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# TEA TIME

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## A Heart and Soul Industry



Face-to-Face  
with Chairman, Tea Board of India

Garden Profile : Nuxalbari Tea Estate



CONTEMPORARY

# TEA TIME

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Cover photo: Stage performance by  
school students of the Indian Institute of  
Cerebral Palsy

Photo courtesy: IICP







# SHADE TREE

# MANAGEMENT

# IN TEA

# GARDENS

**The pros and cons  
of shade trees in  
tea gardens all over  
India**

Shade trees play an important role in tea cultivation and hence their proper management merits due attention. The following benefits are derived from shade trees in a tea plantation:



**Anjali Pathak**

- A shade tree species with single layer canopy composed of small leaflets that intercept 30-50% of the available sunlight in the form of sunflecks, is considered an ideal shade tree. An ideal shade tree should belong to the leguminous family (as they can fix atmospheric nitrogen into soil) and have a tall spreading growth habit, small leaves and should be resistant to wind damage.
- The shade tree *Albizia chinensis* meets these requirements to the best in north India. In south India the silver oak (*Grevillea robusta*) is a shade tree of choice. Shade trees should be planted along tea rows at a spacing of 6 x 6 m (275 plants/ha).
- Optimum population of shade tree helps to conserve soil moisture by one to three percent during the dry season and lowers the leaf temperature by two to four degree centigrade.
- Deep rooted shade trees help in conserving soil moisture during the period of stress .
- Shade trees add 2500-5000 kg/ha organic matter to the tea fields through droppings of leaves, twigs and pods.
- The rate of development and proliferation of feeder roots of tea is high under shade trees.
- Shade trees absorb/reflect over 70% of harmful infra-red radiation from the solar spectrum thus protecting the tea bushes from being scorched.
- Positive effects contributed by shade trees cannot be replaced by additional application of nutrients.
- Optimum shade density reduces loss of water through transpiration, enhances photosynthetic efficiency and helps in the mobilisation of nutrients.
- Under shade trees a large proportion of the assimilated nutrients are diverted to the growing shoots. This increases the yield of the tea bush.
- Effective shade reduces the incidence of red spider and other mites.

Tea requires only sparse shade. So retain optimum stand of shade based on the growth of the tree, altitude of the garden and aspect of the field (south and west slopes require more shade). Thin out shade initially to 12 x 6 m after eight to ten years of planting and if required further thinning may be done to 12 x 12 m at later stages (12 years from planting). Always thin out shade prior to pruning.

For permanent shade trees a spacing of 10.86 – 12.6 metres is recommended and for temporary shade trees a spacing of four to five metres is ideal.

## Rotation of shade trees

Shade trees should be managed on a shorter rotation of 20-25 years. This is required to avoid shade trees with large trunk diameter as such trees when fallen by storm, normally damage 25-30 tea bushes. Incidence of pests and diseases is also drastically minimised when shade trees are renewed on a shorter rotation. Spraying of pesticides becomes convenient when the shade trees are kept within a manageable height.



## It was the turn of TEA

**M**rs Sudha Kaul wife of Mr. Om Kaul of Carritt Moran had been saying that the young Spastic School has no building and is having to operate from a military tent at Ballygunge. When I became Chairman of the Calcutta Tea Traders Association in 1976 I appealed in turn to brokers, producers and buyers to please consider helping the spastic cause. The response did take time and a great deal of effort which included my appeal having to be



*Courtesy : Targett Archives*

The author with two buyers at a charity auction for The Spastics Society of Eastern India, Calcutta, 1976

translated into Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Arabic, Polish and Russian. This multi-language effort was in order to help our agent buyers to be able to persuade their client country. In those days a great deal of business was rupee barter trade.

Eventually the efforts were rewarded when it was resolved almost unanimously that every seller, buyer and broker would donate two rupees per chest of tea sold in a particular week's auction. If I remember right, the total came to about Rs.1800 short of rupees five lakh. I donated the 1800 or so rupees and made a round figure of rupees five lakh. That was the seed money for making a beginning for a building at Taratolla Road so that the spastic children could be helped more comfortably and systematically.

The tea fraternity has always been conscious of its responsibilities towards the challenges in our society. In 1961, as symbolic of the auction centenary, a similar donation was made through the auction in a particular week. Then the contribution was one rupee per chest. The total proceeds were donated to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. That was in addition to the good money raised by the sale of seven small donated lots of tea auctioned in the presence of Jawaharlal Nehru on that historic December day.

In civilization, the strong help the weak. In contrast, in a jungle, the strong eat up the weak. That is the sentiment which drove me in 1976.

**Prafull Goradia**

now a Computer Trainer and a recipient of the President's Award for Painting whose parents Saroj and R L Kapur were founder members, and Arjun Kaul, then aged four, now a strapping, handsome young man in his 40s. I was a young wife and mother barely out of my teens with just an honours degree in History. As a founder member, I attended the inauguration and shortly after that, on January 1, 1975, Sudha Kaul offered me a job as a teacher, even though at that time I had neither experience nor relevant qualifications. This was true of most of the initial team. Commitment, conviction and enthusiasm

we had in plenty but no qualifications to our name. It is due to the trust and faith vested in the organisation by the tea industry and all other well-wishers that later, we were able to study further, register in universities in the UK and USA and complete higher degrees.

The school gradually expanded and with that came trained professionals — amongst them, Tessa Hamblin, an English physiotherapist who came to Kolkata under the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Kamla Prasad, Speech Therapist, Purobie Bose and the late Shanti Nundy, Special Educators and Sujata





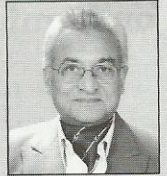


Tea Tales

# inner line

## REGULATION

**Life for the British planters in Assam and Cachar in the 1800s was a continuous battle with the elements as well as the tribals of the region**



Entry to the north eastern states of Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal is only permissible to the indigenous inhabitants but restricted to all other Indian citizens and foreigners. A pass termed the 'Inner Line Permit' is required for admission. The rule which has been in existence, from the days of the British, is over 130 years old and was made to restrict planters encroaching into the tribal areas to propagate tea. The circumstances leading to enforcement of the law has been documented by Dr. Imdad Hussain who retired as Dean of the School of Social Sciences, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya. Extracts from his studies are reproduced. The learned Professor is thanked for the permission to publish the historical facts.

Without doubt few events had left a more lasting impression upon European tea planters in Assam and Cachar than the massacre of Englishmen, women and children in Northern India during the summer of 1857. The lessons they learnt of their own exceedingly isolated and vulnerable situation miles away from the nearest civil station were not easily forgotten. The result was the development of North Eastern India of the volunteer movement that was to become one of the pillars of the colonial internal security system in India.

Until August 1857, however, things were rather quiet in Assam and eastern India generally. Bengal had remained unaffected giving a sense of immunity to the planters, missionaries and government officers. But after Jagadishpur in Bihar rose in rebellion, considerable anxiety began to show itself among the local officers and planters. None could ignore the fact that a large proportion of the men of the 1st Assam Light Infantry Battalion at Dibrugarh came from that region. There were no regular regiments of the Bengal Army stationed in territories beyond what was the Eastern Frontier of Bengal before the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-'26). Assam was defended by two local battalions of the Assam Light

Infantry; the first located at Dibrugarh and the second at Gauhati, the Headquarters of Assam's Commissioner. The Sylhet Light Infantry with its Headquarters at Cheerapunji was responsible for the defence of Sylhet and Cachar. For the numerous frontier outposts, there were several companies somewhat on the lines of what today are called para-military forces. The locals and irregulars were fairly well armed and in Assam there were soon anxious reports of anti-British intrigues developing. In this situation Donald Mackay of the Assam Company immediately brought to the notice of the Bengal Government the want of European Troops in Assam. Calcutta could spare none and so sent two Battalions of

**Ali Zaman**



European sailors or "Jack Tars", in the parlance of the day. The first consisting of about 194 men under Lieutenant Davis was stationed at Dibrugarh, and the second under Captain Brown that followed was sent to Sibsagar.

Cachar planters had little reason for worry. At least not until March 1858, when the 34th Bengal Native Infantry mutinied at Chittagong and began to move north, towards Sylhet and Cachar. On the 18th an engagement took place between the mutineers and a detachment of the Sylhet Light Infantry at a place called Latu. Though its distinguished Commanding Officer Major Bung lost his life in the encounter, the mutineers were

