

CONTEMPORARY

TEA TIME

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TEA JOURNAL WITH THE LARGEST READERSHIP | 26th YEAR OF PUBLICATION



COVER STORY

Tea Industry at **CROSSROADS**

FOCUS

PLANTERS CLUBS



Errol O' Brien

TEA QUIZZY

QUESTIONS

1. Name the group of agitators in tea circles, which not only boycotted unions but refused to let men join the strike since they are easily influenced by liquor and sell out to the management.
2. The presence of antioxidants in tea prevents the development of a certain number of diseases. Which particular chemical is responsible for this?
3. How is the correct stage of fermentation in tea often judged?
4. Can you recall the first Agency which was the predecessor to James Warren to commercially make CTC tea?
5. Which company in India has the largest area under clonal tea in India around 2770 hectares?
6. There is a store point for teas on the Himalayan Railway route on a small station in Darjeeling for chests to be dispatched to Kolkata. Name it.
7. If the liquor of a tea is described as Dry what are its attributes or defects?
8. In which country was it once the practice to spread Orthodox tea covered with Golden Tips before guests as a prelude to tea preparation and tea service before tea time?
9. If the dry leaf in the tea tasting container is described as blistered, what are its defects?
10. In a recent book entitled *The Silkworm* written by J K Rowling under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith, the hero detective Cormoran Strike prefers Creosote Tea. Analyse the background of this tea.

Answers

- 1) Munnar Women's Tea Workers at the Kanan Devan Hills Plantations pressing for better financial terms
- 2) Polyphenols help to keep heart disease and cholesterol at bay
- 3) By the colour and aroma of the leaf under the fermentation process
- 4) Planters Store and Agency
- 5) The Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Co-Operative (Tan Tea)
- 6) Jorebungalow
- 7) Slightly High Fired
- 8) Iran
- 9) Too rapid removal of moisture during manufacture
- 10) It is a Tisane or medicinal tea made from the yellow blossoms and juice of white woody fruit of the Creosote Plant. It has a pungent scent. The Creosote plant is native to the Tahquitz Canyon in Palm Springs, California



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Readers Write



Dear Sir,

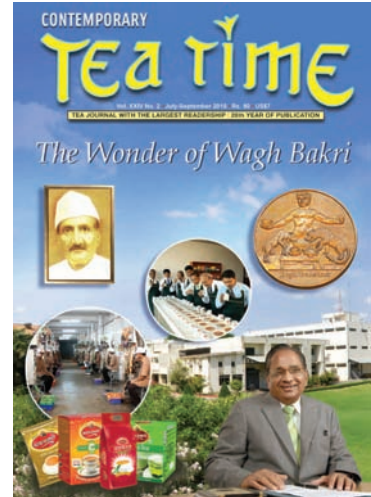
Contemporary Tea Time gives useful figures and information about the tea manufacture as well as market scenario.

There is enough tea in the Indian market but there is shortage of good quality teas. Our endeavour shall be to manufacture best quality tea to survive in the present market condition.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely

Sudarshan Jalan
Bhatkawa Tea Industries Limited
Kolkata



Dear Sir,

It was really enjoyable reading *Memories of Assam* in the July - September 2015 issue of *Contemporary Tea Time*. My grandfather was a planter and we were regaled on many an evening by stories of his planting days. He is no more. Thank you for bringing back memories of him and his wonderful reminiscences through the wonderfully written article.

Yours sincerely

Mona Ray
Kolkata

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 demobilised. Fortunately, through family connections, I heard of some jobs which might be available. While still in the S.A.C. I Robert McKenzie was sent on the hard bench over seas, 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 previous 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 Patteny Hill. The office was up four or five flights of stairs in a very old building. Inside, one could almost see the working methods of a hundred years previous... tall desks, high desks, figures bent over their work. The only thing missing was the quill pen.

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 on the far end were four Directors and the Chairman. The Director was 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

would be 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 meetings and I was sent out of the room for a few minutes. 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 Marshall's Tea Machinery Engineers in Gumborough. 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 Blackbank 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 Shillongga by ferry. There was no bridge, and the railways were of two different gauges. I arrived at Nautia 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

NOSTALGIA

Contemporary Tea Time 15

Dear Sir,

Kalyan Sircar's articles in *Contemporary Tea Time* are always a pleasure to read for the interesting information that they are filled with. *In Retrospect* in the July - September 2015 issue was no exception. The fact that not all the British people associated with the Indian tea industry were tyrants and some of them took active parts in understanding the labour force, is enlightening. Even behavioural norms like avoiding arrogant or disdainful reference to Indian prejudices or customs were laid down! We look forward to such informative articles.

Thanking you
Yours sincerely

Rajesh Mehta
New Delhi

In Retrospect

"When in doubt, stay where you are."
Mahatma Gandhi

Kalyan Sircar

1911 - the Second World War ends. 1947 - India wins London. 1948 - Report is dominated by Sircar. The twenty year period between 1947 and 1967 was a time full of conflict, doubt and fear for British tea planters. The old assumption had been that the British planters and their tea were the mainstay of the Indian government. Instead, they were now installed a government prepared to be not sympathetic to British interest. Indeed, with high taxation and control of all kinds, tea planters and other British businessmen found themselves in an unenviable territory, one through which had become increasingly difficult. Apart from an administration not exclusively by Indians, they had to contend with a powerful trade union movement and a militant labour force. What should they do? How best could they cope with the new situation that threatened their investment, liberty, and a secure future in retirement at home in Britain?

He undertakes far that the only solution they Indian office staff must be they did Assam managers, and the better were. Ironically, accurate knowledge of tea and figures relating to labour than we have at present. We must be more deeply in touch with the needs of

labour and with influence brought to bear on labour here than we have at present. Today the best managers will admit that they do not know what their men are thinking and trying to do.

The old assumption was that a good manager was naturally in touch with his labour force and that his men had read him long ago. Today, they would not go to an employer for help, such allegiance of workers and other British businessmen found themselves in an unenviable territory, one through which had become increasingly difficult. Apart from an administration not exclusively by Indians, they had to contend with a powerful trade union movement and a militant labour force. What should they do? How best could they cope with the new situation that threatened their investment, liberty, and a secure future in retirement at home in Britain?

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15 July-September '15

04 October-December '15

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Today's Threats Tomorrow's Opportunities



Can the ailing tea industry in India — battered and bruised by the storms of weather, defoliating pest attacks, lack of productive labour and wage demands — rise like the legendary phoenix? Several decades ago, it was the country's largest foreign exchange earner.

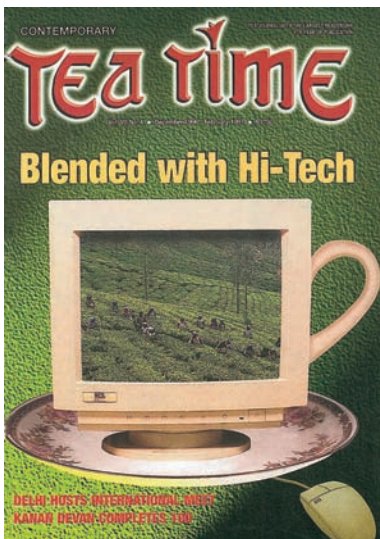
Rising global demand and low supply from other tea-producing areas of the world — as in the case of Africa, due to bad weather and poor harvest — provide us little relief.

It is time for industry leaders to seek out solutions from within the sector and, where needed, pursue policy changes at the Centre or State levels. With single-minded focus on what is necessary and paring down practices that are not, the industry can be transformed into a healthy entity. One must ask, for example, whether the Plantation Labour Act has outlived its purpose. Or if black tea is an industrial or agricultural product. Or, should bushes get depreciation allowance. Experts weigh in.

Handwritten signature of A Nandkeolyar.

A Nandkeolyar





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Contemporary Tea Time, a magazine of the tea industry published by Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd. has completed 26 years of its existence. It has through the years evolved into a voice of the industry, reflecting the views, opinions, market trends and happenings of the tea scenario in India and abroad.

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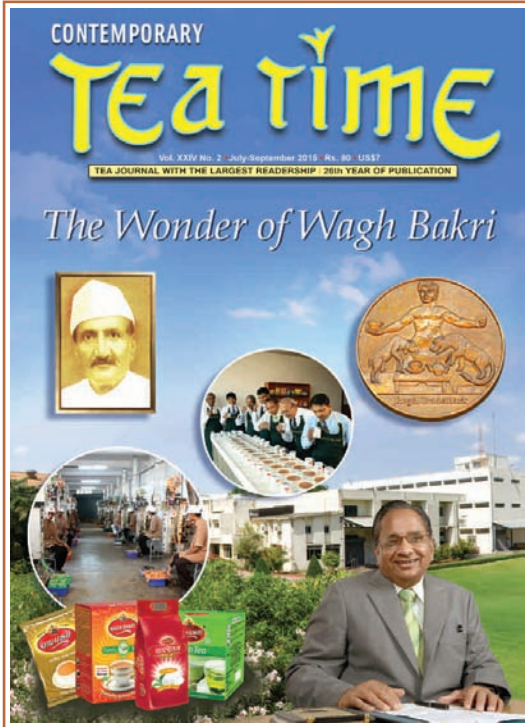
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P S Sundar

Tea Promotion Redefined

South India shows the way

Innovation and ethnicity should re-define the strategy for promoting tea in all countries. This was discussed in a series of lectures at the programmes of tea plantation management and tea tasting and quality assurance conducted by Kothari Agricultural Management Centre (KAMC) at Coonoor.

"These programmes are sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Representatives from Tea Board, Tea Research Institutes and tea industry from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Kenya, Nepal and India attending these deliberations, underlined the need for adopting innovative methods to retain youngsters' interest in tea consumption", KAMC Director Dr AVK Iyengar told me.

"Observing that traditional systems of promotion would not continue to yield desired results, our meeting urged tea industry and Tea Boards of different countries to engage newer reach-vehicles like social media, mobile networking, blogs and group messaging for

promoting tea. The United Nations Organisation and their relevant bodies including Food and Agricultural Organisation as also Government and corporate heads

Tea Boards of different countries to engage newer reach-vehicles like social media, mobile networking, blogs and group messaging for promoting tea Indian tea industry should not lag behind

are using social media like Twitter and Facebook to connect with people on official policies and decisions. Corporate heads are also using these means for connecting

with stakeholders. Tea industry should not lag behind", he said. "Players in tea industry and trade as also the Tea Boards of various countries must build tea professional groups in social media and deliberate on real-time basis on developments affecting their business. There must be closer interaction for pooling of guidance to tide over emerging problems by sharing success stories".

Although tea is produced only in 34 countries but consumed in all countries including the producing ones, there is heavy competition among the countries on the one hand and among substitutable beverages on the other. This requires the maintenance of consistency in promotion and at many times resorting to aggressive promotion. A proper engagement of social media for both generic and brand promotion can help create and sustain interest in tea at relatively low cost. The thrust on promotion must be on the positive health impact of consuming tea besides its eco-friendly and



Foreign delegates at KAMC's Tea Plantation Management Programme



Tea Board - STASI conference on 'Make in India' in Coonoor

hospitality characteristics.

On the other hand, if the per capita consumption goes up, India cannot manage without imports unless production also rises. For instance, there is a move to ask every Indian to drink one cup more every day. This is very much possible considering that a cup can be made with just two grams of tea. This will raise the per capita consumption to one kg per head per year. That, in turn, will make the consumption level as 1,270 mkg while the highest production so far was 1,207 mkg achieved last year. This means, India will have to import tea even to cater to the home market, let alone the export market.

Besides, newer challenges confront the global tea management these days. With technological advancement, it has become possible to predict weather to a greater extent. However, scientific advancement to answer the threats have still to go a long way. In other words, predicting frost is welcome but coming out with a strain to withstand frost-bite is a desideratum. Time was when tea plantation workers feared the introduction of computers contending that it will reduce employment but now, mechanisation is necessary to overcome labour shortage during peak activity season.

The use of ethnic methods to manufacture tea, engaging the local populace and dovetailing successful traditional systems gain significance. For instance, the KAMC meet observed the prominence hand-made and multiple-brewing teas manu-

factured by Avataa enjoy in global market as speciality tea. It also recognised the reality that the winter speciality Nilgiri teas fetched over Rs 10,000 per kg at the auction conducted by Nilgiri Planters' Association. It recorded that the unique feature of high-grown Orthodox tea by companies in the Nilgiris enjoyed a Geographical Identification and premium market.

On the trendy front, KAMC deliberations observed the need to modernise the containers and consumer packaging to suit the taste of contemporary youth and remain alert in the market. "Continual evolution is the hallmark of success for tea industry", Dr Iyengar noted.

The Prime Minister's 'Make in India' concept has gained inroads into the tea industry as well. Tea Board and the Small Tea Growers' Association of South India (STASI) devoted the Third National Conference for Small Tea Growers to the theme, "Make in India". The full-day conference was held on November 2, 2015 at UPASI Coonoor.

"At the conference, we focussed on the 12th Five Year Plan schemes applicable to small tea growers. We highlighted the special package for small growers. Based on this, we are chalking out a roadmap for growth to strengthen 'Make in India' for tea", STASI's founder President and Conference Chairman Dr S Ramu said.

The conference deliberated fruitfully on the formation of tea growers' societies, micro and mini factories, parliamentary standing committee on tea, treating tea as

agro-based industry and according the 'national drink' status for tea.

Tea Board Executive Director, C Paulrasu underlined that a funding to the extent of Rs 200 crore was envisaged in XII Plan for the benefit of small growers.

Soon after this conference, Commerce Ministry issued a Gazette notification re-

constituting the Tea Board for three years from November 2, 2015. However, it was just filling up one post here and one there and not a full-fledged re-constitution. Only one member has been appointed from south India - Nilgiri-based senior tea plantation executive, D Hegde.

Hegde is Director of The United Nilgiri Tea Estates Co Ltd (UNITEA) which runs Chamraj and Korakundah estates and factories in the Nilgiris. He is a former President of UPASI.



D Hegde, Director of UNITEA

"The Government has appointed me to represent the interests of the owners of tea estates and gardens and tea growers. Accordingly, my agenda is to take necessary steps to boost tea consumption - both domestic and export. In the context of rising production cost, there is need to augment prices to help producers earn fair return on their investment. To reach this, my thrust will be on promotion of tea consumption", he told me.

Photos : Author



The Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), a coalition of non-profit conservation and rural development organisations, exists to promote the environmental and social sustainability of agricultural activities. Through training, rural producers around the world can change and develop their practices to meet the strict standards of the SAN, which in turn, enables their farms to be recognised as Rainforest Alliance Certified™.

Since 1992, more than one million farms – small, medium, large and cooperatives – in more than 40 countries around the world have met the SAN standards that ensure protection of workers and wildlife, conservation of natural resources and support the financial viability of farms.

By focusing on certification, the Rainforest Alliance is able to guide farmers on how to improve their practices, whilst holding companies accountable and enabling consumers to make informed choices. But to do this, here at the Rainforest Alliance we have to be committed to the publication of a certification standard of the highest level. A leader in the sector, at the same time will be an accessible tool for instructing and partnering with producers that are just starting to take their first steps on the path to sustainability.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL NETWORK



COP21 • CMP11
PARIS 2015
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

The new 2016 SAN Standard will have a unique balance between quality, urgent requirements, accessibility and support to producers in their learning process, say Per Bogstad and Christina Cullen





Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting the India Pavilion at COP21 Summit in Paris

If nothing ever changed, there'd be no butterflies

Approximately every five years, the standard is reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects the latest thinking and is able to meet the needs and challenges of a robust and growing certification system that is already operating in more than 40 countries and covers over 100 different crops. We are always pursuing continuous improvement and more efficient ways to include the latest scientific and technological knowledge in ecosystem conservation, productivity, pesticide management and workers' wellbeing. Working in regions with farmers who are directly facing the challenges of climate change, poverty and systemic cultural factors, we need to constantly review and evaluate our impacts to ensure that the best interests of farmers are at the heart of everything we do.

To this end, a newly revised 2016 SAN Standard for Sustainable Agriculture will be published in July 2016 and it will be binding for audits starting in April 2017. This process has however, not been taken lightly. Reflecting a transparent exercise involving more than 1000 people from 50 countries, the revision of the Standard has been a long and detailed process.

New lease of life

The new 2016 SAN Standard will have a unique balance between quality, urgent requirements, accessibility and support to producers in their learning process. We want this to be an inclusive tool that allows less advanced producers in terms of sustainability to start the



transformation process toward production using best practices, at the same time maintaining the highest quality of Standards that will strengthen its position as a leader in the sector.

Unlike its 2010 predecessor, which was based on ten principles, the 2016 Standard is based on four principles of sustainability. These principles address the SAN Theory of Change:

- Effective Planning and Management System (including elements of productivity and profitability)
- Biodiversity conservation

- Natural resource conservation
- Livelihoods and human wellbeing (of producers and their families).

The 2016 version of the standard includes criteria that promote planning to enhance productivity; it adopts a model for pesticide use based on the prohibition of hazardous substances and management of risk from permitted substances. It includes specific mitigation activities that go beyond a mere list of banned products, by incorporating criteria in the standard for the first time that address risk to mammals, birds, pollinators and aquatic life.

The work requirements of the standard will have a focus on the basic needs for drinking water, safe housing and access to education and health services. In addition, plantations that provide housing for their workers must ensure that the facilities are clean and safe.

It will have clearer concepts regarding natural ecosystems and High Conservation Value areas to facilitate their identification and conservation and it will promote greater use of agroforestry systems. The new SAN Standard will also have a specific principle for sustainable cattle production and differentiated criteria for farms and administrators of producer groups.

Vanishing of the bees

With almost 200 countries agreeing on a historic deal on climate change and working together to keep average global temperature below 2°C (on pre-industrial levels) with an ambition to keep it below 1.5°C at last month's COP21 climate talks in Paris, consideration of climate change and mitigation has been a critical feature of the development of the 2016 SAN Standard.

The SAN / Rainforest Alliance certification system will not have a separate module of standards for climate change, as it did in the past. We will facilitate the implementation of practices for prevention, adaptation and



mitigation throughout the Standard, so that they will be carried out by all certified farms.

The new 2016 SAN Standard encourages plantations and small farmers to consider possible extreme weather events in their planning cycle, including actions for ensuring soil health and optimising the use of water. It requires a minimum percentage of natural vegetation on the farms and promotes the adoption of agroforestry systems.

The carbon footprint of farms certified under the SAN standards is minimised through optimised agrochemical use, carbon sequestration by trees and the protection of high carbon storage ecosystems and other areas with High Conservation Value. The standards also have specific criteria for reducing carbon footprints on cattle farms.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch

As the consultation process and development of the new 2016 SAN Standards reaches its ultimate stages and final adjustments are made to ensure the highest quality for the new standards, a special working group is concentrating on refining details related to implementation that enable real compliance by farmers on matters such as:

- Assurance that farm service



Per Bogstad, Senior Manager, Markets Transformation (UK, Ireland, India) Rainforest Alliance



Christina Cullen, Media Relations, Rainforest Alliance

providers meet the critical criteria, since the SAN believes that all the activities carried out on a farm are the responsibility of its administration.

- Establishment of grievance mechanisms for workers
- Implementation of an occupational health and safety plan

that covers all workers

- Implementation of an Integrated Pest Management plan
- Existence of adequate hygiene facilities for agrochemical applicators
- Restrictions on aerial fumigation
- Risk management actions for restricted use pesticides.

In the short term, as of December 2015, SAN has accelerated improvements to standard requirements pertaining to inadequate living conditions and access to safe drinking water. Farms that offer lodging to their workers must ensure housing is clean and safe, with windows to ensure ventilation and lighting, with no leaks and no overcrowding. Farms must also ensure the access of all workers to drinking water, without exception.

As these are now critical criteria, all certified farms must meet these standards. Farms that do not meet basic housing requirements must assess the quality of employee housing, water supply and sanitation facilities and then must develop and present to auditors, plans to correct any shortcomings, with measurable and consistent annual targets. Farms will need to correct any unacceptable conditions within an agreed upon time period; certification will be cancelled if a farm fails to meet these requirements.



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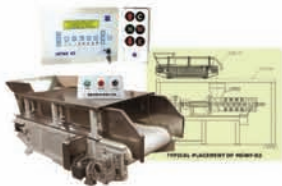
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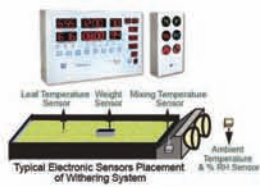
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Quality Enhancement Device for Drier (VARUN)



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Residence Time Indicator RTI for CFM



Microcontroller based Digital Temperature Indicator (MTS)

- Many more Electronic products for tea process Automation are under Development
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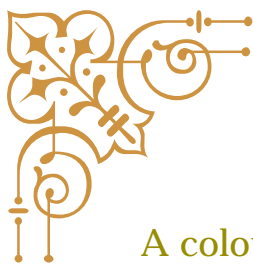
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A Poet on the Board

A colourful solicitor in The Assam Company



Kalyan Sircar



Walter Prideaux

Walter Prideaux was born on April 15, 1806, in Beascombe, near Knightsbride and Loddiswell in Devon. The young Walter was sent to Plymouth Grammar where the Headmaster was Macaulay, later the famous Law Member of Council of India. Prideaux joined the law firm of Messrs. Woollcombe and Jago of Plymouth and was admitted as a Solicitor in 1829. The partnership of Walter Prideaux and John Lane was set up at Foster Lane, London. In 1835 he became Clerk and Solicitor to the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, a position he held until 1882. Prideaux knew Spanish and French. He was also an accomplished balloonist and a renowned poet.

In this essay our interest is Prideaux's connection with The Assam Company. His association with this first tea company predates its formal establishment. In the late 1830s city merchants of London were excited at the prospect of cultivation and manufacture of tea

in India for the ever growing markets of Britain and Europe.

On February 12, 1839, a Memorial to the Court of the East India Company, signed by persons representing thirteen companies and three individuals, had been drawn up requesting that Walter Prideaux, their Secretary, be provided with information regarding the Company's cultivation and manufacture of tea in Assam, to enable them to form a correct estimate of the probable advantages of the speculation. The response from the East India company was most encouraging, and on February 12, 1839, The Assam Company was launched formally.

The promoters of The Assam Company had in mind a large-scale enterprise with many people subscribing to its capital, and whose management would rest in the hands of a number of part-time

being uncertain for many years before it was given these privileges. The denial of a legal status created many difficulties, and soon it was realised that the Company should be reconstituted with an English Act of Incorporation. Meanwhile an enormous amount of correspondence between the Company and India Government followed. Prideaux, in addition to his duties elsewhere, took on this task on behalf of The Assam Company. His letters display his enormous legal knowledge and expertise. At one stage an exasperated Prideaux addressed a letter to Lord Hardinge, then Governor-General of India (who was then in London): "The Act, as drafted by the East India Company was immediately accepted – it was still delayed – the Government changed its intention and had determined not to pass the Act, but proposed alteration to it imposing

When The Assam Company's financial situation was critical, Prideaux himself cut his own remuneration, and lent his own money to it

directors with other business interests. For this, the status of an incorporate body with limited liability of the shareholders was essential.

But this was not granted immediately. Indeed, the Company had to carry on with its legal status

such conditions and restrictions on the Company as would inevitably stop operations."

The Assam Company, until 1864, had two Boards of Directors, one in London and the other in Calcutta. In London its Secretary was Walter Prideaux. They kept

different dates for account keeping and balance sheet. When the Company was given the much coveted status of an Incorporate Body, it was by an Indian Act and in rupee capital. The 'Double Administration' created many problems impeding the working of the enterprise. London constantly accused Calcutta of reckless expenditure without commensurate result. From the beginning Prideaux was very critical of the Calcutta Board and The Assam Company's staff in India. Calcutta directors were incompetent, extravagant in their expenditure, the staff in Assam neglectful in their duties. In a letter to the directors in Calcutta, Prideaux observed darkly that expenses in India in relation to production continued to rise. He also complained about the correctness of data supplied by Calcutta 'upon which we heretofore depended upon.' Prideaux concluded that 'unless the produce of 1845 can be shipped from Calcutta at below one shilling per pound for average qualities, the sooner the consideration can be given to the winding up of the concern the better.

When The Assam Company's financial situation was critical, Prideaux himself cut his own remuneration and lent his own money to it. Prideaux was equally critical of some London directors. In a handwritten letter to Chairman Kemshed dated August 2, 1865, Prideaux expressed satisfaction that Mr. Sanderson has disqualified himself as a director.

In turn the Calcutta Board reciprocated. In 1867, for example, they demanded that Secretary Prideaux should not be re-elected who, they regarded, as peculiarly responsible for past mismanagement. Moreover, he was much preoccupied with his other duties (to the Goldsmiths Company) to enable him to give the required time to The Assam Company. Calcutta's allegations were ignored by London and he was duly re-elected.



In time some directors of the Calcutta Board retired and returned to London. Their claim for directorships on London Board led to bitter dispute between 'practical planters with ground experience' and distant amateur directors in the city. Retired Calcutta directors demanded Prideaux's removal and appointment of one with practical experience, who will bind himself to devote the whole of his time and attention to the business of the Company.

His long service constituted a remarkable record of unswerving loyalty

In 1866, famine conditions prevailed in parts of Assam where the Company had its plantations. The Chairman of the Company accused the Agent in Calcutta for his neglect to supply the coolies with food. The affronted Agent wrote to Prideaux: "It is a very serious matter to impute to English Gentleman, the want of common compassion - he is compelled in refutation of such an imputation to refer to the large amount of private and public contributions published or unpublished in aid of the Famine Fund."

Retired Calcutta directors' bid for control in London was not successful, excepting one Henry Burkinyoung, who obtained a place on the Board without much influence. About 'practical men' on the Board, the Chairman commented; "You might as well require that a manager of a railway company shall be a plate layer." Burkinyoung's claim that he with others were responsible for the retrieval of the Company was readily rejected.

In his day to day management of the Company, Prideaux was meticulous. He believed in keeping his minutes to the barest essentials. The most critical decisions of the Board were disposed of by 'The Secretary's draft reply was submitted and approved.'

In Prideaux's papers I find an interesting letter from one of the Company's employees in the London office. In parts the letter reads: "Both myself and my wife are very desirous of going to Assam, as our large family and the increased expenses of house-keeping, render our little income sufficient only for barest necessities and neither of us feel any tie in England now to render it a matter of regret at leaving it." There is no record of the success or otherwise of the employee's application.

The 'Double Administration' of The Assam Company came to end in 1865 when the Calcutta Board was abolished, and the Company was reconstituted as a sterling company with limited liability for its shareholders.

As Secretary, Director, Deputy Chairman and Chairman, Walter Prideaux served The Assam Company from 1839 to 1886, when he resigned, then nearly blind. His resignation was much lamented by his colleagues. His long service constituted a remarkable record of unswerving loyalty. He upheld the Board in all their actions against the adverse criticism of disgruntled shareholders. Walter Prideaux, then knighted, died in 1889.

The writer is an academic based in London



Tidings from BANGLADESH



Monjur Hossain

Smallholders move towards sustainable growth

Bangladesh has 156 tea estates spread over Sylhet, Maulvibazar, Habiganj, Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts districts. In Bangladesh, tea industry has directly employed 1,17,728 workers on permanent pay roll, besides the permanent workers and about 30,000 casual workers mostly in plucking. More than 50% of the total workers are female. There is no gender discrimination relating to terms of employment. Apart from the above number of workers, another 2,59,000 persons are living within the tea industry as dependents of the workers. From plantation to retail marketing, in real terms, the traditional tea industry has been providing employment and earning opportunity to 8,00,000 persons in Bangladesh. All these figures relate to the tea plantation owned by the organised sectors, viz. big companies under structured management.

Bangladesh currently produces about 65 mkg of tea annually with a production increase of only one percent per annum while local consumption/demand is increasing at 3.5% to 5%. In 1980 Bangladesh produced 43 mkg of tea of which 34.4 mkg (80%) of tea was exported. Only 8.6 mkg (20%) of tea was locally consumed. In 2013 Bangladesh produced 66.26 mkg of tea of which only 0.54 mkg was exported. The rest of the quantity was consumed in the country.

Along with the increase in the number of tea consumers, the per capita consumption has also increased by eight percent per annum to 445 gm/year/person in 2013 from 105 gm/year/person in 1980.

Bangladesh is a developing country and as such it would be extremely painful if the country enters into the world tea market as a tea importer in spite of having high potential to increase tea production. Now and in future there is no scope to open new tea estates. Therefore, a group of tea professionals took the initiative and formed Tetulia Tea Company Ltd.

to open new area for tea cultivation under the concept of "Tea for Poverty Alleviation" through smallholding tea cultivation in the non-traditional areas of Panchagarh in the northern part of Bangladesh

Since April 2000, in this new management concept, there is a direct link between tea plantation and livelihood of the poor farmers.

Panchagarh district in



Objectives of "Tea for Poverty Alleviation"

- Creating sustainable employment opportunity in the rural areas for marginal land owners and for landless mass population in the poorest districts of the country
- Creating micro-entrepreneurs in the rural areas by utilising local resources in tea plantation business instead of creating daily labourers like in traditional tea estates
- Creating a sound financial base for marginal and poor farmers in order to address their basic problems relating to food, housing, health, education and clothing
- Optimum commercial utilisation of fallow land in a land hungry country like Bangladesh
- Increasing tea production to cope with the fast increasing domestic consumption by utilising the technical know-how of the experienced tea planters of the country
- Helping government programmes for poverty alleviation through smallholding tea cultivation.



Bangladesh is one of the most deprived regions in the country; incidence of poverty is very high particularly in Tetulia sub district. According to World Food Programme (WFP) current Food Atlas, food insecurity is very high in Tetulia. It is a part of the ill-famed Monga or seasonal famine region. Situation of malnutrition, health and hygiene is alarming. The region is a slightly sloped plain at the foot of the Himalayan mountain range. Most part of the soil is acidic and sandy resulting in marginal production of rice and other crops. The fact that the soil cannot retain adequate water despite substantial rainfall throughout the year also prevents cultivation of vegetables and pond fisheries. Main economic activity in these areas is excavating stones from land and selling it to the market or contracting out the whole process to a third party. It is very alarming for the ecology as a whole and the livelihood is completely unsustainable as after a few years the land will remain as an eight to ten feet ditch with nothing to grow on it, as has been revealed from a recent study

On the other hand, the emergence of small holding tea plantation is an exciting, new phenomenon in this area. Panchagarh region, situated at the extreme north of Bangladesh, bordering Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, has recently emerged as the Third Tea Zone in the country.

Today, small tea holding is a

Panchagarh region, situated at the extreme north of Bangladesh, has recently emerged as the Third Tea Zone in the country

reality in Panchagarh, with huge numbers of small tea growers earning a good living from sales proceeds of tea leaves grown in their own land. Many others are also willing to invest in tea as well. However, following the initial success of Tetulia Tea Company, around 20 big players have entered in the tea planting race and engaged in indiscriminate purchase of small farmers' lands. At present, 70% of the total land under tea cultivation belongs to these bigger tea estates while 30% of the land is owned by small growers, who sell plucked green leaves to factories. However, till now only a fraction of the most suitable 16,000 ha of land in Panchagarh is under tea production. So, immense opportunity lies ahead to change the livelihoods of small farmers through growing tea.

A comprehensive study has shown that only in Panchagarh district currently there are more

than 16000 hectares of fallow land, which is considered as highly suitable for tea cultivation. Till now only about 1200 ha area has been brought under tea cultivation in Panchagarh. The CHT districts also have 46,000 ha similar land available for tea cultivation by which half of the families in the CHT districts could be self-employed in the same model as implemented in Panchagarh.

There are few small projects funded through BTB and other donors are supporting small tea farmers but not sufficient to cater to the needs of the farmers. However the concept of Self Help Group (SHG) is very popular in the communities of small tea farmers in various tea growing countries for sustainable development. In Bangladesh, recently through a CFC/FAO project for Small Tea Farmers, this has been tried but is still in a very early stage. Self Help is a trust, belief and conviction that the community, no matter how backward, has resources that can be mobilised for meeting individual's local needs and that of the community for making local improvement and bringing about social change. The tea farmers of Panchagarh are trying their best for their sustainable growth and gradually changing the economic condition and social capital through small holding tea farming.

The writer is Managing Director PMTC (Bangladesh) Limited



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Planters Clubs

Where Tea Folk Rejuvenate

For the early planters, life in tea for years was anything but normal. Alone in the wilderness, miles from nowhere, the tea planter *sahib* in those early days lived a life of a recluse. The only place that could provide some entertainment to the lonely planters were the planters clubs. Hard working thirsty planters entered the clubs calling out "Koi-Hai" and liveried bearers would appear and open up the bar to pour the *sahib* a drink. Club nights and special occasions like Christmas and New Years Eve infused colour to the lives of planters and their families.



Planters Club Darjeeling

Located on a ridge overlooking the snow capped peaks of the Eastern Himalayas and accessible through a narrow ramp from the Nehru Road, Planters' Club (or Darjeeling Club as it is actually named) is one of the oldest clubs in this part of the world. It was established in 1868 during the colonial days by the British Tea Planters.

The club was built for the planters and their wives to enjoy the cool climate of Darjeeling. It was a meeting place for the planters and an escape for others. There were gala evenings when black tie was mandatory and sit down dinners were served with aplomb. As the membership increased, a limited company (Darjeeling Club Limited) was incorporated in the year 1907. Today there is a large base of members from India and abroad. However, visiting temporary members and tourists can also book the rooms and enjoy all the amenities in the club.

The slopes and the potted plants when in bloom provide a

lovely backdrop to the walk up and around the club. One can sit and watch the snow peaks and Kanchenjunga from the verandah or simply watch the world go by.

There are a couple of grand lounges, a billiard room and a



conference room. The lounges have antique Victorian furniture, TVs, fireplaces. The lounge has original Snaffles paintings dating back to the early 1900s.

The billiard room is a showcase of memorable and historic photographs from the third Mount Everest expedition that met with an unfortunate end. Incidentally the expedition that was led by Irvine and Mallory started out from this very club in 1924.

There is an exclusive seating area 'Quarter Deck' for the members, with great views. Here there is a World War I Gattling Cannon gifted to the club by Col. Younghusband before he left Darjeeling, leading the first British expedition to Tibet. At the end of the passage and after the reception, there is a restaurant.

There are 17 rooms in the club – seven VIP Suites, eight Super Deluxe Rooms and two Deluxe Rooms. The room service is



friendly and warm, provided by the staff of the club who have been working here for long.

There is a library with a great collection of books. Other amenities include a table tennis room, free car park, terrace garden, doctor on call, laundry service etc.





Jorhat Gymkhana Club

The word gymkhana was likely derived from the Hindi word 'gendkhana' literally meaning 'ball house'. It also originally referred to a social and sporting club. In English-speaking countries, a gymkhana also referred to a multi-game equestrian event performed to display the training and talents of horses and their riders. The British opened various Gymkhanas all over the country with these very ideas. The Bombay Gymkhana was established in 1875 and The Jorhat Gymkhana the very next year in 1876.

Glorious History : In the 1860's and 1870's many tea gardens sprang up in Jorhat area of Upper Assam, which is today the tea capital of the world. The Jorhat Gymkhana was the idea of various tea planters of this area led by the then Superintendent of the Jorehaut Tea Co. – J Huttman. In 1876, the original Gymkhana Club was only a small woodhouse, situated in the middle of the racecourse, about two kilometres to the east of the present building. For the purpose of privacy, a decision was taken to shift the club to some other location. During 1885, the present clubhouse was built by importing material, masons and carpenters from Calcutta, the British headquarters. It still stands, resplendent in its heritage and colourful history. It is the first building in the district raised on an iron structure. The club makes it a point not to add

any new structure to the ancient building to retain its heritage look. Electricity with own generator was installed at The Gymkhana in 1912. The Club road was the first asphalt road laid in undivided Sibsagar in 1926 to connect the town with The Gymkhana. The first airplane, a GI-AA-X, ever to land on North East Indian soil was at the club ground in 1928, when Bernard Leete, the owner-pilot of the plane, came to Jorhat at the request of A C Tunstel of the Tocklai Tea Experimental Station who wanted to take his ailing wife to Calcutta for treatment. Lord Irvin, the Viceroy of India along with Lady Irvin visited The Gymkhana on January 4, 1931. It was at this very club that former Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru delivered a stirring speech on December 15, 1937, pleading world leaders to back the movement for Independence. Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, made it a point to visit the club on December 16, 1960. The Gymkhana was out of bounds for Indians for more than half a century. In 1929 at the Annual General Meeting, the membership of Indians (that too without voting rights) was passed by a vote of 29 for and 14 against. In the early 1950s, Indians were allowed to become office bearers on the management committee. The Tea Tourism Festival of 2002 was held at Jorhat Gymkhana.

Jorhat Races : The first horse race of the Jorhat Races started on

January 16, 1877 under the first Hony. Secy. C I Showers Esq. The club has been a venue for annual horse races ever since its inauguration. The Governor's Cup is the major trophy awarded here every year, which His Excellency, the Governor of Assam himself presents. The Assam Valley Light Horse Trophy presented in 1932 on display in the old bar, has the winning names of various camps of Assam Light Horse Cavalry. The mile long racetrack along with building and the two approach roads to the Gymkhana are marked in the Seknidhara Caraibari Mauza government pedestal map of 1888-1889. Jorhat races are described as one of the oldest sporting events of Assam. The idea behind the Races was to display planters' equestrian skills in a carnival like atmosphere where all levels of workers involved in plantations could be thoroughly entertained. The spin-off would be a small surplus from the weeklong festivity, which would go towards the welfare of the weaker sections of the participants. In the mid 1900s, planters stopped using horses for their *kamjari* (work) and the very existence of the races came under threat. Mising riders and ponies from the Brahmaputra bank were invited to the races. Tea garden horses were replaced with Mising ponies and the Races continued. The ponies are ridden bareback i.e. without saddles and stirrups. The Royal Calcutta Turf

Club, the organisers of the oldest horse races in the country nowadays helps the Jorhat Races by providing technical guidance to further the sport and ensure the smooth running of this heritage event. Golf, car rally, horse and dog shows, live bands, ladies football, tennis tournaments and the weeklong festivity of the Races is definitely something not to be missed.

Golf : Jorhat Gymkhana Golf course is the second oldest golf course to be made outside the British Islands after the Royal Calcutta Golf Club. India was the first country outside Great Britain to take up the game of golf. Jorhat Gymkhana golf course was made in 1876. A rare photograph of gents along with lady golfers of 1907 in their full golfing attire can be seen displayed in the club. The nine holes golf course was expanded to 18 holes with the help of the Army and the nearby tea gardens in 1995. The 6036 yard, par 72 course is affiliated to the Indian Golf Union, the governing body for golf in India. Golfers compete for beautiful silver golf trophies for tournaments started as early as 1902. The club is now thinking of adding a golf range where anyone can come and hit a few golf balls and get a feel of the game.

Polo : According to historical records, Jorhat Gymkhana Club was also one of the oldest polo clubs in the world. In the 1850s, British tea planters discovered the locals playing the game in Manipur on the Burmese border with India. In 1859, they formed the Cachar Club, the first polo club in the world, at Silchar, Assam. Other clubs followed, including the Jorhat Gymkhana Club and in 1862, the Calcutta Polo Club. Polo spread rapidly after a British Army officer stationed in India saw a match early in 1866 and immediately formed a team from among his fellow officers. The first game was played in England in 1870. Polo continued at Jorhat

Gymkhana until the mid sixties when it was played on alternate days along with tennis and golf. Polo has now given way to cycle polo.

Cinema : The Club purchased a cinema projector in 1945 at a cost of Rs.20000 and this was replaced in 1953 at a cost of Rs.12500. As in earlier times, cinema rolls still are transported from Howrah Railway Station to Mariani Railway Station by train and the latest movies as



well as old classics screened for the members every weekend.

Tennis : Tennis is played on three grass courts at the club regularly. During the British times, six grass tennis courts were maintained which showed the popularity of the sport then.

Cricket and Football : The Club has a beautiful cricket ground and boasts of being a famous venue for holding a number of matches like the CK Naidu Cricket tournament, Vijay Merchant Trophy, Duleep Trophy and many other inter state cup matches. From 1913-1953 all football tournaments were held here.

Billiards and Snooker : The Club also has two very old billiards tables in a dedicated billiards room.

Swimming : The club has swimming pool, which is open during summers.

Bar : The club has three beautiful teak panel bars with high ceilings and warm fireplaces where one can have a drink. One gets a feel of the old world charm when one enters the bars for the first

time. Most of the members of the Gymkhana are tea planters and the bar is always buzzing with talk of weather, crop, made tea, tea prices or something else relating to tea. To see the tea spirit one must visit the Gymkhana. The Club also has a dining restaurant and pantry.

Auditorium : There is a big 4000 sq ft. hall on the first floor of the building with a beautiful open view of the golf course and race track in front. It is a preferred venue for the Tea Associations to hold their AGMs and other related events.

Other Activities : The Club also celebrates various festivals like New Years Eve, Bihu, Independence Day, Diwali and Christmas.



The Club also organises flower, vegetable and cooking competitions every spring. Jorhat Gymkhana has been featured among the top 100 elite clubs of India.

Overview : The Jorhat Gymkhana is one of the few clubs with so many firsts and numerous facilities including golf and horse races at the same place. It has grown from strength to strength and has survived the changes of time, people, culture and natural calamities. Today, the clubhouse, along with the racecourse and golf course stands as a living testimony of the rich culture and history of its members and of Assam. Acting as a hub, the Jorhat Gymkhana has a huge potential to promote tea and golf tourism in Assam. Tourists who visit The Gymkhana every year on invitation always leave impressed with the Club.





MISA Polo Club

Established in 1888 as a social polo club for the Planters and British District Administration heads, MISA Club in Assam was established by British planters. Besides encouraging social interaction through sports and other celebratory occasions, in its colourful past, the club was used by US Army when billeted in MISA during World War II. It later added a nine hole golf course to the other facilities of tennis, cricket and other indoor games.

Today MISA Club is positioned as a transit midway point for visitors to upper Assam – who visit to experience the grandeur of the past – especially with the re-alignment of the Asian Highway. A modern



management centre of excellence where skills on the playing fields supplement the collective exchange of ideas and learning at the Convention Centre Hall. One may call it a recreational hub in the lap of nature.

Games facilities at the club include a 9 Hole Golf course (being upgraded to 18 holes), driving range, tennis, badminton, volley ball, basket ball, croquet, table tennis, billiards, darts, chess and children kiddy corner.

The Management Development Centre has drop down screen with overhead projector, wi fi connectivity, library with e-book facility and browsing, fully equipped gym, on-site cook with catering, fully functional bar, customised stationary on order and facilities for visit to tea estate and factory.

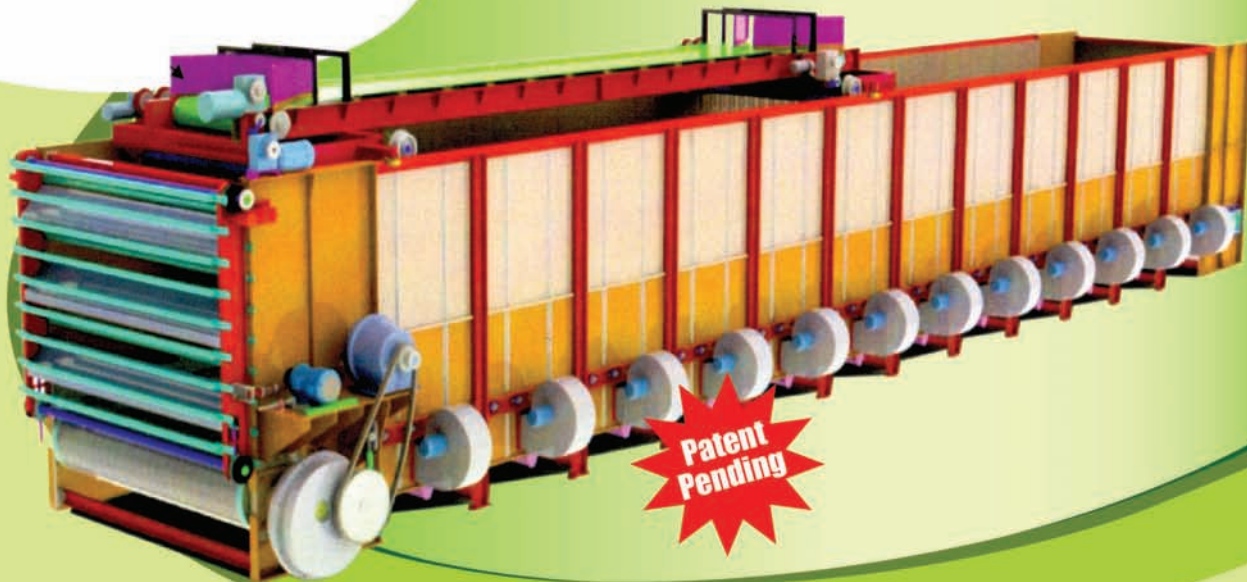
The driving force behind the excellently maintained MISA Club is Ranjit Barthakur, Chairman, APPL Foundation.



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Labour	Standard requirement	15% of standard requirement
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Shuffling	Manual	Automatic
Spillage	Large	None
Leaf damage/wastage	Yes	Nil
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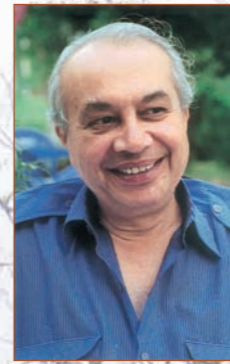
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Tea Industry at CROSSROADS

A Nandkeolyar of Contemporary Tea Time approached industry experts with questions related to the problems currently ailing the tea industry and sought solutions. Here are their viewpoints



Tragi-comedy of INDIAN TEA

Prafull Goradia

In 1950 Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet established the Planning Commission. It was a socialist call for developing the country's economy which would require the exports to be increased and enhance foreign exchange earnings. So told us Manubhai Shah some 25 years ago at a seminar in Delhi. Shah was the Commerce Minister in the sixties. His only connection with our trade was his brother-in-law, Kanu Mehta who was with Davenports for quite a number of years.

Rupee or Barter trade was his brain child. This trade was contracted with a number of countries, the most prominent amongst them was the Soviet Union, followed by Hungary, East Germany, Poland, UAR or Egypt, Iraq and perhaps one or two others. For tea, India became the monopoly supplier to these barter countries. Their advantage was that they did not have to spend any hard currency for the items they imported from India. In exchange, they provided India with goods required by us. Like arms and ammunition from the USSR, power generators from East Germany, petroleum from Iraq and so on. For these items that these countries bought, there was a boom for years and years. Although agreements with the West Asian countries ended at different times, those with the Soviet Union and its satellites lasted until 1990/'91. It had begun with tea in 1964, if I remember right, a good 26 year run.

Over the years, the agents for the USSR grew to dominate the auctions, brokers paid obeisance to them. As time went by, they bought so much tea that quality lost most of its significance except what the Russian tasters thought undesirable like stalk and fibre. They began in the sixties with only whole leaf grades and broken. As their appetite expanded, they also extended themselves to purchasing CTC

grades. Because of their hurry and hunger for purchase, the cup quality was ignored. Anything free from stalk and fibre was lapped up. The price differentials narrowed. As a few buyers put it, donkeys and horses cost the same.

This led some planters to believe that all the defects in plucking could be rectified in the sorting room. Pluck liberally, produce more and separate stalk and fibre with the help of machines. The result was that with tea easy-to-sell, quality became secondary and economy of expenditure ceased to be a priority. It was all hunky dory for most gardens, most of the years until the Barter trade ended soon after the Soviet Union broke up.

A most unfortunate event was that the Government of India signed or had to sign in 1978 an agreement with Moscow that the Rouble would forever be worth Rs.18/-. As a result, even when the US dollar could command the astronomical figure of 12,000 Roubles, the Russian agents were then able to pick up tea in Indian auctions at a few paise per kilogram.

Meanwhile, Indian tea had been priced out of many a world market. We had until the nineties depended so much on the Soviet and the domestic demand. In the late fifties and early sixties, India was the supplier of first resort. Be it Britain, Ireland, Australia, Iran, Turkey et al. The first two named countries drank up to four kg per capita in those days.

That most gardens have been able to stand up to the sharp fall in demand from the Barter countries is a credit to our domestic demand and no less to the resilience of the Indian planters. It was well nigh a debacle from which the survival has been ensured. On the horizon, has risen a new sun called cup quality!

Only planting and rejuvenation is not sufficient to increase yields, investments and research are needed

Says J S Kandal, MD, Amalgamated Plantations Pvt Ltd

That was Jagjeet Kandal, Managing Director of AAPL. During a conversation with *Contemporary Tea Time* he echoed on many issues on the tea industry and insinuated about some problems which need immediate attention. So here goes.

Surrounded by the influence of the industry there is an immediate need for improvement in quality. But it is easier said than done, as the concept of quality needs to permeate down to the lowest level. It is a problem that the managements will need to solve as it involves changing mindsets at the workers' levels.

Mitigating climate change is another vital issue. For instance, irrigation was never thought about in Upper Assam but it is needed today. On the flip side of the coin are the dwindling groundwater resources and receding water tables. How can ground water be recharged? Rain water harvesting by creating ponds, is one way. A more expensive method is to push back water into the soil.

On the other hand, high water tables during the rains – also the highest producing period – lead to dropping yields as the root zones get water logged.

Therefore only planting and rejuvenation is not sufficient to increase yields. Investments and research are needed in this area.



AMALGAMATED PLANTATIONS

For plucking and at the factory, mechanisation on a much larger scale is imperative. North India plantations need to learn to mechanise without losing out on quality.

On the marketing front there is a need to expand into various types of teas to offer consumers different choices and experiences. A diversity of products is needed. Tea extracts have been studied



extensively but not really actualised in India.

At the Policy Level, one major revamp required is of the Plantation Labour Act. It has a structure which contributes to over-

heads. Elsewhere in the industry, labour is a variable cost.

The Tea Board being under the Commerce Ministry, tea is considered an export commodity. But the puzzling question remains – is growing and producing tea an agricultural activity or an industry? The fallout includes tea being excluded from a recently introduced crop insurance scheme.

The State and Centre must share welfare costs and duties and implement all rural schemes in the tea growing regions as well as help the industry fulfill the workers' aspirations to provide them with opportunity to build assets. Otherwise it is impossible to prevent their migration to urban areas to seek greener pastures.

Is the tea industry getting the right price or not?

Asks A N Singh, MD, Goodricke Group

For the industry to remain sustainable and keep investing in welfare of workers, it is the responsibility of all stakeholders, even the media and NGOs, who of late have been targeting the managements for all the woes in the industry. They must realise that among the



plantation industries tea is the only sector that has not only maintained its health but has gone beyond to expand it and create employment for youth. The fate of other plantation industries – indigo and jute – is known

to all.

Climate change is the main factor that is giving rise to all the environmental issues.

Due to climate change rainfall has become erratic. It is concentrated over only five months and the rest of the year is a very long dry spell. This is resulting in more irrigation and the



water table has drastically gone down. Global warming has caused the gap between the day and night temperatures to widen.

Then there has been extensive denudation. The Bhutan and Nagaland forests have disappeared leading to problems at the micro level. We have to begin with micro level management. Like planting plenty of trees suitable to the region, rain water harvesting. Check dams and rivulets can help in increasing the water table.

Declining crop due to unfavourable weather resulting in high cost of production is a worry. Since 60% cost of production constitutes the workers' wages, the producer can do very little to bring down costs because from the rest, 30% is spent on manufacture and maintenance. There is urgent need to increase wages of workers for their

sustenance.

The foremost thing that should be questioned is whether the tea industry is getting the right price or not. Even if tea prices go up to Rs. 500/- a kg, the cost of tea in a cup will be only one rupee. Then producers would be in a position to pay over Rs. 300/- wages. But it is only when the growers get the

right price they will be in a position to invest. The recent report of BBC is more sensational in nature than of substance. They should have done more research, known India better and then come up with solutions. The need of the hour for all stakeholders is to work together for betterment of our people and not belittle one another.



The Plantation Labour Act should be relooked at and substituted with a contemporary one

Says Sunil Munshi, Director (Personnel) and Director-in-charge (Tea), Andrew Yule and Co. Ltd. and formerly a tea planter

WITHIN the circle of our influence the industry can aggressively pursue generic promotion of Indian teas both in the national and international arenas.

The industry could also look for other variants of tea, such as in toothpaste, tea creams, balms and candies to cite a few examples. China has successfully made such innovative products.

The industry must maintain a total and complete commitment to quality.

There is a great necessity to rapidly modernise the tea production facility and focus on improving yields by replanting.

What we have no influence over, but are in need of, is a change in the Plantation Labour Act. This

Act should be relooked at and substituted with a contemporary one, more on the lines of what is needed today.

Monetizing benefits has a down side. The question is, will the fun loving plantation labour, who are generally very peaceful, because their basic needs of food, shelter, education and medical benefits are



met, continue to keep these basics on their priority, once they have the surplus cash to spend?



The industry could also look for other variants of tea, such as in toothpaste, tea creams etc.



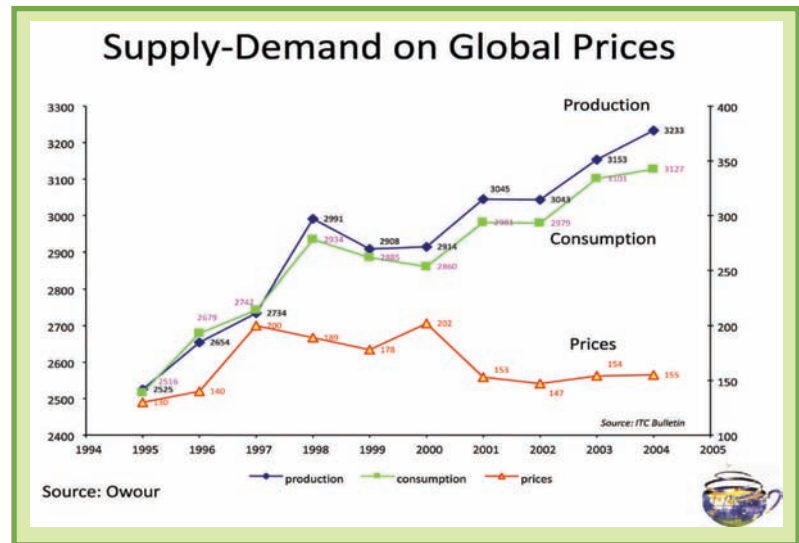
A multi pronged approach to R&D and application of new technology needed

Says Dr. N K Jain, renowned tea scientist and Executive Vice President, International Society of Tea Science



CHINA and Japan have shown how the oversupply of low quality tea can be mopped up by making value added products for pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, cosmetics and industrial uses. Strangely, Tea Board sponsored researches on black tea and human health, on which NTRF spent crores in the last decade, hardly find a mention in the international literature.

There is need for economic and costing studies in tea research institutes, as well as ergonomic studies in collaboration with British Council, to increase working hours and reducing the heat load by redesigning baskets and hats. Some data were reported in my 1999



magnum opus *Global Advances in Tea Science*.

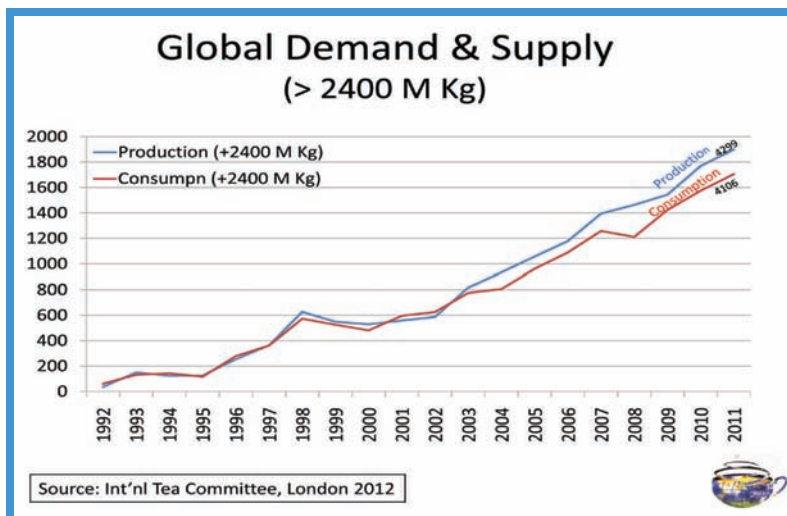
There is also the issue of the very high productivity of the Kenyan pluckers (200 - 300 kg per day) against 15-20 kg by Indian pluckers. How do they do it? Replacement of human plucking by machines is an alternative if quality of leaf is not the primary concern.

Preventive health care of garden workers by tea industry is an

investment in labour productivity and not an expenditure on a welfare measure by the tea industry – a strongly held belief by many in the industry. Low haemoglobin in women workers causing hospitalisation, can be prevented by iron capsules at three paise per day as shown in an ITA study done in 1972. Malaria, the greatest debilitator has been controlled in Kenya with American help but India has still not been able to do it. The British set up Ross Institute and India is foremost in malaria control research. DDT is half a century old. Artemicea, given by a Chinese botanist got a nobel Prize this year. Why can't we do it?

Simple steps like change of ball bearings can save energy expenditure on tea processing. Goodricke has shown that sharpening of CTC rollers improves quality and reduces energy.

A multi pronged approach to R&D and application of new technology can help the tea industry in achieving self sustenance inspite of hike in wages.



Small growers must be partners in business

Says Sudeep Chitlangia of Duro-Sarda Plywood about their venture into tea

THEY saw "bought leaf" operations as an emerging opportunity in the industry, due to a proliferation of small growers and decided to put up a tea factory. Nine months later in March 1998, the factory commenced production and teas were sold under the banner Sarda Tea.

An online process was soon operational with little manual intervention, from the withering troughs to the sorting room. T&I Ltd, supplied all the machinery.

The first year's production was 6.5 lakh kg which was produced with one 36" bank of CTC and by the fourth year three lines of CTC machines were producing 21 lakh kg of tea. In 2002, the factory was further expanded to six lines with the addition of three new banks of 42" CTC of 13" roller diameter, producing 42 lakh kg.

With the progress of time, leaf quality deteriorated as demand for it increased. The Chitlangias then experimented with the removal of stalks by sifting the stalk after the rotorvane. This exercise was marginally successful but could not be sustained as the removed stalks could not be processed simultaneously in the absence of an additional CTC and hence was discontinued. Another experiment



that they tried was an attempt at cooling the CTC rollers with cold water, the objective being to improve the liquors. This experiment failed too.

Being able to initially sell 100% privately to western Indian and north Indian buyers, the Sarda Group, in 2004, switched a portion of their teas to the auctions in Kolkata. They went in for strategic alliances with Hindustan Unilever as the markets declined further.

**Bought Leaf
Factories and
Small Growers
must be
integrated with
the organised
sector**



Late P D Chitlangia

Over the years says Sudeep, the quality of leaf available has declined sharply. Lead by growing demand, prices change daily unlike previously, when it was negotiated monthly. The fine leaf percentage dropped steadily from 50% plus to less than 20% today. This increased demand played havoc with supplies as commitment to quality and the sanctity to contracts vanished.

Meanwhile at the industry level the bought leaf factory owners were often treated as outcasts and far removed from the main stream though many established estates had began purchasing green leaf from small growers as well.

The Tea Board issued licenses but established little control on quality parameters. The TOMCO was not implemented strictly. Many factories in the recent years have been established without having the necessary clearances required. In fact, for some years now, Tea Board has not been granting licenses for new BLFs. However, many estates have been setting up new factories to process bought leaf under the garb of capacity expansion or modernisation. Why should this happen?

In 2014 Tea Board declared that green leaf prices should be based on auction averages. This price mechanism has many grey areas. The Tea Board's method of leaf count for example, is not acceptable





Sudeep Chitlangia

A manual of best practices must be circulated by the Tea Board in consultation with Tea Research Association and the small growers

across the Board. In addition, the green leaf price is much higher during the low cropping months whereas drops during the peak cropping months. This price fluctuation is caused entirely due to the demand-supply pattern. It appears that Tea Board is trying to govern the green leaf prices, similar to what happens in the sugarcane industry.

Recently they passed a stricture stating that 75% of all bought leaf production should be sold through the auctions. Why was this not for all tea manufacturers? This was protested strongly and the authorities relented and said that all estates, bought leaf factories or otherwise must sell 50% through the auction system. But does the Tea Board have a mechanism to regulate or control this?

Today the industry is facing difficulties in the implementation of the plant protection code. And what are the control mechanisms in place, for small growers who now account for almost 40% of leaf harvested in north India? Banned chemicals are still available and over the years the soil is saturated with them. What steps are being taken at a quick pace to educate them?

Bought Leaf Factories must be



integrated with the organised sector and ITA and TAI and all other Associations must consider them as a part of the industry. The approach should be inclusive. They must be proactive and protective about them. Now a new rule has come into force that apart from the Estates and Bought Leaf Factories, a third category of producer has been classified as Bought Leaf Tea Estate where production from bought leaf exceeds the estates' own leaf.



For the future, a long term vision must be created. Quality tea will only come from good quality leaf, which depends on planting materials and the mix followed by practices in the field. A manual of best practices must be circulated by the Tea Board in consultation with Tea Research Association and the small growers must be made aware of market needs and evolution of demand. Small growers must be partners in business. And partners in development. Today the relationship is, unfortunately, more of confrontation.



The rolling room

Improvement in prices possible by reduction in supply

Says Shashank Prasad of Darjeeling Dooars Plantations (Tea) Ltd



I am a firm believer that tea historically has been in over supply despite the growing domestic demand and that is why the prices remain flat. The change in the prices occur periodically during times of crop failure in India. But during times of crop failure in any other country in the world the impact is not felt due to higher inventories in the global market resulting out of over production in the immediate preceding years. Moreover, over the years Indian tea has lost quite a number of markets overseas and the export figure has been constant over the last two decades, due to the increase in the domestic consumption of tea.

Coming to the Indian scenario, there has been a paradigm shift in the marketing of tea and majority of the quantity is being sold in value added form resulting in bigger control of pan India and regional picketers who are indulging in meeting their requirement of fillers from the bought leaf factories production. Unfortunately, the major increase



Poor quality tea in domestic market is the main cause for depressed prices



in production in the country in the last two decades almost has come forth from the small grower segment whose leaf quality is poor resulting in excess supply of poor quality tea in the domestic market which is the main cause for the prices getting depressed. Only very good quality has a market as it is in short supply and prospects remain bright for this category going forward. But producing the right quality is a stupendous task for the producer.

In conclusion I would only sum

up that the future of tea, particularly in regions producing medium and common variety of tea in India i.e. Cachar, Dooars, Terai and in south India is rather bleak in view of the over supply of production from the small grower segment and the way forward is to contain the production in these segments. To my mind there are no short cut solutions to the problems being faced by the tea industry currently and any improvement in prices can take place by reduction in supply alone.



APPL Foundation

A journey towards a more sustainable society

APPL Foundation was formed on August 29, 2011, as an irrevocable trust with the dominant objective of the welfare of the general public in distress. The Trust has been formed as a charitable organisation among others to provide medical aid, services and relief, attending and propagation of education and learning, environment protection and food security to general public at large and the revival of indigenous tribal music and dance. APPL Foundation has been granted registration u/s 12AA of the Income Tax Act, 1961, vide order dated March 5, 2012, by the Director of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata.

APPL Foundation was formed to promote the social impact initiatives of Amalgamated Plantations Pvt. Ltd. It catalyses the social transformation agenda of the Company. The Foundation acts as a facilitator to achieve the CSR objectives of Amalgamated Plantations, both independently and on a collaborative basis, with the Company.

Since 2013, the Foundation has been striving in key social impact verticals, namely, Education and Skill Development, Healthcare, Environment and Culture to create interdependence of social impact initiatives. The result of this perseverance has been that during 2013-'15, skills training was provided to 800 youth from Assam and north Bengal, over 75,000 local residents of the North East were beneficiaries of their healthcare programmes, 1200 beneficiary farmers from 60 neighbouring villages were able to significantly raise their income through their income

supplementary initiatives while contributing to the restoration of the frail ecological balance in the Kaziranga region by going organic at Hathikuli tea estate. The past year also saw the coming together of 1600 plantation residents to celebrate the traditional art forms and heritage of the local community.



Ranjit Barthakur
Chairman, Board of Trustees
APPL Foundation

World Environment Day



Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan at the Tea Estates



Women's Day



Sports



Health Care



Amalgamated Plantation Pvt Ltd. has been a 100% cleft-free company since 2011. Since then consolidated efforts are being made to ensure that the communities around RHRC are also completely free of cleft defect



Sewing machine operators

Education and Skill Development



Amalgamated Plantation Private Industrial Training Institute (APPITI), Rowta

Protecting the Environment



Hathikuli TE - India's largest integrated organic farm

Welfare Activities



On my arrival at Towkok Tea Estate in 1946, my first posting was as Factory Assistant. The only power to drive the factory was two large steam engines, made by Marshalls. These were horizontal engines, side by side. The main engine was a side-valve rated at 90 bhp, probably only fifteen years old. The stand-by was probably a much earlier piston-valved horizontal. Two Lancashire boilers were there, one as a stand-by and rated at 100 lbs pressure. Both were mostly fired by wood, though some grit coal was used.

The main drives from the engine were cotton ropes, six of them, about two and a half inches in diameter. Each year the men from the Ganges Rope Company, Calcutta, came to splice and repair the ropes – an era of long ago that has never been repeated.

The Head Fitter was an old man called Jeepa, who had been at Towkok a great number of years. These engines were his life!



Members of the Nazira polo team mid-1950s



Robert Mckenzie

The starting procedure was a great show, whether during the day or at night. First, he would give three long blasts on a ship's steam whistle on the roof of the engine room. We reckoned it could be heard over five miles away. In the engine room, Jeepa supervised two engine drivers with crowbars to turn the huge cast iron flywheel until the slide valves were open in the correct position. Then, with great ceremony, he began to turn the steam valve very slowly. The engine would come to life with a great hissing of steam. The revolutions would pick up. Then, when satisfied that the engine was running properly, he gave another long blast on the whistle. He then *salaamed* the engine and handed it over to the Engine Driver and *jugali*. The ceremony was completed.

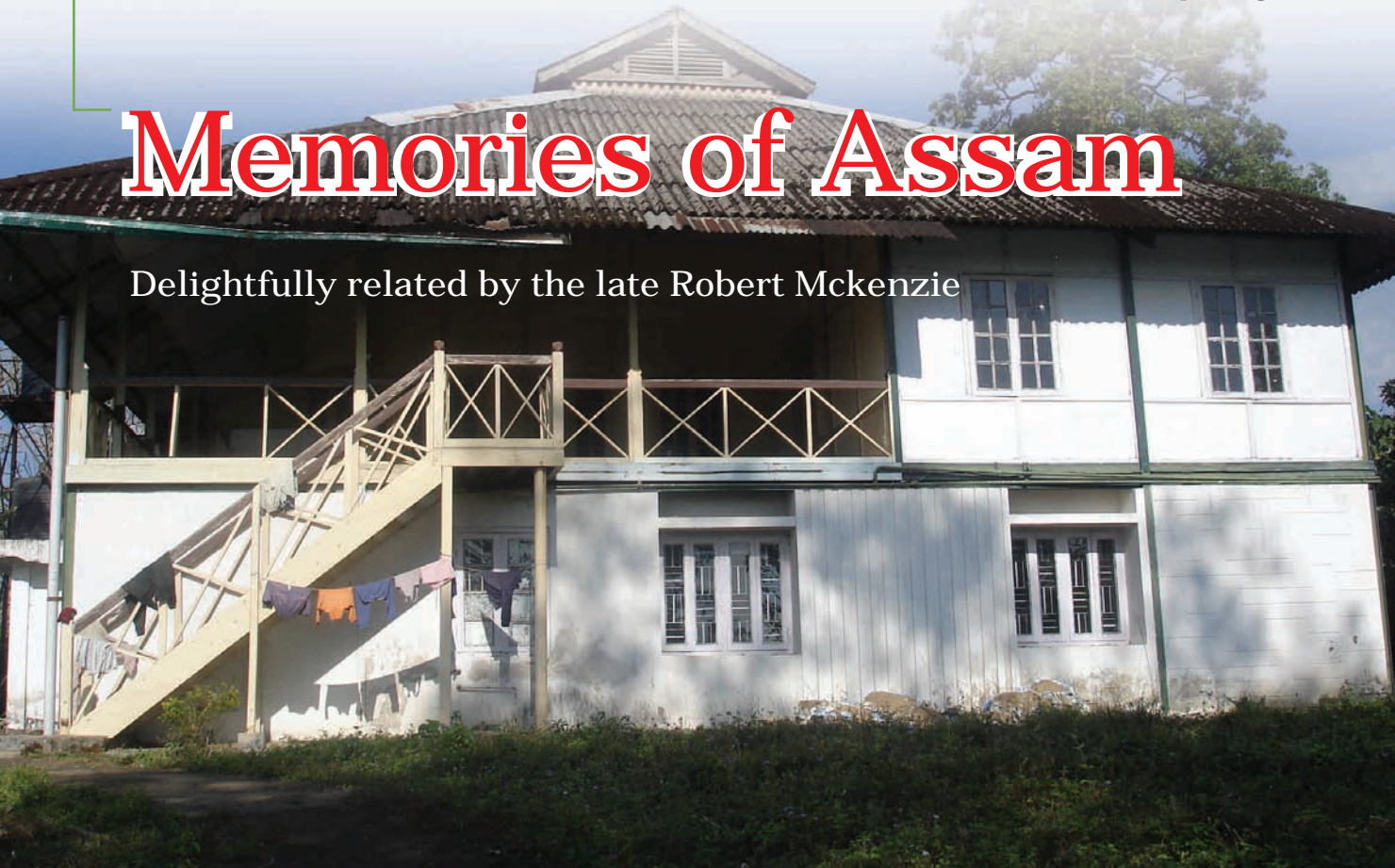
He rarely failed to be there and nobody was to touch the engine or the whistle until he arrived. On the very few occasions he was not there through illness, the Engine Driver would start it without ceremony. Jeepa, on his return would seriously *puja* the engine to atone for his absence.

The Shikari Wallahs

During my days at Towkok in the late 1940's, on the outgarden Namtolla, which was right up against the Naga Hills and very dense jungle, there had been considerable trouble with wild elephants. They were coming into the rice paddies and also into the labourers' lines, causing quite a lot of disturbance. This was particular to the cold weather and the onset of the rice harvest. The labourers had been spending

Memories of Assam

Delightfully related by the late Robert Mckenzie



most nights beating empty kerosene tins and waving fire torches with very little success.

Tom Darby, who was acting manager, decided that we should go after these elephants and informed the forest department, who agreed. In Sonari District, the District Medical Officer for the Singlo Tea Company was Dr. Bill Muir. He was in possession of a twin-barrelled point five, black powder elephant gun. All I had was a 405 Winchester, and Tom Darby, a 303 rifle.

We went down to Namtolla at about nine o'clock at night. We had rigged up a jeep headlight on a board



Football 1964 : Moran Planters

with wires to a battery. The battery was to be carried by our labour helpers. At about midnight, the first reports came in that the elephants had arrived in the paddy fields. So we proceeded, a total party of three with guns and four labourers. My rifle was being carried by one of them because I was responsible for the headlight on the board. The batteries were carried by two of the labourers.

We got off into the paddy and could hear a number of elephants pulling up the ripened rice, thrashing it on their sides and eating it. We crept slowly towards the elephants. When we got to what we thought was fairly close, Tom Darby shouted, 'Put on the light.' This I did. At about a hundred yards away was a group of elephants. Tom Darby started firing off his rifle, with every other round being a tracer. Doc. Muir got down on one knee and must have fired both barrels, at the same time. All I saw was him being thrown backwards by the force of the gun, ending up on his back about three yards away. The shots had obviously gone wild.

By this time, the elephants had become very aggressive and were trumpeting and stamping their feet on the ground – like a mini earthquake. With this, the labourers took off, dropping the battery. So out went the light. We were left in the middle of the paddy land, in pitch darkness, with a herd of very annoyed elephants.

We decided that running was not the best action, so we stood perfectly still. Though the elephants had got our scent, they could not locate exactly where we were. After five minutes, the elephants, with a lot of trumpeting and stamping, turned tail and made off towards the jungle.

At camp, after a hasty retreat, a few stiff whiskies were needed by three very shaken *Shikari Wallahs*.

Enjoying life

The club was rather formal. Two very senior *Memsahibs* of Sonari, who had been in tea since the early twenties, sat on the veranda to receive felicitations from assistants of a junior status. There was however a problem. One was more senior than the other by a mere few months. To pass your greetings, in error, to the junior one first was to incur the displeasure from the husband of the senior one later, in the Men's Bar, in such a way that everybody would know about it.

Treading very carefully was the order of the day. These were *Burra Sahibs* of thirty years or more, and they were men to be aware of by Junior Assistants.

During this period, in the cold weather, polo was played at the club twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays. There were some very good players – Ginger Morris, Brough, and Worman. We could muster three teams.

After three and a half years in Towkok, I was posted to Moran District.

1950s

Flying in Assam

In the early fifties, there were a few of us who had small planes of various descriptions. Some of them were ex-US Military. Williamsons had their own flight of two Austers and at one stage, had a Dragon Rapide, an eight seater. They had a professional pilot called Johnson who unfortunately crashed not far from Mohanbarrie Airport, killing himself and the mechanic. The Austers were flown by Stew Campbell and others, whose normal duties were Garden Assistants. Stew was an ex Fleet Air Arm pilot.

There was another unfortunate accident in Golaghat District where Mackenzie managed to fly into some trees on take-off from a garden strip, killing himself. He was in an Aeronca Super Chief.

For myself I had various aircrafts, from Piper Cub (L4), Stinson Sentinel (L5), and an Aeronca Super Chief. The Assam Company helped me maintain these aircrafts and they were used on occasions by the General Manager and Visiting Directors and sometimes by outside companies. This continued until 1964 when the Indian Government, in its wisdom, decided that foreigners flying about in Assam was not a good thing, due to the Chinese situation and the increase of Air Force activity. My license was suspended, which was probably a good thing because the company had decided that I had enough to do as the manager of Doomur Dullung estate.

Bill worked in Assam's tea gardens for many years. He eventually retired to live in Spain. He passed away in 2012.



45th AGM of TAI



Vijay Dhandhanias addressing the 45th AGM of TAI

The 45th Annual General Meeting of Tea Association of India (TAI) was held in Kolkata in October 2015. Vijay Kumar Dhandhanias, President TAI, said that the industry is confronted with huge challenges and will have to surmount them to emerge as a competing one. He stressed that a vigorous domestic generic promotion initiative highlighting health benefits and targeting young and adolescents is the need of the hour to augment per capita domestic consumption. "The industry will have to adapt itself with the rapidly changing market scenario and technological advancement in agri-business" added Dhandhanias.

A school with a difference

ITMA Vidya Niketan, a school created by the members of Indore Tea Merchants Association, completed 25 years. A commendable example of collective social responsibility of small traders, the school has been providing a carefully planned, stimulating environment to its students with appealing learning tools and activities geared to the needs of the children. Throughout the academic year efforts are made to motivate the students to aim higher in various fields, inculcate rational and independent thought and action, encourage a spirit of service to humanity and at the same time encourage creative pursuits.



Students of ITMA Vidya Niketan



132nd AGM of ITA

The 132nd Annual General Meeting of Indian Tea Association was held in Kolkata on December 18, 2015. Addressing the AGM, ITA Chairman A K Bhargava said, "High cost of production (COP) without optimum price realisation will thwart sustainability. The spiraling COP owing to rising input and employment costs continues to pose a challenge for the organised sector".

Former Chairman of Tea Board and Chief Secretary of Assam MGVK Bhanu said that efforts should be made to improve quality.

"Sixty percent of the cost of production comprises social and employment cost. This means that human resource is the most important thing in an organisation", he added.



MGVK Bhanu addressing the 132nd AGM of ITA

"Price of tea needs to be increased by Rs 5-10 per 100 grams otherwise the industry cannot survive today. For that, packers must co-operate with the makers," he said.



MGVK Bhanu being felicitated by A K Bhargava



A section of the audience

51st AGM of TRA

The 51st Annual General Meeting of Tea Research Association (TRA) was held at Tollygunge Club, Kolkata, in September 2015. Among those present at the occasion were R R Rashmi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India and P S Ahuja, former Director General, CSIR.

A N Singh, Chairman, TRA, in his speech said that to keep Indian tea relevant in the export market, TRA is working on important issues of compliance and safety with regard to chemicals like anthraquinone with UK Tea Council and nicotine with European Tea Committee. With the help of the Union Commerce

Ministry and Tea Board, TRA is working closely with the Iranian food safety regulators on their new standards so that exports to Iran can be seamless.

The Chairman urged upon producers to initiate in-house



R R Rashmi at the 51st AGM of TRA

experiments to reduce the pesticide load and take a pledge to ban use of WHO Class 1 (a) and 1 (b)

chemicals showing commitment towards a more sustainable model of tea cultivation. He added that agricultural practices and landscape management approaches need to be adaptive and focus on moving food system operations towards 'safe spaces'. This will require targeted scientific research adopting climate-smart practices.

TRA along with Southampton University has initiated a project on climate-smartening tea plantation landscapes that will deliver multiple simultaneous benefits to livelihoods and the environment while developing resilience to uncertain and negative climate change impacts.



Trans Siberian Tea

Mrittika Bose discovers unique flavours in stunning landscapes



Trans Siberian train cutting across Gobi Desert

It was touch-and-go from the very beginning. Two Indian women stuck in traffic jam on a congested Beijing road, watching dismally as their watches ticked away. When they finally reached Beijing Central Station to catch the Trans Siberian train, their watches showed five minutes to departure time. Almost sure they would miss the train, and totally unsure what would happen after that, they struggled with their overweight luggage, negotiating escalators, staircases and corridors trying to find out which platform the train was in. No one could help since they knew no English. Finally they reached the platform and as soon as they pushed in their luggage and scrambled in, the train took off!

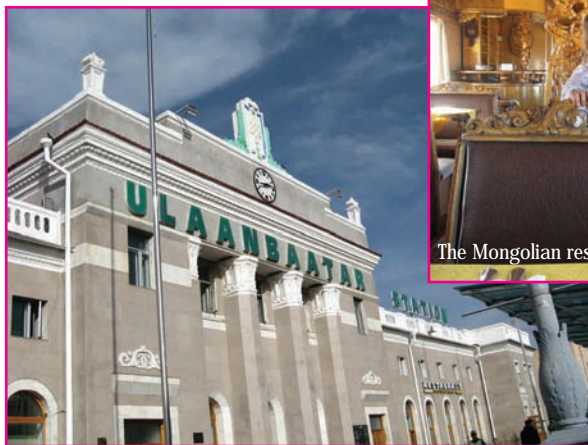
That was my daughter and me, beginning our journey from Beijing to Irkutsk by the Trans Siberian train. We were so exhausted physically and mentally after the ordeal that it took us almost half an hour to settle down and relax in our cosy and comfortable coupe. Was the tumultuous beginning an indication of similar experiences throughout the rest of the trip? We badly needed something to soothe our frayed nerves and what could be better than some hot tea? To our delight, we found a dispenser at one end of the compartment

providing hot water. Out came our tea bags and cookies and soon our spirits lifted to help us enjoy the passing Chinese landscape outside. Free meal coupons were provided for the restaurant car. Lunch and dinner were tasty and wholesome, complemented nicely by excellent Chinese green tea.

We didn't realise when we had entered Mongolia as it was dark outside. Notwithstanding the slightly unnerving visit by the uniformed Mongolian official who took away our passports for visa formalities at Erlian station at 10 pm, followed by the jolts and jerks during 'wheel change' there, we slept comfortably through the night in the centrally heated train while it was bitterly cold outside.

The first view outside the window in the morning stunned us. We were travelling through Gobi desert! The cold Mongolian desert that we had read about in geography books! As the train cut through the endless sea of sand, we spotted two-humped Bactrian camels on top of a dune silhouetted against the morning sun. Barring the occasional herdsman with his flock or the stocky, wild-maned, long-tailed Mongol horses grazing in the wilderness, not a soul was around.

A visit to the restaurant car brought a real surprise. The Chinese one with minimalistic decor had been replaced by a grandly done up Mongolian one. The panelling with beautiful woodwork painted in golden colour was gorgeous. The carvings included Mongolian horse heads, musical instruments and other ethnic symbols. A gleaming samovar adorned a corner. The food was outstanding. Be it the ham stuffed omelette and pancakes for breakfast, Mongolian noodle with fried mince meat soup for lunch or Schnitzel and meat and



The Mongolian restaurant car

fried egg with rice for dinner, washed down with some invigorating tea and served by smiling Mongolian lady staff, the fare was delectable.

As we approached Ulan Bataar, the capital of Mongolia, habitation came into view. Concrete houses and white, cylindrical Mongolian tent-like houses stood side by side. There was a thirty minute halt at Ulan Bataar station enabling us to get down and get a glimpse of the city from



Making tea on the bank of Lake Baikal



Fresh catch from Lake Baikal



Litsvianka

the station. The city seemed busy with cars and skyscrapers. There was a tiny museum, a small duty free shop and a store at the station but few passengers. An old Mongolian man was hawking paintings and I picked up three small ones as they were rather good. The man was very happy to be paid by Chinese currency since we were not carrying Mongolian money.

Night time brought another wheel change session and passport checking by a team of armed Russian personnel in black uniforms, who scoured the train from ceiling to floor with sniffer dogs. Morning dawned to show that we had crossed Mongolia and were travelling through Siberian landscape. The Russian restaurant car provided culinary delights like pancakes with smoked salmon and jam, boiled eggs with tomato, ham, cheese and mayonnaise. A casual glance outside took our breath away. **An expanse of blue water skirted by snow clad ranges dazzled in the morning sun. What sea was it? "Lake Baikal" replied the restaurant attendant. I gulped down my cup of tea.** Another wonder from the geography book! Gulls and terns circled over the blue water, taking occasional plunges for fish. We could spot one

or two heavily clad fishermen hunched over their fishing rods. The conveniently arranged folding seats arranged along the corridor running outside the coupes throughout the train provided us with ample

opportunity to view and photograph Lake Baikal (through glass of course) for a long time.

As we settled down in our coupe after the photography session with story books, looking forward to the day and night ahead of us before reaching our destination, Irkutsk, a Chinese attendant abruptly came in, handed back our tickets and said "Irkutsk, two hours". We were rather shocked. Weren't we supposed to reach the next morning as

indicated on the ticket? We realised that the Chinese railway authorities do not consider the changing time zones that the train passes through and go by their own timing. Feeling rather jittery, we gathered our stuff and got down at Irkutsk station at what we supposed was morning.

Imagine arriving at a foreign city one day in advance of your schedule, with hotel booking and car pick-up fixed for the next day, with no knowledge of the local language and the local people not speaking a word of English! How we caught hold of a porter with a cell phone, made connection with the hotel and explained our predicament, managed to get a car pick-up in half an hour and reached the doll's house like Matreshka hotel is a rather complicated story better not elaborated here. The hotel was comfortable and very well maintained, managed by beautiful young Russian women and provided sumptuous and delicious buffet breakfast. We discovered from the hotel clock that we had reached Irkutsk at 4:30 in the afternoon and not in the morning as we had thought!

Early next morning we set off for Litsvianka to experience Lake Baikal from close quarters. The bus



took us through woodlands dressed in fall colours and finally to the mesmerising Lake Baikal. It looked like a sea with surf and sand, waves breaking in foam on the beach. But I have never come across water so spectacularly blue. Colourful boats – for fishing and carrying passengers – were moored along the waterfront but there was hardly anyone to avail of them at



Displays in the Tea Museum



Irkutsk - a city of cathedrals and mosques

that time of the year. **Tea stalls on the beach were coming awake. The tea men had just lit their ovens and were preparing the first tea of the morning in smoke blackened samovars.** The

promenade lined by motels, with hills as backdrop, was straight out of a picture postcard. We spent hours watching the gulls circling, preening, perching, swimming and diving for fish. The sunbeams danced on the waves like millions of glittering diamonds.

The shopping corner, where women were selling an amazing variety of local goods beckoned us. From Matreshka dolls, wooden curios, leather knick-knacks to fresh and dried fish, everything was made or sourced from Lake Baikal and the surrounding area. They were too tempting to resist a few purchases. After the morning's adventure we were ravenous. The beachside place we selected for lunch served very tasty fried rice cooked with vegetable and chunks of meat and succulent kebabs. To wash it down we chose tea with sweet lime. Sipping the wonderful brew from the room overlooking the lake was the ultimate luxury.

Back in Irkutsk, we decided to tour the town on foot, armed with a map of the city provided by the hotel. A picturesque and interesting city, the old and new exist in complete harmony in Irkutsk. Glitzy malls and modern offices are clustered in specific

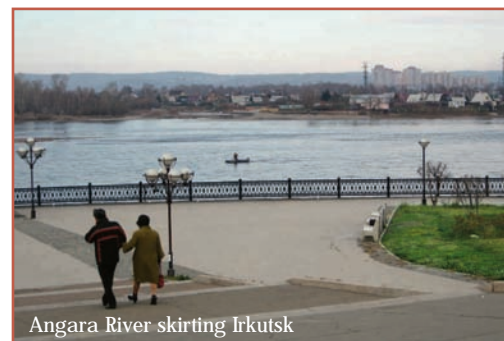
areas. Stately mansions have been maintained beautifully, some housing offices, shops or restaurants, others converted into museums. We thoroughly enjoyed walking along Karl Marx Avenue, the main road running through the city

centre stopping occasionally to tuck in gourmet's delights like salmon wrapped shrimps, hotchpotch soup – tasty and comforting in the sub zero temperature – for lunch and raspberry cheese cake and homemade chocolates with tea during tea time. We visited Lenin Square, Big Ben Square, Irkutsk History Museum, the well maintained Russia House, Church of Epiphany and Church of Saviour leading to the Upper Embankment of the Angara River skirting the city. The Jewish quarters with the old houses and the well maintained synagogue and the Cathedral Mosque were

interesting studies of culture and architecture. The roads were not crowded but those outdoors were happy people, enjoying their outing in the sun.

We had reached European House – a cluster of luxurious houses built by the rich to enjoy the European style of living. I suddenly noticed a board with 'Tea Museum' written on it. **The Tea Museum is housed in one of the houses in the European House complex. Old tea packs, crockery, samovars and photographs related to tea were on display.** One of the tea packs with a picture of an elephant and another with a miniature Indian painting were witness to the once booming tea trade between India and Russia. In one of the rooms in the adjoining City Life Museum, afternoon tea laid out in an exquisite silver tea set enchanted viewers.

The sun had gone down and it had turned very cold. As we were hurrying back to our hotel, a young man with a baby girl on his shoulder waved at us. He came up and asked, "Indi?" When we affirmed, his face broke into a heart warming smile. He introduced himself and his little daughter Olga and requested me to take a photograph of him and his daughter with my daughter. I clicked a couple and showed him. He was so happy that he took out a flask from his backpack and offered me some tea from it!



Angara River skirting Irkutsk

Photos : Author



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Iron Filings in Tea

Dr Baby U I suggests measures to control the problem

The presence of iron filings in tea has become a serious issue in recent times, with the implementation of Food Safety and Standards Act (FSSA). The burning question to the tea industry is the inconsistency in the report issued by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) approved NABL accredited laboratories; the sample passed by one laboratory is failing in another laboratory!

Control measures

Iron filings may contaminate tea unless there are quality checks at every stage of processing from plucking of green leaf to sorting of made tea. Preventive measures are more ideal in keeping this malady under control. The extent of contamination of iron filings depends on the quality system adopted in the factory; the more stringent the quality system the less will be the chances of contamination. Tea Board (1997) and TRA (2013) have suggested these important guidelines to control iron filings in made tea:

- The entire tea factory, particularly factory roof and machinery should be cleaned, de-rusted and painted as and when necessary
- Special care should be taken in factories with wooden floor to remove the loose nails and wire by moving a magnet mounted low bench trolley over the entire floor
- The loose belt fasteners on conveyor belts have to be replaced immediately
- Edges of wire meshes on sorters should be covered with beats to avoid breakage of meshes. Stainless steel meshes to be used wherever possible
- All bearings, pulleys and moving parts of machines should



be well lubricated to avoid production of iron filings

- Graphite powder used for lubricating the sprockets and chains in dryers should be screened through magnets to remove iron particles present in them
- The quality of CTC rollers should be assured. CTC rollers of approved quality, preferably made up of 18/8 forged stainless steel should be used
- Reconditioned CTC segments to avoid breakage of teeth



- Correct alignment of slow and high speed CTC rollers to minimise friction between the teeth
- Inadequate sharpening standards should be avoided, as this increases the grinding action of the rollers and encourages breaking of the teeth of the roller segment
- Powerful magnets should be installed at various vantage points of manufacturing
- The effectiveness of the

magnets used in tea manufacturing and packing units should be strictly monitored.

- The magnets have to be thoroughly cleaned periodically to improve their performance
- Usage of steel wool and wire meshes for cleaning the machinery and floors should be avoided, as pieces of wool and wire meshes can stick on to the surface and find their way to manufacturing process
- Enough receptacles in factories should be provided and the practice of dropping any foreign material like nails broken wires etc in the receptacles should be inculcated
- Proper training should be given to all the personnel involved in tea processing and packaging.

In the light of stringent regulations of FSSAI, a holistic approach is needed right from the field to packing, by integrating all the personnel in the process chain to combat this malady. Here 3As – Awareness, Acceptance and Assimilation – have a major role to play. Create awareness among all the personnel through training, motivate them to accept it as a custom and practice it as a part of the whole quality system. Further, improved technologies also have to be adopted to combat this malady effectively.

Swearing by Assam Tea

Rossell India tackles climate change and shows record growth in Assam

Rossell India has seven gardens in Assam – four of them in the northern districts where floods devastated its estates last August, while two are in Jorhat district that was crippled by a severe drought last year. But the company is unfazed, and wants more gardens. "If the right property is available, we will buy it right now," says C S Bedi, Managing Director, Rossell India.

There are reasons for Rossell's boldness – a 23.7 percent average growth over the past three fiscals, with an accompanying 24.4 percent rise in net profits.

A 47-year industry veteran, Bedi believes "climatic change" in the state is the biggest challenge for planters. "We did look at an acquisition in Malawi, but have now taken a conscious decision to stick to Assam," he feels. Bedi prefers Assam because growing



H M Gupta, Executive Chairman, Rossell India

leaves and manufacturing tea are both more "standardised" compared to the Darjeeling hills.

Rossell has seen the elements taking a toll on its bottom line. Its crop yield fell 12 percent, pulling down its gross revenue a tad lower. The rainfall was the worst in 80 years, weakening the bushes and pushing up input costs. What also had an impact were the depreciation norms under the Companies Act 2013, and the Rs 21 increase in wages per man hour, along with the statutory outgoes.

Bedi says that his company has focused on quality produce in both Orthodox and CTC. As a result, the company has outperformed the market; its average Orthodox teas have fetched Rs 51 more than the Assam average per kg in 2014/'15, while CTC was Rs 44 higher.

Rossell has also pandered to varied tastes by producing both Orthodox and CTC at its gardens: Dikom, Nokhroy, Bokakhat and Namsang concentrate on the former, and Nagrijuli, Romai and Kharikatia on the latter. The "judicious product mix" has been its strategy for years and helped it exploit the core competence of each garden, says Bedi.

This has come especially handy in meeting the challenges on the export front, as in Iran, where the demand was depressed last fiscal due to over supply. Therefore,



C S Bedi, MD, Rossell India

Does a farmer stop sowing paddy because of floods or poor rains in the previous year?

despite a 12 percent lower output, Rossell saw its exports move north by about 18 percent to over Rs 41 crore, accounting for 30 percent of its total production across gardens and 40 percent of its revenue.

The most telling commentary on Rossell's commitment has perhaps been its investment in its tea business – over Rs 150 crore in the 20 years under Harsh Mohan Gupta, the Executive Chairman of the company. When Gupta inherited the tea business after separating from his former partners in 1994/'95, he got three gardens. He sold one and bought another five, and is eyeing for more. "We are on a tremendous growth path for the next three-four years," says Gupta. "We want to be the best in whatever we do."



Balancing Development and Empathy

Sri Lanka Tea Board Chairman Rohan Pethiyagoda discusses the challenges facing the country's traditional trade sector

? Ceylon tea is considered premium in Europe. In terms of your export market, are you pushing this ahead of quantity?

Pethiyagoda: It's always been about quality. In the 148 years since Ceylon tea's been growing here, quality has always been the focus. A lot of other tea manufacturing countries have gone in the direction of teabags, which are perceived as not offering the same level of quality as long-leaf tea, and the Sri Lankan manufacturing system is geared towards high quality: the Orthodox method versus the CTC [crush, tear, curl] method, which is used for example in Kenya.

? Why is that? Surely the temptation to go to mass production exists?

Pethiyagoda: There's a bit of that, but it's a very small part of the market. Most manufacturers are sensitive to the demand of high-quality tea from Sri Lanka or they wouldn't get the prices. If you're going to earn a dollar more a kilo than everyone else, then you have to give something for that.

? Explain how it works: is there a central distributing function?

Pethiyagoda: There are about 700 tea factories in the country. All the tea has to be sold through the Colombo Tea Auction. Each factory has one or more brokers who auction their tea two days a week. The buyers must buy the tea only at the auction – there's a very small percentage that can be bought at



the factory. This allows for a very transparent system in which the seller gets the highest possible price and one seller can't be played against the other.

? Does that protect it from the volatility and externalities of commodities markets?

Pethiyagoda: Not really. Sri Lanka produces less than 10% of world tea, so world prices do dictate what we can do. We believe we've got the best tea in the world but in terms of quantity we're quite small.

? Does your model differ?

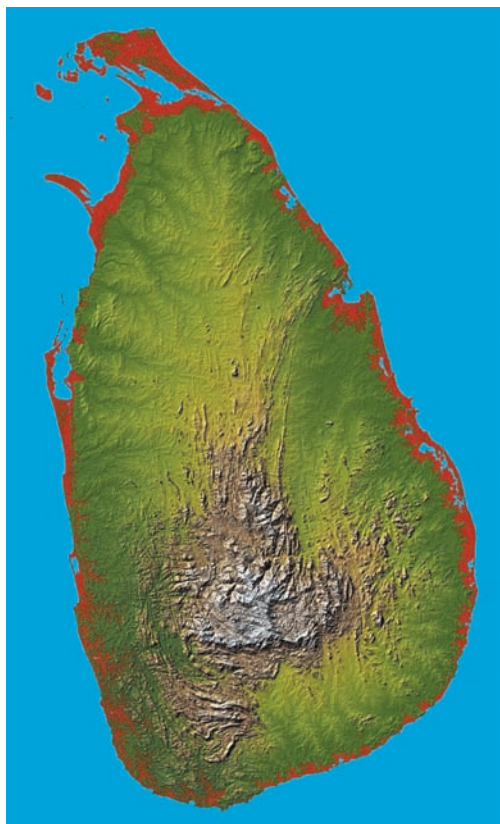
Pethiyagoda: Everyone uses the auction system. Factories sell by auction and it has strengths and weaknesses. It has transparency and allows everybody to maximise price. On the negative side, if you imagine doing the same thing with French wine you very quickly lose the advantage. You're losing the value of your appellation, your region and all the other factors that go back 200 or 300 years, may be diluted because you're selling

through a common forum.

Kenya, for growing pretty much exactly the same area of tea as Sri Lanka – 200,000 hectares – has only 110 tea factories. We've got 700. One would have thought that having that many factories would mean more potential marketing opportunities, but the auction impedes that; it's a leveller.

If you didn't have an auction system, individual factories could probably do more to identify themselves with their brand, like a French vineyard would. But you

A lot of plantations borrow from their brokers. They manufacture the tea, it's sent to the brokers' warehouse for auction. The broker values the tea and advances the money



Pethiyagoda: There is, but it will be transformed. It may become a low-volume, premium-priced product. That's the direction development will inevitably take us. No developed country has an agricultural base, you have to have an agricultural sector that adds value.

Very few manage to go from an agricultural to a service economy without long-term pain. I hope Sri Lanka will be lucky because an industrial phase tends to be painful. Workers get exploited, you have environmental issues, so to make the transition from agricultural to service is the challenge. We've not got there yet I think we're still largely

dependent on agriculture. We need to have an economy that thinks in terms of service.

have the problem that in a market which has stronger buyers than sellers, you could easily end up depressing the prices for everyone.

? How are labour issues affecting the tea industry as Sri Lanka develops?

Pethiyagoda: The industry always complains of a shortage of labour. That is in a way a good thing, because it means people are getting jobs. But labour is a big issue. In Kenya, a worker earns less than one-third of a Sri Lankan worker and plucks more than twice as much tea in a day. That's why they're making lots of money and we're not – labour costs so much. In the long term I would imagine Sri Lanka's tea industry will end up with a model much like Australia or Japan, both of which still grow tea despite being developed countries, because they've made it a high-level niche rather than a mass-production industry.

? Is there a fear that Sri Lanka will outgrow the tea industry?

? How does the regulatory environment affect trade?

Pethiyagoda: Like many developing countries, we're over-



regulated. We've got India sitting over us – far more heavily regulated than here – companies are stifled by regulation. But we still haven't seen the opportunity of deregulating ourselves even further, so we have the model where Indians behave towards us like China does to Hong Kong.

Indians would come, stash their money here, look at this as a destination which is of economic and recreational value, because we need to deregulate to a level that we ourselves see as dangerous.

? How does government support exports – do you have an export credit agency?

Pethiyagoda: We do, we have the Export Credit Council. It largely underwrites. The industry is facing a challenge. Buyers no longer want to go through the route of establishing an LC and buying through a highly regulated buying system.

They want to send a purchase order, the tea gets shipped and the money sent. As trust develops between buyer and seller, they want to get into an easier way to trade and much less expensive. But again there are regulations around this. It's pretty much compulsory to use an LC because of capital controls and I can't see a time that we move away from this and float the rupee: we have to have control.

There's a political consensus that we won't go to a market economy because we don't want the social pain that brings. We'd like to be a little more caring towards people. But the problem with doing that is that you can't

develop as rapidly as you'd like, so we're trying to find that balance. The government targets growth rates of around eight percent, but to have a rapid, Singapore-like growth rate for Sri Lanka is going to be difficult.

Source : <http://www.gtreview.com>

The story of T

Jim Glendinning regales with adventures from yesteryears

I stepped over the cobbled stones in the little square off Mincing Lane, which led me to the offices of Walter Duncan & Goodrickes. This was in March 1949 and I was visiting at the request of the Directors, and in answer to my request to join their Company which comprised 12 tea estates in The Dooars-West Bengal.

The Board Room was upstairs and the clerks worked below. Flint

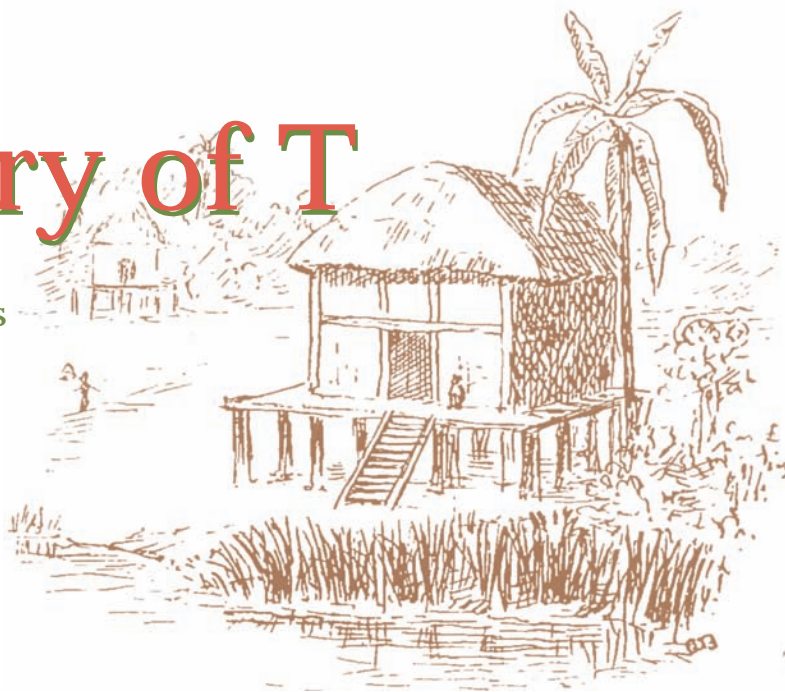
a deathly hush. How could this young cub from Somerset come by this information that they were trying to hide from the city? The end result was that I was given the job and worked for 12 years for this

Fever that killed most men. He survived and one day descended the stairs from his bedroom in the assistant's bungalow of Baintgoorie and queried about a large wooden object lying on the front veranda. He was to learn it was a coffin that had been prepared for him!

The Company wanted to be rid of him but the man so loved his job he begged to stay and a way round was found. We had one outlying tea estate of some 1000 acres away from the tea district and surrounded by paddy fields. He was told he could go there and stay. This was preferable to the story I heard from a man who joined tea in Ceylon. He finally reached this isolated tea garden, having been carried the last 15 miles by a buffalow cart.

The Manager told him he was never ever to leave the boundaries during his five year contract. In fact it turned out to be not that bad. The manager attended the planters club some 20 miles away, leaving behind a rather beautiful wife, to whose willing bed the garden assistant would jump.

But all's well that ends well. T became manager and turned the estate into the best money spinner we had, and was eventually promoted to superintendent!



nosed Directors grilled me for a long while and I gathered they were unhappy about my age, which was only 20 years. Finally the Chairman concluded the interview and asked if I had any questions. I had in fact just one, and I had done my homework. I asked not to be sent to Danguarjhar Tea Estate, where there had recently been severe rioting and the manager left for dead. Those who were dozing in their chairs suddenly woke up and there was

Company both as Assistant and later Manager.

During my 12 years in tea in the Dooars of West Bengal, there was a character I remember like the very name Dooars, which in itself was unusual. The name was derived from a mixture of British soldier and Indian Sepoy. It meant 'doors from Tibet into India'.

T was outstanding as a planter. He joined Walter Duncan & Goodrickes around 1938 and very soon went down with Black Water

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