

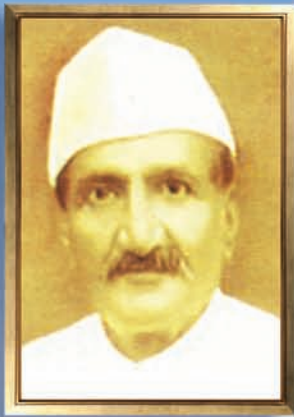
CONTEMPORARY

TEA TIME

Vol. XXIV No. 2 • July-September 2015 • Rs. 80 • US\$7

TEA JOURNAL WITH THE LARGEST READERSHIP 26th YEAR OF PUBLICATION

The Wonder of Wagh Bakri





Errol O' Brien

TEA QUIZZY

QUESTIONS

1. Strong tea, burnt toast and magnesium oxide in the ratio of 1: 2: 1 combines to form a very useful mixture. Why?
2. In the recent landslide disasters in Mirik and Kalimpong, the Indian Meteorological Department fell short of rain gauges. From where did the Geological Survey of India collect rainfall data trying to solve the landslide mystery?
3. Which variety of *Camellia Sinensis* is now indigenous to Japan?
4. Which advertising personality who made his name in another field was known for introducing calligraphy elements to his advertisements and worked on several campaigns for Lipton?
5. Lionel Messi is said to have which special tea before every meal?
6. Tea has a high commercial value. Sugar in Cuba is referred to as White Gold. Tea is gold of which colour of the spectrum?
7. Greenpeace India came under Governmental sanctions this year. One of the environmental issues concerned tea. What did Greenpeace highlight to prejudicially influence foreign interest in Indian tea?
8. How many kilogram's of freshly plucked tea leaves make up a kg of manufactured tea?
9. Chevalier Robert Paganini, an Italian engineer working on a rail section in Assam named a town after the Queen Consort of Italy during the reign of King Umberto 1. Consequently a tea estate also carries the same name. Which one?
10. Oleoresin is a substance prepared by the solvent extraction of a spice or a herb used in flavouring. Which brand is presently advertising its tea blended with seven spices?

Answers

- 1) It is the universal antidote to poison • 2) Rainfall data from the gauges of tea estates • 3) Japonica • 4) Satyajit Ray • 5) Yerba Mato--- Argentinean Green tea • 6) Green Gold • 7) The use of pesticides in tea gardens • 8) 4.5 kg • 9) Margherita in Assam named after Queen Margherita Marie Teresa • 10) Wagh Bakri



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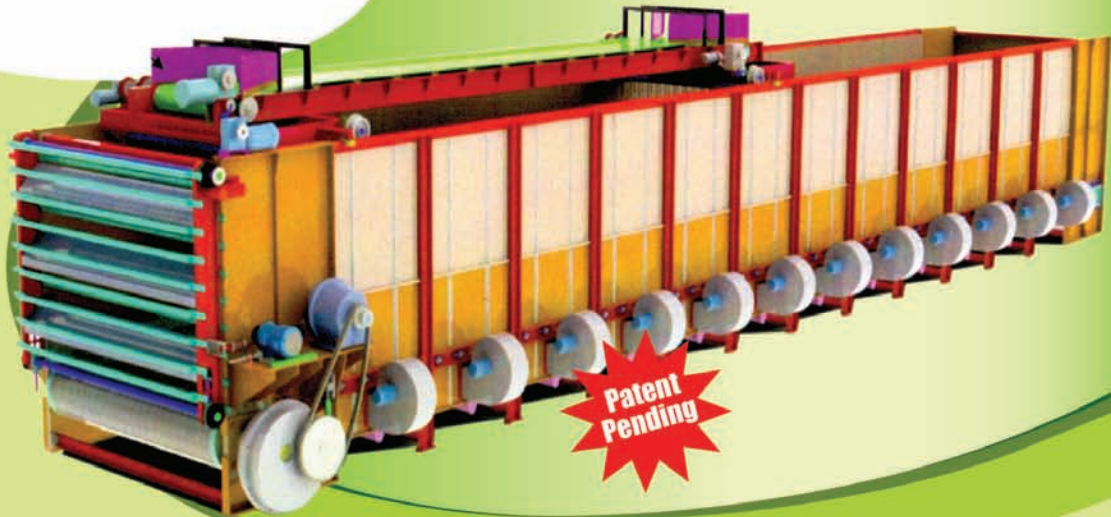
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Labour	Standard requirement	15% of standard requirement
Spreading	Manual	Automatic
Shuffling	Manual	Automatic
Spillage	Large	None
Leaf damage/wastage	Yes	Nil
Supervision and control	Multi station and difficult	Single point and easy
Quality of tea	Inconsistent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



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Falling Prices Growing Demand A Paradox

In the long term Tea – the cup that cheers – could become a precious commodity affordable only by a few. With rising cost of production and lower price realisation, producing teas is no longer viable for a vast

majority of estates especially in north Bengal. Some small producers are seriously looking at alternate land use avenues within the framework of their leases, to remain viable.

That Assam Valley estates, which produce the best teas, appreciated for their cuppage and taste, are challenged by adverse weather and pest conditions and have been losing crops through the years. And yet for the vast majority of these estates, their prices are declining. Which is also a paradox considering the growing demand for good teas.

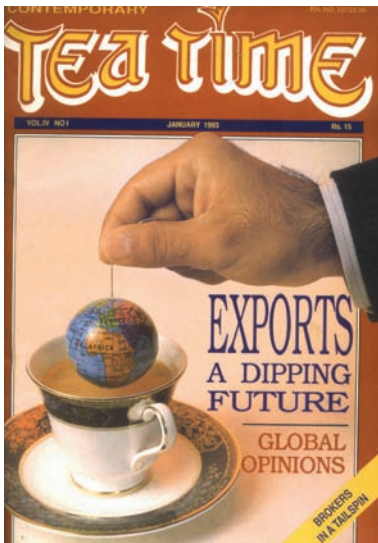
Global shortages may push up the prices in the coming weeks, with most of the large buyers still short on their annual quantities, but the reality is that unless the mindset changes and strong support manifests, over a sustained period of time, a dearth of Assam teas could soon

force our tea lovers to do without them.

In this issue we profile the august House of Wagh Bakri, known for their commitment to providing a tasty cup of tea. This dynamic Group has made inroads into the growing and developing market segments such as tea bags, ready-to-drink tea, instant concoctions and Darjeeling teas. They have opened several tea lounges as well.




A Nandkeolyar



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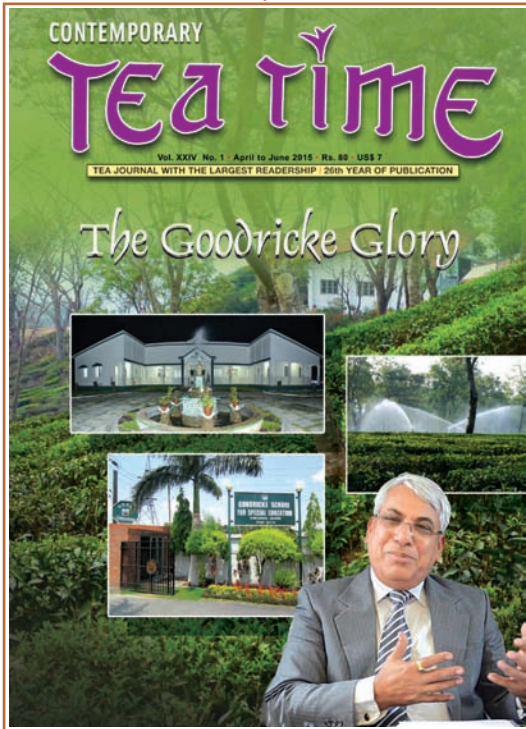
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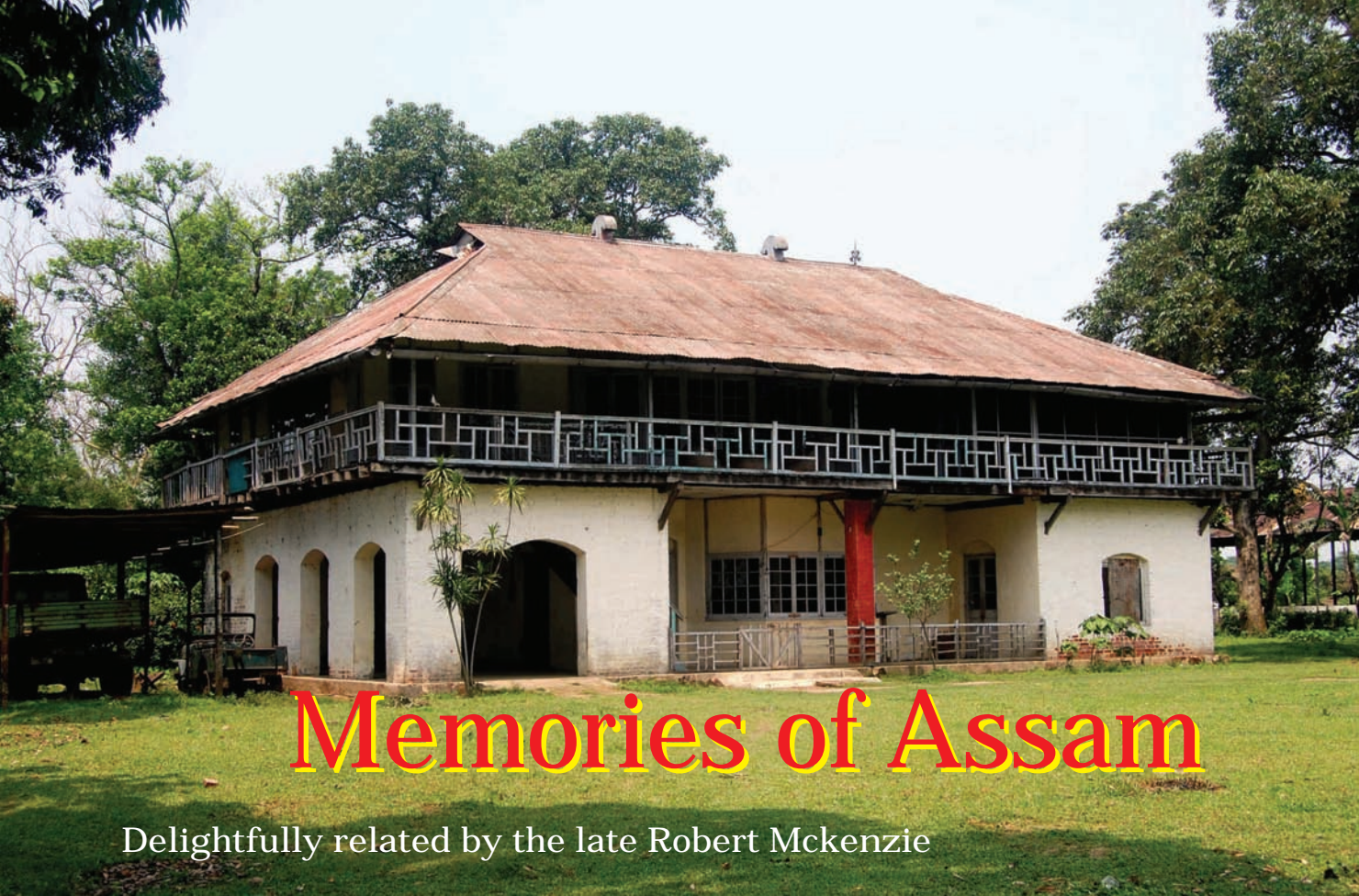
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Memories of Assam

Delightfully related by the late Robert Mckenzie

A journey into the unknown

When the war ended in 1945, everybody was trying to find a job as most of us were going to be demobbed. Fortunately, through family connections, I heard of some jobs, which might be available. Whilst still in the RAF, I went to London to meet the Chairman of The Assam Company. He said that there was the possibility of a job in tea in India. Other choices included openings in Africa and America. I chose tea.

He asked whether I could get immediate release from the Airforce, but I preferred to wait a few months until my proper group number came up. He then told me that I would have to go before the Board of The Assam Company in London.

The Assam Company was situated in The City in Lawrence Putney Hill. The office was up two or three flights of stairs in a very old building. Inside, one could almost see the working methods of a hundred years previous ... tall stools, high desks, figures bent over their work. The only thing missing was the quill pens.

I was directed to sit on a hard bench outside the Boardroom door. In due course, the Secretary called me. It was a large room with a long Boardroom table. Sitting at the far end were four Directors and the Chairman. The Directors were of great vintage and questioned me as to why I should want to go to tea in Assam. Simple answer, I needed a job and it



Robert Mckenzie

sounded suitable for me. I don't know what else I could have said because I knew nothing about growing tea – or about growing anything to be honest.

There were further shufflings and murmurings and I was sent out of the room to wait on the hard bench once more. Eventually the Secretary told me that they had accepted my application. He informed me that I should receive a three-year contract and my salary per month in the first year would be twenty-five pounds payable on my arrival in Assam. I was also to have a bungalow to live in and one or two servants. Another condition was that in the first five years, there was no question of the Board allowing an Assistant to marry.

They required me, for the next few weeks, to go to Marshals Tea Machinery Engineers in Gainsborough. This I did at my expense. Within weeks, I received my sailing instructions – from Liverpool, on a Ministry of Transport Passage to Calcutta. The ship belonged to the Brocklebank Line. This was paid by The Assam Company.

The journey to Assam took one night and two full days. We had to change trains half way by crossing the Brahmaputra by ferry. There was no bridge, and the railways were of two different gauges. I arrived at Nazira station at eight o'clock at night. There was a car to meet me, and I was taken to The Assam Company compound, to the General Manager's



bungalow. This was a large compound consisting of workshops, club, polo ground and about eight bungalows, including a hospital.

At the assigned bungalow there was no one, except the servants, because it was Monday and Club Night. A meal was waiting for me and being pretty tired, I went to bed. Next morning I met the General Manager. We had a talk at breakfast and then he took me down to headquarters buildings to meet the Accountant.

In his office he first asked me how much money I had borrowed, which seemed to be the general practice of new arrivals. He made arrangements for me to pay off my already outstanding debts, plus another loan of one hundred rupees to live on for the present time. Repayment was to be made monthly from my twenty-five pounds. He then told me that he would show me the company compound. This meant we went directly to the Club, and started drinking brandy and soda at eleven o'clock in the morning. The Club was quite a large building with a general bar, gent's bar, dance hall and changing rooms.

I managed to get back to the General Manager's bungalow at midday. He arrived at about twelve-thirty. We sat down to have a chat. He told me I would be going that afternoon to Towkok Tea Estate in Sonari district, about fifty miles away. This estate, in those days, bordered on the jungle of the Naga Hills.

After lunch we went out onto the veranda and

sure enough, at the gates of his compound, was an old, lease-lent, Chevy truck, piled high with cane plucking baskets, a driver and 'handy-man' and two *jugalies*. I loaded up my tin box, mounted the cabin of the lorry, which was more or less open and started the journey. We had several stoppages for problems with the petrol. There was a lot of sucking and blowing through pipes but eventually we arrived, about four hours later, at Towkok.

The reality

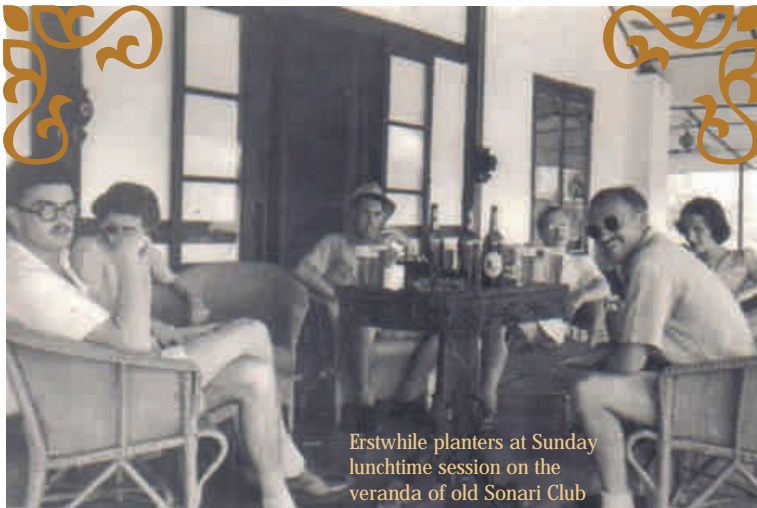
My arrival in Assam was dramatic enough. Now come the real facts of life in tea in the mid-1940s. The Japanese invasion threatened Assam. They advanced as far as Kohima in Nagaland and Assam was almost in the front line. The younger Assistants were conscripted into the services. During that period, the Assistants who were too old for the services were required to supervise the labour from the tea gardens who were conscripted to build the Dimapur to Burma Road. The majority of the managers, therefore, were very senior, having done more than their thirty years, due to the war.

On my arrival to tea, those who had been away were returning. There were some rather grumpy managers, overdue for retirement and were not exactly enamoured with the new assistants, most of whom had also been to war, but were treated as though they had just left school.

The regime was strict. All assistants at Towkok



The Nazira Polo team, mid-1950s



Erstwhile planters at Sunday lunchtime session on the veranda of old Sonari Club

had to assemble at the Manager's office at six-thirty in the morning (but in winter it was delayed to eight o'clock). We stood and had to listen to the labour complaints being handled by him. I'm sorry to say, some of them got a clip behind the ear.

I shared an outgarden bungalow with an Assistant who had joined just before the war and returned after being a prisoner of war in Italy. He was slightly on the mad side. For instance, when the cook, one day provided us with a pretty shocking lunch, he suddenly got up from the table, went to his bedroom and got his Lea Enfield rifle, supplied by the Assam Valley Light Horse army unit and opened fire on the cookhouse. The cook and the *pani wallah* were seen disappearing into the tea garden, not to appear near the bungalow again.

Shortly I moved to a very dilapidated *chung chota* bungalow that was almost in the factory compound. It had wooden floors that sloped one way or the other. It was fifty years old and looked it. It had been used to store fertilisers.

I was to be a Factory Assistant. Every morning, after office, I had to follow the Manager through the factory. He was negative about most things. I did, on one occasion answer back, over some oil drums which had been cleaned out with paraffin. He considered them still dirty. My reply "I can't get into the b---things." With this, he marched me to the office and sent me to the General Manager in Nazira Headquarters with a letter. By this time, I could not care less.

Nazira was The Assam Company Headquarters - a large site where the General Manager, Secretary,

Engineer, Chief Medical Officer, Surveyor and their staff lived. Workshops, a hospital and stores made quite an impressive centre from where the thirteen Assam Company Estates were administrated. No agents were involved except the Forwarding Agents Kilburn & Co., Fairlie Place, Calcutta, who arranged the purchase of stores for the factories and sent them by river steamer. The polo ground and Nazira Polo Club were also in the compound.

The General Manager was rather astounded by the letter. He told me not to worry and sent me back with a letter to the Manager. The contents of the letter were unknown to me but

that evening I heard the Manager's car arrive at my compound. He came up onto the veranda with a bottle of whisky (then rationed). I did it justice!

I did have subtle revenge. There was a small nine-hole golf course hacked out of the jungle. The Manager was a keen golfer and talked a lot about his game. He always mentioned his delight in seeing *jungle* (wild) fowl around number five green. Living was pretty tight on about 350 rupees a month. I had inherited an old Damascus-barrelled shotgun. My



The author with Birdie Richmond of Lakmijan

only transport was a bicycle, so I went on several occasions with the shotgun hidden in my trousers, to bag myself with a few good meals. After a little while, the Manager at the office mentioned that there must be some disease in the wild fowl because they were far fewer in number!

On the more serious side, during manufacturing, the Factory Assistant was expected to be in the factory at all times, except for short breaks for meals. This sometimes meant a period of eighteen to twenty hours, not much time for sleep. This particular Manager used to frequently sneak about during night manufacturing hours to see if I was about. But I had a good crowd of staff, who usually gave me news of his arrival in the factory.

COVER STORY

WAGH BAKRI TEA LOUNGE

WAGH BAKRI





WAGH BAKRI TEA LOUNGE

The Wonder of Wagh Bakri

Rarely has a tea company blended history and modernisation as efficiently as Wagh Bakri. The journey that its founder Narandas Desai began in the early 1900s was arduous to say the least. But this has been one tea family that has stayed and flourished together. Giving tea lovers in India and across the world the finest of teas and tea lounges to savour them in.

The name "Wagh Bakri" has a history. Narandas Desai started this company in the name of Gujarat Tea Depot Co. in 1919. Earlier he went to South Africa with Mahatma Gandhi. He started tea cultivation there. But after 15 years he was asked to boycott and leave South Africa overnight. Mahatma Gandhi pleaded his case that time and got six months' time to wrap up all the business there.

After returning to India he started retail and wholesale business. One evening, while attending a Russian circus, on the bank of Sabarmati river he saw the ringmaster bring two tigers together on the stage. He was greatly surprised. However, a Swamiji told him that there was nothing exceptional in this. It would be a far greater achievement if a goat and a tiger could be brought together and made to eat from the same pot. This was the story behind the logo of Wagh Bakri.

Narandas Desai's three sons Ramdas Desai, Ochavlal Desai and Kantilal Desai followed in their father's footsteps by joining the business. Till 1980 Gujarat Tea Depot continued to sell tea through wholesale as well as retail through seven retail outlets. The first to recognize the need for packaged teas, the Group launched Gujarat Tea Processors and Packers Ltd. in 1980. The company also started an office in Kolkata to oversee and

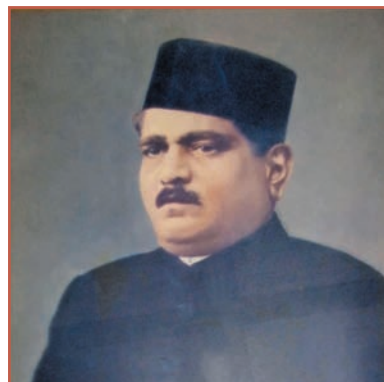


Ochavlal Desai

check the purchase of tea at auction centres there. The corporate office



of Wagh Bakri was inaugurated in 2006. The vision of the founder, has matured into reality over many years, blending a futuristic outlook, dedication and trust.



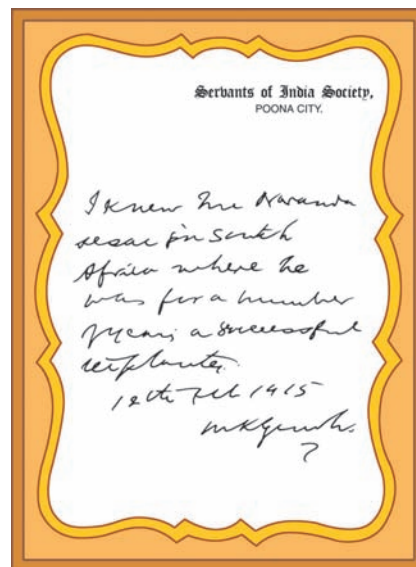
Ramdas Desai



Narandas Desai



Kantilal Desai



Mahatma Gandhi's letter to Narandas Desai

Wagh Bakri Tea Group is a premium tea company, with presence in tea business for more than a century now. The Group has striven to maintain quality standards and gone all out to source quality tea from renowned gardens having ISO certifications. Leaf from the best tea gardens is selected and the Group directors personally taste and evaluate the teas.

Wagh Bakri Tea Group has a fully integrated and self-sufficient plant sprawled across 60,000 sq. yards of land amidst green farmlands. There is no pollution and even tea waste is used as fertiliser. The plant is operated by a team of dedicated workers and skilled professionals who ensure adherence to Food Safety and Quality Policy. Strict and total inspection of incoming teas is done to ensure complete conformity with the samples, which are meticulously selected during tasting. Fully automated storage and reclaiming system, at par with the latest standards in the food industry, ensures safe keeping and retention of quality.

The blending unit comprises fully enclosed, touch free, stainless steel equipment with online multi stage cleaning to render safe products. The packaging unit comprises machines with latest technology. Food grade packing material is used as also, solvent free printing, touch-free packing of the best available quality, resulting in strong, attractive and safe packaging for final presentation to the consumer.



Spic-and-span factory interiors



COVER STORY





Factory

Wagh Bakri Tea Group started its tea business in the year 1919 with a single retail shop at Gandhi Road. Today it is the third largest packaged tea company in India with a turnover of over Rs 850 crore and over 30 million kg of tea distribution.



1892 – On call from Mahatma Gandhi, Narandas Desai left India for South Africa. He procured a tea estate in 1915. But facing racial discrimination in South Africa, he left that country and came back to India with a certificate of merit from Mahatma Gandhi, a few belongings and years of experience in tea.

1919 – Narandas established tea business in Ahmedabad. The firm was named The Gujarat Tea Depot Co. with its first retail outlet for wholesale teas at Gandhi Road, Ahmedabad (erstwhile Richie Road).

1925 – The Wagh Bakri brand – now a favourite of millions of tea lovers – was born.

1944 – The Good Morning brand of premium blended tea leaf was introduced for tea connoisseurs – a blend rich in full bodied taste and aroma. The tea cuppers discovered it to be the right brand to begin their mornings, fresh with a cup that cheers.

1976 – Encouraged by the success, Wagh Bakri tea house entered into large scale distribution of Good Morning.

2008 – Imported Double Chamber Tea Bag

Machine viz. IMA C 27 from Italy.

The company acquired the land measuring 25,748 sq. metre adjoining the existing Dholka factory and also 12,595 sq. metre at village Tundel, Taluka Nadiad.

Opened a Wagh Bakri Tea Lounge at Ville Parle [East], Mumbai.

2011 – The company opened a second Wagh Bakri Tea Lounge in Delhi in the presence of TV celebrity Saakshi Tanwar to give the people of Delhi a unique experience of having tea.

2014 – The company opened yet another Tea Lounge in Delhi and one at Ahmedabad, Gujarat.



Wagh Bakri Tea Group is marching ahead on a strong footing, with more than 10% share of the all India market for packet teas and an overwhelming presence in Gujarat. However, in the tea growing front, there are challenges, as quality produce available in the yesteryears is no more seen. Tea growing requires fertile soil in hilly terrain with fair number of shade trees. There is non-availability of additional land in the north east for developing tea plantations. It is a challenge for the producers to make quality tea for the increasing number of consumers.

Export

Apart from India, Wagh Bakri Tea brands are household names in USA, Canada, UK and Europe, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Australia, New Zealand, FIJI, Singapore, Africa. Wagh Bakri teas are sold in more than 30 countries across the globe.

The company buys more than 50% of the material from well-established and well known Groups who themselves are exporters, their quality and purity matching international standards and from gardens known for quality. Priority is given to gardens with Rainforest certification or Trustea logo.

The company has reserved one seat on its Board of Directors, for a senior, experienced tea professional from the industry. Previously H M Parekh, Ex-Chairman, J.Thomas & Co P. Ltd was there for 15 years. Thereafter a well reputed tea professional N N Nagpaul who has more than 40 years expertise in producing tea, has been on the Board. So whenever referred, his expert advise is available to the company so far as prevailing weather conditions in tea gardens at different states, etc. are concerned.

Wagh Bakri Tea Group's quality consciousness is vouched even by its competitors. Recent addition is the NABL accredited laboratory for chemical testing, which ensures that highest quality standards are met not only on existing products but also newly developed products. Wagh Bakri Tea Group presently enjoys the following quality certifications –

- Certified Organic as per NPOP, Council regulation EC and Swiss Organic Farming Ordinance by Lacon GMBH, Germany

- Certified 100% Organic as per the NOP standards of the USDA by Lacon GMBH, Germany
- ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System, Swedac Certification
- Food Safety Management System – HACCP - Principles of Food Hygiene, by Intertek – ISO 22000:2005 - Food Safety

Management System, Swedac Certification

Whatever material is bought by the company is tested in its own laboratory, established at a cost of rupees two crores and all the materials are randomly checked for quality and purity.

The company also has a well maintained 60 ft long Tasting



Room, on the seventh floor of the Corporate Office at Ahmedabad. There is a team of 10 professional Tea Tasters. Order is placed only after tasting each lot. Most of the Directors have tea tasting experience. Chairman, P O Desai is himself a tea taster with 50 years experience. He has been invited many a times as jury member at tea tasting competitions conducted by various institutions/forums at national/international level.

Research and Development

Keeping increased customer satisfaction in view, Wagh Bakri Tea Group has now set up its own testing laboratory with state-of-the-art technology. This ensures meeting highest quality standards on existing as well as newly developed products. This laboratory is manned by highly qualified and competent professionals to match international standards like ISO 17025. This NABL accredited laboratory's continuous endeavour in research enables the Group to launch new products and at the same time rejuvenate the existing ones.

CSR

During the last many decades the company has directly or through NGOs contributed generously to various philanthropic activities every year from its profit. Institutions



operating in the field of education – medical and sports – have been given importance.

Education is given tremendous importance at Wagh Bakri. Every year the Group felicitates student achievers from across Gujarat.

As a part of its CSR activities, the company has chosen SEWA Rural, Jhagadia in central Gujarat, near Ankleshwar, by signing one MoU whereby the company will spend Rs.2.40 crores in a span of 18 months from 2014-'15 to 2015-'16 to build a nursing college and hostel, in which every year 25 to 50 nurses will be trained at the hospital of Sewa. Side by side the hostel building will be constructed

to provide accommodation to those girls joining the nursing course.

The Wagh Bakri-AMA (Ahmedabad Management Association) Centre for Governance set up in 1998, focuses on disseminating unbiased opinion on issues relating to public policy and community welfare. Study of corporate values and ethics is also a part of the Centre's activities.

A partial list of social organisations the Group assists are:

- Apang Manav Mandal
- Blind People's Association
- Sristi
- Sadvichar Parivar – Viklang Punarvas Kendra
- Shri Yugacharya Swami Pranvanandji Kelavni Trust, Visnagar
- Vishwa Kalyan Foundation
- Polio Foundation
- Sanjivani Health and Relief Committee
- Gujarat Lok Samiti
- SEWA Rural, Jhagadia

Future Plans

Wagh Bakri Tea Group is seriously thinking of diversification and acquisition of tea gardens in north eastern India to assure supply of quality teas. The company has forayed into tea lounges, presently successfully



Ahmedabad Tea Lounge

Key Personnel

Piyush Desai, Chairman and Managing Director, is a tea maestro, tea tasting and evaluation expert and visionary in the tea industry. He has been instrumental in setting high standards of quality at the Wagh Bakri Tea Group with deep knowledge and insights into the industry. He has also been Chairman of the Federation of the All India Tea Traders Association (FAITTA).

Pankaj Desai, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, is an expert tea taster and evaluator. He acts as the backbone of the company in financial and tax matters.

Rasesh Desai, Managing Director, is an engineer. He is a guiding force in domestic and international marketing and plays a key role in the tea blending and packaging process.

Paras Desai, Executive Director, with a Diploma in Management Studies from Ohio State University USA, spearheads the Group's tea evaluation, purchase, finance, operations and HR departments.

Parag Desai, Executive Director, with an MBA from Long Island University USA, spearheads sales, marketing and export departments for the Group and is an expert tea taster and evaluator.

Priyam Parikh, Executive Director, an MBA, majoring in finance, from Nirma University, is the youngest addition from the family to the Group. He is looking after the Group's purchase, tea evaluation, tea blending and factory operations.

Ashvin Joshi, Legal Director, is looking after legal and statutory compliances.

Dhiren Shah, President (Finance); Adarsh Chopra, President (Tea); Jitendra Raje, President (HR) and a team of very senior and experienced professionals in the field of Finance, Administration, HR and the tea industry have joined this Group, adding to the professionalism.

P O Desai, who is known for his quality consciousness, is heading formulation of blends, assisted by Vice Chairman, Pankaj Desai and Executive Director Paras Desai, who are all spending their valuable time for formulation of blends.



Piyush Desai



running at Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad. Its next plan is to open more such tea lounges in all major cities and vending machines in airports, railway stations and major public places. The company is planning to open 20 lounges in the next two years.

The production base near Ahmedabad is impressively spread over 14 acres with a modern manufacturing plant and a state-of-the-art production and packaging unit that conforms to international norms, having HACCP and ISO 9001 Certification in production, blending



and packaging of the finest tea leaf for worldwide consumption. Wagh Bakri offers a bouquet of brands to suit different palates and price segments. Wagh Bakri Tea Group products are Wagh Bakri Premium Leaf Tea, Wagh Bakri Perfect, Good Morning Premium tea and tea bags, Good Morning Green tea bags, Good Morning English Breakfast tea bags, Wagh Bakri Masala tea and tea bags, Wagh Bakri Ginger tea bags, Wagh Bakri Elaichi tea bags, Wagh Bakri Organic teas, Wagh Bakri Pure Darjeeling tea, Mili, and Navchetan.



The Indian School Citizenship Program

A school that looks beyond syllabus

A good school is not merely a passport to a good college and to a handsomely paid job. The Citizenship Program of the Indian School firmly believes that the aim of education is not only to prepare children for a career but also to prepare them to face all the challenges of life.

Shram Daan is an invaluable learning we seek to instill in our children. The value of offering a little bit of one's own time and effort for helping to alleviate the misery of another, is something our students are continuously taught.

Items made by the children include



(Top, above and facing page bottom)
Leading and Awareness March



soaps, rangoli/holi colors paintings and potted plants. They make hand-made items at school, the collections from which, they personally hand over to a variety of charities listed below and work towards a better cleaner society :

Agewell - Five wheelchairs for the elderly and immobile

Palna - Books, bookshelves and sponsorship of minor surgeries for the orphans

The Earth Saviours Foundation - Sponsored building material to make shelters for abandoned senior citizens

Supporting Housewives - We train them in craft skills and buying back their end product to be included in Shram Daan

New Delhi Rising - Students joined hands with an anonymous organisation to clean/paint walls and reclaim public spaces.

Our most challenging step is the adoption of Defence Colony Market for a Cleanliness Campaign. Our aim would not be the physical cleaning of areas as many organisations were doing as a result of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, but to educate the general public on the importance of cleanliness and how it can lead to a better, cleaner and healthier society. The students put together a Nukkad Natak on cleanliness. We gained



Candles and soaps made by students as part of Shram Daan




THE INDIAN SCHOOL

SHRAM DAAN
Simple Act, Significant Impact
(An Initiative of the Citizenship Program, The Indian School)



Shramdaan has been derived from two Sanskrit words "Shram" (labour) and "Daan" (donation) meaning donation of labour.

Shram daan is a significant and respectable way to help provide services to society for its development and to those in need.

To create awareness, The Indian School, makes an ongoing effort to inculcate Shram Daan among our children by using the proceeds of all sales from various products/ artifacts made by the children themselves (for e.g. holi colours, potted plants, paintings, soaps, aroma/ floating/ decorative candles etc) towards a charitable purpose.

We have previously sponsored wheelchairs for the elderly and minor surgeries for children at an orphanage. Our biggest contribution has been adopting the Defence Colony Market for creating awareness on cleanliness.

With your support, we hope that our journey continues to touch more lives of those who are less able and help make our society a better place for our children.



the support of the of RWA Defence Colony Market, the Defence Colony Market Association and the local leaders which was followed by frequent visits to the market to interact with the *paan-wallahs*, parking attendants, shopkeepers and staff to understand why there was so much garbage in such a posh market of south Delhi.

to install a few more. We also gave over 20 small dustbins to the owners of the kiosks in the market with the idea that the general public that buy things with small wrappers that create the maximum litter, would use them. This exercise did clean up the market to an extent but the journey is on. Our next aim is to meet the owners of the restaurants and florists to work out a better way to dispose their waste and water.

In an effort to solve this aspect, The Citizenship Program installed four dustbins in the market (funded through Shram Daan), and the MCD was quick

We are constantly looking for new and sustainable ideas on how to create a litter-free market. We realise we have a long way to go but what is important is the type of exposure the students are getting at this early age in the form of interacting with local leaders, how to work around the hurdles of red tape, life-skills picked up by interacting with all strata's of society and to actually getting down to the ground level and achieving a target.





Tea Price Stability: A thought

Amarendra Nandkeolyar suggests a way to balance supply and demand in the domestic market

Demand and supply establish prices. Overall supply of tea in India exceeds its demand, in certain categories. Demand for 'common quality' teas is limited. By 'common' we mean teas with thin liquors. This is mainly due to two reasons, which are:

- 1) Proliferation of domestic packet/tea bags, which necessarily need to be good liquoring and tasty.
- 2) Indian consumers like their tea with milk so their need is for thick, colourful and strong teas. India appreciates and pays the best prices for the overall quality. Some of this variety is in demand overseas too, during the second flush period.

But in many countries, tea is drunk without milk. So what we consider as thin and weak liquor satisfies demand for their taste. And it is in this category that we face the greatest challenge within our own shores.

Let us now assume that we have a domestic availability of 1006

mkg of teas. (production 1207 mkg minus exports 201 mkg). This is 83% of our production. The balance 17% leaves the shores. If we can get an additional 13% out of our shores, the supply side would be better balanced. Based on this equation, let a compulsory domestic quota of 70 % be created. The rest 30% would be for statutory export that cannot be sold in the domestic market.

This means an estate can sell up to 70% of its produce in the domestic market, and has to either export or buy domestic quota for the remaining 30% of its teas, which is otherwise meant for statutory export. For example, a producer from Dooars who may not be able to export 30% of his teas, will need to purchase from a producer in Assam, who can export more than the statutory 30%, a part of his domestic quota of 70%. This would ensure that only a certain amount of tea is available in the domestic market.

This balance of supply and demand may lead to price stability. As the demand increases the quotas can be adjusted to ensure sufficient tea for the domestic consumers.

This system proved workable in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, although then the quotas were for exports and not for domestic consumption.



Initiated in '70s the Company has emerged out as a frontal flagship organization among the Tea Processing machinery manufactures with its sheer strength in Managerial ability, R & D, Quality Control and prompt and efficient after sales service. The Company has achieved monumental success in evolving full range of Tea Processing machinery with proven efficiency incorporating latest technology. **The success of a Company is measured by the yardstick of quality and reliability of its products and its ability to ensure strong sales and service back up network, a must for the Tea Industry.** The Company is a veritable treasure house of most modern and State of The Art machinery and has seven full fledged sister concerns, four big well-equipped factories and a penetrating Sales and Service network all over India and abroad. Plucking to Packing, whatever the need is the Company is always there with personalized services.

Our Indigenous products are:

- Axial Flow Fan.
- Green Leaf Shifter.
- Rotor Vane.
- **Z-Cut** CTC Machines.
- **Zenifer** CFM Machine.
- **Zest** VFB Dryer.
- S.S. CTC Segments.
- Coal Saver Device etc.

This besides, in order to combat with present labor shortage problem, steep rise in wages and to upgrade productivity in tea estates without compromising with the quality we had launched a couple of imported tea field mechanization related equipments which we have been importing e.g.;

- **"OCHIAI"** Plucking Machines (Double & Single Men operated) & Hedge Trimmer from JAPAN.
- **"KAAZ"** Tea Pruner and Brush Cutter from JAPAN.
- **"MORI"** Tea Pruner, Deluxe Brush Cutter & Mechanical Auger machines from TAIWAN.
- Solar Powered Insect Trap & Yellow Sticky Trap.
- Tractor Towed & Driven Sprayer Machine incorporated with ITALIAN Technology.

Above machines are being supplied to numerous tea gardens for last 7-8 years quite successfully and our list of clientele include Agency Houses, Group Gardens and renowned Proprietary Concerns. In this respect we have been supporting the Tea industry by opening up New Horizons.

"Service is our Commitment" is the motto of our Company.

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Tidings from BANGLADESH



Monjur Hossain

Current challenges of Bangladesh tea industry

The Bangladesh tea industry is now at the threshold of new challenges arising out of the demands of liberalisation and globalisation. Further the current production is not coping with the increasing domestic demand.

Hence, strategic gearing is an immediate need of the industry. Sector experts' opine that to meet challenges, the following areas need to be addressed:

- ✔ Tea development with extension and replacement of the old teas
- ✔ Small holding cultivation
- ✔ Improvement of drainages and irrigation facilities in tea
- ✔ Balancing and modernisation of tea factories to meet the excess demand
- ✔ Establishment of bought leaf factories to support small holders in Bandarban and Nilphamari districts
- ✔ Labour welfare in tea estates to increase their efficiency and output
- ✔ Land use and ecology development with crop diversification
- ✔ Manpower development with training of management personnel, supervisory staff and of workers
- ✔ Support to the industry with research in the field of variety improvement, Micro propagation, and Biotechnology in tea breeding, Improvement of soil fertility, Soil mapping, Integrated pest management and Biological pest control, Conservation of energy and utilisation of solar energy etc.
- ✔ Promotional strategies for local and export market planned with captive strategy, media strategy and through market research
- ✔ Institutional support and services to the industry with re-



Tofael Ahmed, Commerce Minister, Government of Bangladesh, at the workshop on Roadmap for Development: Tea Industry of Bangladesh

appropriation of the constitution of Tea Board and its branches viz. Research and Development and reshuffling its total manpower

- ✔ Establishment of a separate Smallholders Development Authority.

The WTO fallout

With the tariff barriers being lifted, it is perceived that the industry is heading for a shakeout. The plantation sector should study the implication of the WTO and formulate a strategy to meet the future challenge. In this context some of the clauses of the agreement appeared as principal concerns relating to developments in the plantation industry. There is also a need to re-look at the competitive strengths of the tea industry, both internal and external. There is a strong feeling that the industry needs to overhaul itself in terms of efficient lines of production, harnessing the economics of costs, product

innovations and concentrate on value-chains vis-a-vis global standards.

Internal restructuring

It is perceived that companies will have to look into the process of production and the costs involved therein. With increasing competition, companies will have to adopt policies that control the production and manufacturing costs. International benchmarking in terms of production and yields would play a vital role.

Brand development

One of the major strategic shifts inevitable will be a gradual consolidation of branded tea. In fact, with increase in the value-added segments over the years, the share of this segment has seen a gradual rise. Although the current market for loose tea is gaining ground, it is expected that availability of loose tea through retail trading processes will decline.

Value-additions through changes in the product forms and delivery systems have been part of the winning formula in the domestic and international markets and are bound to get replicated in Bangladesh down the years. Quality is an important factor. But, the real differentiator is the way a company sells its product. Companies interested in brand development should have a long-term strategic view of it as a capital investment. It is not recommended to launch any brand without having a big budget in market promotion.

Market segmentation

Serving the commodity market alone cannot protect the market share of a product. Branding requires segmentation. There are many micro-market segments in Bangladesh and mass customisation is essential these days. It is extremely important that a company keeps segmenting the market into tangibles, which is measurable, quantifiable and observable and can be copied as well. The intangibles come with better imagery, belief and reputation, cashing on the emotional element.

This happens to be the latest keyword for all scientifically managed tea plantations in Bangladesh. To this effect, the tea industry should join hands with the Management Training Centre of Bangladesh Tea Board for evolving new technologies for improved management systems at the plantation levels.

This management system should encompass a whole gamut of traits pertaining to the tea industry including estate performance, strategic cost management, enlightened leadership, forward thinking engineering and global competitiveness of tea. The plantation managers need to be sensitised to the concept and operational essence of plantation management, which is economically viable and environmentally

sustainable. Sound labour deployment strategies is the key element of increasing productivity for both plucking and non-plucking operations.

What is needed

The Bangladesh tea sector needs big investment for increase of production to keep pace with the rapidly increasing domestic demand. Realising the importance of the development of the industry, Bangladesh Tea Board organised several workshops and seminars where policy makers, industry leaders and other stakeholders participated and came to a consensus that the industry needs a big push in investments to overcome the challenges. The speakers also opined that resolution of land disputes and low

He said that if the target is fulfilled, Bangladesh could earn significant amount of foreign currency through exporting high quality tea. The Commerce Minister who attended the workshop as Chief Guest said, “The government has taken an initiative to implement the strategic plan – Vision 2025 – aiming at development of the country's tea industry and boosting the export of tea. Following implementation of the strategic plan, about 4,698 hectares of fallow land will come under cultivation and an additional 12 mkg of tea will be produced per year,” he said. The Minister urged the planters to discourage tea import through increasing production and said the Government would give all support to the producers for the betterment of the sector. “Despite



interest bank loans are needed for the tea industry to restore the lost pride.

Entrepreneurs said that due to falling production, Bangladesh's status has changed to tea importing country from an exporting country. In a recent workshop – *Roadmap for Development: Tea Industry of Bangladesh*, which was jointly organised by the Commerce Ministry and Bangladesh Tea Board, the Chairman of Bangladesh Tea Board, said that Bangladesh has targeted to produce 100 mkg of tea by 2025 and to reach the goal, the sector urgently needs investment worth Tk 1,000 crore.

potentials, we have failed to meet the increasing demand of tea whereas once upon a time Bangladesh was a leading tea exporting country,” he said. “We have huge potential to increase the production of tea as the soil of some northern districts is suitable for the cultivation of tea,” he added and further said that the Tea Research Institute has already developed 18 varieties of hybrids, four bi-clonal and one polyclonal seed varieties to boost tea production.

The writer is Managing Director, PMTC (Bangladesh) Limited



Delicate DARJEELING

The world's finest tea and its uncertainties

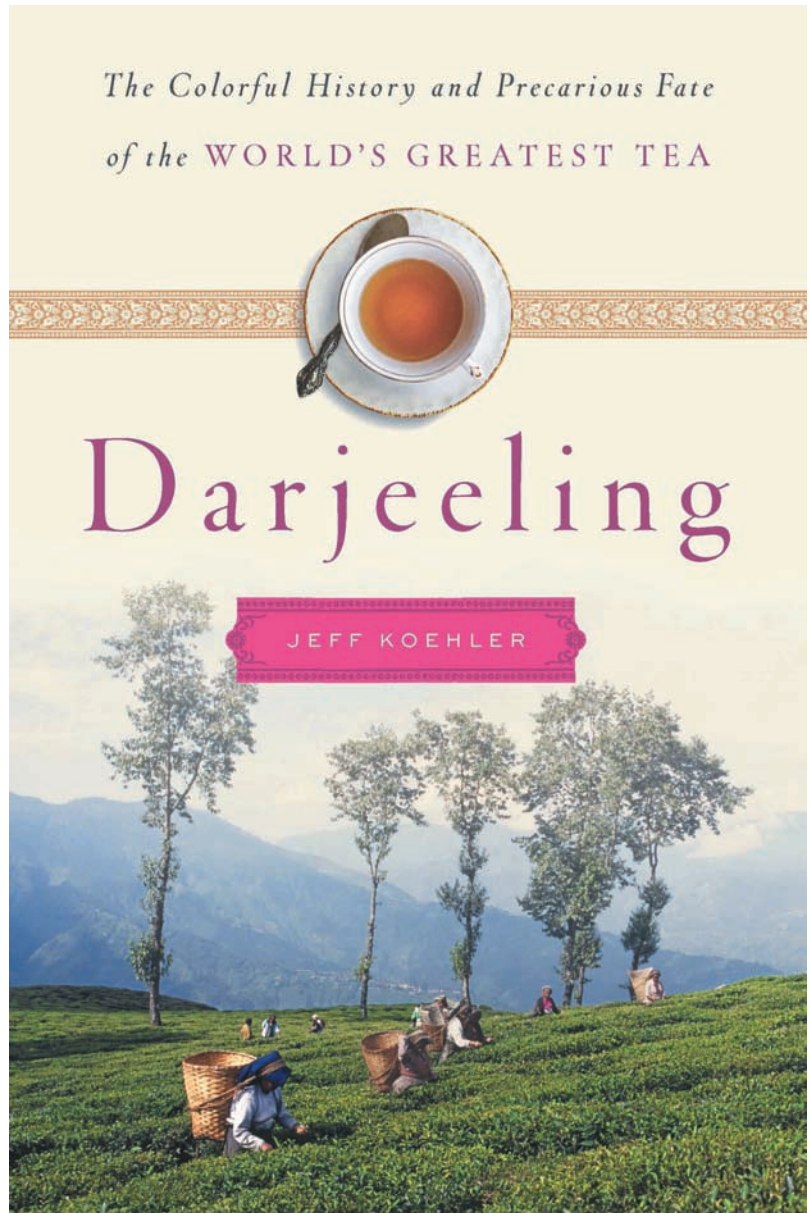
The estates of Darjeeling produce less than one percent of India's tea and opinion is divided over the resulting beverage.

Delicate Darjeeling is far from ideal, and much too expensive if all you're after is a punchy cuppa that can withstand lots of milk and sugar. This, Jeff Koehler informs, is the commonsensical stance of most Indians, which is why three-quarters of Darjeeling is exported.

In Japan and Germany, by contrast, the single-estate teas go down a storm and, the world over, self-styled connoisseurs describe it in terms usually reserved for fine wines. There are, we're told, notes of apricot, toasted nuts and Muscat grapes. The stuff can sell for astronomical prices and it can inspire decidedly rhapsodic prose. Koehler is not immune to this temptation: Darjeeling, 'like the finest female vocalists, can carry body as well as subtlety and grace.' Blimey.

The history of this elixir turns out to be fascinating. Koehler does a wonderful job of recounting the establishment of British tea cultivation in 19th century India. There was a conspicuous cultural agenda at play. As one contemporary put it, producing fine tea on imperial soil would help to 'pull down the haughty pride of China'. The trouble was, while India had indigenous tea aplenty, it could not match the finesse of the posher product from the Chinese hills. Some extraordinary tactics were required. These included sending agents to smuggle plants, seeds and trade secrets out of China.

The tiny region of Darjeeling, 'jammed like a thumb' between Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, was perfect for growing the subtler



varieties of tea. There was a happy combination of climate, soil and altitude. The sparse local population showed little interest in the project but this did not deter the Europeans. Thousands of Nepalese workers were drafted in and estates were established despite the constant setbacks of disease.

Koehler paints vivid portraits of life among the European planters. They were, for the most part, of the middling sort – former shopkeepers, soldiers, and so forth – and they enjoyed a tippie. At the Darjeeling Planters' Club there was a strict code for alcoholic consumption: beer from eleven in the morning, gin in the afternoon,



and no whisky before sunset. Rules to live by, then as now.

Before we romanticise things, however, it is important to note that there was a darker side to the tea revolution in 19th century India. As Koehler makes very clear, it was part and parcel of imperial intrusion and expansion. Fortunes were made but ancient landscapes and cultures were turned upside down.

The Westerners did very well for an impressive period, but with Indian Independence, political factors prompted major change. From the late 1940s a large number of Europeans sold their estates to Indians (no bad thing) and those who remained faced new challenges in the 1970s: legislation limited the amount of foreign equity in any Indian-based company. The tea kept on coming, of course, although these days a host of dilemmas and uncertainties are on the horizon. Separatist turmoil in the region is not good for business and the spectre of ecological change looms large: the monsoons are stronger and the temperatures are rising. Most



importantly, the basic model of Darjeeling production provokes headaches. It is extraordinarily labour-intensive and time-consuming. 22,000 hand-plucked shoots are required for a single kilo, and the processes of cultivation and refinement are mind-bogglingly precise. Sustaining the interest of a highly-skilled but poorly-paid workforce is proving difficult and levels of

absenteeism are soaring. It is hard to blame the truants.

The future of Darjeeling is therefore uncertain but there are some signs of hope. An awful lot of tea has been falsely sold as Darjeeling but this most famous of teas now enjoys the legal geographical protection status afforded to something like Parmesan cheese. This will presumably deter some of the fraudsters.

Ultimately, though, Koehler shows that the Darjeeling industry can only thrive if it becomes as sustainable and equitable as possible. A luxury product that still captivates gastronomic imaginations and helps to create a profession as bizarre as that of the tea sommelier has a fighting chance of success.

DARJEELING: The Colourful History and Precarious Fate of the World's Greatest Tea by Jeff Koehler; Bloomsbury; £20 (hardback)

*Review courtesy :
Geographical Magazine*





Kalyan Sircar

In Retrospect

"When in doubt, stay where you are."

Mahatma Gandhi

1945 – the Second World War ends. 1947 – India wins freedom. 1966 – Rupee is devalued by 40 percent. The twenty one year period between 1945 and 1966 was a time full of anxiety, doubt and fear for British tea planters. The old certainty had gone forever. There was no protection for the British planters hitherto provided by the colonial government. Instead, there was now installed a government perceived to be not sympathetic to British interest. Indeed, with high taxation and control of all kinds, British planters and other British businessmen found themselves in an unknown territory, navigating through which became increasingly difficult. Apart from an administration run exclusively by Indians, they had to contend with a powerful trade union movement and a restive labour force. What should they do? How best could they cope with the new situation that threatened their investment, lifestyle, and a secure future in retirement at home in Britain?

labour and with influences brought to bear on labour force than we have at present. Today the best managers will admit that they do not know what their men are thinking and saying, or meaning".

The old assumption was that a good manager was sufficiently in touch with his labour force and that his men had trust on him to get a fair deal. This being the case, they would not go to an outsider for help. Such allegiance of workers has all but disappeared. Moreover, the planters cannot rely, as before, on the fact that the Divisional Commissioner would be on his side.

Griffiths did not think that an increase in wage was the answer to secure their loyalty. The wants of labourers were few and as such increased wage rate would merely mean they would work less. The Advisor adds, "But this is likely to change in future. The spread of education and the general raising of standard of living in India are bound to affect the labour in the post war years when consumer goods are again available."

Griffiths noticed the 'unfortunate' fact that the workers trusted their Indian office staff more than they did European managers, and the former were 'tremendously influenced by Congress propaganda and we must not assume that they were on our side.'

Griffiths also noticed that even

the attitude of recent British recruits with degrees from universities seemed to have changed. They were often inclined to sympathize more with labour than with the employer.

Interestingly, some 22 years ago similar advice to planters was



offered by T C Crawford, Chairman of the Indian Tea Association (London) : "Managers realise the disabilities under which they labour from the lack of knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of people with whom they work. A general survey of primitive peoples and stages by which they have evolved their superstitious belief was necessary." (Forward to The District Labour Association Handbook of Castes and Tribes employed on the Tea Estates in North India, 1924).

Crawford advised that manager's dealings with his labour force should be guided by sympathy and knowledge – the duty of a manager to study the habits and customs of his heterogeneous labour force could not be too strongly emphasized.

Crawford continued, "the need for the *sahib* knowing the language of his workers, the importance of certain Indian customs like 'sradah'(when the coolie must be given time off from duties), separate accommodation for people belonging to different castes, etc.'



In 1945 P J Griffiths, Adviser to the Tea Industry wrote to the Indian Tea Association (London) : "We must have a much more accurate knowledge of facts and figures relating to labour than we have at present. We must be more closely in touch with the needs of

As early as 1882, Samuel Baidon, in his book, *The Tea Industry in India, A Review of Finance and Labour and A Guide for Capitalists and Assistants*, had advised the young planters to 'learn as much you can of Indian customs, religions, castes, legends, proverbs, and something of their history, This would make you a better manager.'

Can one say, perhaps unkindly, that British planters were slow learners! But let us return to post war years. The long war damaged the industry in many ways. Many planters lost their lives fighting in the war. By 1943, twenty-five of Assam Company's European staff in India had joined the forces. Three of them lost their lives. The war veteran planters returned to find their estates much neglected due to labour shortage, lack of proper supervision high price and shortage of food and material needed for cultivation and manufacture of tea. More importantly, perhaps, the social and political climate had changed, and the labour force were now more conscious of their position throughout north east India.

In a handbook, *Hints for Europeans Engaged in Commerce and Industry*, on their first arrival in India with special reference to conditions in Bengal and Assam, published in 1946 for private circulation, the importance of 'sympathetic understanding' was stressed - 'considerations for the feeling of others are unflinching lubricants to oil the wheels of human intercourse - knowledge and considerations are important.'

A number of behavioural norms were laid down. All arrogant or disdainful reference to Indian prejudices or customs should be avoided; European employers should avoid using vernacular words of abuse, Indians are particularly sensitive to the use of bad language in English - 'stupid', 'native', 'coolie'. Above all 'each European should act as living examples to the East of all that is best in the personality of the West.'

After Independence of India in 1947, another reappraisal of British presence was made. In a note of January 5, 1948, the ITA (London), observed that the British business had not yet experienced any 'persecution or discrimination' and 'we have been allowed to carry as best.' The British community was adapting itself to changing conditions and Indians had learned to see the difference between British rule of the past and the British residents doing business in India. On the side of the British they should expect government orders are properly carried out. The best they could do was to remain here (India) as invisible export - rather than return to Britain. The note concludes quoting Mahatma Gandhi: 'when in doubt, stay where you are.'

The quality that was of utmost importance was 'patience' and 'courtesy'. ITA's (London) note gave some examples to illustrate the ways of right conduct. 'A Mohammedan's beards should not be touched.' 'Striking should be absolutely prohibited.' 'Salutation from any Indian should be invariably answered no matter how humble the person may be. This should always be given by the right hand. Indeed, the right hand should always be used in giving or receiving any article.' The words "native" and "coolie" should be avoided by Europeans in India, as they are considered to offend the susceptibility of the educated Indian.

Realistically, however, the Association considered the post Independence situation in India 'not very cheerful one.' The old method of discrimination or prosecution was now unsuitable. The threatened attitude of trade union leaders, particularly that of Sibnath Banerjee, now a member of the Legislative Assembly, was particularly serious.



Yet not all was lost. There were some positive signs evidenced by a willingness of Indians and expatriate British to work for the betterment of India. 'British residents in India were no longer identified in the popular mind with an alien government. The national inferiority complex had disappeared and prospect was good for the new treatment of British traders as the American residents were treated - 'as a foreigner who is trading in India.'

But the ground reality was changing rapidly. During the war an Excess Profit Tax was imposed. In 1945 this tax was 100 percent of all profit over a standard amount. The war time control of export, distribution, price and rationing continued until 1952. In 1952 the London Auctions were re-opened. The duty on imported tea chest remained high. Then there was the high price of food and other necessities that continued to rise. The Plantation Act of 1951 introduced a minimum wage and other welfare measures. Planters considered these to be high. Many tea companies were closed, amalgamated with other concerns, or sold to Indian investors.

In 1946 the last blow was struck. The Indian rupee was devalued by 40 percent and capital control was made stricter. By now the British planters had no 'doubt' and they decided not to 'stay' in India any more.

And in retirement, in the words of one, 'many literally withered away after leaving their beloved gardens, bereft of action, company, and above all, the camaraderie that was the glue binding us all.

The writer is an academic based in London



Southern Innovations

From health to food preferences, tea is impacting society greatly

Tea connoisseurs will henceforth be able to enjoy Nilgiri tea premium grades, manufactured in Chinese and Japanese style, from the leaves plucked in the pristine Western Ghats at a height of over 7,000 feet above mean sea level (MSL) from Chamraj and Korakundah estates owned by the United Nilgiri Tea Estates Co Ltd. (UNITEA).

"These grades packed in attractive containers come with tips on good tea brewing and the impact on positive health", UNITEA Director D Hegde told me.

Of them, 'Organic Oolong Tea' is from Korakundah Estate, which recently gained entry in the Limca Book of Records as India's highest tea garden at 8,107 feet above MSL with 275 hectare tea estate surrounded by reserve forests and national parks of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. "Korakundah Oolong tea,



The Avataa stall at Private Label Products exhibition in New Delhi

manufactured in the style of the the 400-year-old Chinese Ming Dynasty, is rich in anti-oxidising vitamins and enzymes beneficial for digestive health. Oolong tea is claimed to be a slimming aid. It also has detoxifying alkaloids like Theine, Theophylline, Theobromine and amino acid", Hegde said.



P S Sundar

The tea comes packed in cans as we are used to seeing *rosogolla* cans. A plastic cover beneath which a tin sheet with instructions to

peel make the container attractive. Pictures to highlight Chinese origin and data on Oolong tea in bright yellow colour make the container informative.

"While a single green tea itself has proven health benefits, Chamraj Emperor's Choice premium green tea is a blend of

select green tea grades from delicate leaves and steam-processed in traditional Japanese style preserving natural flavour and colour. These leaves, grown in Chamraj at 7,000 feet above MSL, are vibrant green, which brew into golden green liquor with delightfully herbaceous sweet flavour that is extremely rare", Hegde described.

The container is unique and less known in tea circles. Colourfully embossed royal images with elephant make it majestic. The inlay has several images to hail the Emperor's Choice! The cap is attractive.



The new products from UNITEA in attractive containers

"Established in 1922, Chamraj remains committed to sustainable production methods and conservation of eco-system in the Western Ghats. The factory is ISO-certified", he noted.

"Detox T, now released, has herbal infusion helping metabolism and youthfulness. Regularly drinking such infusions means a young and energetic you! This helps to improve skin appearance and promotes general health. The infusions help to purify blood, provide nutrients and anti-oxidants to strengthen immune and digestive systems. The infusions come in bags of one gram each", Hegde added.

Another instance of innovation happened when tea companies participated in the international exhibition on Private Label Products in New Delhi from August 6-8, 2015. This was India's only exhibition of its kind catering to the country's fast growing retail market emphasising on own brands and label and contract manufacturing.

"We have been creating brands and labels for our multiple-brewing teas, focussing on the marketers or

dealers. Our teas bearing the brand names of marketers are doing very well. We are in the process of exploring more such retailers and dealers who would like to sell our teas using their domain advantage", G Udayakumar, Director, Avataa Beverages, said.

Avataa Beverages participated in this exhibition displaying its private label products already in the market and building business relationship with the newcomers.

"The exhibition had various



Sudarshan Motwani (*extreme right*), MD, Orchid Square, Coonoor, explaining the varieties of tea served in his 'Tea Pot' section with liquid tea varieties on display

segments of which food and beverages were prominent. This segment is expected to grow by 30 percent in the next five years because of the burgeoning middle class which is increasingly turning to private labelling in brands", Udayakumar said.

"The visitors to the stalls were serious in business which showed a promising outlook. With intensive follow-up, it should be possible to seal business deals for private labelling by new contacts. With a right mix, there will be opportunity for consumers at large to pick up our quality and unique multiple-brewing teas through their familiar localised brands. Also, dealers and sellers will have the right opportunity to sell our quality teas through their own labelling to support their marketing effort", Avataa Production Executive E N R Vejeya Shekara, who represented the company at the exhibition, said.

Another instance of innovation

comes in the form of serving hot and cold tea varieties in the Nilgiris, the Mecca of the south Indian tea industry. "The Nilgiris grows about 62,000 acres of tea bushes from 2,000 to 6,000 feet above mean sea level. It is the country's second largest tea producing region next to Assam. The quality Nilgiri teas have fine flavour with bright brisk liquor and smooth rounded mellow attraction. The Nilgiri teas are famous all over the country and in

many nations. However, visitors are not able to enjoy a variety of Nilgiri tea when they are in the Nilgiris. To fill the void, we have created the 'Tea Pot' segment", Sudharshan Motwani, Managing



North Indian tea ladies living in Coonoor performing at the Independence Day celebrations

Director, Orchid Square Boutique Hotel, Coonoor, told me.

The hotel is situated at a vantage point on the way to Coonoor's most popular picnic spots - Lamb's Rock and Dolphin's Nose.

Among the Hot Tea varieties available there are *Masala Chai*, *Spicy Milk Chai*, *Cardamom Tea*, *Saffron Tea*, *Chocolate Mint Tea*,

Fresh Orthodox Black, *Orange Pekoe Leaf Tea* and *Orange Green Tea*.

Among the Ice Tea variants are *Apple and Honey Iced Tea*, *Citrus Mint Iced Tea*, *Peach Iced Tea* and *Ginger Iced Tea*.

The menu card given to the visitors provides details of the Nilgiri tea - "The Nilgiris, or the Blue Mountains, are a stunningly beautiful range of hills that stretch down to the south-western tip of India. The tea industry was established here in 1840 when Colonel John Ouchterloney came upon a sheet of virgin forest well-supplied with its own rivers and streams."

Many north Indian families living in Coonoor have tea connections in growing, manufacturing, trading or broking. Some ladies from these families who hold thematic meetings every month under the banner 'Fun Zone' to focus on issues of national importance, used this year's Independence Day to pledge to do their might to make India a superpower.

"Coinciding with Independence Day, we paid our respects to freedom fighters and pledged to contribute to nation building through creating stronger patriotic families at our grass-root level", Suman Goyal, who co-ordinated the event, said.

"Providing the best possible education to our children and moulding them into responsible citizens will be our direct contribution to building a stronger India", she noted.

"We wore dress and bangles matching tricolour, sang patriotic songs, danced to hail India's Independence and conducted quiz and brain teasers to recall our freedom struggle. Our stress was that Independence Day should motivate us to make India stronger through our families", added Sheetal Gupta, another co-ordinator.

Photos : Author



Shri Hanuman Tea Company

A trusted name in the industry

Shri Hanuman Tea Company is one of the finest Indian and Nepal tea traders, possessing the best industry experts and tasters with over 30 years of experience. With the vast and unique bio-diversity of nature in India and her neighbours, the company proudly offers unique varieties as well as the highest quality of Darjeeling, Assam, Nilgiris and Nepal teas at the most reasonable prices to its customers.

The trademark of the company is providing dedicated as well as consistent service to continue the trust and loyalty it enjoys in the industry.

The success story of Shri Hanuman Tea Company lies not only in its innovative and finest blends of tea but also in its high profile team members who possess perfection and aptitude for precise execution in the service industry that ensures the satisfaction of the customers.

The company is also one of the best suppliers of the finest ornamental, hand rolled and organic tea in the country. The



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-  Reduces risk of cardiac failure

knowledge and experience of the team members and experts have brought the company the height it has reached today.

Shri Hanuman Tea Company has recently launched green tea boxes of 100 gm and 200 gm in the brand name Doktor's Green Tea, which has acquired a big reputation in terms of quality and taste. It is 100% natural whole leaf hand sorted tea.

Doktor's Green Tea is widely available in the local markets. The company is also focusing on international markets.



26th AGM of FAITTA

The 26th Annual General Meeting of Federation of All India Tea Traders' Association (FAITTA) was held on August 8, 2015, at the Hyatt Regency Kolkata. In his speech delivered at the AGM, Harendra Shah, Chairman, FAITTA, highlighted a common complaint from upcountry traders, that the quality of bulk packaging needs improvement. He said FAITTA had appealed for declaration of 500ppm as permissible level for iron fillings and introduction of improved sampling protocols.

FAITTA had released a book on Food Safety and Standard Act 2006 and they had conducted a seminar on the recently implemented Plant Protection Code. The Chairman asked everyone to recall late President Dr A P J Abdul Kalam's dictum - "It will be no exaggeration if we call tea the national drink of India", made at the World Tea



Science Congress on November 22, 2011, at Jorhat.

Other speakers at the AGM included Ramesh Chand Agarwal, Vice Chairman, who said that India was fast becoming a fringe player



in the global tea markets. The main reasons for this were fluctuating quality, a lack of coherent strategy and indifferent Government policy. The Government had de-motivated exporters by reducing incentives for tea exports, he said and implored the agencies to rectify this so that India could regain its glory.

Chetan K Patel, Honorary Secretary, said the industry was facing unprecedented threats on

account of climate changes and extreme weather conditions.

The highlight of the morning session was a Talk on Ethics by Pujya Gnanvatsal Swami from the Swami Narayan Temple Trust. His

talk, peppered with anecdotes, on the power of ethical practices enthralled the audience. He recommended two books on the subject - *Management Wisdom of Lord Krishna* by Dr Vir Singh and *How the mighty fall* by Jim Collin. He went on to add, if this second book were to be condensed into one sentence it would be: "The undisciplined pursuit for more is the reason for the mighty to fall."



Tea Treasures

It is always enterprising and encouraging to see hotel chains contributing in more than one way to promote a destination, rather than the property itself. The Lalit Great Eastern is one such, whose motto is - 'We develop destinations and not just hotels'. The Tea Lounge is one of the best in Kolkata, where a wide range of handpicked flavours are served in a unique way.

In continuation to this tradition, to mark the essence of tea in India and to revive the tea culture in the country, The Lalit Great Eastern organised Tea Treasures - one of the biggest tea festivals in Kolkata. Dedicated to the tea lovers and connoisseurs and offering a platform to tea producers, tea marketers, tea shops, tea tourism operators and tea joints in the city



- the three-day festival brought all of them under one roof.

Rakesh Mitra, General Manager, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, was happy and excited about the fact that this would help to bring forth the legacy of tea trading and sensitizing about tea auctions, tea tourism and significance of tea in the Indian market. The famous Makaibari tea

estate was present with its wonderful range of tea flavours as was Assam 1860 soon to revolutionise the tea scene in Kolkata with a new approach at reaching out to people.

Tea and *adda* are quintessential with Bengalis and Tea Treasures was no different. Members of the Bengali film industry added glamour to the *adda* session.

Tea Trails to open over 500 outlets

Tea Trails, the first chain of tea cafes in the country that offers a curated range of gourmet teas from around the world, plans to raise \$2 million to expand across the country with over 500 outlets in the next five years.

The cafe chain specialises in elaborately tea-infused food menu.



The signature tea infused dishes include the Burmese Tea Salad, Tea Marbled Eggs, Tea Infused Thai Bowl among others. They serve gourmet teas from around the world and have an exquisite range

of teas from hot to cold and normal to extravagant.

"The large part of the expansion strategy is based on franchise network development. This business model is asset light with high return on investment. Tea Trails is in the process of raising an investment of \$2 million to support this plan," Uday Mathur, co-founder, Tea Trails said.

Tea Trails also plans to sell select blends of teas that would be available at premium retail stores and niche online portals, apart from the Tea Trails outlets.

Tea Trails offers almost 80 varieties of teas with various blends. The offerings range from white tea, green tea, Oolong, herbal and black tea. Tea Trails also offers bubble teas, like the Taiwanese

bubble tea and the tapioca bubble variant.

Tea Trails is promoted by a group of entrepreneurs. Tea Trails currently operates six outlets in Mumbai. The brand has now embarked on a pan India expansion strategy that is a combination of company owned and franchised outlets. In the current year the brand plans to open 45 outlets across the country. In the initial phase, the focus markets are Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi NCR and Ahmedabad. Kavita Mathur, co-owner and Tea Sommelier says, "Brewing tea is an ancient art which is seldom paid attention to. We understand the importance of brewing and steeping high quality loose leaf teas to perfection, without which, the experience of drinking tea cannot be enjoyed to its fullest. Tea Trails looks to expand its network with over 500 outlets within the next five years."

Surma Valley Tasting Session of Contemporary Brokers



The Cachar (Surma Valley) tasting session of Contemporary Brokers was held on July 3, 2015, at Silchar and was attended by executives from Kolkata and Guwahati office.

In all 21 estates attended the session including Goodricke Group Ltd., Jayshree Tea & Industries Ltd., Bhuwalka Trading & Tea Co (P) Ltd., Cheviot Agro Industries Ltd. etc.

During the session various aspects of tea manufacturing practices from handling raw material to made tea were discussed. The session ended with lunch.

Report : Niladri Saha



Contemporary Brokers use laminated paper and machine packing so that samples reach the buyers in a fresh condition. Apart from Siliguri and Kolkata, this has been introduced at the Guwahati branch as well.



HAPPENINGS

Popular Brands in Bihar packed at Siliguri

Sourabh Bhaduri and Abhishek Mitra of Contemporary Tea Time report

Companies and their Brands



Company	Brand
H T Tea	Tea Time
Rama Tea	Nidhi Tea
K B Tea	City Gold Tea
A K Gupta	Indradhanush
M B Tea	Suman Tea
R K Enterprises	Dalmia Gold
Rungta Tea	Real Gold
Sancheti Tea Pvt Ltd	Rajni Tea and Glory Tea



Market outlook and quality perception from Dooars



A K Gupta

Gopesh Mittal of A K Gupta says, "Quality teas from Dooars will be very good for the tea trade and packeters. Bought Leaf Factory (BLF) quality should be improved as there are plenty of reprocessed teas in the market. Packeters will be active on good Dooars tea for the whole year.

The consumers are becoming more conscious about liquor hence the bought leaf factories have to produce quality tea.

Price : Indradhanush - 14 gms @ Rs 5. Avg. Rs. 260.00 per kg pouch and Rs. 220.00 per kg jar.

Grade mix : BP & OF blend with secondaries.





Vineet Bansal

Vineet Bansal of M B Tea & Allied Products Pvt Ltd says, “As a packeter emphasis is on well infused liquoring teas. Dooars teas traditionally are appearance based teas and in the last five to six years a gradual change has occurred, though not upto the level that packeters expected. The gardens have benefitted in terms of prices every year though. We have seen prices shooting by Rs 10 to Rs 15 on an average and if this momentum continues we will see the gardens reaping the benefits.

Price : Rs 250.00 to Rs 280.00 kg.

Grade mix : BP , OF and BOPSM.



Subhankar Bose



Subhankar Bose of Sancheti Tea Pvt Ltd says, “Market for Dooars this year will be lower compared to last year because of various Tea Board regulations. Quality tea will sell at a premium.

Price : Rajni and Glory Tea - Rs 80.00 per 250 gm jar and Rs 75.00 per 250 gm pouch.

Grade mix : BP & OF and BOPSM in some blends.



Rajesh Grover (left) and Narayan Singh, owners of Shri Hanuman Tea Company



INDUSTRY

ITA Position Paper

Background

- ❖ The Indian Tea Association (ITA), the apex body of Producer's Association in India refers to the reports being aired by the BBC since 07.09.2015 regarding their findings titled "The Bitter Story behind UK's National Drink".
- ❖ It is unfortunate that the Report has been compiled without taking into account a holistic view of the tea industry of Assam, its challenges and the overall quality of life of the large population of workers, of which 50% are women, who rely on this industry for their livelihood.
- ❖ The BBC team visited a couple of tea estates without notice which is not the norm on a tea plantation due to security concerns of the environment. The conclusions drawn by the team were based on isolated findings. These isolated cases do not reflect the compliance level on sustainable welfare for the large workforce who are dependant and form an integral part of the Assam tea industry.
- ❖ The industry continues to meet its statutory welfare obligations and those beyond statute inspite of uncertainties that threaten viability in terms of rising costs, cyclical prices and fluctuating production levels due to climatic factors beyond the control of the tea industry.

Workers Wages and Amenities

- ❖ The tea worker in Assam receives a daily cash wage of Rs.115/- plus bonus as a deferred wage and also in-kind benefits which add up to Rs.249/- per day.
- ❖ Daily cash wage payable is revised every three years through Bi-partite and Tri-partite agreements involving the Union and the Government.
- ❖ In-kind benefits being provided are inflation proof as detailed below. These are provided under various statutes and bilateral agreements.
 - Free fuel and firewood
 - Concessional foodgrains of approximately 33 kg of grain per month per family
 - Free medical facilities and sickness benefit
 - Maternity benefit
 - Social security by nature of gratuity and provident fund under statute as pensionary benefits
 - Free housing and water supply
 - Free children's education at primary level
 - Essential amenities such as umbrella, footwear, blankets etc
 - Earned leave with wages
 - Dry tea

- Recreational facilities inclusive of national and festival holidays.

Welfare Schemes

- ❖ Tea estates have institutionalised welfare schemes which cover the following :

- Child Health and Nutrition – Provision of nutritional shops, creation of kitchen gardens, provision of subsidised foodgrains of 33 kg per month to each family, ICDS and Guided Nutrition Programme to provide lactating mothers with nutritious food during pregnancy in conjunction with Government of Assam.
- Vulnerability to Disease and Fatality – Diarrhoea and dysentery which used to assume epidemic proportions have been controlled. Tea estate workers are under the surveillance of the DOTS Programme to combat TB where medicines are provided free of cost. Awareness TB cure campaign has been launched by the Association towards ensuring that workers complete the medication.
- Health and Safety – Protective gears provided to spraying squads in place, which covers health check up of workers. Training and Awareness Programmes are conducted regularly.
- Water Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH) – This programme has been extended to 170 tea estates of Assam Branch Indian Tea Association to improve sanitation facilities in tea estates.
- Details of collaborative initiatives between the Assam Branch Indian Tea Association and UNICEF for the benefit of tea estate workers can be seen at :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkJKiQf-z-k> (UNICEF-Twining partnership);

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejZ5BASyr2k> (UNICEF-ETP partnership).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1YuMMfpYlQ> (Case study of Pinky Karmakar).

The relevant files are attached.

- ❖ The above amenities and welfare legislation ensures for the worker and his family a quality of life that no other agricultural sector provides to its workers in India.
- ❖ The Human Index Demographics i.e Infant Mortality Rate, Death Rate, Birth Rate among the tea estate population are better than the national average as would be seen from the following chart relating to 270 tea estates in the membership of the Assam Branch Indian Tea Association

(Figures : 2014)

Parameters	ABITA	ABITA	ABITA	ABITA	Assam	All India
	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3			
Birth Rate	3.56	7.56	8.66	6.59	22.80	19.89
Death Rate	1.59	3.71	3.46	2.90	8.00	7.35
IMR	14.78	23.55	30.78	23.04	55.00	43.19
MMR	152	182	72	135	390	178 (2011-'12)

(Birth Rate, Death Rate, IMR per 1000)

(MMR as per 100000 population)

Source : Government of Assam and GOI, ABITA Statistics from reporting gardens

Security of Employment – 01.01.1969 Agreement

❖ In the tea industry in Assam, a retiring worker has the right to nominate his/her son/daughter for filling up the vacancy created by his/her retirement. This system called the “Budli System” assures every family continued employment on the estate. The industry in north India is also governed by a tripartite agreement which requires every tea estate to maintain a minimum labour strength. The benchmark for labour strength is guided by the labour strength that prevailed on 1.1.1969 and subsequent recruitments made by virtue of industry level agreements. A retiring worker therefore continues to live on the estate after retirement with his son or daughter to whom the replacement employment has been provided. The Indian tea industry therefore has a larger strength of permanent workers compared to other geographies.

Child Labour

❖ The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 permits employment for children who are aged 14 years and above. However the Indian Tea Association’s National Committee had adopted a Resolution in 1994 and has advised member tea companies to ensure that no person below the age of 15 years is employed in the ITA member tea estates. This is followed by the industry and there is no employment of child labour.

❖ It must be understood that in a tea estate environment, families of workers reside on the plantations. It is practically impossible therefore to prevent small children from being seen in the fields with their mothers. However all measures are in place to ensure that they do not get involved in the work sphere. Their mere presence must not be interpreted as participation of child labour.

Housing and Sanitation

❖ The Plantation Labour Act entitles a worker and his family to be provided with a house as specified in the Act. The definition of family as provided in the Plantation Labour Act includes the worker and his/her spouse, dependant children as well as dependant parents. Houses are being provided in a phased manner as the requirement of housing keeps increasing

every year with the number of families increasing due to matrimony. As already stated above, a retiring worker has the right to nominate a direct dependant i.e son or daughter to take up his/her job after retirement. In a situation where there are two workers – husband and wife constituting one family, retirement of the husband would normally lead to employment of one child and retirement of the wife would again lead to employment of second child. When the children get married and have their own families the family splits requiring the management to provide one extra house for the same family. Therefore, the requirement for houses, sanitary units etc. are growing every year. This was recognised by the Government of India and a loan cum subsidy scheme was provided to the industry to accelerate construction of houses from 1964 to 1984. This has since been discontinued and therefore keeping pace with the growing need for housing remains a challenge.

Electricity

❖ Electrification of labour quarters is being done in a phased manner. Assam is a power deficit state and power supply/availability averages 60% of requirement across the state as the power distribution company is unable to meet the growing demand. There is therefore a waiting period for new connections, particularly in the rural sector. In fact, all the tea estates are compelled to run their factories on standby power through captive generation at a high cost, which is a major concern for the industry. Electricity therefore, remains a challenge.

Viability

❖ A close scrutiny of the industry viability reveals that price realisation has not kept pace with the growing costs of production thereby impeding the competitiveness of the industry. The price rise between 2010 – 2014 has been four percent per year whereas the cost of production has increased by 16-18% annually.

❖ The financial commitment of providing fringe benefits and rise in costs of production has cast a burden which needs to be mitigated by higher returns. The Government appointed Committees have in fact comprehensively mapped these issues and recommended the need for sharing of welfare costs between the industry and State Governments.

Conclusion

The tea industry remains committed to an inclusive growth paradigm which encompasses the development and well being of the workers and all other stakeholders in the value chain. The long-term viability of the industry remains critical for the continued sustenance and employment security of the large working population dependent on the industry. This would depend on the challenges in terms of cyclical price, rising costs and climatic factors.



Mohani News

A forward thinking company

Mohani Tea offers good quality tea at very affordable price. They are passionate about tea, always eager to give the best value to their customers.

“We ensure that the tea we select meets our blend parameters which conform to our robust and transparent five-layer Standard Operating Procedures of tea tasting. I myself have been a tea taster for over 35 years now and take keen interest to ensure best value purchase for our customers with a consistent endeavour to better the previous best purchase”, says Ramesh Chand Agarwal, MD, Mohani Tea.

Mohani has not only institutionalised the tea tasting process suitable to consumer requirement but has also got all microbiological and other necessary tests done at its in-house certified laboratory before packing.

They have world class tea packing facilities with all the necessary compliance certifications required. A huge amount has been invested to build a six million kilogram capacity state-of-the-art warehouse to store teas in the most safe and hygienic manner besides in-creasing supply chain efficiencies.

Continuously updating themselves on the changing consumer demands and preferences, Mohani has tried to improve its products to suit the demands of its consumers.

In recognition to its efforts, the company received the most promising brand award in 2011 from ASSOCHAM for outstanding commitment towards quality. The company has certifications like ISO22000 HACCP BRC etc.

Mohani has a diverse portfolio of teas such as CTC, Darjeeling, Orthodox, Green tea, Flavoured teas, Herbal teas etc and further wishes to enhance on functional and OOH tea beverages.

The company caters to general trade, modern trade,



Ramesh Chand Agarwal, MD, Mohani Tea



private labeling, government institutions, government canteens, e-commerce portals (online sales), etc.

A flagship Mohani tea lounge is already in process and within few months it will be ready to delight customers to experience a wide variety of Indian and international teas. The idea is to make the tea-drinking experience better and hygienic for lovers of the brew.

Mohani has gone overseas and opened its first office in Africa to let the people there enjoy the taste of Indian tea. The company has plans to start operations in Russia/US markets in future.

The launch of its tea buying portal is imminent too.

From Tea Cup to World Cup

Tea and sports have always travelled hand-in-hand

Ranji Saha is a Senior Manager (Marketing) in Mcleod Russel India Ltd.

Besides tea, his other passion is darts. After excelling in the national darts circuit, he is representing India in the WDF World Cup Darts in Turkey in October 2015. Let's hear from him about his dalliance with darts. This is what he has to say —

Darts is basically a serious bar sports for people who can handle their liquors well.

My journey in darts started from the Tea Room while working in my present organisation Mcleod Russel India Ltd. We used to have a dart board in our tasting room around the year 2001, initiated by my boss Azam Monem. It started as a stress buster and fun times with my colleagues, where we started aiming for Bulls Eye ala Robin Hood or Arjuna of Mahabharata.

The Merchants Cup Darts happened in 2002 where we participated and fared well, learning the nuances and finesse of the game. Our lavish lunch room in office namely "Quatro", sports one of the finest darts setup that I have seen in the country (while travelling to play in various darts nationals tournaments). I owe my success to the facility at "Quatro", which has so far been my practice pad. Also an understanding boss (who himself has been a national level shooter) allows me to travel for participating in the various darts tournaments across the country. This has helped me



in competing with the best of darts players across the country and helped enhance my National Ranking points. I have been extremely fortunate so far.

Decent wins at state ranking tournaments, state championships and a back-to-back Men's Doubles National Championship has provided me a chance to

represent my country in the WDF World Cup Darts in Turkey in October 2015.

The journey has just begun for me in the game of darts and there is a long way to go from here. I thus call this short journey of mine From Tea Cup to World Cup.

It's funny but I find some similarities between Tea and Darts :

- Darts have three throws a round while tea has three queues: leaf, liquor, infusion
- No one is a know-all in tea or in darts – the learning process is continuous
- Both are liquor oriented
- Both kill stress, help you to concentrate and are addictive
- No two cups of tea or two darts players are similar in their style or character
- Both help you to win friends and well wishers

And I can't do without either!



Amazing *Chaiwallah* Author

The most famous tea seller in the Indian capital, Delhi, Laxman Rao, is also a prolific Hindi-language author whose novels are now available on online platforms

Laxman Rao is not your ordinary *chaiwallah*. Apart from the sweet milky tea his customers love, he also sells 24 Hindi-language titles he has authored. His open air tea shop is essentially a few planks of wood perched on bricks, some buckets of water, ceramic and paper cups, kettles and a gas stove – all neatly placed on the pavement.

Born to a farmer in a village in the western state of Maharashtra, Rao left for Delhi – the hub of major Hindi language publishers – in 1975 to fulfil his dream of becoming a writer. He worked as a construction worker, washed dishes at a restaurant and finally managed to open a shop to sell *paan* (betel leaves), *beedi* (hand-rolled cigarettes) and cigarettes, a few yards away from his current tea stall. After a few years, he graduated to selling tea as it was more profitable.

Rao has a Bachelor's degree in Hindi and has sat a Masters exam through a distance learning programme. He worked hard to publish his books, but all his meetings with publishers ended in disappointment as nobody was willing to bet his money on a book written by a roadside vendor. Undeterred, he saved up enough to self-publish his first novel in 1979.

Turbulent lives, the struggle to rise above grinding poverty and the ordinary pleasures of life are the themes on which Rao's novels, political essays and plays are based. And he is not without recognition. His best-selling novel *Ramdass* – published in 1992 – explores the complexities of the teacher-student relationship through the story of a young, wayward student from Rao's village who drowned in a river.



The book, now in its third edition, has sold more than 4,000 copies. In 1984, a senior Congress party member spoke to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi about Rao's books. Within a few days, he received an invitation to meet her and present his books to her. "I met Mrs Gandhi in May 1984 with two of my books. She really appreciated my work and encouraged me to write more. I wrote an essay on her tenure from 1969-1972 titled *Pradhan Mantri*.

Now, Laxman Rao uses online selling platforms like Amazon and Flipkart to hawk his books. "His books are doing very well on our site. We are happy that authors like Rao have found a platform such as ours to sell his books," a spokesperson for Amazon India told the BBC.

Hitesh, the *chaiwallah* author's elder son, manages online sales coordination and the author's Facebook page. But despite notching good sales figures on online sites, Rao still cycles to various places to sell his books, a practice of many years.

Outside his stall meanwhile, a light drizzle prompts customers to

run for cover under the white fig tree that also shelters Rao and his tea making apparatus. Unfazed by the shower, he removes the tarpaulin, covering the utensils and stove and gets busy boiling water for tea. Loyal customers are huddled together under the tree waiting for a cuppa and fried snacks. On an average day, Rao makes 1,200 rupees by selling 150 cups of tea, enough to keep the kitchen fires in his two-room rented flat burning. The tea-selling author has won many awards and also received recognition from former President Pratibha Patil.

"Authors pull different stunts to market their books, make movies and TV serials out of them. I am a simple man. I get all my mail at this footpath address. My books are available in school, college and university libraries in the city and I am often asked to lecture in various schools and colleges across the country. What more can a writer ask for?" said Rao as he handed a cup of tea to a homeless woman waiting patiently by the stall.

Source :

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india>



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Welcome cup

When God came knocking

A group of fifteen soldiers led by a Major were on their way to the post in Himalayans where they would be deployed for the next three months. The batch that would be relieved were waiting anxiously.

It was a cold winter and intermittent snowfall made the treacherous climb more difficult. "If someone could offer a cup of tea", the Major thought, knowing it was a futile wish.

They continued for an hour before they came across a dilapidated structure, which looked like a tea shop but it was locked. It was late in the night. "No tea boys, bad luck", said the Major. But he suggested they all take some rest there as they had been walking for three hours.

"Sir, this is a tea shop and we can make tea. We will have to break the lock", suggested one soldier.

The officer was in great dilemma to the unethical suggestion but the thought of a



band of thieves but disciplined soldiers. He took out a Rs 1000/- note from his wallet, placed it on the counter, pressed under the sugar container, so that the owner would be able to see it. The officer was now relieved of his guilt. He ordered his soldiers to put the shutter down and proceed.

Three months passed, they continued to perform their duties gallantly and were lucky not to lose anyone from the group in the intense insurgency situation. And

then it was time for another team to replace them.

Soon they were on their way back and stopped at the same tea shop which was open and the owner was present in the

shop. The owner, an old man with meagre resources, was very happy to greet fifteen customers. All of them had tea and biscuits. They talked to the old man about his life and experience of selling tea at such a remote place.

The old man had many stories to tell, replete with his faith in God.

"Oh, Baba, if God is there, why should He keep you in such poverty?" commented one of them.

"Do not say like that Sahib! God actually is there, I got a proof three months ago. I was going through very tough times because my only son had been severely beaten by terrorists who wanted some information from him which he did not have. I had closed my shop to take my son to the hospital. Some medicines were to be purchased and I had no money. No one would give me loan for fear of the terrorists. There was no hope, Sahib".

"And that day Sahib, I prayed to God for help. And Sahib, God walked into my shop that day! When I returned to my shop, I found the lock broken. I felt I was finished and had lost whatever little I had. But then I saw that God had left Rs 1000/- under the sugar pot. I can't tell you Sahib what that money was worth that day. God exists Sahib. He does."

The faith in his eyes was unflinching. Fifteen pairs of eyes met the eyes of the officer and read the order in his eyes clear and unambiguous, "Keep quiet".

The officer got up and paid the bill. He hugged the old man and said, "Yes Baba, I know God does exist. And yes, the tea was wonderful."

The fifteen pairs of eyes did not miss the moisture building up in the eyes of their officer, a rare sight.

The truth is you can be God to anyone.



steaming cup of tea for the tired soldiers made him give the permission. They were in luck. The place had everything needed to make tea and also packets of biscuits. The soldiers had tea and biscuits and were ready for the remaining journey.

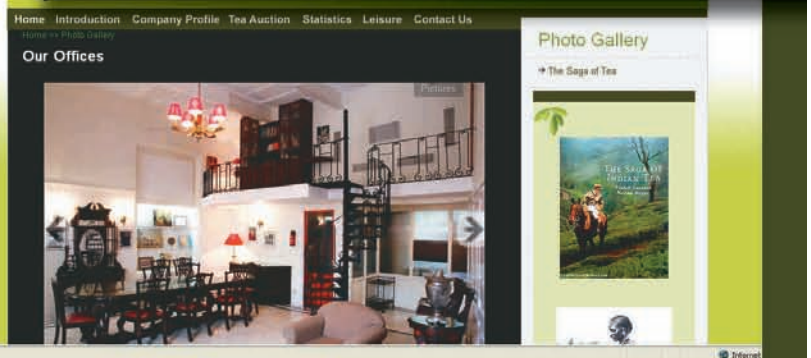
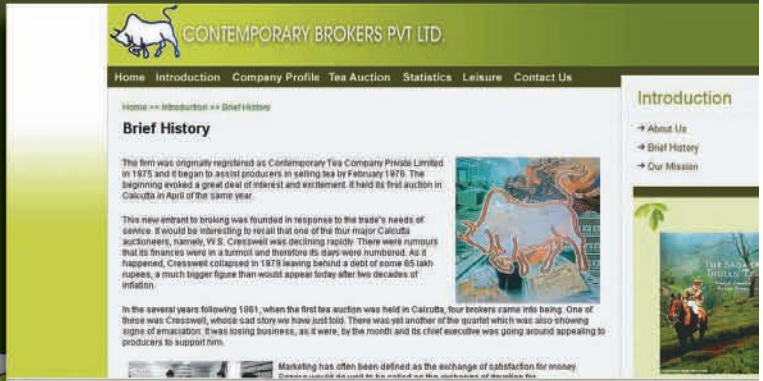
The Major thought, they had broken the lock and had tea and biscuits without the permission of the owner. But they were not a

The click of convenience



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