

CONTEMPORARY

TEA TIME

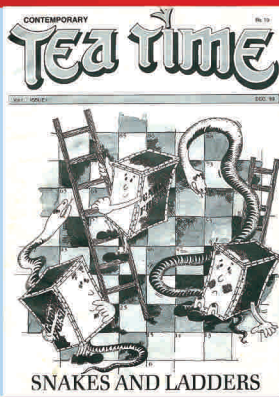
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TEA JOURNAL WITH THE LARGEST READERSHIP | 25th YEAR OF PUBLICATION

Celebrating
25 *years*



1989



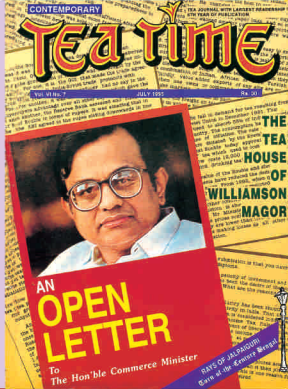
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1991



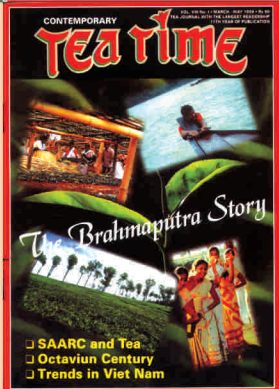
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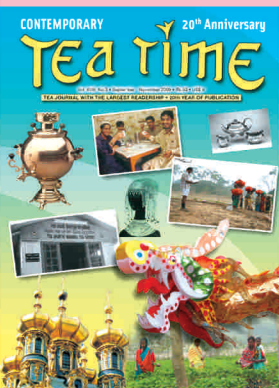
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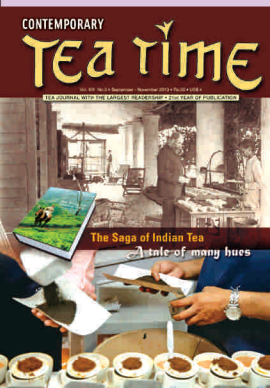
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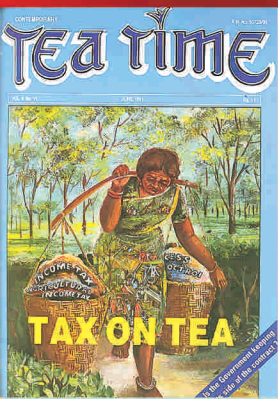
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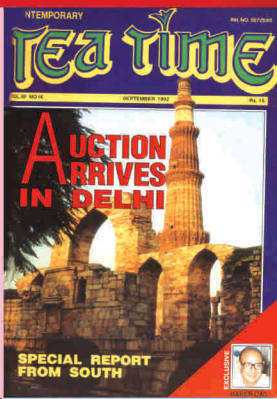
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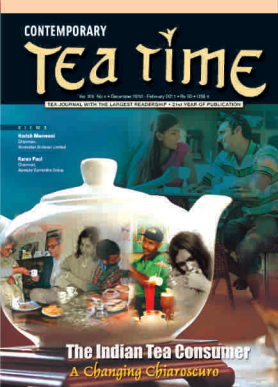
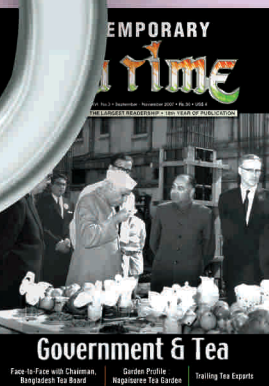
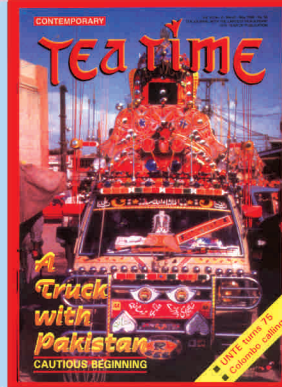
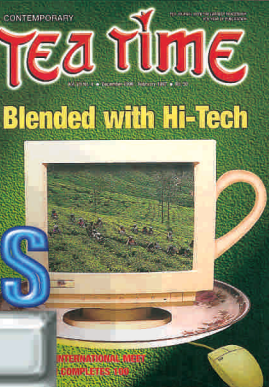
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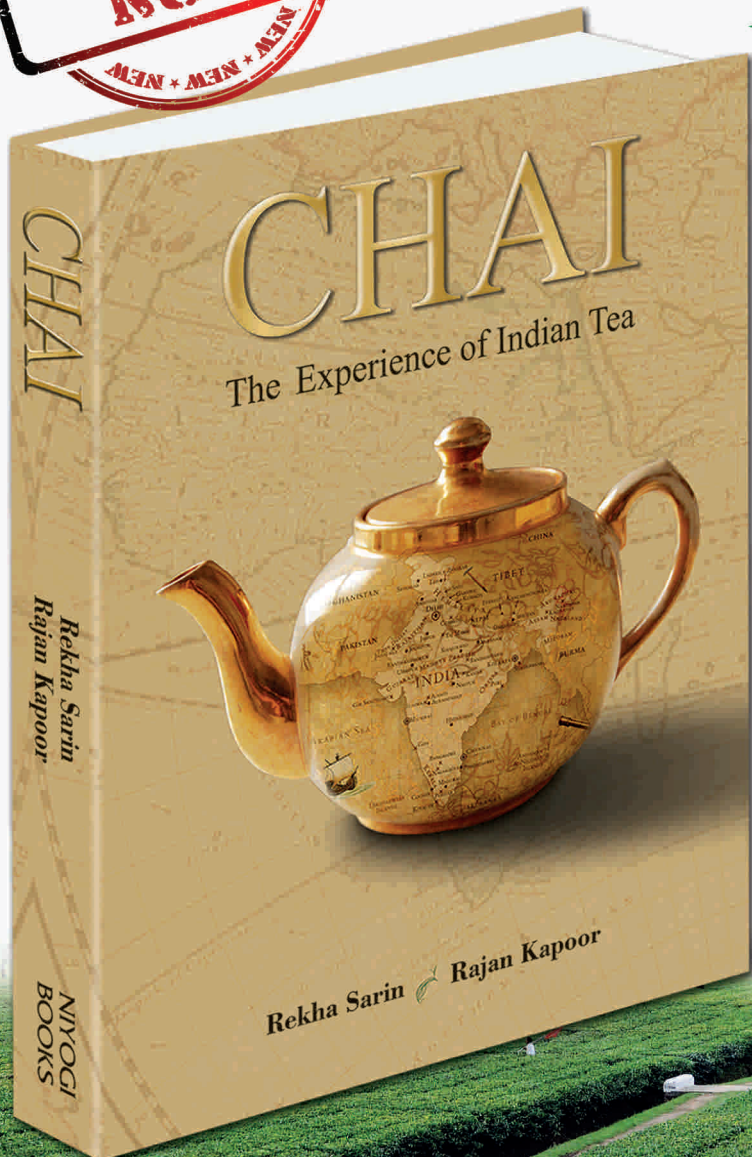
1993



To the tea leaf pluckers and labourers of the tea gardens in India, for
keeping alive the heritage of Indian tea

...their innocent smiles touched me deeply.

—RAJAN KAPOOR



*'Come, oh come, ye tea-thirsty
restless ones—the kettle boils,
bubbles and sings, musically.'*

—Rabindranath Tagore

*'Steam rises from a cup of tea and
we are wrapped in history, inhaling
ancient times and lands, comfort of
ages in our hands.'*

—Faith Greenbowl

*'Tea is one of the mainstays of
civilization in this country.'*

—George Orwell

*'Its liquor is like the sweetest dew
from Heaven.'*

—Lu Yu

*'Wouldn't it be dreadful to live in a
country where they didn't have tea?'*

—Noel Coward

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- 38 **July**
An Open Letter to P Chidambaram



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Errol O'Brien

TEA QUIZZY

QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the functions of a Tea Sommelier besides discussing and describing flavour?
- 2 Which estate indulges in Cherry Tea tourism?
- 3 Which tea garden's factory was gutted by fire and has now reopened after 21 years of labour dispute?
- 4 Due to the presence of which properties are most health benefits from tea obtained?
- 5 What type of tea is Chamomile?
- 6 How is the appearance of the leaf of a tea which is flat, open and poorly made described?
- 7 What is the difference in hours between Bagan Time (Tea garden time in Assam) as opposed to IST?
- 8 Singaporeans have come forward to help the West Bengal State Tourism to revive one of the world's oldest Chinese settlements outside mainland China in the areas of Tiretta Bazaar and Tangra in Kolkata. What has the project been named?
- 9 Which innovation was introduced by Tetley in the UK in 1953?
- 10 Who is the brand ambassador for Tata's new flavours of Green Tea?

Answers

1. The pairing of food with tea. • 2. Temi Tea Estate in Sikkim takes visitors on walks through the tea estate • 3. Ringtong • 4. Tea is rich in polyphenols which include flavonoids — these have antioxidants. • 5. Herbal tea • 6. Flaky • 7. Daylight saving on the estates. Bagan time is one hour ahead • 8. Cha. kiosks and decorations will be set up selling traditional Chinese products. • 9. Tea bags • 10. Kareena Kapoor





FROM THE PUBLISHER

In service to the COMMODITY for 25 YEARS

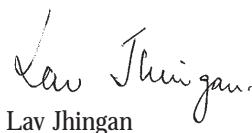
In terms of the history of the tea industry, 25 years does not seem to be a significant length of time. The industry has been and continues to be chronicled in the written media quite extensively, mainly by authors looking in from outside. In this milieu, *Contemporary Tea Time* has been the only magazine to provide a platform to those within the industry to air their views and discuss the highs and lows faced by them in real situations. In this respect, twenty five years take on considerable significance.



Alongside the key issues of the stakeholders, we have presented the myriad colours of the industry that has nurtured us for more than 200 years. Its rich history – from the 'Raj' era planters to today's small holders; the vast geographies covered by it – from Assam, north Bengal, south India to Kangra; tea related stories from different countries like Kenya, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, China, Vietnam and many more; the constantly evolving tea drinking traditions in India and the world over and some wonderfully written snippets of nostalgia.

We have consistently focused on capturing and relaying to our readers, the changes that the commodity has gone through; its cultivation and manufacture, the auctioning or trading and the consumption patterns and the ever changing consumer preferences.

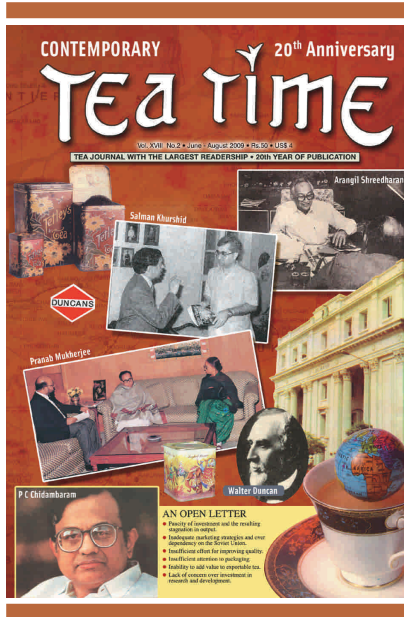
As this silver jubilee issue goes to print, we thank all our readers for their support and suggestions. We are grateful to the Chairman, Indian Tea Association for sparing time to write an article especially for this issue.


Lav Jhingan



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THE TEA INDUSTRY : Passage

An overview by **A N SINGH**, Chairman, Indian Tea Association

Production trends

If one were to trace back the last 25 years one of the key features which would highlight a measure of progress would be the increase in tea production in India from a level of around 700 mkg in 1990 to 1200 mkg in 2013 i.e. a growth of 71%. Seen in terms of yields, the average yield which was languishing at around 1700 kg per hectare in 1990 has now risen to over 2000 kg per hectare. As individual benchmarks these are no mean achievements and the Indian tea industry can take justifiable pride in touting these numbers as major achievements. What is however not so readily grasped is that while the organised segment of the tea industry has recorded modest growth in terms of both area under tea as well as production, it is the small grower segment that has boomed during the last 25 years. The trigger for this growth was undoubtedly the price boom of 1998 and 1999 in the back of which the small grower segment started mushrooming from the mid 1990s. The Tea Board statistics is revealing in as much as the number of estates which stood

at around 3000 in 1991 proliferated to 48000 estates in the year 2001. Small growers have incidentally been very much a part of the south Indian landscape for a very long time – however, in north India, their growth has been a relatively recent phenomena spread over the last 25 years or so.



Small grower

The small grower segments have clearly contributed to the recent surge in tea production. This segment is now estimated to be contributing almost 32% of India's total tea production. Assam alone records some 70,000 small tea holders and the comparative figure in West Bengal touches almost 30,000 as per rough estimates. Tea has therefore contributed to livelihood and socio economic sustenance of a large segment



over the last 25 years

of agriculturists who were earlier pursuing cash crops and this move can easily be interpreted as a growing transition from annual crops to a perennial like tea imparting much needed stability to farm incomes. The challenges as we go forward are manifold :

- Need for balance and inclusive growth whereby the organised and small grower segments can develop in synergy with each other and not at the cost of one another
- Need for quality upgradation of small grower produce
- Sustainability, safety and compliance issues of the small tea grower segment aligned to global standards.

One must however place one's concern and the need for caution against unbridled expansion of tea areas. If tea were to outstrip demand, one could very well have a repeat of the severe recession that the industry passed through between the years 2000 to 2007. Such a situation would be to the detriment of the tea sector but hit the small growers even harder given their weaker holding power.

Tea prices between the last 25 years

From a level of around Rs 40 per kg in 1990 the Indian tea price average has increased to Rs 128 per kg in the year 2013. Seen in terms of bare statistics this records a jump of around 183% which may appear startling at face value. What lies hidden is the fact that seen in terms of average annual rates of increase, tea prices have just about clocked eight percent – well below the rates of inflation that one has seen in other major food articles which form the daily basket of average Indian consumption.

Furthermore, it is important to discern that from the last high recorded in 1998-'99 of around Rs 75 per kg, tea prices declined sharply between the block 2000 to 2008 – a period widely recognised as one of the longest recessionary period to have haunted the tea industry. This was a period when global supply far outstripped demand and the position seen within India as well. The recovery of tea prices since 2009 has been steady but slow and seen in terms of enabling Indian tea producers to recover their accumulated losses. What the long recession did



was to throw into sharp focus the imperatives before the tea industry to look at major strategic moves to ensure long term economic viability. These moves were in the form :

- A sharp focus on cost reduction to safe-guard profitability
- Renewed focus on exports to complement domestic absorption and therefore achieve a demand:supply balance
- Renewed focus on long term developmental activity to boost productivity and through that process contain costs.
- Boost consumption demand for tea particularly in India which though blessed with a large tea consuming population continues to display very low per capita consumption.



Renewed focus on replanting

The industry, largely led by the ITA, placed top priority to the task of replacement of old tea bushes with a twofold objective : (a) enhancing productivity and (b) in the process move towards better quality of produce.

The ITA championed the initiative now widely recognised as the Special Purpose Tea Fund (SPTF) – a construct which appeared somewhat distant when it was first conceived. Given the industry's irregular performance largely in the backdrop of uncertainty in tea prices – for which we have little control – the replanting rate had long been languishing at less than one percent till the decade of 2000s. Tea producers were

virtually caught in a trap – low yields – high cost of production – low profitability – low investment. Given the inability of the industry to generate the required funds for investment it was necessary to give a fresh look to redefine the investment matrix through an external push. Given the long gestations involved in the replanting process, traditional source of finance i.e. commercial banks and financial institutions were loathe to look at the tea industry given the long payback periods and attendant lending risks. It was in the mid 2000 that the industry led by ITA championed the case for SPTF, which working alongside improved retention, provided additional resources to tea companies to undertake some aggressive rates of replanting. This Fund virtually bridged a viability gap and in so doing provided welcome funds to the industry to re-invest in the plantations. It is a measure of the SPTF's success that the rate of replanting has now climbed to a healthy two percent in north India.

Exports

Exports seen in volume terms during the last 25 years have continued to hover around an average of 200 mkg and have therefore continued to remain under considerable pressure. It would be a fallacy, however, to regard exports as marginal activity placing undue reliance on a robust domestic consumption level within India. Besides balancing out our total production towards ensuring an overall remunerative price realisation, exports play a vital part in showcasing our quality and specialty teas. The positioning of Indian Orthodox teas as a high value earner is especially significant in this context. It is a matter of great satisfaction that ITA members alone recorded a production of 45 mkg of



Orthodox during 2013 – up by 15 mkg over 2012. This added focus on Orthodox, had a very positive impact in terms of recording significant growth in certain markets which have been traditional homes for Orthodox teas. A case in point is Iran where exports upto September 2013 have doubled over the level in the corresponding period of 2012. The ITA, yet again, was in the forefront of devising a special focus on key markets – an initiative which has now come to be widely recognised as the 5x5x5 project covering our leading markets such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Egypt and US. Intensive trade delegations and Buyer Seller Meets continue to be pursued in this segment to aggressively

promote our teas. It is important however to bear in mind that as we go forward the emphasis has clearly shifted from chasing volumes to value. Improvement of the quality of Indian tea, renewed focus on Orthodox and pursuit of value added exports will form a three pronged approach towards ensuring higher unit value realisation for Indian teas in the world market. Again, over the last 25 years the unit value of Indian tea exports which was around Rs 50 per kg in 1990 has climbed to almost Rs 200 per kg in 2013. Even allowing for currency depreciation which has been pronounced during the last year, the price of Indian teas in the world market has achieved significant increase in real terms.

Consumption trends

What are the key learnings over the last 25 years as regards consumption? While India continues to remain the largest consumer of tea, efforts need to be sustained to further boosting consumption. We need to remain alert to competition from other beverages including ASDs. In the early 1990s tea consumption growth rate was around 3.1%. Thereafter, this rate came down to 1.8% and is now estimated to have recovered to around three percent. The tea industry is in doldrums whenever there is over

supply, mismatch in product mix, lower exports, higher imports and lower price realisations. Sustained growth in

domestic consumption can ease much of this volatility and it continues to remain an imperative to promote tea and create awareness of benefits of tea drinking among consumers. Having seen the trend of 2013 where demand remained strong despite the industry having produced almost 80 mkg more than the previous year. We still perceive a match between demand and supply. However, it may be difficult to always ensure this balance. More so, given the fact that the tea sector is highly fragmented making it difficult for supply responses to be coordinated and controlled on real time basis. Given this constraint one can only repeat that the intervention to grow consumption is critically required. There is a strong case for rolling out a B2C programme aimed at familiarising consumers – particularly the youth in urban and semi urban settings to look at tea with greater excitement.

Food safety and sustainability

One of the buzz words underlying developmental models in the plantation sector and agriculture in general is sustainability. Several agencies / NGOs / Corporates have been in the forefront of driving sustainable models of growth keeping in view that discerning consumers continue to demand sustainably produced products. It is to the Tea Board's credit that these somewhat disparate initiatives were sought to be consolidated under an India banner in the form of a Sustainability Code TRUSTEA that was launched in July this year. The exercise still leaves certain vital questions inadequately addressed. I would highlight these as follows :



- While the subscription to the Code is not mandatory there are real apprehensions that estates / companies who remain outside its ambit



could face problems of selling their produce or could see their produce discounted.

- The Code must lead to visible and tangible savings by way of certification costs.
- No guarantees that the additional costs of compliance and verification would be compensated by enhanced value accruals.
- No clarity on who will promote the Code and Mark and across which geographies.

Tea Board and industry are jointly committed to promote in respect of our exports but I would hasten to reiterate that the quality promise is equally for our consumers at home. Food safety and standards provisions under FSSAI reinforce the food safety promise. The tea industry accords the highest priority to compliance under these food regulations.

Industrial / Human relations

Looking back at the experience of the last 25 years or even more it is to the tea industry's

credit that it has kept focus on human resource needs for fostering growth and efforts continue to nurture one of our most vital and real assets – the workforce. One of the major tasks confronting industrial managements is the handling of its workforce which is perhaps the most sensitive and therefore complex. The tea industry as a whole must appreciate that every individual decision however small in itself, concerning any aspect of a worker's employment, form a definite piece of labour relations work. We must continue to keep our ears to the ground and proceed with the faith that a happy worker is central to our plans for growth.

It will be myopic however on our part to presume that industrial growth can proceed without impinging on the society. This would be even more so for the tea industry which continues to operate largely in a rural environment. The tea industry has already seen that people in the periphery of the estate previously content with the simple and somewhat austere life of rural communities are eagerly embracing opportunities to better their living standards and overcome the limiting inhibitions of life in village communities. The industry will need to remain sensitive to these visible changes as we head to the future.





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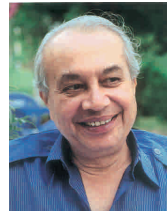
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Crystal Gazing in 1989

On an October 1989 afternoon I was sitting in our Cochin office when the *Times of India* arrived from Bombay. Having nothing better to do I began looking through the paper only to discover a small report which stated that Mikhail Gorbachev had announced, that from the following year, the Soviet foreign trade would be decentralised to the 16 Republics of the Union. With a little cold water flowing down my spine, I felt that this could be the death knell of the Indo Soviet Rupee trade. How can there be 16 different rupee agreements without a guarantee from Moscow?

Earlier, one or two experts, who understood international currencies, had told me that the Soviet Rouble would soon be worth paisas and not rupees. From this angle, as an Indian I felt that it was just as well that the loot of India may be halted. On the other hand, as a tea man I realised that the halcyon days of Indian tea prices would be over. Contrary to my fears, the following three years did not see any undue fall in



Prafull Goradia

From prediction to reality

prices. Then the market slid or rather fluctuated mildly from year to year. But by no means did they reflect the continual inflation.

In 1939, the approximate price level of north Indian tea was two rupees a kg (converted suitably from pounds). In the mid-nineties, they hovered around 75 rupees. With the advent of 2000 A.D.

began a slump which carried on and on for nine years. In my

memory never has a tea slump lasted

so long. We had all heard

of the 1929

great crash

and the Depression that

followed through the

thirties but it was not so relentless.

There was even talk of cutting worker wages but somehow



upward fluctuations, however short lived, provided relief. Moreover, there came an international agreement to regulate exports with the help of tea quotas to each exporting country.

In these early years of the 21st century, I had hoped for revolutionary changes especially at the garden level productivity. Changes and



adjustments took place but not revolution.

Acceptance by workers of mechanical plucking yes, but not sufficient implementation.

Even the inadequate changeover

was more due to labour shortage.

The Soviet had bought tea on a grand scale. Quantity purchase was the name of the game. Quality was incidental especially in the last decade namely the eighties when the Rouble value was crashing. The Soviet currency, which was officially valued at US 60 cents had gradually become less than a cent in the open market. Good tea sold at say 20 rupees whereas its poor parallel realised up to 19 rupees. In bazaar jargon, there was little difference between the price of a horse or that of a donkey. The temptation before the garden was pluck for quantity only. The faults in quality could be made up in the sorting room. Fine plucking suffered a discount in most areas and for the greater part of the season.

With the Soviets buying over half the Indian tea exports at virtually any price within their ceiling levels, there was not enough to go around to the traditional export markets. Over the years, our hard currency exports fell and the vacuum was

filled by Sri Lanka, East Africa and other producers. These lost markets are yet to be recovered. Thirty years of Soviet blessing to the gardens has proved a curse since. Whither Indian tea now on the world stage is yet to be ascertained. Here is what was foreseeable in 1989.



Another of crystal gazing of 25 years ago that is steadily coming true was in the area of consumer marketing at home. Uncannily, the UK of the past has been the future scene in India. Loose tea displayed in grocery, seen and smelt by the consumer was quite the style at the advent of the 20th century.

In Britain in due course, the 4 oz packet captured the UK tea shelves whether in groceries or in supermarkets. Although widely associated to start with, containing poor quality leaf, over three decades, the tea bag is the super game in distribution and inevitably as a medium of consumption. In

India, real display of



loose tea has virtually disappeared. The substantive replacement is the local retailer's sealed pouch. Simultaneously, the tea bag is steadily creeping up. So let us see what holds good for the next 25 years!



a STAR was born



A magazine born out of and dedicated to the tea industry

A Nandkeolyar

Contemporary Tea Time was conceived over 25 years ago. It was our endeavour, in response to the challenge of communication in the world of tea, to provide a forum for all those who grow, auction, buy, pack and consume tea. We declared that we would be happy to publish all that is relevant to the tea world.

The first issue was assembled in house. The lead story covered the fluctuating markets, prevailing then. The average price of tea was Rs 30 per kilo and exports were rising. In fact it witnessed a big jump. The USSR increased their purchase from about 135 mkg in 1988 to approximately 221 mkg in 1989 – a jump of 64% on an all India basis. Although the USSR purchased mostly the Orthodox variety and Darjeelings, that year, they bought large quantities of CTC. In Siliguri, for instance, exporters purchased 41% of the offerings, while today their share is a mere two percent of the teas sold. Alternate sales for exports and for domestic use were then being introduced to ensure that tea was available to our home consumers. This decision would prove costly to the trade because blenders worldwide were encouraged more than ever before to switch to teas of other origins for the bulk of their requirements. Meanwhile with alternating sales, the market rose and fell each week by as much as 20% in price. Reflecting popular sentiment, a local Delhi tea broker, Raghubir Singh, unable to make ends meet, prayed for the market to settle down, “neither

up nor down”, so that his clients could begin to buy and sell teas freely. The cover story of our first black and white issue, named *Snakes and Ladders*, focused on these fluctuating markets.

At that time C K Dhanuka was the incoming President of the TAI, Narendra Kumar, the Chairman of the ITA and P K Bora the Chairman of the Tea Board.

In sync with our policy of providing a neutral forum for all opinions, we aired some non conventional views. When the Late Amitava Palchoudhuri, ‘Senior’ to all those who knew him, suggested ‘make more dusts’ to compensate for dwindling supplies, because more cups per kilogram of tea could be obtained, it was a ‘different’ and unorthodox idea.

Our keen perception of the pulse of the times has reflected trends such as the increase in tea bag consumption so that the fannings and pekoe dusts grades have become more popular than most other CTC broken grades and often commanded a premium. While in the Soviet’s buying era the mantra was ‘to produce more broken, more larger ones the better,’ it is now the practice to produce more fannings and smaller broken. Besides, one never knows when suitable packing material to infuse dust grades in tea bags will appear, and the attention shift to dusts.

We have chronicled the history of tea when the domestic market was moving towards packets and we saw that for the packers to give consistent tea, even density was necessary. It was necessary so the last cup of tea from a packet would taste similar to the first. Taj Mahal then retailed at



Rs 7.00 for a 100g pack and Lipton's Yellow Label at Rs 5.40.

We met Pranab Mukerjee, today the President of India, then the Commerce Minister and P Chidambaram, the Finance Minister and we wrote about the burden of tax that the tea industry has had to bear, which while being agricultural in nature - dependent on the unpredictable weather but was taxed like the predictable manufacturing industry, yet not

enjoying any depreciation for the bushes which were the 'machines'.

As we go into the 25th year of publication, we are full of confidence that through this forum more people would be encouraged to express themselves. Our raison d'être has always been to provide a platform for open debate, relevant discussion and to represent the divergent voices of the contemporary tea world.



SNAKES *and* LADDERS

By a Special Correspondent

A boom is not new in the tea market. There has been boom in prices before and there has been many a slump. But never before have the prices fluctuated as violently as this year. For example, in the course of a mere four weeks in September, the prices rose and fell in the auctions by ten rupees per kg or more. Some teas rose by Rs 16 to Rs 53 and crashed to Rs 33 as if the market was engaged in a snakes and ladders game

When prices rise government intervention is necessary because tea is an item of popular daily consumption. No government can be seen to prefer exports to domestic consumption. Intervention certainly helps in the short run although in the long run the only solution is to increase production to meet the demand.

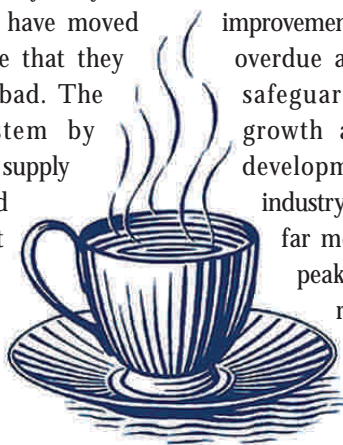


T S Broca
former Chairman of
the Tea Board and
present Chairman of
Food Corporation of
India



Dhirendra Kumar
Chairman
Calcutta Tea Traders
Association

There have been too many slumps and very few booms in the tea industry. Only since 1984, things have moved better, before that they were really bad. The auction system by regulating the supply of tea to the market has helped in stabilising price levels and it has proved to be a very fair disposal system for such a large commodity. Prices without it would have been uncontrollable with huge fluctuations.



It would have been better if the prices had gone up gradually.



C K Arya
J V Gokal & Co.



V K Goenka
Warren Tea Ltd.

Slumps and booms is an interesting subject. All forecast so far have been wrong and let us see what happens.

These booms and slumps are not healthy for the tea industry. A steady improvement in prices is long overdue as only this can safeguard the healthy growth and long term development of the tea industry. Stable prices are far more desirable than the abnormal peaks and slumps which we have seen recently.



R K Krishna Kumar
Tata Tea Ltd.

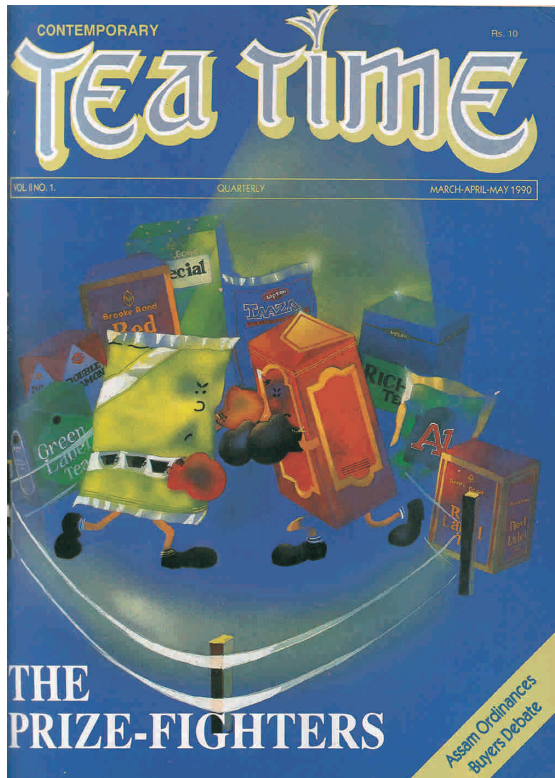
*Contemporary Tea Time
December 1989*

The Prize-Fighters

Round One

The polypack is substantively the attempt by a producer or a garden owner to short-circuit the traditional mode of blending/distribution in reaching the consumer directly. It is a bold innovation by the producer to add value by packing consistently selected tea in a colourful pouch which can reach the consumer's kitchen, as it were, directly from the tea bush to the cup. It is an imaginative attempt by the grower to shore up the surpluses which, he believes, the trader has been traditionally appropriating.

The pouch or the polypack, as it is popularly known in the trade, was innovated by the experts of Tata Tea and launched some three years ago. Until then, except for the poor man's pice envelopes, consumer tea packs in India were cuboid packets or cartons. And most of these were distributed by Brooke Bond and Lipton. Except for one or two brands of Duncans all contained blended tea.



Comments by Deepak Atal, Managing Director of Duncans Agro Industries Limited

“The packet tea segment of the market had been stagnating for quite some time. With the introduction of polypacks by reliable producers/blenders, new opportunities have arisen as in my opinion the conversion to polypacks has basically come from the loose tea customer. Polypacks are no different from any consumer pack and require sales promotion and advertising to establish popularity as a 'brand'.

Those who treat it purely as a commodity or as a fair-weather friend, are unlikely to establish themselves. Like in any other consumer pack, blending is a must to reduce costs and to maintain quality.”



Contemporary Tea Time March 1990



The Legendary Thomas Lipton

The son of a poor Glasgow grocer made the name of Lipton synonymous with tea the world over

In the heyday of the glittering, halcyon Edwardian era the wealth and hospitality of Sir Thomas J Lipton had become a legend on both sides of the Atlantic. There is a story about Sir Thomas once asking a young business associate to stay back for luncheon aboard his fabled yacht 'Erin'.



"I'm afraid I can't", stammered the man, much overwhelmed. "Can't? Why not, why not?" demanded the tycoon.

"Well, Sir to be quite honest, you have such famous, titled people on board that I would not know how to address them correctly." "Young man, aboard my yacht" boomed Sir Thomas, "You will always be quite safe if you say "Your Grace."

It was no idle boast. King Edward was a frequent guest and Sir Thomas was on hand-shaking terms with the Kaiser and the Tsar of All the Russias. The guest list on the 'Erin' read like a 'Who's Who' of European royalty and aristocracy.

Indeed the son of the poor Glasgow grocer had come a long way. At the time of Tom's birth his father earned a wage of 30 shillings a week but his ambition in life was to open his own grocery store. One day, his son was to open as many as

600 Lipton stores and own a business estimated at £2¹/₂ million.

Tom Lipton was born in 1850. His parents were Irish immigrants who settled in Glasgow to escape the terrible potato famine. Though poor, they were solid, honest, churchgoing folk. The surroundings in which they lived were dingy from the blast of

furnaces belching soot into the air. But within their tiny four-roomed apartment the atmosphere was one of prim respectability. Soon after Tom's birth, his father set up his own grocery shop. As a child, Tom first displayed his extraordinary advertising flair when he suggested to his father that his mother should be deputed to sell the eggs as they looked much larger in her small hands! At 15 Tom was out of school and sailing to America. For four years he worked on various jobs from a plantation labourer in South Carolina to a tramcar driver in New Orleans. When he returned to Glasgow he brought back with him that flamboyant salesmanship which was to catapult the name of Lipton to giddy heights.

Before 40 Tom was a millionaire. But he was still very much a ham and bacon man. His romance with tea did not begin until 1890. He was on his way to Australia when his ship made its routine



into a public limited company. It is said that when the announcement of going public was made applications were received for £40 million worth of shares. That same year, Queen Victoria knighted him.

Rumour goes that the knighthood was conferred as a reward for Lipton's cheque of £25,000 sent in a flamboyant gesture to the Prince of Wales' charity fund.

halt at Colombo and the aroma of tea assailed him. Tea was then selling at three shillings a lb in UK and was very much a rich man's drink; it was cheaper to serve beer in the servant's hall. But the boom in tea was beginning. Tom made a snap decision. He got off the ship at Colombo, travelled upcountry and bought several tea gardens. He was not quite aware of what he was getting into. He still looked upon tea as he looked upon ham and bacon – as something that would attract greater custom to his chain of shops. By cutting the middle man he felt he could reduce the price to one and seven pence.

He prepared his campaign accordingly. A showman first, he concentrated – after he was satisfied with the quality – on the appearance of his wares. At that time tea was sold loose. Tom had a better scheme – to sell it in packets. Tea would be fresher, the brand standardised and the packet easier to handle. He visualised an attractive label of a Tamil girl with a basket on her head. He had his slogan ready : "Direct from the tea gardens to the teapot."

After that there was no looking back for the grocer from Glasgow. In 1898 he converted his business

Nevertheless it was a characteristic Liptonian gesture and very much in keeping with the style of a man who, when his ship had run aground off Aden, had first thought it fit to paint on some floating bales, "Drink Lipton's Tea," before jumping to safety.

At Lipton's, business expanded but alas Sir Thomas's style of management did not change with the demands of the 20th century. In the 1920s, he continued to manage his giant conglomerate in the same one-man showy style in which he had run his Glasgow business 40 years ago. What had seemed strengths then were now turning into glaring defects.

In 1927, Sir Thomas finally sold out to a syndicate headed by Van der Bergh interests and Meadow Dairy. He was 77 and the fight had gone out of him. He signed his abdication in the stateroom of his new yacht 'Shamrock'. Four years later, he died. Half a century has passed since. But the name of Lipton remains synonymous with tea the world over today.

WH Targett, Archives

Contemporary Tea Time March 1990



Packaging is to a product what dress is to the people. They protect against weather and to add attractiveness. If only the producer or the marketer were to devote the same attention to packaging tea as he does to his own dress, the demand for his brand could be far greater.

There are consumer products 75% of whose costs go into packaging. In sharp contrast, 70% of the tea in India is sold practically naked. That is loose tea. Which means cheapness has been the main criterion of its sale. Perhaps logical in a poor country. And certainly not to be ridiculed as it has worked so far. Over the last 18 years, the Indian consumption has jumped from 260 mkg to 480 mkg.

Even the remaining 30% branded non-loose tea is packaged economically. On the argument of tea being the cheapest beverage, every effort has been made by packers and marketers to keep down the cost of the carton. Surprisingly, economical packing appears also to have consumer appeal. This was discovered when the polypack was widely launched by producer packers. Although no cheaper, this soft pack created the illusion that it was more economical. And the Indian consumer lapped it up in the belief that the cheaper the packing, the better the tea the supplier could afford to give. As a result, even the traditional packers like Brooke Bond and Lipton had to introduce polypacks.

The paradox of marketing in India does not end here. Blended tea as distinct from unmixed garden tea, is not, clinically speaking, a value-added product. A good blender can save up to 10% in cost by dexterous blending which makes blended tea a value deducted product. Therefore, it is believed that it cannot absorb expensive packing. Hence the practice in Indian tea to pack as inexpensively as possible.

In any case, for bulk packing, economy or

Packaging PARADOX



cheapness has to be the dictating criterion. But the same consideration cannot run indefinitely in consumer marketing. In the long run, and certainly in the upmarket, attractive packaging does prove a trump. As much as a pretty bride looks prettier when decked up in attractive clothes and glittering jewellery.



The traditional tea chest has rendered yeoman service in the past. The two functions of manufacture and blending/marketing had been clearly demarcated, with the former content with manufacturing and sending tea of various grades in tea chests to the blenders, who had taken on the task of blending and packing the tea in cartons and marketing it to the ultimate consumers. However, a large number of Indian consumers took immense pleasure, in buying tea blended in their presence, as per their personal choice, in loose tea shops.

The scene has changed drastically since the mid '80s. The demarcation between manufacturers and blender-packeteers has all but disappeared. The tea chest is fast becoming a disappearing species and environmental considerations urgently demand that we take all possible measures to preserve our dwindling forests. The result has been the unmitigated success of “plantation-packed” tea in poly bags, which has swept the Indian market as a result of :

- (a) Convenience of purchase, compared to loose tea
- (b) Low cost, compared to metal caddies and cartons
- (c) Simplicity of packaging lines compared to carton packaging machinery
- (d) Attractive shelf appearance and
- (e) Vastly improved shelf life.

The last factor has surely clinched the issue in favour of polypacks, made from high 'barrier plastic packaging material, which helps keep in the freshness of tea up to the point of use and keep out external taint and odours present in the grocer's shelves.

Since the barrier properties and transport worthiness of the consumer packs are of prime importance, the material selected for tea packaging, keeping in mind cost factors, has been a laminate of polyester and polythene, with the printing in reverse on the former.

Contemporary Tea Time March 1991

The Polypack Revolution

Arup Bose, Materials Manager of Tata Tea, writes on the transformation that is taking place in tea packing

The '80s have witnessed the advent of consumerism in India. The accent is on convenience of purchase, product appeal at point of sale, shelf life and a constant battle against competition. Tea has been no exception in this regard.





CEYLON TEA

There is more reason for India and Sri Lanka to cooperate than to compete. As it happens, only one percent of Indian tea competes head-on with Ceylon tea. Three-fourths of the Indian output is the quick-brewing, thick-drinking CTC which Sri Lanka hardly produces. The north Indian Orthodox variety is long leaf and distinct in character. The only quality comparable with Sri Lanka's is the south Indian Orthodox which accounts for six percent of the national crop. Some five percent of this six percent goes to the Soviet Union under barter trade in which Sri Lanka cannot participate.

Times can change and more of the two countries' production may, in the future, compete on the international market. Sri Lanka can make more CTC while the Soviet Union may choose to spread its purchases more broadly amongst the growing countries. And so on. Nevertheless, the reason to cooperate will endure. Not only between India and Sri Lanka but also with the other producer nations.

After all, what are the compulsions behind competition? Economic advantage; a higher value for the produce and the sale of more of the



output. In both these areas, the advantage lies in coordinating rather than undercutting each other. The money is with the importing nations. The question is how much of it can be spontaneously brought across whether to India or Sri Lanka.

For example, standard tea is retailed in Britain for up to £ 6/- a kg. And the average cost of bulk tea to the packer is say £ 1/-. This leaves all of £ 4/- to £ 5/- to pay for the blending, the packing, the distribution, the retailing, the advertising and the profit. As a rule of thumb, a packer should be comfortable if he pays about 50% of his sale proceeds for the bulk tea. But at the current prices he has to pay 25% or less.

The moral of this story is that the international price of bulk tea can comfortably be double of what it is today. Were it so, Sri Lanka would take home an extra 15 billion rupees (INR 700 crore) a year. India would benefit less as only half its tea sells on the international market.

It is however not so. No fault of anyone. The packer overseas prices his retail pack as high as he can without losing sales. And, as is prudent business, procures bulk tea as cheaply as he can. It just so happens that the growing countries are offering a little more tea than the rest of the nation's drink today. The growers, especially in China, India and Kenya, are trying to produce more in order to control costs of production. But they are doing little to regulate their export supply. Nor do they do much to persuade more of the world's people to drink tea or to drink more of it. They largely abdicate this vital role to the packers or distributors of the importing countries.

There are two great pitfalls in this virtual abdication. The packer will promote tea drinking in his country to the extent he can in the context of his own profit possibility. If he sees a greater possibility in promoting say coffee he will deploy

more effort and money on coffee. Today, few packers are exclusively in tea distribution. And therefore promotion is left to the mercy of the comparative chances open to a packer in his country.

In a country like Britain, which consumes a great deal of tea, this dependence on a packer may not be too disadvantageous. But what about say the Continent where the per capita consumption of tea is low and

therefore, where the packer can ill-afford to deploy money or effort on promoting the sale of tea? The Continent has the money, its people are



familiar with tea and may be inclined to drink more of it as it is healthier than coffee. But who is to put out the money and the effort to exploit this enormous potential?

Only cooperation amongst producer countries can be an answer to these vital questions. By indiscriminately competing with one another or incidentally by under-cutting prices, they are all missing the wood for the tree or mistaking a twig for a garden.

Contemporary Tea Time March 1991





JAPAN *at a glance*

The total area planted in Japan covers more than 62,000 hectares and the annual production amounts to about 103,000 tonnes. The gardens are distributed from the Kanto district to Kyushu island, being mainly located along the coast of the Pacific Ocean, where the annual average temperature is above 13°C and the total amount of precipitation is above 1,400 mm. The tea produced in Japan is mostly green. The “Sencha” variety is the most popular. Tea is harvested two or three times a year. The first crop is of the best quality

E isai (1141-1215) was the first priest who brought tea seeds from China. He may be called the founder of the Japanese tea industry. Along with his follower Myoe, he carried the seeds, brought from China, to various places so as to encourage people to cultivate tea. The custom of tea drinking was confined to select classes, who used the brew as a kind of medicine as well as a drink at social gatherings. It was only after Sennorikyu (1521-1591), who had accomplished the art of tea ceremony, that tea drinking was conveyed from the higher classes to the society

of Bushi (Samurai). It then gradually became popular among the common people. But as a daily beverage, tea was insignificant until 1859 when Yokohama was opened as a trading port. Since then, Japanese green tea received praise abroad as one of the two greatest export items together with raw silk.

The largest producing region is Shizuoka prefecture which produces about 50% of the tea in Japan. The second is Kagoshima prefecture on Kyushu island. There are several kinds of tea

made in Japan, but the production of black tea has decreased since 1972 when the restriction on imports was removed. At present, black tea is not produced at all.

The tea produced is mostly green tea; it is nonfermented. “Sencha” is the most popular, it is manufactured in many parts of the country. The freshly picked leaves are immediately steamed for 30-40 seconds to inactivate the enzymes and then rolled and dried until they become like green needles. “Gyokuro” is the best quality. The plants are cultivated in the shade for about two weeks (90% darkness) before harvest. Only hand-picked soft leaves are used to make this special tea. “Kabusecha” is also of good quality. The period of shading is shorter (50%-80% darkness, 1-2 weeks). “Tencha” is also made from leaves grown under complete shade. Leaves are steamed, rolled, dried and finally ground into powder (50 micron) by a stone mill. It is used mainly for the tea ceremony. “Bancha” is the lower grade of “Sencha”, made from coarse leaves and stalks.

“Kamairicha” (pan-fired tea) is also made from young leaves, but differs from “Sencha” in that

the first process in the manufacture is parching and not steaming. “Ureshinocha” is a variety of ‘Kamairicha’. This is pan-fired and comma shaped tea and is a speciality of Saga prefecture. “Aoyagicha” is also pan-fired tea tinged with blue.

It is a speciality of Miyazaki prefecture. Until 1950, the gardens were planted with seedlings, but now clones of superior varieties only are used. The typical variety is “Yabukita” and it covers about 90% of the total clonal area.

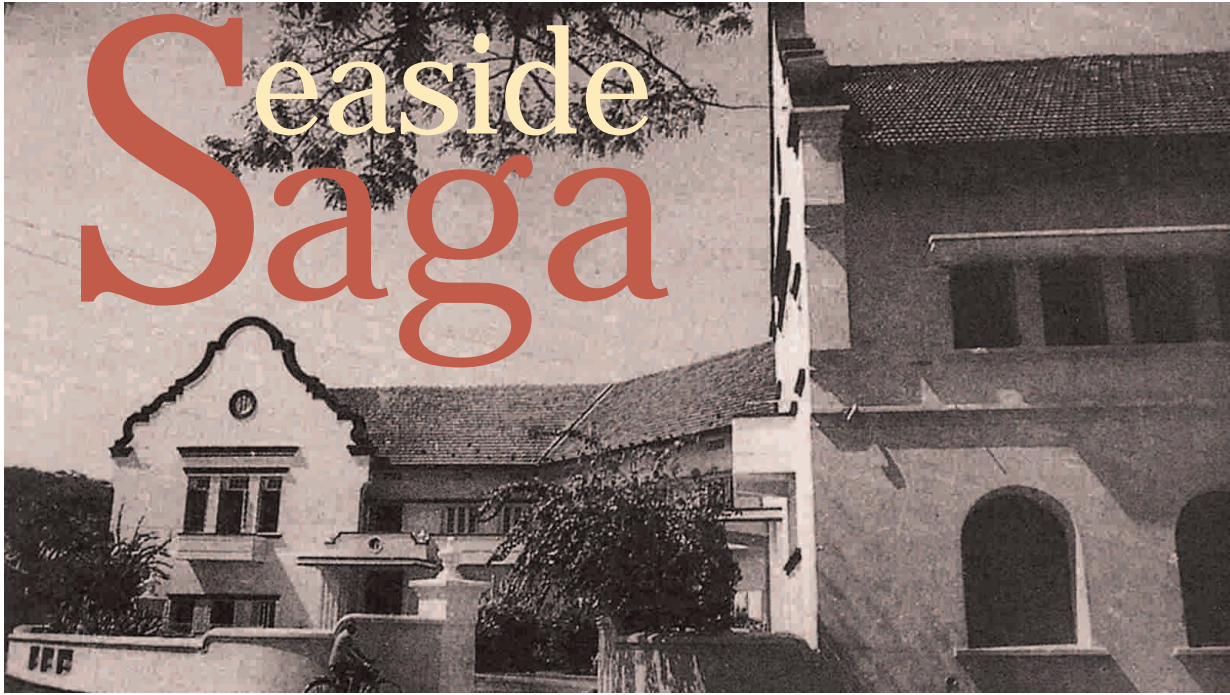
Tea is harvested two or three times a year. The first crop is plucked from late April to mid-May. This first harvested tea is of the best quality.

The second crop is plucked in mid-late June and the third in early August. In 1985 green leaves were harvested in these proportions of the total yield; first crop 49%, second 36%, third 9%, others 6%.

Courtesy : Shigehiro Kodomari Shizuoka Tea Experiment Station

Contemporary Tea Time June 1991





Aspinwall at one time owned the Peermade Tea Co. and Glen-Leven Estate and managed Twyford and T.T.E Ashley Estates, Stagbrooke, Katary, S.I.T.E.

The bold lettering on the wall of the apparently largest building on the water front as one cruises on to the sea alongside Fort Cochin is of a company that has become part of the annals and antiquities of that port town since organised sea trading began with the west in the first half of the 19th century. The warehouse building had at one time stored the tea chests for shipment to England by Aspinwall. Lettered in black paint it could not be missed by anyone even from a long distance.

While the Aspinwall's rise and trading expansion began in the middle of the 19th century the merchant whose name is still borne by the company, now held by the royal family of Travancore, had bought it from a partnership firm Oughterson and Campbell. In its early days the company was engaged in timber business, ship-building and general trading. The partners

bought the site on which Aspinwall and Co Ltd. still has its principal office.

Incidentally, a special committee deputed to suggest steps to preserve the historic vestiges of Fort Cochin (no fort exists any longer) reportedly wants the skyline to be left intact. Which means the Aspinwall building will remain an indelible watermark.

It is truly a monument to a man who was no buccaneer as many merchants of the times were. He took keen interest in Fort Cochin's civic and public welfare and was vice-president of the local municipality from 1875 to 1878. He was also the president of the local chamber of commerce in 1870 when he sponsored the proposal for a deep sea channel to let big steamers come inside. Years later when this was done the sand and mud scooped out of the seabed made for one

of the best known man-made islands, Willingdon Island, now prime property in Kochi.

The original partners got into problems with the Travancore 'sarcar' over teak business resulting in litigation. They thought they should wind up and did so by taking in J H Aspinwall, an Englishman, as a partner. This was in 1863 and Aspinwall has since been one of the largest trading houses on the Malabar coast. In four years Aspinwall became the sole proprietor and the holding company he established retained its control until a century later it transferred its interests to the royal family of Travancore.

As an aside to the saga, Aspinwall built up a commercial establishment in Madras and gifted it as a wedding present to his son-in-law AVD Best. There was an understanding between the two that each will confine his business to the assigned area, Aspinwall to the west coast and Best to the east coast. Through various incarnations, Best since became Best and Crompton. Aspinwall died in London in 1884; his friends put up a commemorative tablet in the historic St. Francis Church where Vasco da Gama remained buried until his grandson took his remains to Portugal.

It was after Aspinwall's death that the company went into plantation business. It had managed 15 tea gardens and had accounts with many coffee and other plantation estates and also had been suppliers of estate stores. Aspinwall's Candle Island complex provided warehousing facilities for estate produce such as tea and also for tug and barge service from Kottayam to Kochi. Since 1920 a succession of British groups held a majority of shares until these were sold to the

former Maharaja of Travancore who acted as chairman briefly from 1971 to 1972.

Another member of the family, C R R Varma, became its managing director in 1979. One functionary who has been a link that has ensured the continuity of the success of Aspinwall is its chief executive, Edadeth Bhaskaran Unni. As Unni reminisces the Aspinwall story, in his fit frame, he looks the erudite head of a Malayalee Tharawad. His office room overlooks the sea whose waves have lapped the edifice of success for over a century and a half. He is full of its history. He could pinpoint the place where Vasco da Gama was to have his final resting place, where Albuquerque landed and Cabral brought in his first Portuguese merchandise. He recalls the start of Cochin auctions after World War II at the initiative of the former British Army tea officer R G Peirce. Unni says he found in tea trading the "cleanest business". Its openness is heightened by the auction system. He could speak at length on the virtues of Cochin tea.

Long years of work have not worn him out and he remains as fresh as he was when he began his career. His interest in music and art forms help him keep off the weariness as he returns to his spacious house after his office schedule for his cup of tea.

Aspinwall is no longer in tea business, but its association with the trade had been of a scale that history could not overlook its catalytic role in the development of Kochi as India's second tea city after Calcutta. The waterfront building is a constant reminder of that role.

Contemporary Tea Time September 1991



Aspinwall building, Kochi



This is a story from Bardoli in Gujarat. Sixty years ago, the peasants of Bardoli taluka conducted a non-violent mass movement. Their protest was against increase in land revenue in a bad agricultural year. This no-tax campaign came to be known as the Bardoli Satyagraha. It was organised by Vallabh Bhai Patel whom the country began to know as Sardar Patel.

After another satyagraha — this time conducted individually by Vinobha Bhawe and others — Sardar Patel was camping in Bardoli, Gandhiji came there to spend a few days with Sardar. The question was : What next after the satyagraha? Sardar thought it would be good to meet and consult other leaders. So a meeting of the Congress Working Committee was arranged, rather suddenly.

The big village was to play host to Congress leaders — Maulana Azad, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Pandit Nehru, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and the rest. Sardar was keen that they should be comfortable even in Bardoli's rural surroundings. So overnight he had some toilets of the European style installed.

In the Bardoli Ashram, there were few who could cook rich food or could even make a good cup of tea. So he asked four or five of us (girls) to help with the arrangement.

I was eager and excited. In Sabarmati and Sevagram, I had seen the leaders come and go. But to live with them and to serve them was going to be something new. Hardly had we settled down when a couple of carloads of Congress leaders drove down from Surat to Bardoli.

We showed them where they would stay. We asked them what they would like to have for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And at what timings? Anything special?

NEHRU *and*



Standing next to Nehru at the Teen Murti. Also in the picture are her children Usha and Anand

Badshah Khan would have coffee. It had to be strong. Eight ounces of cream should go with it. We were taken aback. Where do we go in the villages for good fresh cream? Shankar Rao Deo would have plain *chapatis*, but the milk must be cow's milk. We knocked at many places to find a fairsized high stool for Mrs Sarojini Naidu's bathroom.

A long verandah led to some of the guest rooms. There was a swing with a broad polished plank of wood. Asaf Ali and Arunaji sat there. I am sure they talked about us. We ran here to there,

tea ceremony



on the back and say appreciatingly – “Bahut Khoobsurat.” We felt rewarded and proud.

In those days there was no cooking gas. We used kerosene stoves and coal-fired stoves. When Panditji asked for tea, it took me some time to get it. He asked why I was late in bringing it. “You should be able to get it without delay.” I gave him no answer.

But we found an answer. We knew when he would want tea again. Well ahead of it, we put water to boil. It was there on the stove for a while. So I poured it promptly next time into a pot and brought him his tea. He was pleased. In a moment however he complained. “*Pani jyada bharaa hey*” (it has been boiled for some time). I had no idea then what difference it made to tea if we used water as it came to a boil or the water which was boiling for a couple of minutes. In our ashram we had neither tea nor coffee. Pandit Nehru asked me if I had used good tea. “Let me show you how to make it. Take a clean vessel. Put fresh water in it. Warm up the kettle or the pot. Pour the water into it as soon as it comes to boil a third time. With good tea leaves in the pot, it will be ready in a few minutes. If the water was not boiled enough or was boiled for long, the taste would change and could be poor.”

fetching things, delivering the clothes we had washed and pressed, and so on. they were friendly and curious. Who was looking after whom? They asked us how things were going. The nation's leaders sat and chatted with us.

Jawaharlalji liked papayas. They became part of his breakfast. Sardar knew where Bardoli grew its sweetest papayas. He had them in the Ashram by basket loads. We would cut papayas in fancy shapes using our skill and sense of design. Pandit Nehru looked at the way they were dressed up and served. He would give a warm friendly pat

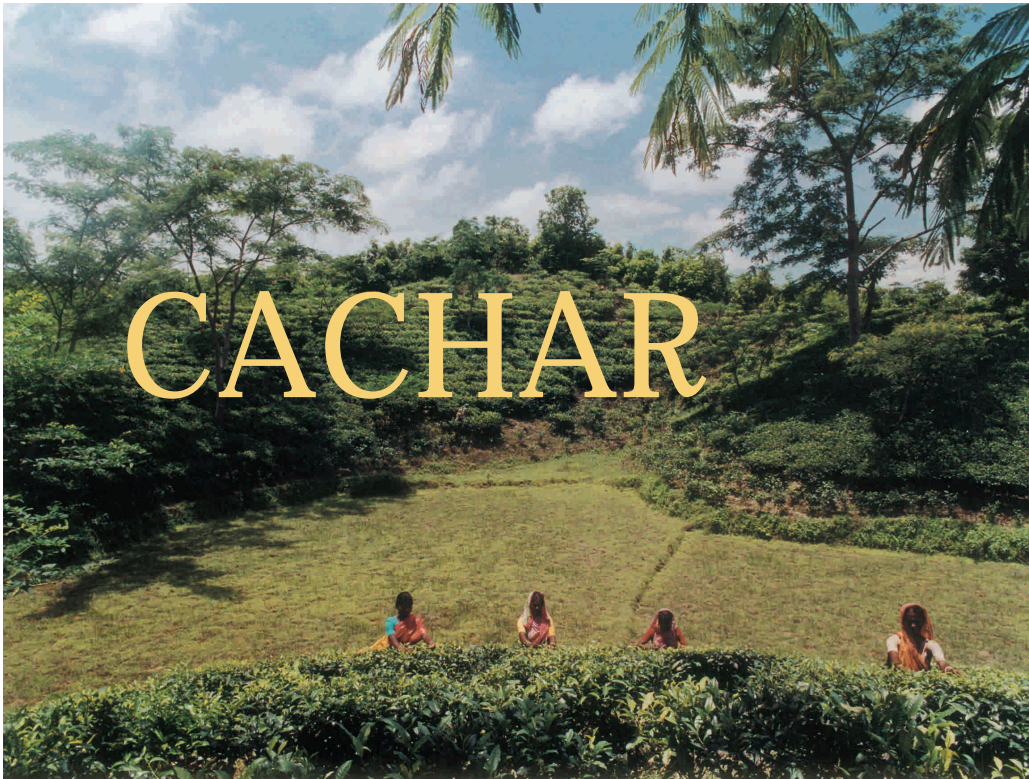
Vanmala Desai with the Mahatma on the right

So when my friends tell me that tea is good, I tell them to thank Pandit Nehru. Six years before he became Prime Minister, he taught me how to make tea.

Vanmala Desai (Courtesy The National Herald)

Contemporary Tea Time September 1991





Cachar is the Cinderella of Indian tea. The district has produced tea for nearly as long as any other area in the country. Its agro-climate has not been as bountiful as that of say the Brahmaputra Valley. The yields have therefore been a struggle and yet the cost of production has been kept down to an economic level. The quality from Cachar has been fair over the decades. When its gardens have made special efforts and made excellent quality, they have not been rewarded merely because they had to be offered as from Cachar. In the 1960s several gardens produced liquors far better than medium Assams but continually sold below six rupees when the latter were being readily taken up at a rupee higher. When tasted blind by the best of tasters, these superb liquors from Cachar stood out. So great was the prejudice of the trade. 'What's in a name', said Shakespeare. The tea world proves him wrong and that too not once but twice. First, it discriminates against a product merely because it is named as from Cachar. And second, it does not permit teas

from the district to claim the name Assam although Cachar is an integral part of this great tea-growing state. Shakespeare is wrong. There is a great deal to a name. And as if with a vengeance, it can be said that the name is greater than the substance.

The exception proves the rule is an old adage. And it applies to this syndrome. Gardens that are situated in say Karbi Anglong are accepted as 'dwija' or twice born in the caste hierarchy of tea estates. But Cachar is not. As with Cinderella so with the others, oppression can often drive one to extraordinary achievement. Like Valmiki created 'Ramayana', Cachar's contribution has also been epical as well as epoch-making. It brought perennial plucking or the extended pruning cycle to north-east India. But for this revolution, whose cradle was the Barak Valley, what would have been the crop of the Brahmaputra Valley today? Or the north-east Indian production? Would it not have been some 50 mkg less?

Contemporary Tea Time December 1991

INDO - Russian Trade

Pravull Goradia

Eighteen ninety-seven was a year of interruption and anxiety in Indian tea exports to Russia. Plague had broken out in parts of the country and import of Indian tea into Batoum was therefore prohibited. Initially, the government reaction in Calcutta was one of anger and there was some talk of reprisals like stopping the import of kersosene pumped in Baku. The Indian Tea Association made a timely intervention and proposed that the Russian authorities be persuaded to recognise that tea is no carrier of plague. The crisis was fortunately short-lived. In the year 1903-'04, nearly 29,000 pound of Indian tea was exported from Bombay to Russia. Two years later the quantity had trebled and the value earned for it was Rs. 42,193/-.



The Indo-Russian sea-borne trade continued to grow. The taste of the Russian had undergone an extraordinary change in the last decade. His preference was swinging from China to Indian and Ceylon tea. Purchases from China had declined from 60% to 40%

of the total imports. Due to a rise in prices, imports via London were also diminishing and direct shipments from the sub-continent were more attractive.

The consular report added that there had been an extraordinary increase also in the demand of green tea. Between 1904 and 1912, imports had grown by nearly 20 times. Turkestan and the other Central Asian provinces had taken to green tea as a kind of substitute for intoxicants which were forbidden by Islam. A whole new market, over and above that of black tea consumed by

the European Russians, had been created.

When the Great War ended there was a general recession. But the crash in tea prices was unprecedented. Between the Christmas of 1919 and 1920, the quotation for common teas had dropped in London from 1.2d per lb to 5d. In the course of a year, prices had become one-third. This slump was largely attributed to the Revolution and Civil War in Russia. Imports by this great consumer had stopped all of a sudden.

On July 12, 1948, at New Delhi, the first Indo-Russian food agreement was signed. India would receive 50,000 tonnes of wheat. In return it would supply 11.5 m lb or 5,000 metric tonnes of high grade tea. The Tea Controller for India, acting for the government, soon invited offers for the supply of 4,250 tonnes of north Indian tea from the 1948 crop. Of this quantity, 69% was to be Assam, 30% Dooars, 5% each Cachar and Darjeeling, divided into 30% whole leaf and 70% broken.

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

Contemporary Tea Time December 1991



The World's First POLO CLUB



M K Choudhuri, Secretary – General and Chief Executive of the Indian Tea

Association, writes on the Silchar Polo Club – first in the

world – which has fallen on lean days. Silchar Polo Club, the forerunner of the Silchar Retreat Club, earned a niche in the Guinness Book of Records as the first polo club in the world

The Silchar Polo Club was founded in March 1895 by Capt. Robert Stewart, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar and Lt. Joe Sherer, Assistant Commissioner, with the co-operation of other enthusiasts.

The origin of polo can however be authoritatively traced back to the small state of Manipore lying between Cachar and Burma. It was first played there in the first half of the 16th century. Polo was the national game of the Manipuris and widely popular, irrespective of age or class. As several Manipuris emigrated and settled in Cachar (its headquarters being Silchar) for political reasons, they also took their national game with them and played it there. Later, in the mid-19th Century they were joined by the Britishers/Planters in Cachar. The venue used to be the vast ground where stands the present DSA ground. Spurred by the activities of the Silchar

Polo Club, the visiting Britishers took the game to Dacca in the early sixties of the last century.

Calcutta merchants, who witnessed the game during their various trips to Cachar, took fancy to it and decided to play it themselves. Thanks to the patronage and leadership of Joe Sherer and C B Stewart, a tentative start was made on the Ballygunge Parade Ground in 1861/'62. In 1863, under the visiting Sherer's inspiration, the first polo-playing club was set up in Calcutta. However, history was made in 1864 when, again at the initiative of Joe Sherer, a team of Manipuris, known as The Band Brothers, visited Calcutta to play against the Calcutta team. The Silchar Polo Club defrayed their expenses by raising a subscription. At that time each team comprised seven players and the side first scoring seven goals was adjudged the winner. The Manipuris from Silchar with their little handy tats of about

11-2 and scientific combined play easily trounced the Calcuttans who had larger and faster ponies. Sherer was handsomely feted at the old Indigo mart in Calcutta.

Subsequently in 1897, Silchar Polo Club members, along with the planting community set up Retreat Club Ltd. The road facing the club came to be known as the Club Road.

Horse-riding and horse-racing figured among other popular sports. The Retreat Club had a six furlong race course in the area behind the club, a portion of which is now known as DSA ground. Horse-racing was popular till 1941 and every February witnessed the annual race meet. It caught on perhaps because the Surma Valley Light Horse Infantry, drawn mainly from the strength of the British planting community, was based at Silchar.

The Retreat Club was known for its socials. Movies were screened on Saturdays and club nites held on Wednesdays, when members used to relax at the bar at the end of their sports and games. Other social nites featured poppy dances as well as dances on the Christmas and New Year Eve. Hogmanay nites were another attraction. The club provided lodging to outstation members in the premises where Ellora Hotel is now situated.

During its palmy days the Retreat Club was equally popular with the ladies. The Ladies Club, functioning under the wing of the Retreat Club, had separate premises where Eastern Motors is now situated. Unfortunately the Ladies Club building was gutted in the early sixties, resulting in a shrinkage of its activities since.

Contemporary Tea Time December 1991



PRANAB MUKHERJEE

talks to

Contemporary Tea Time



There is no instant solution to the current crisis in the tea industry. It could be only a gradual process of successful prosecution of strategies.

Commerce Minister **PRANAB MUKHERJEE** (the current President of India), speaking to **Contemporary Tea Time**, rules out any subsidies for the industry, which had wasted opportunities of the export boom years. Nor does the minister find any merit in the industry's proposal to cut production. That will only hurt the consumer at home, without any certain gains in sales abroad. He does not, however, consider the situation desperate

■ Would you prefer a cut in the Indian production? (This means a medium term sacrifice in growth for the sake of meeting an immediate exigency. It also means some unemployment of workers etc.)

◆ There is no scope for a cut in the present production level for the simple reason that the domestic consumption is increasing at a faster pace than the rate of increase in production. Any cut in production will create crisis in the domestic market including that of labour and long-term productivity apart from rendering the exportable surplus inadequate. The present low export is a temporary phenomenon which is likely to be overcome shortly by aggressive marketing of Indian tea abroad. Secondly, cut in production does not necessarily mean increase in export of Indian tea.

■ Or, would you prefer a strategy of urgently increasing exports?

◆ In fact, the need of the time is diversification of Indian export markets for tea and also value added exports. The Ministry of Commerce at present is concentrating on this two-fold strategy.

■ If you prefer an urgent export strategy, how should we deal with the crisis with Iran? This oil rich country had declined to take delivery of some five mkg of tea which is ready for export in response to its orders. Should we extend credit or negotiate a counter trade? Or work out a barter trade on the old Indo-Soviet lines?

◆ In fact, a high level business delegation headed by Chairman of Tea Board visited Iran this month. Most of the outstanding problems with regard to credit and shipments are being sorted out.

■ What about Russia or the CIS countries? Cannot the government consider allotting Rs 300 to 400 crore from the Rs 2,000 crore

worth of goods that have to be exported to Russia as repayment for past debts, to members of the tea trade and industry? There appears to be no reason why the Commerce Ministry cannot persuade the Russians to accept tea in the basket of commodities. We repeatedly hear that there is an acute shortage of tea in the CIS countries.

◆ Consequent to the visit of the Prime Minister and the Commerce Minister to Russia, possibilities have emerged for greater export of Indian tea to Russia. This was followed up by a visit by Commerce Secretary to sort out ground level problems with regard to export of various commodities, including tea, under debt repayment mechanism. The Russians are likely to source higher quantity of tea from India compared to last year.

■ Is there any way you can see chances of renewing even a limited barter or counter trade with Russia or any of the CIS countries? After all it was one of your predecessors, Manubhai Shah, who was the proud author of the Indo-Soviet agreement. Would you not like to pay tribute to him as the author of the original idea by at least renewing barter trade on a limited basis?

◆ The trade with Soviet Union was based on an age old bilateral relation carefully built over the post-war years. Now that the erstwhile USSR has disintegrated and more importantly the economy of Russia and CIS countries have been opened up for the world market, it has given rise to the possibilities for restructuring our trade with Russia and other CIS countries. While doing so, the historic relationship of the past has to be a major input. Accordingly, we are in the process of developing a new trade relationship with Russia and other CIS countries.

■ Then is the all important question of Pakistan. This country has now become the second largest importer of tea after the UK.

It imports most of its tea from Kenya, which, in turn, hardly buys anything from Pakistan. At the same time, tea can move from Delhi to Lahore by road in 24 hours at a cost of 48 paise per kg. Cannot your ministry do something to separate this mutually beneficial trade from the mutually antagonistic political relations? Can you not permit Indian tea exporters to get paid by Pakistani buyers in goods as opposed to money?

◆ We have been exporting tea to Pakistan, although Kenya has a larger share in the market. As on date, we have not had any barter trade with Pakistan in tea.



A Nandkeolyar and Shukla Rudra of *Contemporary Tea Time* in conversation with Pranab Mukherjee

■ The industry has moved and set into action a plan to promote an Indian blend in the CIS and Russia. As brand promotion is a very expensive task, how far is the Union Government willing to subsidise or give relief to the industry, to enable it to do this brand promotion?

◆ The government has limited resources and while it would be willing to help, it can only do so up to a point. However, it is for the industry to put its best foot forward and go ahead. The golden opportunity which the industry had for expansion during the CIS/Russian boom years has been missed.



An OPEN LETTER

To
The Hon'ble Commerce Minister

MISSING THE DISEASE FOR THE SYMPTOMS



To
The Hon'ble Commerce Minister
Government of India

Dear Mr. Chidambaram,

On 13 May 1995 at Calcutta, while addressing the AGM of the Indian Tea Association, you expressed dissatisfaction with the tea industry on the following points :

1. Paucity of investment and the resulting stagnation in output. You have insisted on the industry producing 1000 mkg by 2001.
2. Inadequate marketing strategies and over dependence on the Soviet Union.
3. Insufficient effort for improving quality.
4. Insufficient attention to packaging.
5. Inability to add value to exportable tea.
6. Lack of concern over investment in research and development.

Mr. Minister, our submission is that you have missed the disease for the symptoms.

True, there is paucity of investment and production has not increased as desired by the industry as well as the government. What are the reasons for this state of affairs?

For decades, the industry has been the highest taxed activity in India. Forty percent of the income earned by producing tea is considered industrial income taxable under the Central Income Tax Rules. The rates have come down with liberalisation. Earlier they were vexatious. Sixty percent of the income is treated as agricultural and yet taxed by such as desired.

There is also the fall in demand for tea due to the break up of the Soviet Union in December 1991 which once used to absorb 55% of India's exports. Russia is a smaller country. Moreover, there has never been a depreciation allowance on the tea bushes.

How then, Mr. Minister, can surpluses accumulate with a tea producing company, to plough back funds for growth and development? This is one reason for the output not rising as of inflation. The Rouble for years worth US\$ 1.66 today approximates to one Indian paisa. A kilo of tea which used to cost five Roubles only some years ago, now costs 12,000 Roubles. How will the

average Russian afford tea? This has reduced the demand for Indian tea by 50 mkg or more. From 1992, when quantities failed to be lifted, the hapless producer resorted to very fine plucking to turn out superfine quality which would be acceptable to other countries. The stagnant production of about 50 mkg is greater than the demand. What then would be the sense in producing yet more? The prices continue to be unremunerative while all other costs have increased with inflation.

With the Soviet dominance on the Indian tea market, it was difficult to have any strategies for alternative markets. Over-dependence on the Soviet Union was not sought by the producers. It is the Government of India that made the trade

agreements and signed all India-Soviet trade protocols with Moscow and the barter trade gave the Soviet buyers advantage over all other buyers of Indian tea. Also the Reserve Bank assessed and fixed the value of Rouble in terms of rupees. In 1978 the RBI agreed to the rupee sliding downwards whereas the Rouble remained static. In 1991, the value of the Rouble hit a high of Rs 42. But it was selling in the Moscow kerb market for

the equivalent of some paise. What choice did the producer have but to submit to the Soviet buying? In other hard currency areas, the producer could only expect offers at the international level of prices generally between 30% and 40% below the Indian level, boosted by the barter buying from Moscow. If the producer sold at 40% below, he would be accused of under-invoicing. For

years the producer had to produce a broker's certificate testifying that the value of the sale overseas was at a reasonable price. How could a broker call 40% discount a reasonable price?

So if the producer could not sell his crop at international prices, what strategy would he evolve? He had to be satisfied by exporting the high season second flush from north India or the peak winter season grades from south India.

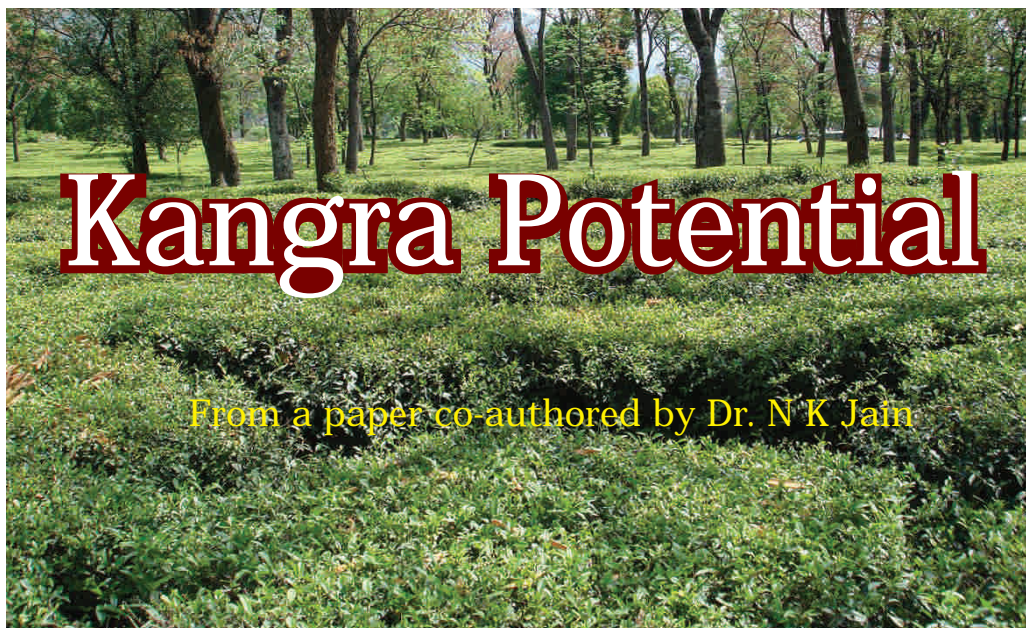
Mr Minister, value added exports are not easy to expand as the trade in importing countries, especially the bigger markets, is jealous of its own survival and prosperity. Secondly, few international blends are of single origin tea — quite often a combination of Indian, African or Turkish tea.



Thirdly, value added exports are possible when one commands a consumer brand in bigger markets. Fourthly, tea travels cheaper and fresher in bulk. Being light, the freight on tea is by volume. Packaged tea increases in volume by say five percent as compared to a chest of bulk tea.

Contemporary Tea Time July 1995





In 1852, tea seed imported from China was used in raising commercial plantations in Kangra Valley. It produced an excellent quality tea until 1905 when the great earthquake destroyed the organised industry. In 1984 only 2,082 hectare tea area survived which produced 361 kg yield per hectare. Of the 1,660 holdings, 81% were small growers with 68% of them obtaining little income from tea.

Work was started in 1984 to transfer new agro-technology to small tea growers of Kangra as well as establish the potential of growth under varying levels of management and with different scientific support. An abandoned area increased 47-fold in yield and 60-fold in gross income under intensive care.

Twenty three technology demonstration plots of average growers quadrupled their yield in six years. Participating farmers watched the progress for two years and were able to get 86% increase in the next four years on the rest of their holdings.

A motivated group of growers having well managed holdings received only verbal advice and recorded 253% productivity in six years.

During this period, the yields doubled and the prices reached 239% totalling a five-fold increase in earnings for the whole of the valley. The impact of the new agro-technology was thus felt in widening circles and proved the potential of harvesting 2,000 kg/ha Darjeeling quality tea.

In 1852, seeds imported from China were planted on the lower slopes of the Dhauladhar mountains at 1,000 M above msl in Kangra valley of Himachal Pradesh, (Griffiths, 1967) which is located at 32.6 N latitude and 76.3 E longitude. These plantations marked a glorious history of quality tea manufacture. But the great earthquake of 1905 destroyed the organised tea industry. The abandoned tea estates were taken over by the labour or small traders who could not understand scientific agro-technology. Consequently, the productivity and quality both declined (Jain, 1984, 1986) until in 1972 the Government was forced to set up Lower standards of Kangra tea (Chakraborty, 1990). A bench mark survey of the small growers of the valley assessed the situation as for 1983 season (Annual Report of CSIR Complex, Palampur, 1984-'86).

Contemporary Tea Time March 1992

Guest on Hire

Nayana Goradia writes of the times when the *burra saheb* came to dinner

Our chief guest was one of those perfectly turned out *burra sahebs* whom I had not thought existed outside books. A slender, distinguished-looking man with a permanently bored and slightly supercilious manner, his suits breathed of Saville Row. He played polo over weekends, went on Home Leave to England every summer and was the only human being I had come across who actually called his servants Koi Hai.

This worthy *burra saheb* was a valued client of the Company. We, still struggling on the lower rungs of the commercial ladder, were sternly told it was no small honour for us to be given the privilege of entertaining this august being in our home. Alas! we were also aware of the risk.

It was then that a helpful friend suggested the Rear Admiral that charmingly suave European gentleman, exuding masses of old world courtesy, who for some reason had taken up temporary residence in Calcutta just then.

My eyes brightened. A tall, erect gentleman, the Rear Admiral wore a monocle over one eye and, in his after dinner conversation, had generally let it be known that he was a retired naval man on excellent terms with everybody from the Mountbattens downwards. For this, the notion had got around that he was nothing short of a Rear Admiral. To us he became much more — a fairy god-parent. The obliging loan of his title and his presence on that crucial evening saved our day. The evening had not begun well. The *burra saheb* had arrived 10 minutes early. The hired Goanese cook who had gone to open the door whistling loudly.

Next the bearer, unfamiliar in his new coat, had bent so low over the tray of drinks as to knock a glass of

whisky straight into the *burra saheb's* lap.

A century dragged by before the bell rang again bringing in our Rear Admiral. He glided across the room to me, raised my two hands in his, fixed me a melting eye and said, "My dear! My dear!" Will you ever forgive me? Oh! to be so late. The traffic! Such traffic!"

I smiled back, feeling all the world was a stage and I was right in the middle. "Do meet our guest". I said to the Rear Admiral.

"Delighted to" replied the Rear Admiral, stretching his arm in the direction of the *burra saheb*. Then, as though a thought had struck him, he fixed his monocle firmly, bent down to have a closer look, raised his head and pronounced.

"But we've met before!"

"Have we?" said the *burra saheb* in his most disagreeable voice.

"But of course old boy!" beamed the Real Admiral "at the Garden Party Buckingham Palace. You remember?" The *burra saheb* looked suspicious. The Rear Admiral smiled back in his most affable manner. "Or was it at that little dinner given by the Mountbattens?" continued the incorrigible Rear Admiral. "Let me think. Yes, that was it. Remember? The Jaipurs were also there. And all that talk about polo?"

"Well," said our *burra saheb* having found himself foisted with the reputation of a man who hobnobs with royalty, "Well, if you say so" Then at last the *burra saheb* beamed widely.

Courtesy : The Statesman

Contemporary Tea Time March 1992



On September 9, 1889, Chang Chih-Tung the acting Governor of Kwang-Tung province, addressed a memorial to the Emperor of China. His specific plea was for the government to set up a cotton mill in his province. But he justified the project by the need to reduce the drainage of wealth out of China. Too much silver was going out of the country. In 1888-'89 the value of the outflow was £10.5 million. The reason was a failure in the export of tea and silk. The Governor complained that India had taken in hand the production of tea on a large scale.

It was Sir Andrew Clark who in the course of this lecture in 1891 phrased the dictum 'The cup that cheers but not inebriates is black China tea'. The bias for China tea was long to live. In August 1908, the Government of India concluded a press communique with the remark that doctors at home (Britain) are advocating the use of China tea as containing less tannin and being consequently more wholesome. The subject of

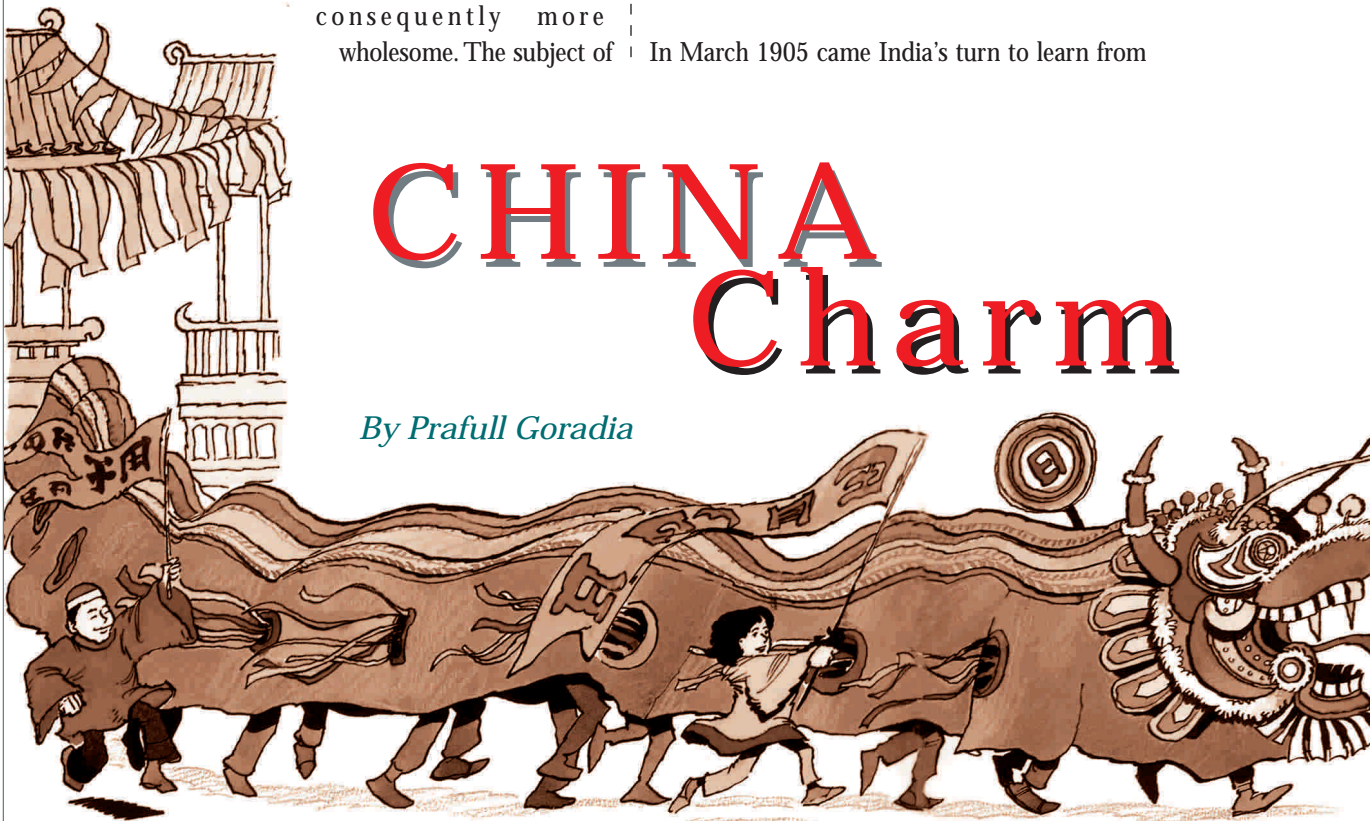
this communique was the withdrawal of import duty on Russian sugar in reciprocation of the repeal by Russia of its surtax on the import of Indian and Ceylon tea.

Such compliments did not lull the Chinese into complacency and in 1897 the Foochow Tea Improvement Company was floated. The factory was to be erected and managed by an English engineer who had been in charge of a tea factory in India. There were many growers in the vicinity of the site who were ready sellers of their green leaf. The machines would help to improve the character and quality of the product. It was also felt that the time had come to deploy capital on a larger scale. Government officials were favourably disposed and they had offered to assist the factory. The time was also right as the Indian and Ceylon rupees were over valued by 25% compared with Chinese silver. This would give an edge to China tea in the export markets.

In March 1905 came India's turn to learn from

CHINA Charm

By Prafull Goradia





China. The Indian Tea Company decided to send an experienced planter to Sechuan at a cost of £400 to learn how to manufacture brick tea.

Until 1950, China was not a uniformly governed cohesive polity. Many regions were ruled by local warlords while the war with Japan, between 1937 and 1945, and the subsequent civil war came in the way of establishing an industry-wide system. Thereafter, peace brought with it to China the bamboo curtain through which information, even when available, found it difficult to filter.

This would enable the company to export brick tea to Tibet. Indo-Chinese jealousy was however not to end. In 1909 exports from North China fell by 14 million pounds. The growers complained to the government at Peking (Beijing) that the decline was due to incessant, almost unscrupulous, misrepresentation by Indian interests that China tea was impure. A Bombay reader of the *Capital* wrote to the editor on April 10, 1919 that China was dumping huge quantities of its tea in Bombay. As a result, Indian tea was not making a headway in India and the labours of the Indian Tea Cess Committee to promote Indian tea in India were going waste.

Protestations did not stand in the way of trade. Bombay continued to import China tea. In 1924, 0.67 million pounds of green tea came to Bombay compared with one million pounds shipped to the North African ports. Nearly 0.3 million pounds of black tea came from China to Bombay. 1925 witnessed a protest of a different kind in a different place. Mr. Bunting, the President of the Tea Buying Brokers' Association of London, in a press interview, warned Indian and Ceylon producers against the folly of plucking coarse and marketing poor quality leaves. "Do not forget China" which had ruined the market by shipping to England an excess of common tea. This low grade of tea of China had become practically unsaleable.

Nevertheless, China tea exports jogged along and the three seasons from 1925 to 1927 passed satisfactorily. All the traditional buyers bought freely both the black as well as the green variety. The best grades realised upto 64 taels (tael = 1.4 dollar) per picul (132.5 pounds) or 21d per pound c.i.f. London while the cheapest varieties were priced at about 8d. But the future prospects were gloomy as the political climate was critical. In addition, the Nationalist Government had imposed luxury taxes.

Contemporary Tea Time March 1992



Warren Tales

Avinash Kohli has written at a time when wildlife is shot only with cameras. The legendary Kenneth Warren reminisced about times it was shot with rifles. He hardly needs an introduction in the world of tea. Born into a family connected intimately with tea from its earliest days, his own association with tea and with India goes as far back as the autumn of 1906 when he took up employment as a tea planter in Assam with the Doom Dooma tea company, then his family concern

Altogether life was easy and pleasant, with polo twice a week and tennis both at the club and in private bungalows, excellent fishing and shooting when one was fortunate enough to get a few days of leave from work.

From time to time we used to have club dances during the cold weather. Those were the days of dance programmes when duty dances were almost obligatory, particularly for younger men, a courtesy custom to which I always conformed. At race meetings and other occasions the Gurkha Band of Assam Rifles was always in attendance.

During the whole of my active period as a planter in Assam, particularly in the early years, polo was our chief recreation, other than shooting

and fishing. As everyone had to have at least one pony in order to get around his work and for ordinary communication purposes, it was naturally assumed that all were expected to turn up at the club and play polo. Most of the smaller clubs in my early days were polo clubs and known as such. The few ladies of the district and anyone who did not play were expected to turn up on polo days to support the game as onlookers.

As time went on and the tea industry expanded and more and more Europeans, including ladies, came into the districts these clubs grew and became more in the nature of social clubs where tennis was usually played once or twice a week



of these clubs still remained quite small however.

As racing became more and more popular there was a tendency among planters to buy 'Walers' from New South Wales, which were really miniature race horses, with the view to racing rather than the ordinary district club polo.

In those days there was excellent fishing on the rivers coming out of the Himalayas such as the Dehong, the Debong, the Lalhi, the Sisseri and Sibiah and several other smaller rivers and also the Lohit, into which the Noar Dehing and Tenga Pani entered on the south bank some distance above the frontier post of Sonpura.

The shooting in the Sadiya area was also very

good. There were even rhinos on the Lalhi Choppery as well as mithun (bison) and buffalo and various kinds of deer, including sambhar and swamp-deer known as Burrah Singha (large horns) and also florican. The rhino and florican are now almost extinct and there is very little left of anything else since the earthquake of 1950 and the following terrible floods which wiped out most of the forest in that area.

"Mellah Shikar" was known in the days of old Assam as the "sport of kings" reserved for "Rajahs". It consisted of the use of fast elephants for hunting down and stampeding a wild herd in the jungle and then cutting out a young elephant caught up with it and the Pandi had been able to throw a rope over its head, at the touch of which the wild elephant would curl up its trunk enabling the rope to be pulled round its neck and the animal brought to a halt by the tame elephant.

In a few moments the next trained elephant would have arrived on the scene and the Pandi would also throw his rope around the elephant's head and thus secured it between the two hunting elephants. The second man on each elephant would then slip off and rope the wild elephant's legs to the nearest tree in a spread-eagled position so that it would not be able to exert its full weight and strain on the ropes.

It would remain in this position for a day or so until it got really hungry and then the Mahout allotted to it would approach and offer it food and water and continue to do this regularly so that the elephant gradually got to recognise him and have some confidence in him. In due course it would be roped between two trained elephants and removed to the camp set up as a depot in the jungle where other similar wild elephants were being tethered and trained.

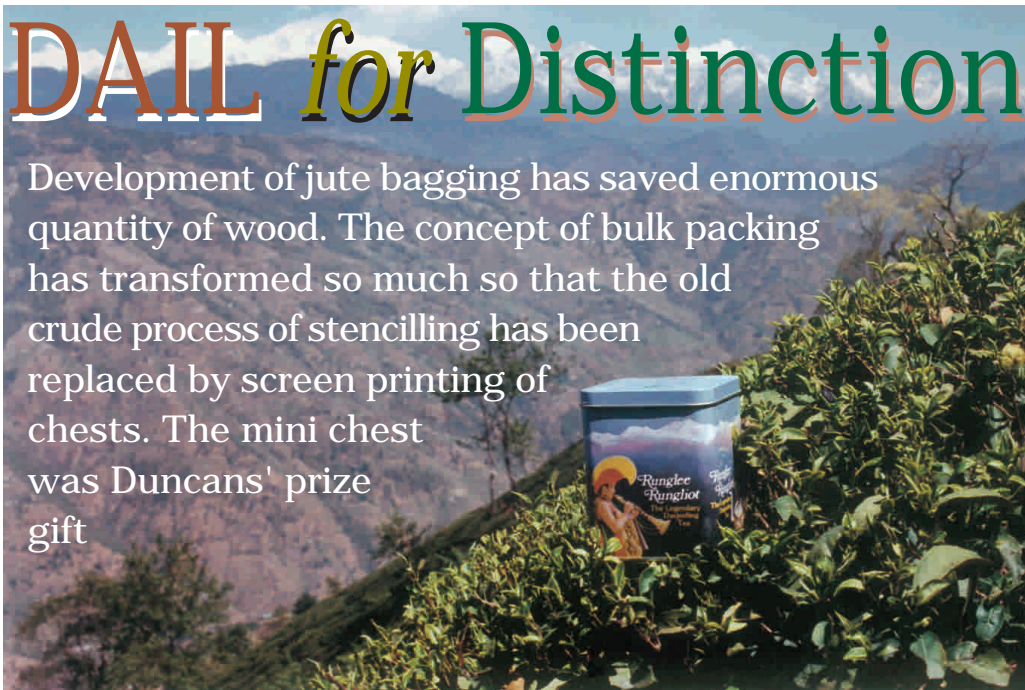
(From W. Kenneth Warren's "Tea Tales of Assam")

Contemporary Tea Time March 1992



DAIL for Distinction

Development of jute bagging has saved enormous quantity of wood. The concept of bulk packing has transformed so much so that the old crude process of stencilling has been replaced by screen printing of chests. The mini chest was Duncans' prize gift



Pioneering that suggests innovation has been the key to the success of Duncans in its operations for close to one century and a quarter. It could list many 'firsts' to its credit. It was the first producer company to make a success of consumer marketing of tea. It turned out the first set of packable teas — ready to drink with cup quality requiring blending. It achieved such a level of standardisation that to distinguish one CTC produce of one season from another or that of one garden from another has been difficult.



Walter Duncan

It development of jute bagging has saved enormous quantity of wood. The concept of bulk packing has transformed so much so that the old crude process of stencilling has been replaced by screen printing of chests. The mini chest was Duncans' prize gift. Chests containing just two kg and five kg are available.



William Duncan

Duncans capped this pack of success with auction

in Bombay city of packs of 55 kg net to 250 g net.

It is hardly surprising that after such initiative featuring corporate performance, Duncans Agro Industries Limited (DAIL for short), a unit of Duncans, should excel in a range of areas. Its turnover (inclusive of exports) has soared close to 265% in a five-year span. It was just Rs. 4336.02 lakh in 1987. This rose to Rs. 11,481 lakh in 1991-'92.

Production-wise too, it could boast of significant strides. It has 12 gardens, all in West Bengal, with a total cropped area of 6,600 hectares. From this land its production has ranged between 13 million in 1987 to an estimated all time high of 14 million in 1991-'92. the average per hectare yield for the two gardens in Darjeeling will be around 10 quintals. This stems from DAIL's high productivity claimed to be 60% higher per hectare as compared to the national average.

Also, the production levels have been maintained or increased by keeping the vacancies to the minimum, the area free of pest and weed and self sufficient in the latest clonal material. Since after all, human resource development is central to any progress, DAIL attaches highest importance to professional training in all functional areas such as quality control, industrial relations and management development.

It has been in marketing that DAIL's originality and enterprise has been strongly pronounced. It introduced direct marketing through devices ranging from baby chests to jumbo bags. Over a three-year period beginning 1975 Duncans reached loose tea of consistent quality at reasonable price through franchise outlets to consumers in central and western India. For two years prior to 1975 it made a bid for the goodwill of the market place through its network to sell loose bulk tea in branded chests. This is not all. In 1976, the concept of mini auctions crystalized. The auction centres facilitated the outreach of Duncans tea to a large number of wholesalers and retailers than ever before in the quickest possible time. The urge to provide something novel that would cater to the fancy of the

investment and quicker profits for traders.

Another trend was set for the trade when Duncans introduced the Boeing bags which since then have become popular with the entire industry. One innovation leads to another. In 1991, the Duncans introduced jumbo bags made of laminated jute for transporting polypacks.

A spin-off effect of popularising the jumbo bags has been a fillip to the ailing jute industry. It gives extra value to the trade as well. The bag with a zip fastener is good for multiple use.

The chests and the bags marked strides in marketing bulk teas and DAIL, though it was time to move closer to the consumer. The packet tea was the reply to this requirement. Packaged in the gardens ensuring freshness and consistency of quality the Duncan pack has proved that blending is after all not so vital to maintain consistency, because other quality control systems developed within the company. The results justify the efforts. This modest beginning has taken the company to the fourth largest company after Brooke Bond, Liptons and Tata Tea.

The entire thrust in DAIL now is on value addition, both for the domestic and export markets. Consumer packs range from 25 gms to 500 gms. So much so, the DAIL turnover in value added packet tea has grown from Rs 19 crore in 1987 to a whopping Rs 70 crore in 1991-'92.

Alongside popularising polypacks DAIL has taken care to woo the upper end of the market. PET jars filled with high quality Duncan produce appeared in store shelves last year. The novel container with the brew was instantly viewed by the segmented buyer as good value for money. The jars found their way to the larder for multiple use.



G P Goenka (extreme right) with T C Broca, Chairman, Tea Board of India (extreme left) and Rathin Sengupta, Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal



THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS



The Illustrated London News, which completes 150 years of publication, has been a social historian par excellence. Its 7,105 back numbers provide a fascinating picture of the past.

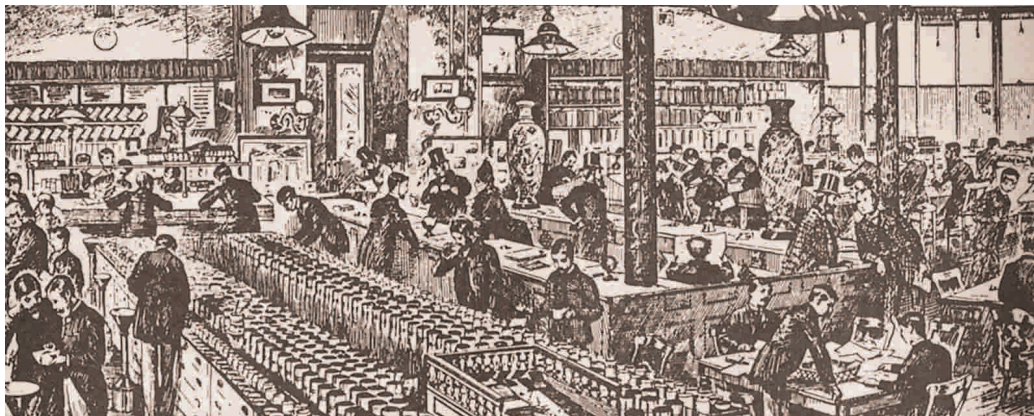
A legendary victorian institution, the ILN established itself at a time when photography was in its infancy. Its engravings are said to represent among the greatest pictorial archives.

Conceptualised by news agent Herbert Ingram when the press did not set much store by illustrations to sell news, the ILN hit the stands on May 4, 1842.

It proved to be an instant success and sold about 60,000 copies in its first year.

Some of the finest engravings in tea the world over are today in ILN archives. To commemorate its 150th anniversary, the publishers have put at our disposal copies of these illustrations, which we now present to our readers.

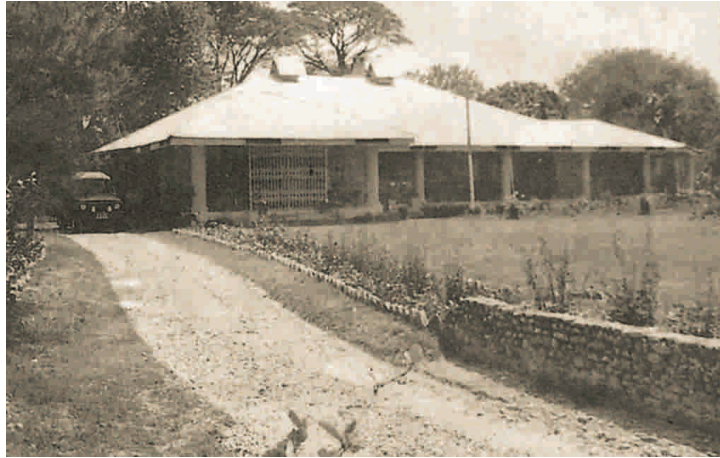
Contemporary Tea Time September 1992





Taipoo Tea Estate MAJESTIC LIVING in 'Bara Bungalow'

Taipoo Bara Bungalow was constructed in 1916 at an extremely beautiful location, that at times gives the feeling that one is enjoying the serenity of nature, somewhere in the countryside of Scotland. Situated right on the *tilla*, one gets to see the Tepu river meandering its way through the garden, while still further behind one sees the distant shade trees rising like a



colossus. On the northern side one sees the magnificent view of the silver plated Kanchanjungha, which fascinates a lover of nature.

The architecture of this bungalow with excellent columns, render a feeling of traditionalism. The velvety grass lawn of the bungalow is like an invitation to the player for putting the ball in the ninth hole. After a hard day's work during summer one can always take a dip in the swimming pool built with craftiness. The drive way of the bungalow. gives the impression of an entrance to a castle, which rises slowly and curves upwards as it reaches the portico. The entire driveway is covered with pebbles and the beautifully curved wall with boulders on one side give the bungalow a touch of the Roman age.

Taipoo garden is situated on the bank of Tepu river. The stretch of the garden from one end to another is about three kilometre. During monsoon, when the river is in its full spate, one

enjoys the waves at night, splashing in harmony. The pleasant feeling is absolutely hypnotising while boating in the river that passes through the garden. It is astonishing to see the well planned labour quarters, factory, bungalows, green play field and the nurseries, that are around 100 years old. They are in complete harmony with the natural environs of the garden. Planters often spent their week-end here and enjoyed the beauty of the surroundings by night sitting in the Bara Bungalow.

Tepu river originates from Dalka forest, about 15 km from the garden. While in spate during monsoons it charms the viewers by its harmonic sound of water. An added bonus is the early dawn when watching the sun rise over the snow capped Kanchunjungha is breathtaking.

Taipoo Tea Estate has been named after River Tepu.

Contemporary Tea Time September 1992



Mountain, Mohammad and the Auction

Tea was first auctioned, in London in 1839. This system of sale is now 153 years old. During the span of its long life it spread to 12 centres. Even today, the auction is flourishing in 10 of these centres. The only two places where the auction's life was interrupted were Rotterdam and Singapore.

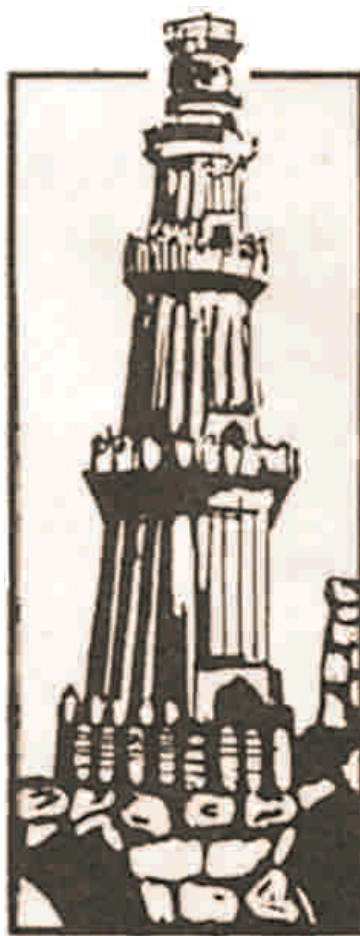
From a paltry 10 or 12 lots that were first sold, today the auction system handles about 1000 mkg or over 40 percent of the world's production.

The system is, therefore, nearly universal. Its rules are known, its customers are happy and nearly all about the auction is accepted. But where it should be ideally located is open to debate.

Britain is not a tea growing area. London has therefore been described as a 'terminal' market. When auction was started in Calcutta, Cochin or Colombo or Mombasa, these centres were loosely described in the trade as 'primary'.



Primary because they were situated in the growing countries as distinct from consuming or importing areas. It was only when the producers of the Nigglers district asked for the auction in Coonoor that it was realised that Calcutta, Cochin etc. were not really primary centres but 'intermediary' or 'port' centres. Although situated in the growing countries, these centres were not quite near or in the growing areas. For example, Calcutta was several hundred miles away from where tea was grown. But it offered the facility of a port so that shipments were quick to execute.



Coonoor was truly a primary centre, the town being surrounded by tea gardens one of which is called Coonoor Estate. Next came Guwahati in 1970 which was near enough to gardens. Then came Siliguri which was again a primary centre. Now the question is what is the ideal location for a tea auction? The answer is as controversial as the old question: 'Should Mohammad go to the mountain or should the mountain come to Mohammad'.

Should the buyer go where the seller is or should the seller take his produce to where the buyer is? The issue as to where an auction should be located depends on who is keener? Is the seller keener to sell or is the buyer more anxious to buy? There can be no permanent answer to this question. It would depend on the equation between demand and supply which alternates from time to time. Boom conditions indicate the excess of demand over supply or the anxiety of

the buyer to buy at any price. Similarly, a slump would show the excess of supply over demand or the desperation of a seller to sell and the indifference of a buyer to buy. Evidently, an auction centre cannot move from place to place depending on whether a boom is prevailing or a slump is being suffered. In a boom, Coonoor is wonderful since all the buyers would like to rush and pick-up what ever they can get. On the other hand, during a slump the growers in their anxiety to sell at a reasonable price would want to rush to say Bombay or Delhi or Amritsar to meet the buyers and at the same time wish that there was a regular auction taking place at Amritsar, Bombay or Delhi. But it is not possible to have the auctioneer of Coonoor at Glennview in times of boom

and move like a circus to Katra Ahluwalia in Amritsar in times of slump.

This unanswered question as to where an auction should ideally be located leads to the question as to whether the auction is a medium of disposal or an instrument of marketing. Evidently, by and large over the last four or five decades, the tea producer has found it profitable enough to dispose of his tea at any centre and by any means which were handy or convenient. The growers' profit margins were generally comfortable enough for him not to go out of the way to seek out the buyers for the greater part of his crop. In other words, disposal was enough and marketing was not necessary.

Contemporary Tea Time September 1992



Grandfather's 'TAS'

My earliest family recollections are that of the 'Tas' get-together. The aroma, the flavour and the community feeling it fostered lingers long after my grandfather, who used to preside over the occasion, had passed away.

My grandfather Bakshi Kartar Singh, was educated in a village *gurudwara* at Dandi in Attock District in the North-West Frontier province, now in Pakistan. He was among the few who could speak English at the village. His schooling background in a *gurudwara* kept him off alcohol and smoking, but he acquired a taste for tea in the company of Englishmen and other colleagues. During World War I, he was sent to Basra, where he stuck to tea as against any hard drink available.

On his retirement, he preferred to settle at his village (Dandi) and took up social service. The evenings were occasions for the spread of communal amity. Tea was served to all guests. When there was scarcity of sugar, guests were offered 'gur' or 'desi shakkar'. Many in the village had not tasted tea before and the get-togethers became very popular. Soon the villagers also started drinking tea at their homes and I remember women coming to our place to borrow 'patti' (tea leaves) for their evening tea. Muslims brewed tea in earthen pots, which lent a special flavour. He would share the tea with his Muslim friends served in 'Tas' (earthen tumbler).



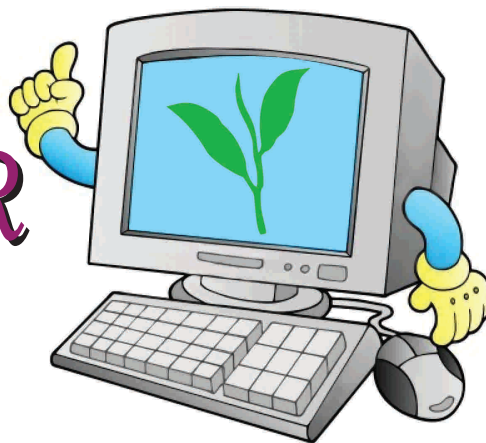
The habit of tea drinking was handed down to my father, B L Bakshi, an army officer, who also stuck to it in preference to any hard drink all his life. The tradition of tea hospitality remained unchanged and my father also invariably invited friends to breakfast or evening tea. So much so, women at home had a constant grouse that people came only at tea time.

In the process I also became an early tea addict. While studying my lessons at night with a class fellow I would prepare tea myself on my stove. My favourite drink and my first choice at parties, lunches and dinners during my three decades of service was the beverage that I sampled as a child.

My day now starts with a refreshing cup of tea. I never count the number of cups that I take during the day. Some believe that tea keeps one awake. But in my case I cannot go to sleep unless I take tea. To me tea is like a sleeping pill.

Contemporary Tea Time September 1992

Made *for* EACH OTHER



Although they may not have met often enough, the computer and tea are made for each other. Computers can absorb infinite data, classify it instantly and analyse it cogently. The tea industry in India has over 200 crore bushes planted on four lakh hectares. An average estate would consist of say 15 lakh bushes.

Most bushes are seedlings and therefore products of cross pollination. Each bush is distinctive with its own virtues, its vulnerability, its cropping behaviour and its quality. And the bush is the productive unit. Yet individually it has to be ignored most of the year and is dealt with as an insignificant part of a section covering several hectares.

On an average each bush produces about



350 gm per annum or about 12 gm per plucking round. If only by individual attention, each bush could be made to yield two more gm per round, India's annual output would jump from 700 to 815 mkg. But this individual care is possible only if there is a computer to help the estate management.

During the peak flushing periods about 20 lakh workers are busy on the 1,300 odd estates. Most of them are daily rated, although permanent. They get extra incentive wages based on every kg of leaf plucked. Their wages are therefore very complicated to calculate and disburse. Then their provident fund deductions, gratuity dues, bonus entitlements are either to be paid or credits recorded. How can all this be done better than by computers?

Each estate makes seven odd grades of tea which when packed and invoiced run into say 15 lakh individual lots of Indian tea every year. The lots are sold in different markets according to optimum demand.

There are six auction centres where they can be sold or sent directly to the consuming centres, whether in India or overseas. They therefore need an individual recording and follow-up. Such a mass of work and analysis can best be done only by computers.

Contemporary Tea Time January 1993



How It All Began

T S Broca, former Chairman of the Tea Board, provides an insight into the problems of Indian tea promotion

The idea of promoting tea or Indian tea is not new. In fact, it is as old as the trade. On the occasion of the first public sale of tea in London in 1657, Thomas Garway issued an advertisement which even now makes interesting reading after over three hundred years, despite the quaint spellings and fanciful medical ideas.

The Indian Tea Association came on the promotion scene, when it sponsored a pavilion at the London Health Exhibition of 1884. At that time, there were only three major producers viz., China, India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The last two were part of the then British Empire. There was no idea yet of 'advertising' Indian or Ceylon Tea. The immediate aim was to introduce the 'Empire Teas' to the British public. At the London and subsequent exhibitions, liquid tea was served, and samples from estates were displayed. At the Glasgow exhibition, Queen Victoria herself accepted a cup of "Ceylon Tea" from the then Commissioner. For a long time, Darjeeling tea was called "Darlington tea" and Cachar as "Catcher tea" by some of the attendants at these exhibitions.

The point to note is that these early efforts to promote Indian tea abroad were started at the initiative of the industry itself on the basis of voluntary contributions. Within a few years, however, the government came on the scene and as early as 1903, the Indian Tea Cess Committee was formed under the Indian Tea Cess Act. Thus for about 90 years now, a statutory basis



has been provided for the collection of funds for the promotion of Indian tea and tea in general. Under the 1903 act, a levy of two annas per 100 lb of tea was collected. The promotion of Indian tea has been continued by the successor organisations like the Indian Tea Market Expansion Board which came into existence in 1936. Later, this work was taken up by the Central Tea Board which was constituted in 1949. Since 1954, the Tea Board has been promoting tea in India and Indian tea abroad. For the last few years, the Board has registered a picturesque logo depicting a plucker girl for use on packets containing either wholly or substantially teas of different regions of India.

Contemporary Tea Time May 1993

BIRLAS IN TEA

Birlas and the industrial growth in post independence India were synonymous. For a long time G D Birla was the charisma and the epitome of industrial vision and few basic industries were excluded from his vision. This epic overshadowed the tale of the Birla contribution to the world of tea. A tale that began to be told in 1946 with a small estate called Lohagarh in the Terai area of West Bengal. The story of the hundredfold growth of Birla plantations over the next 46 years is told elsewhere. Here it is important to take a look at the Birla's importance in tea. It has been said before that but for Birla's innovations the Indian production of tea might have been notably

smaller today. 'Crop, crop and crop' is an old planter's slogan but it was not translated into the language of cost and profit. That the only way to control costs in an inflationary economy was to raise the crop, raise the yield per hectare every year. The aim was that at the end of the year the cost of production per kg was the same as the previous year although the total expenditure would be much higher.

There were several estates especially situated in the lush areas of Upper Assam which made good profits. But it was at the Industry House in Camac Street that it was first and repeatedly said that tea sold at Rs 6/- a kg should earn Rs 2/- a kg. In other words, one-third of the turnover had to

be surplus if plantations were to flourish.

In this intensive crop, crop and crop, Jayshree Tea & Industries adapted the perennial plucking of south India, first in Cachar, then transferred it to Upper Assam until over a period of years the whole of north east India extended its pruning



B K Birla with his family

cycle. A major reason for the pace at which production leapt in the seventies. The extended pruning cycle was transferred to north India by Jayshree Tea & Industries in the teeth of condemnation. It was not uncommon to hear in the corridors of Calcutta tea in the late sixties, "Some prefer to pluck leather from tea bushes."

The poison of prejudice spread amongst the buyers, exporters as well as importers overseas. Nevertheless, Jayshree persevered with the new style of pruning, adjusted the plucking until they made lots and lots of good tea. Once success had come, the new style spread across north India.

Contemporary Tea Time May 1993



friendliest feel

Why do the British drink so much tea? Hermione Ravenscroft, a British tourist, who was in India recently, talks about British tea-time



“Let’s have a cup of tea”, “How about a brew?”

However we put it, we mean much more than that. The invitation to partake of some tea-leaves steeped in boiling water implies a wish to sit and relax for a while, with friends or relatives.

Of all the meals which British families take each day, tea-time has the friendliest feel to it : in winter, we sit around the coal fire, tray on a low table, laden with tea-pot, hot-water jug, sugar bowl, cups and saucers, with a plate of cake or biscuits. In summer time, the tray is carried out into the garden where we laze in deck-chairs, enjoying both our tea and the mild sunshine.

Although tea-time in the home is disappearing, there remains a strong tradition of 'going out to tea.' Families or friends will take cars, bicycle, train or bus into the countryside in order to walk in the hills, swim in the sea, or visit a stately home once lived in by nobility, now owned by the National Trust or English Heritage and open to the public. By four o'clock, we will look for a cafe, a 'tea-place' or even assemble a portable stove and put our little kettle to boil for a much-needed brew. At their impressive mansion, Chatsworth House, in Derbyshire, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire make a feature of serving afternoon tea to the public. Last year they sold around 75,000 pots of tea.

In villages and towns all over Britain, tea-rooms will be filled with tired and thirsty customers; little thatched cottages with a notice in the window - 'Home-made teas', imposing hotels with comfortable arm-chairs and uniformed waitresses; purpose-built cafes in car-parks near popular 'beauty-spots', even converted motor-caravans parked alongside busy roads, TEAS painted in large letters, a welcome sight for lorry-drivers or families travelling long distances.

Besides drinking tea for refreshment and relaxation, we associate the beverage with a means to comfort in times of stress or sorrow. Tea-bars were set up at all major railway termini to greet shell-shocked soldiers and sailors coming home on leave from both World Wars. The Women's Royal Voluntary Service today runs tea stalls in hospitals, prisons, courts-of-justice, to provide a service for visitors, many of whom have had to travel a long way in order to see their loved ones. In such distressing circumstances, a hot cup of tea serves as solace.

Contemporary Tea Time May 1993



Eco TEA

In the cloud-kissing highlands of western India nestle a few prized patches of verdant land. Far removed from the poisons of artificial civilisation. In these near-Utopian expanses, grows a rare tea, free from the taint of pollution : BBTC's organic tea

B BTC's foray into organic tea, is a saga that started 12 decades ago. In September 1863, the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation Ltd. was registered in Bombay with public participation, with Alexander Wallace as Chairman. BBTC was then only the second Indian company having public participation.

The key note for BBTC's involvement in plantations was struck in the Anamallais, where the major planting took place between 1913 and 1921. Today, this area spans 1863 hectares and is known as the Mudis Group : covering Mukottu Mudi, Thay Mudi, Thoni Mudi, Gajam Mudi and Anai Mudi.

The success of the Mudis group prompted BBTC to seek fresher pastures. In 1927, the Singampatti Group of Estates was born – out of land leased from the Zamindar of Singampatti. This land, lying at the southernmost tip of the Western Ghats in peninsular India, was then a vast expanse of virgin forest.

Today, the Corporation's plantations are spread over the Mudis Group (1,863 hectares of tea); the Singampatti Group (804 hectares of tea); the Elk Hill Group (898 hectares of coffee); and Dunsandle Estate (155 hectares of highgrown

tea). In all these areas, cardamom and pepper are also planted as subsidiary crops. And today, 1.5% of the world's known tea crop 1.5% of India's total production comes from BBTC's estates.

In keeping with the growing global concern over ecology and environment, BBTC has made a conscientious move : the organic cultivation of tea, on an organised, commercial scale.

The decision to embark on this new enterprise was made in November 1988, after a careful examination of the various factors, such as higher costs and likely lower production. Consequently, 39 hectares of tea were reserved for organic corridor which the Macaque inhabits.

The Singampatti Group of Estates also incorporates large areas of clonal tea fields. Extensive research in finding disease-resistant clones has been conducted in the last few decades. The clones thus developed have been tested, multiplied and planted on a field scale. As these naturally require less chemical inputs, particularly fungicides, these fields were the natural choice for conversion to complete organic culture.

Contemporary Tea Time September 1993



Executive Wives



It was on the cocktail circuit that the difference amongst wives surfaced. The wives of the direct recruits, usually scions of a noble race and a convent education, had to mix with the wives of the rank-promoted executives — docile, homely and tongue-tied — whom my daughter Rita used to refer to in bovine terms such as Annabelle, Mabel and Priscilla until I came down heavily upon her.

The direct-recruit wives would turn up their noses at the promoted wives and tend to look upon them as if they were something the cat had brought into the drawing room. The situation would be pathetic with the husbands doing very little to help. They had their own problems with their direct-recruit colleagues. As the executive wives came from different parts of India, language became a problem.

I have known instances where lack of formal English education has not cramped the style of aggressive and ambitious wives. One such was Mrs. Parthasarathy referred to as Mrs. P. She was famous for her dinners and could be seen with a large plate in her hand going around exhorting her guests to 'eat shamelessly' and to get "fully fed up". Mr. P would stay very much

T S Nagarajan former Managing Director of Brooke Bond India Ltd., mixes laughter with executive life

in the background, nervous, tongue-tied and beaming, with not a word to say.

On the other hand, there were wives who were scared of parties. It took a long while for Mr. Seshadri to convince his demure wife Ranganayaki that no tails were served at cocktails and it would be strictly vegetarian.

At one of my parties I had taken a great deal of trouble to organise the soft drinks part properly. It was a garden party and I had fresh *daab* — tender coconut — specially arranged for. I could see it was becoming very popular with the ladies. I was quite voluble in singing the praise of the *daab* and freely recommending it to the ladies.

Two of my important guests at that party were the newly posted Commissioner of Income Tax, Mr. M N Iyer, and his wife. I had met Mr. Iyer earlier and had been struck by his simplicity and god-fearing nature. I quickly took measure of Mrs. Iyer. The solid diamond earrings, the nose screw, the heavy Conjeevaram saree and the tied back hair, all pointed to the Annabelle series. I became the effusive host and said "Mrs Iyer, we have some special *daab* which you must try." Mrs. Iyer took her time. She whipped out a cigarette from her hand bag and lighting it with the flourish of a John Wayne scowled at me and said in a deep husky voice : "Doesn't one get whisky at your cocktail parties?"

Courtesy : T S Nagarajan's 'The Executive Whirl'.

Sketch by R K Laxman.

Contemporary Tea Time September 1993

FROM THE PUBLISHER

UPASI

A hundred years



Tea is at once agriculture and industry. One is at its best when the individual tiller has a stake in the benefit of the soil. To him small is beautiful. Industry however demands the economies of scale. To any process by machine, large is handsome. This paradox was resolved over the last century by the planter's ingenuity who is therefore, known as a man for all seasons. Until the institution of the Agency

House was abolished in 1970, it provided the infrastructure that only size can afford. What needed to be done at the level of the entire tea fraternity was left to the association to deal with.

UPASI went a step higher by being a federation of associations and not only of tea but also of other plantations. The image of the great federal body housed at Glenview, Coonoor, is high. It encompasses all the producers of tea, coffee, rubber and spices in the whole of south India. It personifies a oneness and a unity which is the envy of all planting associations of the North East. UPASI has every reason to experience a sense of fulfilment for its glorious past.

What about the future? The pressures of modernisation must grow. The competitive edge will become sharper with liberalisation whose logic is that the big can swallow the small. Being land based, plantations have a special socio-political responsibility. To protect the medium and the small owner from losing to the large by developing and distributing what the economy of scale usually gives. By doing federally all that is not possible doing singly.

There is thus, a new role in search of a hero and going by its track record, UPASI, now a hundred years old, should rise to the occasion.

Prafull Goradia

Prafull Goradia

Contemporary Tea Time September 1993



KENYA TEA Comes of Age

Kenya Tea comes of age, writes Stephen Nakanata, of the Tea Board of Kenya, in a special message to **Contemporary Tea Time**



Kenya is recognised presently as a major producer and net exporter of tea after India and Sri Lanka which have a long history of tea growing. Producing mainly the CTC variety, Kenya, in spite of a severe drought experienced in recent years, was able to produce in 1992 some 188,072 metric tonnes, behind India, which had 703,797 metric tonnes. Due to drought conditions, Sri Lanka was able to produce 178,870 metric tonnes.

The success of the Kenya tea industry has been mainly due to the liberal approach of the Government on tea matters, which has left the industry free to choose what suits it best. On this account, the Government does not advocate tea production ceilings, buffer stocks or any other price stabilisation mechanisms. The Government has also strongly supported the competitive public tea auction and an open free trading system, with minimum control.

Through the Tea Board, the industry has supported tea promotion and the enhancement of tea quality for both the domestic and international markets.

Commercial tea plantations in Kenya were not established before 1924 and a strong small holder sector was not started until after independence,

in 1964. These two sectors are now very vibrant with the small holder accounting for well over 53% of the total production and nearly 70% of area under tea.

In comparison with the old tea growing countries, Kenya's tea industry could be said to be young but we feel that we have now come of age.

The tea industry in Kenya is at the centre stage in the development of the country's economy and currently tea is the leading agricultural foreign exchange earner contributing up to 28% of total export earnings for Kenya. Tea production is labour intensive and it is estimated to account for over one million jobs in direct and indirect employment.

The growing and manufacturing are activities carried out in the rural areas thereby contributing significantly to rural industrialisation and development.

Contemporary Tea Time December 1993

The Kanoi Saga

Rai Saheb Hanuman Bux (1885-1966) exemplified in a refreshing way the determination of the 'native' to stand up and be equal to the 'white' man

Rai Saheb Hanuman Bux Kanoi is a legend in tea. He began with little but ended with lots. Success did not go to his head. Instead, he thought of the deprived who led him to do charity. His formal learning was limited but his wisdom was vast. He was modern, cared for women's education and built a girls' college. But not all this adds up to a legend.

Rai Saheb exemplified in a refreshing way the determination of the 'native' Indian to stand up and be equal to the 'white' British. He showed that the Indian could plant a tea garden from scratch. He bought land; the best for tea — raised easy-to-drain areas were already taken by the expatriate planters. He bought what he could and began sowing bush by bush, plot by plot, section by section.

Hanuman Bux proved he knew all about tea that was worth knowing before he allowed his son or his nephew to buy readymade gardens from the British. This was not easy. Imperial arrogance was not confined to the owners or the managers of gardens. It extended even to the brokers. Although he paid the same one percent brokerage, the 'native' proprietor had to meet an under-broker who was a former clerk promoted to a

marketman. Only if the white broker had the time, he would call into his room the dark client.

Tea was not as bad as jute gunnies which were categorised as A, B; C, D, depending on each mill's reputation for quality. But an Indian 'A' fetched a lower price than an European 'B'. There were no C or D among the European mills. Tea unfortunately did not have such official classifications. Nevertheless, the auction operators as well as the buyers beyond knew which garden belonged to whom. They discriminated in price; it was said, less on the colour of the tea and more on the complexion of the garden owner. The only irony to this discrimination was that the native buyer was equally partial to the European garden.

Yet Hanuman Bux did not react, did not take offence. Instead, he decided to compete, even if on unequal terms. It was not easy to keep one's head in those heady times and with graceful poise accept a British title called 'Rai Saheb'. Beating someone at his game is very difficult. Kanoi did it and became a legend.

Contemporary Tea Time March 1994



The Year of RECOVERY



Samar Sircar, Contemporary Targett Director, reviews the tea scene in '1993 year of India tea'

The past year brought into focus some crucial, if gradual, changes which have been taking place in tea over the last few years. Some of these are listed below and could have long term implications.

- The year 1993 could be termed as the year when garden packed teas in pouches really came on to their own. Just about every large and medium sized producer has today his own brand or brands with plans to market teas directly to the consumer. The packet tea scenario in India today could broadly be broken up into the four undernoted categories.
- The big national players like Brooke Bond, Lipton, Tata and Duncan who have been in this line for some time.
- The emerging producer houses who are on to retail marketing and have quite successfully carved out market niches for their product. Their sales however are still localised or strong in one or two states but their brands are not sold on a national scale as yet.
- The producers who pack their teas in pouches but who do not retail market their teas. The packet price is determined by the auction price plus cost on a week to week basis.
- Packet tea sold by some big buyers who sold loose tea earlier. Some of the buyer brands like Society and Wagh Bakri have been remarkably successful in major cities of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The urban consumer today is therefore faced



with a bewildering array of packets on the shelf, all between 100 gm to 250 gm and all around the same price range. Obviously not every brand can survive the competition and finally half a dozen or so of the stronger ones could remain at every major selling outlet.

- Direct marketing by producers (be it in polypacks, or overseas/internal bulk sales) means less teas to auctions. While the Indian crop in 1993 was ahead by 54 mkg compared to the year before, the all-India auction quantity dropped by 11 mkg during the same period. This means that 65 mkg of tea bypassed the auction system in a single year.

Auction brokers will be fighting for an ever/decreasing size of cake if the trend continues. Running to stay in the same place, the weaker ones or those with high overheads may find the going too tough if the cushion of 1993 prices is no longer there.

Contemporary Tea Time March 1994

SOCIAL CONCERNS OF TEA

AN INDUSTRY THAT CARES

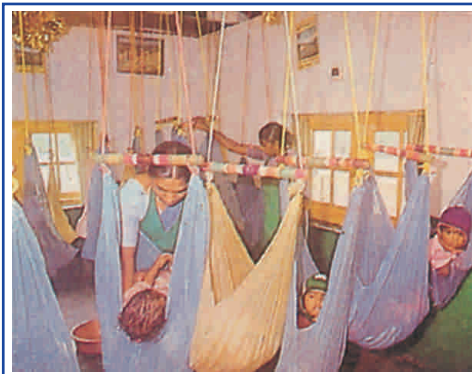
Among major industries, tea keeps in focus human dimensions to its operations

Tata Tea, Jokai Tea and Williamson Magor have, through the fluctuating fortunes of the tea industry, ever placed priority attention to the human side of tea production. Most of the effort has been voluntary. The definite objective has been to improve the quality of life of the community around the gardens.

Contributions made by these corporate bodies to development of the social sector match the results achieved in other areas reflected in production and profit. Tata Tea runs as many as 65 hospitals and clinic, 170 creches, 110 schools and community development programmes.

Consistent with its philosophy of active participation in socio-economic development of its neighbourhood Rossel Industries (Jokai Tea) has undertaken several projects in Assam and made generous contribution to schemes started by the Indian Tea Association.

Five central hospitals with super speciality facilities, the Assam Valley School's assistance to the Trees for Life Project and renovation of historical buildings and other charity works feature the record of the Magor group.

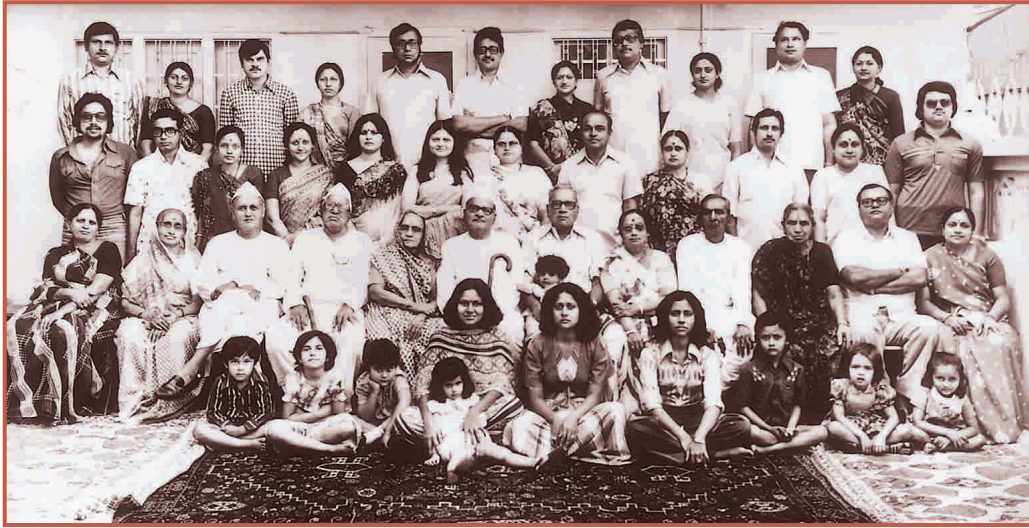


Tata Pre-School Centre, Munnar

All these programme are in addition to statutory obligations to be fulfilled by the companies. Tata Tea, the largest integrated tea company in the world, has 30 estates in south India and 19 in Assam. In his address to the 31st annual general meeting of Tata Tea shareholders no less a top functionary than Chairman D S Seth declared: "We are pledged that we shall do the maximum that we can to enhance the welfare and well-being of our large workforce (58,000 people) and their families drawn largely from the weaker sections of our society". The same commitment is conveyed in the inside cover of the annual report of Rossell which refers to its philosophy as "helping the weak to be strong". The Magor group, which has 53 estates in Assam : Dooars and Darjeeling, considers it as a major pre-occupation with the 125-year-old company to be involved in worthwhile causes that contribute to better living for the community.

*Contemporary Tea
Time January 1995*





First Row : Sitting on chair from left to right – (3rd) late Manibhai, (4th) late Purushottambhai, (6th) late Chunibhai, (7th) late Rambhai and (11th) Sri Kanjbhai C. Patel *Middle Row* : Standing extreme left Sri Harishbhai and extreme right Sri Mukeshbhai *Top Row* : Standing from left to right (1st) Sri Indravadanbhai, (3rd) Sri Ashokbhai, (5th) Sri Hasmukhbhai, (6th) Sri Kiritbhai, (8th) Sri Mahendrabhai and (10th) Sri Shashikantbhai

Patels of Sonav

Hailing from the small town of Sonav in the Kheda district of Gujarat, the Ambalal Patel group made a great name for itself in the tea business in eastern India

Tndeed the Patels in the tea trade and industry in Calcutta have behind them, a proud history of successes and achievements covering more than seven decades. They are the descendants of the Late Shankerbhai Patel, a native of a small village Sonav, in the district of Kheda – a farmer by profession. Chiefly dependent on the cultivation of tobacco and cereal, he prodded his grandson to diversify in order to augment the family income. One of them, Late Govindbhai Patel, decided to explore the unchartered areas of the East, where new trade and industry under British companies were beginning to flourish. In 1924, he along with his cousin, Late Umedbhai Patel started a partnership firm in the name of Messers Parshottam Ambalal & Co. with an initial capital of Rs. 12,000/-

provided by his uncle Khushabhai Patel, to do business in tobacco, rice and tea. This was supported by his nephew, Chunibhai Patel who moved to Aden to allow the company access to the British free port at the entrance of the Red Sea. The business flourished and continued to grow.

Those were the days of the freedom and *swadeshi* movement and tea was not a popular beverage in India as it was considered to be anti-nationalistic. The British companies were perceived to be exploiting Indian labour. It was in these adverse circumstances that the Patels set up their tea business.

Contemporary Tea Time April 1995

Half-Past Twelve Rupees

by Nayana Goradia

When Mrs Hilary Clinton came on a visit to India,
I was reminded of my family's brief encounter with
another First Lady of the White House

In mourning my grandfather who died at the age of 86, I was also saying a requiem to an era in my own life. It was of a childhood in the Saurashtra town of Jamnagar; in a colonial style mansion with high ceilings and long, aimless corridors. Many years have passed but the remembrance of things past comes swift and vivid to the mind.

Over this domain presided my grandfather — a highly successful physician and surgeon, who had studied Sanskrit at the age of 45 to translate the 3,000 year old medical treatise, the *Charak Samhita*, into English. He was every inch an intellectual; haughty gaze from a pair of hooded eyes, a prominent, hooked nose and flaring nostrils. To meet he could be alarming. Everybody had to play second fiddle. This did not, however, apply to my enchanting, petite grandmother. My grandmother came from a family of bankers from Rajkot and like all Rajkotwallas may have tendered to look upon the Jamnagaris as provincial folk. She had some reason to. In her father's house they had an English lady teacher coming every morning, and the girls were encouraged to play badminton and read poetry.

When my grandfather came to see her with a view to matrimony, she had been carefully arranged behind a sitar. She was sixteen and he ten years older. She had the temerity to raise her eyes to his face and ask about her future home. My grandfather was not a handsome man but the diamond-like brilliance of his intellect must have been apparent even then.

To begin with, Jamnagar must have been a bleak change for my grandmother. Her in-laws had money but little style. Besides her husband, there was a father-in-law, several unmarried sisters-in-law, and a quarrelsome step

mother-in-law in the house. On her arrival a clothes line had fluttered in the front verandah and in the drawing room the tables were covered with dusty old railway-guides. Besides, it was a tacitly understood rule that women had to be content to languish in the zenana wing. My grandmother soon made changes.

For all her claims to having an English governess, my grandmother could not have mastered the language too well. The proof being a long-standing joke in the family about the time when Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt came to tea. Apparently my grandmother, in her best pearls and French chiffon, had received her in the hall and taken her indoors. Mrs Roosevelt complimented her on her home, spotted an embroidered Kutch cushion cover and casually inquired its price. My grandmother is said to have majestically answered "It cost, half-past twelve rupees."



Contemporary Tea Time July 1995



Pioneer in POLYPACKING

Tata Tea came into existence in 1983. It decided to go to the consumer directly. This necessitated the use of ideal packaging, so that the product could be conveniently transferred along the distribution channel. The Company identified a specifically structured laminate polypack material, comprising primarily of laminated layers of polyester and polythene, which appeared optimally suited for the packaging of teas. No one had even sold tea in polypacks and forecasting the success and profitability of such a venture was difficult. However, TTL boldly ventured forth and by late 1984, market trials were started.

Polypacking created several unusual changes at various levels in the tea industry. Rather unusually, it appeared to be a change that proved advantageous to all concerned parties, i.e. the tea companies, the dealers/retailers as well as to the final consumer of tea.

The creation of accountability has been one of the great benefits of garden packing. This assured the buyer of the standardised taste, consistent, across the year and in different parts of the country.

Garden packaging, having provided the freshness, remains sealed in by the polyester/polythene laminates. By virtue of its superior barrier properties the polypack material provided a

double protection. It also sealed out the smells at the retail store, where tea is often placed near the soap, camphor, incense and similar strong



odorous articles.

The additional income generated through the sale of plantation packed value added teas, is passed back to the tea estates and therefore can and indeed has, in the case of TTL atleast, meant a drastic rise in welfare activities. The benefits of tea sales have truly passed to the people, the ultimate sign of success of the polypack concept.

The polypacking of teas has helped gardens create their independent brands and market these as separate entities. It is the physical differentiation of packaging that creates these brands. Other companies introduced new polypacks directly in competition with the Tata Tea products and also converted their existing packet tea brands to polypacks.

Contemporary Tea Time September, 1995

Estimated Production Of Tea In India

(Quantity in Million Kgs)

January to December

| District/State | 1987 | 1989 | 1992 | 1998 | 2002 | 2007 | 2012 | 2013 | Difference (2013-1987) | |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|----------|------------------------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | % |
| Assam Valley | 333.43 | 342.02 | 344.12 | 415.20 | 387.76 | 467.75 | 537.25 | 569.86 | 236.43 | 71% |
| Cachar | 35.20 | 36.70 | 43.69 | 51.85 | 45.57 | 44.13 | 52.87 | 48.28 | 13.08 | 37% |
| Total Assam | 368.63 | 378.73 | 387.81 | 467.05 | 433.33 | 511.89 | 590.12 | 618.14 | 249.51 | 68% |
| Darjeeling | 11.59 | 12.69 | 9.87 | 10.25 | 9.18 | 10.01 | 8.93 | 10.15 | -1.44 | -12% |
| Dooars | 119.14 | 112.73 | 118.94 | 147.13 | 125.24 | 138.84 | 156.71 | 179.45 | 60.31 | 51% |
| Terai | 21.49 | 21.53 | 21.43 | 36.40 | 53.61 | 87.50 | 113.66 | 125.66 | 104.17 | 485% |
| Total West Bengal | 152.22 | 146.94 | 150.24 | 193.79 | 188.02 | 236.34 | 279.30 | 315.26 | 163.04 | 107 |
| Others | 6.58 | 6.63 | 7.27 | 9.82 | 10.40 | 16.51 | 17.53 | 24.04 | 17.46 | 266% |
| Total North India | 527.42 | 532.30 | 545.32 | 670.66 | 631.75 | 764.74 | 886.95 | 957.44 | 430.02 | 82% |
| Tamil Nadu | 86.35 | 91.14 | 99.44 | 132.05 | 143.12 | 160.53 | 170.56 | 174.46 | 88.11 | 102% |
| Kerala | 56.28 | 57.08 | 55.14 | 65.94 | 57.77 | 55.97 | 63.10 | 62.55 | 6.27 | 11% |
| Karnataka | 4.25 | 3.61 | 4.03 | 5.46 | 5.83 | 5.19 | 5.72 | 5.59 | 1.34 | 31% |
| Total South India | 146.88 | 151.83 | 158.61 | 203.45 | 206.73 | 221.69 | 239.38 | 242.60 | 95.72 | 65% |
| All India | 674.30 | 684.14 | 703.93 | 874.11 | 838.47 | 986.43 | 1126.33 | 1,200.04 | 525.74 | 78% |

World Tea Production

(Quantity in Million Kgs)

January to December

| Countries | 1987 | 1989 | 1992 | 1998 | 2002 | 2007 | 2012 | Difference (2012-1987) | |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | | | | % |
| Bangladesh | 40.61 | 38.40 | 48.27 | 55.82 | 53.62 | 57.96 | 62.16 | 21.54 | 53% |
| China | 508.00 | 534.90 | 559.83 | 665.03 | 745.37 | 1094.00 | 1761.00 | 1253.00 | 247% |
| India | 674.30 | 684.14 | 703.93 | 874.11 | 838.47 | 986.43 | 1126.33 | 452.03 | 67% |
| Indonesia | 127.45 | 149.00 | 145.69 | 166.83 | 162.19 | 149.51 | 130.50 | 3.05 | 2% |
| Kenya | 155.81 | 180.60 | 188.07 | 294.17 | 287.10 | 369.57 | 369.56 | 213.76 | 137% |
| Malawi | 31.91 | 39.48 | 28.14 | 40.36 | 39.19 | 48.14 | 42.49 | 10.58 | 33% |
| Sri Lanka | 213.33 | 206.99 | 178.87 | 280.67 | 310.60 | 304.61 | 326.28 | 112.95 | 53% |
| Uganda | 3.33 | 4.62 | 9.43 | 26.42 | 33.83 | 44.91 | 55.08 | 51.75 | 1553% |
| Total | 1754.739 | 1838.122 | 1862.221 | 2403.412 | 2470.388 | 3055.133 | 3873.397 | 2118.66 | 121% |

Compiled by Soumen Bagchi



GTAC Marching Ahead

A story of charity auctions



Born out of the commitment of a few pioneers the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre has been nurtured and sustained through the joint effort of the Dinesh Ch. Bihani state government and the four segments of the tea trade – sellers, buyers, brokers and warehousemen. After its commencement it grew from strength to strength from an initial offering of nine mkg in 1971 to today's 164 mkg (E) for season 2013 - '14. Currently it is one of the biggest CTC auction centres in the world.

The first auction started on September 25, 1970, in the stadium guest house. Later on April 9, 1985, the auction centre shifted to the newly constructed building at Dispur. The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre building is on a plot of land adjacent to the Dispur capital complex provided by the Government of Assam. The building is constructed by the state government and by an agreement it has been decided that the building will be owned by the government and leased out to GTAC.

In the smooth running of the tea trade the auction



Tarun Gogoi, Chief Minister of Assam at the Grand Charity Auction



Pradyut Bordoloi, Minister of Power, Industries and Commerce and Public Enterprise, Govt of Assam and also Chairman of GTAC at the inauguration

system has an important role. It provides a smooth procedure of sale and purchase operations free from any market distortions or manipulations. This has benefited the producers, the buyers and the consumers. Keeping in pace with technology and to bring more efficiency in the system we shifted from manual system to e-auction on May 1, 2009. GTAC was the first auction centre in north India to successfully attain this change.

Although, Assam produces approximately 580 mkg of tea, GTAC only shares 30 % of its total production. We need to improve GTAC share to at least 50 % of total production. This can only be attained if we provide more facilities to sellers and buyers. For this we need to improve our sale closing system, providing additional options to sell teas and improve warehouse infrastructure.

Pradyut Bordoloi (Minister of Power, Industries and Commerce and Public Enterprise) — Chairman of GTAC — has taken a lot of initiative for the improvement of GTAC sales. He had

It was the turn of TEA

Mrs Sudha Kaul wife of Mr. Om Kaul of Carritt Moran had been saying that the young Spastic School has no building and is having to operate from a military tent at Ballygunge. When I became Chairman of the Calcutta Tea Traders Association in 1976 I appealed in turn to brokers, producers and buyers to please consider helping the spastic cause. The response did take time and a great deal of effort which included my appeal having to be translated into Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Arabic, Polish and Russian. This multi-language effort was in order to help our agent buyers to be able to persuade their client country. In those days a great deal of business was rupee barter trade.

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



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

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

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

Prafull Goradia



A K Bhargava, Vice-Chairman, IIA (front row centre) and noted actor Victor Banerjee at the Grand Charity Auction

organised a sellers meet at Dibrugarh, buyers meets at Kolkata and Mumbai in a bid to

encourage more buyers and sellers to participate in the sales.

GTAC is also playing an important role in uplifting society. Recently, GTAC contributed towards the disability sector by organising a Grand Charity Auction held on December 3, 2013, the proceeds of which was donated to the disability sector. This auction had a record price of selling Orthodox tea at Rs 73000 per kg. This is the highest price paid by an individual in the history of the auction centre.

The author is a senior buyer at the GTAC. He is the Secretary of the (GTABA) Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association and also the Vice President of Federation of All India Tea Traders Association





At the 43rd Annual General Meeting of Tea Association of India (TAI), North Bengal Branch, A K Sengupta Chairman highlighted the issues affecting the working as well as prosperity of the tea industry of north Bengal, like absenteeism, which has become an issue of deep concern to the tea gardens of north Bengal, unplanned and unscientific extraction of dolomite in the Bhutan Hills and flowing through rivers adjoining to the tea gardens. Apart from the above, he also spoke about the frequency and magnitude of attacks by wild animals and devastation in various tea gardens of Dooars and Terai, causing deaths and

considerable losses of garden properties. He requested the State Government to improve the basic infrastructure and boost tea tourism in the potential region.

CII Conference

The third Indian Tea Forum was organised by CII North Bengal along with Tea Board and FAITTA in Siliguri on December 13-14, 2013. Gautam Deb, Minister for North Bengal Development inaugurated the forum. The main focus of the Forum was the promotion, growth and development of north Bengal teas through interaction with the different stakeholders. Panel discussions were held on the following topics:

- What will bring prosperity and fame to north Bengal tea – quantity, quality or innovative practices?
- Best practices and development of small tea growers and bought leaf factories
- Requirements of better tea price realisation commensurate with cost of inputs and price index shall require value addition, modern branding and marketing.



The Annual General Meeting of the Terai Branch Indian Tea Association (TBITA) was held at the Club, Montana Vista, Uttorayan on January 16, 2014.

A N Singh, Chairman, ITA, in his speech requested Gautam Deb, Hon'ble Minister for North Bengal Development – who was present at the AGM – to form a committee on tea at the state level for deeper analysis of the issues which could lead to specific policy formulation.

Among other dignitaries present were Puneet Yadav (IAS), District Magistrate, Darjeeling and T K Choudhury, Chairman, West Bengal Regional Committee.



(Left to right) Ravi Agarwal, Convenor; Laxmi Limbu, Secretary, CII; G S Hora, past Chairman CII; Prabir Seal, Vice Chairman CII; Gautam Deb, Hon'ble Minister; P K Shah, Chairman CII; Harendra Shah, Chairman FAITTA; K K Bhattacharya, Deputy Director Tea Board of India

DBITA AGM



The 136th Annual General Meeting of the Dooars Branch Indian Tea Association (DBITA) was held at Central Dooars Club, Binnaguri on January 18, 2014. S K Babal, Chairman, DBITA, highlighted the production and average price realisation of Dooars tea vis-a-vis Indian tea and lauded the role of the Branch in dealing with

industrial relation problems and important issues related to tourism, Stamp Duty etc.

A N Singh, Chairman, Indian Tea Association, spoke on cost of production and social costs of the tea sector while also touching on TRUSTEA Code and the aspect of small growers.

The Kolkata Marathon



The Kolkata Marathon organised in support of cancer patients at the Tata Medical Centre, was held on January 5, 2014 in the City of Joy. It received overwhelming response. Thousands of participants including celebrities from all walks of life took to the streets on the occasion. Among the sponsors were Amalgamated Plantations and Tata Global Beverages. The Kolkata Marathon promotes athletics in the state of West Bengal and gives Indian athletes a platform to showcase their talent.

Pritha Sarkar, IAS, District Magistrate, Jalapiguri, T K Choudhuri, Chairman, West Bengal Regional Committee, ITA, Kolkata, Kuldiep Singh, IPS, IG, north Bengal and Dr. Subrata Gupta, IAS, Commissioner, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, also spoke at the AGM.

Terai Indian Planters' Association AGM



A Contemporary Celebration



Colleagues at the Kolkata office of Contemporary Brokers celebrated the 65th birthday of Lav Jhingan at a small but joyous celebration with the cutting of a cake



WITDA Seminar

A Tea Seminar was organised by Western India Tea Dealers Association (WITDA) on December 2013, coinciding with its Annual General Meeting. The speakers at the seminar included



MGVK Bhanu, Chairman, Tea Board of India delivering his speech



Important delegates

MGVK Bhanu, Chairman, Tea Board of India, R P Singh, Minister of State of Parliamentary Affairs for Commerce and Industry, Government of India, Bhupendra Sinhi Chudasama, Gujarat Minister for Education, Law and Justice and Rural Development, Ashoke Batra of Rainforest Alliance, Ramesh Chand Agarwal, Vice Chairman, FAITTA and P O Desai, President, WITDA. Among the guests present were Vijay Dhandhania,

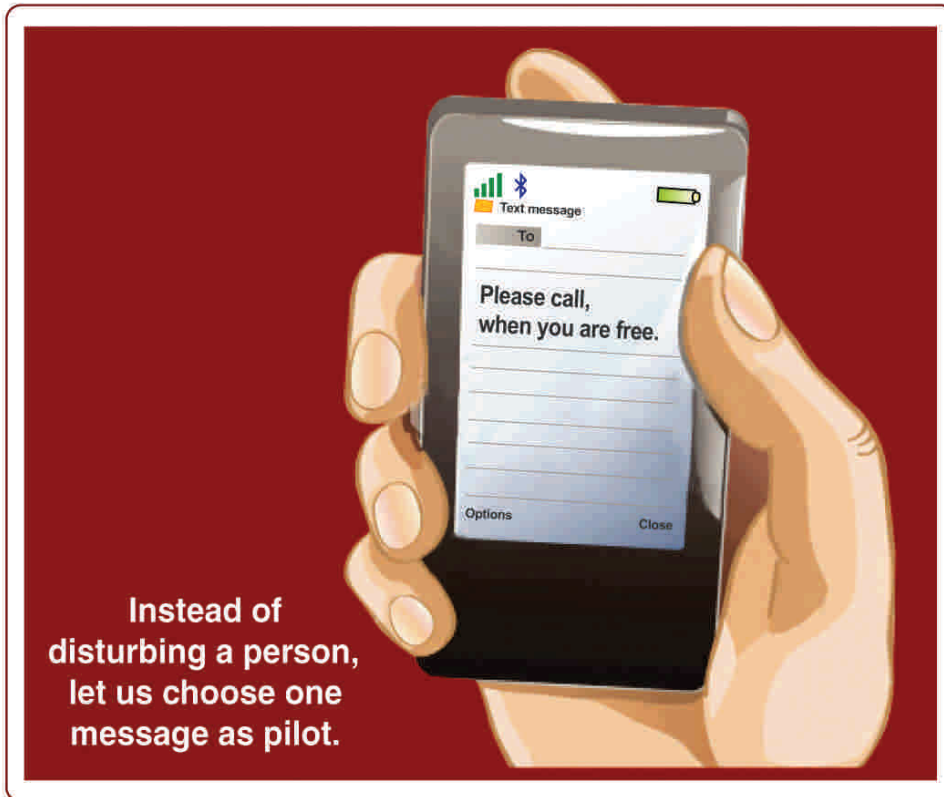


Cultural programme

President, TAI, Percy Siganporia, G Boriah, Advisors to the Tea Board, R P Das, Director, Tea Promotion, Government of Assam, Sangeeta Kichlu, N Dharmaraj, Dinesh Bihani and others.

A cultural programme was arranged on the occasion showcasing the rich heritage of Gujarat.

**Let us use our cell phone with patience,
and take care of others' comfort too!**



Technology has made our lives easier and more productive.

Its usefulness makes us totally dependent and it has become an essential part of our lives, so much so that we can't imagine living without it. The mobile is one such technological innovation.

There is nothing wrong in using the cell phone extensively. From house-work to office related tasks, from small matters to solving crisis situations, the mobile is omnipresent. However, this continued dependence has made us insensitive and occasionally we fail to realise that we may be disturbing others.

Many a times, it is possible that just dropping a message can accomplish the purpose. Let's communicate skillfully!



Wagh Bakri Tea Group is the 3rd largest privately held packaged tea group in India. With an annual turnover of Rs. 750 crores, the group distributes 32 million kgs of processed and packaged tea in 9 states in India and other countries.



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