Tea Board should guide them to train good quality tea plucking so they get good remunerative prices.

Q. Tea prices in the GTAC have been stagnant? Any specific reasons?

A. The main reason of stagnant prices is due to higher crops than demand and lower quality teas which have resulted for prices becoming stagnant. We GTABA buyers feel in Auctions most of the sellers are selling their second quality teas. The first preference of good quality teas are given in the private channel and balance are sold through auctions. This results in lower auction averages which are considered as a standard. There is also a need to understand that tea prices across the globe are down in major tea producing countries – Kenya and Srilanka. Recently auction data concluded lot of gardens which are selling their quality teas through GTAC are getting an average price of above Rs 300 and more throughout the year.

Q. What is the impact of the Tea Control Order on the industry?

A. Some of the TOMCO Rules does not fit to the present scenario. The Tea Board should not interfere in day to day work of auctions. Thus, recently Commerce ministry took note of the various extracts of the TOMCO Order and assured changes will be done accordingly.

Q. According to reports there is a slump in the domestic consumption of tea in the country. What can be done to improve the market?

A. The domestic consumption is very low infact our mass consumption is even lower than

our neighbouring Countries. All industry stakeholders with the help of Tea Board should promote tea drinking especially among the young Indian Population. We should promote the tea drinking similar to Amul milk and other cold drink companies.

Q. What monitoring is done to regulate the pesticide level in the tea produced in the State? High minimum residue Level in exported tea has led to rejection?

A. Non-obeying of Plant Protection Code and FSSAI guidelines has resulted in rejection of teas in the global market. Although Tea Board and government authorities are taking steps to prevent such situations but it is also the duty of sellers a ssociations to guide their members to prevent use of restricted pesticides.

Q. What is the tea export scenario vis-a-vis the international tea market?

A. The Tea export scenario is not in a very good shape. Our exports are down year by year due to competition from other tea producing countries. Our prices are also higher comparing with other countries. Recently, Sri Lanka government had an agreement with Iran to supply teas against purchase of

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oil as barter system trade. This will again affect our export especially on orthodox category in future. Also there are issues pertaining to MRL and payment issue with some countries affecting exports. The Government and the tea industry should take immediate steps to look into the matter otherwise we will lose all our permanent tea import destinations.

Q. What is your opinion on newly introduced Bharat Tea Auction Platform?

A. The newly Bharat Tea Auction Platform was introduced by Tea Board when some stake holders were not happy on Pan India Auction system and they were alleging that it is not a transparent system with buyers making a cartel and giving low prices in Auctions. There after Tea Board appointed IIM Bangalore to study Auction system and advice. They submitted a report named Madhevan report however, this report was changed many times and after consulting they introduced Bharat Tea Auction System. However, with this auction the buyers are not happy the way it was forcefully implemented. The buyers always in opinion that the tea prices runs on demand and supply and prices are fetched as per their quality. Thus, till date there is no changes in prices of teas and infact more outlots are seen in the Auction.

Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association is the major stake holder for Assam Tea Industry and GTAC. GTABA is always proactive on finding solutions for benefitting the Tea Industry as well as Tea Auction System with all stake holders. GTABA always want Assam tea Industry to prosper as like Assam Tea which is known for strong liquor, good flavour and strengths.



Amarjit Sarma,
Tea Time,
Guwahati

GTAC Tea lounge
Participate in India
International Trade
Fair New Delhi in
November 2022





Latest Activities at the Guwahati Tea Auction Committee



For the first time a Multi-Stakeholder consultation was convened by the Labour Department where the International Labour Organisation was invited by the Government of Assam for advise on the minimum wages and adequate wages for the plantation workers. The Tea Association of India lauds this important initiative of the Government of Assam. It is a significant occasion where the issues of productivity linked wages were discussed. TAI strongly advocates hourly rates wages, the provision of which is there in the minimum wages act. The ILO stated that sustainability of the industry is also to be taken in consideration while fixing the adequate wages.

The meeting was attended by representatives of various producers associations and labour unions. TAI was represented P.K. Bhattacharjee, Secretary General and Dipanjol Deka, Secretary, Assam Branch.

KAMRUP *Tea Company*



Ms. Sonam Kasera spoke with Vishal Kumar of Tea Time

1. What evoked your interest in the business of tea? Was it only your family legacy?

It started with family legacy but the more I got involved I started enjoying it and found it more interesting. Each day is a new learning experience with so much variance, it is not stereo type, it's fun and challenging because nature dictates it. Each batch of tea is different with plenty of variance, and working with international partners is more exciting and challenging.

2. Who is your business role model and why?

Steve Jobs – once you deliver a good quality and an innovative product, the world comes to you. you don't need to go to the world... create an aspirational quality product.

3. What are your aspirations for your Company?

Our aim is to be a global producer of consistent quality and supplier for all origins of tea. Wherever tea is, we are there. we want to make ours a global brand, not driven by volumes but by quality.

4. What are the opportunities for the industry?

To promote tea consumption and specially attract the Gen Z by offering

Innovative products, with them they should not just perceive tea as cutting chai or masala chai. But know tea has so much to offer so much varieties, whether they want to drink





a hot beverage or cold beverage, they choose tea.

5. What do you perceive as threats to the Industry?

Labour related concerns are the major threats. and lesser participation from Gen Z in the industry. Alongside natural threats like global warming have an adverse impact on the industry.

6. What do you see as opportunities for your Company?

To be a quality producer and global supplier. Recently we have started our own Brand in a modest manner through a few select retail stores and through E-Commerce, we are working to enhance our footprint in this domain.

7. In general, do you see an interest among young entrepreneurs in tea?

There are two sides to this - one sect of the segment is really doing well, E – Commerce players like Tea Box, Vahdam, Chai Break Cafes, but on the other side majority of Gen Z still perceive it as traditional business and prefer other avenues.

8. What are your hobbies, interests and passions outside of tea?

During Covid I have been introduced to Yoga and now am a Yoga freak. Also travelling, international trade and teaching.

9. Who has been your greatest teacher?

My Mother, My Bosses, our International Partners, the faculty at IIFT & FIEO Family and most importantly Tea Itself, from each one of them I am learning each day and are indebted for their valuable teachings.

10. Which are the new avenues that have opened up for the new generation in the tea industry in India?

Tea Cafes and E – Commerce, Tea in Gifting, be it Luxury or Corporate.

11. How would you compare the new leaders in tea as compared to the previous ones?

I still perceive myself as belonging to an older generation and consider the previous generations to be the Leaders, they are the pillars who set the foundation for the industry. Now it's up to the young generation to keep it expanding, we need to innovate with the changing times.

A famous quote by Paul Critchlow would sum up –

“If you could put Boomers and Millennials together in the same place and with the right setting and conditions it's amazing how they spark each other“.



Vishal Kumar
Tea Time, Kolkata

In Conversation with ...

Pranav Bhansali

Tea Time recently had a chance to sit down with Pranav Bhansali, from Bhansali and Company. Read on to find out more about his journey in the industry as someone who grew up influenced by the industry from a very early age.



Q. What evoked your interest in the business of tea? Was it only your family legacy?

A. The Senior partners at Bhansali and Company, Mr Sudhir, Sameer and Anish Bhansali, have always had a deep passion for tea. Apart from enjoying the beverage, it's always been a treat to hear them speak about our industry. This love and energy for tea rubbed off on me. My maternal side of the family also has a reputed name in tea.

At 16 years of age, I interned with the world's largest tea brokers in Kolkata. Those were early days but I immediately connected with the work and environment of the tasting room.

Q. What are your aspirations for your Company?

A. To continue being reliable partners for Indian tea for the most reputed companies around the world. Our commitment to quality is attested by consistently being amongst the top exporters of Indian tea for over 50 years.

Q. What are the opportunities for the industry?

A. Last couple of years, Indian orthodox market has been very buoyant and due to developments elsewhere, global markets have finally been exposed to blends from Assam and Nilgiris. If collectively as an industry

we decide to hold ourselves accountable to stringent quality benchmarks, I feel Indian tea can finally tap and make further inroads in markets which have traditionally not been welcoming to Indian tea.

Q. What do you perceive as threats to the industry?

A. Climate Change would certainly be the single biggest threat for the industry. We have seen Inconsistent rain and monsoon





patterns really wreak havoc with supply side dynamics.

Herbal teas - We need to monitor and check whether brands and packeteers which claim to be selling herbal teas, are in fact using leaves from the camellia sinensis plant or not. Confluence of exotic herbal infusions without tea should not be marketed as herbal tea.

Race to the bottom - Since Covid, domestic and foreign brands have launched economic/budget brands which are using poor quality teas. How can we convince people to consume more tea when cheap and poor quality blends are thriving?

Q. What do you see as opportunities for your Company?

A. Having round the year buying for several grades of tea help us to source and procure at best possible prices. For years we have been using this to our advantage and we continue to make the most of this in the future too.

India is blessed to have such wide variety of tea production capabilities in North and South India. Being conscious of this and having a solid understanding about Assam and Nilgiri teas has helped us to get a foothold in all six tea auction centres.

Q. In general, do you see an interest among young entrepreneurs in tea?

A. Tea has a certain aura and legacy around it. It's very nice to see the new generation gladly taking up responsibility and building on, despite having opportunities in other mainstream industries which are supposedly more rewarding. I feel if one has a passion for tea or someone who simply enjoys the beverage, it's very easy to appreciate and be proud of our industry.

Q. Which are the new avenues that have opened up for the new generation in the tea industry in India?

A. Only in the last few years have we started seeing young business people coming up with novel and out of the box ideas ranging from instant tea solutions to tech enabled private selling platforms. Obviously, it's good to see such initiatives. Our industry has warmly received these startups and have shown their appreciation to their work and thought.



Vishal Kumar
Tea Time, Kolkata



Monjur Hossain

Tidings from BANGLADESH

This is the second part of the article published in the last issue (Vol. XXXIII, No II, April to June 2023).

The profitability of the sector depends on the productivity per hectare and the price realised for tea in the auction. Which is again depends on the international market situation and the producer does not have any control over the auction. At the same time due to increased cost of inputs, the cost of production is also going high every year. A recent increase of labour wages and staffs salary amounted further increase of the cost of production. As such the producers will be have to face a challenge to meet these additional cost of production.

Apart from the above, the tea industry in Bangladesh is facing multiple other challenges at the moment. The fact that the amount of export is continuously decreasing has already been discussed earlier. Apart from that, there are various other issues to deal with:

Antiquated Irrigation System

The country's current irrigation system is almost ancient which scales down the level of production to a great extent.

Dependency on Single Source of Labour

The country's tea industry labour force is composed of only the tribal casts who have been in this workforce for several generations. But since both the local and global demand is increasing, if the source of labour is not diversified, then very shortly there will be an acute shortage of labour.

Climate Change

Finally, global warming is a major concern since maintaining the optimum weather condition

is absolutely crucial but in recent times, global warming repercussions appeared either in the form of excessive rainfalls, thunderstorms, and increased air humidity, or no rain at all as droughts. Both these situations result in low yields of tea production.

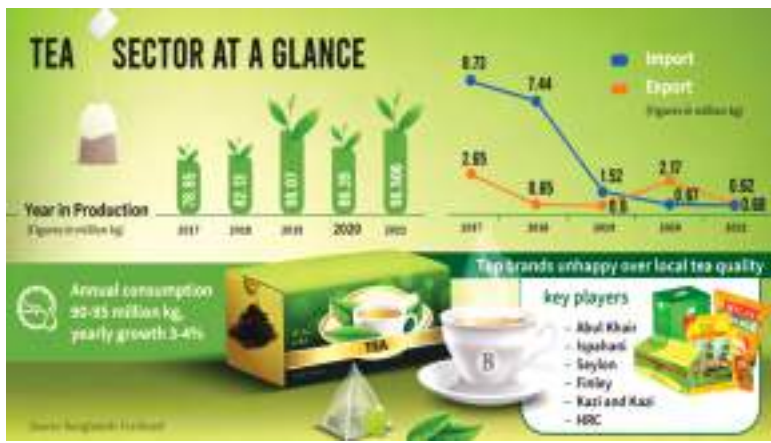
Lack of Customer Interest for Premium Quality Tea

While local customers are becoming more and more habituated with tea drinking habits, they have little interest in high-quality tea variants due to the premium pricing of such products. That said, the market of premium quality tea is quite different when it's in the international context. In regions like Europe and America, these premium teas have very promising demand. Apart from that, the tea industry of Bangladesh has many other growth potentials and scopes for innovation.

Growth Potentials and Innovation

The tea industry, despite dealing with some challenges, does offer some amazing opportunities to grow further in the future. Both the local and global demand for traditional and high-quality tea is on the rise so if the country manages to scale up the production, it would result in a high return on investment since the demand is higher than the supply at this point.

The governmental policy regarding the tea industry has also been favourable since the beginning. With its assistance, tea production has already been initiated in the plain lands of the northern region of the country including



INTERNATIONAL



with new trees because tea plants usually lose their peak productivity rate after a certain period of time. Moreover, using natural fertilizers in the plantation gardens should be prioritized as well. The other tea-producing countries are currently having a huge competitive advantage due to the low cost of production and high productivity.

Panchagarh and Thakurgaon. Utilizing unused and idle plain land which cannot be used for any other agro-based production anyway, would definitely contribute to meeting increasing demand for tea, both in the home and global market. The government now is expected to facilitate the innovation of new variants of tea, while enhancing production, marketing, and auctioning. The transformation of flat lands as cultivable for tea production has been extremely promising so far since 12% of the current total production is from these areas. Since the demand is increasing at a very fast pace, utilization of flat lands for tea production is crucial.

In Bangladesh, the existing labour force should be provided with better facilities to enhance their quality of lifestyle and adequate training facilities to level up their skills and productivity. The present cultivable land is insufficient to increase both the export amount and satisfy the local consumption, so the authorities should patronise and encourage more the utilization and expansion of such land as well. Modernization of the supply chain, minimization of impurity, and magnification of the marketing efforts for the newly introduced variants of tea could be the way to maximize the production of the tea industry in this country.

One contemporary innovative approach in this industry is promoting tea as a skincare and beauty product. Using the by-products of tea leaves and using them for making skincare products can be a whole new industry that could not only cater to the home demand for beauty products but also be exported as well since tea is internationally known for its medicinal and health values.

* The writer is Managing Director of PMTC (Bangladesh) Limited

The current focus at this point should be to figure out ways to increase domestic production as much as possible so that tea products can be exported even after meeting the local demand to the greatest extent. For that, there is no alternative to modern and artificial irrigation systems to deal with unpredictable or hostile weather conditions that cannot create any impediments. The ancient tea bushes with plunging production ability should be replaced



Tea Time in conversation with

Sourav Pahari, IAS, Deputy Chairman, Tea Board



Shri Saurav Pahari, IAS
Deputy Chairman, Tea Board India

At a relative young age at 42, Sourav Pahari has a wide experience in the districts of West Bengal. Before taking on his current assignment at the Tea Board, where he has served as Chairman and Deputy Chairman, he was the Addl. Secretary Department of Food Processing Industries and Horticulture, Government of West Bengal. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) degree from the Calcutta University and has attended management Program in Public Policy from the Indian School of Business. He joined the IAS in 2008.

Q

1. **As a young student, what were your aspirations and what made you chose the IAS as a profession .**

My aspiration was to be independent immediately after completing my studies. The competitive examinations were my first foray into the job market and fortunately got through.

2. **The Tea Industry is relatively stressed with a high cost of production and lower price realisation. What would you suggest would be the way forward for sustainability?**

The industry consists of the organized or big growers' sector and the small tea growers. The organized sector has a higher

cost of production while the small growers due to their family size holdings have an inherently lower cost of production. The small growers are contributing to about 52% of the Country's production. However, there are quality issues in the small grower's sector.

In line with the Government's added focus on development of the small growers' sector, Tea Board has been making sustained efforts in bringing the STG sector into the mainstream value chain through collectivisation, innovation in products, better packaging and incisive marketing.

Productivity is also linked with cost and to ensure higher productivity the Board is implementing the Tea Development & Promotion Scheme for holistic development. The manufacturers therefore should focus on quality with value addition to cater to the large domestic market which ultimately make the sustainability of the tea industry.

3. **The Jorhat Tea E-Marketplace has been giv-**



en a platform to conduct Tea Auctions but with a different set of Rules as against the Pan India Bharat Auctions. Any reasons for this, as it would not be a level playing field.

There was a long demand of the stakeholders of upper Assam in general for a new age auction centre particularly at Jorhat owing to increased tea production of Assam, which accounts for 52 per cent of the country's production and in view of the fact that the state of Assam was having only one centre, namely Guwahati Tea Auction Centre covering entire North-East region. To address the same, Board had implemented Jorhat e-Marketplace in association with M/s. mjunction services limited in June, 2020 after due consultation with the stakeholders. The Jorhat Auction has been designed to cater the needs of the stakeholders in an innovative way to ensure quality, cost effectiveness of the entire process, fair and market-driven price discovery by virtue of transparency between primary, secondary and tertiary buyers & to reduce turnaround time of tea. The Jorhat auction platform is an initiative taken by Board to modernize the current auction system. Hence, the Jorhat auction is governed by a set of different rules and the same cannot be compared with other auction centres of the country run under the Pan India Auction rules.

- 4. A lot of Small and Medium Buyers are not being able to operate in the New Bharat Auction because of the No Division clause. This may be taking away some competition from the platform, for a correct price discovery. Your thoughts on this.**

Upto sale 38/2021 of North India, the minimum lot size for CTC tea was 20 packages. However, considering representations of the producer associations, the minimum lot size was increased to 30 packages in respect of CTC

tea from the subsequent sale. The producer/seller associations had also expressed their apprehension over lower realization of prices of made tea in absence of non-divisibility norms in minimum lot size, i.e., 30 packages. Accordingly, Board had amended the rule no.44 pertaining to Division of lots w.e.f. sale no.40/2021, wherein no division has been stipulated upto 30 packages of lot. Since the change (division of lot) was done based on the suggestions of the producers, Board will take the issue to them for necessary action.

- 5. What are the Government's plan to increase the domestic consumption of tea? The FAO report stated that growing and consuming countries must focus on their domestic markets as consumption in the developed markets are shifting to herbal infusions and flavoured teas. We feel that the excessive supply can only be balanced by robust growth in consumption, since export markets are far less lucrative. Please opine.**

Even though India is a largest consumer of black tea, considering the production trends, there is supply-demand in-equilibrium. The only way forward is to increase domestic consumption and to make inroads into new territories for export promotion. In order to ascertain the tea consumption pattern, future projections etc., the Board undertook a thorough domestic consumption study through M/s Deloitte in the year 2017. As per the said report, domestic tea consumption is to increase @ 2.32% Y-o-Y. Presently Tea Board has engaged an agency to conduct a study for understanding the current levels of per capita consumption, growth expected, market size, preference of consumers and possible measures that can be taken to effectively promote tea consumption etc.

Tea Board is continuing the generic promotion of tea on sustained basis through

TEA TIME

various forums and participation of trade fairs and the Industry also to come forward for sustained promotion of tea showing its health benefits and targeting youth as a beverage.

6. What are the Tea Board's current policies towards the trade and Industry.? In terms of exports, subsidies, quality control, green leaf prices and the rising costs of production?

Current policies towards the trade and Industry: In view of various challenges confronting the Indian tea industry now, Tea Board along with the support from the Central government facilitates the development of the rapidly growing STG sector, mitigation of climate change impact on tea plantations, rendering sustained training programmes on GAP & GMP, ensuring quality assurances, undertaking various promotional programmes and various trade facilitation measures with a view to removing trade impediments.

Exports: The steps being undertaken in this direction are basically two-fold:

1. Organization of regular meetings with the exporters for sensitizing them about the need for market diversification in terms of distributing the risks amongst the diverse export destinations
2. Virtual meetings with the tea importers are being held with the help of the Indian Missions in the potential markets targeted for diversification such as Syria, Malaysia, China, Libya, Saudi Arab, Iraq, Azerbaijan etc. on continual basis

Subsidies: As regards to the subsidies, the Board is presently implementing the Tea Development & Promotion Scheme for the 15th Finance Commission (2021-22 to 2025-26) with the objective to improve production, productivity, quality of Indian teas in order to



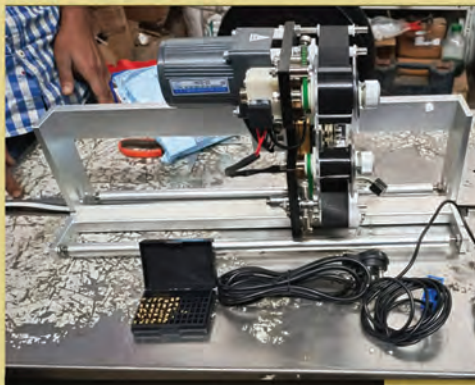
remain competitive in global markets, focus on the development of small tea growers, their collectivization for moving up in value chain, value addition in teas for better price realization and share in export markets, improving tea exports from India to high value markets, encouraging research and development, technological innovations and welfare of wards of small tea growers. The Board is also implementing the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Area Sub Plan (TASP) under which components of the ongoing scheme are extended to stakeholders belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Communities with certain relaxations.

Quality control: The quality compliance is being ensured by surprise quality check and analysing for the FSSAI parameters conformity. Tea Board and Tea Research Institutes (TRIs) are having their own Tea Testing Laboratories (TTLs) having the NABL-Accreditation. Besides Tea Board and TRI's TTLs, as on date there are other 37 NABL-Accredited Laboratories for tea testing under NABL Integrated Assessment Scheme.

Green leaf prices and the rising costs of production

Enhancement of Production and productivity in view of the stagnant productivity of the organized sector. Research to support achieving higher productivity, quality and adaptation to climate change, new blends for the sustainable markets.

Courtesy : Iqbal Singh Sukarchakia



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Tea Routes: the ancient tea & horse road of china



Map of the Tea Horse road

In Ancient China, tea was the most prized commodity that was traded with people from the ‘outer world’ for horses. The modern world still bears the inconspicuous marks of the passage of those tea traders. For more than a thousand years, the Tea Horse Road -- a thoroughfare of commerce between China and Tibet – was one of the harshest trails in Asia. The ancient passageway stretched almost 2,250km across the tea-growing region of China’s Sichuan Province to Lhasa, the 365m-high capital of Tibet. Beginning in the 10th Century, Chinese porters and pack animals inched up switchbacks to cross Tibet’s Zar Gama Pass (pictured) to trade Chinese tea for Tibetan horses. Today, most of the original Tea Horse Road is gone and what is left of the old route is now travelled by car or truck.

city. The exchange? A single horse for 60kg of tea. In the June of 1990, scholars from the University of Yunnan, led by Chen Baoya, started from Zhongdian in Yunnan and trekked across high mountains and grasslands. They followed the traces of the old roads to do research on the

Tibetan royalty and nomads alike took to tea for its warm temperature in a cold climate, making raw tea at the time worth more than porcelain or silk. Chinese porters, both men and women, regularly carried loads weighing 70kg to 90kg along the Tea Horse Road – a three-month journey that took them up four deadly 520m-high passes before dropping them into Tibet’s capital



The Ancient Tea Horse Road in Yunnan Village



Modern Pu'er Tea

culture and linguistics of the area. The scholars reached Chamdo in the Tibet autonomous region and Kangding in Sichuan (an important stop along the trade route in ancient times) before returning to Zhongdian in September. This three-month trek emphasized the role of tea as a commodity during the historical times in China. Along the way, many anecdotes regarding tea-porters who travelled beyond the Himalayas to India and Myanmar were still heard.

This research trip yielded the paper where the term 'Chama Gudao' was first used to connote the millennia-old exchange of tea for horses in China. Tea was a staple of daily life in Tibet

and beyond, why the Chinese needed good horses to maintain their military strength against tribes in the North. The manufacturing method of Pu'er tea produced all over the Yunnan province had the great advantage of not only being very storage-friendly, but also had the reputation of getting better with age. This caused the trade across what used to be a part of the Southern Silk Route, to thrive for

hundreds of years. The routes were increasingly used in the Song and Yuan dynasties (960-1368 CE), which gradually petered out at the end of the Qing dynasty (1911) when sea-trade became more and more convenient.

Since then academic interest in the Ancient Tea and Horse road has increased greatly, prompting a surge in tourism as well. The beauty of the mountains and the historical relics such as hoof-marks embedded in old cobblestones, old salt-wells, etc bring the past much closer.



Ancient Tea Horse Path at Chenyao Cliff & Zar Gama Pass in Tibet

A Producer's Dilemma

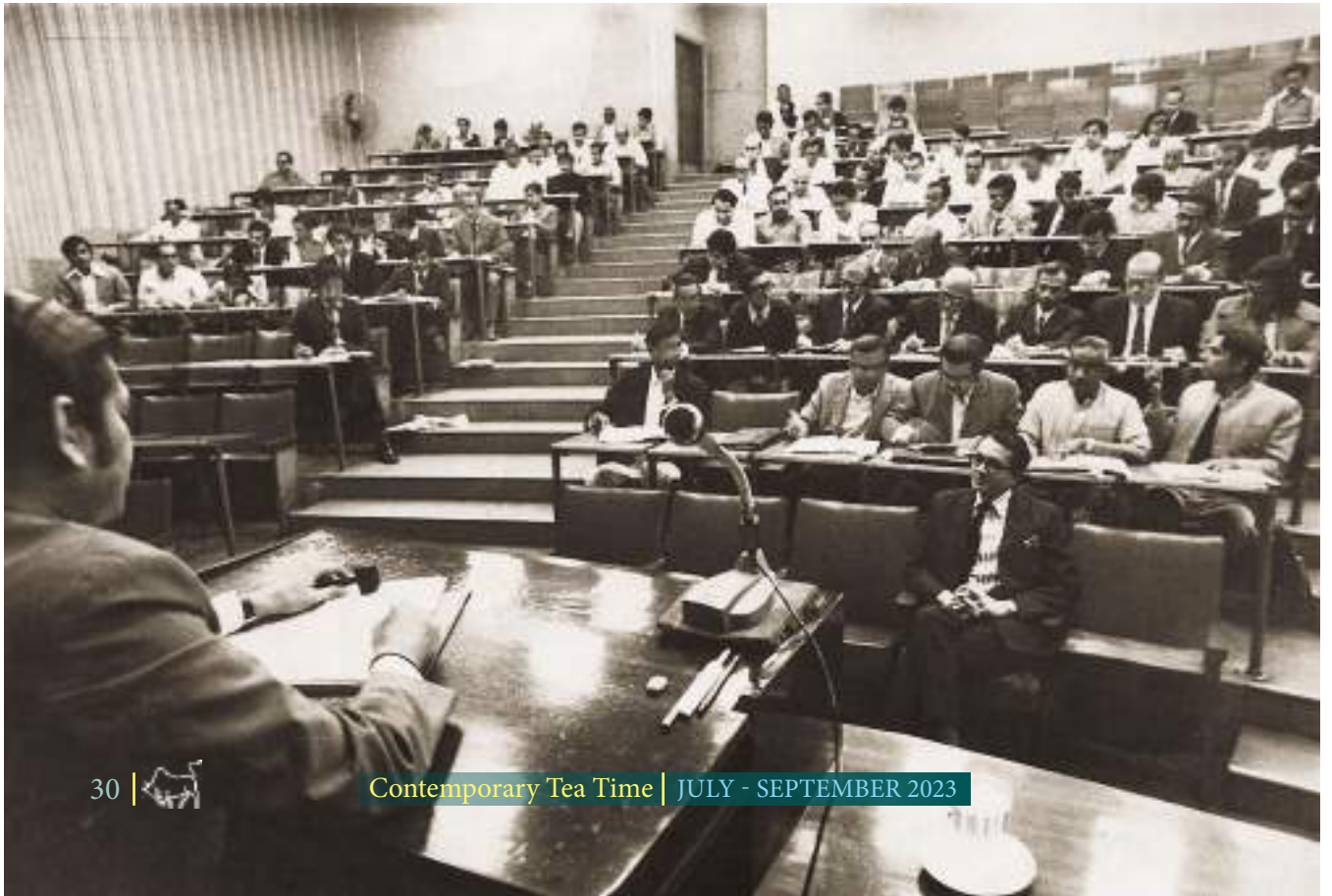
Auction - e-Auction - Bharat Auction

A senior member of the producers' community fondly remembers the days of transparency, participation and price discovery for their teas at the 165-year old traditional tea auctions. Now remembered as the OUT CRY system. And he rues the systematic destruction of a robust system of price discovery under the guise of technology being used to disrupt the market. Speaking on the conditions of strict anonymity, he speaks about his beliefs to Tea Time..

From its inception, on 27th December 1861 the tea auctions system has proved to be an efficient and effective distribution channel of sale for the wide range of qualities and varieties of this agricultural commodity. The system evaluated the worth of these teas and then distributed samples to all those who were interested in trading and followed it up by offering them a platform and a catalogue to buy and choose from in an organised manner. The

first tea auction in India was conducted under the instructions of R Thomas & Company, general brokers, by the firm, Mackenzie Lyall at No. 2 Mission Row, Calcutta. On 19th of February 1862, a second auction was held and conducted by the firm of W Moran & Co at No. 5 Bankshall Street. The lots that interested a bidder could be fairly purchased by him at a price that he could afford to pay. This price was arrived at through a consensus

Before the computer era, tea auctions were run with full halls of auctioneers in a manual process.





Tea e-auctions

– thanks to rival bidders, who provided in-built competition in the system. This was a transparent system; each player knew who was interested in a certain lot.

The bidding procedure, allowed them to establish best prices in what is called today ‘fair price discovery’.

Due to the wide variation in quality owing to seasonal change, ever-changing leaf quality, and hourly varying production parameters, each lot is needs to be assessed individually and evaluated for its intrinsic value, to the buyer in the context of his requirement, blends, and taste. The auctioneer assisted by sending out these valuations.

The winner was the producer. And rightly so. It was his tea, after all.

Tea Auction

In the early days there were four auctioneers, and the business was divided among them equally. These were: J Thomas and Company, Carritt Moran and Co, A W Figgis and Co and W S

Cresswell and Company.

There was only one point of public sale and the supply was focused here, as was the demand.

The strengths of the auction system were:

- Wide distribution of samples.
- Evaluation of the worth of each lot, by experienced auctioneers, who tasted a wide range of teas. (Typically, one still tastes 500 cups of tea or more each day from several estates, compared to the producer who had limited exposure to only their own teas. The buyers had exposure to the entire range of teas offered by all the auctioneers.)
- The aware auctioneer knew a lot’s demand as it came up for sale. And since the system was a transparent one, he knew who was bidding and against whom, he could cajole and incite buyers to compete and “cough up their best” prices. The intellectual capital of an auctioneer was appreciated and revered by the trade. Auctioneers knew the credible bears and bulls of the trade, which were great

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indicators of trends and the shape of the things to come. Again advantage producer.

This system had stood the test of time for if it were archaic, it would have been long gone. It was a system logically developed, for the sale of tea. Designers had a comprehension of the very nature of the commodity, which is practically infinite in quality.

- **E-auctions**

In these modern times, 'disruption' and 'shortening the value chain' are buzz words. With this mindset some electronic changes have been brought about by the introduction of an e-auction platform. However, it completely ignored the fickle nature of the quality of tea.

The designers of the new e-auction platform effectively cut off the auctioneers/ brokers from the system, keeping them from actively exploiting their expertise, for the benefit of the producer.

The e-auction creators believed that the word '**grade**' in tea trade parlance was synonymous with the **quality** of tea. This cannot be further from the truth.

Based on this and various corollaries to this and other such assumptions, the system was developed. Sample free sales were mooted, another failure to understand the trade. Buyer transparency was removed, because, said the e-auction creators, that it would yield a higher price discovery.

To incapacitate the auctioneer further - effectively blindfolding him to selling possibilities - emphasis was given to speed. Six random lots would pop on a screen for one minute. So, in essence, it was an application of the principle of rote learning; meaning that either the auctioneer knew each lot by rote and had lightning quick reflexes to change prices seeing the demand for that lot or just leave it to pre-set parameters and allow fate to decide the lot's best price.

The erstwhile knowledgeable auctioneer was reduced to a logistics, supply chain operator, while the unfortunate producers looked on. Disadvantage producer.

Pleas that sequential offerings of lots be allowed and that buyer anonymity be discontinued

Bharat Auctions: An empty auction room





fell on deaf ears, as the producer watched haplessly as others dictated how he should sell his produce. Toothless in the wake of excessive supply, they watched with greater tragedy as brands were being built at their costs. But they languished.

Multiple selling points developed as cash flow had to be maintained for survival. Diffused demand ruled due to scattered supplies. Disadvantage Producer.

- **Bharat auctions**

Now in another attempt to further the belief buyers would show their trump cards up front, a Japanese auction mechanism has been adopted and named the Bharat auction. This was introduced at the beginning of the season 2023. In this system, it is assumed that all traders would give their best bids anonymously for the certainty of buying their requirements. And this would ensure the best price discovery, yielding the highest price. This may be true when there is supply shortage, but is it logical under the conditions of excess supply?

Here the idea is that before the sale the buyers would display their highest prices, auctioneers would upload the minimum prices at which a bid could be recorded, and another hidden price called the reserve price, would be loaded, at which a lot would commence its journey towards being sold.

Then all sit back and watch the outcome, decided by the software.

There was no auction in this, but a tender.

Here auctioneers have no role to play as the sale progressed. They just watch. It had shown some promise during the early part of the season when demand outstripped supply, but it did not take long for a tweak, as the markets weakened, which allowed a buyer to opt out during an active lot, if they found the market changing. But surprisingly, no such interventional tweak was allowed to the seller's auctioneer. Disadvantage producer.



Computers and tea : made for each other

In a falling market, there were many out lots. Bids Re1 below the reserve could not be activated. But if the trader was getting a lot at a lower price, he could lower his bid!

As a producer, I marvel at the great innocence of our community, and their limited vision.

- **Buyers and buying pattern**

At auctions, several types of traders participate. They can be grouped into three basic categories:

- Some traders sell straight line teas, by repacking their purchases into smaller consumer packets.
- Others buy small lots (and mix) them together. Their quantity requirement is directly proportionate to what they sell each month. This category of traders could sell between 1mT to 10mT per month. These traders may have two or more varieties to sell. They have little capacity or inclination to stock up on their teas. The days of the bears and bulls are gone.
- Still others buy large quantities, they own several brands into which they blend and pack. And they could have geographic specific brands. This implies a library of teas to buy store/stock and blend.



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The primary auctions have now been geared to cater to only the third category of buyers with no division of lots. Even the smallest of traders needs to maintain consistency, which is only possible via blending, a range of teas. With a “no division rule” he needs to buy an entire lot. Many cannot afford it.

The first and second category of traders or buyers have moved down the value chain and they obtain their supplies from the large wholesalers along this value chain. Some are wholesalers selling further down the value chain to cater to the smaller packers, supplying them with their own mixed or repacked ‘blended’ bulk or trade brands. They can promise a guarantee of quality, steady supply and smaller quantities.

• Auctions vs a sale

The strength of the tea auctions is transparency and participation. The more the participation the greater the competition.

Further, there is a distinction between a sale and an auction.

In the case of sales, there is a declared price and the sale is negotiated around that. A price which is negotiable.

Whereas in an auction price discovery is based entirely on competition. The winning bidder does not allow the other bidders to obtain the tea at a lower price, than their perceived value.

Innovation : Destruction by competition.

Can a robust competitive system be developed, catering to the demand for all varieties, and for each of the infinite quality of teas? Now that would be a disruption.

Could, by packaging differentiation and product innovation and a single point of sale, generate better competition and be the best price discovery mechanism? (Why talk of only a fair price?).

For the best price discovery, a major portion of such teas must sell through this system.

In conclusion, an Indian Tea Auctioneers Association has come into existence. It is hoped that they will bring about far reaching changes to the system, to the advantage of the Producers.

As a subset, can this mechanism obtain remunerative prices for quality estate teas with only one point of sale for all estate teas? This would also be the only supply source for all large medium and small traders?



Parallel Business Models

In this price-driven market, with marketeers preferring economical teas and vying for market shares, a parallel very profitable supply business model co-exists, adding to the woes of the estates. They can buy their raw material at varying prices and have comparatively low overhead costs. Their kind now dominates 60% of all domestic tea supplies. These teas are generally only of fair quality (exceptions exist) and need blending to boost quality with teas from good estates teas. Best and good teas are being “value reduced” to push up the quality of weaker quality teas.

The average Indian, an avid appreciator of quality teas, just cannot get his tasty brew.





It has been a popular pastime to berate the old auction systems, after crippling it.

The starkest policy contradictions are:

- It is the producer's tea, but a non-commercial body governs how it must be packed or graded, and sold.
- This body sets up the rules and a system of sale, which is illogical from the best price discovery point of view. There exists a controller of licensing in this license-free era.
- While trade makes its rules, which are binding on them, why should dictates come from a non-commercial government organization that was birthed to promote the consumption of tea? The Tea Marketing Control order 1981 was in the interest of the Indian consumer as the government then believed that the Indian drinker must get his cuppa daily at economic prices, export markets be dammed. The supply was short and the demand high, then. It is not, now.
- Decisions are taken in consultation with the traders, pandering to their requirements, as they are at the supply end of a commodity in excess supply. It is buyers market. The irony is that their dharma is to buy as cheap as possible while the dharma of the producer is obtain the highest possible prices.



The retail end economics

Maximum retail prices (MRPs) of packets are capped by the 'big players'. Local packers who buy from wholesalers are compelled to purchase at the lowest price to ensure that after they add, their expenses (cost and margins), the product falls within the MRP of the popular brands.

The local packer must pay a higher price as he is down the value chain but at the same time restricted at the selling end. The smallest packer therefore is unable to compete in the local markets as his cost of tea is comparatively higher than those sourcing it from the primary markets. Traders are innovating here as well, but that is a different story.

Pictures courtesy: The Saga of Indian Tea



A Lifetime of steeped dedication: Mr. Sampatmal Sancheti's tea journey

In the enchanting world of tea, where each sip tells a story and every leaf carries a legacy, there exists an unassuming yet remarkable figure – Mr. Sampatmal Sancheti. A titan in the tea trade, Mr. Sancheti's journey through the rich tapestry of flavors, traditions, and values is a testament to his unwavering commitment and deep-seated passion.



The transition from accounts to proprietorship was swift yet significant. In 1972, at the tender age of 24, Mr. Sancheti assumed the reins of his family tea business, a legacy that had its roots in Bihar with the retail counter “Sancheti Chai.” The passing of the torch marked the dawn of a new era, as Mr. Sancheti embraced his role as the second-generation custodian of this time-honored tradition.

By 1977, Mr. Sancheti's influence had grown beyond the confines of his family's retail legacy. He embarked on a new chapter, becoming an auction member for the buyer house “Sancheti Tea Co” in Siliguri. In those days, the tea industry was a close-knit community, with fewer than 50 buyers. It was a time when bulk tea arrived fresh from the gardens and was meticulously graded within the confines of Sancheti Tea Co. The aroma of tradition hung in the air, and the tea chests themselves became a symbol of authenticity, housing the precious samples that would find their way to discerning palates.

It was amidst these hallowed grounds that Mr. Sancheti's tea journey truly blossomed. From his first modest purchase of tea worth Rs 4 to Rs. 8 in the auction, he ventured into uncharted

Born into a family where tea flowed through the veins since 1956, Mr. Sancheti's introduction to the tea industry was a seamless blend of heritage and destiny. His foray into this aromatic realm began in 1964 when he took his first steps into the tea industry, commencing his journey in the accounts section of Oodlabari Tea Company Ltd. Little did he know then that this would be the start of an illustrious career that would span decades.





territories, becoming a dynamic force in shaping the industry's evolution. His timing coincided with the burgeoning era of tea consumerism, a phenomenon that gained momentum during the Janta Government's reign. Yet, challenges loomed on the horizon, as the then Commerce Minister, Mohan Dharia, increased export duties, resulting in a ripple effect that cascaded into the auctions and prices.

Undeterred by these headwinds, Mr. Sancheti's pioneering spirit led him to diversify. In 1993, he launched his first tea packets under the banner of Sancheti Tea Pvt. Ltd., cementing his presence in the market. With his fingers on the pulse of the trade, he deftly navigated the changing tides, emerging as among one of the largest buyers in the dust category.

Mr. Sampatmal Sancheti's influence extends far beyond his tea expertise. He has contributed significantly to the tea community, serving as an esteemed Ex-Governing Body member of the Siliguri Tea Auction Committee. His dedication to justice and governance is evident in his role as a respected member of all the committees. Furthermore, Mr. Sancheti's leadership shines through his multifaceted involvement with the Siliguri Tea Traders Association, where he has held pivotal positions as Treasurer, Secretary, and President.

The legacy of Mr. Sancheti extends beyond the realm of commerce. A beacon of philanthropy, he shines a light on compassion and community welfare, charity along with a few of his friends. Through the establishment of a blind school

and an old-age home named "Apna Ghar," he has transformed lives and touched hearts. As a devoted member of the Jain Samaj and a Vice President of Maharaja Agrasen Hospital, he has woven threads of service and care into the very fabric of his being. Amongst his multifaceted endeavors, "Ashra" stands as a poignant testament to his compassion. Providing shelter to the homeless people and destitute, and to birds in need, Mr. Sancheti's actions mirror his philosophy that every being, no matter how small, deserves a place to call home.

In the realm of tea tasting, Mr. Sancheti is a maestro. With a ritualistic dedication, he embarks on a daily journey through 600 cups of tea, guiding his choices and shaping his discerning palate. His commitment to quality is unwavering – no tea is bought before it has been personally tasted, a tradition that stems from a time when such scrutiny was scoffed at, yet has now become a hallmark of trust and authenticity.

In 1972, Mr. Sampatmal Sancheti earned his M. Com and LLB degrees from Calcutta University before immersing himself in the family's tea business. Although his daughter didn't follow the path of tea, his son-in-law embraced the industry. Looking ahead, the reins of this remarkable journey will eventually pass into the capable hands of Mr. Sanjay, ensuring the continuation of a legacy that has spanned generations.

Reflecting on the past, Mr. Sancheti's gaze turns to the present and future. With concern, he notes a decline in tea standards, with inferior quality infiltrating the market. His sage insights, earned



AASARA SEWA TRUST, SILIGURI

स्तंभ

1. SRI SIBRASH CHAUDI JI KUMHART	SILIGURI	9434819883	3. SRI KALASH JI KANOPURA (AGARWAL)	SILIGURI	9434863100
2. SRI BILKY JI CHOUHAN	SILIGURI	9434849034	4. SRI LABHCHAND JI SRIVASTA	SILIGURI	9832945457

न्यासीगण (TRUSTEE)

1. SRI SAMPTAL BHIL JI SANCHETI	SILIGURI	9434187159	20. SMT. LEELA JI KUMBHANT	SILIGURI	9434184257
2. SRI KANABTAR JI DEBMA	SILIGURI	9434019867	21. SRI CHIMAY JI BAFNA	MUMBAI	9870120808
3. DR. VIKRAM RANJAN JI HALDAR	SILIGURI	9832027961	22. SMT. EKTA SINDHEEP JI BAFNA	MUMBAI	7787794411
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5. SRI BHADVIR JI KUMBHA	SILIGURI	9434049879	24. SRI DEEPAK JI MAHESINGHA	SILIGURI	9841781177
6. SRI CHANDRA PRAKASH JI SIVHAL	SILIGURI	9832375446	25. SRI SAILU JI LOCHA	MUMBAI	9820148302
7. SRI HIRESH KUMAR JI SIVHAL	SILIGURI	9436511111	26. SRI SAILURY JI BAYEAL (JUNGA NYANDA)	SILIGURI	9733822567
8. SRI KALASH CHAND JI JAIN	SILIGURI	9434019811	27. SRI MANOLI JI BASAL, INTERIOR DESIGNER	SILIGURI	9333812888
9. SRI SHANTI LAL JI HARITA	SILIGURI	9434063463	28. SRI SUSHIL JI JAIN (JAIN)	SILIGURI	9832811745
10. SRI RAJEEV JI BARD	SILIGURI	9851001111	29. SRI ARUN JI DABIRWAL	SILIGURI	9434829834
11. SRI DIVYAN SUNDAR JI AGARWAL	SILIGURI	9474328122	30. SRI GURU SHANKAR JI GOYAL	SILIGURI	9832821163
12. SRI BANI JI MITTAL	SILIGURI	9832678964	31. SRI MAHAL KISHORE JI GOYAL	SILIGURI	9833080800
13. SRI HARSHODRA JI SARGI (SR)	SILIGURI	9833824478	32. SRI SUSHIL KUMAR JI BANJIA	SILIGURI	9434815161
14. SRI HARSHODRA KUMAR JI BARD	SILIGURI	9082129037	33. SRI MANISH KUMAR JI AGARWAL	SILIGURI	9832821837
15. SRI KANAKYA LAL JI GOYAL	SILIGURI	9832823068	34. SRI DILIP KUMAR JI CHOUHAN	SILIGURI	9832065808
16. SRI GANDEEP JI SINGH	SILIGURI	9434816881	35. SRI PRITAN KUMAR JI AGARWAL	SILIGURI	9434062727
17. SRI ANKIT JI LOCHAN	SILIGURI	9434847280	36. SRI BIKRO KUMAR JI AGARWAL	SILIGURI	9434079336
18. SRI MOHAN LAL JI KALA	SILIGURI	9434888877	37. CA NISHAL JI JAIN (BAFNA)	SILIGURI	9832883236
19. SRI GURU PRASAD JI TOGNIVAL	SILIGURI	9800738000	38. MATULSARAWATI (S.B.M. GOLD)	SILIGURI	9434864948

कार्यकारिणी सदस्य

- श्री सुभाष जी कुम्भट (अध्यक्ष)
- श्री विजय जी चौधरी (वित्त प्रबंधक)
- श्री सम्पतमल जी संचेती (उपाध्यक्ष)
- श्री दिपक जी मानसिंघा (सलाहाकार)
- श्री कैलाश जी जकीपुरिया (महामंत्री)
- श्री लाभचंद जी सुराणा (प्रभारी-प्रसादम्)



through years of dedicated service, serve as a clarion call for a return to the artistry and craftsmanship that define tea.

At present, Mr. Sampatmal Sancheti leads a dedicated team of many individuals who contribute to the success of his endeavors. His pride in their growth and achievements is palpable, as he fondly acknowledges that several former team members have evolved into tea buyers and successful businessmen. Mr. Sancheti's leadership is marked by his hands-off approach, valuing autonomy and growth for his team. He refrains from unnecessary interference in their work, instead offering his heartfelt wishes for their ongoing success and a bright future ahead.

In a world where trends and fads often eclipse tradition, Mr. Sancheti's philosophy remains unshaken. For him, "Chai ek pyaari cheez hai" – tea is a cherished treasure. With every sip, with every charitable endeavor, with every word he imparts, Mr. Sancheti's influence ripples through time, ensuring that the story of tea remains intertwined with his remarkable legacy.

"No matter how expensive the gift, it's a good cup of tea that lingers in memory."

– Mr. Sampatmal Sancheti



Ena Bandyopadhyay,
Tea Time, Siliguri



A2Z TEA MACH
KOLKATA - SILIGURI - JORHAT - COIMBATORE

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Siliguri Tea Traders Association Celebrates



A Legacy of the Finest Brews

A Journey of Excellence, Innovation, and Global Prominence

In the heartland of tea production in India, the Siliguri Tea Traders Association (STTA) stands tall as a symbol of excellence and dedication to the art of tea. With the completion of its 50th year, the STTA has not only established itself as a prestigious institution but has also played a pivotal role in shaping the tea industry in Siliguri and beyond. This significant milestone calls for a celebration of the STTA's remarkable journey and its invaluable contributions to the world of tea.

A Legacy of Unity and Quality

Established in 1973, the STTA was founded by a group of visionary tea traders who recognized the need for a united platform to address the challenges faced by the tea industry in the Siliguri region. Since its inception, the association has been committed to promoting the interests of its members, fostering cooperation among

tea traders, and ensuring the highest quality standards for Siliguri tea.

One of the key achievements of the STTA has been its relentless efforts to uphold the reputation of Siliguri tea as some of the finest in the world. The STTA has been instrumental in maintaining and enhancing this reputation by implementing stringent quality control measures, conducting



workshops and seminars, and facilitating knowledge sharing among tea professionals.

A Global Ambassador for Siliguri Tea

Furthermore, the STTA has been actively involved in promoting Siliguri tea on the global stage. Through participation in international tea expos and trade fairs, the association has showcased the exquisite range of teas produced in the region, attracting buyers and enthusiasts from around the world. This has not only boosted the demand for Siliguri tea but has also opened new avenues for trade and collaboration, leading to increased export opportunities for tea traders associated with the STTA.

Celebrating 50 Years of Success

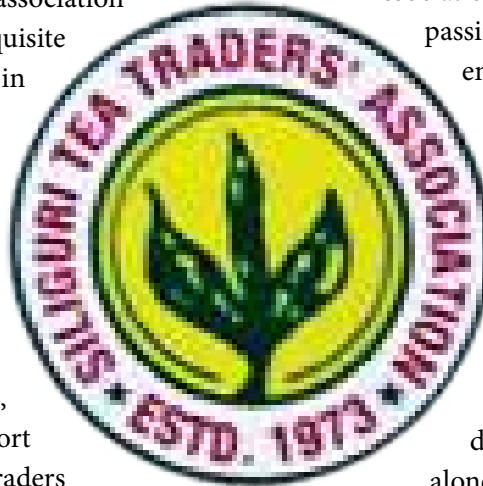
The completion of 50 years is a significant milestone for the Siliguri Tea Traders Association, marking a legacy of excellence, resilience, and dedication. It is a testament to the collective efforts of tea traders, growers, and stakeholders who have contributed to the growth and success of the association. As the STTA looks towards the future, it remains committed to upholding the traditions of Siliguri tea while embracing

innovation and sustainability.

Siliguri, on May 21st, celebrated International Tea Day with great enthusiasm. The event held at Hashmi Chowk, Norway tenzing bus stand, Bagdogra Airport, Railway station and Vega mall was organized by the Siliguri Tea Traders Association, which ensured that everyone passing through the area could enjoy a delightful cup of tea. This celebration held particular significance as Siliguri is the birthplace of the world-renowned Darjeeling tea, with its numerous tea gardens and a thriving tea industry.

But the STTA's engagement didn't stop at tea-serving alone. On the second day of the celebration, they organized a blood donation camp, emphasizing their commitment to the community's well-being and promoting the spirit of selfless giving.

To conclude the festivities on a high note, a joyous celebration dinner took place at Montana Vista in Siliguri on the third and final day. The association members had the opportunity to come together, socialize, and indulge in a delectable feast, creating a memorable ending to the vibrant International Tea Day celebrations.



TEA TIME



AUCTIONEER
NAVNEET JAIN
SANDEEP BANSAL

SILIGURI TEA TRADERS ASSOCIATION
Celebrating **50 Years**
of Service
CELEBRATION OF
GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR

AUCTIONEER
KISHAN DALMIA
SANDEEP GOYAL

<p>SILVER CUP</p> <p>SILVER CUP AND SAUCER WT 200GM</p>	<p>SPECIAL DARJEELING</p> <p>WHITE CHINA DELIGHT GRADE: SP500P/L WT 4 KG</p>
<p>WORLD HERITAGE</p> <p>DARJEELING TOY TRAIN ENGINE DUMMY</p>	<p>SPECIAL CTC</p> <p>BLENDED ASSAM AND DOOARS WT 2.5KG</p>
<p>BRONZE KETTLE</p> <p>TEA KETTLE MATERIAL: BRONZE</p>	<p>50 YEARS MEMORABILIA</p> <p>T-SHIRT SIGNED BY PRESIDENT AND SECRETARIES OF STTA MATERIAL: COTTON</p>

प्रीत्युग गोवाल
PRIYUSH GOYAL

श्रीप्रियुग गोवाल
श्रीप्रियुग गोवाल
श्रीप्रियुग गोवाल

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
CHANDER SHEKHAR NAYAK, MOU & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
TELEPHONE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MESSAGE

I am delighted to learn that Siliguri Tea Traders Association (STTA) is celebrating its 50 Year Anniversary in the month of May, 2023 which is also coinciding with 'International Tea Day' which is celebrated on 21st May every year.

The tea industry in India has immense potential for growth and expansion, both domestically and internationally. Under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Government of India is committed to bringing quality and innovation in the tea industry. The development of this industry is in line with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of 'Vocal for Local' and 'Local goes Global'.

It is praiseworthy that STTA had organised a 'Tea for all' drive to raise awareness of 'CHAI' as a healthy beverage. It had also organised a blood donation camp and free health and eye checkup especially for underprivileged people during the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

I congratulate STTA on this occasion and for the services that they have been rendering for the past 50 years and wish STTA all success in its future endeavours.

Priyush Goyal

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The impact of AI on the tea industry

Artificial Intelligence is a term we are becoming more and more aware of, but unaware of how much it entails. The mainstream usage of this, which is basically a human made simulation which brings about robust problem solving, has enticed debates on whether or not it is a boon or a bane like any other invention but its impacts on the commercial market is absolutely undeniable. This new set of tools for mankind is set to become an indispensable part of our lives and can be utilised to its fullest for profit maximisation in major industries.

The tea industry is a multi-disciplinary spectrum of specialisation of labour. From the producers to the auctioneers to the retailers and the consumers – all have already begun integrating Artificial intelligence into this process. As we know in India the auctioning of the teas has been digitized instead of the physical bidding process, since 2011. This is a remote process which allows those involved to save time and invest it into the tea tasting process.

Another proposition which is gaining ground, is the usage of AI in the manufacturing process to promote quality control. This can be achieved by something like the 'Machine Vision System'

prototype which can analyse and report the appearance, colour and texture of the tea leaves thus providing oversight on the main parameters for good quality of leaves. This will also bring

about easy identification of defects and lead to improved quality standards. This is not even the limit of its advantages as certain algorithms and software can analyse historical data on weather patterns, soil conditions and other factors to measure optimum yield of that particular patch of land or tea garden.

An agro-tech start-up, AgNext has launched "TRAGNEXT," a first-of-its-kind AI (artificial intelligence)-based fine leaf count system, across North-East India's tea growing districts. The deployment would aid in the improvement of tea quality, advise fair pricing for small tea growers (STG) and the sector as a whole, and reposition India as a global leader in quality tea fit for global markets and exports. This company has already been finding new horizons since 2018 when they entered a certain partnership with the Tea Research Association, to accelerate the implementation of this data driven technology. The vision of this company is to bring in transparency, equal surveillance and authenticity of assessments in the tea production process. "TRAGNEXT" is the first of its kind solution that automatically determines the fine leaf count without human intervention, removing subjectivity, reducing the process to seconds and improving overall



accuracy,”
said a
press statement
issued by the
company. TRAGNEXT,

with its computer vision-based technology, has been initially deployed in tea estates such as Goodricke, Rossell Tea, and Bokahola Tea.

To meet the growing demand, the Tea Board has installed two machines in West Bengal and one in Assam. Furthermore, TRAGNEXT has been recently deployed in CISTA, which serves as the hub for Specialty Tea Growers (STGs) in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. Leveraging its computer vision capabilities, TRAGNEXT can efficiently count a one-kilogram sample of tea and provide accurate results on the percentage of Fine Leaf Count (FLC) and coarse leaf within a brief two-minute timeframe. This advanced technology not only ensures precise measurements but also enables proper incentivization for farmers and reduces yield loss for buyers. By swiftly and accurately analysing tea samples, TRAGNEXT empowers farmers with reliable information to receive appropriate incentives for producing high-quality tea. Additionally, it assists buyers in curbing yield loss by identifying the composition of the tea leaves and aiding in informed decision-making during the procurement process. TRAGNEXT’s deployment in various tea estates and its

expansion to the CISTA hub signifies its growing importance in the tea industry. Through its computer vision-based technology, TRAGNEXT streamlines the tea quality assessment process, benefiting both farmers and buyers by delivering accurate results, incentivizing farmers, and reducing yield loss.

The laissez-faire ideology is up to contention, however. The tea industry interestingly does enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. This industry is also dynamic and has to alter its presentation or grades according to consumer taste and preferences. AI can enable them to make and predict these changes quicker. AI algorithms already study the products and flavours in demand through consumer purchases and search engine entries, this data just needs to be utilised by the companies. We can also employ Artificial Intelligence for inventory management which is integrated with the consumer preference models to optimise these inventory levels. This will not only enable high organisational efficiency but will also minimise wastage. AI-powered devices, such as smart tea makers or brewing assistants, can precisely control brewing parameters like water temperature, steeping time, and tea-to-water ratio. This ensures that the tea is brewed consistently to achieve the desired flavour profiles and enhances the brewing experience for tea enthusiasts.

The international political spectrum is pushing for sustainable living and environmental awareness especially in the industrial processes. To support such a cause, AI can provide assistance in adopting sustainable farming practices. By analysing environmental data, soil conditions, and weather patterns, AI systems can recommend optimised irrigation schedules, pest control measures, and fertiliser usage, leading to improved resource efficiency and reduced environmental impact.



Anushka Roy Chowdhury





Amnesty: a Resolution of the Human-Elephant Conflict

Tolerance and non-interference becomes the most effective measure in the human-elephant conflict. Noinapara Tea Estate, under the leadership of Mr. Nigel D'Souza, shows the way.

The human encroachment on the territories of wild elephants have created a continuous conflict

in Assam which has always been a major source of danger to planters and tea-workers since the inception of tea cultivation in the area. In recent years, with decreasing forested areas, this conflict has been escalating to an alarming degree. Death and property damage has been happening every year.





The strategy of tackling this issue has always been to deter the animals away with torches, firecrackers, essentially forcing them to not follow the routes ingrained in their collective conscious since before the arrival of humans in large numbers. Noinapara

Tea Estate, situated in Udalguri (where the human deaths have numbered to 175 and elephant deaths to 73 since 2010) has the distinction of being the most important elephant corridor connecting Bhutan-Assam-

Arunachal. Interestingly, no death of wild elephants or human beings has been reported from this area in the last couple of years. The tea garden instituted a strict Non-Interference Policy and workers are instructed to never harass or chase the elephants as they move across the garden.

Nigel D'Souza, the senior manager, has mentioned that their workers are taught to ignore the presence of wild elephants, to never have eye-to-eye contact. Unlike in other gardens, in Noinapara Tea estate Mr D'Souza's unremitting efforts have reduced the friction between the wild and civilization. Mr. D'Souza remarked "Wild elephants in a herd always remember to follow their traditional routes, and never consider workers' colonies as a part of the elephant corridor."

Noinapara TE has been a part of the wild elephants corridor which has been made accessible to the herds through Nonaikhuti Basti entry point through to the exit points at section 19 and 20 of the garden. There is an eight-member team who

TEA TIME



monitor the situation and facilitate the movement of the herds through human inhabited areas. They remove obstacles and make sure even the smaller babies have a safe passage.



Mr. Nigel D'Souza

Mr. Nigel D'Souza, along with being a lover of wild-life, is also a talented and avid wild-life photographer. His awe at the mysterious beauty of the wildlife of Assam is reflected in his photographs.



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The Chennai Ice House was renamed Vivekananda House in the 1960's and is now maintained by the Ramkrishna Mission as a museum

Frosted History:

How Ice was Shipped Across Oceans

Ice, as a trade commodity, has been around for a very long time. It was harvested from rivers and lakes in China over three millennia ago. The ancient Romans had a fetish for chilled wine, so much so that chunks of ice were brought down from the summits of Mounts Vesuvius and Etna to chill the food and drink of the rich. For centuries, harvesting of ice was the only means of refrigeration.

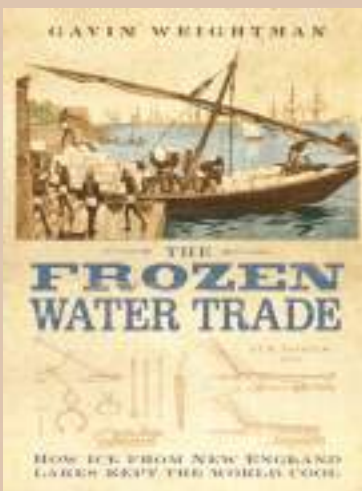
In ancient India, people moistened the outside of containers which led to

evaporation and resultant cooling of the water inside. During the Mughal times, ice was transported from Kashmir to the Mughal capital and stored in *baraf khanas*. But not everyone could wallow in the luxury of Himalayan ice.

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed widespread use of ice in America. The Americans made ice cream at home and had ice-boxes to keep butter and milk fresh. Iced drinks were served in hotels across America long before artificial refrigeration became a reality.

The ice was natural, harvested from lakes and rivers in winter, stored in huge ice-houses, delivered to buyers on demand and exported far and wide. And would you believe it, American ice was shipped to British India as well.

Gavin Weightman's book *The Frozen Water Trade* is a real page-turner. It charts the life and work of Frederic Tudor, an American businessman, who had a crazy idea that spawned an industry as he successfully shipped frozen American ice to the Tropics. The book dedicates



Ice, as a trade commodity, has been around for a very long time. It was harvested from rivers and lakes in China over three millennia ago.

an entire chapter *A Cool Cargo for Calcutta* to Tudor's incredible business ventures in the Subcontinent.

Before the arrival of American ice, the British used a preparation of saltpetre and water as a cooling mixture to chill wine and beer in Calcutta. An expensive local ice made in shallow pits by the freezing water of the Hooghly River in winter was also used. But such locally manufactured ice was filthy and inconsumable. This was not the kind of ice that the East India Company wanted for their officials in Calcutta.

American merchants had begun trading in India in the late eighteenth century, but Tudor's very idea of transporting ice from Boston to Calcutta covering a distance of 16000 miles that required four months of travel across the seas in those days was dismissed as crazy.

Unfazed, Tudor loaded 180 tonnes of ice on the *Tuscany* which set sail for India in May 1833. When the ship docked at Calcutta in September, it still

contained 100 tonnes of ice. Though 80 tonnes had melted during the journey, yet Tudor managed a profit out of what had remained. The imported American ice was of magical quality *vis-à-vis* the locally manufactured alternative.

Within three days of the ship's arrival in Calcutta, the British residents of the Indian capital raised money to set up an ice house. Over the next three decades, Tudor sold his high quality ice in Calcutta and other places like Bombay and Madras at a reasonably low price, undercutting his competitors who sold inferior ice at a higher price. He thus achieved a monopoly in the Indian market and became a multi-millionaire. However, with the advent of artificial refrigeration and ice machines, the thriving ice trade collapsed almost as quickly as it had come up.

The Calcutta Ice House located where the City Sessions Court at Dalhousie Square stands today was pulled down in 1882. Just-ice served!



UN: Women Safety Accelerator Fund

An evnt in Kolkata

H. S. Sidhu



Yesterday I had the good fortune of being invited to two back to back events at Taj Vivanta, Calcutta, organised by IDH under the UN Women Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF).

WSAF is a consortium of private and public actors, non-competitive collaboration, to promote women's safety and address violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the tea sector of India by using the UN women's Global Women Safety Framework. The Fund is a first of its kind in the country, spread over in **300 + tea estates (50+ producer companies) in all tea growing regions in India (Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu)** and through multistakeholder engagement address prevention and build response mechanism through establishing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to address women's safety & VAWG at the tea estate level.

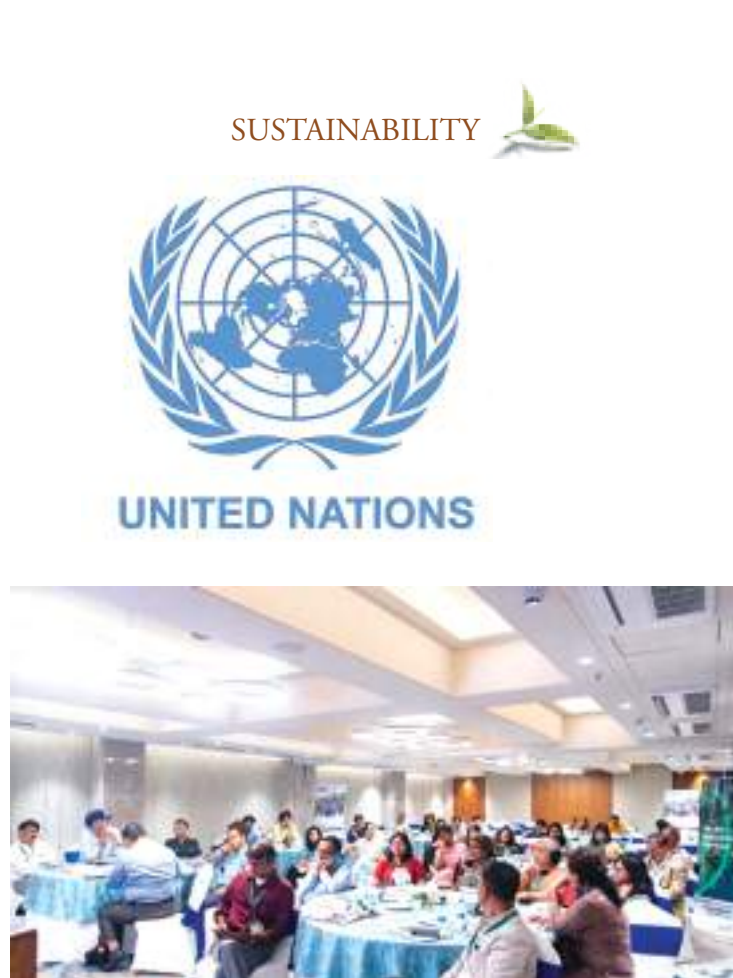
The program collaborates with the government,

civil society and private sector to work together for long lasting solutions by leveraging the efforts and capacity of local NGOs and producers to drive more sustainable, long-term shifts in women's safety within the tea supply chain.

The two events:

1. In the morning was – **Breaking the Glass Ceiling** : Glass ceilings are often the result of unconscious bias – instinctive, underlying beliefs about ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, social class, religion, and so on. This was targeted at the Tea Industry where, glass ceilings have existed for time immemorial and have become a systemic problem- an inherent part of the Industry's culture.

All stakeholders of the industry were well represented and thanks to the moderator, Perminder Jeet Kaur, all candidly & openly contributed. Many areas were identified and great suggestions came from them to find



SUSTAINABILITY



UNITED NATIONS

ways to break the status quo & the glass ceiling.

2. The second event after lunch was “**To promote Women’s safety and address violence against Women & Girls (VAWG)**” Having, of late, witnessed some domestic verbal violence at fairly close quarters, I participated openly with all the other participants. I found it very interesting and educative. Some legal-eagles from the administration explained the law and the rights of the women/girls in cases of violence (physical/mental/verbal/domestic).



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HOW CAN THE DAILY CONSUMPTION OF TEA BE INCREASED IN INDIA?



Increasing the daily consumption of tea in India state-wise would require a multifaceted approach that takes into consideration the diverse cultural, regional, and social factors that influence tea consumption patterns. Here are some strategies that could be implemented to increase tea consumption across different states in India :

1. Promote Health Benefits:

- Highlight the health benefits of tea consumption through public awareness campaigns and educational programs. Emphasize the antioxidants in tea and its potential role in promoting overall well-being.

Tea Time has spoken to people across the industry and list below some generic suggestions on how the consumption of tea can be increased in India. The industry is at the brink of a precipice and is overwhelmed with an abundance of supplies. Alas, is there no one to drink this healthy elixir?

2. Customized Marketing:

- Tailor marketing efforts to the preferences of each state. For instance, in states with a strong tradition of chai, focus on the cultural aspects of tea consumption. In regions where herbal teas are popular, promote these varieties.

3. Diversify Tea Offerings:

- Introduce a wider range of tea varieties to cater to diverse tastes. This includes offering different types of black, green, and herbal teas.

4. Support Local Tea Marketers and Packers :

- Encourage local tea packers and



support small-scale tea sellers and cooperatives. This can be done through subsidies, training, and infrastructure development.

5. Tea Tourism:

- Promote tea tourism in states with tea plantations. Develop tea estates as tourist destinations, where visitors can learn about the tea-making process and enjoy scenic landscapes.

6. Partnerships with Hospitality Industry:

- Collaborate with hotels, restaurants, and cafes to promote tea consumption. Offer tea as part of meal packages and develop unique tea-based beverages.

7. Retail Initiatives:

- Encourage retailers to stock a variety of teas and create attractive displays to capture the interest of customers.

8. Educational Programs:

- Implement educational programs in schools to teach children about the cultural significance and health benefits of tea. Encourage tea-drinking habits from a young age.

9. Local Flavors and Spices:

- In regions with a strong preference for spiced tea (masala chai), promote the use of locally sourced spices to enhance flavors.

10. Accessibility and Affordability:

- Ensure that tea remains an affordable beverage for all income groups. Explore subsidies for tea leaves, milk, and sugar, especially for economically disadvantaged regions.

11. Government Initiatives:

- Partner with state governments to launch tea promotion campaigns and offer incentives to tea growers, retailers, and consumers.

12. Research and Development:

- Invest in tea research and development to create new and unique tea blends that cater to local tastes and preferences.

13. Environmental Sustainability:

- Promote sustainable and eco-friendly tea production practices to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.

14. Collaborate with Celebrities and Influencers:

- Partner with local celebrities and social media influencers to endorse tea brands and raise awareness about tea consumption.

15. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Continuously monitor the impact of initiatives through surveys and data collection to assess changes in tea consumption patterns.

It's important to note that while increasing tea consumption is a worthy goal, it should be done in a way that is culturally sensitive and respects regional preferences. The success of such initiatives will depend on collaboration between government agencies, the tea industry, and local communities to ensure that tea becomes a more integral part of daily life across India's diverse states.



tea by sea, cha by land

The language and spread of tea

Picture this- you're sipping on a warm cup of tea, the fragrant steam swirling around you, as you settle into the comforting embrace of your favorite brew. Little do you know that with every sip, you're not just enjoying a beverage; you're indulging in a centuries-old odyssey that has traversed continents, seas, and cultures. The words "cha" and "tea," both synonymous with this beloved elixir in Chinese, harbor captivating histories intertwined with the legendary trade routes of yore.

The Silk Route Sip- CHA

Centuries ago, amidst the ancient trade across the Silk Route, the word "cha" emerged as the name for tea. As traders and explorers journeyed along this vast network of land routes, they encountered the captivating drink. Its aroma, flavors, and restorative qualities intrigued

them, leading to the adoption of the Chinese term "cha" in their own languages. Today, many countries still use variations of "cha" to refer to tea.

Cha became "Chai" in India, "Chay" in Russian & "Shay" in Arabic.

The Sea Faring Sips- TEA

In the era of seafaring adventures and maritime exploration, Dutch traders were at the forefront of establishing sea shipping routes, connecting distant lands through their formidable seafaring prowess. During their expeditions, they encountered tea and brought this fascinating beverage back to Europe. In their language, the Dutch term "thee" evolved, ultimately giving rise to the word "tea" as we know it today. It is also called "The" in Javanese, "Tè" in Sri Lanka, "Tii" in Maori, "Tee" in South Africa, "Tè" in Italian & "Tea" in English



Inauguration of Mini Factory at TRA Nagrakata.




The Guinness World Records had shared pictures of an extravagant teapot worth \$3,000,000, approximately Rs 24 crore. The teapot, named “The Egoist,” was commissioned by the N Sethia Foundation of the UK, alongside Newby Teas of London.

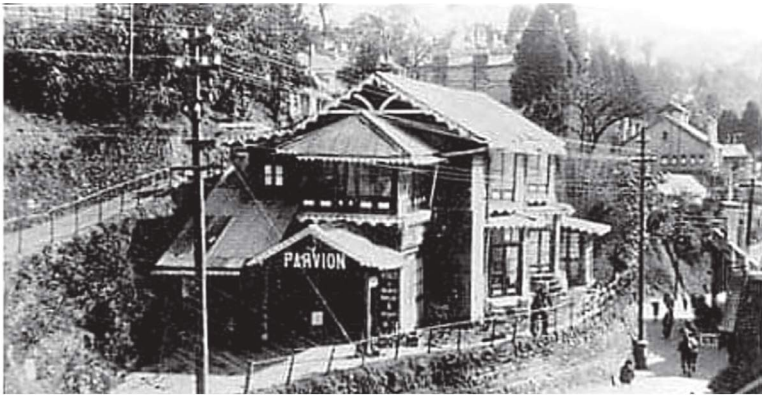


Representatives from Indian Tea Auctioneer Association (ITAA) met Mr. Amardeep S Bhatia, Addl. Secretary (Plants), Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of India on 29th September, 2023 and held fruitful discussion

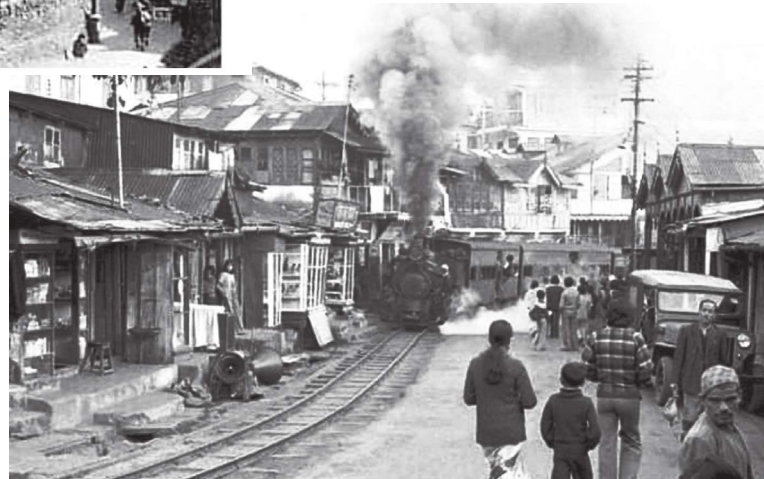
L to R :
Noor Mahmoud, Kanak Puri, Addl Secretary, Mr. Amardeep S Bhatia, Akhil Sapru, Iqbal Sukarchakia, Sujit Patra



Goodricke opens Tea Pot at Darjeeling



Old Shangrila Hotel..near Chowrasta, Darjeeling.



Pramode Tewari recollects:
(Former Owners of Soureni T E) Our house is just above the engine, now concrete after the Kurseong Fire.



HAPPENINGS



59th Annual General Meeting of Tea Research Association

Tea Research Association held its 59th Annual General Meeting at Kolkata on the 15th September with the theme of 200 years of Assam Tea. Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson TRA presented the status of the research work done at TRA over the last one year. She stated that there is severe fund crunch in carrying out regular activities of the TRA and requested all members to pay their dues to the Association. The Chairperson praised the Honble Chief Minister of Assam in understanding the problems of TRA Tocklai and appreciated the immediate steps taken by him. Some of the main work taken up was introducing the ride on harvester in Assam plantations which will increase productivity in a major way once aligned with the local conditions. The work on AI led robotic harvester has been tried out in the plantations in collaboration with CDAC and will be ready by 2024.

On the aspect of climate change work has been taken up on life cycle analysis on carbon foot print in tea plantations in collaboration with Unilever. Ms Palchoudhuri informed the house that on the proposal of TRA to form a Net Zero

Tea Committee (NZTC), the Dy Chairman Tea Board Saurav Pahari has formed the Net Zero Tea Committee in July 2023 involving all segments of the industry with Secretary TRA as the convenor.

The Director of TRA stated that a new clone which is climate resilient and good in quality will be released in 2024. He also stated that a Rapid Test Kit to detect harmful pesticides in green leaf will be released in November 2023.

Dr Parameswar Krishnan Iyer, Director of IIT Guwahati who was the Chief Guest of the function spoke on the use of nanotechnology and its use in the tea industry. He proposed collaborative projects with TRA on problem areas of the industry.

Dr Satyen Kumar Panda, Advisor of Quality Assurance FSSAI, Government of India highlighted the issues found by FSSAI on non compliance and urged the tea industry to take adequate steps. He stated that FSSAI is open to conducting sensitisation workshops in Association with TRA and Tea Board in tea plantation areas.

In the AGM, a new product named MAK ADJOL



developed and patented jointly by TRA and Bharat Petroleum Co Ltd was launched and released to the tea industry. The product which is a by-product of crude oil is organic in nature and when applied with pesticides, it increases the coverage and efficacy of the pesticides. The product will ensure less pesticides and more coverage. Mr Debashis Ganguli, CGM R&D BPCL spoke on the major benefits of the product.

Mr Atul Asthana who is the Vice Chairman of TRA thanked the guests for their participation and their offer to work together for the development of the Indian tea industry.

J Phukan
Secretary TRA
15th September 2023



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The Flavours of Darjeeling

by J. P. Gurung

Book Review



J P Gurung

Spanning a life of 4 decades, as a planter, Jeewan Prakash Gurung, fondly known to all as “JP” has published his third book, *The Flavours of Darjeeling*. After his schooling at Goethals Memorial School in Kurseong and his Graduation from North Point College Darjeeling, he commenced his career in 1976, as an assistant Manager in Darjeeling. During his long career, he has been associated with various business and social organizations and has been the President of the Darjeeling Planters Association,

President of the Darjeeling Club, and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Dooars and Darjeeling Medical Association. He is presently one of the Vice President of Bharat Scouts and Guides of West Bengal and a member of the North Bengal Committee of the Tea Research Association.

His first book was “All in a cup of tea”, which offers an insider’s account and perspective into the globally renowned beverage, Darjeeling Tea.

The second *MUSCATEL Memories*, on people who made Darjeeling teas what it was. From the early settlers and pioneers to the day-to-day lives of planters and workers: all find a place in this book.

Excerpts



The *Flavours of Darjeeling* is an effort to weave into twenty short stories, some of the remarkable times of a Darjeeling Tea Planter.

Geoffrey James Ower-Johnston, born on 22 March 1929 in the Cedars Tea Estate Bungalow, tracked life and to his eventual death by brutal murder by his own people at the age of 51 on 29 April 1981. The body had ninety-six wounds!

His epitaph on his grave reads

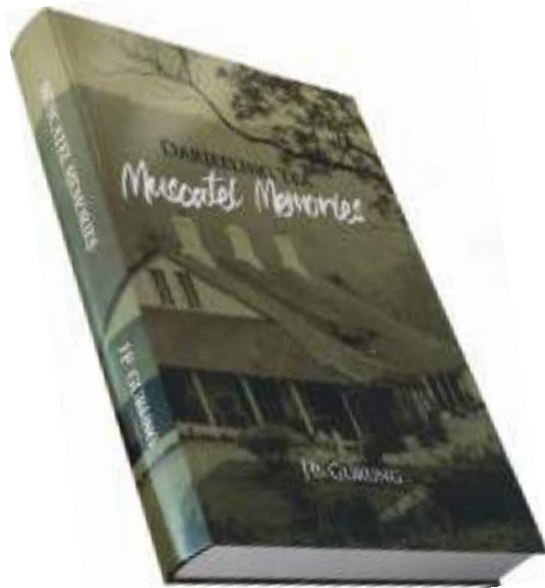
*“Beloved by so many
Betrayed by so few
His like will not be seen
again”*



Did you know?

Electricity was introduced to the district of Darjeeling during the beginning of the nineteenth century where Ansell & Son played a major role in the introduction of small Hydroelectric plants.

They installed the first of these schemes at Goethals Memorial School, Kurseong in the year 1911 and another one for Mrs. Lennox who owned Goomtee Tea Estate in the year 1917 for Factory power and Bungalow lighting.



Did You Know?

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway was actually conceived and formed as “The Darjeeling Steam Tramway Company” and among the various advantages listed, one was to serve the tea gardens.

Operations of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Started in three phases. One from Siliguri to Tindharia to Kurseong on the 23rd of August 1880 and the final stretch from Kurseong to Darjeeling on the 3rd of July 1881.



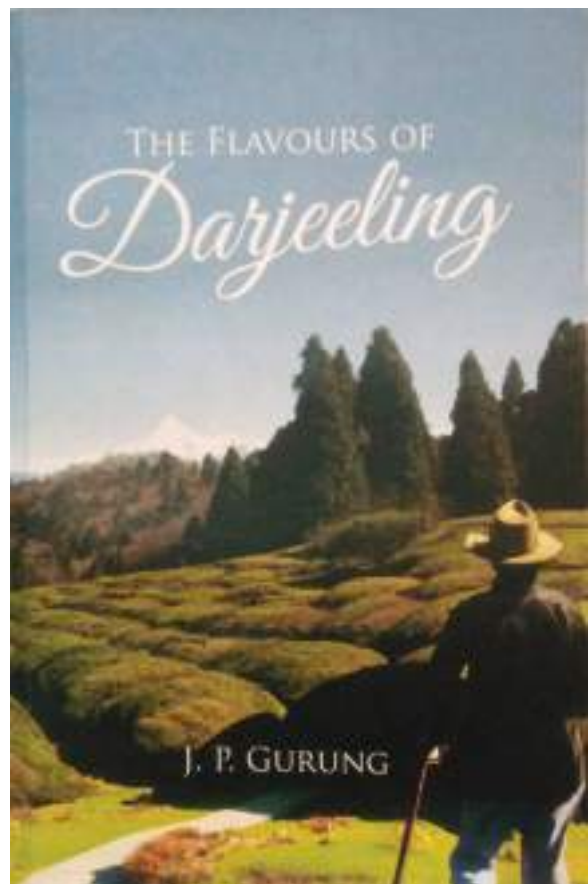
Did You Know?

There were three local pioneers along with the British in the initial days planting tea.

Shri Bhagat Bir Rai originally came in 1835 from Bhojpur in Nepal to work as a labour contraction for Captain C. A. Lloyd (later General Lloyd) to build the first military road from Pankhabari to Gundri Bazar (Darjeeling). He established Soureni, Samrikpani & Phuguri.

Shri Kamal Krishna Haldar who hailed from Barackpore came to Darjeeling in 1850 as the Manager for the Maharaja of Burdwan. He started Kamalpur Tea Estate near Bagdogra.

Shri Biprodas Pal Choudhury a Zamindar and Engineer from the Nadia District came to Darjeeling in 1869. Ghyabaree & Tindharia tea estates were established by him.



The Art of Tea:

Engaging Your Senses for a Deeper Appreciation



Tea has been cherished and celebrated for centuries, not only for its delightful flavours and aromas but also for the profound experiences it offers. Beyond the simple act of drinking, tea can be a gateway to mindfulness, a conduit for connection, and a source of inspiration. By engaging all five senses, we can unlock a deeper appreciation for this ancient beverage and embark on a sensory journey unlike any other. In this article, we will explore the art of tea and how we can employ our senses to fully understand and savour its wonders.

1. See: A Feast for the Eyes

When it comes to tea, the visual aspect is often overlooked, but it plays a crucial role in our overall experience. Just as a painter carefully chooses their palette, the appearance of tea leaves and the vessel in which it is brewed can captivate our gaze. Take a moment to observe the colour, shape, and texture of the leaves before they are submerged in hot water. Notice how they unfurl and release their essence, creating a mesmerizing dance. As you pour the tea into a cup or bowl, watch as the liquid changes hue, deepening in richness. The visual transformation sets the stage for what lies ahead.

2. Hear: Symphony of Sounds

Tea has a symphony of sounds that accompany its preparation. The gentle hiss of the kettle, the cascading water as it fills the teapot, and the delicate clink of porcelain meeting porcelain.



These sounds create a sense of anticipation, signalling the imminent enjoyment of a soothing cup of tea. Close your eyes and let your ears be enveloped by these melodic moments. Embrace the harmony of the sounds and let them transport you to a place of tranquility.

3. Smell: Fragrant Whispers

Aroma has the power to evoke memories, stir emotions, and awaken our senses. As you bring the tea cup closer to your face, inhale deeply and allow the fragrant whispers to envelop you. Each tea has its own unique bouquet, ranging from floral and fruity to earthy and smoky. Let your olfactory senses guide you on a journey of discovery, as you unravel the layers of scents infused within the tea leaves. Close your eyes and let the aroma transport you to distant lands and serene landscapes.



4. Touch: Embracing Texture

The sense of touch adds a tactile dimension to our tea experience. As you hold the teacup in your hands, feel its warmth seep through your fingertips, imbuing you with a sense of comfort. Notice the weight and texture of the cup, the smoothness of the glaze, and the intricate details of its design. The act of cradling the cup can be a grounding gesture, connecting us to the present moment and allowing us to fully immerse ourselves in the teadrinking ritual.

5. Taste: Savouring the Subtle Nuances

Finally, we come to the pinnacle of the tea experience – taste. Take a small sip and let the liquid wash over your tongue. Notice the interplay of flavours – the delicate sweetness, the subtle bitterness, and the lingering aftertaste. Tea



offers a vast spectrum of tastes, from grassy green teas to robust black teas, from floral oolongs to earthy pu-erhs. Let your taste buds dance with delight as you explore the intricate nuances that unfold with each sip. Pay attention to the texture of the tea in your mouth, its body, and the way it coats your palate. Truly savour the moment and let the tea envelop you in its embrace.

6. The Power of Mindfulness

Engaging our senses in the art of tea allows us to cultivate mindfulness, bringing us into the present moment and fostering a deeper connection with ourselves and the world around us. As we focus on the sights, sounds, smells, textures, and flavours of tea, we release the distractions of the outside world and find solace in the present. With each sip, we become more attuned to our own thoughts, emotions, and sensations, creating a space for introspection and self-discovery.

7. The Ritual of Tea



Tea is not merely a beverage; it is a ritual, a way of honouring tradition or rebuilding one and embracing the beauty of simplicity. The process of preparing tea can be a meditative act – as it is in Japan or China, requiring patience, attention, and intention. By engaging our senses, we enhance this ritual, transforming it into a deeply meaningful experience. Whether it is the graceful movements of a tea ceremony or the quiet solitude of a personal brewing session, the ritual of tea invites us to slow down, to be fully present, and to appreciate the

beauty in every moment.

8. Expanding Your Tea Journey

To fully immerse ourselves in the art of tea, we can explore different types of tea, each offering its own sensory delights. Green teas with their vibrant hues and fresh grassy notes, black teas with their robust flavours and hints of malt, oolongs with their complex aromas and delicate floral nuances – the world of tea is vast and diverse. Experiment with different varieties, brewing methods, and serving vessels to discover your own personal preferences and to expand your tea journey.

9. Creating Your Tea Sanctuary

To fully engage your senses in the art of tea, it is

essential to create a serene and inviting space where you can fully immerse yourself in the experience. Designate a corner of your home as your tea sanctuary, a place where you can escape the busyness of life and find solace in the ritual of tea. Surround yourself with elements that inspire tranquility – soft lighting, comfortable seating, and perhaps a few objects of beauty such as artwork or plants. This dedicated space will become your haven, a sanctuary for tea and self-reflection.

10. A Lifelong Journey of Tea Appreciation

The art of tea is a lifelong journey of exploration, learning, and appreciation. As you continue to engage your senses in the world of tea, you will deepen your understanding and develop a profound connection with this ancient beverage. Each cup of tea becomes an opportunity for growth, self-discovery, and connection. Embrace the art of tea, let your senses guide you, and allow yourself to be captivated by the beauty and wonder that unfolds in every sip. Explore this new and unique experience to bring you calm, happiness and joy.

The art of tea is a sensory experience that transcends the act of drinking. By engaging all five senses – sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste – we can unlock a deeper appreciation for tea and embark on a journey of mindfulness and self-discovery. Through the ritual of tea, we find solace in the present moment and create space for introspection. Expand your tea journey, create your tea sanctuary, and embrace the lifelong adventure of tea appreciation. Let the art of tea awaken your senses and enrich your life. Tea found me at a very crucial period of my life and I found Tea Appreciation the most meaningful way to touch my inner self and deal with all the lemons that life throws at us (sometimes I make lemon tea too!).

As a certified professional, I have been teaching Sensory Tea Appreciation and conducting workshops on it since 2016 and I have seen how it has positively affected each of my participants. I am inviting you to join me on the journey of Art of Tea. As a Tea Artist, it will make me immensely happy to see you find a bit of joy, happiness and peace in this very chaotic world.

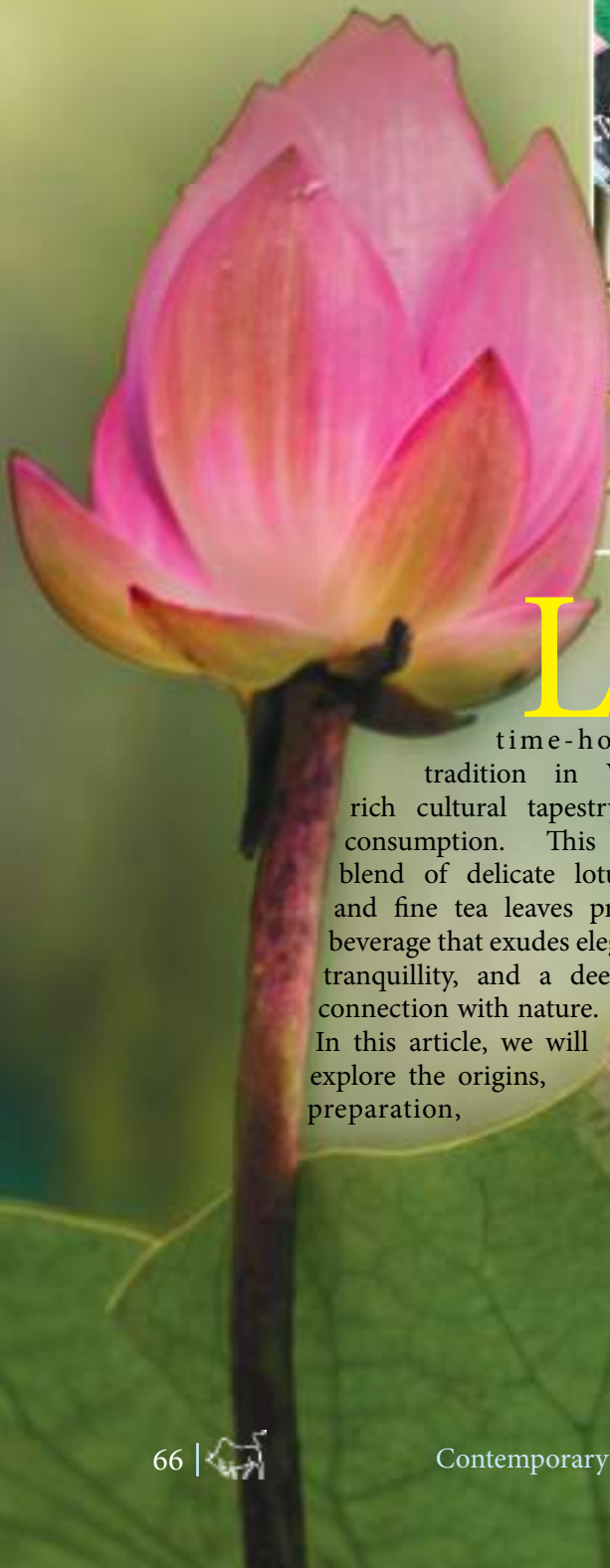
Susmita Dasgupta

Tea Artist, Tea blogger and the founder of 'Tea with Susmita'.



The Enchanting Lotus Tea of Vietnam: A Delicate Elixir of Tradition and Culture

Dr Kallol K Dey



Lotus Tea is a beloved and time-honoured tradition in Vietnam's rich cultural tapestry of tea consumption. This unique blend of delicate lotus petals and fine tea leaves provides a beverage that exudes elegance, tranquillity, and a deep connection with nature. In this article, we will explore the origins, preparation,

cultural significance, and health benefits of Lotus Tea, offering a glimpse into Vietnam's captivating tea culture.

Historically, Lotus Tea has been an integral part of Vietnamese customs for over a millennium, tracing its roots back to the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225). The lotus flower, symbolizing purity and resilience, holds spiritual importance. The combination of tea leaves and lotus blossoms began during this era and evolved through subsequent dynasties, enchanting the elite



and becoming a hallmark of Vietnamese tea ceremonies.

Crafting Lotus Tea requires precision and patience. Handpicked, fresh lotus petals are carefully layered over tea leaves, infusing their aromatic essence. Time is the key, allowing the tea to absorb the lotus's delicate fragrance. Afterwards, the petals are removed, leaving tea leaves imbued with the essence of the lotus.

Lotus Tea is deeply rooted in Vietnamese culture, symbolizing grace, purity, and spiritual enlightenment, often resonating with Buddhist teachings. The lotus's emergence from muddy waters mirrors enlightenment. The lotus embodies beauty, grace, and feminine virtues throughout Vietnamese literature and art.

The tea's consumption is tied to traditional ceremonies, fostering community, harmony, and reverence.

Lotus Tea is a sensory marvel, captivating with its delicate aroma and exquisite taste. The tea absorbs the lotus's floral fragrance, resulting in a mellow, subtly sweet brew. Sipping Lotus Tea invokes serenity and mindfulness, an ode to tranquility.

Beyond its cultural significance, Lotus Tea offers a bounty of health benefits. Antioxidants in the tea combat free radicals, promoting overall well-being. Lotus tea is abundant in antioxidants, such as catechins, flavonoids, and polyphenols, which play a vital role in neutralizing harmful free radicals in the body. These potent compounds contribute to overall health and may have anti-ageing effects, support heart health, and reduce the risk of chronic conditions like cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Lotus petals possess anti-inflammatory properties, aiding digestion and bolstering the immune system. Studies have indicated that the flavonoids and alkaloids found in Lotus tea can help modulate the inflammatory response and reduce the production of pro-inflammatory markers. By mitigating chronic inflammation, Lotus tea may aid in managing conditions like arthritis, asthma, and inflammatory bowel diseases.

Each cup of Lotus Tea celebrates the beauty, serenity, and timeless art of tea in Vietnam's deep-rooted traditions and reverence for nature.

On The Lighter Side...



When your teacher wants you to Fail

EXAMINATION COUNCIL OF ZAMBIA

SPECIAL PAPER 6

Time : 15 minutes



Answer all questions. Do not turn this paper until you are told to do so.

Each question carries 10 marks.

1. Black is a color and white is also a color, but black and white television is not a color television. Discuss. **10 marks.**
2. If soap and water makes the body clean, then what makes the towel dirt after bath? Discuss. **10 marks.**
3. Can you trust a nurse whose husband sells coffins? Discuss. **10 marks.**

You are free to use a calculator.



New Executive Committee of Siliguri Tea Traders Association Elected in 51st Annual General Meeting



Siliguri, August 7, 2023 - The 51st Annual General Meeting of the Siliguri Tea Traders Association, held on August 7, 2023, witnessed the election for the post of president and 12 executive members. The event was graced by esteemed guests, including Sri Milan Ruchal, Commissioner-IT, Jalpaiguri Division, who served as the Chief Guest, and Sri Sushil Berlia, Vice Chairman of the Tea Board, and Sri Subir Hazra, DDTD (P) of the Tea Board, who were the Guests of Honour. The outgoing President, Sri Gangadhar Nakipuria, presided over the meeting. One of the significant highlights of the AGM was



the approval of the audited statements of accounts and the balance sheet of the Association for the fiscal years 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23. The meeting concluded with the announcement of the newly elected President and members of the executive committee:

1. Sri Anand Tebriwal - President
2. Sri Navneet Jain - Vice President
3. Sri Sandeep Bansal - Secretary
4. Sri Ankur Jain - Treasurer
5. Sri Ankit Agarwal - Co-Treasurer
6. Sri Pravin Kumar Agarwal - Member
7. Sri Pankaj Nakipuria - Member
8. Sri Arihant Jain - Member
9. Sri Gaurav Agarwal - Member
10. Sri Amardeep Gupta - Member
11. Sri Pawan Kishore Tewari - Member
12. Sri Devendra Kumar Mittal - Member
13. Sri Ravi Pawa - Member

The newly elected committee members are expected to lead the Siliguri Tea Traders Association and contribute to the growth and development of the tea industry in the region. Their diverse backgrounds and experiences promise a vibrant future for the association and its stakeholders.

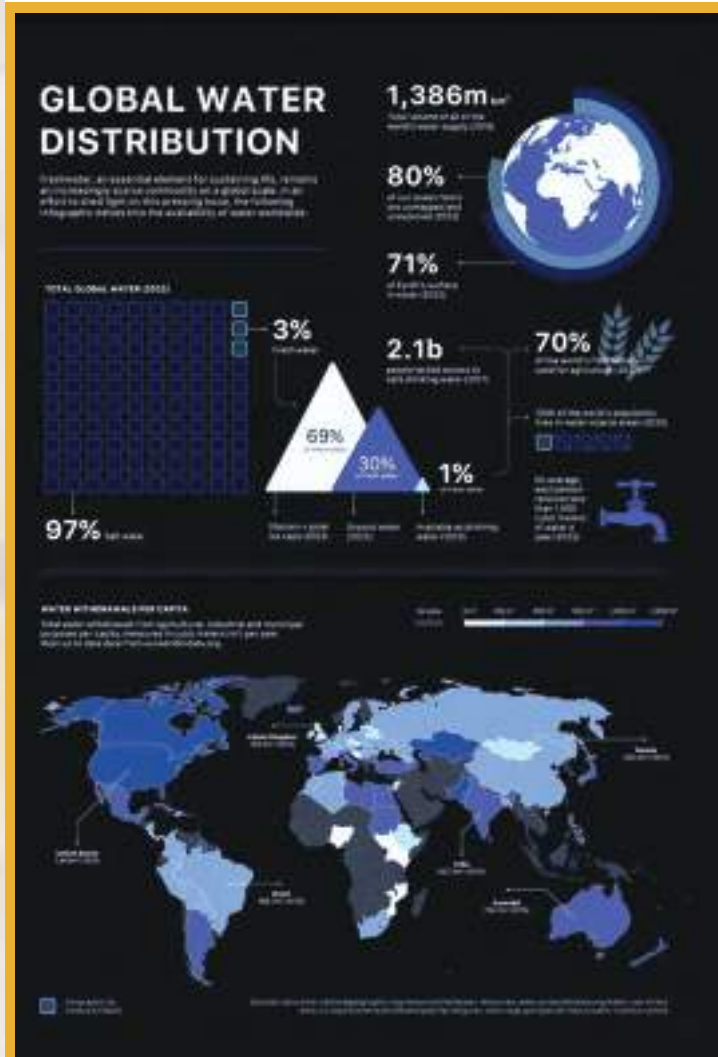
The Siliguri Tea Traders Association plays a crucial role in the tea trade in this region, and the newly elected executive committee is entrusted with the responsibility of upholding and advancing the interests of the tea community. The AGM marked a significant moment in the history of the association, and all eyes are on the new leadership as they embark on their journey to further strengthen the tea trade in Siliguri.

The following individuals have been newly appointed to the Executive Committee:

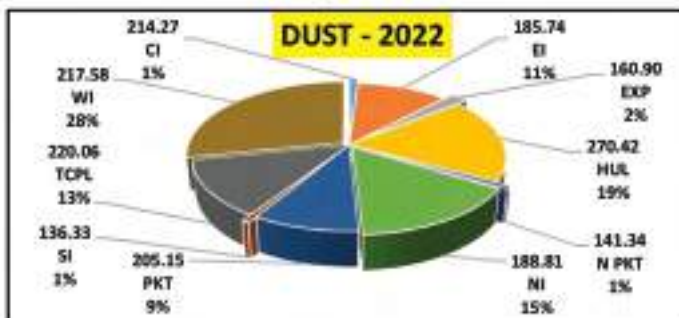
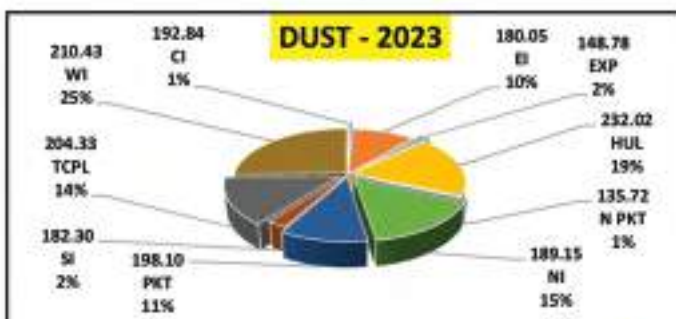
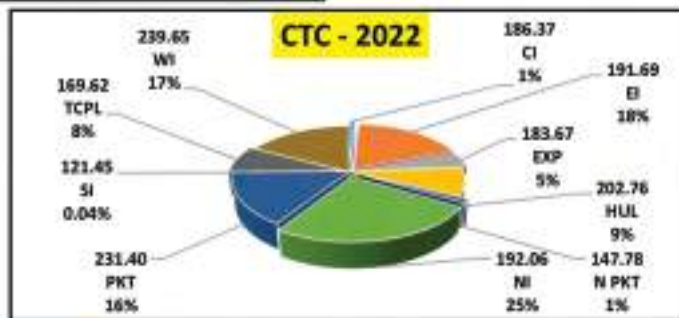
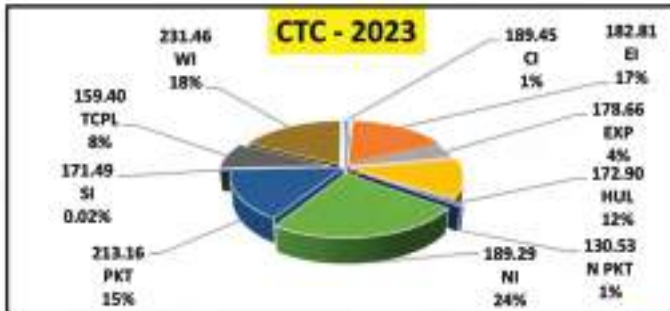
- Sri Krishen Dalmia - Joint Secretary
- Sri Bajrang Sethia - Co-opted Member
- Sri Ashish Agarwal - Co-opted Member



Ena Bandyopadhyay,
Tea Time, Siliguri



N. India Auction Buying - Zone wise April to September



Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust
 ## CI - Central India, EI - Eastern India, EXP - Exporters, HUL - Hindustan Unilever Ltd., N PKT - National Packeteers, NI - North India, PKT - Regional Packeteers, SI - South India, TCPL - Tata Consumer Products Limited, WI - Western India

Month wise District wise Auction averages

CTC Leaf & Dust

Assam : Estate

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	244.28	281.77	-37.49
May	222.70	213.60	9.10
June	260.83	258.24	2.59
July	254.23	260.82	-6.59
August	232.09	261.22	-29.12
September	227.46	237.28	-9.82
April to September	238.46	250.95	-12.49

Dooars & Terai : Estate

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	242.10	261.70	-19.60
May	226.02	209.13	16.89
June	238.37	245.72	-7.35
July	226.08	227.49	-1.41
August	197.71	221.51	-23.80
September	191.62	204.43	-12.80
April to September	214.09	225.39	-11.30

Cachar : Estate

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	216.51	236.46	-19.96
May	190.38	183.33	7.05
June	186.67	182.31	4.35
July	198.36	191.67	6.69
August	188.84	202.25	-13.41
September	187.79	194.04	-6.26
April to September	190.32	193.93	-3.61

Tripura : Estate

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	219.71	227.34	-7.63
May	166.51	160.47	6.05
June	160.76	151.56	9.20
July	163.42	153.80	9.62
August	152.07	161.65	-9.59
September	152.98	157.57	-4.59
April to September	158.37	158.92	-0.55

Assam : BLF

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	171.79	196.35	-24.57
May	154.52	158.23	-3.71
June	171.32	164.75	6.56
July	175.43	167.03	8.40
August	166.12	178.85	-12.73
September	162.57	172.97	-10.40
April to September	166.59	170.93	-4.34

Dooars & Terai : BLF

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	124.66	158.63	-33.97
May	125.02	130.57	-5.56
June	121.54	122.80	-1.26
July	121.75	120.59	1.16
August	114.86	127.14	-12.27
September	114.89	127.74	-12.85
April to September	119.38	127.89	-8.51

South India

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	119.15	103.37	15.78
May	112.60	100.45	12.15
June	104.51	96.01	8.50
July	103.54	92.58	10.96
August	99.61	104.19	-4.59
September	101.60	107.23	-5.63
April to September	105.77	99.91	5.86

● Orthodox ●

Assam

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	245.09	282.51	-37.42
May	210.08	265.63	-55.55
June	230.21	354.27	-124.05
July	228.10	354.92	-126.83
August	227.87	343.25	-115.38
September	235.98	284.81	-48.83
April to September	228.12	322.35	-94.23

South India

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	162.48	139.38	23.10
May	159.98	160.43	-0.45
June	145.69	161.63	-15.94
July	132.42	167.62	-35.20
August	121.52	160.19	-38.67
September	139.87	166.17	-26.29
April to September	143.43	160.37	-16.95

● Darjeeling ●

Darjeeling

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
April	819.19	877.62	-58.43
May	599.39	433.96	165.43
June	352.18	343.14	9.05
July	396.47	458.22	-61.76
August	400.53	355.77	44.77
September	294.40	302.79	-8.39
April to September	408.69	398.63	10.06



Compiled by Soumen Bagchi



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In the Black Tea processing withering is the most important and critical process of leaf which has come a long way from natural air withering with no controls to present day force draught air with sufficient controls to new technology of continuous system.

Vikram's Continuous Mechanised withering system Eliminates all the deficiencies inherent in traditional trough withering and constitute the foundation of achieving quality in Tea Manufacturing in which freshly plucked Green Leaf is conditioned chemically as well as physically for ensuing processing stage for both CTC & Orthodox tea. The Catabolic changes of larger organic molecules enhance enzyme activities, contributes towards Briskness, production of Volatile flavour compounds (VFC) responsible for AROMA. This process needs sufficient times and can not be accelerated.

Continuous Mechanised withering system comprises of two separate systems for chemical and physical withering with separate controls for residence time, humidity and temperature.

Advantage of Continuous Mechanised withering system helps in achieving consistent withering percentage of green leaf in spite of change of ambient conditions, no loss and damage of green leaf in handling as in traditional troughs and the tea manufactured will be uniform and consistent.

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