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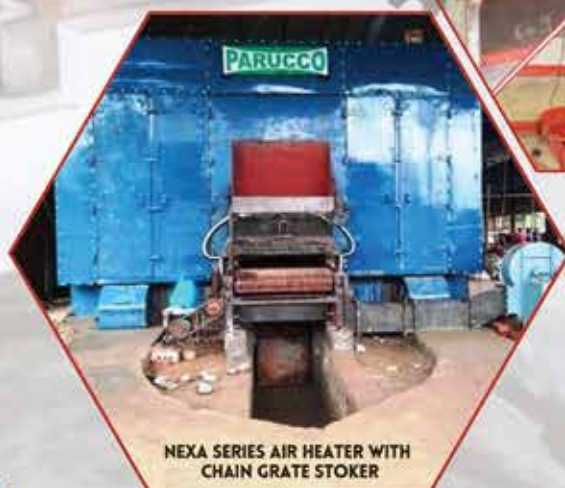
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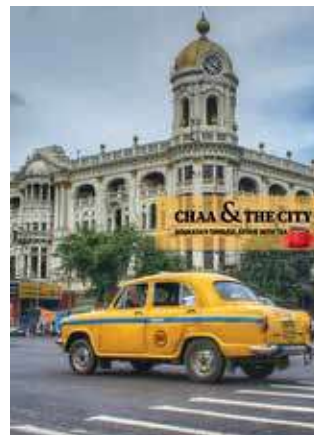
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First Flush

Cha “There is, was, and will be no one like him,” said Satyajit Ray. “The finest among us,” added cinema Dilip Kumar. They spoke of Uttam Kumar - the luminous face of Bengali cinema, a time- and the city less phenomenon.

This year, as Bengal marks his birth centenary, we celebrate not just the actor but the aura that surrounds him. Our cover image, captured decades ago by yesteryear’s iconic Edna Lorenz Studio, holds a rare stillness: Uttam Kumar, a cup of tea in hand. In that single frame, two icons meet - Uttam and tea - each steeped deeply in Bengal’s cultural memory.

The city he belonged to is no ordinary city. Kolkata is a living chronicle, its pages turned by poets, reformers, dreamers, and rebels. Its streets echo revolutions and whisper midnight ideas. From science to cinema, literature to sport, it has given the world legends whose influence transcends borders and generations. Through every reinvention, one ritual remains untouched: the daily romance with tea. More than a beverage, tea is a quiet architect of conversations, reflections, and revolutions.

As summer’s heat yields to monsoon’s cool breath, Contemporary Tea Time invites you to embrace the city’s most enduring affair. Our cover story, “Cha & the City: Kolkata’s Timeless Affair with Tea,” celebrates tea as a living tradition - one that binds strangers, softens silences, and bridges generations.

Inside, memory drapes itself over meaning. Retro-Sips offers a glimpse from Nayana Goradia’s The Middle, painting Calcutta aglow with grace and ambition. A visual essay revisits 1960s tea parties - where porcelain softly clinked and friendships brewed alongside Darjeeling leaves. Recipes bring the city’s soul to your table, while voices of tea veterans and industry insiders speak candidly about heritage, change, and uncertain horizons.

The tea industry stands at a delicate precipice - its leaves weathering the storms of climate change, market upheaval, and systemic strain. We call on all who pour and partake to safeguard this craft: to foster innovation without losing authenticity, to ensure fairness, and to honour the hands that harvest each leaf.

In restless times, tea offers quiet defiance: the low whistle of the kettle, the curl of steam rising in half-light, and the warmth of a shared cup between old friends. Tea is memory. Tea is resilience. Tea is hope.

Here’s to Kolkata. To tea. And to Uttam Kumar - whose presence, like the finest brew, grows deeper, richer, and more luminous with time.

Chitto Ghosh
Editor



Image courtesy: Shilbadra Datta



Guest Kettle

ADLAND AROMAS In My Life With Tea



Tea, for me, is a lever that brings me back to life, a platform to build camaraderie, and a prop to show off my class!

A cup of good tea first thing in the morning is what I look forward to, sitting back and perhaps meditating, planning the day ahead. It is like the first gift of the day - freshly plucked Assam with a dash of milk, strong enough to wake you up and face the day ahead.

The local tea shop in the evenings is where we would meet after work with friends and neighbours, and aimlessly talk about politics, the world, cricket and even spice it up with some juicy gossip. The bhandas of hot tea made by Choton gives me the joys of life, perhaps even the reason to live.

After the first cup I swing to demonstrate my class. I must have my First Flush, imported from the

garden in a English breakfast cup and follow it up with a cup of Green Tea, and in the evening, good Darjeeling served in good China.

I am very fussy about my chai. I detest people who have tea in coffee mugs, even paper cups. Having a cup of tea is a statement and it must be delivered in style. The brew time must be done with a Tea Timer and in a pot.

When I travel, I carry my leaf - tea because no matter how luxurious the hotel is and which brand of tea they are offering, I cannot have tea bags. I am snooty but they are an insult to the beverage which is in my genes.

Cha, or tea has been a part of our growing up, specially in the eastern part of the country. Coffee was an acquired taste and we got allowance to take a sip of coffee when we were almost in senior years in school. However, we were always inquisitive about the role of tea in social pattern. As it is in every middle class homes, tea played a variety of roles in our home too - as a moment of solace for a father in the end of a working day, and as a warm welcome to all the friends and relatives who drop by. It was considered the common man's preference, while coffee was considered an elitist beverage. I must add here that I had many friends who came from the coffee - drinking belt. They mostly came from South Indian families, who only had coffee and that too powder ones purchased from Komala Villas in the Lake Market area of Kolkata. I still remember the can of Polson's Coffee in our kitchen, reserved for all the elitist guests visiting us.

A typical day in an agency started with Mayadhor (good ol' bearer at Clarion Advertising - heir to the influential D. J. Keymer - a bygone titan of advertising that cultivated luminaries such as D. K. Gupta, Annada Munshi, Satyajit Ray to Tara Sinha - the first lady of Indian ads among many more big names) serving you a cup. This would be followed by round-the-clock calls to Mayadhor for a hot cup (and cigarettes), be it before going for a client meeting or coming back from one.

The real Kolkata box-wallah life was centered around tea. You entered the client's cabin for a meeting and after pleasantries, he would ring the bell and his bearer would come running and the boss would signal, "Tea". Soon the man would be back with a tray; a tea pot, milk, sugar and a requisite number of cups in it, while the lady Secretary would come running and play the Mother. The quality of the crockery was a declaration of the Manager's grade. Higher the level, more delicate the crockery.

In the early 70's, a few of us had entered a small alley near Wellington and ordered tea and local biscuits from a tea shop. As we waited for the tea to brew, my eyes caught a metal board nailed to the wall with the words, "Ei Je Ashun, Gorom Cha". (Please come for a hot cup of tea). It was an advertisement by Lipton. Many years later, while I was gaining experience in the launch of a new Lipton brand called Top Star, I still remembered the way in which Lipton and other brands had integrated with the essence of the city. Top Star, however, failed to make a mark.

The Bengali middle class loved their tea and even though First Flush or Second Flush were still decades away, as was Green Tea; the loose tea shop in Gariahat Market was always crowded. They "punched" Assam and Darjeeling which supposedly gave the aroma and the strength, and a packet of "good" Darjeeling tea leaves was always considered a welcome gift.

Times changed as tea bags came in. I still remember an ad film which introduced the Brooke Bond Tea bags and the film strongly suggested the convenience of tea bags... no fuss, no jhamela. Years later, the jingle "dip, dip, dip..." was a huge hit. Tea bags or loose tea, Lipton and Brooke Bond, both then housed in Kolkata were big advertisers. The red and yellow labels of Brooke Bond and Lipton were considered status symbols and served with pride. However, Lopchu was also the choice of the discerning tea drinker, particularly the Orange Pekoe. Also whenever the middle class Bengali went for their annual trip to Darjeeling, they would make it a point to buy a packet of Makaibari tea and proudly flaunt it to everyone.

I am not sure how much knowledge do the South India coffee-drinkers possess about the coffee or the filters. Coffee has many variants, just like tea, indeed. However, tea had always been a member of the households and was always served in style. Tea sets from Bengal Potteries were considered a thoughtful gift, as good quality tea were relished better in cups made from bone china with floral designs. At offices, the senior strata would sip their tea in gold rimmed cups while the general staff were served in white cups. They were cups, not mugs! Most homes displayed their exquisite tea set which they inherited, most of them being high-end Japanese crockery.

Growing up in Kolkata was like living in the world of tea. In fact, jobs in tea companies were much in-demand, not just for the salary, but mostly for the lifestyle. The "tea crowd" led a colonial lifestyle,, which included clubs and parties, and everyone would jockey for a posting in their London Office for three years.

At the local level, tea stall owners became legends. Be it Radhu Babu or Koney ki Dukaan or Favourite Cafe, these tea shops were considered landmarks and a major part of the city's social milieu.

In the end, it can be said that tea is the trigger for creative minds - to think, and also to mull over a crisis quietly. Be it the creative room of an ad agency or a film set, tea was the pause button when the work environment heated up. Tea helps the brain to recharge, think afresh and move on.

Tea and Me have been inseparable. It is not just a beverage. It's me.



Sujit Sanyal : Spent two lifetimes in advertising and turned Visiting Faculty at Symbiosis. Connects culture through Kahaani Koncerti. Author. Conversationalist. Hon'y Director, Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development.



CALCUTTA OF The Mid-sixties

Calcutta, in the mid-sixties, stood at a curious threshold - where Palladian facades met the pulse of change...and the imperial echo faded into Indian verse.

*Nayana Goradia, our venerated adviser and wise chronicler of Calcutta's metamorphosis, leads us through boulevards of time - stately, cracked, and quietly lyrical in her memoir, *The Middle: A Story of Love, Life & Laughter*. It is a sepia-soaked stroll into club lawns perfumed by the "sahib's culture", and mansions dressed in olive-green memory. This is no tale of tea, though the air may hum with its echo. It is a chronicle of slow shedding and graceful reclaiming - of a city swaying between colonial ritual and native rhythm, between brass-panelled legacies and the stirrings of ownership. We present an excerpt not just for what it records, but for the texture it leaves behind - warm, intelligent, eminently readable. Calcutta, as remembered by Mrs Goradia, doesn't transform overnight - it bends, breathes, and becomes.*



The Calcutta Club 1960s

IN THE MID-SIXTIES, an imperial hangover continued to hover over Calcutta, and particularly over the world of company executives. It seemed as though the British had converted Calcutta into their home-away-from-home-which-was-forever England. As in London, Calcutta had its open parks, the Maidan at its heart; the Hooghly river breeze brought along with the salt air, as did the Thames, the aroma of spice and tea. One could see huge neo-classical mansions standing amid carefully cultivated gardens facing wide boulevards; public buildings had been created to appear awesome, the grandiloquent style heightened by Palladian facades and columned doorways. The old families lived in imposing mansions in the north of the city. Some of the buildings there were, however, now splitting apart under the hammer blows of taxation and neglect.

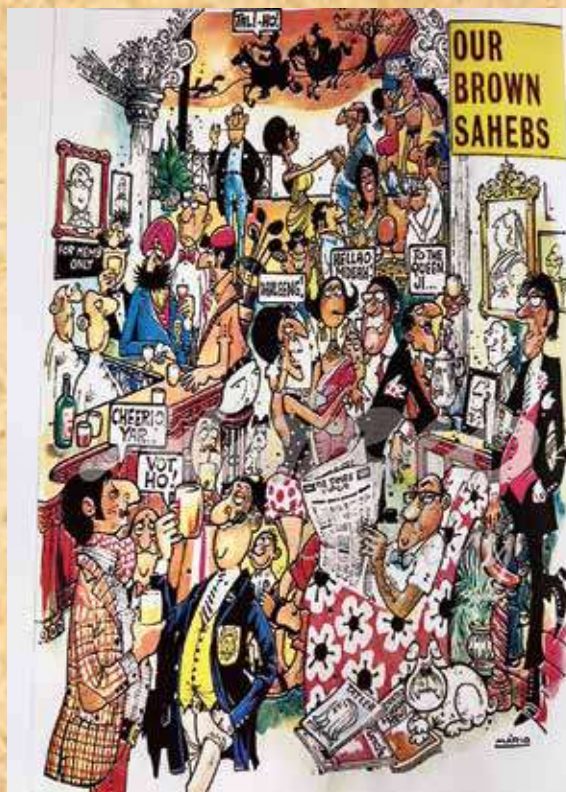
But old colonial institutions like the clubs, which had started taking in Indian members, were acquiring a growing momentum. These clubs were now bustling with Calcutta's young, bright, inexhaustible and modern men and women. Everywhere around one could sense the colonial presence. In the marching file of stately office buildings on Clive Street, now Netaji Subhas Road, and Dalhousie Square, or now BBD Bagh, the commercial hub of the city, featured predominant British names. Emblazoned on brass panels at imposing entrances were names like Andrew Yule, James Finlay, Duncan Bros, Macneill and Barry, Gillanders Arbuthnot, Bird & Co., Balmer Lawrie, etc. Many of these companies continued to be controlled from England but some had begun to be taken over by wealthy Marwaris. They, however, seemed to be happy to stay in the background, maintaining the labels and the trappings of yore, believing that they gave greater prestige to the company.

Presiding over these mammoth mercantile houses were the white burra sahibs who lived in gracious bungalows thoughtfully provided by their companies in the fashionable localities of Ballygunge and Alipore. The memsahibs could be even more imposing. An invitation to tea was an honour not to be lightly taken. Apart from the

signal that the husband was in the good books of the company, it carried with it an implicit hint of an exalted role the wife was expected to play in the future. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the lavender-scented memsahib would emerge fresh from her siesta to preside over an exquisitely laid-out tea on a manicured lawn, while liveried servants scuttled in the shrubbery at her bidding, fetching trays of wafer-thin cucumber sandwiches and fruit cake made by the bavarchi in the kitchen. The young wife, rendered somewhat breathless by such august attentions, was meant to absorb the tradition and carry it forward when her turn came.

About this time we were allotted a company flat in the exclusive 4, Lord Sinha Road complex. Though it was on the second floor, the flat was large, with three spacious bedrooms that all opened onto a large hall in the centre, with a long kitchen at the far end. A metal spiral staircase from the kitchen led to the servants' quarters on the ground floor. The previous tenants had been a stylish avant-garde couple who thought nothing of painting one wall, the ceiling and the fans of the living room a muddy olive green. Another room was similarly painted in a deep grey. When the fans moved I thought of giant bats whirling in the air. We moved in with two beds, a Godrej almirah, a Regency dining table with eight chairs bought at an auction, a sideboard and a newly recruited raw-boned Nepali servant.

The furniture for the other rooms was being designed and assembled by my designer school-friend who had been originally sent to England by his father to study law but ended up doing interiors under Lord Mountbatten's son-in-law, the distinguished designer David Hicks. He designed a long sofa for the drawing room and covered it with superior jute cloth, the colour of raw silk. It looked very attractive but could be prickly to sit on. The friend also made an elegant wingchair, side tables and a coffee table, to match the ceiling. Along with the flat came and persuaded us to buy an olive-green carpet, an air-conditioner and a generous allowance from the company to buy furniture, though the executive was expected to pay for the curtains and carpets.



Busy hum of social life in clubs portrayed by the cartoonist Mario Miranda.



The Tea Room at Flurys' in the 1960's



Nayana Goradia
Historian and Author

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CHAA & THE CITY

KOLKATA'S TIMELESS AFFAIR WITH TEA





Cover Story

Kolkata is not merely a city - it is a brew of emotions, history, and humanity; steeped in the comforting aroma of cha. Here, tea is not just a beverage; it is ritual, respite, and often, revelation. From the first light of dawn to the fading hush of midnight, cha punctuates the rhythm of the city's daily life. It flows through the city's veins - from roadside stalls where strangers become comrades to drawing rooms where stories unfold with every sip.

In this city of debates and daydreams, the humble cup of tea becomes a cultural compass. It is the excuse for an adda, the balm after a heartbreak, the pause that refreshes thought and rekindles connection. "There's cha for every problem," they say - not as a cure-all, but as a quiet belief that some warmth in a clay cup can soften the world's sharpest edges.

In this edition, a former journalist of a leading Bengali daily returns to the streets and stalls of Kolkata to trace the deep, fragrant trail of its tea culture. With an eye for details and a palate attuned to memory, the author uncovers how cha has not only fueled conversations but shaped the very soul of a city that is as beloved as it is bruised.

Welcome to Kolkata - where every story begins with a cup of tea. Long before the steam rose from porcelain cups in colonial drawing rooms, a Bengali monk sipped his tea amidst the snowy silence of Tibet. In the 11th century, Atish Dipankar Srijani - a trailblazing Buddhist scholar and reformer, became the first recorded Bengali to taste tea. He drank it not in Calcutta but in the highlands of Tibet, over 800 years before the British introduced the brew to the city. Fast forward to the early 19th century: smuggled seeds from China, discoveries at the Calcutta Botanical Garden and business acumen from figures like Dwarkanath Tagore, who launched Bengal's first

tea trade enterprise, finally brought Indian-grown tea to Kolkata. And when the British bid farewell, they left behind not just railways and institutions they left Kolkata its most beloved elixir, as they bequeathed the legacy of tea, arguably one of their most enduring contributions. Bengalis embraced the brew wholeheartedly, infusing it with the soul of adda. Whether in the throbbing heart of the city, in serene suburbs, or quiet villages beyond, the sight of animated conversations over steaming cups is ubiquitous. Yet, the iconic earthen bhar had not arrived then. Tea was served in modest glass tumblers, swiftly rinsed in hot water.

These tea stall gatherings transcended generational divides. Conversations orbited

around the beloved stars of Bengali cinema - Uttam Kumar and Suchitra Sen - and the fiercely contested rivalry between football giants East Bengal and Mohun Bagan. Cricket, unlike today's year-round obsession, was primarily a winter indulgence. Speaking of Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, one amusing anecdote comes to mind: author Buddhadeb Guha once remarked in his office, "Just a glass of tea and two Lero biscuits were enough to make Chuni (Goswami) play for any team. And he'd give his heart and soul to it. We were still in school then."

In the late 1960s, politics quietly seeped into these conversations, adding new dimensions to the adda. Still, cinema, football, and cricket remained steadfast pillars of tea-stall discourse... Let's rewind further - to the early whispers of tea in old Calcutta. Mahendranath Dutta, younger brother of Swami Vivekananda, offers a vivid childhood memory:

"We were very young when we first heard about something called 'tea'. We never saw it as thick or thin. At our house, when my aunt gave birth, she was given tea as medicine one day. We, being little



naked boys, surrounded a dark man (a black kettle) standing with a spout in its mouth. He put something like crushed leaves inside, poured hot water, then strained it, added a little milk and sugar, and drank it. We were astonished to see this. We had seen it, but hadn't yet tasted it. We told people stories about this amazing thing we had seen - this was the first encounter." (Drinking Tea and the Black Kettle, Old Tales and Customs of Calcutta, Mahendranath Dutta)

Tea, at the time, was imported from China, as no cultivation took place in India. Born in 1868, Dutta's memory suggests Kolkata's introduction to tea occurred around 1870–72. By then, roadside tea stalls had begun dotting the cityscape. Take, for instance, Gupi's tea stall - a four-generation shop beside Shyambazar Metro Station, in

operation since 1874–75. That's over 150 years of brewing Kolkata's memory.

In those early decades, advertisements glorifying tea were abundant. At Dum Dum railway station, on platforms two and three, one might spot inscriptions proclaiming:

"It contains no intoxicating elements, yet its consumption delights the heart..." Another read: "It is very tasty to drink. It protects against attacks from various diseases - malaria, typhoid, cholera, dysentery, plague, and fatigue."

And if the tea was prepared in a copper vessel, it was nothing short of miraculous. For Bengalis prone to acidity and sour belching, such tea was considered a digestive cure-all.

One unforgettable image comes from a tea stall opposite a famed restaurant on Bentinck Street. A massive copper pot simmered all day, silently observing the city's passing moments. Like the shop itself - now past its centenary, that pot had endured seasons, stories, and the shifting silhouettes of Kolkata.

To inculcate tea drinking among locals, the British

distributed it freely in markets and public squares and Bengalis accepted it eagerly. And so, the tea circle - or cha-chakra - was born. Rabindranath Tagore succinctly called it "Chakra."

Any mention of tea's journey in Bengal inevitably leads to the Tagore family. It was Dwarkanath Tagore who first introduced tea into their household and, more significantly, partnered with the British to enter the tea business. When the government approved the tea trade in the 1830s, Dwarkanath moved swiftly.

He managed gardens in Assam, and the Bengal Tea Association operated as a branch of the Assam Company, in which Dwarkanath held 100 of the 2,000 shares - with a quarter held by Car-Tagore, as documented by Chitra Deb (Ananda). Dwarkanath brought Assam tea to Kolkata, even exporting it to

England, laying the groundwork for Bengal's tea tradition.

But centuries before any of this, the first Bengali to sip tea was neither a trader nor a noble - it was Atish Dipankar, the 11th-century Buddhist monk. While traveling through Tibet, he encountered the beverage and asked, "What is this?" A monk replied, "It is extremely cold here, so everyone drinks it." Thus, over 800 years before British steamers docked at Kolkata's ghats, a Bengali had already tasted tea - sparking a cultural journey that would simmer through centuries.

The Tagore household was renowned for its sociability and hospitality. Abanindranath Tagore recounts that during Gunendranath Tagore's time at Jorasanko Thakurbari (house number five), tea gatherings were held in a spacious room along the southern veranda. Tea was served with an assortment of snacks, and sometimes even Englishmen joined the conversations. Among them was Lieutenant Governor Lord Carmichael, who reportedly attended multiple times. Even after Gunendranath's passing, his sons upheld this genteel tradition.

At Pathuriaghata, Jatindramohan Tagore - a member of the extended Tagore family - was equally enthusiastic about tea and known for his cheerful disposition. Swarnakumari Devi, Debendranath Tagore's fourth daughter and elder sister to Rabindranath, was a celebrated writer whose tea gatherings were legendary in literary circles. So admired was the brew she offered that Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, reputed to be a

tea connoisseur himself, not only attended but also had tea sent to his residence, inspired by her hospitality.

Naturally, Rabindranath Tagore was no stranger to this culture. A lover of tea, he held regular gatherings in his sitting room, both in Kolkata and Santiniketan, where he affectionately dubbed his tea circle "Chakra." He developed a particular fondness for Japanese tea, along with the rituals surrounding its preparation.

The only recorded meeting between Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda took place at a tea gathering hosted by Sister Nivedita at her residence in Baghbazar, famously home to a flock of pigeons. As detailed in Debanjan Sengupta's "Nivedita and Rabindranath: Unveiling a Controversial Relationship," the meeting occurred on Saturday, January 28, 1899, in the intimate setting of a domestic tea party - carefully orchestrated by Nivedita.

Originally intended to take place on the veranda of her schoolhouse, the gathering was moved to the courtyard due to pigeon-related disturbances. Guests arrived in splendid attire, but a logistical snag arose: a delay in sourcing milk. A kind neighbor stepped in, and with additional support from Sarala Devi (wife of Prasanna Kumar Roy), tea was prepared - rescuing the occasion. According to Prabrajika Muktiprana, when Sarala Devi took charge, the guests gathered in Nivedita's candle-lit room where Swamiji delivered an unforgettable speech.



Yet, strangely enough, Nivedita - usually meticulous - remained rather quiet about the event in her writings. Other attendees also left behind little documentation. Professor Shankari Prasad Basu observed, "Although Nivedita wrote extensively to Mrs. Ole Bull about her interactions with the Tagores and Brahmos, we found no mention of this tea party." The only surviving reference appears in a letter to Miss MacLeod, who had briefly stayed at Nivedita's Bosepara Lane home.

Nivedita's teaching schedule at the Math, as detailed by Muktiprana, was as follows: Botany and Drawing on Wednesdays, Physiology and Needlework on Fridays. After lessons, she would retire to Swamiji's room to sip tea.

In her letter following the tea party, Nivedita wrote:

"Last Saturday I had an unarranged party. Mrs P K Roy and young Mr Mukherjee, Mr Mohini [Mohan Chatterjee], and the poet [Rabindranath] came - shortly after Swamiji with Dr [Mahendralal] Sarkar. It was a most

charming little gathering, for Mr Tagore sang three of his songs in his delightful, strong masculine voice, and Swamiji was superb. However, there was some cloud - I could not tell what."

Later, she mused

"Now the evening prayers and the sound of bells are heard from neighboring houses. The people here call this time 'Senjuti' - the time of worship. I cannot forget the lovely poem 'Come O Peace' (Escho Shanti) - with its poignant, soft melody. Mr Tagore composed the song and sang it for us that day."

While tea entered Kolkata through elite circles like the Tagore family, one might ask: When did

the common folk begin drinking it?

It is reasonable to assume that North Kolkata hosted the earliest tea stalls, influenced by the tea traditions of both the Tagores and Narendranath Dutta's (Swami Vivekananda's) family. The idea of drinking tea slowly percolated into Bengali homes, not just among the British colonials. Much like taverns established in Sahibpara (the European quarter) - frequented by affluent Bengalis - these establishments reportedly served tea alongside alcohol. The tea talk from such spaces likely inspired the launch of local tea stalls.

In those days, Kolkata primarily referred to the triad of Sutanuti, Gobindapur, and Kolkata proper - all centered in the northern part of the city. With such geographic alignment, it's no surprise that many tea stalls appeared in close proximity to these cultural epicenters.

Could Harendranath Dutta's tea stall on Baghbazar Street be one of the earliest? Located opposite Girish Mancha, the shop began as a modest



indoor nook founded by his father, Narendranath Dutta, approximately 150 years ago. Today, it's a bustling outdoor setup maintained by Indrani Dutta, his daughter, who is also an ardent theatre lover.

This stall has silently observed epochs: from the visit of Sri Ramakrishna Dev in 1885 to Swami Vivekananda's grand felicitation in February 1897, held in the adjacent Basu residence hall, adorned with divine imagery. During the Partition of Bengal (Banga Bhanga) movement, this very site hosted the first Swadeshi meeting and saw three student conferences during the Swadeshi era.



As documented by Ajit Kumar Basu in “The Story of Baghbazar,” the palanquin that carried Ramakrishna entered through Nandu Basu’s gate, crossed the wide front grounds, and stopped at the long upper hall - an eternal witness to some of the city’s most defining moments.

Balram Basu’s house stands like a silent sentinel to a luminous past. It played host to some of Bengal’s most revered figures - Thakur Ramakrishna Dev, Ma Sarada, Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore - and even bore witness to the cinematic awakening with the Aurora Film Company. It’s said that Hiralal Sen, considered the father of Indian cinema, would stop by Horenda’s tea stall for a refreshing cup on his way to Aurora.

Another neighborhood jewel is Nishanath Cabin, nestled near the former office of Amrita Bazar Patrika. Initially a modest setup serving tea, snacks, and endless adda, it soon became a gathering ground for journalists and artists alike. Singer Anath Basu and sitarist Mustaq Ali, who lived in Anath Basu’s home, were among its regular patrons - adding notes of melody to its storied walls.

Just beyond Baghbazar, at the iconic Shyambazar five-point crossing, one finds the charming National Economy Restaurant - a teashop that has stood tall for 104 years. Established in 1920 by Jawaharlal Basak, it was later stewarded by Madhusudan Basak and now lovingly run by his sons Subhashis and Rajib Basak. The interiors are untouched by modern whimsy - unpainted walls, aged tables and chairs, and a vibe that suggests time stands still. “Why the vintage feel?” Subhashis was asked. He replied simply: “Because that’s how our customers like it.” And indeed, the sense of familiarity among the regulars adds to the charm.

Kolkata’s iconic tram expansion, reaching Shyambazar in 1882 and Belgachia by 1902, greatly boosted the tea culture around these crossings. National Economy Restaurant blossomed in the midst of these changes - cementing its place as a hub for conversations, camaraderie, and caffeine.



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Across the river of time, another legendary haunt emerged: Balwant Singh Dhaba, beside SSKM Hospital. Now nearly a century old, it first gained fame not for food - but solely for tea. Today, it's known for its extensive tea menu, priced between ₹20 and ₹200, and remains open for 20 hours daily. Whether Amitabh Bachchan or Mahendra Singh Dhoni, countless celebrities have warmed their hands around its cups.

Down south in Janak Road, beside Lake Mall, stands Radhababu's tea shop - 90 years old and still steeped in tradition. Poet Subhash Mukhopadhyay was a devotee of its brew, once famously saying before leaving for Moscow: "I won't get Radhababu's tea there." The late Hemanta Mukhopadhyay, Sudhirlal Chakraborty, Shyamal Mitra, Utpala Sen - all frequented the shop. Even Bollywood legends like Raj Kapoor and Hrishikesh Mukherjee stopped in for a cup of Kolkata's finest.

Here, tea is an art – a custom blend of Darjeeling and Assam, a formula that remains unchanged. Gone are the china saucers of yesteryears; since the pandemic, paper cups now cradle the treasured brew. In essence, these timeless tea stalls are far more than purveyors of beverage – they are repositories of culture, memory, and human warmth. Their enduring charm lies not in cosmetic sophistication but in the soulful simplicity that fuels conversations and fosters bonds. In a city where steam rises like poetry and history seeps from every crack in the pavement, Kolkata's tea culture remains a living archive – brewing intimacy, legacy, and rebellion in each shared cup.

And yet, what makes this tradition remarkable is how it continues to evolve without losing its essence. In the hands of new-gen entrepreneurs, tea is being reimagined through innovative blends, artisanal cafés, sustainable practices, and storytelling that connect the local with the global. In doing so, they are not just preserving the old-world adda over cha but giving it new life, carrying Kolkata's timeless romance with tea into the future. In the swirl of steam, the city finds its past, its present, and its promise - all in one cup.

*(From an unpublished Bengali original by the author,
translated and adapted by Chitto Ghosh)*



CHA-ER SATHE TAA The Crunch That Keeps Bengal Talking

To a Bengali, cha without taa is like Shakespeare without soliloquy or cricket without commentary - simply incomplete. "Cha-taa" is more than a snack; it's a ritual, a social glue, and sometimes a guilty pleasure. From the first dunked biscuit in the morning to the evening parade of singaras and chops, cha-taa shapes conversations, arguments, romances, and even revolutions, earning its place in both memory and literature. In this piece, Ena Bandyopadhyay, Assistant Editor of Contemporary Tea Time, takes readers on a crunchy, crumb-filled journey through the Bengali cha-taa universe - where every sip demands a bite, and every bite unfolds a story.

In Bengal, tea hardly arrives alone. It comes hand-in-hand with taa, its edible twin, so much so that the phrase "cha-taa" has long fused into a single word in our collective tongue. To a Bengali ear, cha without taa sounds oddly incomplete - like a song without its refrain, or a Satyajit Ray frame without a background melody.

That taa could be a singara (samosa) on any evening, muri (puffed rice) tossed with chanachur on a lazy afternoon, a crispy beguni (brinjal fritter) or alur chop from the para stall, or even humble butter

toast or a butterfly biscuit dipped until it melts in the cup. Every bite is a sidekick to the brew - sometimes hearty, sometimes simple, always comforting. And always social, because in Bengal tea is rarely a solitary affair; it arrives with adda, neighbours, and unplanned conversations.

What makes this so timeless is how the taa plays with the cha. The fried crispness of a chop cuts through the briskness of Assam, while puffed rice pairs lightly with the delicate fragrance of Darjeeling. These small plates are more than snacks - they're the balance that makes every

cup feel complete. And sometimes, that memory rests in the simple ritual of toast - still an everyday prelude to tea, whether buttered and dusted with sugar or pepper, or in the homely indulgence of our indigenous French toast, said to be either "pain perdu" (lost bread) or a happy accident of Joseph French, the innkeeper who forgot an apostrophe and gave

the dish his name. At the other end of the spectrum, the tradition stretches into the elegance of high tea, where taa takes the shape of cucumber or smoked salmon finger sandwiches, warm cheese puffs, scones with dotted cream, macarons, and dainty cakes - an

upper-class cousin to our street-corner cha. From the most unassuming toast to the most refined tart, tea finds its echo in every bite, proving that whether humble or grand, cha-r sathe taa is not just about eating - it's about savoring a culture, one sip and one bite at a time.

And the stories! Take, for instance, in 1924, when Rabindranath Tagore, enchanted by China's tea culture, started a tea gathering at Santiniketan inspired by his Chinese friend Su Sumao. He cleverly named it "Sushim Cha-kra" (Tea Circle), a witty pun adapting his friend's name into the





tradition. Fast forward to the shooting of *Charulata*, where Satyajit Ray, ever the perfectionist, could halt the entire set because the cha-taa had not yet arrived. Madhabi Mukherjee, dressed as Charu, would sip tea between takes while Ray nibbled on buttered toast and shingara, insisting that “good cinema cannot be made on an empty stomach.” Mrinal Sen too was famous for his tea breaks - pausing fierce political debates with his crew when the alur chop vendor appeared at the studio gate. And Uttam Kumar? The matinee idol was known to tell his directors, half in jest, “Give me a strong cup of tea and a crisp chop, and I’ll give you the perfect shot.” When legends of the silver screen use cha-taa as fuel, it’s clear it’s more than just a snack - it’s a cultural ancho.

What makes it timeless is how taa plays with cha. The fried crispness of a chop cuts through the briskness of Assam, while puffed rice pairs lightly with the delicate fragrance of Darjeeling. Sometimes, the memory rests in the everyday toast - whether buttered and sugared, sprinkled with pepper, or reborn as French toast, said to be either the lost bread of pain perdu or an innkeeper’s grammatical mistake.

And at the other extreme, the tradition stretches to high tea, where taa morphs into cucumber sandwiches, scones with clotted cream, or dainty macarons - distant cousins of our parar alur chop. But whether it’s an unassuming toast or an elegant tart, tea finds its echo in every bite.

Because in Bengal, cha-r sathe taa isn’t just a phrase; it’s a feeling. It’s the rainy-day smell of frying beguni, the roadside cup before catching the tram, or a round of adda that refuses to end. Here in Calcutta, a cup is never alone - it always carries a bite, a pause, and a memory.

Ena Bandyopadhyay
Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri



CHAIWAYS AND BYWAYS

Sipping Through My Calcutta Chronicle

Some cities are immortalized by their skyline, others by their sea. But for me, Kolkata - Calcutta, as I still affectionately call her - will always be remembered by a cup of cha. I never realized it growing up, but my journey into becoming a tea connoisseur began with the humble bhaar in my hand and the aroma of coal-fired stoves drifting up from roadside stalls. Kolkata - my city by birth - is the quintessential deshi avatar of sahebi Calcutta, where tea isn't just a beverage. It's an emotion, a ritual, and an everyday celebration. Kolkata overwhelms you, embraces you, talks to you - and always, always offers you a cup of cha.

Citea of Memories Where Every Sip Tells a Story

Every para in Kolkata tells its own story, and cha plays the starring role in each of them. From early mornings in Shyambazar, where the day starts with the clink of glasses and the scent of robust liquor tea, to golden evenings in Gariahat, where ginger, milk, and crushed leaves float through the air - I've lived each chapter of my life with tea as my quiet companion.

I remember walking past tramlines, colonial facades, and beautiful chaos - and always discovering a tea stall tucked into a corner, ready to welcome me. These weren't cafés with ambient lights or curated menus. These were stalls with dented kettles, towers of cups, and stories bubbling in every pot.

Stalls that feel like home

Some of my fondest memories are stitched together in these addas. One corner would find schoolboys debating Messi and Ronaldo; another, old men in deep discussion over the day's news. I've eavesdropped on whispered love stories, shared a laugh with strangers, and even found peace in the midst of lively noise.

Every stall has a character. Some are older than the generations seated there. Some open at dawn, and some close long after midnight. Some serve cream

crackers and nimki; others, a platter of unsolicited life advice. But every cup hands you a little bit of Kolkata in every sip.

The price? Just five rupees. Yet what you gain is priceless: stories, warmth, and belonging.

Clay Cuppa: City's Soul Warmer

Even after enjoying the finest Darjeeling first flush or rare Himalayan whites, nothing quite matches cha in a bhaar. That earthy perfume, the way the cup warms your fingers, the feel of holding something fragile yet familiar - I still crave it every time.

Each bhaar is unique, uneven, and imperfect - and so is Kolkata. You drink, you sigh, and when you're done, you toss it aside gently. It breaks, but nothing feels broken. That's Cha in Kolkata: beautifully temporary, endlessly meaningful.





Cha: A Ritual, Not a Routine

In my childhood home, Cha was everywhere. It was Ma's silent companion before sunrise, the soundtrack to Baba's newspaper, the afternoon pause, the center of every evening chat.

Whenever I return to Kolkata, 6p.m. is still buttered toast and cha with the whole family. Even guests aren't offered water first - it's always cha, whether the occasion is joyful, sorrowful, or simply beyond words.

Cha isn't just part of life - it elevates it.

Cha: Heartbeat of Every Adda

Ask any Bengali: adda and cha can never be split. You don't simply drink a cup of tea - you start a conversation that might wander through politics, football, films, Tagore, or personal dreams.

As a student, I spent hours on broken benches near my college, sipping lemon tea with friends and dreaming of the future. Now, as a professional in the tea industry, no tea room - however stylish - feels quite as soulful as College Street's Coffee House or a huddled Hatibagan stall.

A five-minute tea break easily became a three-hour therapy session. That's Calcutta for you.

Many Avatars of Calcutta Cha

Now that I understand tea profiles and terroirs, Kolkata's cha delights me all the more for refusing to fit in a box. There's thick, sweet, milky cha that

hugs you. Tangy, spiced lemon tea for sticky afternoons. Malai cha with a nostalgic cream float. Tulsi for sickness, adrak for fatigue, cardamom for homesickness - each variety, a different mood, a memory, a hug in a cup.

Sure, boutique tea rooms and global blends are appearing. I work with them, taste them, and write about them. But nothing comes close to the tiny roadside stall, its coal stove, the overboiled tea, and the bhaar in your hand.



"The first sip is joy, the second is gladness, the third is serenity, the fourth is madness, the fifth is ecstasy."

Jack Kerouac //

Forever Going Strong with Her First Love

As Kolkata sheds its old borders and stretches ever outward - spilling past its historic limits to embrace glass towers in Sector V and the soaring high-rises of New Town - Cha works its quiet magic everywhere. In these modern enclaves where the city's new pulse beats, office boys carry thermoses, security guards brew tea on makeshift stoves, and colleagues bond over steaming cups amid the hum of elevators and laptops. Newcomers, homesick in these fresh precincts, find solace in its warmth.

Because Kolkata never forgets - not her people, not her past, and certainly not her first love: cha.

In Every Sip, Calcutta

Today, as a tea connoisseur, I travel widely and write about teas and blends, origins and brewing styles. But at heart, I remain the girl who fell for bhaar-er-cha.

Every sip of cha from a bhaar takes me home - not as a place, but as a feeling. I remember rain-washed roads, candlelit rooms during load-shedding, rooftop conversations, heartbreaks silently mended, and hopes brewed fresh each morning.

So when you visit Kolkata, don't just check off monuments or hunt Instagram spots. Find a stall under a banyan tree, ask for "ekta bhaar cha," and savor that first sip.

You'll taste tea. But more than that, you'll taste Kolkata, always.



Ena Bandyopadhyay
Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri





INDIAN COFFEE HOUSE

A Bold Coffee Statement in Tea's Homeland

In Kolkata's bustling College Street, the Indian Coffee House stands as a living legend. Its cavernous interiors within Albert Hall are a nod to a bold legacy that's been brewing since 1942, right at the crossroads of Bengal's famous chai obsession. While generations have woken up to the clink of teacups, this colonial-era café remains a sanctuary for coffee and conversation, a place where caffeine became the fuel for revolution and art.

Coffee House isn't just another café; it's a cultural counterpoint. Inside these historic walls, where the city's pulse beats with tea, the smell of strong coffee and spirited adda has always brought together intellectuals and dreamers. Immortalized by Manna Dey's classic "Coffee House-er shei adda ta aaj ar nei," the venue once echoed with voices



like Satyajit Ray, Amartya Sen, and Sunil Gangopadhyay - in fact almost all luminaries who redefined creativity and intellectual discourses, carving out coffee's place in Bengal's storied culture.

What distinguishes Coffee House is its purposeful embrace of difference. Here, choosing coffee isn't just a matter of taste - it's a declaration of identity. Today's Gen Z has reimagined the legendary adda, blending memes, politics, podcasts, and poetry over steaming cups. For this new generation, the draw isn't just affordability - it's the authenticity of

experience. Students chat as they edit reels, sketch in notebooks, or debate new ventures, all in an atmosphere where free-thinking feels effortless.

Despite Kolkata's constant modernization, Coffee House has resisted the tide of total transformation. Its ethos remains - classic white cups and saucers, the famed "timing tea" still just ₹20, the same creaking wooden chairs. Even though Gen Z lives online, they keep alive a tradition of community and quiet rebellion in these echoing halls. This shows why some things should last.

For the tea-dominated state, Coffee House is a paradox - and a testament to how a humble beverage can transcend its mere flavor to become a symbol of belonging, rebellion, and intellectual tradition. Coffee House endures, bold as ever, inviting all into its storied embrace to sip not just coffee, but a piece of Kolkata's counter-cultural soul.



Swarupa Das
Contemporary Brokers, Kolkata



Cha-tting Kolkata

CITY'S TIMELESS Tea Theks

Kolkata's tangled lanes have always felt alive to me, each one pulsing with stories - none more intoxicating than those found in its tea stalls. As a young tea professional wandering these streets, I'm drawn by more than the warmth of a cutting chai in my palms. Here, tea is a love language. It's the laughter that erupts between friends huddled over steaming glass tumblers, the murmurs of dissent and debate, and that gentle familiarity of the chaiwala who remembers just how sweet you like it.

For Kolkata, tea is a living memory - steeped in laughter, heartbreak, and the city's relentless pulse. Every tea stall offers its own flavor of nostalgia: politics simmering alongside poetry, marble-top tables polished by generations of elbows, and the clatter of glasses rising above the everyday hum. These places don't just serve tea; they brew together people, passion, and a lingering sense of belonging that can't quite be bottled.

What follows are glimpses into Kolkata's century-old tea stalls - timeless spaces woven into the urban lore of this tea-thirsty city, each one holding its own secrets, rituals, and irresistible charm.

In the slow-burning charm of Kolkata's lanes, where time seems to pause and eavesdrop, the cutting chai reigns supreme - not merely as a beverage, but as a ritual, a conversation starter, and a memory keeper. The city's tea culture isn't just about tea; it's about the wafting aroma of nostalgia, the clink of glasses on marble-top tables, and the hum of politics, poetry, and protest.

Radhu Babur Chayer Dokan - Without Signboard Since 1933

Radhu Babur Chayer Dokan, established in 1933, holds a special place in Kolkata's history. Founded by Radha Kishore Datta, a revolutionary who fought for India's freedom, this iconic tea shop is much more than just a tea stall. It was a meeting place for luminaries like Russi Mody, Uttam Kumar, and Raj Kapoor during the 1950s to 1970s. The shop witnessed key events in history, including the Naxalite movement, becoming a silent spectator to many discussions and plans. Radha Kishore Datta's legacy lives on, run by his descendants today. The third generation of Datta's family upholds its historic worth.

The Samovar Tea Shop – Dhoni's Tanki Chai

Have you ever heard of Mahendra Singh Dhoni's tea shop on Bentinck Street? Famous for its giant samovar (a large metallic urn) or tanki, to boil water in, the shop has had a loyal local clientele for many years. It was started almost a century ago by Mahendra Singh's grandfather, Juhuri Singh, who moved to Kolkata from Bihar looking for work. Juhuri Singh then set up the shop to

cater to office-goers, investing in a samovar to make more tea at one go. The same vessel is still in use today and is likely to be only one of its kind in Kolkata.

Kona Dukan – Share market and Malai toast

As you snake through the bylanes of Dalhousie, having driven past localities that are effervescent with a post-colonial hangover, you'll arrive at The Calcutta Stock Exchange, often called 'share market'. On Sunday mornings, the bustle is at the opposite end of the facade.

Kona Dukan was set up 77 years ago. It's presently





run by brothers Mukund and Guddu Anand Singh, the fourth-generation owners of the street stall. "We took over the business and made a number of changes to it. The stall was very famous before, but no one knew what it was called - because it had no name! We named it Kona Dukan and it has been a craze ever since," says Mukund. Mukund's great-grandfather came to Kolkata from the town of Gaya in Bihar and set up Kona Dukan in 1945. The corner shop ran for six decades without a name and yet garnered massive goodwill among Kolkatans. Mukund entered the business in 2017 and named it 'Kona Dukan'.

Balwant Singh Dhaba – Midnight Chai and Malai Magic

Balwant Singh's Eating House, near Elgin Road, is a 24x7 landmark. Known for its Doodh Cola and frothy malai chai, this dhaba - established in 1926 - is where students, lovers, and night owls refuel. It's as much a chai joint as it is a monument to late-night Kolkata.

Shyama Prasad Dey's Coffee Stall – Café with a Canvas

What sets this stall apart is its visual appeal. Every inch - from walls to paper cups - is a canvas. Dey, also known by his pseudonym "Dhopeswar Maharaj", draws caricatures of customers right on the cups - quick, witty renditions for a nominal price. These custom cups have gone viral on social media, drawing both locals and art students to sip coffee and snap pics.

Inside the 3x5 foot stall, walls are littered with monochrome sketches, calligraphic slogans, and cartoons that often reflect current moods or local life. His pseudonym lends intrigue: "people are more likely to listen to someone fictitious," he admits, as his alter ego Dhopeswar delivers clever commentary.

National Economic Restaurant – A Slice of Calcutta's Secular Soul

Among the many such heritage eateries is one breakfast joint, which has been in business for the past 105 years. The eatery was established in 1920 by Lalbihari Basak, and today is run by his great grandsons, Subhasish Basak and Rajiv Basak.

The National Economic Restaurant was once a regular chaa-spot for several noted names of the theatre and film industry. In the heyday of the theatres in neighbouring Hatibagan, actors and actresses would stop by for a bite here. Eminent theatre personality Satyabrata Kabiraj was a regular during the 1970s, as were Anup Kumar and Manoj Mitra.

Rituparno Ghosh shot few scenes of *Abohoman* in this heritage eatery, and it had a rendezvous with Bollywood too with *Kahaani 2: Durga Rani Singh*.

Other 100-Year-Old Tea Shrines in Kolkata Beyond the better-known names, Kolkata hides many timeless tea joints

Paramount Sherbet & Tea House (Est. 1918, College Street) A unique mix of sherbets and teas with colonial flair.

Sharma Tea Stall (Est. 1905, near Wellington) Black tea, toasted bun, and early morning office crowd.

Haridas Tea Cabin (Est. 1912, Sovabazar) Minimal décor, maximal nostalgia.

Buro Dadu's Tea Corner (Est. 1910, Kalighat) Still uses the original brass kettles and earthen kulhars.



Susmita Poddar
Contemporary Brokers, Kolkata

** MOSTLY TAKEN FROM TELEGRAPH ARTICLES.



DOMESTIC TEA CONSUMPTION IN BANGLADESH

Choices, Quality, and Trends

Tea holds a unique place in Bangladeshi culture, blending tradition, hospitality, and modern consumer preferences. As a country once renowned for tea exports, Bangladesh has shifted towards a consumer-driven market due to rising domestic demand. This article explores the factors shaping tea consumption, including per capita intake, import-export dynamics, consumer preferences, and value addition, with insights into how these trends are transforming the tea industry.

Per Capita Tea Consumption

As of recent data, the per capita tea consumption in Bangladesh is approximately 500 grams per - year. While this figure places the country behind major tea-consuming nations such as Turkey or the UK, tea remains an indispensable part of Bangladeshi life, deeply rooted in its cultural and social practices.

This consumption trend reflects a cultural evolution where tea has transitioned from being an occasional luxury to a daily necessity, crossing economic and social boundaries. Urban and rural households alike favour tea for its affordability and role in fostering social connections. In rural areas, tea stalls have become popular gathering spots, serving as informal hubs for discussions and social interactions.

Furthermore, the growing urban population, coupled with evolving preferences, is fueling demand for diverse tea varieties. The rise of middle-class consumers has driven interest in premium blends, green tea, and other specialty options, supporting a steady expansion of the domestic tea market. This broader cultural shift

indicates tea's lasting relevance and potential for further market growth in Bangladesh.

Production and Consumption Trends

Bangladesh produces an average of 90–95 million kilograms of tea annually, primarily from traditional regions like Sylhet, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, and Chittagong. In recent years, significant contributions have come from non-traditional areas in northern Bangladesh, such as Panchagarh, boosting overall production. However, despite these efforts, domestic demand continues to rise sharply, outpacing production.

This mismatch has necessitated a 3% annual increase in imports to address the shortfall. Kenya

remains the dominant supplier, accounting for 73% of tea imports, with additional imports from China and Hong Kong. This reliance reflects both a growing consumer base and preferences for varied blends.

Simultaneously, rising domestic demand has led to a gradual decline in exports, with only a small percentage of tea production being exported. Key



export destinations include Pakistan, the UAE, and the USA. Export volumes have been shrinking annually, and although export prices averaged \$3,147 per tonne in 2023, marking a moderate increase, the overall export competitiveness remains limited. This decline is largely attributed to strong domestic demand, which leaves little surplus for the international market.

Consumer Preferences

Consumer preferences in Bangladesh have evolved significantly. Traditional black tea remains the staple, but the growing middle class has diversified tastes. There is increasing interest in premium and speciality teas, including green tea, herbal blends, and flavoured varieties. Urban consumers, especially the younger demographic, are drawn to these options for their perceived health benefits and modern appeal.

Affordability remains crucial for rural and semi-urban markets, where loose black tea dominates. However, packaged and branded teas are gaining popularity due to convenience, hygiene, and consistent quality. Brands such as Ispahani, Finlay, Haldavelly, and Kazi & Kazi cater to different market segments, ranging from premium to budget-friendly options.

Value Addition and Quality Enhancement

Bangladesh's tea industry is increasingly focusing on value addition to boost competitiveness. Initiatives include producing speciality teas, improving packaging, and obtaining organic certifications. Both the government and private sector have

invested in modernising processing facilities and promoting smallholder tea farming, particularly in newer regions such as Panchagarh and the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Many tea gardens rely on ageing plantations, with tea bushes often exceeding 60–70 years, resulting in declining yields. Replanting and rejuvenating these gardens are critical to maintaining production levels and meeting the growing demand.



Trends in Import and Export

Bangladesh's growing dependency on imports is a notable trend. Tea imports in 2023 amounted to approximately 30 million kilograms, valued at an average price of \$2,138 per tonne. While imports fill the demand gap, they also reflect challenges in scaling local production to match domestic consumption. Conversely, declining export volumes highlight the industry's struggle to balance domestic and international markets.

Exports primarily target niche markets, with demand for high-quality Bangladeshi tea in countries such as the USA and UAE. However, maintaining quality and branding are critical to expanding these markets. Initiatives to market Bangladeshi tea as a speciality product, particularly organic and premium varieties, could enhance its global appeal.

Government and Private Sector Initiatives

The government, in collaboration with the Bangladesh Tea Board, has introduced policies to expand cultivation into non-traditional areas such as Panchagarh and Bandarban, where smallholder farming thrives. This approach diversifies production and supports rural livelihoods, contributing to regional development.

Private-sector initiatives include promoting value-added products such as pyramid tea bags, premium blends, and export-focused branding. These efforts aim to position Bangladeshi tea as a competitive player in the global market while catering to evolving domestic tastes.

Present Challenge

However, the tea industry in Bangladesh is currently



struggling with a serious financial crisis, as auction prices have dropped below production costs for several years. This crisis is attributed to a combination of record production, rising production costs, and shrinking profits at auction. Production costs have surged by about 11.7% per kilogram since 2018, primarily due to rising wages, as well as increased expenses for inputs like fuel, fertiliser, and electricity. However, auction prices have not kept pace, falling by over 34% in the same period.

With average auction prices at around 171 taka per kilogram, many producers are unable to cover production costs, which reached around 217 taka per kilogram in 2023. This price discrepancy led to losses amounting to over 4.6 billion taka last year. In response, the Bangladesh Tea Board introduced a minimum price floor at auctions, which has shown some early signs of improvement, though producers remain uncertain about the long-term viability of this solution.

Future Outlook

Bangladesh's tea sector is poised for growth, driven by rising domestic consumption and the potential for quality-focused exports. The industry must address sustainability challenges, such as climate change and resource management, to ensure long-term viability.

Conclusion

Tea remains a cornerstone of Bangladeshi culture and economy, with domestic consumption driving its transformation. By embracing modernisation, value addition, and strategic investments, Bangladesh can balance domestic needs with global opportunities, ensuring a vibrant future for its tea industry.



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ACROSS DESERTS ON CAMELBACK

The Forgotten Tea Route

Centuries ago, only a handful of trade routes carried tea from its land of origin to neighboring countries - the camel route among them, alive with tales of triumphant journeys. In this article, tea history investigator Sangeeta Bhattacharya time-travels through that desert trail - read to join her.

In an earlier issue of Tea Time, we compiled an article about the ancient Tea-Horse Route, which connected Tibet and China, where the exchange was tea for horses or horses for tea, between the two regions. Our readers found the story very exciting and so we decided to delve deeper into another Tea Route and its stories. This historic Tea Route between China and Russia via the great grasslands & coldest dessert of Mongolia was known as the Tea-Camel Route, and interestingly the Modern Trans-Siberian Railway route stencils this old tea route map.

After many scientific studies on the origin of tea, it has been concluded that, what we consume as Tea today, likely originated from a wild plant. On a windy day, the leaves when they fell into a boiling cauldron of water, changed its colour and gave it an unmistakable flavour. This infusion then was started to be used as a medicinal herb in China nearly 3,000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. This flavourful wildling was found in the present-day geographical confluence of China, Tibet, Myanmar, and Northeast India. As if this ancient land already foresaw the modern borders that would divide people, and so, in a moment of ancient congruence, gave rise to something



destined to become a cultural coalition. A future bond for those once separated, now reunited by a single cup of tea.

History of how Tea entered Russia

Understandably, tea gradually replaced the ancient Russian beverage called sbiten. The very spicy or overly sweet sbiten was slowly overtaken by tea, which was a more aromatic and refined beverage that not only soothed the tongue, but also comforted the body during the cold Russian winters.

While folktales recorded in Ivan Sakharov's "Tales of Russian People" speak of the nomadic tribes of southern Russia, the people of the Ural region who are believed to have first encountered tea during their journeys to the Chinese realms in the 16th century. It was almost mid-17th century when a Mongolian ruler gifted tea to the Russian Tsar Michael I.

The history of China's tea connection with Russia was not ancient, nor was it limited to a simple trade exchange, as it was often the case with other provinces in the past. The gift of tea to Russia was to regulate the relations between Imperial Russia and the Qing Empire of China, which later formulated into Treaties that served as trade relations exchanging Russian furs with **Chinese Tea.**

The Journey

The Great Tea Camel Route was the longest land trade route in the history of mankind. Although

not ancient, its greatest significance lies in the fact that it had paved the way for the construction of the longest railway in the world - the Trans-Siberian Railway. Before the advent of modern, faster modes of transport, the responsibility of carrying heavy bricks of tea rested with the Mongolian camel caravans. The caravan leaders were among the most respected and trusted figures of their time. Not only were they adept at navigating the extreme terrain and overcoming geographical challenges, but they also served as messengers of world affairs, playing a critical role in the socio-political landscape of their era.

The Present

The Trans-Siberian Railway ended the era of tea caravans, yet interest in the history and stories of the Tea Camel Route has not faded. Many towns along this historic path still feature buildings and museum collections from that earlier time. The route continues to play an integral role in connecting these countries. So much so that a significant railway section was recently honoured as a tourist route for tea enthusiasts.

What came as a gift to the Tsars of Russia from the Chinese rulers is now sipped by people across Eurasia and beyond. Once rare and hard to obtain due to treacherous trade routes, tea has overcome those barriers to become the most beloved drink in the world.

Whether black or green, with milk and sugar or without, hot or iced, brewed in samovars or saucepans, tea has found its way into the hearts of people - an ever-present companion in health and in sickness.



Sangheeta Bhattacharya
Tea Enthusiast





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Flavour from far

MASALA GOES MAINSTREAM

America's Chai Time

Your coffee order has got a competition now. And it arrives swirled in cardamom, ginger, and confidence. Across the US, South Asian founders are rewriting the syrupy “chai latte” trope with glossy, stovetop-style masala chai that tastes like it flew in business class from Mumbai. Case in point: The Chai Box, a family brand out of Atlanta, leapt from kitchen craft to Costco shelves. America isn’t just flirting with chai it’s fully smitten. (Wolfe, 2024)

New York’s Kolkata Chai Co. turned nostalgia into a movement. Brothers Ani and Ayan Sanyal started with farmers’ market pop-ups and a promise: no shortcuts, just the real, simmered brew. Today, their downtown café and national make-at-home kits channel street-stall spirit with metropolitan polish. It’s the kind of cup that says “meet-cute at 3 PM, still talking at 6.” (Indian Eagle, 2024)

Taste is evolving, and so is supply. Cafés craving authenticity (and speed) are turning to higher-quality concentrates from South Asian entrepreneurs - a path that respects the spice while surviving the morning rush. Gen Z and Millennials are driving tea’s boom, with some customers heading to cafés specifically for chai. Translation: chai is no longer a side character - it’s the star (Mercer, 2023)

But chai isn’t the only tea turning heads. Across the U.S., tea is having a moment, evolving from quiet comfort drink to dynamic lifestyle choice. Consumers are increasingly drawn to health-forward teas like matcha, herbal blends, and functional infusions packed with adaptogens, probiotics, or CBD. The wellness wave is strong, and tea fits right in.



Sustainability is another driving force. Ethical sourcing, organic certifications, and fair-trade practices are now key selling points for brands aiming to attract eco-conscious buyers.

On the flavor front, cold brew and nitro teas are gaining traction, especially among younger drinkers looking for smoother, refreshing alternatives to traditional iced tea. Meanwhile, flavored and infused teas like hibiscus-rose or turmeric-ginger - are turning heads in cafés and restaurants.

The rise of ready-to-drink (RTD) teas and direct-to-consumer online sales is reshaping how Americans buy and enjoy their brews. And with tea bars popping up in urban centers, sipping tea is becoming a curated experience.

In short, tea in the US is no longer just steeped - it's stirred, chilled, infused, and innovated.

Indian restaurateurs are also raising the bar. In San Francisco, chef Heena Patel of Besharam has been candid about how elusive "proper chai" felt in the Bay Area. The intensity of spices and the small rituals of service she grew up with are hard to find in American cafés. At her restaurant, she leans on CTC-processed Assam leaves and the precision of technique to coax that full-throttle flavour back into the cup. Done right, chai is both lesson and love letter: it comforts the diaspora and educates curious locals on what the real thing tastes like. (Selvam, 2023)

And the culture? Positively percolating. From chai cafés and pop-ups to restaurant menus where the drink arrives in petite glasses or earthy kulhars, street-style chai is the new social - equal parts cozy and cosmopolitan. Even mainstream wellness writers are drawing the line between traditional masala chai (tea, milk, spices, just-enough sweetness) and the dessert-leaning coffee house versions - less jitter, more glow. (Warren, 2025)



Suchetana Ghosh (Guha)
Cincinnati, USA



Kaleidoscope



Inauguration of the
New Corporate office of
CHAIZUP BEVERAGES LLP
on 14th June 2025

by Indranil Bhattacharjee



Contemporary Tea Time





Global Reach

ASSAM TEA SHINES in New York

Marking its illustrious 200-year journey, Assam Tea took center stage at the prestigious Summer Fancy Food Show in New York, captivating an international audience with its rich heritage and exceptional brews. The India Pavilion, vibrant with energy and aroma, was abuzz with conversations, tastings, and an unmistakable shared affection for the beloved “cuppa that cheers.” This event provided an impeccable platform to highlight Assam’s enduring legacy as one of the world’s premier tea producers.

The delegation representing Assam was distinguished by the presence of key figures, including Dr. Ravi Kota, Chief Secretary of Assam; Arijit Raha from the Indian Tea Association; Shiv Bhasin of Goodricke Group Ltd.; and Nibir Bordoloi of Luxmi Tea. Their participation was a testament to Assam’s unwavering importance in the global tea industry and the state’s continuous efforts to innovate and uphold quality standards.

Throughout the event, Assam’s exhibitors engaged in meaningful conversations with international



buyers, tea experts, and connoisseurs, opening doors for new partnerships and wider recognition. The showcase went beyond celebrating heritage - it underscored Assam Tea’s commitment to embracing innovation, sustainable practices, and evolving consumer tastes.

This milestone occasion reaffirmed Assam Tea’s place as a timeless symbol of excellence in the global tea narrative and set an ambitious tone for the future, promising expanded global reach and a fresh wave of appreciation for India’s signature brew. As the world’s tea lovers sipped Assam’s finest, the message was clear: Assam Tea is not just history but an inspired future in every cup.

Ena Bandyopadhyay
Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri





CANDID CONVERSATION with a Tea Trailblazer

For over five decades, Team United Marketing Pvt. Ltd. has been at the forefront of India's tea export industry, renowned for delivering premium-quality teas - from Darjeeling and Assam (CTC and Orthodox) to Dooars and Nilgiris - across both domestic and international markets. Under the strategic and transformational leadership of Mr. Praveen Bajaj, a third-generation tea entrepreneur from the Bajaj family, the company has built a global presence with exports spanning Europe, the USA, Russia, the Middle East, China, Japan, and beyond, boasting an annual turnover of over USD 10 million. In this candid conversation with Tea Time's Indranil Bhattacharjee, Mr. Bajaj shares his insights on the evolving tea trade, market opportunities, challenges, and his lifelong commitment to quality and innovation in the world of tea.

What interested you in the tea business?

Our tea business has been passed down through generations. I am honored to carry forward the legacy of my forefathers. My father introduced me to this trade, and I soon developed a liking for it, which gradually transformed into a deep passion.

Who is your business role model and why?

My business role model in the tea industry has been McLeod

Russel. During my early days, I held this company in high regard for its vast operations and significant export volumes. I aspired to become a prominent tea exporter and establish a distinct niche in the industry.

With the global tea market evolving, which regions do you see as emerging hotspots for Indian tea exports, and what factors are driving these opportunities?

The global tea landscape is indeed shifting, presenting several promising avenues for Indian exporters

Iraq Indian tea exports to Iraq have seen significant growth, making it a major market. Approximately three to four exporters have collectively exported around 40 million kilograms in the last



Praveen Bajaj

financial year.

Iran There is strong demand for premium Assam Orthodox teas in Iran.

Kazakhstan Almaty presents a substantial opportunity for CTC teas, which are often consumed with milk and sugar.

Malaysia There's a good market for Dust grades from both North and South Indian producers.

Russia Russia remains a major market for Indian tea exporters. I believe that exports could increase further if the Government of India relaxes certain trade policies.

To capitalize on these opportunities, it's imperative for Indian exporters to maintain consistent quality and adhere to international standards. Additionally, navigating geopolitical challenges and fostering strong trade partnerships will be key to sustaining and expanding India's presence in these markets.

In your view, what are the pressing concerns or looming threats that stakeholders in the tea sector should be vigilant about?

Pesticide Residues A major challenge is the unavailability of pesticide-free or MRL-compliant tea. Growing awareness about pesticide usage in tea cultivation can lead to decreased consumer demand and lower prices.

Health-conscious consumers are increasingly seeking pesticide-free tea.

I strongly believe that the entire tea fraternity should unite to produce, sell, and promote pesticide-free tea, ensuring every cup is safe and healthy. Positive steps have already been initiated in this direction.

Geopolitical Tensions Recent conflicts, particularly the intensifying situation in Ukraine and other geopolitical disruptions in major markets like Russia and Iran, pose significant threats. Additionally, there's been a substantial increase in shipping costs, although buyers are currently absorbing these expenses.

Have trade sanctions or political instability in markets like Iran and Russia impacted your export markets?

Yes, the imposition of trade sanctions in Iran has led to significant challenges in payments and shipping. Export figures could have been higher if these issues were absent.

How has the fluctuation in currency exchange rates affected your profit margins, especially in your major export markets?

Fluctuations in currency exchange rates have led to the devaluation of the Iranian Rial, impacting both turnover and profit margins.



Do you observe an interest among young entrepreneurs in the tea industry?

Unfortunately, not much. In my opinion, a segment of the younger generation does not view tea as a lucrative career option. While they are well-educated and hardworking, many lack the patience required in this trade. They often pursue professions offering better packages. I've noticed a trend where young individuals are more inclined towards setting up tea-related startups rather than engaging in the core processes of tasting, blending, and brand

creation. We need the younger generation to immerse themselves in these foundational aspects to enhance the product that nature has bestowed upon us.

Who has been your greatest teacher?

Undoubtedly, my father. He taught me the basics of the trade and instilled in me the importance of hard work. He encouraged me to chart my own course in the business.

He emphasized that there's no substitute for hard work - a principle I've upheld to this day. He provided me with a foundational platform in the tea business, and from there, I've learned everything through experience. My failures have been instrumental in achieving success. I've never given up and have utilized my experiences to shape both my personal and professional life.

What are your aspirations for your company?

We began as a single entity, Bajaj Enterprise. Over the years, we've diversified into the export business under the umbrella of Team United Marketing Pvt. Ltd., with offices in Kolkata and Coimbatore.

Since then, I've adhered to one principle: maintaining and delivering quality. Introduced to the tea trade at the tender age of 10, I've amassed 50 years of experience in both CTC and Ortho



dox teas. I've always delivered the best quality based on customer preferences and requirements.

At 60, I take pride in never compromising on quality. Customer satisfaction has always been my priority - this is my USP. I've pledged to uphold this commitment indefinitely.

Today, we've expanded to multiple destinations and ventured into the bulk tea flavor segment. Currently, we're exporting to Middle Eastern countries, offering Earl Grey flavored teas,

Cardamom teas, and teas flavored with cardamom peels. However, the government mandates the use of natural flavors, which are quite expensive. I believe some relaxation should be allowed for using identical flavors as well.

My aspiration is to establish Team United as a global leader in both traditional and contemporary tea products.

How would you compare the new leaders in tea with the previous ones?

I believe it's inappropriate to draw direct comparisons, as the times were different. The previous generation worked long hours without concern for extended office time, striving for perfection. The current generation, especially the youth, prefers fixed and less demanding work hours. The secure platforms established by the older generation provide assurance to the younger ones. I believe that if the next generation develops a passion for this trade and brings in their enthusiasm and energy, the tea industry will be in safe hands.

Before we conclude, could you share your hobbies, passions, and interests outside the world of tea?

Although my schedule often leaves little room for leisure, I make it a point to indulge in swimming whenever possible - a passion I've cherished since childhood. I'm also a proud member of the Calcutta Swimming Club, which allows me to stay connected to the sport and unwind amidst a community that shares my enthusiasm.



Indranil Bhattacharjee
Contemporary Brokers, Kolkata



CPW MACHINES Flourishing in Africa but Struggling in Assam

An Insight on Challenges and Solutions

As the innovator of both Heat-less Withering and Dry Air Assisted Withering systems - respectively for Conventional Troughs and CPW (Continuous Physical Withering) Machines - I have often wondered why many reputed Indian tea machinery manufacturers regularly export CPW machines to Africa, while finding only few buyers in Assam.

In Africa, most new factories now opt for CPW machines instead of conventional troughs. Assam Planters, on the other hand, hesitate. Why? After research, field visits, and a practical case study, I offer this article for readers who are open-minded and forward-thinking in adopting new tea technologies.

Before addressing Assam's CPW challenges directly, we must first revisit a few parameters central to quality withering.

Focus Areas Among the tea-producing countries in Africa - viz. Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, and Tanzania (the last two named produce teas somewhat similar to The Nilgiris') - I have selected Kenya for comparison with Assam, as both are renowned largely for CTC tea, although Assam also produces a reasonable quantity of high-quality Orthodox and Specialty teas. Further, I have

considered the Monsoon production since that is the season in Assam when the CPW machines struggle to deliver the right quality of wither. Finally, to ensure a fair evaluation, I have narrowed down the comparison between two specific tea-producing belts: Kericho in Kenya and Jorhat in Assam.

Ambient Conditions The altitude of Kericho is about 2,100 metres (highlands) as opposed to

CPW Machine - Pic Courtesy Havukal Estate



Jorhat's 100 metres (lowlands, rivers, valleys) - though this low elevation, combined with the warm monsoon and high humidity, is in fact a major reason why Assam teas develop their strong, malty character. The monsoon temperature of Kericho's wettest month, April, is only about 22°C with R.H. (relative humidity) of 65%–75%. In contrast, Jorhat's monsoon peaks in July, when temperatures last year rose to 28°C–30°C, accompanied by an RH of 89%.

Basics of Moisture Removal Physical withering is the process of gently removing moisture from green leaves, and it works best when three key 'T' factors - Turbulence, Time, and Temperature of the air used - are perfectly balanced. Turbulence refers to the airflow passing through the green leaf (measured in CFM per kg of leaf). Time refers to how long the air stays in contact with the leaves while passing through it - denoted by number of hours technically known as Residence time. Temperature refers to the highest level of heat the leaf can safely endure without losing the attributes responsible for its flavour and liquor.

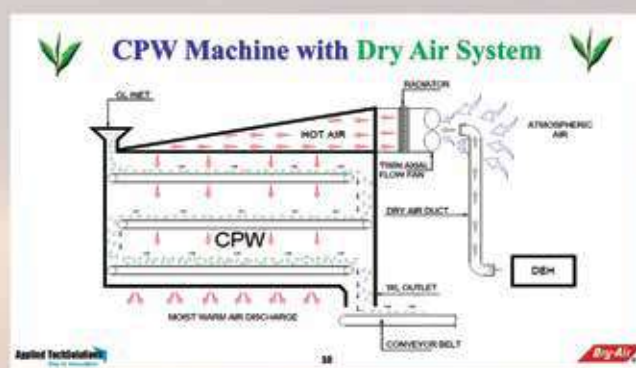
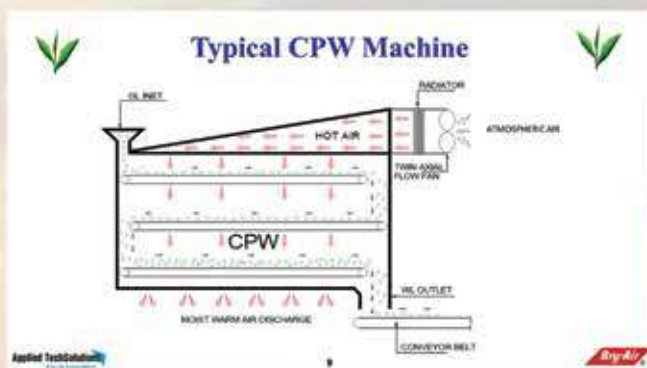
Basics of Perfect Withering The essential requirements for perfect withering are: Ample Air Supply, Controlled Hygrometric Difference (the difference between Dry Bulb Temperature and Wet Bulb

leaf will remain very close to the WBT of its surrounding air. For all practical purposes, the surface temperature of a wet leaf with open stomata is almost the same as its surrounding air's WBT.

This phenomenon makes it abundantly clear that during withering, it is not the high DBT, but rather the high WBT that causes deterioration of the leaves' physical and chemical characteristics. Therefore, if the WBT can be maintained below 32°C (or 35°C, according to some experts), the tea leaves remain invulnerable - regardless of how high the DBT rises to. Thus, the Art and Science of withering through a CPW machine lies in holding the WBT within the safe and critical limit of 32°C - 35°C.

Pertinent Facts Unlike Conventional Trough Withering, the CPW machine is designed for handling bulk quantities of tea, simultaneously minimizing human intervention, reducing the usage of floor space and addressing labour shortages. In CPWs, the withering period is generally reduced to as low as 2 to 3 hours only, as against 14 to 18 hours used for conventional troughs.

Now, to compensate this drastic reduction of one of the T's - namely Time - the other two T's, i.e. Turbulence and Temperature, have to be obviously



Temperature and most importantly maintaining a Low Wet Bulb Temperature throughout the withering period, since moisture evaporation from the green leaf follows the wet bulb temperature of the air being used for withering (**Ref:** Tea Research Institute, Ceylon).

In simpler terms, as long as the green leaf is transpiring (losing water vapour/moisture) through its stomata and cuticle, the surface temperature of the

increased. For example, the air quantity per kg of green leaf is almost doubled to about 60 CFM per kg of leaf. Similarly, the air temperature is raised to 45–50°C, and more often than not, even to 51–52°C - particularly during the monsoon and other adverse weather conditions.

Disadvantages of Assam Planters When Kericho's monsoon air, having a DBT of 22°C and low relative

humidity and a low WBT, is heated by the CPW's Radiator to the designed withering temperature of say 42°C - 45°C (also shoots up further depending on location and altitude), its WBT hovers around the limit of 35°C, thereby resulting to the level of withering as expected in Kenya compared to that of Assam as latter's quality is better and it fetches higher price in international market. However due to better fine plucking standard strictly controlled (as well as with field training to farmers) by KTDA, Kenyan black tea liquor is often described as deep amber with a lively brightness.

Further, when Jorhat's monsoon air, with a DBT of 28-30°C and high relative humidity and a high WBT, is sucked into the CPW machine, the Planters unfortunately are left with no choice but to increase the air temperature inside the CPW machine to 50°C+ and above, in order to achieve an appropriate hygrometric differential for moisture removal. But this heat addition, which raises the DBT to 50°C+, simultaneously pushes the air's WBT very much beyond 32°C - with no means to control it at all.

This inevitably mars the quality of the leaves. Withering at such high wet bulb temperature results in Reddening of leaves, Uneven (non-uniform) wither with varying moisture percentage in withered leaves and stiff, i.e. non-flaccid leaves.

Solution In 2018, I was invited to visit Havukal Estate in Kotagiri, The Nilgiris, when their MD Mr T Jayaraman entrusted me with the onerous task of achieving a HD of 16°C during peak monsoon, while simultaneously restricting the DBT of hot air after the Radiator to 45°C. As Havukal Estate are into Orthodox manufacturing, they required a higher percentage of moisture removal compared to CTC manufacturing and hence needed higher HD. At that time, they were operating their CPW machines at 52/53°C DBT, without any sort of control of WBT.

Upon return to my base Kolkata, I worked diligently for several weeks, carrying out meticulous calculations and arrived at a design very well conceived. I finalised integration of a Desiccant Dehumidifier in my System Design which would infuse my designed quantity of dry air to reduce intake of moisture-laden atmospheric air by the same volume - thereby keeping the CPW machine's total air intake unchanged.

With nearly two and a half decades of professional experience of working at Bry-Air (Asia) Pvt. Ltd., consolidated with specialisation certification at Bry-Air's both Advanced Training Centers in the USA and The Netherlands, along with in-depth knowledge of desiccant-based drying and dehumidification systems, I opted for a Bry-Air dehumidifier for this highly critical assignment. Further, I incorporated an On-line Display of DBT & WBT for real-time monitoring of HD by the client throughout the withering period.

At the installation site, my system has been delivering since 2018 a HD of 18°C - thus exceeding the client's expectation of HD of 16°C - at a DBT of 45°C. This resulted in a WBT of 27°C, which is comfortably below the safe limit of 32°C. Even when the client, for their own operational reasons, operate the CPW at as high as 50°C DBT, the WBT still do not exceed 32°C.

My design involved the selection of one large-capacity Bry-Air Dehumidifier capable of simultaneously serving three CPW machines having a combined air volume of 174,000 CFM.

Performance My system design has been running successfully for the last 7 (seven) years to the full satisfaction of the client, who has been producing approximately 20 lakh kg of made tea per year. Moreover, Bry-Air's engineers have never had to physically attend to any complaint, except for routine courtesy visits. This clearly demonstrates the ruggedness and reliability of the Bry-Air dehumidifier, which is equipped with a Human Machine Interface Control Panel that enables resolution of any equipment-related issues with just a simple phone call to Bry-Air's Chennai Regional Office.

Benefits Obtained The benefits are Evenly (uniformly) Withered i.e. all leaves having nearly same moisture percentage, Greener and more



Flaccid leaves, resulting in quality improvement and consequent value addition. For the information of readers, especially users of CPW machines in Assam, Dooars, or South India, it is worth noting that in April 2018 - before the installation of my designed system - Havukal's made tea was selling at ₹140/kg. By July 2023, the price had increased to ₹230/kg. I am unable to disclose the current selling price due to the client's policy, which I deeply respect. All I can humbly state is that my system design certainly added a valuable tool to Havukal's MasterCraft of tea making, contributing to this phenomenal value addition.

Cost of Solution Dear Readers, you will appreciate that any solution to such a critical problem like this naturally carries a certain cost. For one single CPW machine, the investment cost of integrating my designed system is estimated at approximately 12.5% of the cost of a Continuous Withering Machine. This includes both the cost of the Bry-Air Dehumidifier and Consultancy Charges towards Design & Engineering.



Running Cost Interestingly, even if the withering temperature is lowered from the existing setting by just 3°C, the energy saving for the in-built Radiator of a standard CPW machine (having 58,000 CFM of air flow) works out to be about 85,400 KCal/hr (whether using steam, pressurized hot water, hot air, natural gas, or LPG). Meanwhile, the Bry-Air Dehumidifier requires almost half of this energy for its operation, which means there is effectively no additional running cost for the dehumidifier.

Energy Savings During the maceration processes, as the withered leaves - with their higher degree of flaccidity - will now need less pressure to be



applied (whether between the table and the pressure cap of a Rolling Table, between the vane and resistor of a Rotorvane, or under the heavy toothed rollers of a CTC machine), the result will be electricity savings across all these machines and processes.

Now, for a 6.00 lakh kg garden, if we consider an energy saving of 20%, with electricity priced at ₹10.00 per kWh, and given that all maceration processes combined consume 0.0863 kWh per kg of made tea (**Ref:** IIT, Delhi), the annual benefit for the factory would amount to approximately ₹1.00 lakh.

Value Addition The improved flaccidity of withered leaves shall provide specific value-added benefits. In Orthodox manufacturing, it results in higher proportions of OP Grades over Broken and Fannings. In CTC manufacturing, evenly withered and homogeneous leaves of right texture at a cooler temperature are obtained at the Rotorvane outlet.

Return On Investment Considering a minimum value addition of ~10% for Orthodox and ~5% for CTC, the ROI works out to be about 3 months and 6 months, respectively.

Wishing all the Readers Happy Withering!!!



Tapan Das
Principal Consultant
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STRENGTHENING SILIGURI'S LEGACY IN TEA 52nd AGM of STTA

The Siliguri Tea Traders' Association (STTA) marked a milestone on **14th June 2025**, celebrating its **52nd Annual General Meeting** at Aurum Resort, Siliguri. The gathering brought together members, dignitaries, and special invitees; reflecting on the association's enduring role in shaping the tea trade of the region.

The meeting began with a heartfelt welcome by **President Sri Anand Tiberwal**, who paid tribute to the founders and senior members whose contributions have cemented STTA as a heritage institution in the tea fraternity.

Secretary Sri Sandeep Bansal presented the Annual Report for 2024-25, highlighting the Association's initiatives to promote transparency, digital efficiency, and fair trade practices, along with its commitment to social and welfare activities. The Treasurer, **Sri Ankur Jain**, presented the audited financials, which were duly adopted by the members.

A special highlight of the AGM was the **Chaity Tea Auction** – a **one-of-its-kind celebration** commemorating the success of Operation Sindoor. With record participation, the auction witnessed

spirited bidding:

CTC Tea achieved a record of ₹ **2,500/kg**

Darjeeling Tea soared to ₹ **26,000/kg**

Part of the proceeds were dedicated to **AWWA** and **AFWWA**, honouring the courage and sacrifices of defence personnel and their families. Contributors and top bidders were felicitated with mementos and certificates.

The AGM was graced by **Major General J. P. Singh, GOC Sub Area III, Tri Shakti Corps**, as Chief Guest, accompanied by senior Army dignitaries. He lauded STTA's efforts in strengthening both the regional economy and its commitment to social causes.

Looking ahead, President Tiberwal outlined STTA's vision to position **Siliguri as a global hub for tea trade**, foster quality and brand value for producers, enhance member welfare, integrate new technologies in auctions, and expand tea gifting and retail opportunities.

The evening concluded with a gracious vote of thanks delivered by **Vice President Sri Navneet Jain**, marking the close of a successful and inspiring session.

Ena Bandyopadhyay

Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri







Legacy Reimagined

DARJEELING'S ICONIC PLANTER'S CLUB Reopens After a Decade

The gates of one of Darjeeling's most storied landmarks - the Darjeeling Club Limited, better known as the Planter's Club - have reopened to the public after nearly a decade, marking a historic revival that blends colonial charm with modern enterprise.

Originally founded in 1868 by British planters, officers, and army personnel, the club had been closed since 2016 for extensive renovations. Now, after navigating significant financial hurdles, the club has re-emerged with a refurbished identity and a long-term sustainability plan.

"This is more than a building - it's a piece of Darjeeling's soul," said Amar Singh Rai, president of the club. "Despite the fund crunch, we're proud to have restored this property."

What began as a ₹2.09 crore restoration effort in 2016 soon ran into monetary roadblocks. Unable to

fund the entire project, the club entered into a 30-year lease agreement with local builder Dawa Sangay, who completed the renovation and now operates the hospitality wing of the building. In return, the club will receive an annual lease amount - crucial revenue to maintain its operations.

The result is a striking four-storey structure with 37 rooms, replacing the club's original 21. The sprawling 7,000-square-foot ground floor will continue to serve as the members-only club area, while the upper floors have been converted into hotel accommodations.

"We've ensured club members retain their privileges," Sangay assured. "They'll receive 30-35% discounts on rooms and restaurant services, though bookings must be made at least a week in advance."

Looking forward, the club plans to expand using its own funds to construct 26 additional rooms, signaling confidence in its new business model.





History Meets Hospitality

What sets the Planter's Club apart isn't just its architecture or colonial heritage - it's the stories it holds. From its original site at Thorn Cottage, the club moved to its current location near the Mall in 1907, thanks to land donated by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Nripendra Narayan Bhoop Bahadur.

Despite surviving a partial collapse during the 1934 earthquake and decades of wear, the club had seen little restoration work until the 2016 overhaul.

Over the decades, the club has moved slowly toward inclusivity: A N Banerjee of Happy Valley Tea Garden became the first Indian president in 1971, and Eudon Lhamu, a retired Indian Foreign Service officer, was the first woman admitted in 1992.

Its collection includes colonial artifacts like a Maxim's Gun, five rare "Snaffles" paintings donated by former president D G S Osbourne (1931–33), 20 wildlife trophies, and even oxygen cylinders once used in Everest expeditions.

With 922 members today and affiliations with over 120 clubs across the country, the Planter's Club is poised to blend its rich legacy with contemporary relevance.

Darjeeling's Past, Recrafted for the Present

Set against the majestic backdrop of Kanchenjunga, the reopened Planter's Club is no longer just a relic of British-era elitism. It's a living institution one that honors its past while adapting to a new era of heritage tourism, commercial realities, and inclusive access.



Acknowledgement: This report includes information sourced from *The Telegraph, Kolkata*, 2 June 2025.



LUDHUA: CULTIVATING LIVES Sustaining Nature

In the quiet folds of South Tripura, lies Ludhua Cha Bagan Sramik Samabay Samity Ltd. (LCBSSS) - a tea estate that has grown beyond its plantation boundaries; into a sanctuary of tranquility, adventure, and ecological wonder. Nestled in the Sabroom subdivision (22°56'N to 24°32'N and 91°09'E to 91°20'E), the estate belongs to the state, small in size yet vast in history. Tripura, once a princely kingdom until its merger with India in 1949, shares borders with Bangladesh on three sides and Assam and Mizoram on the other, making it a true cultural crossroads. The coexistence of indigenous tribes and Bengali settlers has not always been without tension, but the state today stands as a mosaic of accommodation and resilience. It is in this layered landscape that Ludhua's story unfolds.



Sujit Seal

From Colonial Ownership to Worker's Hands

The roots of Ludhua trace back to 1919, when the **Chandrapur Tea Company** managed the plantation under A.K. Guha. The ownership changed hands several times until the early 1970s, when operations came to a halt. For seven long years, Ludhua's workers endured silence in the fields, with no plucking, no payment, and hardly any hope.

But from that void emerged a remarkable experiment in collective resilience. In 1979, with the encouragement of cooperative leaders and their own will to survive, the workers formally registered **Ludhua Cha Bagan Sramik Samabay Samity Ltd.** as a cooperative society. For the first time, those who had only labored in the gardens now owned and managed them.

Rebuilding Against the Odds

When the workers took charge, they inherited abandoned bushes, a burnt-down factory, and years of neglect. Yet, within adversity lay a hidden advantage: decades without chemical inputs had already nudged the estate into an organic mode of cultivation.

In the late 1990s, support came from a Fair Trade Organization (FTO) in Kolkata, which helped reconstruct part of the factory, provided new machinery, and guided Ludhua towards organic certification. Though the partnership eventually ended, Ludhua had already carved out a reputation for producing **certified organic tea**.



Today's Ludhua

The Government of Tripura now formally recognizes the co-operative's ownership of **1,252.85 acres** of estate land. Of this, about **472.5 acres are under tea cultivation**, including a 20-acre clonal nursery. The estate has also diversified its land use:

90 acres for worker welfare and community infrastructure (housing, school, health centre, market, and roads).

25 acres earmarked for tea tourism.

91 acres under paddy fields.

30.19 acres used for other crops.

60 acres of water bodies and natural resources.

Nearly 474 acres remain vacant, offering scope for future expansion.

The estate's new factory, built in 2013 with Tripura State Co-operative Bank's support, has a capacity of **200,000 kg annually**. Current production, however, stands at around **125,000 kg (2015 figures)** across **CTC, Orthodox, and Green teas**, leaving room for growth.

The Market and Beyond

Ludhua teas are priced to reflect both accessibility and quality:

CTC Tea – 310/kg wholesale; retail packs at 35/- (100 gm) and 170/- (500 gm).

Green Tea – 1400/kg wholesale; 160 per 100 gm retail.

Orthodox Tea – 800/kg wholesale; 100 per 100 gm retail.

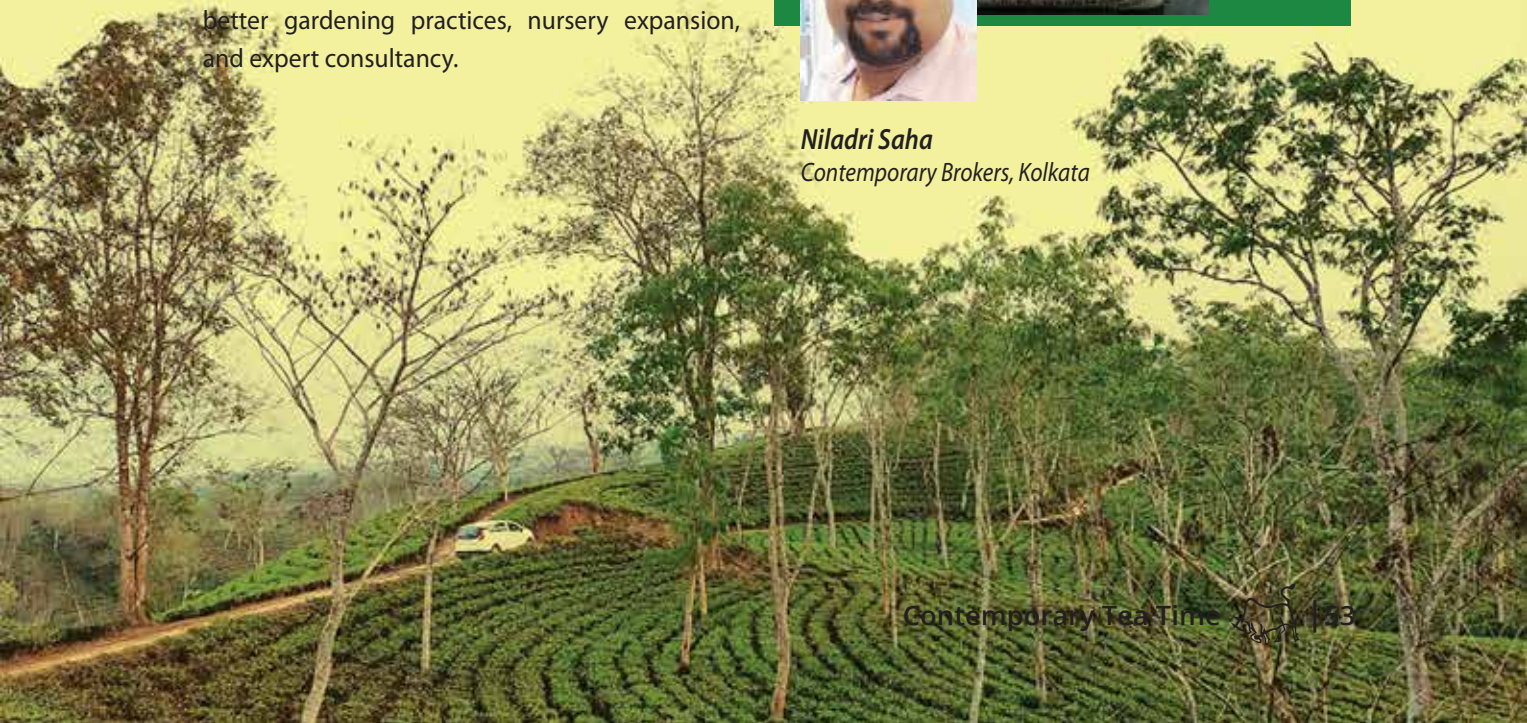
With a foothold in Tripura's domestic market, the co-operative now eyes broader horizons through better gardening practices, nursery expansion, and expert consultancy.

A Model of Worker Resilience

Ludhua today is more than a tea estate. It is a living testimony to collective ownership, organic cultivation, and the workers' ability to transform adversity into opportunity. From the ashes of a burnt-down factory and decades of neglect has risen a green sanctuary - where tea is not just grown but nurtured, where the land sustains both community and ecology, and where every sip carries the story of resilience.



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NECTAR TEA Sipping on Legacy Brewing the Future

At Nectar, we don't just sell tea, we create blends that carry memories and meaning.



Story shared by the Kanoria siblings, Nectar Tea, Kolkata.

Our story begins with my grandfather, Late B.P. Kanoria, who was associated with Octavius Tea for over 35 years, as he looked after the Dooars tea sales. His dedication to the trade and deep-rooted understanding of tea left a lasting impression on our family. Inspired by him, my father stepped into the world of tea and eventually laid the foundation for Victoria Tea Company.

As third-generation tea merchants, we grew up surrounded by the nuances of this world, the aroma of fresh samples, auction rooms buzzing with quiet intensity, and the beauty of a perfectly brewed cup. But with Nectar, we wanted to bring something new to the table. We saw potential in blending age-old tea wisdom with present-day preferences to create something that feels both familiar and fresh. So, we started a collection of loose leaf teas, self-blended in small batches, crafted to offer authenticity in every sip. Our range includes flavoured blends infused with real flowers, fruits, and herbs, carefully selected to enhance both taste and wellness without overpowering the tea itself.

We source our tea directly from both auctions and trusted gardens; ensuring quality, transparency, and a consistent flavour profile. Every blend is created with care using real ingredients, never additives, designed to match the pace and palette of today's tea drinker. Today, Nectar finds its way into homes, hampers, wellness routines, and quiet corners of comfort. And as we carry this legacy forward, one thoughtful blend at a time, we remain guided by the same values that started it all: integrity, craftsmanship, and a deep love for tea. At Nectar, we don't just sell tea - we craft blends that carry memories and meaning in every cup. Each aroma, each flavor is a tribute to generations past and a celebration of the moments today's tea lovers create. Our teas are more than just brews; they are vessels of emotion, tradition, and connection, inviting drinkers to pause, reflect, and savor the story steeped in every sip. This is the essence of Nectar - where legacy meets life, and every cup tells a tale worth sharing.

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CONTEMPORARY

TEA TIME

Contemporary Tea Time invites you on a journey with its cover story in Oct - Dec 2025 issue

CHAI ON WHEELS

India's Railway Romance in a Cup



From bustling platforms to swaying compartments, discover how the humble cup of tea became the heartbeat of India's rail journeys + features that capture the legacies, trends, and dreams brewing in today's Indian tea industry.

Coming Next

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Auction Leafline

Estimated Consumption of Teas in India				(Figures in M.Kgs)
Year	Production	Imports	Exports	Available for consumption
2021	1343	27	197	1173
2022	1366	30	227	1169
2023	1394	24	232	1186
2024	1285	45	256	1074

2021, 2022, 2023 & 2024 figures are from Tea Board

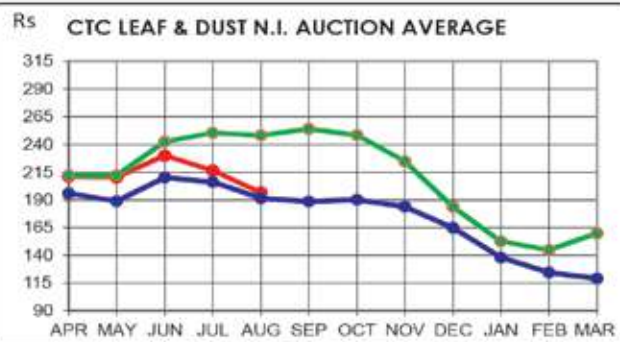
Import data from DGFT & DGCIS

N. India Market Graphs April to August

North India - CTC Leaf & Dust

Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	211.10	211.91	-0.81	195.81	15.29
MAY	210.52	212.11	-1.59	188.86	21.66
JUN	230.03	242.39	-12.37	210.15	19.88
JUL	216.50	250.47	-33.98	206.17	10.32
AUG	196.78	248.17	-51.39	191.60	5.18
SEP		254.06		188.50	
OCT		248.46		190.13	
NOV		224.91		183.92	
DEC		183.59		164.70	
JAN		152.62		137.97	
FEB		144.69		124.52	
MAR		159.87		119.01	
April to August	212.29	240.79	-28.50	198.48	13.82
April to March		218.77		179.90	

Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust



North India - Orthodox Leaf

Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	311.30	303.93	7.38	244.42	66.88
MAY	311.79	287.69	24.10	209.82	101.97
JUN	297.24	299.80	-2.56	228.77	68.47
JUL	299.77	304.22	-4.45	226.04	73.73
AUG	301.03	314.61	-13.58	225.35	75.69
SEP		332.59		233.22	
OCT		302.23		223.23	
NOV		279.92		228.64	
DEC		254.20		211.32	
JAN		225.13		180.22	
FEB		205.14		165.63	
MAR		205.08		184.01	
April to August	302.55	303.05	-0.50	224.72	77.82
April to March		287.61		220.78	

Darjeeling Leaf

Months	2025/26	2024/25	25 vs 24	2023/24	25 vs 23
APR	822.49	1136.32	-313.83	819.19	3.29
MAY	676.24	643.20	33.04	599.39	76.85
JUN	450.20	361.23	88.97	352.18	98.02
JUL	570.74	569.62	1.12	396.47	174.27
AUG	473.40	496.89	-23.49	400.53	72.87
SEP		437.16		294.40	
OCT		356.69		251.67	
NOV		333.80		259.42	
DEC		285.33		235.24	
JAN		195.45		175.58	
FEB		226.14		156.02	
MAR		216.11		160.68	
April to August	535.86	503.76	32.12	436.21	99.65
April to March		396.64		324.45	



(*Subject to minor revision)

Month-wise District-wise Auction averages

CTC Leaf & Dust

Assam : Estate

Months	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	275.79	285.33	-9.54
MAY	266.49	258.23	8.26
JUN	292.78	312.75	-19.97
JUL	279.80	307.61	-27.81
AUG	243.07	297.75	-54.67
SEP		298.57	
OCT		279.81	
NOV		246.86	
DEC		201.67	
JAN		163.43	
FEB		157.19	
MAR		161.36	
April to August	269.11	296.59	-27.48
April to March		254.56	

Dooars & Terai : Estate

Month	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	253.74	267.43	-13.69
MAY	238.72	229.91	8.81
JUN	262.86	274.66	-11.80
JUL	238.47	252.76	-14.29
AUG	210.13	250.71	-40.57
SEP		252.52	
OCT		245.54	
NOV		225.74	
DEC		184.76	
JAN		160.93	
FEB		144.45	
MAR		243.29	
April to August	237.66	251.87	-14.22
April to March		222.24	

Cachar : Estate

Month	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	210.13	192.24	17.89
MAY	213.55	186.66	26.88
JUN	205.70	214.51	-8.81
JUL	214.32	212.44	1.88
AUG	196.38	229.55	-33.17
SEP		237.22	
OCT		226.50	
NOV		203.12	
DEC		166.93	
JAN		141.58	
FEB		139.15	
MAR		123.22	
April to August	206.43	212.39	-5.96
April to March		195.58	

Tripura : Estate

Month	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	237.77	207.75	30.02
MAY	179.93	156.19	23.74
JUN	171.48	180.39	-8.91
JUL	161.86	180.86	-19.00
AUG	155.09	199.16	-44.07
SEP		205.47	
OCT		202.91	
NOV		182.64	
DEC		145.39	
JAN		124.70	
FEB		117.92	
MAR		102.71	
April to August	165.96	182.75	-16.78
April to March		174.51	

Assam : BLF

Month	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	187.11	198.34	-11.23
MAY	177.69	170.72	6.97
JUN	197.15	206.06	-8.91
JUL	189.66	219.85	-30.18
AUG	170.77	230.42	-59.65
SEP		230.09	
OCT		229.35	
NOV		206.76	
DEC		170.20	
JAN		140.53	
FEB		135.56	
MAR		135.06	
April to August	184.45	211.21	-26.75
April to March		198.38	

Dooars & Terai : BLF

Month	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	134.54	130.74	3.80
MAY	129.47	133.54	-4.07
JUN	122.62	143.39	-20.77
JUL	115.05	148.75	-33.70
AUG	111.08	169.99	-58.90
SEP		185.58	
OCT		194.81	
NOV		169.29	
DEC		147.75	
JAN		131.08	
FEB		128.33	
MAR		131.52	
April to August	119.96	150.22	-30.26
April to March		158.17	

Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust

● CTC Leaf & Dust ●

South India

Month	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	130.71	110.55	20.16
MAY	118.29	113.26	5.03
JUN	111.78	121.40	-9.62
JUL	104.85	113.45	-8.60
AUG	110.59	122.70	-12.11
SEP		149.00	
OCT		157.80	
NOV		139.38	
DEC		135.77	
JAN		137.40	
FEB		133.58	
MAR		134.42	
April to August	113.84	116.96	-3.12
April to March		131.13	

● Orthodox ●

Assam

Month	2023-24	2022-23	Diff (+/-)
APR	314.87	311.29	3.58
MAY	312.72	287.22	25.49
JUN	299.60	307.78	-8.18
JUL	303.18	305.28	-2.11
AUG	304.88	324.30	-19.43
SEP		338.17	
OCT		302.71	
NOV		282.85	
DEC		258.18	
JAN		228.65	
FEB		207.37	
MAR		193.76	
April to August	305.55	306.09	-0.53
April to March		291.71	

South India

Month	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	190.32	172.54	17.78
MAY	187.49	176.74	10.75
JUN	170.23	180.01	-9.78
JUL	175.06	164.71	10.35
AUG	173.88	160.05	13.83
SEP		191.50	
OCT		188.37	
NOV		175.50	
DEC		186.03	
JAN		183.69	
FEB		187.99	
MAR		196.24	
April to August	178.72	169.89	8.83
April to March		178.88	

● Darjeeling ●

Darjeeling

Month	2025/26	2024/25	Diff (+/-)
APR	822.49	1136.32	-313.83
MAY	676.24	643.20	33.04
JUN	450.20	361.23	88.97
JUL	570.74	569.62	1.12
AUG	473.40	496.89	-23.49
SEP		437.16	
OCT		356.69	
NOV		333.80	
DEC		285.33	
JAN		195.45	
FEB		226.14	
MAR		216.11	
April to August	535.86	503.74	32.12
April to March		396.64	



Compiled By
Soumen Bagchi



A JOURNEY IN TEA

Blending the Art and Alchemy of Tasting

(This article presents the first of a three-part reflection on Kurush Bharucha's remarkable life in tea tasting. The second part will appear in CTT's October–December 2025 issue and the third part in January–March 2026 issue)

This article, first published in the online magazine Tea Journey (under its "Taster profile") Kurush Bharucha in his own column. Over four decades with Unilever/Lipton, he has earned the reputation of a true "Tea Ambassador from tasting, buying, and blending to advising plantations, optimizing supply chains, and driving R&D across India, Dubai, and the UK. Along the way, he has always been a passionate tea advocate who championed tea culture worldwide. And most fittingly, his very name ends with "cha."

I got into tea (and tea tasting) in 1985, as a young 20+ year old - and quite by accident! (To be honest, nobody can think of becoming a tea taster. You couldn't plan for it - it's not something that an Ivy League University offers a Course in, nor is it often advertised, nor will college career advisors ever say 'tea taster'!)

I was about to graduate from St Xavier's College (University of Bombay) with a degree in Economics when I casually applied for a 'Management Trainee – Saleroom' job advert - by a company called Brooke Bond - that I saw on my college Notice Board. (I had no idea then that the Brooke Bond Group was one of the largest tea companies in the world or that Unilever had just acquired it!) From what I best recall, it promised the exciting opportunity to travel and learn - and be paid for this!

Fast forward three months, I'd got the job, and the next thing I knew, I'd traveled nearly 2,000 km east to the City of Calcutta - India's City of Tea, where I joined the Saleroom. I had thought this would have to do with sales. But, guess what, the 'SALEROOM' (as I later discovered) actually referred to the Auction ROOM where teas were SOLD! It's where the trade converged each week to buy teas in a public auction. In effect, I had joined the Commodities Department of one of the biggest tea companies in the world - with tea tasting underpinning all the 'value' of its tea buying and blending operations. (It seemed then that the company's success was founded on its astute buying and judicious blending of tea and not on its selling!)

From there on, it was taste/taste/taste - always alongside my more experienced seniors. It was



fascinating to discover the dazzling diversity of Indian tea – hearing tea descriptors such as smoky / spicy / sweet / soft / strong or bakey / brisk / brassy / bouquet / biscuity. And to think that all this variety came from a single plant - *Camellia sinensis* – how awesome was that! I was utterly fascinated - 1 plant, 6 families, 2,000+ varieties, and 5,000 years of history! I could never imagine that such a profession could even exist! I understood that tea tasting as a profession did not really require any degree or qualification. Instead, it was like playing golf. You were always competing against yourself. This was a battle that I felt I could win if I truly committed to it. I stayed positive, and I stayed on.

The more I tasted, the better I got - gradually growing my sensory vocabulary and beginning to develop a palate memory. I was sure I'd get the hang of it. And how could you not? In those early days at Brooke Bond India, it was not uncommon to taste up to 1000 cups of tea each day! And so I embraced the 5S's of taster tenacity- see, sniff, sip, swirl, and spit! In my quest to become a Jedi master of tea quality, my trusty spoon would serve as my light-saber. And working alongside my senior mentors - became my 'grow-on-the-go' University. All they asked me to bring each day, was my persistence and my palate!

There was no looking back. I was sucked into the art and craft, the magic and logic of tea - our 'nectar of nature'. I began to see tea as 'not just raw material, but raw potential'!

This was my first job, and I've never needed to work anywhere else since. Over my four-decades-long career, Unilever (Lipton/Brooke Bond) is the only company I've known, and tea is the only category I've worked in. Tea wasn't just what I did - it seemed to define who I am. As my close friends light-heartedly joke, "Kurush doesn't drink tea to wake up, he wakes up to drink tea!" and "If he won the lottery tomorrow, he'd still be doing tea!" Having said this, I remain a student of tea, with a deep respect for the traditions of the craft, but equally, with an innovative eye on its ongoing evolution. It's funny but true - the more you think you know about tea, the more you realize how little you know!



Kurush Bharucha

In my long career (of sips and spills!), I've always been the keenest student of the width and depth of black, oxidized tea manufacture - whether orthodox rolled, rotorvane, or CTC. These "amber elixirs" never fail to take me to a happy place, always bringing a smile to my face when I taste them.

The styles I've studied, understood, and admired most deeply include what I call my "**Selection of Six**":

Yunnan China Golden Tippy, with delicious hints of astringency and maple sweetness

Keemun (the "Burgundy of Tea") from China's Anhui province, with multi-layered notes of nuttiness and cocoa-chocolate

Darjeeling (the "Champagne of Tea") Himalayan terroirs with aromatic flavors combining floral, fruity, and muscatel notes, often verging on Oolongs

Assam Second flush orthodox, with chunky golden tips and a taste that balances malty assertiveness with honey-caramel overtones

Uva Peak-season, high-grown, rotorvane teas with a signature wintergreen aroma and a heady balm-like, minty-mentholated flavor

Rwanda CTC High-grown, premium teas producing bright golden cups that sparkle with freshness - brisk, lively, and flavoury

These six teas resonated powerfully in my consumer tastings, each one showcasing its awe-inspiring pedigree through artisanal black-tea manufacturing styles. I loved seeing drinkers' faces light up as they discovered these flavors for the first time - and even more when they heard about their unique "leaf-to-lip" journeys. While manufacturing style was always a fascinating facet, there was so much more to the full story of their 6 Ps: not just processing, but also provenance, plantation, plucking, product, and people.

To be continued...

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	Nursery	3 ml/litre of water	30-45 days
BIOFOS	Water Logging	300ml/ha	45-60 days
	Young plants	3 ml/litre of water	30-45 days

Executive Summary: 2-Year (2023-2024) field study in Assam and West Bengal by TRA Tocklai

- Highest yield increases were recorded with 350 ml/ha BIOKAD: 5.63% in Assam and 5.02% in Dooars, compared to Urea + Zinc (Current TRA foliar Recommendation).
- A 3.88% yield increase (Assam) and 2.77% increase (Dooars) were observed even at reduced fertilizer input (75% RDF + 300 ml BIOKAD/ha).
- BIOKAD reduced the residue of several pesticides in green leaves by 6% to 83%, demonstrating significant detoxification potential.
- Treatments with BIOKAD had a high benefit-cost ratio, 2.45 (Assam) and 2.88 (West Bengal), proving profitable economic viability.
- BIOKAD application significantly enhanced chlorophyll content in tea leaves.
- Tea made from treated bushes showed improved biochemical quality, indicating better liquor characteristics.
- Recommendation: Apply BIOKAD at 300–350 ml/ha for enhanced tea yield, quality, and chemical residue reduction in NE Indian tea estates.

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QUIZ!

Quiz whiz Suchetana Ghosh (Guha) serves a zesty reel of questions where every sip comes with a twist.

1. In which movie does the Mad Hatter host a whimsical tea party?
A. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory B. Alice in Wonderland
C. The Wizard of Oz D. Beauty and the Beast
2. In "Beauty and the Beast," what is the name of the teapot character?
A. Mrs. Lovett B. Mrs. Doubtfire C. Mrs. Potts D. Mrs. Featherstone
3. Which British detective is famously seen drinking tea in several of his film appearances?
A. Sherlock Holmes B. James Bond C. Harry Palmer D. John Steed
4. In "Harry Potter," which professor is known for reading tea leaves?
A. Professor McGonagall B. Professor Sprout C. Professor Trelawney D. Professor Flitwick
5. In which Quentin Tarantino film is a tense tea scene featured in a lavish drawing room?
A. Reservoir Dogs B. Pulp Fiction C. Django Unchained D. The Hateful Eight
6. In which Hindi film does Shah Rukh Khan's character is seen drinking tea from a roadside tea stall?
A. Dil Se B. Kal Ho Naa Ho C. Swades D. Chennai Express
7. In which Hindi film does a housewife start a home-based tea and tiffin service that empowers her?
A. English Vinglish B. Tumhari Sulu C. Chhapaak D. Lunchbox
8. In "Downton Abbey: The Movie," what social ritual often revolves around tea?
A. Morning prayers B. Afternoon walks C. Afternoon tea D. Horseback riding
9. Which classic Bollywood film includes a charming scene of bonding over roadside chai?
A. Dil Chahta Hai B. Swades C. Jab We Met D. Dangal
10. In "The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," which beverage symbolizes cultural adaptation?
A. Whiskey B. Masala chai C. Green tea D. Coconut water

6.A 7.D 8.C 9.B 10.B
1.B 2.C 3.A 4.C 5.C

ANSWER

Corrigendum

In the April-June issue, the answer to Quiz No. 9 was incorrectly given as "D" instead of the correct answer, "A." We regret the error.

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