

CONTEMPORARY TEA TIME

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TEA JOURNAL WITH THE LARGEST READERSHIP 32nd YEAR OF PUBLICATION



CHALLENGES

TODAY -

*Innovation and
Marketing*

Other attractions: ■ Russia-Ukraine War- impact on Indian & Global Tea Industry
■ Tea in Kolkata ■ ITA 138th AGM ■ Personality ■ Nostalgia ■ Domestic consumption
■ Jute bag history and Package Tea ■ International: Bangladesh and Sri Lanka ■ Trivia
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Two and a half years ago I met a tea garden owner who resolved a conundrum I had been facing. Every time I visited India, I would look for tea that would satisfy my craving for the flavor of Darjeeling that I remembered from the 20 years our family lived there. In keeping with the times, those varieties of leaf seemed to have become extinct. My trips to Darjeeling were even more frustrating. Where once tea would flow through the veins of the locals, it seemed that they had since become accustomed to dishwater. The Nepalese shopgirls, as pretty as ever, would be surprised when I rejected even the most expensive samples of tea they could show me. I would finally settle for a package or two of Makaibari to return home with. During the days when Raja Banerjee was running the tight ship with his organic methods at the garden just below Kurseong, muscatel would flow out of every pore of the leaf. That was what represented Darjeeling throughout the world of tea intellectuals. Such a romantic word. Muscatel. Invoking visions of dusky maidens dancing in the twilight on a misty spring night. Hmm, to get back to the story about the tea garden owner. He told me that the secret was in the bush. Ever since traders had taken over the plantations, the mediocre consumer has taken over. Where once, professional tea tasters working for companies like J. Thomas would dictate the price at the source or origin of the tea, the demand for liquor and strength superceded the preference for flavor and aftertaste.

Traders from the merchant caste stampeded through the Darjeeling hillsides contaminating the original tea bushes imported by the British from China to maximize yield in a process they proudly call cloning, replacing at the same time cowdung, mulch and nature with chemical fertilizer and pesticide. Clonal tea is the name of the game, declared a young merchant planter, intoxicated by the focus on yield and profit. With the audacity and arrogance typical of the new generation of 'successful' Indians, he confided in me that the British knew nothing about planting tea! When I insisted that I sought tea harvested from an original Chinese bush, he proselytized the superiority of clonal tea with the zeal of a militant missionary intent on converting this old ignorant heathen into his new cult. "Those bushes are OLD", he said with distaste, "over 150 years old". Time to cut off their limbs, dry them in the sun, turn them over, nail a tabletop on them to be parked in the living room of some dilapidated garden bungalow. Fortunately, he couldn't persuade me. I've continued my quest and am glad that I did. After so many years, I discovered a week ago a portion of his garden that still had the original Chinese import. Muscatel once again coats my tongue, and my intoxicated taste genes rejoice.

- Swapan Nag

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

If one traces the history of innovations, in the Tea Industry, after the invention of the CTC process of manufacture, the other big revolutionary innovation was the creation of the jute, “boeing” bags for bulk packaging. In this issue we track its history.

With Sri Lanka having set themselves on fire, and the ongoing Ukraine and Russia conflict, the tea world will necessarily be affected. Some opportunities will surface for the nimble footed. UAE has become a major trading and packaging hub for most countries in the middle east and its imports from India last year almost equals the loss from Iran.

North Eastern India is experiencing monsoon type weather as we go into print. With some good sunshine to follow we can expect a good crop. Quality is a buzz word as the markets have been clearly demarcated.

Another buzz is that some packers who were casual with their approach to quality are experiencing lash back at the consuming centers and stocks have piled up.

And we would like to take this opportunity to wish Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, the first lady chairperson of the ITA and her team Mr Atul Astana and Mr Hemant Bangur our best wishes in steering the Industry further along the course set by its dynamic past Chairman Mr Vivek Goenka.



A Nandkeolyar

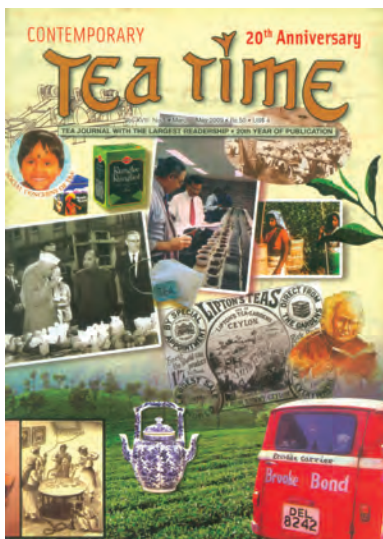
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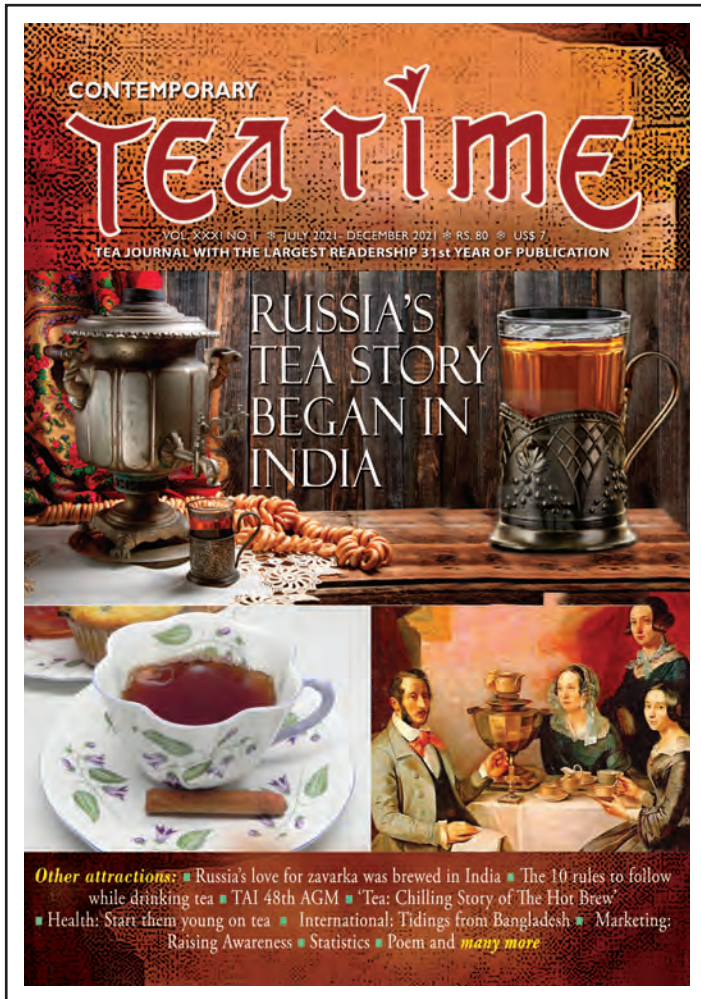
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TEA TIME



Errol O'Brien

- 1) Define the term All Natural in Tea.
- 2) Which Tea is produced in the Shong style, in the traditional fermentation process which takes 15 to 20 years?
- 3) What do people practicing Tassography do?
- 4) Which Company introduced the Pyramid Tea Bags?
- 5) In a formal Tea Service what is a slop ball used for?
- 6) At what time is Afternoon Tea usually taken?
- 7) Which Bengali film has made it to the Santa Barbara International Film Festival?
- 8) What is unusual about the cricketer Usman Kwaza?
- 9) What connects the title Sagarmatha in Nepal and Chomulunga in Tibet?
- 10) How many players are there in a polo game?

10) Four on each side.

9) Names for Mt. Everest.

Australia.

8) A cricketer from Pakistan who plays for

7) Manikbatur Megh.

6) 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

5) Pour out the warming water from a Tea Pot.

4) Lipton.

leaves.

the infusion of tea

3) They read ones for-

tune by examining

South Western part of China.

2) Pu Erh Tea grown only in the

South Western part of China.

your.

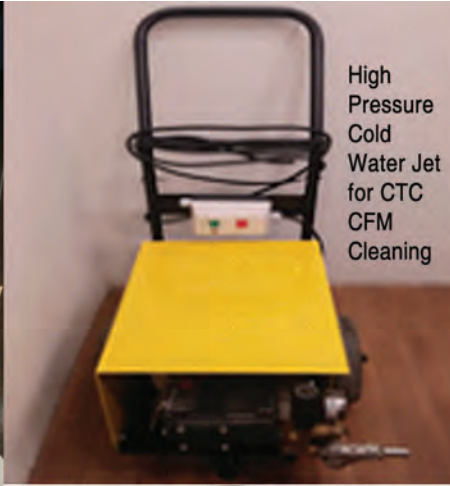
1) It means no artificial ingredients have

been used for coloring, scenting or fla-

vor.



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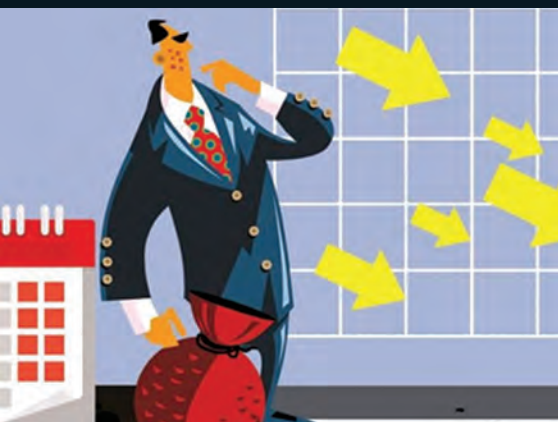


SACHIN VERMA

CEO, JV GOKAL & Co. Pvt Ltd. New Delhi, India

RUSSIA – UKRAINE WAR: IMPACT ON INDIAN & GLOBAL TEA INDUSTRY

As Russia continues its war of aggression in Ukraine, several industries are now facing the prospects of supply chain issues and macroeconomic issues. The two countries are some of the biggest exporters of raw materials in the world. But with the war, the latter's ports are blocked and the former is facing severe global sanctions. The imposition of economic sanctions on Russia has been swift. However, the conflict is expected to hurt major items of export from India to Russia. These include Pharmaceuticals, Telecom Instruments, Iron and Steel, tea, chemical products and



import is petroleum, pearl and semi-precious stones, coal, fertilizers and vegetable oils. Banks have applied stringent terms in

recent months because the rouble has been a volatile currency, and now it has pretty much collapsed. With global transport already severely disrupted in the aftermath of the pandemic, a war could create further problems. The transport modes likely to be affected are ocean shipping and rail freight.

Indian exports to Russia are of two types - one based on rupee payments and the other on dollar payments. While there will be no issues with rupee payments, dollar payments may face problems. Some foreign banks here have already

said they would not accept export documents to these two countries. If the trend spreads to other banks, tea exports will face challenges. India and Russia may keep the ruble out of the proposed rupee-ruble trade, given the high volatility in the Russian currency after Western nations imposed sanctions on the country. Payments are likely to be settled in the rupee pegged to the dollar, and deposited in an Indian bank account. The rupee-ruble trade may not be feasible as the ruble has depreciated sharply. Instead, trade can be valued in the rupee pegged to the dollar. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is working out the details in consultation with Indian and Russian banks. Exporters are now little worried of taking the risk of shipping: who knows if containers will reach their destination and how will anyone get paid with Russia cut off from the global banking. Seven Russian banks are currently blocked from using SWIFT for clearances which means that tea traders with accounts at these banks can no longer transact sales in dollars. There is about \$400 million in unrealised receipts for exports that have already been shipped from India to Russia.

The Indian tea industry is facing uncertainty after war broke out between Russia and Ukraine. India accounted for 21 per cent of total global tea production during 2021, but its export share is only 11 per cent due to hard competition from Kenya and Sri Lanka. Whereas the combined production of Kenya and Sri Lanka is 14 per cent of the world production, they command 42 per cent of world tea export share. Of the approximate volume of 145 million kg of annual tea imports by Russia, 40 million kg is from India. Close to 45% of these is from South India. Ukraine is

Leading tea exporters and exports to Russia (2020).

	Total Production	Total Exports	Exports to Russia	%age of total exports going to Russia
China	2,986,016	348,815	15,300	4.39
Georgia	5,000	1,800	200	11.11
India	1,257,530	203,565	39,200	19.26
Indonesia	126,000	45,265	8,500	18.78
Iran	19,000	7,000	600	8.57
Kenya	569,536	518,921	25,100	4.84
Sri Lanka	278,493	262,726	30,400	11.57
Vietnam	186,000	130,000	13,000	10.00

also a major importer of Indian tea with almost 15m kg import annually. If tea exports to these two countries are affected, it will have an impact on the Indian tea sector, India is looking to develop alternative export markets for tea such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the US, Japan etc. in view of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Iran things can get better if their negotiations with US & P4 countries is successful. Our export to CIS countries, including Russia, is 62 million kg and this war is bound to affect tea trade in these regions of the world. Coupled with the fact that the country has an ongoing payment issue vis-à-vis Iran, the country is staring at a sharp decline in export figures. The export for 2021 was stuck at 195 million kg over 20% drop compared to previous two years.

Tea suppliers in Russia usually stock two to three months inventory in their warehouses, to hedge against delays in delivery times due to the pandemic. Right now, there is not much tea enroute to replenish supplies. It is estimated that stocks will be exhausted before July. It is a challenge for domestic brands, including Orimi Trade and May Foods, in overcoming hurdles like financing shipments upfront. Russia no longer permits the exchange of rubles for US dollars. In 2021, Orimi and May accounted for 63% marketshare in Russia. Uncertainty led most tea-producing nations and international tea brands to turn to more promising markets than Russia. India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka exporters rely so much on Russia that they are determined to discover a route of safe economic passage. Russian buyers at auction account for 20% of India's tea exports and nearly the same percentage from Indonesia. In 2020 Sri Lanka exported over 30 mkg of tea to Russia, about 10% of Sri Lanka's tea exports.

Unlike the West, where households spend less than 15% of their earnings on food, a 2021

consumer survey of Russian households found that 60% spend half their monthly income on food. Market researchers estimate that 98% of the country's 144 million people drink tea, but they are likely to trade down to lesser grades of tea. According to World Bank statistics, Russians are not wealthy, earning a per capita average of \$11,700 US last year, down from the pre-pandemic average of \$12,100 a year. During the 2008-9 financial crisis 40% of Russians adopted austerity budgets for everyday household items. Grocery sales fell 15-25% in the premium and "mid-grade plus" segments and rose 15-20% in the mid-grade minus and economy segments. At that time, inexpensive private label brands accounted for more than 65% of the retail chains' sales, goods in the average price bracket

accounted for 30% of sales, and premium-price goods for less than 1%. According to RBC. UK-based Ahmad Tea and Unilever/



Ekaterra have about 6% market share (down from 10% in 2010). Many European tea brands will no longer ship to Russia. Increases in retail prices for essential goods in supermarkets must keep within government guidelines. Grocers, for example, were advised to limit price increases to 5% for dairy, bread, and sugar. Tea is considered an essential foodstuff and therefore not subject to sanctions, but food inflation at 40% in some categories limits sales. Indeed it is a difficult year for the global tea Industry specially those who have predominant tea exports in CIS countries but the Industry always find a way to face & overcome challenges.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF TEA IN INDIA— FROM Hate TO “Can’t Wake-Up Without It”



Susmita Das Gupta,
Tea Artist

Tea in India has a very fascinating history – not just in terms of how tea came about to be cultivated in India but how Indians adopted to tea drinking – an alien beverage they were unaware of until late 19th century. It was only during the 1960s that tea became the household or welcome beverage that it is today.

The British East India company with the aim to set shop in India used its land to grow tea in order to compete with the Chinese producers and to control global tea market for a drink that they got to learn about just a couple of hundred years back, and which has slowly become their favourite beverage.

While the first tea estate and factory in India belonged to Assam and contributed largely in producing tea for the British market and was not meant for local Indians, it was the English educated, aristocratic Bengalis in Kolkata who picked up tea drinking like their British neighbours and officials much earlier than the rest of India. Calcutta becoming the capital city of the colonial British, perhaps, helped the cause.

It is believed that the Tagore family was one of the first few families in Calcutta to initiate tea drinking among the men of the family, which of course, began as a curious interest into this much talked about beverage. The ladies of the Thakur Bari would also sip the mysterious drink secretly so as to understand why the men were making such a noise about it.

Let us also understand quickly here that though British had learnt



tea drinking by importing it from China, they had actually not learnt the way the Chinese were drinking their tea. They found their own way of making and brewing tea which has got nothing to do the way the Chinese have been brewing and drinking tea for thousands of years. So what the Bengalis learnt by looking at the British was not the authentic way of drinking tea but the British way of having the beverage.

It is also to be remembered here that back in those days for Indians, tea was a British product and therefore, was considered anti-national. Infact,

Gandhiji had called for complete boycott of tea just like other British products. There were (and unfortunately even today) also some absurd myths that got associated with tea – drinking tea can make one darker! With India's strange fascination for fairer skin, they forgot to see that the British were not exactly turning darker by consuming it. However, the strangest myth was that tea was poisonous and therefore could adversely affect health.

After establishing tea as a major cash-crop for the British Empire they were now ready to look at India - the enormous, untapped market - for tea consumption. Some smart British Tea brands took the health platform (just like today) to do just that. They started huge promotional campaigns starting with home to home demonstrations. Early morning when buffaloes were brought to home to milk them in front of the lady of the house, the tea brands' representatives would be present there with a pull cart with all required utensil and he would make a hot cup of tea with that fresh milk and serve it to the ladies. This worked tremendously well to establish that tea was not only not a poisonous product but it also enhances the goodness of milk.

This eventually contributed over a period of time to the growth of various tea recipes across India where milk was the main ingredient and

tea was only a colouring agent.

Bengal or Calcutta proved to be a little different, primarily because of the reason that Bengalis were now drinking Darjeeling tea and the first tea adaptors in India learnt to drink tea in the British way.

If you really take a very close look at various tea recipes of India and compare it with Calcutta or Bengal you will see vast differences in the way the teas are made here. While a lot of Bengalis still “cook” tea instead of brewing it, like rest of India, they still understand that it is the tea leaves that are the main ingredients in making tea, unlike in other parts of India where milk and sugar becomes the most important ingredients.

Also if you look at Kolkata lebu cha it is something completely different from the lemon tea that is served anywhere else in India. Lebu cha is an Interesting Kolkata tea because here salt is an important part of the recipe and the only other place where salt is used in making tea is in far away Kashmir.

The Khulhad Chai of Calcutta only tests perfect when it is a blend of Darjeeling and Assam tea mixed at a certain proportion and then used in the right quantity to balance the milk and sugar. This kind of tea blend or understanding of it is completely absent in rest of India whether its tea recipes like kadak chai, cutting chai, masala chai, et cetera.

Going back to the lebu chai of Kolkata it is believed that the recipe is so secret that no lebu chai seller shares it to anybody outside their family!

Cha-Biscuit, as the Bengalis call it, is also one of the most favourite and popular tea and food pairing which India learnt from the British tea drinking habits. In China tea it is not taken with biscuits at all but rather with meal or as it is.

But did you know that in Chinese Mandarin the character for tea 茶 is pronounced as Chá' (SChaa) and that in most part of India also we call it cha? Now, how did that happen that's a story for another day...



WASHABARIE TEA ESTATE

The turning of tides, the changing of seasons. Lines like these are generally about us, working in and around tea. However, its good to get a bit personal every now and then. I have found myself participating in this balancing act like never before. How to pull this off, is something I quite honestly learned from my father. And that's farm/ estate/ planter life. You can't have all eggs in one basket while also not taking your eyes



off your top targets. I can write pages already about the tea we produced last week that's beyond delightful or the run ins we've had with our temporary resident leopard. But there is a time and place for that. Diversifying what we do, is how we approach life here at Washabarie. So when people ask me what I do - I most often take a moment to articulate a response.

I moved here to go up close to the land and plant that gives us all the life we lead. What we can give and what it can spare for us is critical to know in today's day and age. Covering large areas of the estate everyday has immensely helped. Observing and listening to understand the ever-changing landscape.

I've paid attention to the fungi here. Around forty varieties documented already. They play such an important role in agriculture despite of us mainly making note of them in the wild. Fungal networks beneath the soil bridge gaps in the soil and help plants to transfer nutrients far far distances. The continuing diversity of fungi found in Washabarie has been a pleasant, humbling surprise to us. This just suggests that we are probably doing the right agricultural things, slow and steady.

On being here, I started highlighting the agroforestry around our crops- all for a richer biodiversity and a healthier ecosystem. At this intersection of [organised] agriculture and conservation, we have found, in real-time, more diversity equals to healthier teas. The past few decades have helped us observe that trees usually prescribed for us, supports little to almost no birds or small mammals life, despite its common appearance on plantations which were replaced by native trees. We brought native trees back. And we are home to a habitat buzzing with life, while producing some great cups.

And yes, no two cups are the same. Individual teas are prized for their terroir- for their special combinations of natural environment and masterful craftsmanship that make them unique. We need to highlight this rather than pushing the usuals.

While I'm at it, I must add a recent learning of an environmental buzz word that's been doing the rounds. The Anthropocene. It's an apt summary of our times. It suggests that the recent geologic time period is severely human influenced [or in other words, anthropogenic]. We have been leaving significant marks through our intrusive and extractive methods. Reassessing a lot of what we do individually will go a long way.

Alongside with tea, we grow heirloom varieties of spices, native to the region and around. Highlighting seasonality of spice farming, batches are grown in small quantities and harvested. It's all fully traceable. All regeneratively grown by us, amidst a variety of

medicinal plants. It's all worked to our favour. However small scale. Diversifying mindfully is the only way to give back.

At times, we use social media to elaborate our days and my learnings here - the ups and the downs and all the slopes. Specificity has helped me immeasurably - and I look to add layers to this through our words and tone. There's so much to say all the time, but most times I find myself holding back. Our world here, indeed is sacred.

Tea will never go out of style. It is what your day begins with. What you cannot do without. We are a sector that ensures produce, employment and security even in heavily tested times. It's something we have to respect. We are in an industry that depends on natural elements, and in a climate change era that's been so erratic, there is a need for financial institutions to recalibrate and account for these changes. That has to be respected. Orders made at the Offices must be consistent. In my short long time here, it didn't take long to see the disconnect between the producers and the higher bodies. It feels like a task, just to ask for a uniformity around for logistics and licenses. Power [and electricity] plays a game. Waste is a deep seeded issue. Tea waste, instead of it being misused and sold out,

can be used for land rehab. Good tea is what the market should always have. Aren't these base level issues that should be ironed out first?

As a producer, I'd like to slowly shift the power dynamic in the tea industry. The redistribution of power and information in both, the crop and the beverage, along with the value chain to us producers is what I am [also] working towards, one good cup at a time.

I dislike the term 'woman' entrepreneur, and there are reasons for it! I am, quite happily, Washabarie's intern, its documenter. It was about time to slowly show the world what we do and how we do it. It's my father who has spent most of his entire adult life combining traditional and scientific processes around conservation, agriculture and its production. Experiencing the Garden with him everyday has allowed us to plan both in the long term as well as the short. We have our pace. This connection with the land helps us to be proactive rather than reactive.

Sayantoni Palchoudhuri

Lives and works in her four generation, family run tea estate in the Dooars. When she's not on the field, she runs their seasonal homestay and markets speciality teas online.



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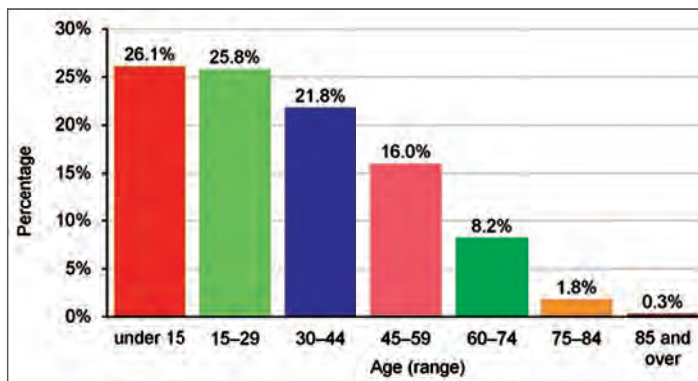


DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION OF TEA IN RELATION TO FUTURE POPULATION (INDIA)



- More babies were born in India in 2003 than any year before and after. Every year since then, the life births have been falling consistently.
- Roughly 7 lakh fewer babies were born in 2021 than were born in 2003. That is approximately 1900 less kids born every day.
- The country witnessed another milestone in 2005; The fertility rate fell below 3 that year and by 2019 the rate slipped to 2, well below the world average.
- It took 14 years for fertility rate to fall by 50% (from 3 to 2) in India, whereas in Bangladesh globally acclaimed for birth control a similar fall took 17 years.
- Since the dwindling population rate of our country is generally a slow process there is no immediate threat which will bring a noticeable change in the consumption for tea in the immediate future.

THE AGE BREAK-DOWN OF THE INDIAN POPULATION :

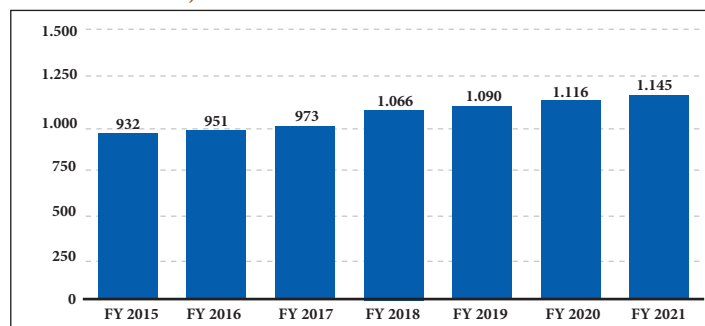


- It is observed that people drink more tea as they cross the age of 40.
- Tea consumption had fallen during the initial lockdown phase owing to the reduced availability of beverage and sharp decline in out of home consumption at road-side tea stalls, restaurants, café, hotels, office etc. Even though consumption of tea might have been increased inside homes during that phase but that would not compensate the

fall in “out of home consumption” which was around 25-30%.

- However, as situation has eased now, after pandemic people have become extremely health conscious and they are tending to opt for healthy non-alcoholic beverages.
- Tea which holds number of healthy nutrients and believed to boost immune system, strengthen bones and teeth, reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, cancer control cholesterol levels etc is considered to be one of the best beverages to consume which would even act as a shield against covid 19. From the above chart the younger generation from age group 15-29 in this context are getting inclined to drink more tea or being recommended by their parents to do so.
- In addition, the healthy teenagers who like to keep themselves fit in the gym have got immense results in terms of weight loss is consuming Green tea.
- Lately, marketing of tea has been done in a smart and effective way to attract the younger generation. For example Ice tea, flavoured tea, Tandoor chai etc.

THE CHART OF CONSUMPTION VOLUME OF TEA IN INDIA FY 2015 - 2021 (IN MILLION KGS)



Source: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/food/tea-consumption-in-india-falls-25-30-during-the-lockdown-period/articleshow/76129582.cms?from=mdr>



A Tea Time Report
by Shivashish Chakraborty
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These gardens in emerald green,
are scattered over the hills.
Keep Darjeeling's reputation sublimely supreme
As the champagne of tea with no fancy frills.

— *F.L. Babinall*

ITA'S 138TH AGM
ITA congratulates the new leadership team



Chairperson
Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri
 First Lady Chairperson of ITA





Vice Chairman
Atul Asthana



Addl Vice Chairman
Hemant Bangur



TEA BODY SEEKS MINIMUM FLOOR PRICE AND AN EXPORT BOOST FOR BECOMING A SELF- SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY

To provide a road map for a self-sustainable tea industry going forward, the Indian Tea Association (ITA) has suggested to the centre for a minimum floor price on the beverage – especially on made tea and green leaf. The tea industry has presented the initial paper citing their proposal to Union commerce minister Piyush Goyal.

For the purpose of guidance and chalking out a strategy, the association has engaged the global consultancy firm Ernst & Young and leading law firm Khaitan and Co, Goenka said. Besides, for the tea industry to flourish, export

volumes need to be raised to 300-350 million kg, which will also maintain the demand supply equilibrium. At present, the country exports around 200-250 million kg of tea on an average annually.

Tea production is a high cost business, with 60-65 percent of the input costs going into labour wages. The rest goes into coal, gas, fertiliser and other machinery.

The country's tea sector employs around 1.2 million workers and contributes 23 per cent to the global output.

Notably, the Tea Board of India had recently proposed to bring in a new Act by replacing the current Tea Act, 1953 for the betterment of the tea industry.

138th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2nd February 2022, Kolkata INDIAN TEA ASSOCIATION



138TH AGM OF ITA by Chairman, Mr Vivek Goenka. 2nd February 2022

INTRODUCTION

I have immense pleasure in welcoming you to the 138th Annual General Meeting of the Indian Tea Association. While we would have liked to have a physical AGM, considering the circumstances and keeping in mind everyone's health and safety we have decided to have this AGM virtually.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam for agreeing to grace this occasion. His dynamic leadership, administrative acumen and wealth of experience will help to guide the industry during these trying times. Dr Sarma is extremely familiar with the Tea Industry and its challenges. In the last couple of years and under his leadership the decisions of the Govt. of Assam to consider a number of incentives and reliefs for the tea industry in particular the Assam Tea Industries Special Incentives Scheme (ATISIS) which has benefitted the industry immensely. His presence today signifies his concern for the Tea Industry and we look forward to hearing his thoughts on the times ahead.

The Association is deeply honoured by the presence of Shri Sunil Barthwal, Secretary to Govt. of India, Ministry of Labour & Employment who is amidst us today. This embodies the importance which the Central Govt attaches to the industry. Sir, your presence today assures us that you and your colleagues remain fully sensitive to our concerns.

A special welcome also to Mr Prabhat Bezbaruah, Chairman and Dr K N Raghavan, Dy Chairman of Tea Board who are great pillars of support to the Industry. We look forward to their continued guidance as we move forward.

COVID 19

The last two years have been extremely difficult with the advent of COVID 19. This pandemic has led to many untimely loss of lives and loss of livelihoods. Under these trying circumstances, I commend and acknowledge the efforts of the selfless COVID warriors who have been battling all odds in attending to the affected and containing further spread of this disease. Not to forget, the efforts of our own up-country units along with our huge work force who have stood up to the challenge to ensure minimal disturbance in the day to day workings of the estates while ensuring safety parameters and SOP's are maintained. Vaccination drives have been well received in the estates, thus helping in checking the incidence and spread among tea workers. While the pandemic has led to severe crises it also presents an opportunity to refresh ourselves, re-imagine the future, think out-of-the box, and pave the way to our Hon'ble Prime Ministers vision of an ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT. Thank you everyone for your continued efforts during these trying time.

BUDGET 2022

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank and commend the Central Government and the Hon'ble Finance Minister for a progressive, reform oriented, growth driven budget laying the blueprint for India @100.

1. INDUSTRY ISSUES

Let me now very briefly outline some data pertaining to production, consumption, exports, import, prices before moving on to my thoughts on the future sustainability of the tea industry.

Production

The drop in India's production in 2020 by 135 mkg i.e. 10% lower than our usual production, did in some way help to address the demand supply mismatch with the wiping out of the huge surplus stock which was available in the market. In 2021, the production though higher than 2020, is estimated to end at around 1329 mkg which means a decline of around 5% when compared to 2019.

Globally though, the total output at 6,268 mkg in 2020 which compared to 2019 was actually higher by 107 mkg with China and Kenya having produced 186 mkg and 111 mkg more respectively even as the rest of the tea world saw a decline in production.

In India while on one hand the organised sector's production is showing a declining trend, the Small Tea Grower sector production has increased leaps and bounds, registering close to a 200% increase since 2005 and now surpassing 50% of the overall production.

Consumption

Delloitte under the aegis of the Tea Board had conducted an indepth study on tea consumption in India wherein they calculated domestic consumption at around 786 grams per capita. This is much lower than a large number of tea consuming countries and is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed. I will speak more on this later in my speech.

This data said, while we do not have any data to reveal the impact of tea consumption during the pandemic years, anecdotal evidence suggests that while there was a drop

in out-of-house consumption, there has been a considerable increase in in-house consumption which may have offset any overall drop. We are very confident that once some form of normalcy resumes normal levels of consumption would ensue.

Exports

Circumstances induced by the pandemic among other factors have hit Indian exports dramatically during the last two years and is a matter of serious concern. Exports in 2021 is estimated at 180-185 mkg. As of November, 2021 the exports are lower by 14.5 mkg compared to 2020 and a staggering 54.4 mkg compared to 2019.

Keeping in mind the growing production in India we must target a volume of 350 Mkg within the next 3-4 years to ensure that demand and supply is kept in equilibrium.

Imports

Another worrisome factor in the past two years has been the surge in imports which has grown by as much as 48% in 2020 and 11% in 2021 (upto Oct). Various countries

having a lower COP than India's are able to export below average quality teas to our market while the Indian producer suffers. In fact it would be pertinent to note here that large quantities of teas are being imported at around USD 1 - USD 1.25. Influx of such average quality teas at cheaper rates is a dangerous trend and whatever correction of demand supply mismatch has been achieved will be diminished, upsetting the equilibrium in the domestic market and subsequently leading to a depression in prices. Strong steps need to be envisaged to ensure sub standard teas are not imported into the country.

II. WAY FORWARD

Over the past decade we have seen only a marginal increase of price of tea which has pushed the industry into a deep crisis. The average auction price moved from Rs 125 in 2012 to Rs 140 in 2019. Uncertainties triggered by the pandemic caused a spike in 2020 but for a limited period only to crash again in the current year with prices closer to 2019 levels. With a CAGR of around only 4% in the 2012-2020 period, the increase of price in tea has been outpaced by the corresponding increase in input costs ranging between 9-12% and costs pertaining to wages more than doubling during this period. **What is really shocking to note is that in real terms, tea prices have actually fallen during this time.** The industry cannot be sustainable and produce quality teas at the current price levels.

Let me now articulate my thoughts on what I feel are the remedies going forward.

1. Floor Price for Tea

At the current production level, the estimated turnover of the industry is around Rs 22,000 Cr. If the industry is to survive, be in a position to meet the growing aspirations of the huge number of people dependent on it and provide a reasonable ROI to the investors, the total turnover of the industry has to increase substantially to Rs 35,000 Cr. This increase cannot happen by way of further increase in production but rather by an increase in price. Without a price increase, neither can the tea producer sustain, nor make quality teas.

Keeping this in mind the ITA has engaged a leading global consultancy firm M/s Ernst & Young and a leading law firm M/s Khaitan and Co to analyse the industry and provide a road map for a self sustainable industry going forward. After much debate, deliberations and discussions the agency has suggested a proposal for a **Minimum Floor Price** for made teas as well as green-leaf price benchmarked to quality. This proposal does not require any financial outlay from the State / Central Governments and ensures a self-sustainable model for all producers both small and large. The industry has had the opportunity to present the initial paper to the Hon Union Commerce Minister. We are currently engaging with other stakeholders and will be finalizing this proposal soon before taking it to the MOC and to the State Governments. I sincerely feel that having a Minimum Floor Price will be extremely beneficial for the entire industry.

2. Boosting of Exports

As I have stated earlier in my earlier speech that there is a surplus of teas being produced every year in our country. In a normal year the Production in India is around 1350-1400 mkg, the domestic consumption around 1050 mkg and exports around 200-225 mkg. This results in a yearly surplus of around 75 mkg which is coming in to the system. Unless this surplus can be addressed the surplus stock will continue to pile up and ultimately lead to an oversupply situation thereby resulting in lower price. Keeping this in mind it is critical that export volumes increase to the level of 300-350 Million kgs to maintain the demand-supply equilibrium.

There are several ways to achieve enhancement of exports. Firstly, there are markets, such as Iran, Russia and China where India already has a strong presence. However, there is a scope for further in-roads and increasing our market share in these markets. Secondly, there are several unexplored markets including markets where once India had a strong foot hold but we have lost to our competitors. These include Iraq, Egypt among others and offer tremendous potential to build export volumes. We may target 2-3 such markets every year and work on then on a sustained basis. While virtual deliberations during covid times were helpful, there is no substitute for physical meetings. The need of the hour is for industry and government to work together in market identification, undertaking trade delegations buyer-seller meets, and most importantly a sustained promotional campaign in such selected markets to boost exports and to boost the brand of Indian tea. Needless to say, promotional campaigns are expensive and here we need the support of the Tea Board and the MOC to financially support the industry for the short and medium term towards development of these markets.

The Indian Tea Association has given a detailed strategy paper to the Tea Board



towards enhancement of exports and we look forward to working with them in the days to come.

Orthodox teas have the major market share in global exports. The drop in orthodox production from 139 Million kgs in 2019 to 96 M kgs in 2020 was in no doubt one of the leading factors for lower exports during the year. We must incentivise the production of Orthodox teas. While the production of Orthodox teas is far more expensive than CTC teas, the scope for exports is much better. Keeping this in mind, the industry requires at least Rs 20 per kg as an incentive for making orthodox and I am confident if this is done, the production of Orthodox will grow substantially and we will have adequate teas for exports to the global market.

3. Boosting of Domestic Consumption

With the proposed revised role of the Tea Board focusing on market promotion, makes the Board the ideal agency to spearhead market growth, expansion and promotion in the domestic market. The Deloitte study which I referred to earlier was done sometime during the pre-covid time and a fresh study need to be done to understand consumption levels across the country. Thereafter both online and the physical campaigns would be necessary to engage with consumers across the country towards higher tea consumption. For example, the egg campaign done by NECC was a huge success and a similar approach needs to be taken for tea. This obviously entail a financial outlay, however, I am very confident that if this were to be done in a sustained manner for the short-medium term this would augur well for the sustainability of the industry for decades to come. The ITA would be happy to work with the Tea Board towards a generic marketing campaign for tea in India.

With reference to the Bharat Auctions I would like to laud the Tea Board for taking this historic step. The positive outcome of this auction model in South India towards achieving fair price discovery is extremely encouraging. While certain critical concerns particularly relevant to the North Indian auction system, are being ironed out, I have 2 requests for the Tea Board. Firstly, the new Auction model must be rolled out during the lean season i.e. February and March, so that during the initial time of roll out any glitches could be addressed and the new model would be in place before new season teas come to the market. We look forward to working with the Tea Board in achieving this goal. Secondly, one of the pillars of Prof Mahadevan's report apart from Fair Price Discovery was also the lowering of Transaction Costs. Herein I would urge the Board once the system goes live and is operating smoothly to begin working towards lowering transaction costs for both the producer and the buyer. Issues such as reduction in sampling, ex-estate sales etc must be considered going forward.

4. Electronic Payment of Wages

Post demonetization there was a strong push towards online banking. While some work has been done on this front for which I am thankful to the MOC and MOF Government of India, a lot more still needs to be achieved. It would also be pertinent to mention here that the levy of 2% TDS u/s 194N of the Finance Act has become a huge burden for the Tea Industry.

Majority of tea estates in North India continue to pay wages in cash due to infrastructural bottlenecks. Ladies and Gentlemen, I must state unequivocally that the industry is ready, geared and most willing to pay 100% of wages, bonus and other payments to workers via electronic means. This said, infrastructural bottlenecks, lacks of adequate ATMs, CSPs etc are the main issues due to which this conversion to online is not taking place. I would thus urge the Central Government to engage on this pressing issue so that we can move to 100% online payments at the earliest.

5. Labour Laws

I must commend the visionary and decisive move of the Central Govt to reform the labour laws which marks a milestone that will help in reshaping the nation's growth trajectory. In the last five years, India has seen several governance reforms promoting the ease of doing business such as the Shram Suvidha Portal, Start-up India, Make in India, Skill India, digitisation of labour law compliances, etc. With the passage of the four new Codes a changed environment in the industrial sector is under way holding the promise of a stronger and vibrant New India.

It would be important to note here that the Tea Industry is indeed unique. It is unique in the sense that the Industry provides various perquisites to its large work force. It is thus pertinent when the Code on Wages and Code of Occupational, Safety and Health come into force the uniqueness of the tea industry must be kept in consideration.

Further, a seamless flow of flagship welfare schemes of the Central and State Government must come into the tea estates so that the residents are not deprived of these benefits. I must commend the Govt of Assam and in particular the Hon CM Govt of Assam for implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission across tea estates in Assam. I have personally seen the work progressing at rapid speed across the tea estates and this will provide huge benefits to our workforce. Similarly schemes such as Ujjwala Yojana among others if implemented in tea estates would be extremely beneficial. Furthermore, keeping in mind uniformity in delivery to society, Health and Education facilities must be taken over by the Government. This would ensure equal access to one and all. This is indeed a pressing concern and we look forward to the Govt's intervention on this point.

6. Adoption of Technology & Smart Farming

Technologies of the new age are set to revolutionise agricultural & industrial operations the world over. With the emergence of the concept of SMART FARMING which involves the use of IoT, Drones, Robotics and AI, enhancement of quality of produce and enabling optimisation of human and material resources will in future be technology driven. Industry 4.0, i.e. Smart Manufacturing has transformed the factory operations through the use of sensors enabling real time monitoring and thus ensuring improved efficiency and productivity and reduced machines downtime. These technologies have the potential to revolutionise estate operations and thus the need to invest in such innovative and disruptive technologies must be an area of focus in the years ahead. The acceptance of solar power today and its popularity as a clean energy generator will invariably be the source of power for the future. A number of estates in Barak Valley and Dooars have already begun this transition and it is important for the rest of the industry to follow suit.

7. Some Other Issues

a. Draft Tea Promotion and Development Bill (2022) : The Draft Tea Promotion & Development Bill is a laudable visionary step which apart from replacing the Tea Act of 1953 will be the backbone of the industry's operations for decades to come. The

changes contemplated are progressive and aims to provide a decontrolled & deregulated regime, thus fostering ease of doing business. However, adequate care is necessary in the run-up to the new legislation to secure the industry from any disharmony between demand and supply. A series of consultations have taken places across the tea fraternity since the draft bill has come into the public domain and we are confident the MOC will take this into consideration.

b. Power & Fuel under GST : Inclusion of power and fuel under the purview of GST will help in reducing the fuel costs to a considerable extent as the industry would then be enabled to derive input tax benefit. This would help the industry to curtail costs and remain competitive.

c. Some Regional Issues : Darjeeling is unique with characteristics totally different from other regions where tea is grown – both in terms of the product as well as geography. In recent times the Tea Industry in Darjeeling has had to cope with a number of challenges starting with a forced closure of more than 3 months in 2017 due to external factors from which it has yet to recover. Vital markets were lost to competitors during and post closure. Prices of Darjeeling Tea have remained stagnant with the CAGR of 0.52 % only (2016-2020) amidst a perpetually increasing cost of production. A special revival package for Darjeeling is crucial to its survival for which the Association is engaged with both the Central Govt. and the State Govt.

Barak Valley and Tripura too are geographically handicapped and wholly dependent on surface transport through Assam, both for sourcing inputs and dispatching the produce. The frequent dislocations in the availability of coal due to various factors threaten manufacturing operations in these regions. The industry lauds the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam at whose behest steps are now being taken to streamline the availability of coal in this region.

I would urge the State Govt. of Assam to extend the tenure of exemption on Green Leaf Cess for a further period of three years from 1st January, 2022.

I would request the Govt. of West Bengal for continuation of exemption under the Agriculture Income Tax for another three years beginning 1st April, 2022.

d. Sustainability : ITA's Sustainability cell, with its twin objective to achieving the Sustainable Developmental Goals of the United Nations as well as pursuing family friendly policies in the estates strengthened its partnerships with eminent global NGOs. Interventions by UNICEF to improve health, hygiene, nutrition and Sanitation as well as promote Child rights and protection have helped the estates to work towards improving the quality of lives of the workers and their families. I must record our deep appreciation to UNICEF , HUL, ETP, GAIN, UTZ , OXFAM and the Zorg - van-de-Zaak foundation of Netherlands for their generous assistance towards sustainability initiatives in tea estates in Assam and Bengal. The TRINITEA program in partnership with Solidaridad has further strengthened the small holder initiative in both the States. Emphasis continues to be laid on good agricultural practices and harvest of quality leaf. We firmly believe that the STG sector would benefit strongly from this integrated approach. I am happy to inform that the first edition of the Sustainability Newsletter which gives a round-up of activities and events initiated by ITA will be released today.

III. CONCLUSION

Let me now summarise the action points I have raised in my speech: and Smart Farming into Tea Estates.

THANKS

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the National Committee of the Association and the Chairman of all the Regional and Sub-Committees for their active participation and help throughout my tenure. I am particularly thankful to Ms. Nayantra Palchoudhuri, Vice-Chairperson for her unstinted support.

I express my gratitude to the Chairman and members of all the constituent Associations of the CCPA for their help and cooperation in taking up and resolving various crucial issues of the industry. The advice from the members of the broking fraternity, the buying fraternity and the merchant exporters have been of considerable help in tackling various problems. I extend my thanks to all of them.

I also wish to convey my deep appreciation and sincere thanks to the ITA Secretariat led by our Secretary General Mr Arijit Raha and his entire team both in Kolkata and upcountry for their continued support and guidance. In particular I must commend them for their proactive role during the pandemic times in ensuring smooth operations of all tea estates.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Ministries at the Centre, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Tea Board for their advice and guidance from time to time. I must also thank the State Governments for their proactive role in tackling industry issues.

I am thankful to the Past-Chairmen of the Association and the senior members of the industry for readily offering me their guidance and valuable advice whenever needed and for responding at very short notice at times.

I am grateful to our friends from the media for their coverage of the Tea Industry at all times.

Last but not the least, distinguished ladies & gentlemen, I thank you all for your patient hearing and for your support.

Wishing you all the best. Thank You!

BUSINESS STRATEGY INNOVATION IN THE INDIAN TEA INDUSTRY

A Case Study of the Darjeeling Tea Industry

By Hrishik Bansal

Historical Overview of the Indian Tea Industry

Around the 1830s, the British experimented with the idea of growing Tea all along the Himalayan foothills, Northeastern India, and the Nilgiri Hills in South India. Historically, the British bought tea from China which was transported overland to the British Isles. The endeavour was to grow tea within their own colonies rather than be dependent on the Chinese for their domestic tea demand. In 1839 The Assam Company became the first tea producing company in India.¹ Initial endeavours to grow tea were carried out by young British executives - known as tea planters who hired local Indian labour to plant thousands of hectares of tea. The perennial nature of the tea crop required a resident workforce and, as a result, a resident management of executives to oversee the agricultural activities.

Thus, the model evolved into a large scale plantation style agriculture where the workers were not only provided housing but also food rations and basic medical facilities. The tea plantation became a model where the workers were bound to the farm, until the service of their tenure, and providing them amenities gave them an incentive to stay on the farm. The British created a hierarchical system of management that they adopted from the military to administer these integrated farms. The British Trading Companies at the time, such as James Finlay and Harrisons & Crosfield created vertically integrated firms which not only traded in tea but also had significant holdings of tea plantations.²

This hierarchy extended beyond the plantation and extended to the entire supply chain. Managing Agency Houses, managed the tea plantations on behalf of the holding companies in the UK. Tea Auctioneers sold the teas in weekly auctions to agents of tea importers in the UK for a fee. Simultaneously, there was a proliferation of allied services to the tea industry supply chain such as warehousing, packaging, blending, carrying and forwarding, and shipping.

A feature of this supply chain was that it was very hierarchical. The reason for this hierarchy was that the owners of all these businesses were domiciled in the UK. In order to control their holdings in the Indian colony, there required to be strong hierarchical linkages with their assets through control over the managers of assets. This hierarchical feature of the industry continues to exist even though colonization ended after World War II.

After Indian independence from the British, there was a shift of ownership from the British to Indian entrepreneurs. The international tea regulation scheme enforced through government supported that cartel in the tea trade, collapse in 1955 as country quotas enforced in the wake of the Great Depression ended.³ Gradually, ownership transferred from the British to Indian businessmen. Post Indian Independence, the industry also faced new regulation with the Plantation Labour Act of 1951. This Act gave established the relationship between plantation workers and management and enshrined the various benefits that workers would receive - such as free housing, free medical facilities, highly subsidized food grain, welfare benefits, to name a few.

The Tea Industry was one of the early attempts at large scale agriculture in India. The huge domestic demand for the commodity was complemented by a massive demand from the USSR, a strong Indian ally. In the 1960s, the Indian Tea Industry started using chemical fertilizers and pesticides with a view to maximize crop yield. Tea planters cared about volumes and little effort was made to generate greater value in the production process. The Crush-Tear-Curl style of manufacture was developed in India in 1930 and was adopted in the Indian Tea Industry for this very purpose - to maximize output.

The Darjeeling Tea Industry

The Darjeeling Tea Industry operated in the context of the Indian Tea Industry as described above. Planted in the 1850s, it was one of the



only regions in the Himalayan foothills where tea continues to be produced today. The features of the Darjeeling Tea Industry are markedly different from the tea grown in the other parts of India. For one, it accounts for a tiny proportion of the Indian Tea Industry. In 2019, India produced 1350,000 metric tonnes of tea out of which only 7250 metric tonnes was produced in Darjeeling. Historically, Darjeeling has accounted for around 1% of Indian tea production and about 0.2% of global tea production. Its yield is around 450-600 kg per hectare while the yields in Assam are in excess of 3000 kg per hectare.

Given that the Darjeeling Tea Industry is such a tiny part of global tea production, it has survived through the years on account of its unique muscatel flavour that has not been replicated anywhere in the world. The confluence of unique agro-climatic conditions has led to the creation of this delicate tea with a floral flavour that was much appreciated by British elites. It soon earned the sobriquet of “The Queen of Teas”. Darjeeling Tea was markedly different from the rest of the tea produced by India. Yet the practices of the rest of the Indian Tea Industry impacted the evolution of the Darjeeling Industry. Much like the other regions in India, the same practices of large-scale production of tea and maximizing volumes. The use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides was an important component of cultivation practices. This was at odds with the characteristics of the Darjeeling industry. The tea produced here was delicate and needed more care in manufacture rather than produce on scale.

In the 1970s a close relationship between India and the Soviet Union developed where India started offering agricultural commodities for Soviet Military Equipment. This resulted in the 1978 Rupee-Ruble trade agreement that allowed the Soviet Union to buy cheap tea from India.⁴ The special agreement created a special preferential agreement which allowed USSR to import Indian goods for only 17% of its value in Indian rupees. This resulted in a huge demand for Indian tea from USSR. Most of the buying happened through Soviet state-owned enterprises

who had little regard for the quality of the tea. Their main criterion was that the appearance of the tea should be black. Owing to the strong Soviet demand, the Darjeeling tea producers focused on this market and maximized volume at the cost of quality. The muscatel flavor was abandoned for Assam like blackish tea. The pursuit of volume saw Darjeeling’s production peaking at around 15,000 Metric Tons (production in the last 5 years has been between 6000 to 7250 MT). Individual Tea Estates uprooted their high-quality Chinery bushes, whose fine leaves produces high quality flavorful tea with Assamica bush varieties, which had a larger leaf size and had a higher yield as compared to the traditional Chinery tea bushes planted by the British.

However, by the mid-1980s the Soviet demand for Indian tea started falling owing to the economic stress on the Soviet economy. Darjeeling was the first place where the Soviets reduced their buying. This led to excess capacity in several tea estates in Darjeeling. The tea produced in Darjeeling did not meet the requirement of traditional buyers of Darjeeling Tea in the UK and continental Europe. The abandonment of quality for volumes meant that many tea plantations went sick and were abandoned by their owners. The big tea companies began to divest their stakes in Darjeeling tea estates.

Emergence of a New Business Model

The decline in Darjeeling tea industry led to the existing owners to re-engage with their original markets in continental Europe and the UK. The tea was far short of the quality standards for Europe. Not only did the tea lack flavor but also had physical impurities in them. The Darjeeling industry had to work toward bringing the tea upto the quality standards of Europe. The removal of physical impurities from tea was just the first step in ensuring that the tea produced was safe for European food safety standards. Gradually, Darjeeling tea producers re-entered the European market. With growing awareness about food safety, there was concern about pesticide use in farm products. European regulations put limits on the use of pesticides and Darjeeling tea could not gain

¹ Jones, G., (2000), Merchants to Multinationals, pg. 268

² Jones, G., (2000), Merchants to Multinationals, pg. 269

³ Gupta, B. (1995). Collusion in the Indian Tea Industry in the Great Depression: An Analysis of Panel Data. (CentER Discussion Paper; Vol. 1995-74). CentER.

⁴ Value Chain Struggles: Institutions and Governance in the Plantation Districts of South India

TEA TIME

market access if these limits were not adhered to.

The growing trend of healthier and sustainable food in Europe led to the growth of organic food business and the demand for Fair Trade products. The European clients started asking the Darjeeling tea producers for certified organic tea. Gradually, other small producers of Darjeeling began to convert their produce to Organic.

The tea estates that went organic did so at considerable risk. The process of organic certification took 3 years – the farm had to be chemical-free for an uninterrupted 3 years before it got an organic certificate. This was to ensure that all chemical residues in the soil were washed away before the tea could be sold as organic. The tea bushes were accustomed to conventional farming where yields were boosted by chemical fertilizers and the use of pesticides. With the adoption of organic agriculture practices, crop yields were hit by 50%. Pests attacked the swathes of the tea estates affecting productivity. There were many who abandoned organic agriculture after seeing the losses. A few entrepreneurs continued to stay organic believing that a change was taking place in the business model. Within a few years of organic agriculture adoption, the production on the farms stabilized and the producers saw huge premia up to 100% in revenues as they were able to differentiate themselves from the conventional producers. The burgeoning organic and fair-trade movement also helped get higher prices.

Gradually, other producers began to shifting to organic agriculture seeing the higher prices organic tea was fetching. By the early 2000s, around 55% of Darjeeling went organic and by 2019 more than 70% was organic.⁵ The organic trade took over the Darjeeling tea industry and with time the premia began to fall. Not only was it known for its quality but its chemical-free nature made it a good tea to blend with other origins. The teas were marketed as Darjeeling due to its superior brand equity. This resulted in large scale adulteration of Darjeeling tea. The Darjeeling Tea Industry undertook the task of gaining intellectual property protection in Europe. Hitherto, no Indian product had received this status in India. Working with the Indian Ministry of Commerce, the Darjeeling Tea Association worked hard to get Product of Geographical Indication status in the EU, similar to Scotch Whiskey and Champagne. This meant that only tea grown in the 87 tea estates in Darjeeling could be

sold as Darjeeling. If it was mixed with teas from other origins there were strict labelling guidelines that prevented the Darjeeling brand from being misused. Accordingly, Darjeeling tea was accorded Product of Geographical Indication status under EU regulation 510/2006 in October 2011.

Challenges Ahead

The premium for organic have fallen since the initial conversion to organic agriculture. About 70 % of Darjeeling tea production is organic. There has been a significant increase in wages and there has been little corresponding increase in prices in European markets. Economic growth across India has created opportunities off farm which is taking farm workers to migrate from the farm. There is also significant risk to production from climate change. With changing weather patterns volatility in production has increased with cropping patterns going haywire.

To protect itself from these headwinds it is imperative for the Darjeeling tea producers to look to new avenues to generate revenues and try to go up the value chain. This would require them to fundamentally change their business models and adapt to changing market conditions.

Hrithik Bansal is an expert in the field of business strategy and business operations. He has an MBA from Harvard Business School and a Master of Philosophy in Economics from the University of Oxford, UK. He has been a recipient of the Overseas Development Institute Fellowship, Harvard Business School Leadership Fellowship as well as the Hilton Prize Coalition Fellowship. He has worked with the South African Ministry of Finance advising the Finance Minister on a range of different topic on economic policy. He has also represented the Indian business as part of the first Indian Chamber of Commerce delegation to meet with stakeholders at the US Department of Commerce, US Department of State, the World Bank and US-India Business Council.



⁵ Personal Interview – Sanjay Bansal, March 29th 2017



A2Z TEA MACH

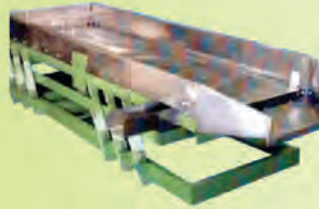
KOLKATA - SILIGURI - JORHAT - COIMBATORE

Small
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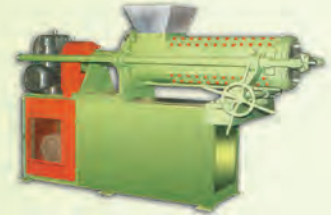
Tea Machinery
Black Tea and
Green Tea



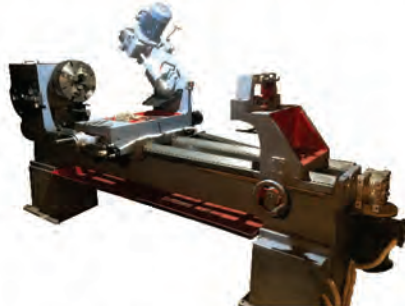
Axial Flow Fan



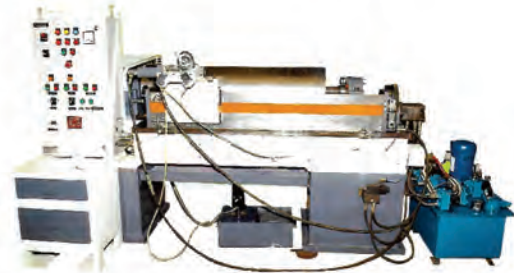
Wither Leaf Feeder



Rotorvane



Auto Milling Machine



Auto Hydromating Chasing Machine



**Addison Tc30
Tool Grinder**



Roller Inspection Bench



Vibroscreen

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‘ URBAN DEMAND RETURNING, BUT RURAL UNDER STRESS ’

Tata Consumers plans to expand its reach in rural areas by increasing the number of outlets to 1.3 million by the end of financial year 2021-22 (FY22). Tata Consumer's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer SUNIL D'SOUZA talks about the company's strategy to launch more d2c (direct-to-consumer) brands and the company's demand outlook.

What products are you looking to add to your portfolio?

In the food and beverage space, we worked with an external partner to distill it and narrowed it down to about 30 categories where we could make a tangible difference.

We then distilled it to five distinct



platforms. On those platforms there are products that we will be able to offer organically, but there are some we'll have to add inorganically.

One of the acquisitions we made was soulfull, because we were interested in breakfast cereals, mini meals and snacks and we had no expertise there. We bought it not only for the brand name and the strength of products, but also because it has got a huge pipeline of differentiated products like ancient grains suited to the Indian consumer. We've just started launches in the last quarter, and hopefully by March you'll find us launching soulfull into a new category.

How do you expect your margins to expand, since tea prices have cooled?

We delivered 14.6 per cent EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes) margin, which is a

recent high, driven primarily by upside in tea margins. Last year, we had a supply shortage because of lockdowns and costs rose, but we couldn't price it at cost because we are in a competitive environment. Also, we did not want to shock the consumer with pricing.

We raised it over a period, and now the cost of tea has reduced. Right now, our gross margin on tea is 35-37 per cent, which is normal, and at these levels we're generating healthy bottom lines for the business. Unless something drastic happens, this is the level of margin that we will be playing at. We will now focus on continuing to build the premium side of our portfolio and drive volume momentum through distribution and innovation.

How do you expect coffee prices to pan out?

Coffee prices have risen in the last six-seven months and are up nearly 70-80 per cent, and that has cascaded across the globe. We see this continuing for at least six months.

Coffee prices impact us in three different businesses. The biggest impact is on Eight O'clock Coffee in the US, where we had already increased prices in August and September and we're about to raise it further, as all our competitors are doing so. Even in our results for last quarter, volumes were down 2 per cent, but revenues were up. You'll see that continuing for some time.

The second biggest impact would be the instant coffee division of Tata coffee. But there we buy coffee at a certain price, we process it, and sell it. It is just the differential margins we've got to make. There might be a bit of pressure on volumes.

The last and the smallest piece is where Tata Coffee has plantations, and higher prices would be slightly beneficial. We have multiple moving parts.

Volumes were impacted in the international tea business in Q3. Do you expect that to continue?

Volumes in the international tea business were primarily impacted because of huge pantry



loading last year, especially in the UK, US and Canada. Canada had four to five lockdowns. Every time there was a lockdown there was pantry loading. We are coming off a high base and that is unwinding. You will see that in the category numbers. In the US and Canada, the categories went through major growth and now that is unwinding. The good news is that I think they're settling close to, if not slightly above, where they started.

In the UK, the category is still soft, as black tea is declining, but fruit, herbal and specialty teas are growing. Tetley is in black tea category and is the one that is declining. We are focused on growing our portfolio for Good Earth and Teapigs, which is our fruit and herbal speciality.

How do you expect demand to pan out in the domestic and international markets?

In the international market we've already started coming off the high base because by this time last year lockdowns had ended. There was a small hiccup in January, but things are broadly back to normal.

In India, extended monsoons have played

truant in some places this year. The urban business should come back with the Omicron wave waning and life returning to normal. However, we are seeing stress in geographies that are more rural and we're seeing the stress even in our portfolio in brands that are more mass market and targeted towards the lower end of the spectrum.

How do you plan to expand your distribution network?

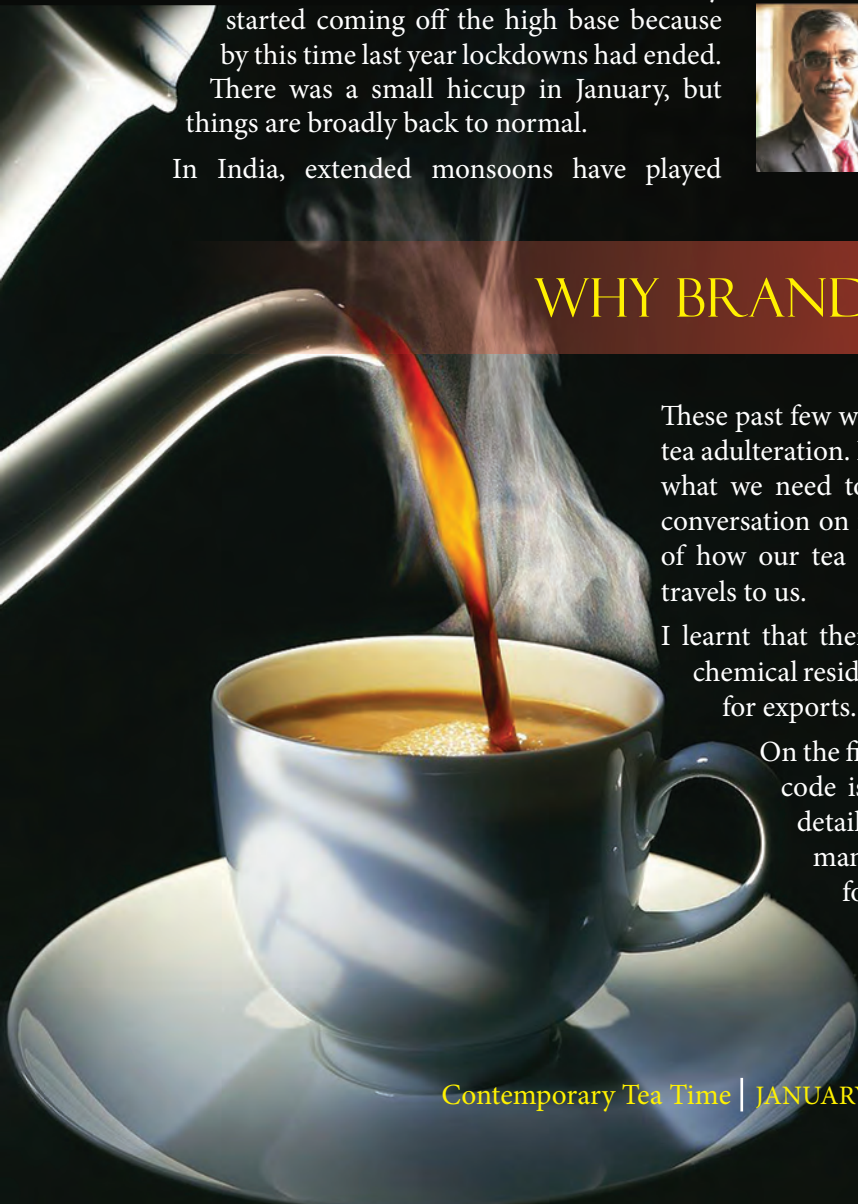
We said we will build out to a million outlets by September, from 500,000, and we will have 1.3 million outlets by March end. We are slowly shifting our focus beyond the metros and big towns and are moving to the tier-2 towns and rural areas. We have a huge focus on growing the rural network with sub-distributors, rural distributors and wholesalers.



A Tea Time Report

By SUNIL D'SOUZ

Tata Consumer's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer



WHY BRANDED TEA IS SAFER

These past few weeks I have seen quite a few articles on tea adulteration. I turned to friends in tea to understand what we need to know as tea drinkers. As with any conversation on food safety, this too led to traceability, of how our tea is grown and made, and also how it travels to us.

I learnt that there are a series of checks in place but chemical residue assessments are limited to tea meant for exports. Sourcing, then, becomes important.

On the field, tea farmers have a plant protection code issued by the Tea Board of India that details everything from pest control and management to formulations allowed for spraying, worker safety etc. In the factories, manufacturers are mandated to meet Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) standards, whether in requirements



for factories, workers, hygiene checks or contamination. FSSAI information on a label is indicative of a licensed brand.

From the factories, tea is sold to buyers, directly or via an auction, with a minuscule quantity sold directly to consumers. Its journey from the time it's processed to the time it reaches the consumer sees several intermediaries --- brokers, buyers, blenders, wholesalers and retailers. Several checks are incorporated in how the tea is bought, handled, sorted and sold.

Typically, tea producers send samples to brokers and buyers. Every "invoice", as a batch is referred to, is sampled and judged for both price and suitability. Buyers abroad have stringent compliance requirements, especially when it comes to the maximum residue levels (MRI.) of chemicals present in tea. One producer told me that every batch of his tea is tested for 399 substances. These are expensive tests, undertaken only by those producers who export. Within India, we don't yet have mandatory testing for MRI which means we have to rely on sourcing our teas right.

Here's where the large brands have an advantage, for they have the where withal to check and ensure safety, whether in vendor or tea selection. Many teas are blended teas, and the blending areas of these facilities are equipped with cleaning equipment to remove foreign matter. There are also new retail brands

that highlight clean teas as a value-add.

So, packaged and branded tea is safer than loosely sold tea. This is perhaps the biggest benefit branding offers.

But then again, the problem of adulteration is as old as the trade itself. Back in the 17th century, tea adulteration was a huge problem in Britain. There are reports of "lie tea", or tea dust with sand and dirt rolled with starch to small granules and dyed. Green tea was usually enhanced for colour with a dye, often Prussian blue. Then there was "exhausted tea", re-dried tea leaves with nothing to offer. The fight to clean tea turned into the move to make tea "English", which in turn led to the establishment of British tea plantations in their colonies and the end of Chinese monopoly in tea.

How can you check if your tea has added colour? The Tea Board of India suggests adding some tea to cold water. Coloured tea will wash off and the water will turn bright red. Take some tea on your palm, add a little cold water and rub it. Added colour will run on to your palm as a red stain.



By Aravinda Anantharaman

A Bengaluru-based tea blogger, Editor, Columnist, writer who reports on the tea industry. Partner at Copac Media. He writes a weekly column for Tea Nanny.



LAUNCH



Goodricke Group introduced its first ready-to-drink organic tea

New tea based beverages from Goodricke Group Limited being launched in Delhi/NCR. In India we have 8 months of warm weather & tea based cold beverages which are pure & healthy can surely replace some of the sugary beverages in India & promote good health.

COVER STORY

AN AFFAIR *with* THE JUTE bag

PRAFULL GORADIA relates how wooden chests gave way to jute bags for tea packaging



Since the three plywood chest called venesta was introduced in 1899, it dominated the universe of bulk tea packing. The average chest carried 50 to 55 kg of leaf tea whereas dusts were packed 35 to 40 kg in smaller chests. Evidently, the venesta has many merits which explained its popularity. It had however one obvious demerit; it consumed some five kg or more of wood. Its average life after



being packed with Indian tea was say, 30 weeks. Those which were exported had to live longer. The ones that stayed in the domestic market had shorter lives. About 75% of Indian tea was consumed at home. It had kept occurring to me that wood, which took years to grow was wasted by venesta chests in a matter of weeks. As it were, what took 30 years to grow was used up in 30 weeks. The second-hand use of the chest might be another 30 to 60 weeks. But even then, there was a waste of a natural resource.

This was the broad picture but there was an interesting detail which made the scene more interesting. In 1974, we had introduced what we called a mini chest. Instead of the conventional 55 kg, this package contained around 25 kg. Half or lesser quantity. The mini had been a roaring success. The biggest and simple reason was the jump in tea prices in 1974. The CTC grade which was selling at Rs 5/- per kg in early December 1973, went up to Rs 8/- in less than two months. The 55 kg that cost Rs 275/- in December, needed Rs 440/- nine weeks later. By the time the chest reached Gujarat or Punjab, having borne storage, despatch, transport, sales tax expenses, the comparable values were Rs 400/- and Rs 650/-. The mini chest would be Rs 300/- instead of Rs 650/-.

The second factor was the rise in bank interest which in a matter of months went up from 10% to 14%. The reason attributed was the oil prices of 1973 and the OPEC drive escalation in the price of petroleum. The cost of money to the traders between his purchase of a chest and its final disposal increased significantly.

A third factor was more interesting. For example, in many parts of Gujarat, there was the practice of a wholesaler giving credit to his retailer or shopkeeper



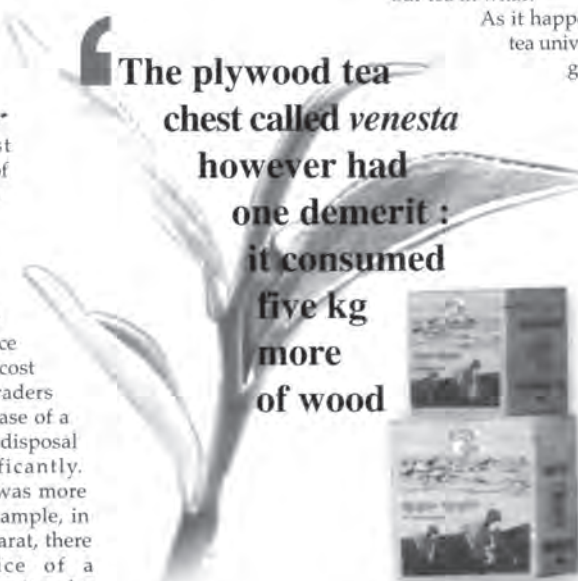
customers.

The most conservative practice was that the wholesaler delivered a chest today but asked for the money a fortnight later when he came to deliver the next chest. If the wholesaler had Rs 65,000/- to use for customer credit, he would be able to service a hundred retailers, Rs 650/- per chest x 100 shops. He could turn his money around twice a month or two fortnights. A 2% of turnover, the wholesaler would earn Rs 1300/- per month. The mini chest enabled him to supply to more than double the number of shops because each packet locked up only Rs 300 and got finished in a week's time. The turnaround was therefore four times a month. The wholesaler could thus earn Rs 2600/- or more per month. That made the mini chest or its smaller packing attractive.

All in all, the experience of 1974 and 1975 was that a smaller packing was needed by the domestic loose tea market. In order to economise, the logical step was to switch to some material cheaper than wood. There was thus a coincidence or confluence of ecology and economy. Give up wood but then pack our tea in what?

As it happened, before joining the tea universe, I had worked in the gunny or jute fabric trade for 15 months. In the course of which, I had spent a month in the jute mills to understand how jute was converted into gunny and bags. There I had learnt that the hardness of the raw fibre was neutralised by adding batching oil, a cheaper variety of petro product which had a smell. The smell in a gunny originated from the oil and not from the fibre, as was the popular impression. The softer the jute, the

The plywood tea chest called venesta however had one demerit : it consumed five kg more of wood



COVER STORY

less the oil required and hence less the smell.

Tea and extraneous smells are inimical. The slightest smell would taint the tea. I thought of tufted carpet backing which the USA imported. It was made of excellent jute and had no perceptible smell. It could be used for making bags, in place of the chest, to pack bulk tea. Trials were initiated. Virgin low density polypropylene bags were ordered. They were to be loosely lowered into the jute bag, filled with tea and heat sealed. That was to secure the tea. Thereafter, the jute bag was to be stitched with nylon thread.

What would be the size of the bag? How much tea was the right quantity? If it was to be an alternative to the mini chest, it had to be small. Why not 21 kg? The smallest packing viable? Anything smaller, say 20 kg, would attract, in those days, an extra excise duty of one rupee per kg. An advantage of the bag over the chest was that the net weight could be standardised at say 21 kg. In a chest, the weight could not be uniform. There are seven flushes in the year or season that a tea bush passes through. The tea is heavy



Shipping tea in wooden chests



as the season opens and with the progress of the flushes, it becomes lighter. The weight-volume ratio changes — greatest volume for the same weight at the close of the season. If therefore a chest takes 26 kg of a particular grade of tea in March, in December, it would accept only about 23 kg. From the marketing viewpoint, an unchanging, uniform weight, say

21 kg, would be preferred. It might create the illusion of a uniform quality. Moreover, billing and accounting calculations would be simpler. Therefore, we decided to go in for a 21 kg, net weight, jute bag with a loose polyethylene liner.

Some colleagues feared that the tea might break up due to the shaking in lorry transit from the garden in West Bengal to the buyer say, in Gujarat. Moreover,

stacking would put a great deal of weight on the bags at lower levels and thus crush the tea. We began the trials by throwing filled and sealed bags from a height of 12 feet in a Calcutta warehouse. There was no damage. We were told that inside the poly bag there were spaces which helped to form air cushions that acted as shock absorbers. On to a lorry for Gujarat. The tea landed at Nandiad safely; there was no breakage of leaf. Neither the shaking lorry nor the warehouse stacking affected the granules of tea.

The bag was so designed that a five foot person could carry it without touching the ground. He could carry it like a suitcase. The bag was gusseted and had two handles. An aeroplane sketch was printed to convey the low weight, less than 22 kg total. The bag was named Boeing Bag so that it did not pick up appellations like gunny, borrah etc. Many a buyer harboured suspicions that the bag might attract rats in the warehouses and get its corners chewed up.

We therefore offered an indirect incentive by placing a special packing charge of 20 and later 30 paise per kg on the mini chest. The bags moved with the progress of months and eventually became popular. Bulk packing jute bags thus became not only legitimate but also respectable. Many years later the bag replaced the chest

for some 80% of India's tea. If wood took 30 years to grow, jute needed only about 13 weeks, about 12,000 tons of wood is now saved annually. Indeed, an affair to remember!



Cover Story

Packing a Punch

It all began in the late 1800s, when a young entrepreneur had a sudden flash of brilliance. He decided to sell his tea – that used to be sold loose till then – in packets. So that the tea remained fresher, the brand standardised and the packet easier to handle. He even visualised an attractive label of a Tamil girl with a basket on her head and had a slogan ready to go on the pack – "Direct from the gardens to the teapot." After that there was no looking back for Lipton's tea and the young businessman, who was none other than the legendary Thomas Lipton. Since then many more tea brands have appeared and fought for their places in the market. Quality alone has not been enough to make their presence felt. Innovative packaging has been one of the biggest tools for standing out in the crowd.

PRABUDDHA DASGUPTA traces how tea packaging has continued to evolve over the years





Over the last five decades, tea packaging has undergone considerable change. Before the advent of retail packs, tea used to be bulk packed in plywood chests lined with aluminum foil. These boxes were closed with thin strips of aluminum with nailing. The boxes used to reach retailers who would open them, blend the tea as per customer's requirements and put in paper or poly bags, further wrapped with aluminum foil. This became the retail pack for the specific customer. Subsequently loose packaging of tea got converted to retail packaging, which continues till today. For this, tea was packed in pouches made out of PET/poly laminates or pouches in cartons in different SKU's and sold directly to the customers. This increased the total shelf life of the product and kept tea fresh. This also helped in bringing standardisation or blends. Other development in retail packaging included lined cartons bag in boxes, PET containers etc.

Technology Used: Together with the appearance of retail packs, packaging technology went through a major change. Retail packaging of tea began to be done through Form Fill and Seal machines. This machine has weighmetric fillers or volumetric cup fillers. The machine could produce centre seal pouches or gusseted pouches. Subsequently newer technology brought in faster machines with servo control motors etc. The FFS machines had coding machines attached to them for printing variable data through various types of coders (Ink jet, pre inked ribbons etc.) In lined cartons/box in bag machines, there

was a carton with a pouch inside. The filling technology involved opening the pre made carton with pouch inside, filling the pouch closing and sealing it with adhesive. These were known as lined cartons. Besides this, multi track FFS machines were introduced for smaller SKU's and low unit packs.

Design: Retail packs then started getting innovative designs. Stand up pouches made their appearance. The 1990s saw the introduction of PET containers of various sizes, shapes and features. This was much liked by the housewives for future use as kitchen containers. Various innovative shapes were developed in pouches and cartons to increase shelf appeal and for differentiation between brands. Besides structural design, graphic design also played a great role. Multi colour printed laminates with different graphic designs, enhanced with varnished and laminated finishing were introduced. Aluminum foil and metalised polyester films were variously used. All this helped to create unique brand designs.

Food Safety Norms: Retail packs needed to conform to :
 a) Weights and Measures Act
 b) Packaged Commodities Act

This brought standardisation in the quantity of tea sold per pack, date of manufacture, best before date batch/lot number etc. This ensured that the customer had a choice and was getting good tea according to his/her requirement. Retail packaging also ensured uniform close shelf life and made the product available throughout distant corners of the country. Also migration and safety in contact



COVER STORY

Contemporary Tea Time 29

with plastics was ensured through various tests.

For maintaining the quality of tea for longer periods of time, two specific technologies are used:

- Inert gas flushing
- Vacuum packaging

These are examples of modified atmospheric packaging. These technologies can be used to preserve bulk tea also. Analytical research results prove that the keeping quality of tea improves through these technologies. Another important property of tea



that needs to be preserved is initial moisture content and protection from picking up of outside foreign taints. Commonly used laminates of PET/poly and PET/MET PET/poly helps to reduce the ingress of moisture and picking up of taints. Tea in bulk packaging can also be done through foil lined multi wall, paper sacks with valves. This is a popular packaging format for exports.

The author is Group Leader (retired), Packaging Development, Foods, Hindustan Unilever Ltd., Bangalore

Goodricke's 'Good' Tea



Goodricke - IICP tea packaging project

30 September-November '13

HEALTH



HEALTH BENEFITS OF SPICED TEA IN WINTER

NEW DELHI: *Did you know that adding a few spices to your tea can be extremely beneficial to your health?*

Spices such as cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, nutmeg, saffron and ginger warm the body while also increasing metabolism and immunity. Spices have been used in tea for nearly as long as tea has been consumed, and there are many different spiced tea drinks to choose from.

Three of the most well-known spiced teas are:

Warm blends aid in the reduction of inflammation and pain. It is said that drinking saffron-infused tea or putting a few cloves in a boiling kettle of drinking water can help relieve pain by lowering inflammation in the body. (IANS)



STAC SPORTS CARNIVAL 2022



Stac Sports meet was held on 5th & 6th of March at Gulma Tea Estate Mr. Gaurav Sharma Commissioner of Policie was the Chief Guest Cricket & Futsul was played between Brokers, Sellers and Buyers. Brokers won the futsul & the sellers won the cricket.

Contributor: Nimeshkar Bhujel, Contemporary Brokers– Siliguri

TEA TIME

IRAJ TEA



Introduction

of Iraj Tea: There is nothing like bonding over a cup of tea! Tea has been an age old social beverage for different cultures across the world. The founders of Iraj Tea, however, had a far deeper agenda. They not only wanted people to bond with one another but also to forge a deeper connection with ones' inner self. Hence, Iraj tea was founded with a vision to enhance and reinvent ones' wellness experience in the most enjoyable way. They took their passion for wellness a notch above for their loved ones by creating blends with the purest of ingredients and healing properties. Iraj Tea is conceptualized as a healthy and luxurious take on flavoured teas and herbal blends. It is royal, refreshing, and duly researched and developed in order to create the best possible wellness experience for their patrons.

How Iraj Tea started the journey:

Gajinder Pal Singh Vij and Ankita Malik are the co-founders of Iraj Tea. Gajinder is a well renowned athlete, who has captained the rugby team at CCFC for several years. He is well-known for his company Pal Goods dealing with transport and logistics. Ankita is a certified Lactation Consultant as well as a certified Pre and Postnatal Yoga and Fitness Consultant. Both being in the health and wellness industry as well as fitness enthusiasts, together they made this joint venture of Iraj Tea to promote their passion for wellness and fitness. Their sole goal is to provide concoctions that soothe the mind, body and soul.

The teas are an amalgamation of medicinal as well as ayurvedic herbs, fruits and flowers, in short all natural and pure ingredients, duly researched by health as well as tea experts. The herbs are blended



Gajinder Pal Singh Vij and Ankita Malik
Co founders

in optimum proportions in order to maximize health benefit as well as taste.

A perfect blend of herbs, dried fruits and flowers were included with the teas in order to create unique blends which help in overall wellness. Iraj Tea was conceptualized with the goal of providing wellness in a unique as well as delicious manner. The owners themselves being health enthusiasts found a way to create versatile blends of teas which can be consumed by all age groups. Catering to every age and being so versatile with flavor helps target different groups of people and having specific blends made for different purposes is what helps Iraj Tea stand out from other tea brands. The versatility of our product is what gets the attention of both tea drinkers and non-tea drinkers.

Different blends:

Iraj Tea has 10 different blends of tea. Each blend is targeted towards a different health benefit. The following includes details of the 10 different blends along with their ingredients and health benefits:

- 1. Royal English Breakfast Tea**– It is a blend of Darjeeling and Assam tea. It is an immunity booster, antioxidant and promotes heart health.
- 2. Jasmine Tea**–It is a blend of jasmine flowers and green tea. It is an antioxidant, lowers the risk of heart disease, improves oral health, boosts brain function, promotes weight loss, & aides in digestion.
- 3. Turmeric Green Tea** – It is a blend of green tea, turmeric, coriander seeds, black



pepper, dandelion, star anise, fennel, brahmi, peppermint, lemon peel, and cinnamon. It is an immunity booster, anti-inflammatory, prevents cough and cold and is an antioxidant.

4. **Mint Refresh**– It is a blend of green tea, cranberry, and peppermint leaves. It is refreshing, helps in digestion, and is a healthy cocktail mixer.
5. **Tranquil-i-tea**– It is a blend of green tea, ashwagandha, lavender, chamomile, turmeric and fennel. Its health benefits are- antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-anxiety, stress reliever, induces sleep, and anti-inflammatory.
6. **Vital-i-tea**– It is a blend of oolong, ashwagandha, lavender, hibiscus, fennel, mint and blueberry. It's health benefits are - anti-anxiety, stress reliever, sleep inducing, energy booster, promotes hormonal health, promotes muscle development, reduces anxiety, aides in digestion, enhances brain function, & aids in fat loss.
7. **Materni Tea**– It is a blend of fenugreek, nettle, tulsi, liquorice, hibiscus, shatavari, moringa, fennel, and cinnamon. It helps to promote lactation and breastfeeding, aides in digestion, supports hormonal health, & improves nutrient absorption.
8. **Tummy Trump** – It is a blend of fennel, cumin, peppermint, ajwain, and cinnamon. It helps promote lactation and breastfeeding, it also aides in digestion, supports hormonal health, & improves nutrient absorption.
9. **Lemongrass Aromatherapy Tea** – It is a blend of green tea, lemongrass, lemon peel and bergamot. It is an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, digestive, regulates blood pressure, and is completely relaxing.
10. **The Weekender Tea** – It is a blend of oolong tea, ashwagandha, hibiscus, lavender, fennel, mint, strawberry, and mango. It is refreshing, revitalizing, rehydrating and also improves nutrient absorption.

Strengths/ USP:

The Co-founders of Iraj Tea have mindfully created these blends with a lot of research and with the help of top tea tasters as well as health and fitness experts. Each blend caters to a different part of ones' body. Iraj Tea is

conceptualized as a healthy and luxurious take on flavoured teas and herbal blends. It is royal, refreshing, and duly researched and developed in order to create the best possible wellness experience for their patrons.

Iraj Tea's USP is it's unique branding as well as its packaging. Their products come in three kinds of packaging which are tins, boxes which include biodegradable tea bags made from sugarcane, and sealable pouches. They kept in mind the condition of the environment and deliberately made a conscious decision on keeping our packaging safe for the environment.

Vision / Way forward:

This wellness tea brand is created with the vision of providing a sense of reliability to



Iraj tea(box packing)



Iraj tea(tin packing)



Iraj tea

people who are concerned about their physical health and well-being. The idea is to provide the enthusiast with a rich and flavourful experience, where every sip will provide a deeper connection to ones' inner self. Iraj Tea is a brew of health, love and spirituality. It is madewith all things real and safe, it is 100% natural and pure without any preservative or additives which makes it safe for consumption and is here to provide you with health and happiness with every cup!



www.irajtea.com

A Tea Time Report

By Vishal Kumar

Contemporary Kolkata



15 TEA TRADITIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Drinking tea is a tradition that's said to date back to 2737 BCE, when, according to legend, Chinese emperor Shennong found his hot water was greatly improved when a dried leaf fell from a plant into his cup. Since then, tea drinking has spread around the world, its recipes and preparations evolving along the way. Here's how to enjoy a cup around the globe.

1. MOROCCO

A mix of mint, green tea leaves, and a generous serving of sugar, Touareg tea (also known as Maghrebi mint tea) is the customary blend in this North African country. Poured from up high into slim, delicate glasses, it's served three times to guests. Each time the flavor varies slightly. Per the proverb: "The first glass is as gentle as life, the second is as strong as love, the third is as bitter as death." Refusing any one of these servings is considered the height of rudeness.



2. TIBET

Forget the "milk or lemon" debate. How about adding some salty butter to your tea? Po cha, the traditional tea of Tibet, is made by boiling a brick of Pemagul black tea for hours.

From there, milk, salt, and yak butter are added, and the mixture is then churned together. It's said this blend with a soup-like consistency is uniquely comforting and fortifying in the high-altitude and cold climates.



3. INDIA

India is both a huge producer and consumer of tea. But for all its variants, the country is best known

for its chai blends that mix black tea leaves with spices like cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, cardamom, and pepper. Though regional recipes vary, this spicy tea is such a quintessential element of day-to-day life that is sipped on the go, offered to houseguests, and found for sale on nearly every street. Vendors called chai wallahs traditionally sell their brew in small sustainable clay cups made from local earth. Some people consider the dust of these clay cups to be a crucial ingredient to get the true taste of this national drink.



4. ARGENTINA

While India has chai, this South American nation has *yerba mate* (pronounced ma-tay), an herb "tea" made from its titular herb. Called "the drink of the gods," it's a staple of Argentinian life. It is prepared in a small pot or *dried calabaza gourd* from which it's drunk through a special straining straw called a bombilla. This device will be revived with more hot water, and passed around a gathering so all might share its tea and bond. To say "thank you" in this situation is seen as declining the drink, which is a grave insult. Also insulting: stirring the brew with the bombilla, as it questions the abilities of its brewer/your host. Traditionally, yerba mate is served without a sweetener, but younger generations have taken to adding sugar or honey.



5. RUSSIA

The tea traditions of Russia were forged in its leaner days, where food and drinks needed to be stretched to serve as many as possible. From these shortages came *zavarka*, a loose-leaf tea concentrate brewed in a small metal container called a samovar. In this vessel, a very strong



(usually black) tea is brewed and then served in large mugs. However, you wouldn't dare fill the mug. Instead, guests take an inch or less of this powerful concoction that they then tame with boiling water as desired. Russians typically drink it black, but hosts will offer milk and sugar, as well as an accompanying snack. Serving zavarka without cookies, crackers or some other munchable is to serve it "naked" and is considered wildly rude.

6. CHINA

The traditional Chinese tea ceremony, Gongfu Tea is an incredibly detailed process, down to the elaborate designs on its small pot and cups. The ritual also involves a tureen, strainers, tongs, tea towels, a brewing tray, and "scent cups," which are used solely to sniff—not drink—the very strong and bitter brew.

Guests are invited to smell the leaves before brewing. This is just the first of many steps, along with warming the cups with a wash of the tea's first brew. The second is drinking, and the tea will be ideally be poured by arranging the cups in a circle, pouring from high in one continuous motion, around and around until each cup is full. Guests are expected to cradle the cup—and its accompanying saucer if there is one—in two hands, to sip slowly and savor the flavor, and then cradle the empty cup to relish in the aroma after the tea is gone.

7. THAILAND

As the *Chinese Civil War* was drawing to a close in 1949, refugees fled to Thailand, taking with them elements of Chinese culture including a rich tradition in tea. But Thailand's tea culture became unique with the evolution of the distinctly amber-colored Thai iced tea or Cha Yen, a blend of Ceylon or Assam tea with sugar, condensed milk, and spices like star anise, tamarind, and orange blossom, served over ice in a tall glass. Some recipes include topping it off with evaporated milk, creating an appealing ombre effect. It's



a sweet and spicy treat that's high in calories but incredibly refreshing on hot days and complementary to the culture's spicy cuisine.

8. TAIWAN



A modern innovation on Chinese tradition is Taiwanese bubble tea. A high calorie treat, its base is an iced tea (black, green, jasmine or oolong typically) with powdered milk and sugary syrup. But the bubbles to which it owes its name are small balls of tapioca, a starchy white grain. The origin of bubble tea only dates back as far as 1988, when *Lin Hsiu Hui*, a product development manager at the Chun Shui Tang teahouse, dropped some tapioca balls from her fen yuan dessert into her tea during a staff meeting, a fortuitous place to experiment. Soon, the teahouse was selling her quirky creation, and in the decades since it's become an international phenomenon with bubble tea shops popping up across Asian, Europe, and the United States.

9. HONG KONG

The name "*pantyhose tea*" may make this concoction sound unappealing, but it's named for the straining sock—which resembles



but is not and has never been pantyhose—that is used *to strain the tea and milk*. The brewing of this powerful blend is labor-intensive, demanding 10 to 20 minutes of dedicated and repeated straining. Most often it appears on the menu in lively tea-centric diners called cha chaan teng, where people of every class and background happily mingle over the beverage and with raucous conversation.

10. JAPAN

Like China, this island nation also has *highly detailed tea ceremonies* with names like Chanoyu, Sado, or Ocha. The movements of the brewer in these processes are carefully choreographed to care



TEA TIME

and consider the viewpoint of the guest being served. These ceremonies include everything from the preparation of the home to how guests are invited into it, the order in which utensils are brought into the room, the cleaning and warming of these tools, the actual brewing, and the cleanup. Details vary depending on the time of day and season, but the powdered green tea Matcha is the preferred blend. It is served with sweets to play against its bitter flavor.



11. PAKISTAN

Tea is a common drink and a courtesy extended to guests across Pakistan. An element of Kashmiri culture, Noon Chai is a special blend of tea that includes a mix of pistachios, almonds, salt, milk, and spices like cardamom, cinnamon, and star anise. It's easy to pick out because of its signature pink color, which can be enhanced with a *bit of baking soda*. Served on special occasions, *Noon Chai* is typically enjoyed with pastries like sheermal, kandir tchot, bakarkhani, and kulcha. More casually enjoyed is “*Doodh Pati*,” or milk tea, which involves no water.

12. THE UNITED KINGDOM

Tea was introduced to England in *the 17th century*, but the iconic British tradition of afternoon tea took nearly another 200 years to catch on. In 1840, standard meal times placed lunch at midday and dinner late, around 8 p.m. or so. Anna, *the seventh Duchess of Bedford*, requested her household staff prepare a sort of mini-meal around 4 p.m., where tea and a selection of cakes or small sandwiches would be served. Her example inspired the upper class, and then spread across the country, spurring the proliferation of tea gardens where customers could enjoy tea and cake in a lovely setting. Today, tea is a major element of Great Britain's identity and day-to-day life.



13. NEW ZEALAND

In the early 19th century are believed to have introduced the tea-brewing practice to the Kiwis,

and by the end of the century, tea had replaced ale as the beverage of choice for breakfast across all classes. The rise of tea gardens during this time promoted tea drinking to a social activity, which gave men and women the perfect chance to mingle in public without drawing gossip. Inspired by their British roots, “afternoon tea” became a staple, and New Zealand developed its own *high tea ceremony*, which includes elegant settings, delectable finger sandwiches, and mouth-watering sweets.

14. IRAN



After tea caught on in India and China, the taste for it spilled *down the Silk Road* and into the Middle East by


the 15th century, sparking the rise of tea houses known as *chaikhanehs*. But it wasn't until the 20th century that Iranians began growing their own black tea, making it a nationally embraced beverage, which now welcomes guests and is a crucial element in social life. A silver tray customarily carries in the drink, which is accompanied by a bright yellow rock candy called *nabat*. So constant is tea's presence in Iranians' lives that its kettle will be kept on a stove burner all day. Tea is served very strong. Rather than mixing in sugar to counteract the bitterness, you're encouraged to place a sugar cube between your front teeth and suck the strong brew through it.

15. MALAYSIA

This Southeast Asian country's signature brew contains black tea, sugar, and condensed milk. But what makes *teh tarik* or “pulled tea” special is how it's mixed. To achieve its distinctly frothy texture, Malaysian brewers pour the beverage back and forth between mugs, giving the liquid repeated access to cool air as it flows from one glass to another. As this tradition developed, so too did the showmanship of its making. To watch “Teh Tarik” being mixed is to witness an *elaborate and energetic dance*, where the brew behaves as a partner, leaping to and fro without a drop ever being lost!



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TEA TIME

TEA IS NOW COOKED AND EATEN, NOT JUST DRUNK!



BY P S SUNDAR



Cluster General Manager of Gateway Coonor and Savoy Ooty Ritesh Choudhary explaining the intricacies of cooking with tea at Gateway Coonor.

At the portico of Hotel Gateway Coonor, a unit of the star-studded IHCL SeleQtions Hotels from the Taj hotel stables, the team led by the Cluster General Manager Ritesh Choudhary welcome guests by adorning them with a garland made with tea leaf.

The guests are then escorted to the restaurant where they are treated to an exclusive ‘Tea Gastronomy’ dinner – sensuous epicurean delights curated by the hotel’s team led by Executive Chef Ramalingam along with tea Sommeliers from the world-reputed Chamraj Estate near Coonor.

“Since Coonor is the epi-centre of South India’s tea activities, we have curated this new concept demonstrating that tea can be used to impart flavour, infused into cooking, smoked on a grill, ground and used as a spice. Tea can be used in everything from savoury, main dishes to dessert to add fragrant herbal spice tinge”, Ritesh told me.

He said, “Tea-infused masterpieces are brought into life. The sensations that tea offers, its taste, mouth-feel – there is a delicious harmony in the union of tea and food”.

Adding testimony to this, Ramalingam said, “Among our popular tea-based starters are Nilgiri tea leaf fritters (crispy tea leaf fritters served with minty chutney), Orange Pekoe Samosa (crispy tea dusted savoury with vegetable dip



Some of the dishes made with tea as part of ‘Tea Gastronomy’ at Gateway Hotel, Coonor.



in sweet and mint chutney) and Jasmine tea crusted Gassu dhoti roll (traditional mashed potatoes bread flavoured with jasmine tea)".

"White tea infused bouillon is a choice soup with infusion of royal white tea from Chamraj Estate. Quinoa Apple and celery salad with Nilgiris Tea Buds and tea honey chilling paired with Ice Frost Tea is a favourite salad here", he explained.

On popular tea-based main dishes, Food and Beverage Manager Bala Murugan detailed, "Blue Mountain Tea Grills (tea and spinach herb crepes sprinkled with cheese and Chamraj Golden Tips Dust Tea) excels. Oolong tea is also paired with traditional dishes from Chettinad region and Coriander steamed rice".

Similar tea-based varieties for non-vegetarian dishes are also available.



Pooja Singh Yohan, triple crown winner at Mrs India Worldwide contest, explaining the salient features of "Tea Bajji" (bajji snack prepared with fresh tea leaves) at Billimalai Estate near Coonoor.

Regarding tea-based desserts, Restaurant Manager Shafiuddin added, "Rose hip tea white chocolate mousse is an attractive dessert paired with White Tea".

Ritesh Choudhary, who is known for innovation in hospitality service, told me, "We bought in this concept as we discover that tea is more than a way to start the day. The array of versatile teas is used in surprising ways to highlight the delicious harmony between tea and food – be it our roasted Orthodox tea Bruschetta, tea roast tender or vegetable samosa with Green Tea leaf. We have now added grassy, herbal, sweet and even smoky notes with tea to our cooking repertoire".

Tea being used in cooking snacks is also gaining ground. At Billimalai Estate, 10 kilometres from Coonoor, where Avataa speciality teas are manufactured, guests are entertained to 'Tea Bajji' – a snack prepared by deep frying tea leaves freshly plucked from the garden immersed in dove.

"The tea bajji is crisp, tasty, mouth watering and unique. It is especially suitable when the weather is misty or rainy. It goes well with a cup of hot quality tea – CTC, orthodox or green", said Pooja Singh Yohan, triple crown winner at Mrs India Worldwide championship held in Europe.



● NATIONAL AWARD – WINNING DIRECTOR SUDHANGSHU SARIA TO DIRECT ESPIONAGE THRILLER ULAJH

“Born in the tea estates of Darjeeling, Sudhangshu Saria is a National Award-winning filmmaker. His last feature, LOEV, played to wide critical acclaim at festivals like SXSW, and Tallinn Black Nights before it was acquired for release on a worldwide exclusive basis by Netflix.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK, a 40-minute psychological thriller he made next, won him India’s highest honour for short film, the

National Award for Best Directing in the non-Feature section. It was shot in Darjeeling.

He is currently serving as the Showrunner, Writer and Director on MASOOM, an one-hour young adult series for Amazon Prime. He is also writing and co-producing the next season of DELHI CRIME, Netflix’s flagship true-crime drama. Sudhangshu is also in development on a feature film, titled Ulajh, he is directing for Junglee Pictures. He is the son of Shiv K Saria of the Soongachi Group of Tea Estates.”

This tea sold in Guwahati, Auction number 50 through Contemporary Brokers.



● MANOHARI GOLD TEA IS BACK

The realisation of Manohari Gold Tea ₹ 99999 is donated to Chief Minister’s relief fund at Manohari Tea Estate today. The cheque of ₹99999 was handed over to Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma by Rajan Lohia, Managing Director, Manohari Tea Estate in presence of MLA Dibrugarh, Prashanta Phukan, MLA Lahoal, Binod Hazatika, MLA Moran, Chakra Gogoi, MLA Sadiya, Bolin Chetia, Deputy Commissioner, Dibrugarh Biswajit Pegu, Superintendent of Police, Dibrugarh Shwetank Mishra. Manohari tea was sold at Rs 99999 per kg in Guwahati Tea Auction Centre on 14th December making a world record for the fourth consecutive time.

● ASSAMESE TEA NAMED AFTER UKRAINE PRESIDENT

An Assam-based start-up has launched a tea named after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, as the country fights Russian invasion. Ranjit Barua, the director of Aromatic Tea, told PTI, “The basic idea is to honour the valour and courage of the Ukrainian President who rejected the US offer to escape war-torn Ukraine, adding that this is an attempt to draw an analogy between Zelensky’s and Assam tea’s character.”





A REJUVENATING TEA CAFÉ OUTING

A Tea Room, a quaint café in the heart of the city of joy by the Goodricke Group is housed in the iconic Tea Board building in Dalhousie right in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the charming city.

The Menu

When in the mood for a cup of authentic and refreshing cup of tea, head over 'The Tea Room', at

the Tea Board, which lives up to the expectations for a tea lover. Once inside the historic premises, there is a winding wooden staircase which leads to 'The Tea Room' on the first floor.

As you enter the café, the din drowns. A serene quiet environment awaits. We chose a cozy corner to spend our time. Once the menu is explained by the Assistant Manager, we settled for Darjeeling tea. After going through the variety of tea from the finest gardens, we choose Badamtam Rose Tea. We ordered Jalapeno Cheese Balls and the Sausage Platter to go with our tea.

The café offers tea crockery for sale as well as a wide variety of teas. A glass wall overlooks the busy and noisy street outside.

Our snacks are delicious, and the tea does not disappoint.



There is a choice of a wide range of cakes, and cookies to choose from. To raise your spirits and for some good tea and quiet moments visit the 'The Tea Room'.

SUKANYA DAS

is a keen TEA ENTHUSIAST and a regular contributor to the TEA TIME



DEGREE TEA: MBAS AND BTECHS BREW CHAI FOR A LIVING



Electrical engineers Anandu Ajay and Mohammed Shafi founded B-Tech Chaiwala in Kerala. They have 70 varieties of tea priced upto Rs. 60. They have unusual combinations like tender

coconut, oreo biscuits, a blue tea made with butterfly flower and a special ginja tea made with a blend of nine spices and herbs.

B-Tech Chaiwala has been hot with locals with daily sales between 200 to 500 cups.

In Vapsi another engineer Ganesh Pandit Dudhnale started a tea shop named Chai Makers by Engineer and along with his co-founder Pradeep Jadhav took the business to Surat.

The biggest success is Prafull Billlore, a MBA dropout who started his tea stall in Ahmedabad named MBA Chaiwala and now has a chain of 60 outlets in 25 cities across the country.



On top in left corner

Nayantara Palchoudhuri (Chairperson of ITA)

On top in the middle

Sunil Alagh (MD of SKA Advisors Pvt. Ltd.)

On top in right corner L to R

Basudeb Banerjee (State Chief Information Commissioner & Former Chief Secretary, Govt of W.B.)

Sujit Patra (Secretary Export, Promotion & MIS of ITA)

Nayantara Palchoudhuri (Chairperson of ITA)

Rajani Gandha Seal Naskar (Controller of Licensing at Tea Board)

Pankaj Tewari (Tewari Tea Corporation)

Group picture L to R

Debasish Chakraborty (Secretary ITA)

Arijit Raha (Secretary General)

Sudip Das (Deputy Secretary)

Sujit Patra (Secretary Export, Promotion & MIS of ITA)

L. N. Gupta (Gupta Tea Pvt Ltd)

Vikram Singh Gulia (MD & CEO of Amalgamated Plantations)

Ajam Monem (Whole Time Director of McLeod Russel)

Hemant Bangur (Add'l Vice Chairman of ITA)

Nayantara Palchoudhuri (Chairperson of ITA)

Atul Asthana (Vice Chairman of ITA)

Viren Shah (Chairman of FAITTA)

Gopal Poddar (Limtex Tea & Industries Ltd)

Ajay Jalan (Mokalbari Kanoi Tea Estate Pvt Ltd)

Anshuman Kanoria (Chairman of Balaji Agro International & Chairman of Indian Tea Exporters Association)



L to R

Pratik Bhansali (Kesaria & Co)

Pankaj Tewari (Tewari Tea Corporation)

Paras Desai (Executive Director of Wagh Bakri)

Kamal Tewari (Tewari Tea Corporation)



THE NEVER-ENDING SAGA OF INPUT TAX CREDIT UNDER GST – ANALYSIS OF SECTION 16(2) OF THE GST ACT

CA. Shivani Shah

The very foundation on which GST was implemented was the seamless and uninterrupted flow of input tax credit ('ITC') to the Assesses. Since its inception in 2017, GST law has undergone many changes and a lot of such changes have been made in relation to ITC.

The section 16(2) of the CGST Act, 2017, ('Act') *interalia* reads as under:

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, no registered person shall be entitled to the credit of any input tax in respect of any supply of goods or services or both to him unless,—

(a) he is in possession of a tax invoice or debit note issued by a supplier registered under this Act, or such other tax paying documents as may be prescribed;

(aa) the details of the invoice or debit note referred to in clause (a) has been furnished by the supplier in the statement of outward supplies and such details have been communicated to the recipient of such invoice or debit note in the manner specified under section

(b) he has received the goods or services or both

Explanation.— For the purposes of this clause, it shall be deemed that the registered person has received the goods or, as the case may be, service—

(i) where the goods are delivered by the supplier to a recipient or any other person on the direction of such registered person, whether acting as an agent or otherwise, before or during movement of goods, either by way of transfer of documents of title to goods or otherwise;

(ii) where the services are provided by the supplier to any person on the direction of and on account of such registered person

(c) subject to the provisions of section 41, the tax charged in respect of such supply has been actually paid to the Government, either in cash or through utilisation of input tax credit admissible in respect of the said supply; and

(d) he has furnished the return under section 39;

On a plain reading of the section, it appears that all the conditions specified under section 16(2) need to be satisfied in order to rightfully avail the ITC.

Further, it is important to note that section 16(2) lays down the conditions in relation to availment of ITC and not the utilization of ITC.

Let us analyse each condition given under section 16(2) of the Act:

The registered tax payer (RTP) is in possession of a tax invoice or debit note issued by a supplier registered under this Act, or such other tax paying documents as may be prescribed.

This condition prescribes that the RTP has to be in possession of a valid document, being a tax invoice, a debit note or any such tax paying document in order to avail the ITC. If the RTP is not in possession of the said document, the ITC may be denied.

The details of the invoice or debit note referred to above has been furnished by the supplier in the statement of outward supplies and such details have been communicated to the recipient of such invoice or debit note in the manner specified under section 37.

This condition was inserted vide the Finance Act, 2021 and was brought into force w.e.f. 1st January, 2022. The insertion of this condition reemphasizes the significance of the filing of returns by the vendor of the RTP. Hence, as per this condition, if the vendor of the RTP does not file its return under section 37 (furnishing of details of outward supply), and the same is not communicated to the RTP, the RTP will not be able to avail the ITC in question.

It is important to note that Rule 36(4) of the CGST Rules, 2017 ('Rules') also stands amended w.e.f. 1st January, 2022 vide notification 40/2021-CT dated 29/12/2021 and reads as under:

“(4) No input tax credit shall be availed by a registered person in respect of invoices or debit notes the details of which are required to be furnished under subsection (1) of section 37 unless,-

(a) the details of such invoices or debit notes have been furnished by the supplier in the statement of outward supplies in FORM GSTR-1 or using the invoice furnishing facility; and

(b) the details of such invoices or debit notes have been communicated to the registered person in FORM GSTR-2B under sub-rule (7) of rule 60.”

Hence, amended Rule 36(4) makes it clear that ITC will be available to RTP to the extent of the details being furnished by the vendor in its GSTR-1 and communicated to the RTP in GSTR-2B under Rule 60(7) of the Rules. Hence the ITC allowed to the tune of 5% over and above what has been furnished by the vendor of the RTP is a thing of the past w.e.f. 1st January 2022.

It is important to note that Rule 36(4) makes a specific mention of GSTR-2B, whereas the section 16(2)(aa) makes a mention of mere communication without a specific mention of GSTR-2B.

Further, the amendment to section 16(2) by way of insertion of clause (aa) only goes on to prove that the requirement of communication to the RTP was not mandatory earlier. Though the Rule 36(4), even prior to amendment, laid emphasis on the details to be communicated by the vendor, the Act did not contain any such requirement under section 16(2).

Hence, it is worthy of litigation in cases where a RTP has availed ITC and the same may not have been communicated to it and the case relates to a period prior to 1st January, 2022.

The RTP has received the goods and services. This condition stipulates that the goods or services on which ITC is to be availed should be first received by the RTP, failing which the ITC will not be available. Hence, any GST paid by an RTP on advance will not be available as a credit to it.

The tax charged in respect of such supply has been actually paid to the Government, either in cash or through utilisation of input tax credit admissible in respect of the said supply.

This condition is quite impossible for an RTP to satisfy. A RTP may never be in a position to be assured that its vendor has paid the tax either through cash or credit. The GSTR-3B of the vendor will not be such that enables an RTP to understand whether the tax charged by the vendor is discharged through the GSTR-3B or not.

The RTP may contemplate seeking a written undertaking to this extent from its vendor. In some cases, as a matter of abundant precaution, RTP may also put the amount in the ECash ledger of its vendor to the extent of the GST charged by the latter.



Further, the condition mentions that the payment can be made by cash or credit by the vendor. In instances, where the GST is paid by the vendor by utilizing ITC and the very nature of the ITC is doubtful, will the RTP still be considered to satisfy this condition?

The RTP has furnished the return under section 39: The RTP should file its return under section 39 of the Act.

It is also important to note that Budget 2022 has also proposed some significant changes in relation to ITC.

Vide Finance Bill 2022, section 16(2)(ba) is proposed to be introduced to provide a new condition for availing ITC.

It has been provided that ITC on invoice or debit note can be availed only when the details of such input tax credit in respect of said invoice/debit note have not been restricted in the GSTR-2B.

Hence, consequent to this proposed amendment, the RTP would be eligible to claim the ITC only when the details of invoices/debit notes made available to him electronically on the GSTN Portal are not restricted in the auto-generated statement referred to as GSTR-2B.

It seems the law is making it clear that *Know your vendor* before you avail the credit. The provisions seem harsh for a law-abiding tax payer. While the intention of the law makers was to curb the menace of fake invoicing, it becomes extremely difficult for a RTP to avail credit which otherwise is rightfully his!

Disclaimer:

The view expressed are strictly of the author. It does not constitute professional advice or recommendation of firm.



CA. Shivani Shah



With a professional career spanning over three decades, since 1992, Aarti began her journey in tea, training at Goodricke Group Limited. She then moved to Warrens, Darjeeling Plantations, Global Exports and Longview. She is now an entrepreneur selling a variety of teas including Matcha Green Tea, Rooibos, Varieties of High end Darjeelings. She is an artist as well and design her own floral packets.



Aarti Khanna
Lady Entrepreneur



Tidings from BANGLADESH



Monjur Hossain



Photograph: Nurjahan T E of the group

COUNTRY

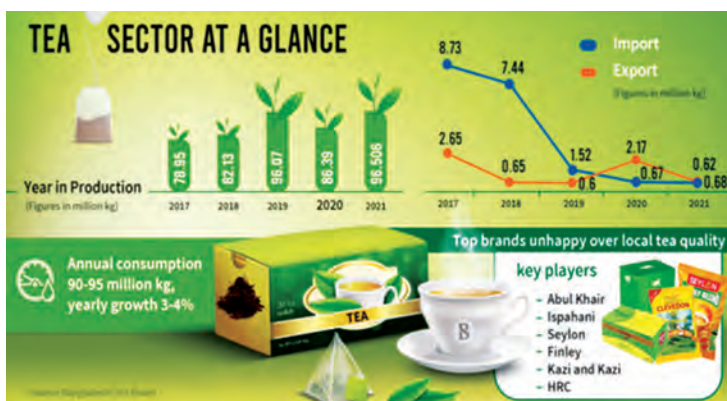
Bangladesh Tea Production Hit All Time Record

Bangladesh has beat its all-time record in tea production as a total of 96.50 million kilogrammes (kgs) of the plant were produced by 167 tea estates and small farmers across the country in 2021.

This is the highest annual yield on record, eclipsing 2020's harvest by a good 10.111 million kgs, according to officials of the Bangladesh Tea Board.

The previous highest annual production came in 2019, when a record 96.069 million kgs of tea was produced.

million kgs in 2020. After the traditional tea areas greater Sylhet and Chittagong, Northern Bangladesh became new tea region where small tea farms contributing as a major player. These northern district are Panchaghar, Takurgonge, Dinajpur, Niphamari and Lalmonirhat. Small holding tea plantation concept first started at Panchagar by the pioneering Tetulia Tea Company formed by few dedicated tea planters in 2002. Then Bangladesh tea Board came into the seen and actively involved to support these new venture of small holding tea. Gradually apart from small holders local investors gradually started holding bigger land for tea and 21unregistered plantation. After Panchaghar, in 2007 tea cultivation started at Lalmonithat and Takurgoan annnd in 2014 Dinajpur and Nilphamari districts. According to Bangladesh Tea Board, in Northern Bangladesh Tea Region there 9 registered and



Source: *The Business Standard*

In the northern region alone, plain tea gardens and small plantations added a record amount of 14.54 million kgs of tea to the national production in 2021 as opposed to 10.30



21 unregistered tea gardens. Apart from these there are 1745 registered and 8067 unregistered small tea farmers involved in tea cultivation for their main source of income.

The overall activities of all tea gardens in the country were normal even amid the ongoing Covid-19 situation. The country's tea production was able to surpass all past records due to various government's financial incentives, regular monitoring and counselling by the Bangladesh Tea Board, relentless efforts of garden owners and workers, and ensuring timely distribution of fertilisers at subsidised prices.

Besides, training tea growers at the "Camellia Open Sky School" and the provision of modern technology made it possible to produce 41 per cent more tea in 2021 compared to 2020 from flat tea gardens and small plantations.

Record in tea production, yet import grows to ensure quality of Top brands

Though Bangladesh recorded an all-time high tea production in 2021, which contributed to a sharp fall in imports.

However, the success fails to satisfy top tea marketing companies as they say the quality of the majority of the locally-grown tea leaves is not up to the mark.

Executive Director of HRC Group, one of the tea marketers told in an interview with The Business Standard that, consumers are used to having tea of the finest leaves. To produce the premium quality tea, they need quality-grade leaves, which are not readily available in local auctions. So, popular companies still need to import tea from different countries, including Kenya, for ensuring the quality of their premium brands.

Echoing to the above several other senior officials of top tea marketing companies also opined that the majority of the existing 167 tea gardens in the country "failed" to produce premium quality tea. The producers were in a competition to increase their yields and bag higher profits which fact a suicidal exercise as yield with quality could make a higher margin for them.

A professional tea taster, however, seeking anonymity told the press that there was no problem with the quality of tea grown in local gardens, big companies import 'inferior quality' tea to add colour to their brands. "The quality of local tea is absolutely okay. Import should be discouraged to protect internal market," he said.

While Madhul Kabir Chowdhury, Deputy Director (trade) at the Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB), opined in his press brief that, keeping pace with the surge in production, the import of tea leaves fell substantially. He was hopeful that the import would further decrease in future. Apart from the quantity, BTB now emphasising the quality of the leaves as well.

Currently, the annual consumption of tea is around 90-95 million kg. It has been increasing by 3-4% every year. As such the production of tea in Bangladesh can meet the requirement of domestic consumption and there is no need of import of tea.

As such it appeared a sharp decline in import and dropped 93% over the past four years. The import was 8.73 million kg in 2017 and decreased to only 0.62 million kg in 2021. The reason behind the drop is just simple, a sharp surge in local production. The imports were 7.44 million kg in 2018, 1.52 million kg in 2019, 0.67 million kg in 2020.

Although the local production of tea increased and imports declined, the exports of tea leaves saw ups and downs in the past years.

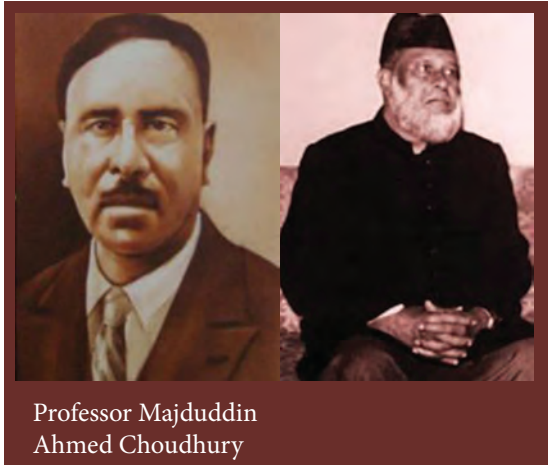
In 2021, the country exported 0.68 million kg of tea leaves, a sharp drop from 2.17 million kg in 2020. The exports were 0.6 million kg in 2019, 0.65 million kg in 2018 and 2.56 million kg in 2017.

Industry insiders said the gradual rise in domestic consumption and ups and downs in productions were the reason behind the zigzag export trend. Besides, the quality of the local tea was also act as a determining factor.

COMPANY

M Ahmed Tea & Land Co: 100 Years in Tea Business

Professor Majduddin Ahmed Choudhury, the founder of M. Ahmed Tea and



Professor Majduddin Ahmed Choudhury

Lands Company Limited, was a man of vision and enterprise. Prolific in his achievements, Majduddin was also an educationist and a dedicated civil servant.

In 1921, his dream of starting his own tea plantation became a reality when he acquired Chandbagh Tea Estate, a derelict property belonging to Octavious Steel & Company. Through his passion and visionary enterprise, the company witnessed transformative growth, both in its plantation as well as workforce. His further acquisitions in Lallakhal Tea Estate in 1946, Habibnagar Tea Estate in 1950 and Phulbari Tea Estate in 1951 paved the way for a legacy that lives on, completed 100 years since its inception.

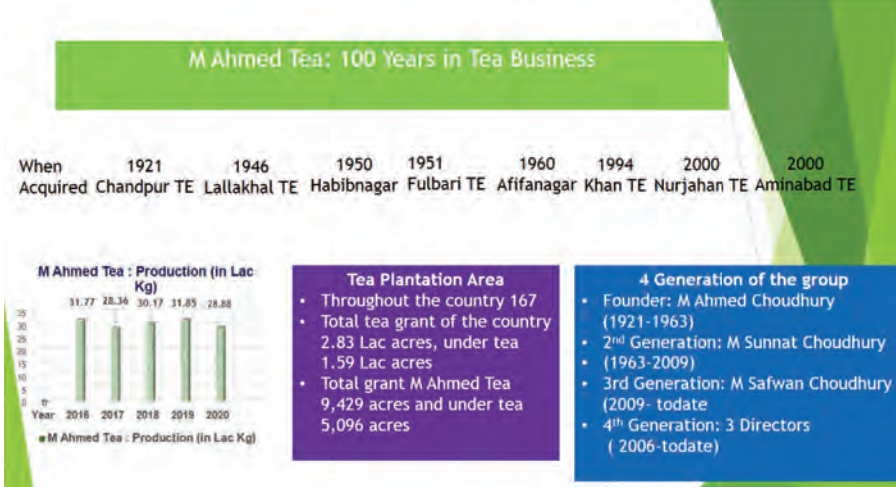
Majduddin's extraordinary achievements were the results of his passion, determination and integrity, some of the core values that drive this company today.

Mohius Sunnat Choudhury son of Professor Majduddin Ahmed Choudhury was the 2nd generation of the group. Like his founder father Sunnat Choudhury's dedication and leadership played a monumental part in ensuring the constant growth and enrichment of the company. Under his visionary endeavours, the Group established itself as a forerunner in the tea industry to become one the highest yielding plantation in the country.

Sunnat Choudhury was one of those rare personalities who was accepted by all, irrespective of political or social affiliations.

Prolific in his philanthropic contributions, Sunnat Choudhury donated generously to a number of educational, social and religious institutions throughout greater Sylhet. Kazi Jalal Uddin High School was established in the city in the 1950s on land he had donated. He had also made significant contributions to Sylhet Government Mahila College, Madan Mohan College, Ambarkhana Girls School & College, Hajrat Shah Jalal Dargah Madrasah, and to Fulbari Aziria Madrasah, an institution established by the Choudhury family and thought to be one of the oldest madrasahs in the country.

Spearheaded since 1920 by two of the finest tea planters



in their era, the group has today come a long way since its existence.

There are eight tea estates belongs to the group, producing about 3.185 million Kg of tea.

The writer is M. D. PMTC (Bangladesh) Ltd.



SRI LANKA CRISIS A BOON FOR INDIAN TEA EXPORTERS? KNOW WHAT EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY

Sri Lanka News: Sri Lanka produces around 300 million kg of tea annually and is predominantly an orthodox tea producer. The country exports around 97-98 per cent of its annual output.

Sri Lanka News | New Delhi: Sri Lanka economic crisis may prove to be a boon for Indian tea exporters, experts stated. Sri Lanka, which is a leading tea exporter, has been facing immense financial hardships since the inception of the Covid-19 pandemic. The country has declared an emergency and the cabinet, except Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, has resigned. According to reports, Sri Lanka is expected to see a major decline in tea production and shipments in the coming days.

Sri Lanka produces around 300 million kg of tea annually and is predominantly an orthodox tea producer. The country exports around 97-98 per cent of its annual output, rating agency ICRA Ltd's vice president Kaushik Das said. With the growing economic crisis in the island country, tea factories are struggling to run their operations, said South India Tea Exporters Association chairman Dipak Shah who had recently returned from Sri Lanka's capital Colombo.

Sri Lanka accounts for around 50 per cent, if not more, of the total global trade of orthodox tea and exports the beverage to mostly west Asian countries such as Iraq, Iran and UAE, and North African destinations like Libya along with Russia and Turkey, he said.

"A significant fall in Sri Lanka's tea production will have an impact on the global market and also provide an opportunity for Indian exporters to fill the gap," Das said.

Much Better If Rupee-Ruble Mechanism Goes Forward

Das also added that such a scenario could provide "much better days for Indian exporters", particularly if the trade with Russia gets improved with a rupee-ruble payment mechanism.

"Almost all units in Sri Lanka are witnessing

power cut for almost 12-13 hours a day and have not enough fuel to run their generators. Generally, disruption in the production process leads to a decline in quality. Apart from this, there is less rain. I think the production could fall by 20-25 per cent in our neighbouring country," Deepak Shah added.

Indian Tea Exporters' Association Chairman Anshuman Kanoria said the industry is expecting that the island country's crop might be lower by around 15 per cent this year because of its economic condition.

"Shortages of fertiliser, diesel and other production inputs would hit its output. We have already seen international buyers, who need Sri Lankan tea for their blend, have started paying higher prices as tea from that country has become expensive by around 10-20 per cent," he told media.

Indian, Sri Lankan Teas Popular In Russia

Both Indian and Sri Lankan orthodox teas are popular in Russia, and India's dependence on the CIS country for the export of the beverage is significant. "The demand for Indian orthodox tea could go up with the shortage of Sri Lankan variety. However, international buyers have allegiance to Sri Lankan tea and their logo, despite the shortage of the crop," Shah said.

Echoing Shah, Kanoria said Russia, like India, is also an important market for Sri Lanka, and traders in the neighbouring country are also facing problems in transporting the commodity to the CIS country with a dearth of containers. With the war situation, Russian buyers were out of the market for the last three-four weeks but now they are returning and this could put more pressure on the prices of Sri Lankan tea, Kanoria said.

Courtesy : Raghav Aggarwal

TAX ON
TEA
3d per lb

BUDGET



A FUTURE READY INDIA

By Shailesh Haribhakti

While the markets gyrated as they started appreciating implications of the Budget, the general feeling about this budget is that it is completely relevant to the new India. A confident, agile, resilient, self-confident, Atmanirbhar Bharat!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

India will have a CBDC next year. India recognises that NFTs and digital coins are assets and will tax them on sale appropriately. (The largest number of digital asset holders are in India. Their number exceeds the ROW number)

Digitisation will scale from Rural to urban areas. a seem less, portalised, platform driven interaction will rapidly emerge.

Portalisation will be G-C, B-B and B-C. Platforms will deliver Digital services in the critical areas of Health, education and all Government services to Indian citizens.

New tax return, reduced litigation, an opportunity to correct errors and a rationalisation of surcharge and disallowance of cess from taxable income all point to simplicity, clarity and ease of voluntary compliance. Tax buoyancy will sustain as rates have remained unchanged. Customs duties will continue to be an important and rationalised source of protection to Indian industry.

GST will be streamlined and enforcement through the Digital backbone will lead to more formalisation of the economy and therefore higher revenues. (The FM gave the all-time high collection number for January 22 interrupting her Budget speech!)

A brand new, highly efficient and digital India can emerge if the external factors identified in the

economic survey do not cripple the execution to this Budget. We can look forward to growth and inclusive welfare, tech enabled development, energy transition, climate action and a virtuous cycle of private investment being crowded in by public Capex.

The elephants in the room are:

INFLATION:

Oil prices are way above our tolerance limits at \$ 92 a barrel, shipping costs are making imports expensive, the constrained supply of semiconductors is causing rising consternation in the automobile sector, and the broken relationship with China are causing risks in the supply chain that are hard to mitigate. The budget seeks to keep us on a path of Fiscal rectitude: 6.4% in 22-23 and <4.5% in 25-26. The glide path is visible! Our macros are also supportive of a balance between consumption and supply as PLI schemes have been enhanced in scope.

Extension of commencement dates for availing tax reductions are also a welcome supply side initiative.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Here the budget has exceeded all expectations. If all goes per plan, the Centre and States will outlay over Rs 10 lakh crores in capex and crowd in Private investment using PPPs. The domestic green bonds, digital payments, clarity in land titles, the 5 rivers linking plans and many other targeted interventions will change the entire thinking about infrastructure. 25,000 Kms of highways, 400 new generation Vande Bharat Trains, multimodal transport connectivity, and ropeways will all modernise infrastructure.

AGRICULTURE

Drones, organic farming, post-harvest value



addition, branding, fruit trees propagation, procurement support, hydro and solar power and land reforms will ignite the growth stuck at below 4% today. A really interesting word picture emerged as a corridor of trees along the Ganga was placed before us! Wasteland development, FPO support, and an outlay of over Rs. 3 lakh crore in Rural India auger well for purchasing power being enhanced. Consumption will follow. The outlay on rural infrastructure for education, healthcare and availability of tap water for almost every family are likely to transform life in our Rural areas.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Bringing back the lost two years of pandemic driven education loss is a most heart-warming initiative. That this is being done with a content led, digital mode is truly inspired. Skill development is being given a digital, doorstep delivery focus. This is crucial as technology overwhelms all old occupations. The freedom to establish Global University affiliates in GIFT city and the revamping of age-old syllabi are amazing initiatives.

Tele health, mental health, and Missions Shakti, Vatsala and Saksham Anganwadi are all massively creative initiatives. Post pandemic, these interventions are the most citizen Centered actions. Universal basic services are likely to become available for the first time in India!

FINANCING THE BUDGET

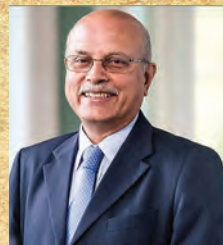
Contained in the 35% Borrowing and other liabilities is a large trove of Asset monetisation.

These long-term instruments, when commingled

with the proposed green bonds will reduce the need for Bank support to GSec issues. In fact, the lendable resources of Banks to private businesses will rise. This stock will also be fuelled by lower credit costs and a deep international interest in India. As borrowings get calibrated as is happening right now, the sequestered resource pool will become visible. With an eminently achievable disinvestment target of Rs 65,000 crores, the crowding in effect will be heightened. Also, there is a likelihood of savings rising as some 'bad apples' get divested and larger pools of dividends accrue.

In fact, this has created the room for MSME sector receiving larger debt support. The linking of all MSME portals will make significant resources available to this sector. Our take is that the panic in the Fixed Income market is a bit premature!

From a Geopolitical standpoint, we are keeping our Markets open, our policies clear and easy to adopt, our ports and goods movements resilient and our responses agile. Tackling the largest vaccination programme in the world, tackling the most citizen aspirational issues and providing for them through targeted IT and capex innovation are all a sign of a Government on the move. Kudos to the FM for making India Future ready.



Shailesh Haribhakti
Chairman, Shailesh Haribhakti
Associates

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP AND OTHER PARTICULARS ABOUT THE NEWSPAPER ENTITLED CONTEMPORARY TEA TIME, AS REQUIRED TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE FIRST ISSUE OF EVERY YEAR AFTER LAST DAY OF FEBRUARY.

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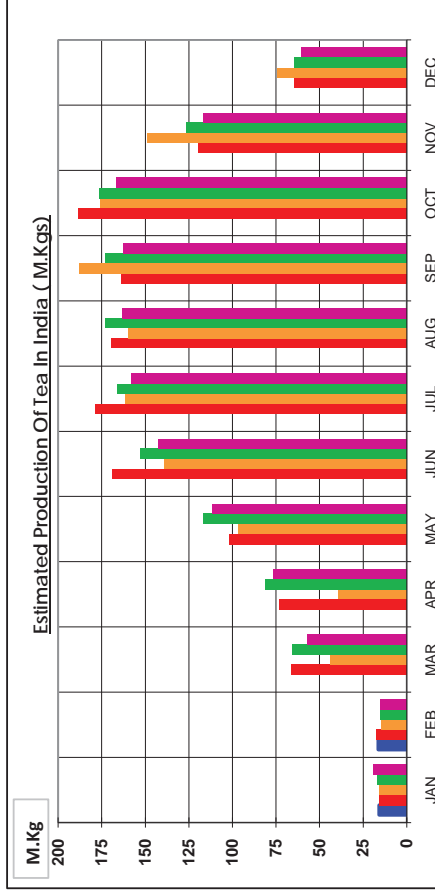


Compiled by
Soumen Bagchi

ANALYSIS OF INDIAN CROP

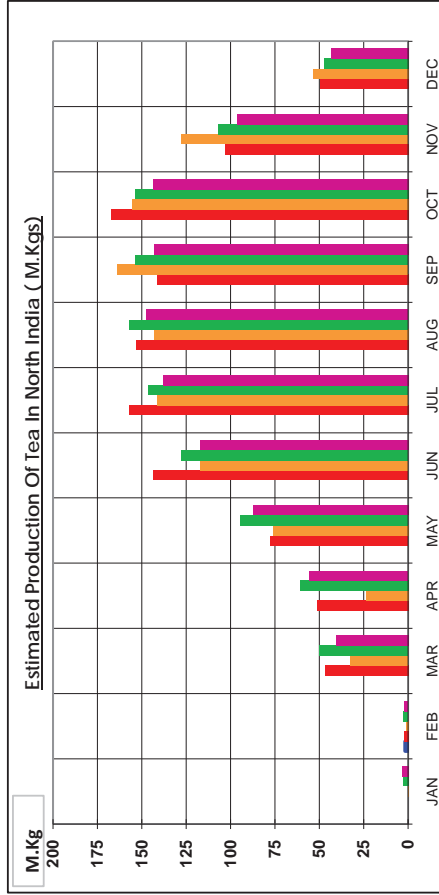
Estimated Production Of Tea In India

MONTH	2022	2021	2020	Difference		Last 5 Yr Avg	Last 10 Yr Avg
	M.Kg	M.Kg	M.Kg	2022-'21	2022-'20	M.Kg	M.Kg
JAN	15.85	15.89	16.06	-0.04	-0.21	16.98	19.19
FEB	16.41	17.50	14.54	-1.09	1.87	15.30	15.24
MAR		66.45	43.74			65.79	57.08
APR		73.44	39.14			81.38	76.40
MAY		101.73	96.75			117.00	111.47
JUN		168.84	139.25			152.88	142.85
JUL		179.01	161.45			166.08	157.90
AUG		169.63	159.80			173.31	163.34
SEP		163.79	188.03			173.10	162.53
OCT		188.61	175.68			176.54	166.83
NOV		119.64	149.00			126.45	116.90
DEC		64.51	74.09			64.49	60.77
JAN to FEB	32.26	33.39	30.60	-1.13	1.66	32.28	34.43
JAN to DEC		1329.04	1257.53			1,329.30	1,250.49



Estimated Production Of Tea In North India

MONTH	2022	2021	2020	Difference		Last 5 Yr Avg	Last 10 Yr Avg
	M.Kg	M.Kg	M.Kg	2022-'21	2022-'20	M.Kg	M.Kg
JAN	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	-0.04	2.94	3.34
FEB	1.81	2.18	1.24	-0.37	0.57	2.60	1.98
MAR		46.87	32.45			49.98	40.72
APR		51.44	23.83			60.95	55.72
MAY		77.37	76.02			94.48	87.40
JUN		143.62	117.13			127.80	117.34
JUL		157.23	141.14			146.30	138.13
AUG		153.25	143.02			156.95	147.33
SEP		141.40	163.88			153.60	143.31
OCT		167.35	155.52			153.95	143.77
NOV		103.01	127.58			106.84	96.27
DEC		49.66	53.63			47.51	43.39
JAN to FEB	1.81	2.18	1.28	-0.37	0.53	5.54	5.32
JAN to DEC		1093.38	1035.48			1,103.88	1,018.69

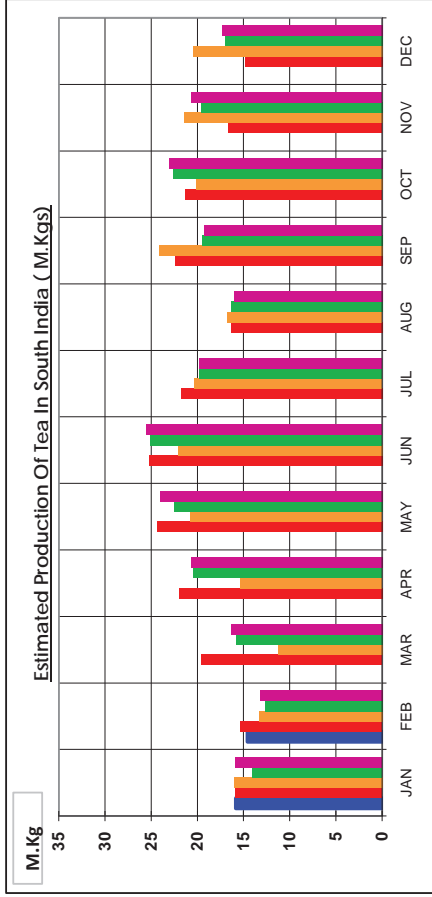


Average excludes year 2020

ANALYSIS OF INDIAN CROP

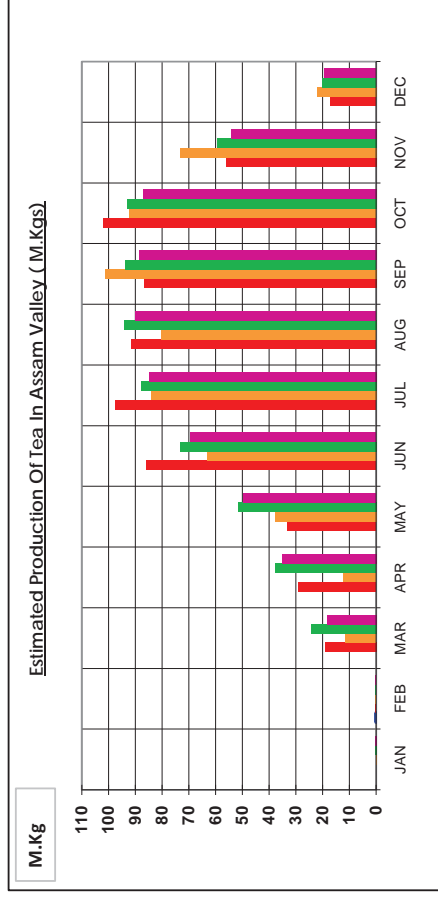
Estimated Production Of Tea In South India

MONTH	2022	2021	2020	Difference		Last 5 Yr Avg	Last 10 Yr Avg
	M.Kg	M.Kg	M.Kg	2022-'21	2022-'20	M.Kg	M.Kg
JAN	15.85	15.89	16.02	-0.04	-0.17	14.04	15.85
FEB	14.60	15.32	13.30	-0.72	1.30	12.70	13.26
MAR		19.58	11.29			15.81	16.36
APR		22.00	15.31			20.43	20.68
MAY		24.36	20.73			22.53	24.07
JUN		25.22	22.12			25.08	25.52
JUL		21.78	20.31			19.78	19.78
AUG		16.38	16.78			16.36	16.01
SEP		22.39	24.15			19.50	19.22
OCT		21.26	20.16			22.59	23.06
NOV		16.63	21.42			19.61	20.63
DEC		14.85	20.46			16.98	17.38
JAN to FEB	30.45	31.21	29.32	-0.76	1.13	26.74	29.11
JAN to DEC	235.66	222.05	225.41	231.81			



Estimated Production Of Tea In Assam Valley

MONTH	2022	2021	-2020	Difference		Last 5 Yr Avg	Last 10 Yr Avg
	M.Kg	M.Kg	M.Kg	2022-'21	2022-'20	M.Kg	M.Kg
JAN	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	-0.03	0.48	0.52
FEB	0.11	0.20	0.21	-0.09	-0.10	0.34	0.26
MAR		19.20	11.53			24.27	18.46
APR		29.06	12.09			37.53	35.31
MAY		33.16	37.87			51.64	49.53
JUN		85.78	63.10			73.32	69.42
JUL		97.42	84.04			87.91	84.88
AUG		91.28	80.27			94.13	89.95
SEP		86.63	101.22			93.69	88.65
OCT		101.89	92.16			93.08	87.18
NOV		56.01	73.28			59.54	54.26
DEC		17.08	22.08			20.05	19.31
JAN to FEB	0.11	0.20	0.24	-0.09	-0.13	0.82	0.78
JAN to DEC	617.71	577.88	635.99	597.74			

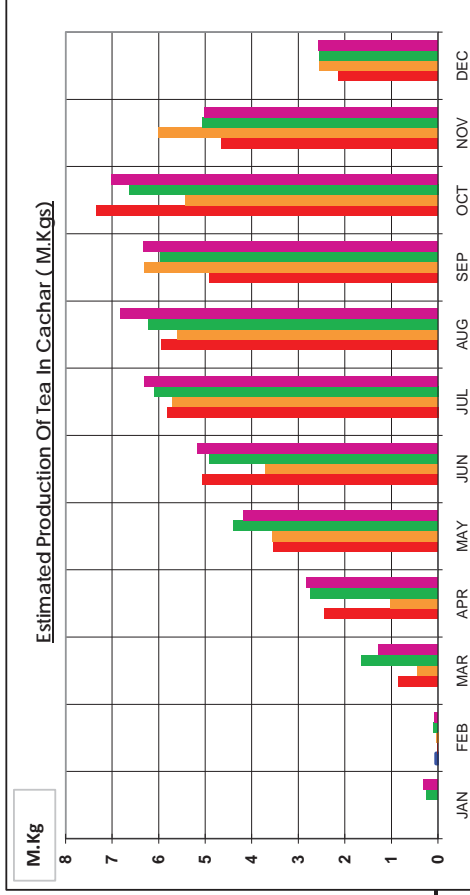


Average excludes year 2020

ANALYSIS OF INDIAN CROP

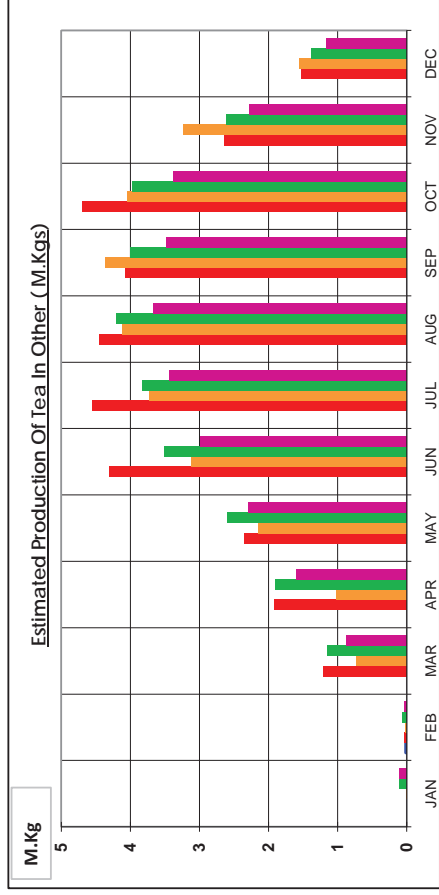
Estimated Production Of Tea In Cachar

MONTH	2022	2021	2020	Difference		Last 5 Yr Avg	Last 10 Yr Avg
	M.Kg	M.Kg	M.Kg	2022-'21	2022-'20	M.Kg	M.Kg
JAN	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.31
FEB	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.09	0.07
MAR		0.85	0.44			1.64	1.27
APR		2.44	1.02			2.74	2.82
MAY		3.54	3.56			4.40	4.18
JUN		5.07	3.70			4.91	5.16
JUL		5.82	5.70			6.10	6.32
AUG		5.95	5.59			6.23	6.82
SEP		4.92	6.30			5.96	6.32
OCT		7.34	5.43			6.64	7.01
NOV		4.65	6.01			5.06	5.03
DEC		2.14	2.54			2.55	2.58
JAN to FEB	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.34	0.38
JAN to DEC		42.74	40.33			46.58	47.88



Estimated Production Of Tea In Other

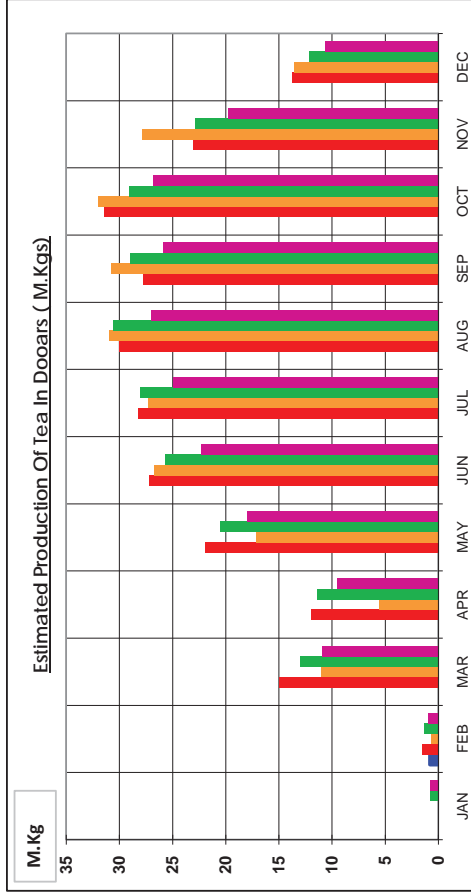
MONTH	2022	2021	2020	Difference		Last 5 Yr Avg	Last 10 Yr Avg
	M.Kg	M.Kg	M.Kg	2022-'21	2022-'20	M.Kg	M.Kg
JAN	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.11	0.11
FEB	0.01	0.03	0.02	-0.02	-0.01	0.06	0.04
MAR		1.21	0.73			1.15	0.87
APR		1.92	1.02			1.90	1.60
MAY		2.35	2.14			2.60	2.29
JUN		4.30	3.11			3.51	3.00
JUL		4.55	3.72			3.82	3.43
AUG		4.44	4.11			4.20	3.66
SEP		4.07	4.36			4.00	3.48
OCT		4.69	4.04			3.97	3.38
NOV		2.64	3.23			2.61	2.28
DEC		1.53	1.55			1.38	1.16
JAN to FEB	0.01	0.03	0.03	-0.02	-0.02	0.17	0.14
JAN to DEC		31.73	28.04			29.30	25.29



Average excludes year 2020

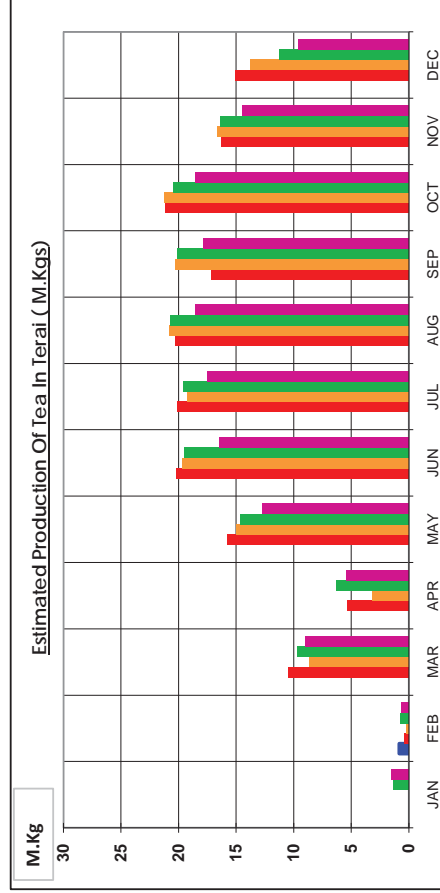
Estimated Production Of Tea In Dooars

MONTH	2022	2021	2020	Difference		Last 5 Yr Avg	Last 10 Yr Avg
	M.Kg	M.Kg	M.Kg	2022-'21	2022-'20	M.Kg	M.Kg
JAN	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.75	0.82
FEB	0.79	1.51	0.71	-0.72	0.08	1.30	0.94
MAR		14.94	10.97			12.98	10.89
APR		12.00	5.59			11.42	9.49
MAY		21.96	17.15			20.52	17.97
JUN		27.24	26.76			25.68	22.31
JUL		28.23	27.26			28.00	24.93
AUG		30.02	31.01			30.53	27.04
SEP		27.76	30.77			28.96	25.94
OCT		31.43	32.01			29.11	26.80
NOV		23.09	27.83			22.89	19.80
DEC		13.76	13.59			12.17	10.63
JAN to FEB	0.79	1.51	0.71	-0.72	0.08	2.05	1.75
JAN to DEC		231.94	223.65			224.30	197.55



Estimated Production Of Tea In Terai

MONTH	2022	2021	2020	Difference		Last 5 Yr Avg	Last 10 Yr Avg
	M.Kg	M.Kg	M.Kg	2022-'21	2022-'20	M.Kg	M.Kg
JAN	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.35	1.58
FEB	0.83	0.42	0.27	0.41	0.56	0.80	0.68
MAR		10.51	8.66			9.74	8.97
APR		5.36	3.19			6.33	5.44
MAY		15.80	14.98			14.66	12.72
JUN		20.23	19.70			19.48	16.44
JUL		20.10	19.29			19.60	17.47
AUG		20.31	20.84			20.74	18.54
SEP		17.16	20.27			20.14	17.90
OCT		21.16	21.28			20.47	18.58
NOV		16.27	16.64			16.38	14.48
DEC		15.07	13.77			11.26	9.61
JAN to FEB	0.83	0.42	0.27	0.41	0.56	2.15	2.26
JAN to DEC		162.39	158.89			160.95	142.40



Average excludes year 2020



Sadness flies away on the wings of time

~Jean de la Fontaine



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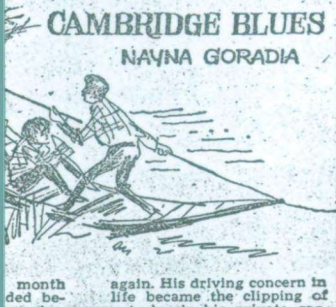
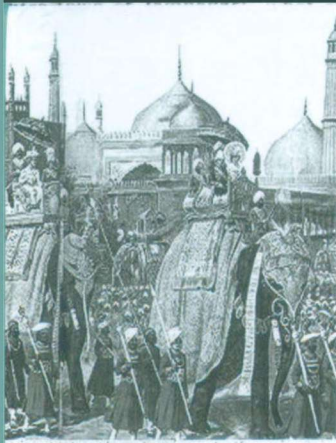
Mr. Vora passed away peacefully recently at his home in Kolkata at the age of 68. He had been looking after the family business from the tender age of 15. He was instrumental in giving Jamnadas Trivhondas & Co. a more organized and professional structure. He truly was a man with vision.



THE MIDDLE

A Story of Love, Life & Laughter

NAYANA GORADIA

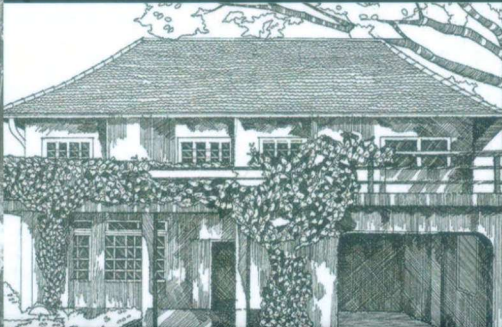
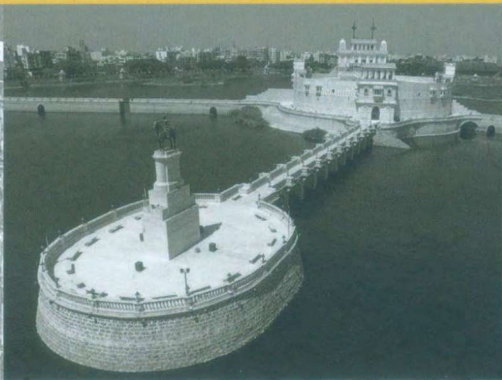


THE MIDDLE
 A Story of Love, Life & Laughter
 NAYANA GORADIA



ated **Weekly** of India

anted In Pakistan



Vitasta



Vitasta



The Middle, a short catchy piece, once earned notoriety for having seized the centre space on the hallowed editorial page of The Times of India. Nayana Goradia began her writing career in this column and though she graduated to other forms she reverted, to the old name The Middle, believing it invested her book with a sense of enigma it might have otherwise lacked.

The pages here reflect upon an early childhood in a princely state in Kathiwar, to a snobbish school in idyllic Sri Lanka, which lay greater stress on young ladies learning to eat with a fork and knife than on mastering the mysteries of a Pythagoras theorem. Higher study in English literature was at Washington State University and Girton College, Cambridge.

With marriage, came the move to a Calcutta basking in an imperial hangover. In the late sixties, it was still halcyon days for 'company wives' with a British label. A stylish flat in swish surroundings made up for the imposing *bada memsahib* with an outdated protocol.

It was difficult in Calcutta to escape the controversial Viceroy, George Nathaniel Curzon, who partitioned Bengal in 1905 and became the harbinger of the larger partition of India in 1947. After seven years of research, two school-going daughters with unfinished homework and a husband who felt the viceroy was becoming the other man in his wife's life, Nayana's biography, *Lord Curzon: The Last of the British Moghuls* was published by Oxford University Press and reviewed widely both in India and overseas.

Nayana Goradia now lives in Delhi and advises a school. Her husband Prafull Goradia, a former parliamentarian, is also an avid writer.

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