

CONTEMPORARY

# TEA TIME

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TEA JOURNAL WITH THE LARGEST READERSHIP 31st YEAR OF PUBLICATION



## RUSSIA'S TEA STORY BEGAN IN INDIA



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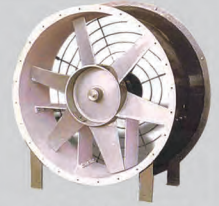
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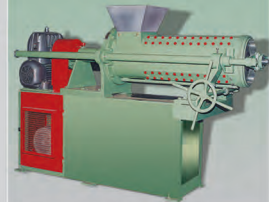
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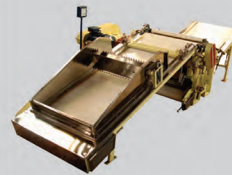
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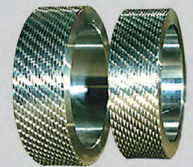
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- 1) Who is the Head of the Tibetan Buddhist community?
- 2) Identify a cricketer named Usman Kwaza
- 3) What does the term GOAT stand for, particularly in Sport?
- 4) How many times has Djokovic won the World Tennis championship?
- 5) What Does AMUL mean in Sanskrit?
- 6) Besides being Bowlers what connects Lasith Malinga and Rashid Khan?
- 7) What has Mark Zuckerberg recently re-named Facebook?
- 8) How is The Jungle Tea Safari better Known?
- 9) What is Operation Flood the nickname of?
- 10) Name the latest Bond movie



- ANSWERS**
- 1) Dalai Lama
  - 2) Pakistani playing for Australia
  - 3) Greatest of all Time
  - 4) 7 times
  - 5) Priceless
  - 6) Four consecutive wickets
  - 7) Meta
  - 8) The Toy Train in Darjeeling
  - 9) Amul Milk production
  - 10) No Time to Die



## EDITORIAL

Looking ahead into 2022, and the declared El Nina, we can expect extreme weather conditions adversely affecting crops globally.

While this year is ending on a deficit for CTC there has been a balanced orthodox supply. Will Kenya make up for their lost crop, this year? With Sri Lanka going the organic way, sans pesticides and fertilizers, their clean teas are likely to find better acceptance in the European markets. But supplies are likely to diminish. On the flip side most, if not all the Orthodox consuming countries are in assorted turmoil. Be it North Africa, Middle East, or Northeast Europe. Now add Afghanistan to this list. Can we find create a larger footprint there?

Unilever has divested numerous European brands as reported in the Dailies. They claim that strong competition from ready to drink products, herbal and flavored infusions as well as from artesian coffee in the developed markets, has induced them to take this decision. They have chosen to retain the more traditional and conservative Indian and Indonesian markets. The effects of this, on the Kenyan primary markets would be positive.

In this emerging scenario can India exploit the global niche markets.? And the orthodox markets, specifically? Iraq, has shown interest, which augurs well for our South Indian produce.

The shortfall in the Darjeeling, production has skewed the balance in favour of demand, improving prices. It will also be fair to add that most estates in Darjeeling have improved their quality. More recently the tourism potential in the hills are being looked at seriously and a large chain of luxury hotels has procured a garden.

The year is ending well for the producers -with excellent prices for the best teas and strong demand for the rest. With no carry forward stocks the opening in 2022 looks promising. But with tea its always hard to predict.



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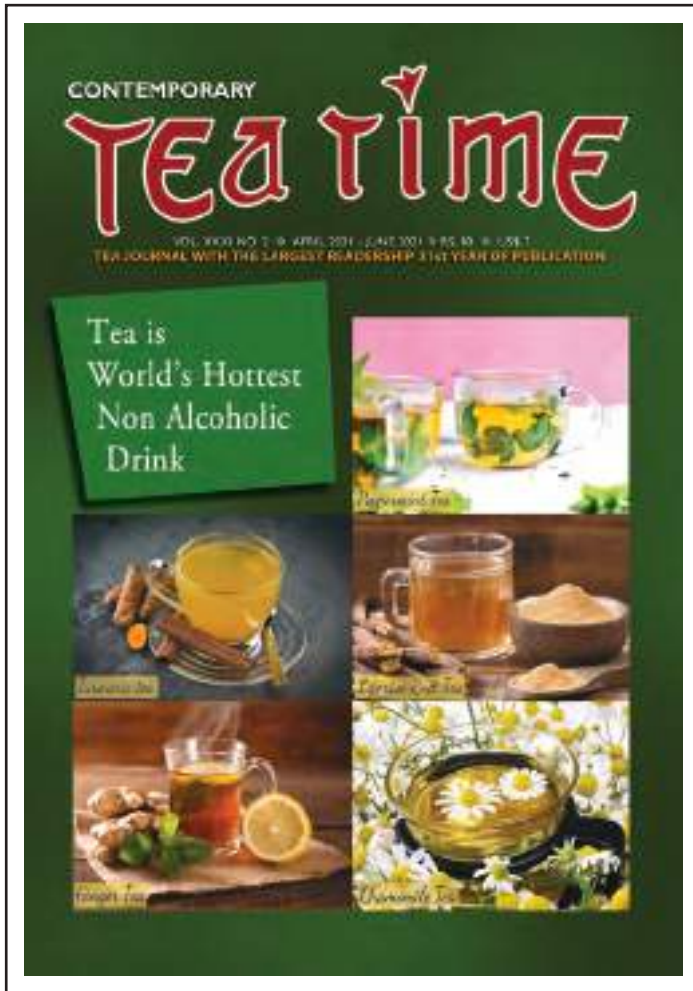
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## THE INDO-RUSSIAN TEA TRADE CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE 1800S

*Russia's love for zavarka was brewed in India*

**Prafull Goradia**

The Indian tea industry is obsessed with the erstwhile Soviet Union, now called Commonwealth of Independent States, market. For nearly 30 years, Indian producers enjoyed the incidental generosity of the Soviets. 'Generosity', because the Soviet government paid handsome prices, some 30 to 40 percent higher than the then prevailing international level. 'Incidental', because the Rouble was falsely valued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). To illustrate, in 1991 the RBI treated the Rouble as worth Rs42, even though it was not worth even 42 paise. The dollar was

being publicly auctioned in Moscow at the time for about 3,000 roubles. (The rupee to dollar rate at the time was Rs22.74 to a dollar.)

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of the rupee barter trade, Indian tea exports declined. There was a slump in prices. Even now, so many years after the collapse, the tea trade survives in the hope that the Russian Prince Charming will return and save the tea damsel. It should therefore be interesting to look back on the history of the Indo-Russian trade.





## BIRTH OF AN ERA

The sales of tea from India to Russia began in the days when the Tsar ruled. In India, the first plantations in Assam had begun producing for exporting worldwide in the 1830s. The year 1897 was one of interruption and anxiety in Indian tea exports to Russia. A plague had broken out in parts of India resulting in the import of the country's tea into Batumi, Georgia, being prohibited. Initially, the government reaction in the then capital, Calcutta (now Kolkata), was one of anger and there was some talk of reprisals like stopping the import of kerosene oil pumped in Baku, Azerbaijan. However, the Indian Tea Association made a timely intervention and proposed that Russian authorities be persuaded to recognise that tea is not a carrier of plague. The crisis was fortunately short-lived and the Indo-Russian sea-borne trade continued to grow. A British consular report of 1872 from Odessa stated, 'the taste of the Russian had undergone an extraordinary change in the last decade. His preference was swinging from China to Indian and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) teas. Purchases from China had declined from 60 percent to 40 percent of the total imports.' The consular report went on to add that there had been an extraordinary increase in the demand of green tea as well.

By 1903-04, nearly 29,000 pounds of tea were exported to Russia. Due to rise in prices, imports via London were also diminishing and direct shipments from the subcontinent were looking more attractive.

Between 1904 and 1912, imports had grown by nearly 20 times.

Turktestan and other Central Asian provinces had taken to green tea as a kind of substitute for intoxicants, which were forbidden by Islam. A whole new market, over and above that of black tea consumed by the European Russians, had been created. Then came the Great War, in 1914.

## THE GREAT WAR

Once the First World War ended, in 1918, and things were getting back to hunky-dory, there was a general recession and the impact on tea prices was unprecedented. Between the Christmas of 1919 and of 1920, the quotation for common teas had dropped in London from 1 shilling 2 pence per pound to 5 pence. In the course of a year, the prices had become one-third. This slump was attributed to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War that preceded and followed. Imports by this great consumer had stopped all of a sudden.

Therefore, much more tea had been shipped to Britain. Warehouses not only in London but also in the provincial towns were choked as a lot of the common variety became unsalable.

In due course, the Soviet Union resumed imports — on a limited scale. In fact, even a decade after the end of the Russian Civil War a big enough alternate home had not been found for the surplus tea. The annual imports by the country around 1930 ranged between 55 and 65 million pounds; pre-First World War I, that figure was 200 million pounds.

And so trade circles in over-supplied London felt that to save the industry from ruin an urgent outlet for 50 to 100 million pounds had to be found. Writing in the 'Capital', a leading business journal published from Calcutta, on July 2, 1937, the London correspondent recommended that the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) was the

*In Russia, water for tea is boiled in a metal urn called a samovar (pictured)*







*Indian tea has regained popularity in Russia over the years*

obvious home for this surplus quantity. The country was willing to import more provided it was granted long-term credit.

USSR had a good record of meeting its obligations and therefore, there should be no hesitation in granting it credit terms. Apart from relieving the glut, what worried the correspondent was the danger of a whole generation growing up in USSR without being able to acquire the tea drinking habit. The supply of tea was dismally inadequate to go round at a price that would make it possible for most people to purchase it.

However, in October 1931, the Ceylon Association reportedly turned down the proposal from the Ceylon Estates Proprietary Association to extend two years' credit to USSR. The reason ascribed for this refusal was that a single Soviet agency would be buying all the tea. In the event of a default, the loss would be total and therefore, unbearable. However, if the creditors were several as in a free-market country, the defaults would not be simultaneous.

Statistics continued to be presented to the government to show how serious a factor the loss of the Soviet market was.

A July 1932 report from London complained that USSR import of Indian tea had dropped from 55.5 million pounds in 1913 to only 11 million pounds in 1931.

The International Restriction Scheme and the consequent control over production helped to achieve a balance between supply and demand.

Prices improved and the market returned to normal. Yet USSR continued to preoccupy the thoughts of the industry. The zealots of the Empire were against any Dutch or Indonesian teas in excess of the Restriction Scheme going to the Soviet Union under a bilateral arrangement.

The more broad-minded, far-seeing elements in London, however, took a different view. They were anxious about the disposal of the extra 250 to 400 million pounds that would land in the world market after the Restriction Scheme ended.





On June 14, 1934, the London correspondent of the 'Capital' wrote, "How any producer can stand out against the sales of black tea to Russia, irrespective of from what country it comes, is beyond comprehension when for the last three-and-a-half years we know the approximate quantity of tea that will be available from the chief producing countries, and consequently if more Dutch tea goes to Russia there will be less to go to the other parts of the world and Ceylon and Indian tea will take its place."

### KEEN BUYERS AND SELLERS

In the meanwhile, negotiations between the producers and the Soviet government had been going on. The purpose was to ensure continuity of sales of black tea to USSR. The supply was plentiful and the Soviets were keen to buy more and more. The missing link was money and therefore, credit had to be organised. It was at last in July 1934 that a tentative agreement and a scheme of credit were reported. A joint trading company was to be formed by the producers of India, Ceylon and the Dutch Indies. The owners of about 59 percent of the production of these countries were to subscribe to the share capital of the company on the basis of 3,750 million pounds of tea grown. Nine-hundred-and-thirty-eight pounds were payable in cash and 2,812 pounds were to cover any default by the Soviet government. As the 'Capital' of July 26, 1934, reported, "this would provide a cash potential of 468,750 pounds and with the uncalled balance of 1,045,000 pounds, it would be sufficient to finance sales up to 30 million pounds per annum, and as the tea would be mostly bought on the London market, it would benefit every estate equally owing to the strengthening of prices as a result of such purchases."

The joint company was to be known as Anglo-Russian Tea Trading Company. It would buy tea for cash at the auctions in London, Colombo, Calcutta and Amsterdam and sell it in USSR on 12 months' credit. The growers of India, Ceylon and the Dutch Indies were free to subscribe to the capital directly or through their respective holding companies. The governments of these countries would be asked to guarantee credits and, if necessary, to levy a cess. The talks had proceeded so far that they raised high hopes but they were dashed to the ground when the negotiations were suddenly suspended. The resulting pessimism was widespread although, soon after auction, USSR returned to Mincing Lane as a buyer even if on a small scale. Arrangements were made for samples to be sent to Moscow in time for orders to reach London for the auctions each week.

As if to make the best of a bad job, J.H. Bunting at the 1933 annual general meeting of the Indian Tea Association in London, mooted

the idea of propagating Indian, Ceylon and Java (Dutch) teas in the Soviet Union. This step could possibly counter the increasing exports of China and Japan teas to this country. The difficulty however lay in the fact that retailing in the Soviet Union was a government monopoly.

Promoting particular growths that might not be made available to the consumer could prove not only wasteful but also counter-productive.

Nevertheless, USSR continued to be on the mind of the industry. Addressing the Indian section of the Royal Society of Arts in 1936, E. A. Watson, Chairman of the Indian Tea Association and the

**Watson, Chairman of the Indian Tea Association, in 1936, said, 'Russians are naturally a tea drinking people'**







*An illustration of a family at tea time in Russia*

moving spirit behind the earlier negotiations with the Soviet government, expressed the hope that the time would not be distant when the Russians could again take a quantity similar to what they used to before WW I. He was so optimistic because ‘they were naturally a tea-drinking people.’ Not all his listeners agreed with Watson and they felt that he had overlooked the fact that since the Revolution a whole generation of Russians, which knew nothing about tea and had never tasted the delights of the samovar, had grown up.

Others however shared Watson’s hopes and appreciated his untiring efforts to send more tea to the Soviet Union. In a 1943 issue of the ‘Tea and Rubber Mall’, it was stated that the future held more promise, and Watson’s exertions on behalf of tea would not have proved fruitless if peace was won. It went on, “the Russian market

alone would have proved the salvation of the tea industry”.

In June 1914, it was reported that the Soviet Union had received more than 35 million pounds of Indian and Ceylon tea through the British Ministry of Food.

The trade therefore wondered whether the Russian market might be reopened. The ‘Manchester Guardian’ expressed the opinion that there was a bigger opportunity after the war for developing the Russian market, given patience and a suitable approach, than expanding the American market, where the tea trade conducted a large advertising campaign in competition with coffee.

#### TRADE AGREEMENT

On July 12, 1948, at New Delhi, the first Indo-Russian food agreement was signed.





India would receive 50,000 tons of wheat. In return it would supply 11.5 million pounds or 5,000 metric tons of high grade tea. The Tea Controller for India, acting for the government, soon invited offers for the supply of 4250 tons of North Indian tea from the 1948 crop. Of this quantity, 60 percent was to be Assam, 30 percent Dooars, the remaining 10 percent would be sourced from Cachar and Darjeeling, of which 30 percent would be whole leaf and 70 percent broken. The prices and the procedure were to be similar to those applied for supplies to the British Food Ministry.

In order to offset the quantity under the wheat-for-tea barter agreement with the Soviet Union, the Government of India in 1949 contemplated a reduction in the shipments to Britain. The Soviet purchases removed from the Calcutta market tea of a quality suitable for Canada and the USA. Some in the trade felt that this would put Indian tea at a disadvantage in the hard currency markets. This conflict between barter and hard currency trade increased as the volume of trade with the Soviet Union went up. As per the 1949 agreement, 200,000 tons of wheat and 100,000 tons of food grains were to be exchanged for tea, jute and castor oil.

#### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Iran, or Persia, is an important link in the tea trade between the Far and the Near East, as well as carrying on a lively trade within her own borders. The pioneer of the modern tea trade in erstwhile Persia was the late Prince Mohamad Ali Mirza Chaicar, Kashef-es-Salteneh, who, in 1900, introduced Indian

tea, inaugurated regular trade with Russia and established tea cultivation in what is now known as Iran.

#### ON THE RUSSIAN TEA ROUTE

The overland caravan trade between Northern China and Russia, via Mongolia and Siberia, had its inception after the signing of the Nerchinsk Treaty in 1689; it reached its peak between 1860 and 1880, and began to decline with the opening of a part of the trans-Siberian railway in 1880. It disappeared altogether upon the completion of the railway in 1900. Subsequently, the bulk of the Russian importations have gone by rail, via the port of Vladivostok.

In addition to the overland teas, Russian tea merchants began in the 1860s to import small quantities of tea via the Suez Canal to Odessa.

These imports were inconsiderable up to the 1890s, but increased rapidly thereafter.

During the same period, Russia frequently imported teas from London. The largest firms in the pre-revolutionary Russian tea trade were: C.S. Popoff & Co., Alexix Gubkin & Co., and Wissotsky & Co. At first, the Popoff company had the lion's share of the business, but Wissotsky & Co., a much younger firm, finally took away much of Popoff's trade.

Popoff & Co. were doing some buying in China subsequent to the World War, but after the death of Colonel Popoff, the founder, the firm ceased to exist. Wissotsky

### India and Russia Bilateral Trade To Triple by 2021-2025



## TEA TIME

& Co. is now doing business in Poland, and has a representative in New York.

Alexis Gubkin & Co. became A. Kusnezow & Co. after Mr. Gubkin's death, with its head office at Moscow. Later, this concern became

the Trading Company and later still, The Asiatic Trading Corporation Ltd. under British registry. Another old Russian Tea firm—now of London, Berlin, etc. was that of P. M. Kousmichoff & Sons, St. Petersburg, founded in 1867 by Pavel M. Kousmichoff. In 1894, his eldest son, Viacheslav Kousmichoff, entered the business; and, subsequently, the two other sons, Constantin Kousmichoff and Michail Kousmichoff.

Pavel M. Kousmichoff died in 1910. The sons extended the business and shops were opened in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev. In October, 1917, came the Bolshevik Revolution and in a few days, empty stores were all that remained of a business that had taken 50 years to build.

There followed a number of years of chaos in the tea trade of Russia and then, in 1925, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics began the reorganisation of tea buying and selling as a government monopoly through a special bureau known as Chaieupravlenie, or the Tea Trust. This proved to be little more than a

gesture, as Chaieupravlenie lacked both capital and credit to supply the teas that were needed. At the end of 1926, Chaieupravlenie ceased to exist and the entire tea business, including the factories, stores, etc., previously owned by the original firms, passed into the hands of Centrosoyus, Moscow—the central association

of consumers' societies, which distributed almost everything in the way of food supplies.

Its London branch opened in 1919, which began purchasing teas in the London market at the beginning of 1927. A branch was also established at Hankow, China. However, the propagandist activities of these foreign branches made them short-lived. In the same year, the British Government closed the London office and similar action was taken by the Peiping Government against the Hankow Branch.

Lack of credit limited the purchasing of tea by Centrosoyus to such an extent that it was impossible for it to supply more than a fraction of the normal pre-Revolution demand, which averaged 187,200,000 pounds per year. In the chaos following the Revolution of 1917, the imports fell to ten or twelve million pounds a year; but in 1926, the first year of unified control, they rose to about 38 million pounds.

The total quantity imported into the Soviet

Union in 1932 has been estimated at 35,161,000 pounds and 42,564,000 pounds in 1933.



*A Russian Imperial P.M.Kousmichoff & Sons tea Tin Box from the 1910s*

### DID YOU KNOW?

In Germany, as in many other countries tea was sold first by chemists. In 1657, a handful cost 15 gulden [1.70 marks] in Nordhausen. The use of tea spread slowly, except in districts nearest

to the sea like Ostfriesland, northwest of Bremen, where consumption remains greater than in any other part of Germany.

In 1913, tea consumption in the entire Austro-Hungarian empire was 70 grams per person.





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# The 10 rules to follow while drinking tea

Tea expert and award-winning blogger *Susmita Dasgupta* explains the different types of brew - and how you should be sipping them

*What makes the perfect cup of tea perfect? It's all about balance - of flavour, of time, of taste. But to get that brew just right, one must follow certain protocols. The first rule is understanding the basics of tea. There are 800 different varieties of tea available and making a choice is difficult. To make a start, it is essential to know the difference between leaf tea and tea dust.*

**T**ea expert and award-winning blogger Susmita Dasgupta says there are five primary types of tea: black, white, green, pu-erh and oolong. "All these are made using the leaves, which is the standard definition of drinking tea," she adds. "Each of these teas has a distinct flavour and can be identified from a light to dark range, based on aroma, strength and hues."

These teas are often confused with herbals and infusions, which are completely different from tea and from each other.

## HERBAL TEAS OR TISANE

Herbal teas, which are caffeine-free beverages, are brewed from things other than tea, or the plant *Camellia sinensis*. "It could be a root, a bark, a flower, a stem," explains the founder

of website 'Tea with Susmita'. Fruits, seeds and even spices can be used to make herbal teas.

Tisanes are either infusions or decoctions. The difference between them is point at which the boiling water comes in contact with plant matter. For infusions, also known as steeping, the boiling water is poured over the plant matter. For decoctions, the plant matter is put into the boiling water, which releases more oils and more flavour. Brewing times differ - it could be anything from 2 to 15 minutes.

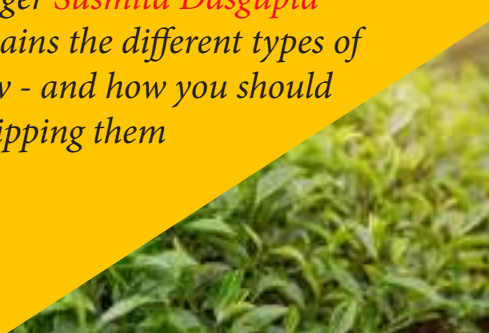
The rule is to follow the instructions and brew as directed, Dasgupta says. And, in all cases, avoid using an aluminium kettle because the material is highly reactive and if used, it could result in a toxic beverage.

Anything boiled, including the fermented kombucha, can be termed an herbal tea. When you combine tea leaves with herbs, you get flavoured tea, she adds.

## STEEPING

The longer the tea sits, the stronger the brew gets, explains Dasgupta. Steeping allows flavours to develop. There is a different algorithm for each tea type; most are best consumed within 18 months. It is only pu-erh teas that have a longer shelf life; the older they get, the tastier they are, she adds.

There is a science to steeping teas to perfection. Though black, white, green and oolong teas come from the same plant, the leaves are processed differently before they claim a genre. Green and white teas are relatively less oxidised - exposed to oxygen - compared to black and





## MARKETING

oolong teas. The teas are often heated to keep the leaf dry and limit the oxidation process.

Black and oolong teas are exposed to oxygen for longer periods - this determines their flavour and colour.

When leaves are submerged in water, the compounds in the leaves permeate the water in a process that is described as osmotic diffusion.

### STEEPING TIME

Want to brew a perfect cup of tea? Steeping time is key - and variable; it all depends on variety.

Chinese and Vietnamese teas should not be infused for more than 30 to 60 seconds. Other teas can be infused for up to three minutes, though blue teas require longer, up to seven minutes, explains Bouqdir.

### FOCUS ON WATER

The third rule focuses on the quality of water. "To preserve the unique characteristics of each variety of tea, it is essential to use only filtered water," says Taha Bouqdir, President, CEO and Co-founder of TWG Tea. "Soft water," is best for infusion teas, since high calcium content gives rise to deposits on the surface of the cup, explains the Singapore-based entrepreneur.

The other important element for infusions, Bouqdir says, is temperature. For the best varieties of white, green and yellow teas, the temperature of the water should not exceed 70 degrees Celsius or 158 degrees Fahrenheit. For other varieties of green teas, black teas, blue teas, red teas and matured teas, the temperature should be between 90 degrees C and 95 degrees C, that is 94 to 203 degrees F.

When brewing a cuppa, Dasgupta cautions, there is an order to be followed - the water must be poured over the leaves and never the other way round.



### AGONY OF THE TEA LEAVES

When tea leaves unfurl after hot water has been poured over them, they look like they are in agony. It is very important to allow the leaves to fully unfurl to get the maximum flavour out of the tea, says Dasgupta. This is rule five.

The unfurling of leaf in tea bags is compromised and this affects its quality and the experience of drinking tea, she adds.

### ADDING MILK TO TEA

Rule six is simple, never use evaporated milk - and never drown your tea in milk. Use a teaspoon to ladle the correct 4.9ml of milk to a cup. The sweetness of course is unique to the palate of the drinker, she says.

### THE ART OF FOOD PAIRING WITH TEA

Creating a balance between food and tea is an art, because great food should be paired with greater teas that complement and enhance the experience. Rule seven, according to Bouqdir, is to either find teas that have the same ingredients as the food or find teas that balance and complement the flavour of the dish. "Tea tasting involves all of your senses - look, smell, taste - start with your basic senses and develop

## TEA TIME

your palate from there,” he explains. White gold teas, for instance, “are great with Normandy apple tart and Napoleon tea goes wonderfully well with caramel macarons,” he says.

Another example he gives is that of Earl Grey fortune tea and chocolate macarons or sauté of beef with spicy Singapore breakfast tea. He suggests pairing white tea with non-spicy foods like sushi, cucumber and tomato sandwiches, crackers and so on. Since green teas are a little more oxidised, Bouqdib recommends pairing them with foods like pasta and risotto. For oolong, seafood works best; for black teas that have been the most oxidised, he suggests a pairing with anything spicy or roasted like beef or lamb.

Pu-erh tea, Dasgupta explains, goes well with foods that are rich in fat, spicy or garlicky. Since pu-erh is compressed and works best when aged, it can be sipped while eating barbeques or roasted meat, she adds.

### TEA FLUSHES

Flushes are used to determine the character of tea, which is the taste, appearance and body of the tea.

The term “flush” is used to describe the various kinds of tea from mountain regions like Darjeeling and Nepal, says Dasgupta.

In countries like Japan and China, the terms used are spring oolong, sencha and pre qingming respectively.

Tea plucked in March and April, that is first flush teas, are often quite green in colour and the water turns into a pale hue of amber to a golden yellow when placed in a cup. It has an astringent flavour. Second flush teas, plucked in summer have darker leaves and the colour is darker, while the taste ranges from fruity to nutty, she explains. Darjeeling second flush teas live up to their reputation of the “Champagne of teas” and especially the flavour of muscatel grapes is best experienced in these summer products, she says. Autumn flush teas have a

spicy, sweeter note, are coppery in hue and are lighter than the summer flush or second flush. Since each flush is unique, the connoisseur has to explore and decide what suits her/his palate best, she recommends, calling it rule number eight.

### ETIQUETTES OF TEA DRINKING

“Tea is the reflection of every culture and civilization; its essence must always be respected, yet it must be adapted to local tastes and taste buds,” Bouqdib says.

“Everything,” he explains, “must be taken into account to get the best out of the tea – climate, water, atmosphere and the cultural sensitivity of a given nation to flavours and accompanying dishes. It is important to monitor the amount of tea used [in a cup], the temperature of the water and the exact steeping time, tea by tea.”

And so it follows that rule number nine would pay homage to a country’s etiquette. In China, for instance, white teas have to be drunk slowly and in a restaurant, the cup must be left half filled if the drinker does not want any more tea. In India, tea can be consumed even out of a saucer, he explains.

### IDENTIFYING YOUR TEA

And, finally, there is rule number ten. Drinking tea is an art form. Each note plays an important role and contributes to the palate, opens the mind to the “wondrous possibilities of a limitless drink.” Finding the right tea for the individual drinker takes time and patience, say both Dasgupta and Bouqdib. With 800 varieties of tea to choose from, it is a long journey.

*A Tea Time Report*



### **Susmita Dasgupta**

Tea Artist and Tea Blogger for Paris based AVPA’s Teas winner of the World Contest in ’18 & ’20. The first Indian speaker at the Nomad Tea Festival Europe, Susmita is the Founder of “Tea with Susmita”






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# DARE TO WIN ?

*Cutting quantity of tea production may be scary, but a focus on quality is the only way forward*

Winning is fun.... Sure. But winning is not the point. Wanting to win is the point. Not giving up is the point. Never letting up is the point. Never being satisfied with what you've done is the point ~ Pat Summitt.



Over the last decade, the Indian Tea Industry has been facing difficulties on account of compounding issues that have been left unattended by the stakeholders.

A very preliminary analysis of the industry value chain reveals the following major issues attributing to the uphill task the industry faces in its pursuit of viability:

1. Sub-optimal growth for per capita consumption.
2. Stagnant export.
3. Rapidly increasing production base, particularly in the small tea growers segment.
4. Oversupply of inferior quality teas in the market.
5. Sub-par price realization vis-à-vis cost of production (CoP) for regulated tea growers.
6. Large percentage of production in North India during six

months where producers seek quick disposal to sustain cash flows, permitting buyers a wide option to choose from, resulting in the surplus languishing in the pipeline.

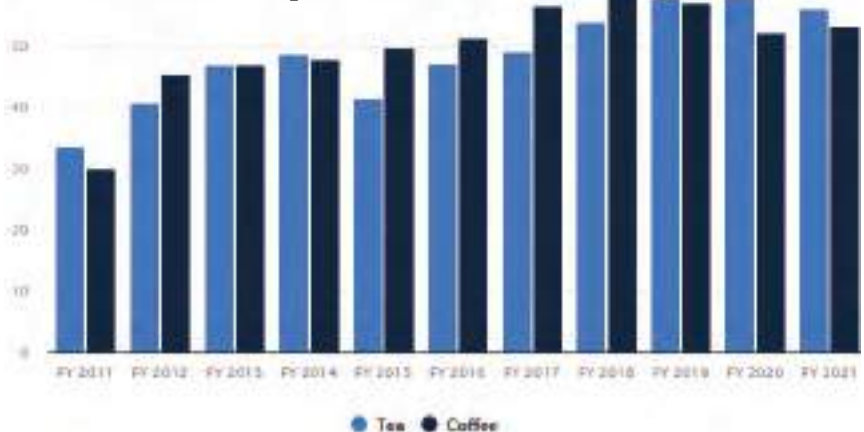
These issues have hitherto been left unattended to primarily because of their complex intertwined nature and because any previous endeavor towards solving the problem has reaped no rewards.

At the outset, a holistic approach looks too overwhelming a task and thus, deters anyone from attempting it.

Having said that, one must realise that “every madness has a method to it” and unravelling that method is the key to overcoming that madness.

The Annual Tea Statistics, recorded by Tea Board of India (TBOI), shows that India produces almost 1,350 million kilos of tea each year, of which North India (mainly Assam and West Bengal) contributes almost 82 percent in volume and South India (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka) contributes most of the rest. Of this total volume of tea, only 200- 250 million kilos are exported each year and around 950

Value of tea and coffee exported from India from financial year 2011 to 2019, with estimates until 2021 (in billion Indian rupees)







million kilos of tea are consumed domestically. Thus, almost 100- 150 million kilos of tea are excess in the market. The production scenario has also drastically changed with more than 50 percent of teas coming from the small tea grower (STG) and the rest from the regulated tea growers (RTGs), conventionally known as big growers or tea estates.

The STGs, who enjoy an inherently favourable cost construct compared to the RTGs, adopt a short-term approach of maximizing volume at the cost of quality as price level for green leaf is not guaranteed but is determined by supply and demand. There is an established practice of annual leasing of the STG fields by most of the farm owners. In the absence of any quality-based incentive, this practice encourages the lessee (i.e. the operator of STG farm) to maximize his/her earning by maximizing his/her harvested volume of leaves; shears and harvesters are normally used to pluck coarse long leaves that reduce per unit cost of harvesting, compared to hand-plucked finer leaf. The STGs also follow a long pruning cycle (reportedly seven-eight years) to ensure higher production volume from their fields.

As a result of these practices, there is an excess supply of inferior quality tea in the market leading to crash prices. Subsequently, the entire industry is impacted including consumers, who don't get a better cup of tea for the price they are paying; the regulated growers, who are not able to cover their cost of production; and the workers, who sometimes lose their livelihood due to the insolvency of their employers.

Based on various theses proposed by industry experts in the last few years, a simple structured method to control the demand-supply imbalance may help find relevant solutions to the tea industry's woes. This would necessarily entail targeting a regulated supply of tea in the market in conjunction with improving the quality of tea being produced resulting in an increase in the demand of the tea and subsequently, the income of all the stakeholders of the industry including the STGs, the workers and the RTGs.

The Japanese Food Control system and specifically, the "voluntary rice marketing system" could act as a good reference in this regard. An additional measure would be to focus on improving the living condition of

## TEA TIME

workers through implementation of existing state and central government-sponsored welfare schemes in tea estates thereby reducing the burden of social cost on the profit-famished RTGs and enabling them to utilise their funds for operational improvement.

The first and foremost focus should be on ways to eliminate the excess quantum of plain/inferior quality teas from the market and simultaneously work on increasing the demand of tea through a boost in domestic tea consumption to correct the price equilibrium point in the market.

A very simple yet effective method of controlling the inflow of inferior quality tea in the market is to trim down the production through change in pruning cycles currently in vogue. Currently, only about 20 percent of North Indian big growers/regulated tea growers follow a three-year pruning cycle and the rest follow a four-year cycle. All the big growers/regulated tea growers of South India as well as all the small tea growers in India follow a seven- to eight-year pruning cycle. Therefore, if all the big estates/regulated tea growers could be mandated to adopt only three-year pruning cycles and all the small tea growers could be mandated to follow only four year pruning cycles, the annual production of almost 60- 65 million kilos of plain/inferior quality tea could be eliminated. This could be further bolstered by shortening the production season in North India by not allowing any tea production in the month of December leading to removal of another 20- 25 million kilos of inferior quality teas.

Besides pruning cycle correction, the leaf should be plucked on a shorter round to ensure it is processed when succulent. These will produce bright full-bodied cups for which Indian tea has been famous and which scores over Africa's bright but thin-bodied teas. India must not lose its unique-selling point of full body and so, establishing a short pruning cycle and minimum number of plucking rounds are important.

Tea produced from better quality succulent leaf will have low percentage of crude fibre that can be tested and a limit set by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India.



There are intangible benefits associated with the pruning cycle modification too, like reduction in irrigation requirement, as pruned areas need less irrigation. This would reduce power consumption and volume of extracted ground water and therefore would be better for the environment. Also, the worker shortage issue with respect to plucking should reduce (specifically for regulated tea growers) as reduction in unpruned area would ensure effective coverage of plucking rounds by the resident workforce and minimize the currently prevalent wasteful expenditure on account of getting outside workforce to support the resident workforce to cover large unpruned areas.

### A LESSON FROM THE ARMY

When the Indian Army's procurement arm sources tea for its troops, it demands a limit on crude fibre content in the tea powder to ensure the tea being supplied





the money they are paying and therefore, help improve tea consumption and so demand and subsequently, prices. The key is to increase per capita consumption and it will not increase only on account of promotional activities, a better tasting brew is non-negotiable for this increase to take place.

In a gist, Tea Board needs to implement Tea Research Association guidelines on pruning cycle and plucking standards targeting better quality, supported by higher prize for green leaves as per prune and leaf quality to the bought leaf factories sector, to ensure regulated supply of green leaf that will help produce better quality of brew. Additionally, the tea waste disposal and cash flow assistance for holding teas during the excess production period will prove to be life savers for the industry. The industry has to come together and implement the understanding learnt during the pandemic year of 2020, where short supply of 100 million-odd kilos led to increase in prices that resulted in positive contributory margins for all producers in spite of lower production.

The case has been made; the rewards have been exhibited; the questions have been answered.

But nothing will happen unless the words are translated into action.

The only pertinent question that remains now is whether the industry is ready to evolve and are the decision-makers ready to take a hard call? Do we dare to win?

is from better raw material and same process could be implemented on any tea being retailed in the country.

In North India, one targets at least 28 rounds of plucking from April 1 to October 30 to produce better quality teas.

#### TEA WASTE

The mandatory declaration of 2 percent tea waste and taking that out of the tea value chain and labelling it “unfit for human consumption” would help eliminate another 20-30 million kilos of inferior teas.

By taking these steps and implementing them in earnest, the industry could reduce almost 100-120 million kilos of inferior quality tea from the market in one fell swoop and help the true price (value) realization of the teas in the market.

The execution of pruning cycle modification, meanwhile, would help improve at the least a 1-1.5 quality point of all teas in the market. This would help customers get a better cup of tea for



Vikram Singh Gulia is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Amalgamated Plantations Private Limited .

Disclaimer: The views in the article are personal views of the writer and do not reflect those of the organization he is employed with.

# How can we stop Darjeeling tea from going cold?

## UNREGULATED INFLOW FROM NEPAL HURTS THE BREW'S UNIQUE FLAVOUR

Kolkata: If the lightness and aroma of the Darjeeling cuppa, the Champagne of Teas as it is fondly called, is missing, blame Nepal. Over the last decade, the erstwhile generous approach to import regulation and the porous Indo-Nepalese border have allowed an uninterrupted entry of Nepalese tea into India. Once blended with its Indian counterpart, these leaves are being passed off as the iconic 'Darjeeling Tea' by deceiving unsuspecting consumers, damaging the reputation of India's first geographical indication (GI)-tagged product. A GI stamp on a product ensures that none other than those authorised within a legally earmarked region can produce, use and sell it.

Nepal, with its 157 tea gardens, produces 25.2 million kilograms green leaf annually, of which more than 50 per cent finds its way into India, reveals data from the National Tea and Coffee Development Board in Nepal. With similar-looking leaves, the unregulated influx of its poor cousin from the neighbouring country is slowly turning Darjeeling tea cold.

Tea planters in Darjeeling have sought a permanent end to the import and sale of "cheap, low-quality and spurious Nepalese brew, which falls short of complying with Indian food safety norms". "Selling it in India or abroad in the name of 'Darjeeling Tea' is an infringement of intellectual property rights," says Anshuman Kanoria, chairman, Indian Tea Exporters' Association. Since 2005, unfortunately, the GI on Darjeeling tea has helped little to weed out illegal 'Nepalese Darjeeling' leaves from the market. Industry experts say a lenient India-Nepal Free Trade Agreement has further empowered traders to legally import tea from Nepal.

The confusion increases manifold when buyers are told that estates of the Himalayan nation bordering Darjeeling enjoy all four climatic factors for producing good tea — sunshine, rainfall, elevation and mist.

But, according to Hills' planters, Darjeeling tea possesses a







distinctive character and rare muscatel flavour owing to soil chemistry, terrain slope and scientific plucking.

Over the years, the Darjeeling Tea Association (DTA), the umbrella body of 87 tea gardens in the Hills, has made a series of representations to the Union commerce ministry, regulator Tea Board of India and the West Bengal government seeking a blanket ban on tea import from Nepal. Citing Clause 22 of the Tea Distribution Export Control Order, 2005, DTA has urged government authorities to stop sales and distribution of imported tea in loose format “without proper labelling and clear marking”.

With “traceability and pesticide compliance questionable in Nepal”, the full price realization of Darjeeling tea also gets affected by this ‘bought-leaf’ production from Nepal, adds Kanoria.

#### WEEDING OUT THE TROUBLE MAKER

Around 67,000 people are involved with the Hills tea sector directly and four lakh indirectly. “Unless import of Nepal tea is banned, the livelihood of those dependent on the Darjeeling variety may reach a point of no return, with more Hills tea gardens shutting shop,” says Sandeep Mukherjee, the principal adviser to DTA.

Some experts also feel that a fall in overall

Darjeeling tea quality and quantity over the years have given Brand Nepal or ‘Himalayan Tea’ a wider acceptance with its price advantage. Prabhat Kamal Bezboruah, the chairman of the Tea Board, thinks that Darjeeling tea has its own problems too. “A part of the crisis is due to vicious undercutting of prices among producer-exporters, who want to squeeze the middleman out. Also, the GI requirement of Darjeeling tea percentage in the blend has made some packers turn to Nepal teas,” he adds.

#### PROBLEM AT HOME

The “Darjeeling” name and logo have also been registered as certification trade marks in the name of Tea Board of India. Experts corroborate the Tea Board chairman’s view by saying that Nepalese brew isn’t the only culprit. “Domestic retailers particularly in eastern India who are passing off greenish broken and fannings from not just Nepal but also Kangra and South India as Darjeeling to naive buyers should also be blamed. Due to this, demand and prices for smaller grades have become unsustainable,” adds Kanoria.

It is ironic that the very Darjeeling tea industry players, especially traders, who clamoured for GI protection, are arguably the biggest buyers of Nepal teas.

*A Tea Time Report*

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# DOKE - *A sustainable tea story*

Bihar's Doke used organic farming practices to create a new brand of tea



*By Rajiv Lochan*

In 1999, Tea Board of India recognised the need to declare a certain portion of Bihar adjoining British-planted tea areas in

the Terai region of West Bengal as non-traditional tea growing areas. The reasons were two-fold: to stop the migration of cheap labour to North India and to inhabit the dry high lands of this area in the absence of irrigation facilities. Soon, some water from the Teesta canal became available as the discharge of low head hydro-electric substations on this canal and the ensuing irrigation facility solved the twin problems in one shot.

Soon we found the need to recognise the best possible tea-making processes to get the best

tea quality by studying the profiles of harvested leaf. After experimentation, by 2005, we had results. These teas got many awards in Japan, China, America and Australia, and we were encouraged to market these varieties worldwide on our platform.

From 2010, we got into tea education and picked the best medium to explain the intricacies of harvesting and manufacture. We always kept in mind that the main criterion for measuring success is the socio-economic effects of this agricultural activity, and we strive to get the best for our workmen.

'How can a small tea farm of only 10 hectares, following organic tea practices, be nurtured to be a sustainable unit?' This question was always in our minds and we have succeeded answering it, by transforming our dream into reality in these short 20 years.

What we want now is the recognition of the administration and political circles for our efforts in solving problems of poverty, illiteracy and skill development, and to achieve more by further implementation of government support.

**Rajiv Lochan** is CEO of Lochan Tea Limited and Founder of Doke Tea Estate.







By P S Sundar



## SILVER NEEDLES RULE IN SPECIAL AUCTION

*Plus, three major developments  
in the tea industry*

India's largest tea co-operative federation, has received a shot in the arm with the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin complimenting its Chief Executive Officer and Principal Secretary to Government, Supriya Sahu, in person in Chennai for obtaining the coveted.

The speciality tea major Avataa Beverages set up two new price records at the special auction conducted by Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) on June 21 as part of Tea Board's celebration of International Tea Day (ITD).

All teas offered for this auction were manufactured with the green leaf plucked on ITD, May 21. "The silver needles excel grade of Avataa created a new price record of Rs.16,400 a kilo and Avataa's silver needles special grade fetched Rs.15,300 a kg," Ravichandran Broos, General Manager, Paramount Tea Marketing (SI) P Ltd, said. "These are all-time high prices for any tea from any factory in any auction anywhere in South India so far," he added. Avataa Beverages' Director G Udayakumar said, "These prices surpass our previous record of Rs.11,500 a kg."

"These are high value, low volume teas – we used five kilos of green buds to produce one kilo of white tea.

"The tea was produced from tea shoots, not leaf, plucked at sunrise on ITD from an exclusive pocket of our Billimalai Tea Estate situated over 6,000 feet above sea level in the Nilgiris," he added. "We plucked the buds using our trained workers as the quality of the buds is essential to produce top quality silver needle teas", explained Avataa's Speciality tea expert, E N R Vejayashekara.

"We processed these teas in our specialised machinery without fermentation to retain the natural green colour of the tea leaf and silver colour of the tips," he added.

Shree Ganesh Tea Trading Company, which is celebrating its silver jubilee, acquired these teas. Owner Rajbir Sharma said, "We bought these two grades at record price because of their distinct quality, attractive aroma, high-keeping strength and outstanding cup quality." For him, it was important that "these teas have a shelf life of two-and-a-half years and hence, very economical for the discerning tea connoisseurs", he noted. "These are exclusive teas not comparable to others in the market here. We bought them for our select traders in Delhi and some upcountry markets", he said. "We are in speciality tea trade for long and will support such teas in coming months as well," he declared.





## New appointment

Supriya Sahu has been appointed Principal Secretary Environment, Climate Change and Forest Department with full additional charge of the post of Chief Executive Officer of Indcoserve, India's largest tea cooperative federation of the government of Tamil Nadu. She will head the tea industry in both cooperative and state government sectors. She has also become Chairperson of the state-owned Tan Tea, a major black tea producer.

In other news, three major events that took place in the last couple of months deserve mention. The 128th Annual Conference of United Planters' Association of Southern India, which was held in virtual mode, created hope for the planters of better co-ordination with the Union Government for resolution of outstanding issues.

Chief Guest Union Minister of State for Commerce, Anupriya Singh Patel, said: "Our ministry stands by you. We want the plantation sector to grow. It is one of the earliest organised sectors of the country which earns foreign exchange and generates employment. For us, it is an extremely important sector."

Referring to the tea industry, she said that Nilgiri, Darjeeling and Assam teas have distinct flavours and enjoy a good export market, although 80 percent of the Indian production is consumed within the country. Due to lockdowns, India's tea exports had suffered, she

added. While nearly 50 percent of the workers in the tea industry are women, small growers contribute to about 50 percent of the country's production, she underlined.

The minister said that the government has allowed the extension of some subsidy schemes and allocated funds to clear the subsidy dues of the Tea Board. To introduce transparency and relief to the small growers, it has been made mandatory for producers to sell at least 50 percent of their production through public auctions. She confirmed that the Tea Board is monitoring the import of tea and hoped something positive would emerge on subsidised fertiliser allocation to the plantations soon.

Overall, the government has increased the fund allocation for the plantation sector for the next five years by 65.42 per cent, the Minister said.

"In consultation with stakeholders, the Commerce Ministry has fixed achievable export targets to reach the Prime Minister's announced goal of \$ 400 billion. This is eminently doable if we all work in harmony," she added.

United Planters' Association of Southern India (UPASI) President Prashant Bhansali said, "The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has launched 'vision \$400 billion export programme.' Commodity Boards have set high targets to reach this goal. This is wishful thinking on their part but it is not achievable without drastic action for which we need [the] government's support. We request you to be the facilitator for this."

*Consul General of Israel Jonathan Zadka, the Nilgiris district Collector Innocent Divya and UN-TEA Director T G B Pinto listening to experts on the working of the IOT sensor-based irrigation system at Allada Valley Estate in The Nilgiris.*

*Photo by: P S Sundar)*





*Above:* UPASI Vice-President M P Cherian, President Prashant Bhansali and Secretary R Sanjith at the 128th UPASI Annual Conference.

*Left:* Union Minister of State for Commerce Anupriya Singh Patel addresses the 128th UPASI Annual Conference, held in virtual mode.

Photos by: P S Sundar

Listing specific requirements, he called for the restructuring of all crop and development loans into a single-term loan as done for general agriculture. He wanted the revision of the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products for all plantation crops.

On tea imports, the UPASI chief said, “Despite being the world leader in black tea production, cheaper teas are imported into India. Both a minimum import price mechanism and a close monitoring of import of teas is required.” He urged the government to remove the limits on purchase of subsidised fertilisers for plantation crops. Appealing to the government to convert the commodity boards as ‘enablers of change’, he sought higher allocation of funds to these boards to ensure the continuance of the development schemes.

On promoting the consumption of beverages, the UPASI President said, “We need a robust generic campaign extolling the virtues of tea and coffee as lifestyle beverages.”

Another significant development was the commissioning of a demonstration project with Israel technology involving Internet of Things (IOT) sensor-based irrigation at Allada Valley Estate of The United Nilgiri Tea Estates Co. Ltd

(UNTEA), 18 kilometres from Coonoor. “This is the first IOT-based project of its kind for the tea industry in the whole of India aiming at Israel’s transfer of technology and creating better co-operation between Indian farmers and Israel service providers,” the Consul General of Israel to South India, Jonathan Zadka, told this correspondent.

He, along with the District Collector of the Nilgiris, Innocent Divya, commissioned the project. “I had mentioned about this project to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin as part of Israel’s agricultural co-operation with India as a whole and Tamil Nadu in particular. The Chief Minister expressed his happiness,” Zadka said. He observed that the project is a demonstration unit in collaboration with UPASI Tea Research Foundation (UPASI TRF) and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU). Israel’s Consulate will extend necessary technical co-operation to farmers for creating such hi-tech irrigation units, he added.

UNTEA Director T G B Pinto said that tea growers can visit the model plot in Allada Valley Estate and learn the working of the sensor-based irrigation. “We learnt about this on our visit to Israel. Since then, we are happy with the co-op-



*Below* : Consul General of Israel to South India Jonathan Zadka and the Nilgiris District Collector, Innocent Divya, commission a sensor-based irrigation project at Al-lada Valley Estate in The Nilgiris.



eration extended by the Israel consulate and concerned units in that country,” he noted. “Many plantation areas are suffering from rain deficiency and so, such smart irrigation system will be beneficial,” he said. Hailing this as a ‘path-breaking’ initiative, District Collector Innocent Divya said that the Tamil Nadu Government would welcome such a micro-irrigation revolution.

“I will take up with the government for extending subsidy to tea growers by integrating this project with the horticulture department. We will partner with the Government of Israel to propel this revolution in irrigation for the tea growers,” she declared. “We will bring groups of small growers to see and learn about this smart irrigation project,” she said.

UPASI President Prashant Bhansali said, “There will be lot of takers in our UPASI fraternity as this project aims at optimum use of water. Planters will have to calculate cost-effectiveness in terms of yield and also the payback period to cover the investment cost but we seek government’s fiscal support for widespread implementation.”

Hailing this as a unique project for the tea industry in India, UPASI TRF Director-in-charge, Dr Victor Ilango said that there would also be fertigation. “We will study how much the tea yield, plant health and soil nutrient increase,” he explained. Dr P Soman, Senior Vice Presi-

*Above:*

Tamil Nadu’s Chief Minister M K Stalin hands over Fair Trade certificate to Indcoserve’s Chief Executive Officer Supriya Sahu.

Photos by: P S Sundar

dent of Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd., which works with Israel consulate in implementing the project said,

“On an average, there will be 55 per cent saving of water and one-and-a-half times increase in crop yield in an established tea estate.” Dr S Panneerselvam, Director, Water Technology Centre of TNAU, said that this project will create favourable level of water footprint in the soil. “There will be saving in operational cost including on labour expenses,” he noted.

In this smart irrigation system, moisture sensors would be buried in the soil which will judge the soil moisture, send inputs to the server, based on which, the controller will automatically trigger the pump to cause drip irrigation to the roots of the plant, irrigation experts associated with the project explained.

### India’s Largest Tea Cooperative gets Fair Trade Certificate

Coonoor-based Indcoserve, India’s largest tea co-operative federation, has received a shot in the arm with the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin complimenting its Chief Executive Officer and Principal Secretary to Government, Supriya Sahu, in person in Chennai for obtaining the coveted Fair Trade certificate. “This is a new milestone for us. As a government-managed co-operative, Indcoserve is not used to getting such international certifications unlike the corporates in the tea industry,” Sahu told

## TEA TIME

this correspondent. “This certificate was issued by the global certifying organisation FLOCERT based in Bonn, Germany, after we fulfilled enormous requirements regarding international standards

on various fronts; from protecting the interests of the tea small growers and adherence to social commitments including labour laws, sanitisation, water and effluents and antidifferentiation policies in addition to quality tea production,” she said. “We already hold Trustea certification for three of our factories but the ‘Fair Trade’ certification places us in an elite league of global tea manufacturers – something creditworthy

for a government-managed cooperative federation,” she explained.

“This will help us explore export markets where importers buy only ‘fair trade certified’ teas,” she said. “Besides, our teas now enter the ‘premium bracket’ in global competitive market. We have several brands of packet teas each bestowed with a distinct significance to suit specific segments of the market,” Sahu said. “Eventually, this would benefit the nearly 30,000 tea small growers who are members of the 16 Indco factories associated with Indcoserve producing about 14 million kg annually,” she added.



## INTERVIEW *with*

**KAMAL TIWARI**

### **What is the future of Indian tea?**

There are a lot of marketing opportunities.

Youngsters today are health conscious and enjoy teas in various flavors - think ginger tea, tulsi tea, lemon tea, jasmine tea and chocolate tea to name a few.

Value-addition and brand-building, that is investment in branding, is necessary.

### **With the growth of small growers we see that big packers’ sales are also growing. What is the fate of high-end estate teas?**

There are large urban markets and smaller urban markets where there is demand for that ‘high grown quality’. The brands in Western Indian states are all well-known, but there are several small packers in towns such as Banaras and Lucknow who sell very high-end teas as well. In some parts of Bihar, large supplies of quality packet teas go from Siliguri. So there is

a good market for them. People have a taste for quality teas.

### **How do you see your role as the Chairman of STAC?**

I look at and treat all the four sections of the trade impartially, namely producers, buyers, brokers and warehouse keepers. As a policy, I say, ‘Make quality’. And I hope one day soon Siliguri can sell 150 million kilogrammes of tea in a year.

### **You are a buyer for a large exporter. How do you see exports this year?**

The strong Indian market pays the best prices. But with prices in Kenya being down, it is a challenge for India exporters to export CTC teas. There may be more scope to export Orthodox teas.

*Mr Kamal Tiwari, The Chairman of the Siliguri Tea Auction Committee*

A Tea Time report





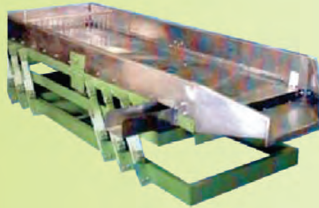
# A2Z TEA MACH

KOLKATA - SILIGURI - JORHAT - COIMBATORE

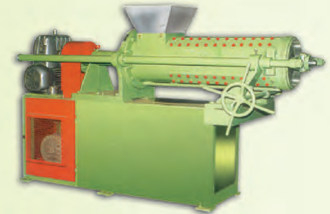
Small  
is the new  
**Big!**  
Tea Machinery  
Black Tea and  
Green Tea



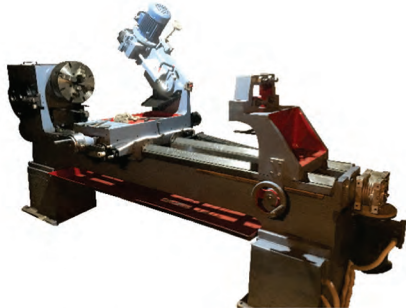
**Axial Flow Fan**



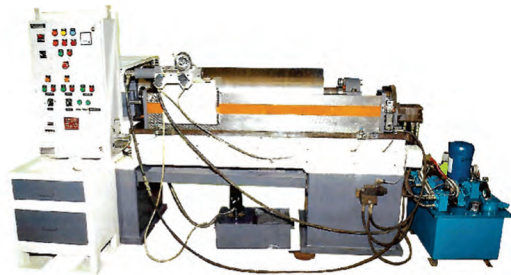
**Wither Leaf Feeder**



**Rotorvane**



**Auto Milling Machine**



**Auto Hydromating Chasing Machine**



**Addison Tc30  
Tool Grinder**



**Roller Inspection Bench**




**Vibroscreen**

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## Indians love their chai. So why are sales declining?

*COVID-19 toll a financial toll on households last year, drying up demand*



**T**ea is the second most consumed beverage in the world after water. In India, the drink is consumed in both rural and urban households, be it by the super rich or the daily wage earner.

We consume tea daily and religiously, and are aware of tea's positive effects on body and mind - it is energizing, stress relieving and revitalizing. This comes in handy when facing the tough times dispensed by COVID-19.

The sales of the brew during the first COVID wave showed the deep regard Indians have for tea - during the first lockdown, there was a fear of staple shortages in the mind of Indians. All items required in the kitchen were not only sufficiently stocked but almost all households preferred to overstock. Tea was not an exception and hence, a household consuming 500 grams of tea a month now stocked up to two kilograms of tea. Due to this all packet tea companies that had a good distribution network gained on sales.

When COVID-19's second wave hit in March, all the states in the country experienced some degree of lockdown - politically known as "curfew". This time, Indians suffered badly as almost every home had someone infected and undergoing treatment. Some were lucky enough to get treated at home under room isolation. Some had to be hospitalised, which

came after a struggle for either beds and/or ventilators or even lifesaving medicines.

Some lost their near and dear ones after hospitalisation.

On average, a household ended up spending about Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 45,000, which affected its savings.

With the dip in cash reserves, people now began to buy groceries as needed and stopped stocking anything extra. Now, if a household consumed 500 grams of tea, they would wait till the 500 gram packet was about to empty before buying a new one.

Another issue in the second wave was that a lot of markets voluntarily shut their stores for between 10 and 40 days to help cut the chain of COVID-19 infection. A peculiar thing about the second wave was that few grocery shops could operate due to a variety of reasons and often that was for only a few hours daily.

The spike in the cases also made most Indians cautious - and kept them homebound. Because of the reduced timings and no-credit policy





## DOMESTIC DISTRIBUTION

that the shops began to employ and the dip in demand, grocery stores began to store less and less tea.

Members - sales team, distributors and delivery staff - of all companies at some point or the other contracted COVID-19, making it tougher to service all grocery outlets even though only a select few grocery shops were open.

To add to this, the government, semi-government and private offices, which had been at least partially open during the first wave, and hang-outs such as cinema halls, malls, restaurants, roadside tea shops, lounges, clubs and other public places were mostly non-operational during second wave.

The result: The consumption of tea, Indian's favorite beverage, at home dipped to nearly zero. During this wave, the sales of most packet tea companies and retailers declined from 20

percent to 60 percent. We have been hearing about a loss of 60 to 80 million

kilograms of tea produced during month of April and May, but in reality the loss of sale due to above reasons would be in the region of 80 to 100 million kilograms.

In conclusion, in these trying times, packet tea companies need to improve their distribution channels wherever they can to reach the last cluster of grocery shops. For this year, price i.e. the affordability of a packet of tea to a consumer shall be of prime importance.

*A Tea Time Report*



TAI 48TH AGM



## CHANGE OF TEA SERVICE

### *Reform and support needed to grow the industry*

**A** new template is emerging in the operating methods of the tea industry following the large-scale changes in the sector across India and in the global economy induced by the unprecedented crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic in the last two years.

Various businesses the world over have had to adapt to major geo-political shifts and have tried to deal with this by changing their products and the services they offer, as well as their delivery mechanisms.

The forces of supply-demand determine prices fetched by the industry and therefore, it is imperative that the industry devise a mechanism to have the forces of production strictly regulated.

Union Minister of State, Commerce and Industry, Anupriya Patel, had urged the industry to develop a self-sustainable model for long-term sustainability, which should stress on quality, innovative packaging and provide a boost in export figures of the tea sector during her visit to Guwahati.

She had reminded the industry that Union Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure, has sanctioned Rs 968 crore for the tea industry for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.

Appealing for incentives to assist the tea industry in fulfilling its role as socially responsible employers, Tea Association of India reminded the union government that it directly employs



11 lakh people, indirect employment is about 40 lakh people on its plantations and factories, mostly in rural areas where other sources of employment are currently limited, and that over 50 per cent of its workforce are women.

### GOING DIGITAL

The 48th Biennial General Meeting of Tea Association of India (TAI) in Kolkata emphasised that it has been a major force during last two years by introducing the concept of “Maintenance work” during lockdown. It has been instrumental in releasing outstanding subsidy claims of West Bengal tea estates and representing to the National Institute for Transforming India, NITI Aayog and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Wage negotiation in Assam, that reforms are essential for transforming digital banking in the tea estates of North Bengal. It has also appealed for auction reforms.

The meeting was attended by Minister (Independent) Charge, Labour, government of West Bengal, Becharam Manna; Principal Secretary to the government of Assam, Industries & Commerce department, Dr. K.K. Dwivedi; and Chairman, Tea Board, India and Chairman, Tea Research Association of India, Prabhat Bezboruah.

Addressing the meeting, the president of TAI, Raj Bansal, said tea production in India increased by 97.52 million kilograms between January and September 2021 compared with the same period in 2020. Exports were likely to touch 200 million kgs, down from 209 million kgs in 2020 and 252 million kgs in 2019. The prospect of achieving the Tea Board’s target of

300 million kgs in 2021-22 appeared bleak and he was doubtful if the industry would be able to export even 250 million kgs in the financial year.

There have been significant gains in the post-pandemic scenario, he said. Tea had emerged as a plant-based functional food geared by the wellness aspect and consumers were seeking premium teas and had become both more knowledgeable and quality conscious about the many layers of taste and variants available to them. The industry had started making a shift to eco-friendly packaging, and there has been an explosion in online marketing scoring over offline and innovative manner of marketing tea.

### STATE OF DEPRESSION

Demanding fair remunerative prices for tea, Bansal emphasised that without a support mechanism the industry would slip into a state of depression that would affect the livelihood of 1 million of workers associated with the sector, which has linkages with further 4 million people who derive a livelihood from it. He pointed out that the concept of fair remunerative prices had been successfully introduced in Kenya. The industry and the Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations has urged the government to move this forward and turn it into a reality so that the industry can get a sustainable price for its produce.

Urging amendments to the Tea Act of 1953, Bansal said that the role of the Tea Board should change to that of a facilitator from regulator. TAI had pushed for binding directions from





the Tea Board on restricting imports of cheaper teas and a recent order had incorporated the demand by making it mandatory for importers to indicate contents of blend and source of origin of the imported teas on the packages.

While the auction system prevalent for the tea industry has proved its worth to various stake-holders and there is no doubt that it would continue to remain the first choice of price discovery for the Tea Industry, Bansal said there was a need to iron out whatever glitches exist. The reforms suggested by Professor Mahadevan were welcome; the TAI president however cautioned that it was important to time the introduction of changes to the existing auction system to increase its efficacy to meet the primary objective of the producers. He felt that a pilot could be tested before the new system was introduced as a full-scale operation.

Seeking reconsideration of the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Product, Bansal said it severely curtails the compatibility of the Indian Tea exports since its rate of 1 -1.7 per cent is low compared to Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) rate of 5 per cent. Tea estates are witnessing the impact of climate change. This has a bearing on yield as well as the quality of tea. The tea industry is a negative carbon emission industry and it is unfair that it has to bear the brunt of these climate changes caused by other factors.

Solutions for adapting and mitigating the climate change challenges being faced by the industry must come from the research organisations of the industry, Bansal said. For this, the government needs to release appropriate funds to the Tea Research Association (TRA) to conduct the relevant research.

The four codes on labour that were enacted in 2019 and 2020 have not been implemented as yet as the Government of India has not notified the changes. The Code on Wages is of prime importance to industries as this would have a direct bearing on cost of production, Bansal said. He added that industry is, therefore, concerned

about the declaration of the Minimum Floor Wages enshrined in the Code on Wages, 2019, as any minimum wages notified by a state government cannot be lower than the minimum floor wages. Similarly, the Occupational Safety and Health Code, 2020, would also determine what stance an employer would adopt with respect to social welfare obligations.

The tea industry in West Bengal is currently engaged in discussion on minimum wages under the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee, Bansal said. Fifteen meetings have been held to date, he added. TAI is deeply concerned about the outcome of these deliberations. Calibrated action on the subject is therefore necessary in the absence of which the industry would find it difficult to operate.

The tea industry has received support from the Centre as well as state governments of West Bengal and Assam in the recent past. Bansal said that the Centre had released Rs1,000 crore for the welfare of women and children of tea workers in Assam and West Bengal. In addition, the West Bengal government had announced a waiver of cess for green leaf, waiver of the Agricultural Income Tax and had announced a Tea Tourism and Allied Business Policy 2019 as well as the Cha Sundari Scheme.

The Assam government had also brought into effect the ATISIS 2020 (Interest Subvention/Orthodox Subsidy/Subsidy for Plant & Machinery for Orthodox production/Agricultural Income Tax) and extended the Jal Jivan Mission to the tea estates.

The support of Raju Bista, Member of Parliament and Member, Tea Board and Member, Standing Committee of Commerce and Industry, Government of India was acknowledged by TAI president Bansal, who said the organisation remains deeply indebted for his support in obtaining favourable directions from the

Centre on matters related to Pending Subsidy, Provident Fund matters and fertilizer allocation and other issues.

## DORJE TEA: A sip for every season

### *The Selim Hill estate goes the unorthodox route*



*Sparsh Agarwal and Ishaan Kanoria at work*

Breaking the mould and perhaps the jinx that has plunged the tea estates in Darjeeling in a crisis of survival, two friends, Sparsh Agarwal and Ishaan Kanoria, turned entrepreneurs and set up Dorje Tea, a venture that uses a digital platform to deliver a year's subscription of seasonal teas to discerning buyers.

“When I was in school and college, I would often bring my friends to Selim Hill during the holidays,” Agarwal was quoted as saying in an interview with Indian website ‘The Better India’. “They have fond memories of this place and the people here. When I told them of the family’s decision to sell Selim Hill, my friends asked whether they could come on board and help revive it. That’s when Kanoria (24), an investment banker, and Anant Gupta, a graduate of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS),

came on board. Given our memories associated with the area, we decided to give the revival process one last try,”

Located 30km from Darjeeling, the verdant and organic 150-year-old Selim Hill Tea Garden spread across 973 acres, has been owned by 23-year-old Agarwal’s family since 1990. The garden, with about 450 acres of tea bushes, is one of 74 operational tea gardens in the region selling world-famous Darjeeling leaves.

However, like most tea gardens here that are dependent on the international export market, Selim Hill was barely breaking even in the 2000s. The expectation that buoyant exports would lift the Darjeeling tea garden and make it profitable met with disappointment year after year. When COVID-19 struck in March 2020, it broke the proverbial camel’s back. The shutdown of economic activities during the pandemic destroyed the Agarwal family’s chances of exporting the much sought-after first (spring) and second (summer) flush. Flush refers to the period when tea plants grow new leaves that are harvested. The first two flushes generate the highest amount of revenue for tea gardens.

#### TO SELL OR NOT TO SELL?

The Agarwal family began to mull selling the garden that April. Sparsh, a former student of political science and international relations at Ashoka University in Sonapat, Haryana, was working with the Centre for Policy Research, a Delhi-based think tank. He had never been interested in getting into the family business. But things changed drastically after he told his friends that his parents were thinking about selling their tea garden.





*Dorje re-introduces Darjeeling tea to the Indian market with flavours for every season*

Together, these young entrepreneurs came up with a plan - but before they could execute it, Sparsh had to convince his parents that Selim Hill could be turned around. They eventually agreed to let him have his way but added one condition; Sparsh and his friends would have to dedicate all their energy towards reviving Selim Hill.

After agreeing to this proposition, Sparsh and Ishaan established Dorje Teas, a venture which seeks to radically change the way Darjeeling tea is marketed and sold. Under their unique subscription model, consumers need to pay Rs.2,100 for an entire year's supply of fresh and organic tea.

They built Dorje Teas under the mentorship of 74-year-old Rajah Banerjee, a legend in the Darjeeling tea business and former owner of the Makaibari Tea Estate in Kurseong and pioneer of the organic movement. "He is also an investor in the company, our brand ambassador and the elder statesman guiding us through the entire process," Sparsh says.

Under Banerjee's guidance, Sparsh and Anant

established the Selim Hill Collective, which seeks to "reimagine the space of the tea estate, by moving away from the model of a commercially exploited plantation to that of an inclusive and sustainable garden".

Fired with their vision to revive Selim Hill, the two young entrepreneurs did some research to figure out why the local tea business was suffering and formulate possible solutions to these issues. From May to November 2020, Sparsh and Ishaan conducted their own research after speaking to Banerjee. They visited other tea gardens in the region, and came up with four reasons the industry was faltering: climate change, dependence on exports, archaic systems of management and competition from cheaper high altitude teas.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

The effects of climate change have been felt over the course of the last decade with changing rainfall and wind patterns.

According to the conventional annual calendar of production, tea is produced over a period of about seven-and-a-half months when it rains

## TEA TIME

in Darjeeling. In reality, Sparsh and Ishaan realised, this period of rainfall had shrunk to about five-and-a-half months. The pattern of rainfall had been affected as well. Erratic events, including droughts followed by heavy rains resulting in landslides, formed the new pattern. In combination with other macro and micro factors such as greater prevalence of dams, which is leading to more seismological activity including earthquakes, the climate and the conditions had undergone permanent change.

### OLD SCHOOL

Conventional wisdom had imposed a schedule on how Darjeeling teas were sold. The first and second flush teas were almost entirely sold to the export market. There was no focus on the domestic market and Darjeeling never marketed all four flushes as unique items. With the candor of youth, Sparsh said in his interview with 'The Better India,' "There has been a lot of inertia within the Darjeeling tea industry about how we market ourselves. We don't focus on domestic sales and make it affordable for Indian customers. Many are stuck in their old ways. The Darjeeling tea industry needs to come out of this bubble and move forward. The many industry veterans we spoke to said that without centering on the export market, our tea garden would shut down. But we have been exporting for the past 30 years, and are still on the verge of collapse."

Legacy management structures and styles have created an anachronistic system of grading and sorting tea leaves for the export market, Sparsh and Ishaan said. Tea gardens continue to operate on a colonial hierarchical management

style. Sparsh admits that past generations of his family have benefited from this, but believes it's not sustainable in the long run.

Competitors saw an opportunity in the 2017 crippling 104-day strike in the region in support of the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland, which included Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. That was when many tea gardens lost a lot of their produce. To fill the gap caused by the strike in the domestic market, traders began importing cheaper tea from Nepal and took over a large chunk of the market. Almost half of the Darjeeling tea is consumed in India.

### SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN

To lure back consumers in the domestic market, Sparsh and Ishaan launched Dorje Teas



There are about 1,000 households in Selim Hill, of which 350 are directly associated with working on the tea garden.

with a social media strategy showing consumers where exactly their produce is coming from. "You need to support local communities, otherwise this is going to collapse," Sparsh adds.

The business model that Sparsh and Ishaan designed emphasises the uniqueness of Darjeeling teas in every one of the four seasons: spring (first flush), summer (second flush), monsoon (third flush) and autumn (flush). While the first and second flush is mostly exported, the latter





two are sold in India. While the first two flushes are sold as premium teas, the monsoon and autumn flush do not fetch a higher price because of how the Darjeeling tea industry operates.

“You have tea garden owners, managers and the larger associations that publicly say monsoon and autumn flush teas are of lower quality. Through our research, we found that all four have their unique taste, aroma, flavour and story. The monsoon flush tea, which gets the worst rap, is unique because it gives you a bold colour, smoky taste, and drinkers can actually add a drop of milk in it as well. Just imagine the uniqueness of a garden which can generate tea in the spring time which is so floral that you don’t even have to add sugar and months later produces tea in which you can add a drop of milk,” Sparsh explains.

Anyone can sell the first and second flush. That market already exists. The problem for tea gardens in Darjeeling is their inability to sell their autumn and monsoon flush. So, Ishaan and Sparsh decided to focus on selling the latter, and thus create a subscription model that allows consumers/patrons to book their annual supply of tea. “Our promise is that we will deliver the freshest possible tea. As soon as you place the order, we roast the tea leaves, pack and send it to you. This way we are able to average out the prices. Monsoon and autumn flush prices are lower than their spring and summer counterparts.”

### COST-EFFECTIVE PLAN

The firm also capitalises on customers by adding affordability to the mix. “[Generally] the Indian customer is anyway not getting the first and second flush, which are exported. First flush teas sell at anywhere between Rs. 500 per kg to Rs. 10,000 per kg. In our model, if you book your annual subscription at Rs. 2,100 per kg,

you get 250g each of the four flushes, including the monsoon flush, which we specially roast, in three-month intervals. After all, 250g makes about 100 cups of tea,” he explains.

If customers want to drink more, they can always opt for getting these packets delivered every month. At Rs 2,100 per kg for the entire year, this becomes a valuable proposition.

Subscribers become supporters of the tea garden and acquire quality and organic farm fresh tea at their doorstep. Going further, Dorje Teas has created a tea community.

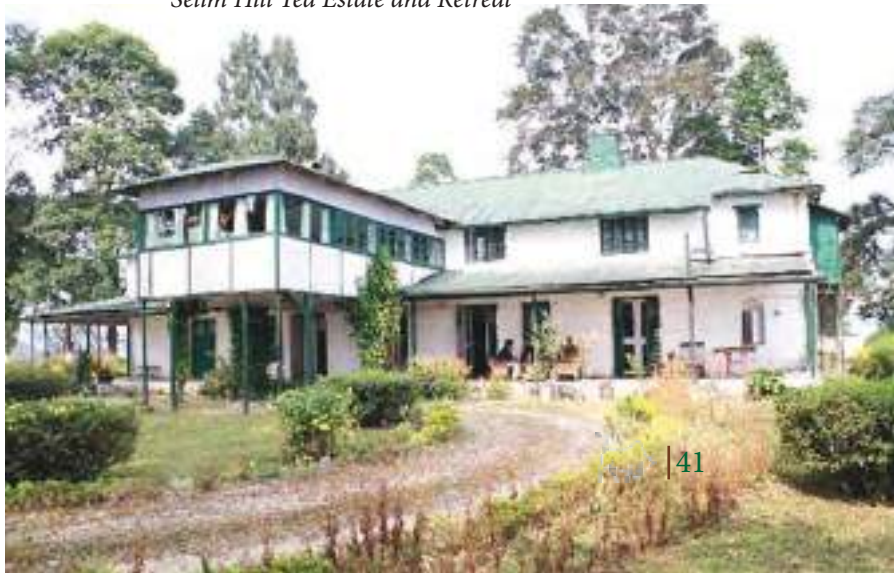
“We’ve created a Tea Club where, every Sunday, we send subscribers updates of what’s happening in the garden, blog posts, pictures of certain bird species that might have been spotted and organise speaker sessions called Echoes. If this model works for us (we need 50,000 customers in the first year), it can become a model for others,” Sparsh explains.

Another way in which Dorje Teas has broken away from conventional practices of the tea industry is by doing away with export market-oriented grading systems at their heritage factory. In the tea industry, leaves are typically divided into four grades – Whole Leaf, Broken Leaf, Fannings (deposited in tea bags), and Dust (also deposited in tea bags).

### TEA GRADES

To establish these grades, tea gardens employ

*Selim Hill Tea Estate and Retreat*





*Selim Hill Green Tea*

machines called breakers, which essentially use metal to cut down the tea leaves to different sizes. These leaves then go into different troughs, which end with establishing the four grades of tea leaves, and are eventually packaged.

“Looking back at how estates in Darjeeling manufactured tea 40 years ago and undergoing an extensive tea tasting process from different gardens, we realised that we don’t need the breaking process. In fact, breaking reduces the quality of tea and leaves behind a metallic tinge. After the tea comes out of the drying oven, we perform a simple hand sorting process to remove some of the stem. There is no crushing or breaking. There is very little handling and that leaves us with the original taste of Darjeeling tea,” Sparsh notes. Selim Hill Collective for the community. Established during the 150th year anniversary of the tea garden last year, the purpose of the Collective is to “create a model for a more sustainable and just tea garden, where workers get their due, the biodiversity is

preserved, and Selim Hill becomes the site of a cultural renaissance for Darjeeling,” notes a blog on the Dorje Teas website.

There are about 1,000 households in Selim Hill, of which 350 are directly associated with working on the tea garden. While Sparsh’s father helped set up a proper sanitation system for its residents, the Collective is looking to address the problem of overall waste management since the area does not have a proper municipality.

#### ECO-FRIENDLY AMBITIONS

Currently, Dorje has launched a large-scale afforestation campaign at Selim Hill to help maintain soil cover and prevent landslides.

It has already planted about 300 saplings in partnership with the local forest department. For every subscriber, Dorje will contribute to the Collective’s campaign to increase tree cover at the garden. Within wildlife conservation, they’ve also started doing a proper taxonomy of bird species in Selim Hill.

The Selim Hill Collective is based out of their Second Chance House at the garden, which offers space and opportunity for photographers, filmmakers, journalists, researchers, writers, wildlife enthusiasts and students to work with them. But these initiatives are in their infancy. The objective is to first revive the tea garden and make it commercially viable. The road ahead is long, but any attempt at reimagining a business and a space that has existed for decades will take time.

*A Tea Time Report*





# TATA TEA SETS UP TEA PACKAGING PLANT IN ODISHA

**A** Armed with modern amenities and equipped with state-of-the-art technology the inauguration of the largest tea packaging plant in India of Tata Consumer Products Limited at Gopalpur Industrial Park by chief minister Naveen Patnaik was a landmark event.

Commissioned in 18 months with an investment of Rs.100 crore, the plant's current production capacity of 15 million kg of tea will be enhanced



to 50 million kg making it the largest such unit. The unit will cater to the needs of several states including Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Central India. It is slated to provide employment opportunities to more than 900 persons in Ganjam.

Inaugurating the plant through virtual mode, the Chief Minister highlighted the state government's good work in setting up industries. Odisha has continued to remain at the forefront of industrial development in India, he added.

"The policy frame work and facilitation mechanism of the state has been successful in mobilising investments in diverse sectors such as petro chemicals, food processing, apparels and garments. The ongoing diversification of industrial base will further improve the employment



opportunities in Odisha," he added.

He also appreciated the role of Tata Group in Odisha and said that it has been play-

ing a vital role in the industrial development of the state.

The packaging plant is being operated by Amalgamated Plantations Private Limited, an associate of Tata Consumers and the second-largest tea producer in India. Lauding the role of the Tata Group in Odisha, Chief Minister Patnaik said it has played a vital role in the state's indus-



trial development.

Appreciating Tata Group's support to the state government on handling the pandemic, he added, "They have also come forward in catalysing social development by partnering with the state government in education, health and skill development initiatives." The CEO and Managing Director of Tata Consumer Products Limited, Sunil D'souza, along with Tata Steel's Managing Director, T V Narendran, were present for the virtual unveiling of the tea packaging plant.

Mr Narendran said Tata Steel had invested Rs. 60,000 crore in Odisha over the past five years of which Rs. 500 crore had been spent on infrastructure development at Gopalpur Special Economic Zone that covers a total area of 2,970 acres on the eastern coast.



## THE CASE FOR PURE GREEN TEA

*There are plenty of blends available in the market, but it's best to stick with the original*

**RAJIV PINCHA**

**M**y journey into tea started in early childhood when my father used to take me often to our tea garden, Kettela, located in the Biswanath region in Assam. I still remember rollers churning out red juice down from the rolling tables. Yes, I am

talking about black Orthodox manufactured from the 1980s to 2000s. Kettela was an Orthodox tea garden and the teas were sold mainly through Kolkata auction.

In 1997, when I visited Siliguri and travelled to some gardens in the Terai region that were making green teas then, on my request green tea was served but I could not manage more than one sip. As I was curious, I was told by the then garden manager that these teas are meant for Kashmir and Afghanistan markets routed through Amritsar in Punjab and people in those parts of the world make a beverage called Kahwa from this tea. It was my first experience with green tea.

Later, when I was managing the tea gardens full time, I continued to be fascinated by green tea although I was by then into Crush, tear, curl (CTC) manufacture. In 2000, our family acquired a tea garden in Tripura named Harendranagar, which had lot of potential in the form of vacant and virgin Tilla Land. I used to spend most of my time in the tea gardens during those years planting tea bushes and improving upon the CTC Factory.

From the very beginning, I kept on planting standard tea Jats (instead of vigorous Jats), even overlooking opposition from my garden manager.

Now was the time to take the plunge into

manufacturing green tea as there was huge growth in consumption in India and rise in awareness about its benefits across all age groups. I considered Tripura as the location to set up a speciality green tea factory over Assam because Tripura has 8-9 per cent Catechins as compared to 16 per cent in Assam, as per data available from various experiments conducted by eminent labs. The other factors favouring Tripura as the best location were our Tripura garden had virgin soil as compared to our Assam garden. Internationally, China, Japan and Taiwan are blessed to make very good green teas as the tea bushes there have low Catechins up to approximately 5 per cent and negligible Tannins, and that coupled with higher elevation and a cooler climate provides natural advantages in terms of green tea production.

Those countries, however, cannot match India, specifically Assam in CTC tea quality.

After considering and comparing Catechin content and other factors in North East India, I personally had Tripura as the only option and it was a better alternative over Assam to produce smoother and better green tea, as compared to more common varieties available in the Indian market.

### NOT SUCH AN EASY DRINK

Green tea manufacturing was never an easy task in a hot climate with tea gardens at lower elevation. It took us almost two years of extensive hard-work, sweating it out in the factory, negotiating with the raw material and machines, keeping track of minute details, choosing the selective tea Jats of our tea garden and learning from several mistakes in the factory, to reach a stage today where Harendranagar tea estate





If someone goes against nature and makes green tea in high Catechin areas, they will end up making green tea which is bitter and yellow due to partial oxidation during manufacture, combined with higher percentage of Tannins in Assamica tea plant variety. This is why the more generally available varieties of green teas are most often blended to suppress and overtake the colour and bitterness associated with it. So, when you buy blended green tea, you are unable to ascertain the quality of the actual green tea used by the blender.

could boast of making good green teas that have light green and smooth cups and do not require any blends to make them drinkable.

The Indian market was and still is flooded with green tea blends -- turmeric, lemon, honey, ginger, mint, tulsi, cardamom, clove, masala, blue flower – that are more readily available than the pure, unflavoured green tea. The blended green teas claim to be more beneficial to human health as they claim to contain the goodness of various herbs in addition to green tea itself.

This raises several questions: why are there so many blended green teas readily available even more than pure green tea itself? And why are there so few blended masala CTCs in comparison?

Turmeric, ginger, tulsi, mint, lemon, honey, clove, cinnamon, cardamom and many other herbs and spices have been a part and parcel of Indian kitchens all over India for many hundreds of years. So why is there a need for these herbs to be blended with green teas?

### LAND OF KADAK CHAI

North East India, Assam Valley, Dooars and Teari are well equipped to produce CTC tea, supported by the availability of the right kind of soil and climate in which the tea leaf generates between 12 per cent to 16 per cent of polyphenols (tea compounds). This makes CTC from these areas brisker and fuller, what is popularly described as Kadak Chai. Over the years, the tea Industry in India has mastered CTC manufacturing whereas, if we consider green tea manufacturing, the desired green tea characteristics are quite different from CTC teas.

Hence, I am of the opinion that buying pure green tea and then mixing a drop of lemon or



honey or anything else that suits one's taste is the better option. It is now upon tea experts, Tea Board and senior tea planters in the tea Industry to educate the Indian masses about it.

Harendranagar offers pure green tea from our garden which is smooth and light green in cups. The tea can be bought on line at Website: [www.origotea.in](http://www.origotea.in)



**Rajiv Pincha** is the Managing Director of Borgang Tea Company Pvt. Ltd. You can reach him at [borgangtea@outlook.com](mailto:borgangtea@outlook.com)



# 'TEA: A CHILLING STORY OF THE HOT BREW'

## Simple, chatty and chilling narration of how tea came to be A Tea Time Report

**M**allika Ravikumar's book for children that presents an alternative perspective on revolutionaries and bravehearts in India has a chapter on tea, titled 'Tea: Chilling Story of the Hot Brew.'

Her simple, chatty and fact-filled narrative starts with Indians who love tea "(and most of them do!), the thought of a cup of a hot masala chai is deeply satisfying," she writes. She introduces the story by jumping straight to the point that tea was not an ancient drink in India. "And going by the amounts we gulp down, one would think we've been drinking tea for centuries! It does come as a surprise then to know that nobody in India drank tea 200 years ago!"

The recounting of the tale of India and tea begins with how tea was stolen by the British from China and brought into India.

### STOLEN GOODS

The reader is invited to follow the journey of the beverage, or rather the tea bush from China to India: "Believe it or not, tea came to India as part of a grand scheme of the British East India Company that planned a massive theft of tea plants from China in order that the thirst for tea in Britain can be sustained."

Packed with details and intriguing twists, the tale of tea offers a fascinating glimpse of a slice of India's history, the expansion of global trade and the trafficking in narcotics. In her words, "The discovery of tea is attributed to a famous legend about a wandering Buddhist monk who was born somewhere near Chennai. This monk named Bodhidharma is regarded as the founder of the Zen school of Buddhism. He is believed to have discovered tea around the 5th century A.D. "The monk spent seven sleepless years meditating and contemplating about the Buddha. During the fifth year, when he began

to feel drowsy, in order to keep himself from falling asleep, he looked around for a solution. That is when the monk found a tree nearby and decided to pluck some of its leaves and chew them. Much to his surprise, he found that upon chewing the leaves and drinking its juice, his tiredness vanished. This bush was tea and thus began the discovery of India's favourite beverage."



R a v i k u m a r mentions that there are other versions of the







tale too. “As with every Indian tale, there are several versions of this legend. Another one goes that one day while the monk was boiling water for drinking, a gust of wind blew some leaves into the kettle. When Bodhidharma drank the water accidentally brewed with the leaves, he felt alert and lively. Stopping to enquire more about the leaves, he accidentally discovered the fine drink.

A slightly more gruesome version of the story also exists. During the seven-year long meditation, Bodhidharma found that his eyelids were growing heavy, causing him to fall asleep. But he did not want to sleep. He wanted to push himself and continue his meditation.

To prevent his eyelids from closing, he angrily plucked them out and threw them on the ground. At the spot where his eyelids fell, a bush began to sprout. That was tea.”

As she tells the story, “The story of tea begins about 2,500 years ago somewhere in the mountains of south-west China. It is the Chinese who first began to drink tea as a medicinal brew by boiling the leaves of the tea bush together with some herbs. Gradually the drinking of tea became a part of Chinese culture and from medicine it became a popular beverage.”

It was when the Portuguese arrived in Asia in the 15th century and era of colonization began that tea began to find its way to Europe from China along with other goods like silks, spices and porcelain. It was during this period that Europe, and particularly England woke up to the delight of tea.

Gradually the English were drinking so much tea that they found much of their silver going to fill China’s coffers as tea imports soared.



1. *Empire Calendar Calcutta*; 1940. & 2. Brooke Bond ‘Kora Dust’, 1920s-1930s.

The Chinese, in return, wanted none of the English goods and tea was draining the English economy.

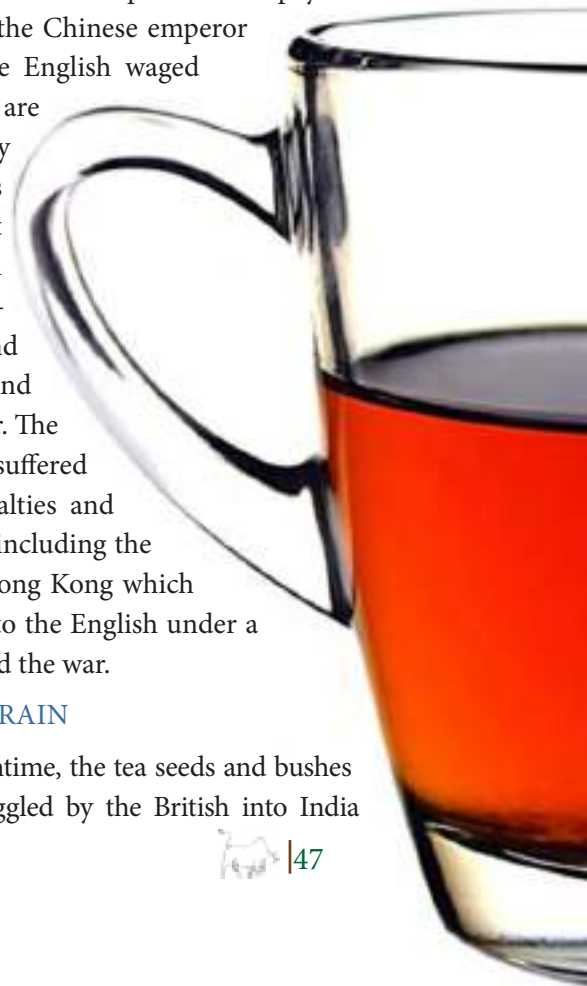
To counter that, the English came up with a novel two-pronged solution. They smuggled the tea bush out of China and experimented with growing it in India. Secondly, they forced Indian farmers to grow opium and smuggled it into China, converting the Chinese into drug addicts so the opium could pay for the tea. When the Chinese emperor resisted, the English waged

wars which are famously known as the First Opium War (1839-42) and the Second

Opium War. The Chinese suffered heavy casualties and lost much, including the island of Hong Kong which was ceded to the English under a treaty to end the war.

#### A NEW STRAIN

In the meantime, the tea seeds and bushes of tea smuggled by the British into India



## TEA TIME

from China, began to sprout and do well. They brought the tea to the hills of Darjeeling and found that the weather and other conditions there were perfect for tea. No longer would the British need to depend on the Chinese to serve their high society with a steaming cup of the brew. They could merely annex land in India and convert them into tea estates.

English botanists also discovered indigenous Indian tea growing in the hills of Assam. The tribals there had been growing the plant. The dark history behind India and the UK's favourite drink for years. They had already smuggled large quantities of the crop from



*The dark history behind India and the UK's favourite drink*

China and now this was a bonus. Thus began a new chapter in the history of the British in India.

“Two hundred years ago, Tea was unheard of in India. Today, India drinks more tea than any other nation in the world! And this is the tumultuous and eventful journey of Indian tea!”

Drink your tea slowly and reverently,  
As if it is the axis  
On which the world earth revolves -  
Slowly, evenly, without  
Rushing toward the future ;  
Live the actual moment.  
Only this moment is life.

-Thich Nhat Hanh-







## START THEM YOUNG ON TEA. IT'S A HEALTH DRINK

STRESS-BUSTING BEVERAGE A GOOD CHOICE,  
*says author*

**D**rinking tea from the age of four helps children combat obesity, stress and heart disease, according to a new study, published in the *Nutrition and Food Technology* journal.

Dr Pamela Mason, the author of the study that examined the results of 60 different scientific studies into tea and its health benefits, said parents should give tea to their children from the age of four instead of sweet, fizzy drinks. The drawbacks of caffeine in tea were outweighed by the hydration and flavonoids it provides.

Dr Mason added, “Studies show that the benefits for health and wellbeing are seen at daily intakes of two to four cups – and it doesn’t matter whether you choose regular black tea, or green tea.”

Tea, or the beverage made with the leaves of *Camellia sinensis*, also benefits the elderly, by reducing the risk of stroke, boosting the immune system and improving cardiovascular health.

Dr Tim Bond, from the Tea Advisory Panel,

JULY 2021 - DECEMBER 2021

which independently commissioned the research, said: “We know that tea drinking is a marker of reduced risk of developing cardiovascular disease and dying from a stroke or heart attack but we also understand why.”

“Tea polyphenols also relax blood vessel, smooth muscle and boost nitric oxide levels – both of which help to lower blood pressure,” he added. Tea has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties too, revealed the study.

The study found that L-theanine, an amino acid unique to tea, helps relaxation, reduces stress and in combination with caffeine, influences brain functions such as alertness and concentration.

It’s not just the mind that benefits from the sipping of some brew.

“Clinical and laboratory studies show that tea polyphenols limit cholesterol absorption in the gut and target receptors which regulate blood cholesterol levels,” the research concluded.

*A Tea Time Report*



## Tidings from BANGLADESH

*Better weather en route to the country's gardens*

Monjur Hossain



**B**angladesh tea is a small player in the world tea scene, but has a leading role in the national economy and employment sector. The history of Bangladesh's tea industry dates back to 1840 when a pioneer tea garden was established on the slopes of the hills in Chittagong where the Chittagong Club now stands. A few years later, in 1854, the country's first commercial tea garden was established in Mulnichera in Sylhet.

During the partition in 1947, Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan) owned 103 tea estates, cov-

ering 26,734 hectares of tea plantation with an annual production of 18.36 million kilogrammes and a yield of about 639 kg per hectare. Domestic consumption was around 13.64 million kg up to 1955. After that, domestic consumption went up rapidly and the then Government of Pakistan imposed a 3 percent mandatory extension of tea area per year in 1961. Ten years later, by 1970, the area in which tea was grown had extended to 42,658 hectares and production increased to 31.38 million kilos.



During the liberation war in 1971, our tea industry suffered colossal damages, which resulted in poor management, high vacancies, insufficient input, dilapidated factory machinery, inadequate maintenance leading to lower yield and poor quality of tea. But the industry soon got a big push on behalf of the government through a massive development program

(BTRP-1980-92), and with the financial and technical assistance of the British ODA and EEC, production increased to 65.84 million kg with per/ha. yield of 1255 kg in 2013.

There are different categories of management prevailing in the industry. These are Sterling companies, Public Limited Company, Private Limited Companies, Tea Board owned and Proprietary estates. There is a remarkable rise of tea areas now in northern Bangladesh, where smallholders are gradually joining the tea race along with some small and large tea estates owners.

### GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

There are at present 177 tea estates in Bangladesh of which 134 are in Greater Sylhet (Sylhet, Moulvibazar and Habiganj); 23 are in Chittagong, one each in Chittagong Hill Tract and Brahmanbaria districts; and 18 newly-developed tea estates in Northern Bangladesh.



### OWNERSHIP PATTERN

The tea estates in Bangladesh are managed by the British/Sterling companies registered in the UK, public limited companies viz National Tea Co. Ltd. (NTC), having Government and private shares, private limited companies, proprietary ownership and Government of Bangladesh Tea Board.

### GENERAL OVERVIEW

Tea producers across the globe have been greatly affected by COVID-19, mainly because of national lockdowns and social distancing policies. Export and import restrictions created uncertainty in the tea market and producers are undertaking emergency response measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in tea communities. Due to the untiring efforts of estate management, the workforce and generous support from the government, the estates continued to function in a normal manner and thus production of tea went on uninterrupted. The 2020 cropping season ended with a shortfall compared to the previous year's production due to very dry conditions during the early months of the season and to a lesser extent because of the COVID situation. The weather improved in the last quarter helping to narrow the shortfall.

The total production of 2020 was 86.3 million kilos as against record production of 96.1 million kilos of previous year. Prices appreciated during the season and recorded a high of 189.29 per kilos by the end of the season. This was above last year's prices of Bangladesh Taka 175.78 per kg.



## TEA TIME

The total production of 2020 was 86.3 million kilos as compared with the record production of 96.1 million kilos in the previous year.

Tea is no longer an important export earner for the country. Due to rise of national consumption and the fact that production cannot keep pace with demand there is little prospect of export; it is in fact decreasing year on year.

Tea is supplied in the internal market in three ways (i) buying tea

from the auction, paying value-added tax (VAT) on the auction value known as internal account buying;

(ii) buying tea from the auction for export at nil VAT known as external account buying and subsequently transferring to the internal account; and (iii) tea supplied directly from the tea estates with prior permission of the Tea Board.

The production, consumption and export of last ten years is shown below:

The data reveals that in some years production was less than consumption, and the gap was filled through import of tea. Due to the pandemic, consumption was less during the year as such imports were much lower, at 0.49 million kg of tea compared to 5.7 million kg in 2019.

### DEMAND AND MARKET

The demand and market during the season as closely recorded by National Brokers Limited is summarized below:

The first sale of the season was held on May 18, 2020 and in spite of travel restrictions due to the pandemic situation, a good number of buyers were present and a fair price was obtained in the auction. The total production of 2020 was 86.3 million kilos as against a record production of 96.1 million kilos of the previous year.

Thereafter, owing to slow down in tea sales

throughout the country during the pandemic, buyers were more selective in their purchase and bought a smaller quantity of tea than they did in 2019 - prices fell, too, and the recorded average price for teas sold in the month of July

Table 1:  
Production trend of Bangladesh Tea

| Year | Production (M.K) | Expected Internal Consumption (M. Kg) | Export (M. Kg) |
|------|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| 2011 | 59.13            | 58.50                                 | 1.48           |
| 2012 | 62.52            | 61.19                                 | 1.56           |
| 2013 | 66.26            | 64.00                                 | 0.54           |
| 2014 | 63.88            | 67.17                                 | 2.66           |
| 2015 | 67.38            | 77.57                                 | 0.54           |
| 2016 | 85.05            | 81.64                                 | 0.62           |
| 2017 | 78.95            | 85.93                                 | 2.56           |
| 2018 | 82.13            | 90.45                                 | 0.65           |
| 2019 | 96.07            | 95.20                                 | 0.60           |
| 2020 | 86.39            | 86.00                                 | 2.17           |

•Source: BTB

was Bangladesh Taka 167 per kg, the lowest for the month since 2011.

Demand improved somewhat in August as the sales rose to 75 per cent in the auction from 50 percent in the previous months. The price also appreciated to a level of Bangladesh Taka 186 per kg; since then, demand has been stronger each week and prices have risen touching an average price of Bangladesh Taka 200 per kg for the teas sold in the month of September.

By the end of that month 33.9 million kg of tea was sold as against 33.6 million kg in the same period in previous years. Cumulative average price up to that month was Bangladesh Taka 185.21 per kg as against Bangladesh Taka 199.72 in 2019.

October saw a high demand for tea, especially brighter liquoring varieties in both leaf and dust categories.







However, both plain and low medium varieties were generally unwanted and were severely discounted.

The price gap was quite wide, ranging from Bangladesh Taka 224 to Bangladesh Taka 180 per kg between good and plain varieties.

The Final Sale (Sale 42) was

held on March 15, 2021, which also marked Mujib Borsho, the birth anniversary of Bangladesh's Founding Father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

CHITTAGONG AUCTION AVERAGE: ( SALE - 18 )  
Season 2021-22: Tk. 196.39 & Season 2020-21: Tk. 199.72



The average obtained at the auction for season 2020-21 was from Bangladesh Taka 189.29 as against from Bangladesh Taka 175.78 per kg for season 2019-2020.

A volume of 81.3 million kg was sold at the auction - this was 9.4 million kg less than the highest ever volume of teas sold last year.

Out-station buyers, most of whom are loose tea buyers, faced difficulties in attending the first few auctions because of the pandemic-imposed lockdown in the country. The major percentage of the teas, therefore, was bought by the blenders and packeters. It was only in October that loose tea buyers began to purchase in earnest.

Due to a drop in crop production and import, the price of tea price did not fall drastically at the end of the season as it had in the previous season. (See graph by National Brokers Ltd.)

### FUTURE PROSPECTS

The industry looks forward to a better future for Bangladesh teas for the season 2021-22. In the beginning of the season tea production was low owing to dry conditions in many parts of the growing areas particularly in South Sylhet and Chittagong belt. But gradually, thanks to more favourable weather, the industry witnessed a partial recovery in production and total crop harvested up to August 2021 was 52.15 million

kg as against 45.31 million kg, a 6.84 million kilo gain on the last season. As such, the industry is looking for another record harvest during the season. On

the market side, it is felt that demand would be quite selective and restricted to

well made, colour teas.

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

## Slow recovery of Indian teas despite signs of growth in exports



constrained the packer operating in the retail market. Conceding that price increases were inevitable, he drew attention to the problem going forward that the ability of the market to absorb this rise without impacting business was limited.

The severe dislocations in the Indian economy, particularly in the labour market with evidence of employment and wage cutbacks have added to the concerns of the industry.

To boost demand for tea, FAITTA has been engaged in internal discussions within its membership to design activities that could be jointly subscribed to by producers, buyers and the Tea Board. Shah said, "We had formulated our proposals concentrating largely on the use of social media and placed them with the Tea Board but the disturbed market conditions prevented us from pushing this agenda." Admitting that the challenge was difficult, because funds were not available for plough back into promotional activities and the high cost of attempting penetration via social media, Shah said "our efforts will have to be smartly designed to offer the best value for our spends." The challenging market conditions and the sharp drop in out-of-home tea consumption has also impacted the off-take of tea bags making it difficult to sustain the high investment cost of staple-less machines, Shah said. FAITTA has therefore presented to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India that the industry needs more time to replace conventional tea bags with the staple-less kind, he added.

While FAITTA had participated in the "so called Japanese Auction system, which has had several mock trials largely in South India," Shah expressed disappointment with the outcome

**D**espite the disruption caused by the pandemic and bad weather conditions, the Federation of Indian Tea Traders Association (FAITTA) President Viren Shah said at the seventh annual general meeting in Kolkata in October, "After many years of relative stagnation, Indian tea exports appeared to be on a higher growth trajectory." He did point out that "after two successive years of 250 million kilo-plus exports in 2018 and 2019, exports sharply declined in 2020 to 210 million kilos. This was a consequence of the production decline and the sharp increase in prices that rendered Indian tea uncompetitive in the global market."

The extent of the disruption has contributed to a significant decline in out-of-home consumption of tea and an increase in the sales of packet teas, Shah said. There was uncertainty over how much the increase in home consumption of tea could offset the decline in out of home consumption of the beverage. He expressed his concern over the sharp rise in tea prices at the farm gate level – by almost 70-80 percent – that had clearly



as there were serious concerns over “a faulty bidding logic that unfortunately had not been well thought through.”

Describing the use of colouring in tea as a “menace,” Shah said FAITTA remains deeply concerned. He observed that “a brand selling premix tea with added colour is seeking to justify its action by differentiating its product from tea.” While FAITTA has already initiated legal proceeding to prevent this misuse which is not in conformity with Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, Shah urged the Tea Board to be far more proactive.”

Addressing the meeting, Chairman, Tea Board of India, Prabhat Bezbaruah emphasised that the basic problem - there are gaps in information that are hurting the tea industry. He pointed out that producers do not know the demand of tea, whereas the supply, that is, the total production numbers are common knowledge. He added that there was no information about the quantities of tea sold in packets, because the largest packeteers do not release the sales data. The Tea Board, he felt, ought to share the information on sales.

Bezbaruah was candid about the need to reduce the quality of poor teas that were being sold by producers. He felt that the maximum content of crude fibre should be lowered from 16 percent to 12 percent. He also observed that a lot of teas do not meet the prescribed minimum residue levels (MRL) and were being sold in the market for domestic

consumption. Teas for exports were following the MRL norms. If all the norms are followed strictly, the production could reduce by 50 to 60 million kilos. It made better business sense to concentrate on quality instead of quantity, Bezbaruah said.

Poor quality teas produced by bought leaf factories should not be allowed to reach the market, Bezbaruah declared. He also urged the industry to make a choice between selling all

its tea through auctions and selling without an auction system, because a hybrid model had not been a success.

Dismissing the idea of the Tea Board’s involvement in promoting teas, Bezbaruah said the organization lacked the knowledge to undertake such a role. The responsibility of the Tea Board was, he believed, to help improve the lives of the workers in the tea gardens.

Girnar Food and Beverages Private Limited Managing Director Hemant Shah was upbeat about the future of premixed flavoured teas.

He noted that instant teas were also becoming popular and felt that these teas should be made from tea leaves and not tea waste.

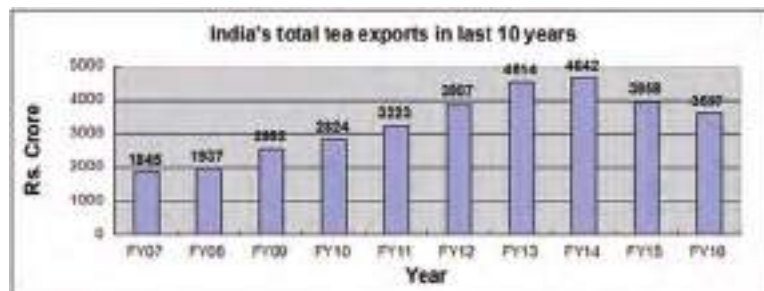
Speaking on the occasion, Vivek Goenka, President of the Indian Tea Association, revealed that while tea production by

large producers had declined in the last 15 years, the quantity produced by small tea growers had increased

by 200 percent. He was clearly pointing to the competition between large and small tea producers. Goenka explained that the prices of tea in North India had in fact dropped over the past 10 years in real terms.

Expressing concern about sluggish demand, Paras Desai, Executive Director of Wagh Bakri said that the second year of the pandemic had been tougher for the tea industry.

*A Tea Time Report*





# RAISING AWARENESS to increase consumption in India

*Panel considers ways to boost sales and marketing*

Tea is the second cheapest beverage consumed after drinking water. India is the world's second largest producer of teas. Yet its ranking in terms of consumption of per capita 786

grams of tea puts it in 28 the place globally. The top ten countries are led by Turkey with a consumption of 3.16 kgs, Ireland at 2.19 kgs, UK at 1.94 kgs, followed by Iran at 1.50 kgs, Russia at 1.38 kgs, Morocco at 1.22 kgs, New Zealand at 1.19 kgs, Chile at 1.19 kgs, Egypt at 1.01 kgs and Poland at 1 kg.

As the common man's drink, tea is popular and its market penetration is 96 per cent across India, but only 64 per cent of the population is consuming it on a regular basis. It is popular but it is also in many ways an adult drink. Children in India are actively discouraged from drinking tea. While about 25 percent of the population is under 12 years old, almost no one in this age group drinks tea.

A panel of distinguished experts from the tea industry discussed the issue of India's low consumption of tea at an event organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce on the need to create awareness about the beverage in an effort to boost consumption. Addressing the panel,

Raising awareness to increase consumption in India, Atul Asthana, Managing Director and CEO of Goodricke, said there was a strong case to be made for the generic promotion of tea in the domestic market.

The production of tea had risen over the past 20 years, but consumption has not kept pace with the increase in availability. Exports too had not matched the increase in production stagnating at around 200 million kilos a year, Asthana pointed out.

Calling for a "promotional drive" that ought to be a collaboration between government and industry, he added, that the consumption of tea needed to be raised in areas where it was currently low, like in the East and South of India. He noted that most Indians, approximately 80 per cent, from among those who did drink tea, did so before breakfast. The tea they usually drank was mixed with milk and sugar.

Underscoring the lack of tea literacy in India, Asthana said that there was little differentiation





among consumers between green, white, black, Orthodox and CTC teas on the one hand and about the origins of the brew they consumed, like Darjeeling, Assam or Nilgiri. A promotion drive that emphasised the qualities of tea as a health drink and a beverage with great variety was urgently needed to boost consumption, he said.

Meanwhile, S Soundarajan, Director, from the Tea Board of India, shared the findings of a domestic consumption survey commissioned by the institution that had assessed that 90 percent of households in India consumed tea. There was a mismatch between the increase in the production of tea and its consumption, he confirmed. The data indicated that Indians on an average drink 830 grams of tea a year, he added.

Describing tea as an “introduced drink,” because it was not an item in the regular basket of consumption of Indians in the past, Soundarajan said there was a correlation between the availability of milk and higher consumption of tea, pointing out that Western and Northern states of India consumed 63 per cent of the tea whereas in the East only 19 percent of the beverage was consumed and in the South it was even lower at 18 percent, even though these were the largest tea producing areas in the country.

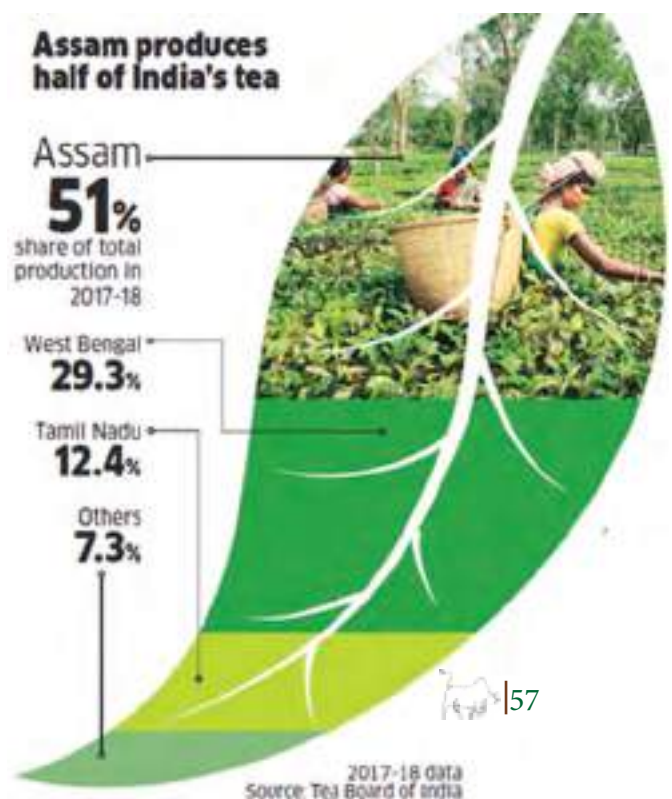
Indians, the survey had found, drank tea mostly at home. The out-of-home consumption was mostly by younger age groups, who were now looking for good quality and convenient places to slake their thirst for the beverage.

There was an opportunity for increasing the consumption of tea by targeting the younger drinkers, especially “millennials,” that is, the Gen Z consumers, who could be attracted to a new promotion package that included green teas and value-added teas, he said. The advantage is that tea is relatively price inelastic and small changes in price do not affect consumption.

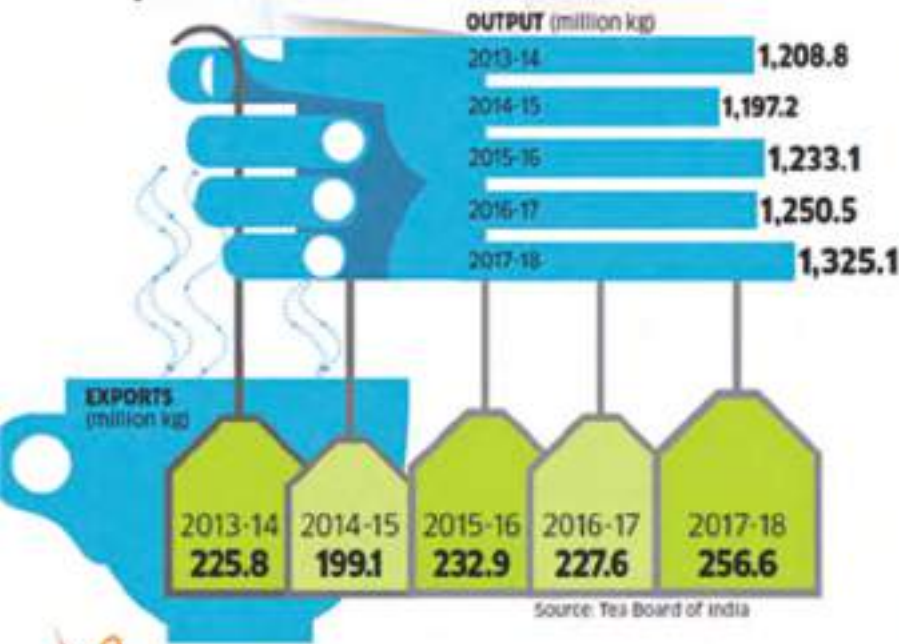
A change in the promotion strategy by shifting to digitised marketing by selling teas on line and advertising on social media could attract younger consumers and build a strong customer base in four to five years, Soundarajan predicted. Arguing for a promotion campaign where the costs were shared by all stakeholders, he added, that diversification of tea as a beverage needed to be explored.

There was a surplus in production of tea in India because of the mismatch between production and consumption, Nayantara Palchoudhuri, vice chairman of the Indian Tea Association said. She believed that there was a growth potential of around 5 per cent over the next four to five years in the ready-to-drink segment of tea.

The beverage market is changing, she said, and new consumers are looking for safe and ethically produced teas. Linking health and wellbeing to drinking more tea would be the new drivers of growth, she predicted. Calling for a dedicated fund that the Tea Board could set up to create a new business model for exploring the growth potential of the beverage, Palchoudhuri said, there were different ways in which the consumer base could be expanded.



## India saw record tea production in 2017-18



Equating the promotion of tea drinking for children and non-adults to “fighting head winds”, Shiva Krishnamurthy of Unilever India said that the industry should design a strategy that can “ride the tail winds”. He argued for a promotion campaign that worked on the emotional connect of consumers to tea as a “way of life”. Youth and college students, he believed, could be persuaded to consider tea as a health and wellness drink, especially green teas.

Consumers were becoming more health conscious and this extended to a consciousness about hygiene, which meant that the demand for sustainably produced ethically sourced teas would increase in the future, he predicted. There had to be a consumer pull for the sustainability of tea as an industry. There was an opportunity to reimagine tea as a beverage.

Youth drink less than one cup of tea a day and the industry has to search for strategies that

## TEA TIME

connect the beverage to the changing preferences of younger consumers, Parul Singh, deputy secretary in the ministry of commerce and industries said. Innovation was essential for the marketing and branding of tea through organising tea fairs and tea fests on the one hand and promoting single origin teas – Darjeeling, Assam, Nilgiri, for instance – on the other.

The need was to create a “pull,” and change perceptions about tea, Gulshan Singh, the erstwhile FCB Interface National Planning Director said. There was a “legacy challenge” and that needed to be overcome. Younger people, he explained, “hate people who try to sell them things.” He said young consumers want to go

online and look for things themselves. Tea had to reposition itself as an aspirational drink.

Identifying the challenges, speakers on the panel said that the industry cannot expect demand to grow by constraining supply as some had argued. Nothing was supply driven, Krishnamurthy pointed out and the focus has to be on increasing demand. There were opportunities that needed to be explored, the panelists believed, like promoting tea as a national beverage, selling masala chai as an original Indian exotica.

Chasing consumers through a promotion drive that was digital based was the consensus among the panelists about next steps to promote demand for tea in India. The investment required ought to be jointly shared by industry and the Tea Board so that in four to five years there was a noticeable increase in the demand for the beverage.



# MOVE TO PRESERVE THE PURITY OF GI-TAGGED TEAS

*Packets must state the contents of their blend*

**R**esponding to the insistent complaints by tea producers from Darjeeling, Assam, Nilgiris and Kangra that their geographical indication (GI) protected teas were being blended with cheap imports leading to issues of quality and quantity, the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry finally issued an order making it mandatory for importers and blenders to disclose all such transactions.

The Tea Board of India circular of November 11 uses transparency as its mechanism to prevent blending that is a violation of the GI-tag for teas produced in Darjeeling, Kangra, Assam (Orthodox) and Nilgiri (Orthodox). In the case of Darjeeling, organisations like the Indian Tea Association (ITA) have flagged the problem of “fake” or “duplicate” teas from Nepal, the import of which rose by 60 per cent in 2020 and by July this year had touched over 50 per cent of the total volume of such trade.

According to reported complaints, including by distinguished members of the tea industry, “To add to the troubles of the tea connoisseurs, the duplicate Darjeeling tea from Nepal appears to be inorganic in nature and high on carcinogens,” because the growers there use pesticides that are banned in India and globally, alleged experts.

ITA secretary Sujit Patra is reported to have said, “Huge quantities of indigenous tea are coming from Nepal and being blended with regular crush, tear, curl (CTC). They are being passed off to the customers as Himalayan Tea or long leaf tea. Himalayan Tea is specifically Darjeeling tea. In trade circles the other issues that have been a matter of concern are the use of colour as an additive in blends that use imported teas.

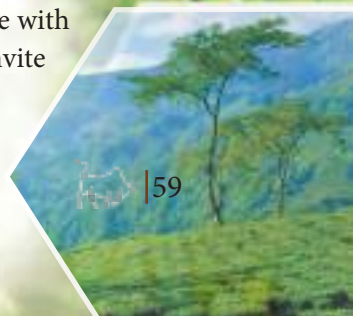
The onus of compliance has been firmly assigned to importers, who under the terms of the circular have been asked to report the “place of storage” to the nearest Tea Board office within 24 hours of “such imported teas in such places.”

To cover the complaints from the tea industry in India that imported teas violate ban orders on the use of certain chemicals, violate Food Safety Standards Authority of India norms, and violate the GI-tag, the circular has designated the Tea Board to collect random samples of the imported teas to “ascertain whether such samples conform to the requirements laid down for tea or not.”

The set of three circulars attempts at a holistic solution to the problem of GI-tag violations and other infringements that follow from the import of certain teas. The order requires importers to comply with the labelling guidelines of FSSAI and insists that the regulations “be inserted in all contract for sale/offer for sale of such imported tea.”

Registered buyers of teas have been cautioned that the Tea Board and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry would take “action” after November 11, should there be blending of any imported teas with teas from Darjeeling, Kangra, Assam (Orthodox) and Nilgiri (Orthodox). Packeters have also been brought within the oversight of the Tea Board in terms of compliance with the new orders. All labels, the order states, “should clearly indicate on the packaging that the contents of the blended tea are imported,” and the source of origin has to be mentioned regardless of whether the teas were directly imported by the packeter or purchased through intermediaries. Non compliance with the new requirements would invite “action,” the order warned.

*A Tea Time Report*



**ASSAM VALLEY- NI (CTC Leaf & All Dust)**

Estate

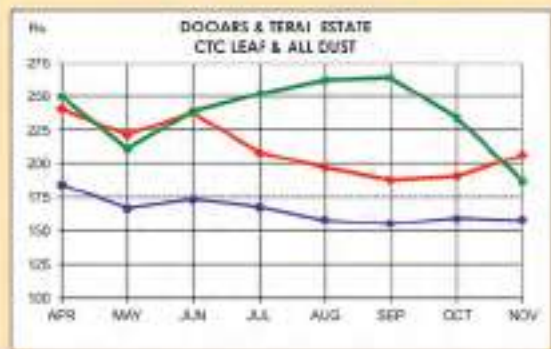
| Months       | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 21 vs 20 | 2019/20 | 21 vs 19 |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| APR          | 230.89  | 248.14  | -17.25   | 184.96  | 46.73    |
| MAY          | 234.35  | 216.00  | 17.37    | 154.97  | 79.39    |
| JUN          | 262.57  | 261.49  | 1.08     | 181.68  | 80.89    |
| JUL          | 227.79  | 307.73  | -79.93   | 196.24  | 31.55    |
| AUG          | 210.30  | 322.84  | -112.54  | 189.84  | 20.36    |
| SEP          | 213.88  | 294.83  | -80.75   | 181.35  | 32.53    |
| OCT          | 212.69  | 248.81  | -36.12   | 175.01  | 37.69    |
| NOV          | 222.57  | 201.45  | 21.11    | 163.43  | 54.14    |
| April to Nov | 222.00  | 288.34  | -44.34   | 179.14  | 42.86    |



**DOOARS & TERAI - NI (CTC Leaf & All Dust)**

Estate

| Months       | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 21 vs 20 | 2019/20 | 21 vs 19 |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| APR          | 241.39  | 250.00  | -8.70    | 184.80  | 56.51    |
| MAY          | 221.29  | 211.38  | 9.91     | 167.02  | 54.26    |
| JUN          | 238.55  | 239.06  | -0.51    | 173.68  | 64.87    |
| JUL          | 208.27  | 252.10  | -43.89   | 187.98  | 40.29    |
| AUG          | 187.94  | 282.17  | -64.16   | 158.60  | 38.34    |
| SEP          | 185.18  | 254.06  | -75.90   | 155.44  | 32.72    |
| OCT          | 190.91  | 234.26  | -43.35   | 159.97  | 30.94    |
| NOV          | 206.74  | 187.75  | 18.99    | 158.58  | 48.16    |
| April to Nov | 207.50  | 239.48  | -31.98   | 163.58  | 43.94    |



**ASSAM VALLEY - NI (CTC Leaf & All Dust)**

BLF

| Months       | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 21 vs 20 | 2019/20 | 21 vs 19 |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| APR          | 182.34  | 218.07  | -36.53   | 138.08  | 44.26    |
| MAY          | 188.38  | 178.30  | 10.08    | 121.73  | 66.65    |
| JUN          | 197.93  | 218.26  | -20.33   | 131.97  | 65.96    |
| JUL          | 163.97  | 251.10  | -87.13   | 133.83  | 30.14    |
| AUG          | 148.20  | 274.05  | -125.86  | 132.34  | 15.86    |
| SEP          | 150.25  | 261.86  | -111.61  | 128.06  | 22.19    |
| OCT          | 152.07  | 215.50  | -63.42   | 126.84  | 25.23    |
| NOV          | 158.80  | 167.21  | -8.41    | 121.37  | 37.43    |
| April to Nov | 162.95  | 229.74  | -66.79   | 128.48  | 34.46    |



**DOOARS & TERAI - NI (CTC Leaf & All Dust)**

BLF

| Months       | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 21 vs 20 | 2019/20 | 21 vs 19 |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| APR          | 181.57  | 170.21  | 11.36    | 122.54  | 59.03    |
| MAY          | 170.15  | 157.73  | 12.42    | 118.54  | 51.61    |
| JUN          | 155.39  | 175.77  | -20.37   | 114.78  | 40.61    |
| JUL          | 134.39  | 206.89  | -72.50   | 108.79  | 24.60    |
| AUG          | 126.32  | 228.70  | -102.44  | 103.60  | 22.72    |
| SEP          | 122.88  | 235.01  | -112.13  | 100.67  | 22.21    |
| OCT          | 123.71  | 200.39  | -76.68   | 101.70  | 22.01    |
| NOV          | 131.66  | 147.79  | -16.33   | 102.00  | 28.47    |
| April to Nov | 136.23  | 199.03  | -62.80   | 107.35  | 28.89    |



Compiled by Soumen Bagchi

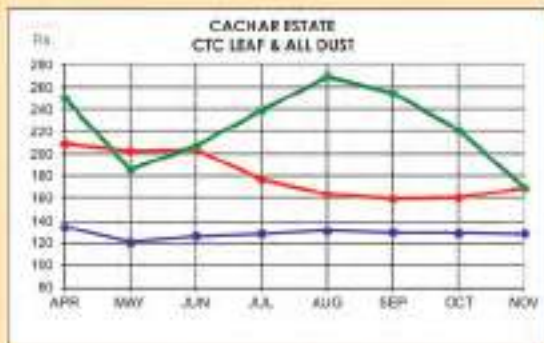




**CACHAR - NI (CTC Leaf & All Dust)**

Estate

| Months       | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 21 vs 20 | 2019/20 | 21 vs 19 |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| APR          | 208.13  | 250.45  | -41.33   | 133.94  | 75.18    |
| MAY          | 202.84  | 185.48  | 17.36    | 121.05  | 81.78    |
| JUN          | 203.40  | 206.68  | -3.28    | 125.60  | 77.71    |
| JUL          | 177.08  | 239.88  | -62.60   | 128.31  | 48.77    |
| AUG          | 163.84  | 289.11  | -105.27  | 130.78  | 33.07    |
| SEP          | 158.91  | 254.93  | -96.02   | 129.01  | 30.90    |
| OCT          | 165.13  | 221.39  | -61.26   | 128.57  | 31.26    |
| NOV          | 169.47  | 188.99  | 0.47     | 127.94  | 41.53    |
| April to Nov | 171.88  | 226.61  | -54.73   | 127.98  | 43.92    |



**TRIPURA - NI (CTC Leaf & All Dust)**

Estate

| Months       | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 21 vs 20 | 2019/20 | 21 vs 19 |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| APR          | 187.58  |         | 187.58   | 150.93  | 27.65    |
| MAY          | 175.96  | 208.15  | -32.19   | 137.36  | 38.60    |
| JUN          | 177.98  | 207.02  | -29.03   | 120.04  | 48.94    |
| JUL          | 162.43  | 224.40  | -71.98   | 117.37  | 35.06    |
| AUG          | 136.01  | 251.64  | -115.63  | 110.49  | 25.52    |
| SEP          | 154.09  | 241.89  | -107.89  | 113.07  | 21.02    |
| OCT          | 130.87  | 197.00  | -66.18   | 114.18  | 16.64    |
| NOV          | 135.71  | 151.73  | -16.02   | 108.22  | 29.49    |
| April to Nov | 144.13  | 212.46  | -68.33   | 116.41  | 27.72    |



**ASSAM VALLEY - NI (ORTHODOX)**

| Months       | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 21 vs 20 | 2019/20 | 21 vs 19 |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| APR          | 258.25  | 311.95  | 16.30    | 263.94  | -5.68    |
| MAY          | 241.60  | 255.66  | -13.46   | 255.82  | -14.22   |
| JUN          | 258.83  | 290.88  | -32.04   | 260.21  | -1.39    |
| JUL          | 254.15  | 311.73  | -67.57   | 243.81  | 10.34    |
| AUG          | 238.48  | 291.36  | -62.78   | 224.80  | 13.89    |
| SEP          | 243.61  | 276.22  | -32.61   | 205.23  | 38.33    |
| OCT          | 230.47  | 288.81  | -38.34   | 206.57  | 23.90    |
| NOV          | 216.47  | 240.60  | -24.13   | 199.05  | 17.41    |
| April to Nov | 239.48  | 279.65  | -40.39   | 228.36  | 13.10    |



**DARJEELING**

| Months       | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 21 vs 20 | 2019/20 | 21 vs 19 |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| APR          | 750.10  |         | 750.10   | 796.34  | -46.24   |
| MAY          | 736.01  |         | 736.01   | 519.05  | 216.96   |
| JUN          | 486.58  | 500.20  | -13.62   | 312.23  | 174.35   |
| JUL          | 481.75  | 559.31  | -77.56   | 381.73  | 100.02   |
| AUG          | 433.19  | 432.96  | 0.23     | 347.23  | 85.95    |
| SEP          | 398.64  | 365.41  | 13.23    | 336.21  | 62.43    |
| OCT          | 328.66  | 348.25  | -19.59   | 253.24  | 75.42    |
| NOV          | 309.06  | 258.02  | 51.04    | 224.77  | 84.29    |
| April to Nov | 429.19  | 412.40  | 16.79    | 344.30  | 84.89    |





TEA TIME

| NORTH INDIA OFFERED (M. KGS) |       |    |    |    |     |    |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
|------------------------------|-------|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|
|                              | APRIL |    |    |    | MAY |    |    |    |    | JUNE |    |    |    |
| SALE NO                      | 14    | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18  | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23   | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 2017                         | 1     | 3  | 4  | 5  | 7   | 8  | 9  | 9  | 9  | 9    | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 2018                         | 1     | 3  | 4  | 7  | 7   | 7  | 9  | 9  | 9  | 10   | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 2019                         | 2     | 3  | 4  | 7  | 9   | 8  | 10 | 11 | 10 | 10   | 10 | 12 | 13 |
| 2020                         | 1     | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0   | 3  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 5    | 6  | 7  | 10 |
| 2021                         | 4     | 4  | 7  | 8  | 8   | 6  | 7  | 6  | 7  | 9    | 9  | 11 | 13 |

| NORTH INDIA SOLD (M. KGS) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 2017                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 9  |
| 2018                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8  |
| 2019                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2020                      | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 8  |
| 2021                      | 3 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 9  |

| NORTH INDIA OFFERED (M. KGS) |      |    |    |    |        |    |    |    |    |           |    |    |    |
|------------------------------|------|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|----|-----------|----|----|----|
|                              | JULY |    |    |    | AUGUST |    |    |    |    | SEPTEMBER |    |    |    |
| SALE NO                      | 27   | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31     | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36        | 37 | 38 | 39 |
| 2017                         | 12   | 13 | 14 | 13 | 13     | 14 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 15        | 15 | 17 | 0  |
| 2018                         | 11   | 11 | 13 | 13 | 14     | 16 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 17        | 17 | 17 | 19 |
| 2019                         | 12   | 13 | 14 | 14 | 14     | 16 | 13 | 17 | 16 | 17        | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 2020                         | 10   | 10 | 11 | 7  | 14     | 12 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 14        | 9  | 14 | 15 |
| 2021                         | 15   | 17 | 17 | 18 | 18     | 18 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 17        | 16 | 18 | 18 |

| NORTH INDIA SOLD (M. KGS) |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 2017                      | 9  | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 0  |
| 2018                      | 9  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 14 |
| 2019                      | 9  | 10 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| 2020                      | 9  | 9  | 10 | 6  | 12 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 7  | 11 | 10 |
| 2021                      | 10 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 13 | 13 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 13 |

| NORTH INDIA OFFERED (M. KGS) |         |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |
|------------------------------|---------|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|
|                              | OCTOBER |    |    |    | NOVEMBER |    |    |    |    | DECEMBER |    |    |    |
| SALE NO                      | 40      | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44       | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49       | 50 | 51 | 52 |
| 2017                         | 14      | 17 | 10 | 18 | 16       | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 17       | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| 2018                         | 18      | 16 | 0  | 18 | 17       | 8  | 19 | 17 | 18 | 17       | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| 2019                         | 10      | 5  | 17 | 18 | 16       | 15 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17       | 17 | 18 | 12 |
| 2020                         | 16      | 17 | 17 | 7  | 17       | 19 | 18 | 20 | 20 | 19       | 17 | 17 | 15 |
| 2021                         | 20      | 18 | 0  | 19 | 13       | 22 | 21 | 20 | 17 |          |    |    |    |

| NORTH INDIA SOLD (M. KGS) |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 2017                      | 11 | 14 | 8  | 14 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| 2018                      | 14 | 13 | 0  | 14 | 13 | 7  | 15 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| 2019                      | 7  | 4  | 13 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 9  |
| 2020                      | 10 | 10 | 10 | 4  | 10 | 12 | 11 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 13 |
| 2021                      | 13 | 0  | 15 | 15 | 10 | 18 | 17 | 17 | 14 |    |    |    |    |

| NORTH INDIA OFFERED (M. KGS) |         |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |   |       |    |    |    |
|------------------------------|---------|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|---|-------|----|----|----|
|                              | JANUARY |    |    |    | FEBRUARY |    |    |    |   | MARCH |    |    |    |
| SALE NO                      | 1       | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5        | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9 | 10    | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 2017                         | 17      | 16 | 16 | 15 | 9        | 14 | 13 | 8  | 5 | 3     | 0  | 3  | 1  |
| 2018                         | 16      | 16 | 15 | 11 | 12       | 10 | 10 | 8  | 6 | 3     | 2  | 2  | 1  |
| 2019                         | 16      | 17 | 17 | 17 | 16       | 16 | 15 | 13 | 8 | 7     | 1  | 3  | 2  |
| 2020                         | 16      | 13 | 13 | 12 | 11       | 8  | 6  | 4  | 3 | 3     | 0  | 2  | 0  |
| 2021                         |         |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |   |       |    |    |    |

| NORTH INDIA SOLD (M. KGS) |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2017                      | 12 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 6  | 10 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| 2018                      | 12 | 12 | 11 | 9  | 8  | 8  | 7  | 6 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 2019                      | 12 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 2020                      | 14 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 10 | 7  | 5  | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 2021                      |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |





### INDIAN STATE WISE ESTIMATED CONSUMPTION OF TEA : 2019 & 2020

| Sl No. | STATE                                | 2019           |               | 2020           |               |
|--------|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
|        |                                      | Daily (Tonnes) | Yearly (M Kg) | Daily (Tonnes) | Yearly (M Kg) |
| 1      | Andhra Pradesh                       | 119            | 44            | 122            | 44            |
| 2      | Arunachal Pradesh                    | 3              | 1             | 4              | 1             |
| 3      | Assam                                | 79             | 29            | 80             | 29            |
| 4      | Bihar                                | 276            | 101           | 282            | 103           |
| 5      | Chhattisgarh                         | 65             | 24            | 66             | 24            |
| 6      | Goa                                  | 4              | 1             | 4              | 1             |
| 7      | Gujarat                              | 141            | 52            | 144            | 53            |
| 8      | Haryana                              | 62             | 23            | 64             | 23            |
| 9      | Himachal Pradesh                     | 16             | 6             | 17             | 6             |
| 10     | Jharkhand                            | 85             | 31            | 87             | 32            |
| 11     | Karnataka                            | 150            | 55            | 153            | 56            |
| 12     | Kerala                               | 79             | 29            | 81             | 29            |
| 13     | Madhya Pradesh                       | 189            | 69            | 193            | 70            |
| 14     | Maharashtra                          | 273            | 99            | 278            | 101           |
| 15     | Manipur                              | 7              | 2             | 7              | 3             |
| 16     | Meghalaya                            | 7              | 3             | 8              | 3             |
| 17     | Mizoram                              | 3              | 1             | 3              | 1             |
| 18     | Nagaland                             | 5              | 2             | 5              | 2             |
| 19     | Odisha                               | 103            | 37            | 105            | 38            |
| 20     | Punjab                               | 67             | 24            | 68             | 25            |
| 21     | Rajasthan                            | 179            | 65            | 183            | 67            |
| 22     | Sikkim                               | 2              | 1             | 2              | 1             |
| 23     | Tamil Nadu                           | 172            | 63            | 176            | 64            |
| 24     | Telangana                            | 87             | 32            | 89             | 32            |
| 25     | Tripura                              | 9              | 3             | 9              | 3             |
| 26     | Uttar Pradesh                        | 527            | 192           | 537            | 196           |
| 27     | Uttarakhand                          | 25             | 9             | 25             | 9             |
| 28     | West Bengal                          | 220            | 80            | 225            | 82            |
| NCT    | Delhi                                | 41             | 15            | 42             | 15            |
| UT1    | Jammu & Kashmir                      | 30             | 11            | 31             | 11            |
| UT2    | Puducherry                           | 3              | 1             | 3              | 1             |
| UT3    | Chandigarh                           | 3              | 1             | 3              | 1             |
| UT4    | Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu | 1              | 0.5           | 1              | 1             |
| UT5    | A. & N. Islands                      | 1              | 0             | 1              | 0             |
| UT6    | Ladakh                               | 1              | 0             | 1              | 0             |
| UT7    | Lakshadweep                          | 0.2            | 0.1           | 0.2            | 0.1           |
| TOTAL  | INDIA                                | 3035           | 1108          | 3096           | 1130          |

# ENTERING THE EMPTY TEA BUNGALOW

I entered the big and spacious empty bungalow,  
High ceilings, big doors and windows wide,  
A big lawn, beautiful bright bougainville in rows,  
Many age-old trees with huge hanging boughs.

The rooms and corners stood coy and quiet,  
The empty white-washed walls too stood tranquil and still,  
O how many stories and tales are hidden in it,  
In the quiet of night, do the corners whisper and gossip.

How did people fill the quiet corners once?  
What knick-knacks and souvenirs did they keep?  
Did they display rare art and paintings on the walls?  
Hung rich silk tapestries, spread out thick fur rugs on the floor?

Did they pour expensive wines in crystal goblets?  
Used finest bone china to serve the sherbet?  
Had they used gold and silver cutleries on the dinner table?  
Lived like those Kings and Queens in folklore and fables?

Did the corners display true wealth and opulence?  
Or hollow vanities and vainglorious haughtiness?  
Aristocratic royal glorious and magnificent grandeur?  
Or ostentatious, display of useless riches?

Were there many clandestine affairs and romance by the fireplace?  
Heartfelt love letters written and tossed in the blaze?  
Or did folks lazily sit by it, sipping hot mugs of tea, weaving many a secret story,  
Till the last glowing ember died so quietly?

I wandered around the big empty palatial rooms,  
The stark bare walls now in descending gloom,  
I thought about the people who once stayed here,  
Made the house their home, with warmth and care.

Vijaylaxmi Sarmah.  
Guwahati





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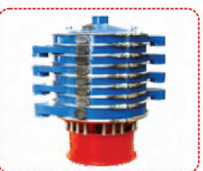
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Meyer Colour Sorter (Ancoo)



Rolling Table



Vibro Screen Sorter



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