

CONTEMPORARY

TEA time

Vol. XXXVII | No. 2 | April - June 2026 | Rs. 80 | US\$ 7

India's Oldest Tea Journal with The Largest Readership | 37 Years



FROM COMMODITY TO CRAFT

The Rise of Speciality Tea Culture

News | Views | Business Stories | History | Market Insights | Guest Column



#1 TEA
HUMIDIFICATION
SPECIALISTS



HARLEY HUMIDIKOOOL

CONTINUOUS
RUNNING
CAPABILITY

2 YEAR
WARRANTY

24 * 7
CUSTOMER
SUPPORT



With Harley Humikool's Advance Cooling and Humidification Solutions, you can get

VIRTUAL TOUR



**SCAN
ME!**



- Optimum Humidification without any dripping or wetness.
- Customized, scientific solution with option for automation.
- Peace of mind with high durability and longer warranty.



Your tea deserves optimal humidification, **backed by** over 600 successful installations, **ensuring every leaf maintains its perfect quality** — because we care.



Quality Performance



Solution and Service

CONTACT US!



F. Harley & Co. Pvt. Ltd.
5 Rameshwar Shaw Road, Kolkata- 700014.



+91 9903998085



033 2289 7676



www.harleyhumidikool.com



ELEKTRA-330 PRO

BATTERY TEA HARVESTER

POWERFUL. DURABLE. SAFE

NAACHI's fourth generation of battery tea harvester combines innovation with durability and safety to optimize and facilitate your tea harvesting work for perfect results.

With the lightweight, portable, balanced handling, and easy to maneuver, it's suitable for harvesting in any terrain, whether it's plains or hills. Ideal for the female workforce.



**ZERO
EMISSIONS**



**LESS NOISE
POLLUTION**



**LOW
VIBRATIONS**



**LESS
MAINTENANCE
COST**



**LESS
DOWNTIME**



**COST
EFFECTIVE**



**RAPID
RETURN ON
INVESTMENT**



AUTHORISED SOLE DISTRIBUTORS IN INDIA:

PATEL AGROTECH PRIVATE LIMITED

124, Rajlaxmi Villa, Beside LIC Building Sevoke Road, Siliguri-734001 (WB)

Mobile: 7477799822 / 8170056688

Email: info@patelagro.com



PARUCCO

TEA MACHINERY DIVISION

- AIR HEATER - SEVEN PASS NEXA MODEL (LATEST MODEL)
- AIR HEATER - FIVE PASS (OLD MODEL)
- AIR HEATER - MINI SERIES MODELS
- CHAIN GRATE STOKERS
- ECP TEA DRYERS
- QUALITY TEA DRYERS
- INDUSTRIAL CASTINGS (FERROUS), S.S AND S.G. IRON CASTINGS
- SEAMLESS FORGED STAINLESS STEEL CTC SEGMENTS
- INDUCED DRAUGHT FANS, HOT AIR FANS, CHIMNEYS
- SPARES



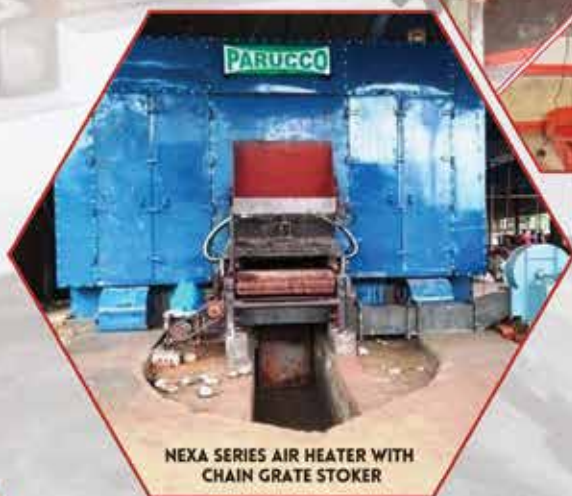
QUALITY TEA DRYERS

OUR FACILITIES

- IN-HOUSE MODERN FABRICATION FACILITIES
- AUTOMATIC PRESS, BENDING AND SHEARING FACILITIES
- IN-HOUSE ASSEMBLY AREA



ECP TEA DRYERS



NEXA SERIES AIR HEATER WITH CHAIN GRATE STOKER

MANUFACTURER OF PARTS AND EQUIPMENTS FOR THE FOLLOWING SECTORS

RAILWAY SECTOR
SAIL/JSW & MAJOR STEEL PLANTS
DEFENCE AND SHIP BUILDING SECTOR
BOILER & COMBUSTION INDUSTRY
MACHINERIES FOR TEA PROCESSING
JUTE SECTOR
ROLLING MILL (HOT & COLD)
REPUTED VALVE MANUFACTURER
COAL INDIA & MINING SECTOR
POWER PLANT
EARTH MOVING PARTS MANUFACTURER



+919831014326, +918777548745

EMAIL - PARUCCOFOUNDRY@GMAIL.COM / PARUCCOINDIA@GMAIL.COM
WEBSITE: WWW.PARUCCOFOUNDRY.COM



142/1 G.T. ROAD, BOWBAZAR, CHATRA,
SERAMPORE, HOOGHLY - 712204,
WEST BENGAL



UNIT-I: ASSEMBLY & MACHINING SHOP 271/48, GHOSAL PARA,
NABAGRAM, P.O. SERAMPORE, MALICKIPARA-3, DIST:
HOOGHLY - 712203, WEST BENGAL

UNIT-II: "BDSO APPROVED" CLASS-A FOUNDRY, DHOBAPUKUR,
BIGHATI, HOOGHLY - 712124, WEST BENGAL

CONTENTS

Apr - Jun 2026

Vol XXXVII | No 2



9 First Flush

11 Post-Ed

Now for climate
Khairul Alam Molla

12 Guest Column

Cha, coupons and the cult
Ajoy John

14 Retro-Sip

Tea vs cola
P S Sundar

17 Cover Story

From commodity to craft
Swapan Chakraborty

23 Flavour from far

The new tea party
Suchetana Ghosh (Guha)

26 Tea-trendz

Tea time, reimagined
Swarupa Das

28 TeaTips

Why freshness feels different
Ena Bandyopadhyay



32 Targettea

India's tea
Saurav Nandi

34 Taa-tales

The great Indian dunk
Asmita Khanra

36 Climate call

When monsoon shifts
Sujoy Mukherjee

37 Tea-talk I

Brewing more than chai
Ena Bandyopadhyay

39 Tea-talk II

A young tea planter's journey
Nayanjyoti Hazarika

42 Tea-talk III

From footpath to franchise
Md Zubair Uddin
Srinjini Swar

45 B'desh brew

The origin and evolution
Monjur Hossain



49 NewsSpeak

India - UK Tea Partnership
EILM Jalpaiguri Hosts
Berry Cup inaugurates
Kamal Kishore Tiwari
Mayfair Tea Resort
Loud, proud and #1

52 Dibrugarh Gala

Contemporary Brokers'
corporate dinner

54 Alvida to EterniTea

The master storyteller
Chitto Ghosh

55 Tea-trails I

Dust, dhaba meals
Goutam Dutta

57 Tea-trails II

The Lockhart leaf walk
Sukanya Das

58 Word Brew

Steeped in idioms
Suchetana Ghosh (Guha)

Regular Column

59 Auction leafline

Adviser Nayana Goradia

Editor & Creative Director Chitto Ghosh

Assistant Editor Ena Bandyopadhyay

Editorial Co-ordinator Srinjini Swar

Correspondent (Bangladesh) Monjur Hossain

Mailing Address Editorial & Marketing Office, 1 Old Court House Corner, 2nd Floor, Kolkata 700001 T +91 33 2230 7241 / 7242 / 4665

E pkg@contemporary.co.in

Branches: **Guwahati** Amarjit Sarmah, 2A Central Point (Opp. Bora Service Station), G S Road, Ulubari, Guwahati 781007 T 0361 252 4253 / 252 2052 E guwahati@contemporary.co.in • **Siliguri** Ena Bandyopadhyay, STAC Building Mallaguri, Pradhan Nagar, Siliguri 734403, T 0353 251 3095 / 3521 E ena@contemporary.org.in

Published by Iqbal Singh Sukarchakia, on behalf of Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd. 1 Old Court House Corner, 2nd Floor, Kolkata 700001

Designed & Printed by Sangya Brand Solutions, 20/3 Aswini Dutta Road, Kolkata 700029 M +91 98306 17150 E sangyabs203@gmail.com

We are a company with strong roots dating from the 1890's in the United Kingdom, started by the Marshall family. Back then the company established an enviable reputation, supplying agricultural machinery and steam engines. The product offerings from the company have undergone a sea change with time and today it offers state of the art equipments for CTC, Orthodox and Green Tea manufacture which save on energy, reduce labour dependency and deliver optimal performance, consistently.

CTC Tea

A few from amongst the wide range of CTC process line equipments offered by us are as follows:



Green Leaf Sifter



Chemical Withering



Physical Withering



Vibroscreen



Rotor Vane



CTC



CFU



Dryer



Online Weigher



Fiber Extractor



Automatic Milling



Automatic Chasing

Cryastal Cut CTC machine is born out of the "Infusion" of the company's African experience and Indian Technology. The quality of materials and workmanship in all "Marshall" products are maintained at the highest standards. The CTC machine design and engineering include many advanced features which ensure un-surpassed cutting quality, negligible maintenance costs, low down time & uninterrupted operation.

WAGH BAKRI TEA LOUNGE

SIP into Happiness

EVERY CUP. EVERY MOMENT.

Handpicked tea leaves, real ingredients
and crafted with care - our beverages
are made to warm your heart and
brighten your day



Pudina Chai



Magic Masala Chai



Adrak Chai



Wagh Bakri Classic Tea




PREMIUM
TEA EXPERIENCE


FRESH
INGREDIENTS


QUALITY
YOU TRUST


GREAT FOOD
GREAT COMPANY

Follow us on
Instagram



@WAGHBAKRITEALOUNGE.OFFICIAL

WWW.WAGHBAKRITEALOUNGE.COM

Gujarat | Maharashtra | Karnataka | Delhi NCR

NOW DELIVERING ON

zomato |  SWIGGY

**HELPS IN DETOXIFICATION
&
REDUCES MRL**

BIOKAD

(AMINO ACIDS)

- » Biologically active Amino acid (100% L-Amino acids)
- » Synthesised by unique Biotechnology process from Botanical Source
- » High purity of almost 99.99%, micronized size
- » Rapidly absorbed (90% within 4 hours).
- » Very good Results in Mechanical Harvesting (UPASI Recommended)
- » Acts as carriers and increases the absorption rate of micro/macro nutrients
- » Compatible with all foliar nutrients
- » Complies with Rain-Forest Alliance certification & IPM

PRODUCT	SECTIONS	DOSAGE	INTERVAL
BIOKAD	Matured Fields	300ml/ha	45-60 days
BIOHUME	Weak Sections	300ml/ha	45-60 days
	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.

AB AMRA BIOSYS PVT LTD

81/1, SRP Koil Street, Chennai - 600 082, India

Mob : 99401 87220 / 72996 14489

E-mail : aliabiosys@gmail.com

web : www.aliabiosys.com



Why Us

We serve 200+ satisfied clients in the industry with our various products

1. HEAVY DUTY MACHINES

Our cleaning machines are built tough, engineered to tackle the most stubborn stains, residues and grime, ensuring an impeccable, hygienic environment for your factory.

2. BEST AFTER- SALES SERVICE

We are committed to customer satisfaction with an industry-leading after-sales service. From quick maintenance to expert troubleshooting. Our team is always ready to help.

3. 10-YEARS SERVICE WARRANTY

Confidence in our quality lets us offer a full 10-years service warranty on every product. Rely on our machines and our service for the long run.

With unique cleaning agency, you don't just get a product; you get a partner dedicated to maintaining your facility's cleanliness and productivity. Choose unique cleaning agency - because quality, durability and services are our promise to you.



This **High Pressure Jet Machine** is extremely useful for proper cleaning of CTC/CFM and also used to easily clean in every corner of a narrow place which is not possible for manual cleaning.



This **Steam Machine** is very very useful for preventing bacteria during production.



CLIENTELE



UNIQUE CLEANING AGENCY

The Perfect Machine For Perfect Cleaning

9 Madhusudan Chatterjee Lane, Kolkata - 700002

Mobile +91 8697015161 / 9830049341 / 7980114256

E-mail uniquecleaning1970@gmail.com



sangyab.in



Big Brands Fade...

**Performance,
Quality and
Trust last!**

SOME OF OUR PROJECTS



STEELA INDUSTRIES



MAJHERDABRI T.E.



MATRI POLYMER



PARSURAM T.E.



JALPAIGURI HIGH COURT



M.B. STEEL



ERIS MILK



ITD CEMENTATION

AUTHORIZED DISTRIBUTOR & CHANNEL PARTNER

DARSHAN SOLAR ENTERPRISE

B-34, Himanchal Vihar, Matigara, Siliguri-734010, West Bengal

Purbi Complex, A.T. Road, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati-781001, Assam

Info@darshansolar.com www.darshansolar.com

+91 9830991272, 9434019805 @darshansolarofficial





First Flush

May, mastery, and the mindful sip

There is a singular density to the month of May. It arrives not merely as a change of season but as a procession of human genius. May is the birth month of titans: the systemic critiques of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud; the visionary cinema of Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, and Orson Welles; the boundary-breaking art of Salvador Dalí and Audrey Hepburn. It echoes with the timeless voices of Rabindranath Tagore, Bob Dylan, and Manna Dey, alongside the intellectual and social weight of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Girish Karnad, and John F. Kennedy.

What links these disparate luminaries? A resolute refusal to accept the mundane. Each took the raw material of existence and refined it into something complex and deeply immersive.

It is beautifully fitting that May also hosts International Tea Day. This year, the month brings exceptional news: the latest TasteAtlas "Top 100 Teas in the World" list has officially crowned Indian Masala Chai as the global #1. This victory underscores a broader evolution we explore in this issue's cover story: the definitive emergence of speciality tea as a new, niche-branded business model.

For decades, tea was largely treated as an anonymous commodity. Today, a vanguard of producers treats the leaf with the reverence of a fine single malt. This is tea defined by terroir, craftsmanship, and compelling narrative. To ground this shift, we supplement our feature with a market overview from the United States, revealing a consumer base rapidly abandoning generic tea bags for authentic, artisanal blends.

Beyond our cover feature and US market insights, this edition offers the usual rich medley of interesting topics from across the trade, celebrating the extraordinary heights the humble leaf can achieve. Like a Tagore lyric or a Ray masterpiece, an exceptional cup demands your undivided immersion.

Welcome to our May issue.



A Tea Board ad campaign crafted by Satyajit Ray during his pre-cinema years at D J Keymer, Calcutta

Chitto Ghosh

Chitto Ghosh
Editor

Shaping the identity...



State-of-the art manufacturing facilities



Product Range

Envelopes | Sweets | Snacks Boxes | Medicine Boxes
Agarbatti Boxes | Various Packaging Items | Medical File Covers

Supplier of Poly Paper Rolls For Food Packaging

B D ASSOCIATES

Rupnagar, Guwahati, Assam - 781032 | Mobile +91 70029 29345



Post-Ed



NOW FOR CLIMATE TEA AT THE EDGE OF ITS OWN FUTURE A note on World Environment Day 2026

World Environment Day 2026, observed on 5 June, under the theme “Inspired by Nature. For Climate. For Our Future” - distilled in its campaign shorthand as #NowForClimate - is hosted by Azerbaijan. The theme makes clear that climate action demands a fundamental rethinking of the systems that power economies and a repair of our relationship with the natural world. Few agricultural industries make that imperative more legible - or more urgent - than tea.

Tea is not merely a commodity. It is an ecology. *Camellia sinensis* is among the world’s most widely consumed plants, sustaining an estimated 13 million workers, with roughly 9 million smallholder farmers growing approximately 60% of the global supply. This is not a peripheral industry awaiting disruption - it is already at the centre of it.

A landmark study published in *Environmental and Sustainability Indicators* (May 2025) warned that climate change will significantly redraw the contours of the global tea industry by mid-century. Tea cultivation is particularly vulnerable because its yield and quality are closely linked to temperature, precipitation, and soil health. Prolonged drought and heat stress disrupt the synthesis of catechins and flavonoids - the compounds that determine tea’s character. Extreme precipitation degrades soil structure and long-term productivity.

The geography of loss is being mapped in real time. By 2050, optimal suitability in Kenya, Sri Lanka, and China will shrink by 26.2%, 14%, and 4.7%, respectively; Sri Lanka faces a further decline of nearly 30% by 2070. Assam and Darjeeling face analogous pressures. The terroir that took centuries to cultivate is contracting within decades.

The crisis runs the full length of the value chain. One study found that up to 85% of the climate impact of Kenyan tea consumed in the United Kingdom arose at the consumer end - primarily from boiling water. This reframes the problem: tea’s emissions are distributed across every node, from smallholder



Japanese tea-farmers and researchers are breeding & selecting climate-resilient tea varieties.

plot to kitchen kettle. Responses are emerging - drought-tolerant cultivars in Darjeeling, solar energy in Kenyan processing units, and FAO-led initiatives targeting the 30% of tea-growing areas at risk by 2050. Yet smallholder farmers, who contribute 70% of global volume, remain structurally marginalised in a value chain where blending and branding capture most of the returns. Climate adaptation without equity is adaptation for the buyer, not the farmer.

This World Environment Day arrives as a threshold, not a commemoration. The tea plant is, in many ways, a living barometer of climatic health - its quality inseparable from the moisture in the air, the shade of the canopy, and the temperature of the soil at dawn. What climate change is doing to tea, it is doing to the conditions that made human civilisation possible. The theme’s quiet insistence - Inspired by Nature. For Climate. For Our Future - is a recognition that nature has already provided the template. The question, as UNEP frames it plainly, is what signal we choose to send in return.

(Abridged)



Khairul Alam Molla

*Climate & Sustainability Activist
Chicago, USA*



Guest Kettle

CHA, COUPONS AND THE CULT OF THE KHANSAMA

On the sacred rhythm of tea in an Indian newsroom

The newsroom is gone now - changed into something unrecognisable. What remains is the memory: the clatter, the deadline urgency, and underneath it all, the tea. Milky or black, oversweet or overboiled - but always indispensable. Ajoy John was among the last who remembered it this way. One of a final brigade who lived and worked inside The Statesman when it was still a giant - diminished by then, yes, but its legacy of fearless journalism intact, its moral authority unquestioned. They were its last custodians. And they knew it. You could tell by the tenderness with which they held on to every ritual.

The tea, above all.



The Statesman newsroom in the 1950s

There is a theory, never quite written down but observed by anyone who has spent time in an Indian newsroom, that the day's edition is not actually held together by editors. It is held together by cha.

Remove the cha and the whole structure collapses. The leader writer dries up mid-sentence. The chief sub develops a tremor. The night editor begins to make decisions of questionable judgement. But pour a cup of milky, over-boiled, possibly-too-sweet tea into the right hand at the right hour, and the front page falls into place as if by divine instruction.

In my years at The Statesman in Calcutta, this theological truth was administered by the Khansamas.

The word itself is wonderfully colonial. Khansama, the head cook of an English household, the man who ran the kitchen in those vast bungalows where someone was always being served something. By the time the title reached us, it had been demoted to

tea duty, but the dignity remained. Our Khansamas wore crisp white, peaked caps perched at a slight angle, and carried themselves with the unhurried gravity of men who knew the newsroom could not function without them. Kushanava Choudhury, who joined The Statesman fresh out of Princeton and later wrote The Epic City, noted that the paper's tea-and-kitchen staff belonged to a sub-economy older than the newspaper itself.

The pricing was a serious matter. Each cup cost 20 paise, payable in coupons. Not cash. Coupons. You bought a booklet at the start of the month, you guarded it like a passport, and you handed over one slip per cup. Lose your coupons and you were, briefly, a man without a country. Senior subs lent a coupon the way Wall Street lends overnight money, at interest payable in favours.

A cha round was not a delivery. It was theatre.

The Khansama arrived with the wooden tray balanced on the flat of one palm, held neck-high, the cups arranged in formation like a parade. He lowered it on to a corner table, never the centre, and began his tour. Down one aisle, around the desk of the chief sub, past reporters pretending to be busy, a cup set down beside each waiting hand. A coupon was plucked in return, no words, no eye contact. He swirled. There is no other word for it.

Every Khansama had a personal style. Some were gruff men who clearly considered sub-editors a tragic waste of good tea. Our favourite was a giant, over six feet tall, all smiles, gliding between desks with the cup-and-saucer trembling a foot above our

heads. When he arrived, the newsroom brightened. When the gruff one was on duty, copy was filed faster, mostly out of fear.

The hierarchy of tea was strictly maintained. Sub-editors got a cup. But the News Editor and the Editor, they got a service. A small porcelain kettle muffled by a tea cozy, a proper cup, a proper saucer, placed reverently within reach so the great man might pour for himself whenever the spirit moved him. And if he waved a hand, the Khansama poured too, with the solemnity of a butler. Twenty paise bought you tea. Rank bought you ceremony.

Elsewhere in India, the rituals differed. In Bombay, tea arrived not in a cup but in a cutting - half a glass of brutally hot, gingery masala chai pushed through the window by a chaiwala who knew the entire newsroom by first name and outstanding tab. In Delhi, the canteen kettle was the real assignment desk. The Press Club bar got the credit, but the kettle did the actual work.

Even the great editors had their tea legends. Khushwant Singh, who ran *The Illustrated Weekly* through the seventies, was famously found at Sujan Singh Park each morning on a wicker chair, hair washed and unfurled to dry in the sun, helping himself from a teapot on a teapoy beside him while reading the papers.

Tea also followed reporters into the field. Mark Tully, the BBC's South Asia bureau chief for twenty years, was so identifiable across the subcontinent that children chased him shouting his name. His colleague Subir Bhaumik once recounted being

mistaken for Tully at a chai stall near Hyderabad in Pakistan. Exasperated, Bhaumik replied, "Yes, I am Mark Tully!" The stall-holder, stirring his pan of tea, spoke a few sentences in Urdu, waited, and then announced calmly: "You're not Mark Tully. You don't speak Urdu." The tea, presumably, was excellent. The cover, instantly, was blown.

Nobody ever called it a tea break. There was no break. The cha came to you. You worked with a cup beside you, the saucer collecting cigarette ash, the spoon forgotten somewhere on page four. It was less a pause than a punctuation.

Indian newsrooms have changed since. The Khansamas have gone. The coupons have gone. In their place stand vending machines that produce a beige liquid, or paper cups of "green tea" carried in by health-conscious twenty-somethings who do not yet understand what they have lost.

But somewhere, in some surviving corner of some surviving paper, there is still a man in white, with a wooden tray held at neck level, swirling between desks at the appointed hour.

The page cannot go to print without him.



Ajoy John

*Former Sr. Journalist with
The Statesman*



The Statesman newsroom in the 1990s



Retro-Sip

TEA VS COLA IN THE NILGIRIS

First published twenty-five years ago in Contemporary Tea Time, late P. S. Sundar's Tea vs Cola in the Nilgiris captured a turning point when fizzy drinks began edging out the traditional cup. Republished today, it reminds us how marketing muscle challenged heritage - and why the tea industry's response still matters.



Tea vs cola

“Do you know what the South Indians’ traditional breakfast is?” I asked in the course of my lecture to the participants at the Commonwealth-funded programme on Advanced Management in Tea in January. “Idli, dosa, vada, pongal,” so went the list given by the managers and directors of tea plantation companies from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, but invariably, every one of them ended his list with tea or coffee.

“Yes, that used to be. But considering the way the traditional hotels are now listing their menus, it appears that cola has replaced tea or coffee”, I told them.

Annapoorna is a famous hotel chain in Tamil Nadu with headquarters in Coimbatore. Hailed to have revolutionised the traditional vegetarian food quality and service in the State, this chain has always been known for its supply of excellent coffee and tea. Now, influenced by the offer of cola, the hotel has introduced packages comprising idli / dosa / uppuma and so on with cola. Bold notices announce that along with the cola, the package comes at an attractively low tariff.

During this Christmas and New Year season, the Nilgiris known for its excellent cake and confectionery varieties, announced a free supply of cola in pet jars of varying sizes matching with the weight of the

cakes bought. No longer are the tea cakes, eaten with the afternoon tea famous - it is cake with cola, these days.

In front of the colleges in Tamil Nadu, one could see tea shops, which used to sell hot tea in disposable cups in the recent past, now selling colas - and other soft drinks. These drinks have now come in disposable paper cups, much to the liking of the youth, who buy them at relatively low cost with all their cooling effects, and conveniently chat around with the cola cup in their hands. These soft drink giants also prepare the paper cups with necessary monograms of their companies and products to attract the youth. All these tea shops can be seen decorated with colourful hoardings from the soft drink companies, which are an added attraction for these dingy outlets.

Soft drink companies have also made definite inroads into the cyber cafes which themselves are a new concept. “Sip and surf as much as you want”, says an advertisement in front of a cyber café. These were the same shops, which had advertised for coffee and tea in the recent past.

Even at dinners in the cold hilly places, colas and bottled soft drinks are the ones in supply - before, during and

after the main course - while a hot cup of tea or coffee is not a regular offering. At the Mariamman temple pooja celebrations in Tamil Nadu, which attract innumerable people from far and near, where colas or other soft drinks had been a rarity, these days one can get them everywhere. The only consolation is, in such places, tea and coffee have not totally vanished. So too, in the long-distance trains with pantry facilities. There is a definite share of soft drinks in the overall beverage consumption. The loss is, of course, to tea and coffee.

It would be suicidal to ignore this steady inroad the soft drinks make into the tea market. The manufacturers of these drinks clearly corner the young with attractive advertisements using their favourite cine or sports stars. In all such cases, the products are sold more for their attractions - advertisement presentations, bottlings, colourful labels and the atmosphere of the shops - rather than for the content.

This is a clear case of the youth having been bought by the soft drink manufacturers with marketing gimmicks. It proves their selling efficiency even as there is no scientific proof of the health effects of such soft drinks. All the same, it proves the marketing inefficiency of the tea industry, despite the many proven health benefits that tea enjoys.

Ten months have elapsed since the researchers from various parts of the world convinced the tea industrialists at the India International Millennium Tea Convention in New Delhi, that they could safely promote tea as a health drink. This forced the industrialists also to reverberate the venue with the rhetoric: Drink Tea and Stay Healthy. But, since then, nothing concrete has been done to promote tea as a health drink. Right now, the industry has announced that it is "planning" to start a generic promotion programme, from March 2001. Even now, the industry is not sure of the programme, as it is expecting fiscal assistance from the Tea Board, which, in turn, is waiting for a nod from the Government. Given the tight financial circumstances, it is doubtful if the Government would sanction any fund for such projects right now. For that matter, for many years now, a project of the Coffee Board for domestic promotion involving just Rs.30 crore spread over five years, is still not through.



So, unless the industry finds its own resources, there does not appear to be any favourable sign of it taking on the massive promotion efforts of the soft drink segment. The inordinate delay would mean a further erosion in consumption. Considering the per capita consumption in many other countries, it is clear that there is tremendous scope to increase the 660 gm in India, despite competition from other hot beverages or soft drinks. Even if the per capita consumption increases marginally, there would be a marked increase in the overall consumption of tea in the country. Besides, a study by the Kolkata-based Indian Institute of Management indicates that the rate of growth of the domestic consumption of tea has presently declined to 1.8 per cent per annum from 2.5 per cent in the past. All this goes to prove that the industry has not done serious work to promote tea against the competition from soft drinks and should this slackness continue for whatever reason, there would be much cause for regret.

Carbonated beverages have several ill-effects on health. Most unfortunately, these have fallen on deaf ears of the youth. But, what upsets the observers is that despite several health benefits highlighted by researchers, the tea industry has so far been unable to launch a promotional campaign. Researchers have proved that tea has anti-oxidant as well as anti-carcinogenic properties. In short, the argument is that there is nothing unhealthy in tea, even as there is nothing healthy in soft drinks!

But, the Indian tea industry has not capitalised on such findings. Foreign companies do try to encash these benefits. At the recent Health Ingredients Europe Exhibition and Conference organised by Miller Freeman, in Frankfurt, Germany, the Hamburg-based 121-year old tea trading company, Halsen & Lyon GmbH., displayed teas. A spokesperson explained, "We are participating in the Health Ingredients Exhibition because, we consider tea a health ingredient. It has anti-oxidant and anti-carcinogenic properties, besides being a cheer-drink." No Indian tea company was present at the meet.

At the same exhibition, Sri Lanka promoted its organic teas as health ingredients. A spokesperson said that organic teas made the teas as a whole, a much healthier drink. The South Indian tea industry, which always complains of stiff competition from Sri Lanka is yet to do this. So, these are instances of the foreign players already trying to capitalise on the health benefits, even as they face stiff competition from aerated soft drinks.

It is, therefore time the Indian tea industry - the south Indian counterpart included - took seriously to the task of promoting the health effects of tea and countered the campaign launched by the aerated soft drinks.

P. S. Sundar



Sardar Karnail Singh & Sons

Delivering Quality & Reliability
Since 1967

"SUPERTWIST" ROLLING TABLE

- » Single/Double Action 46" Rolling Table Asymmetric Well/Cone and Batten Type
- » Single/Double Action 36" Rolling Table Asymmetric Well/Cone and Batten Type
- » 30" Single Action Rolling Table
- » 24" Single Action Rolling Table
- » 18" Single Action Rolling Table
- » 15" Single Action Rolling Table



15" Single Action Rolling Table



18" Single Action Rolling Table



24" Single Action Rolling Table



30" Single Action Rolling Table



36" Single/Double Action Rolling Table



INDUSTRIAL GAS BURNERS

We offer complete range of burners designed for different applications such as for Withering Trough, Tea Dryer, etc. The choice of high quality components and superior design ensures a high level of reliability and efficient operations.

Manufacturers & Exporters of Green and Orthodox Tea Machinery

Office: A.T. Road, Opposite Thermal Tiniali, Dibrugarh, Assam-786001

Phone: +91 94351 31204, +91 94353 38170, +91 86383 88070

E-mail: info.skss67@gmail.com

HEAD OFFICE: DIBRUGARH, ASSAM



Cover Story

FROM COMMODITY TO CRAFT

The Rise of Speciality Tea Culture



A paradigm shift is brewing in the global tea trade. Driven by a new demographic demanding origin over anonymity and curated experiences over bulk convenience, the Indian tea industry is rewriting its century-old playbook. Moving from the auction floor to the boutique, producers are transforming the very definition of a premium cup. Freelance columnist Swapan Chakraborty takes us inside this radical pivot from high-volume CTC to high-value, artisanal storytelling - examining how forward-thinking estates and boutique brands are decoupling from volatile commodity markets to save their legacies and reclaim their narrative.

For over a century, the global narrative of tea was governed by a singular, unyielding metric: volume. The sprawling estates of Assam, the terraced hills of Darjeeling, and the emerald carpets of the Nilgiris were the engines of a vast, industrialised commodity machine. The leaf was plucked, processed via the crush-tear-curl (CTC) method, blended into anonymity, and shipped across oceans to fuel the waking hours of the world. Tea was a staple, not a statement. It was the ubiquitous, democratic beverage of the masses, traded by the ton and priced by the penny.

Today, that monolithic narrative is fracturing in the most beautiful of ways.

Across the globe, and particularly within the domestic Indian market, a quiet revolution is taking place. The tea industry is witnessing an unprecedented pivot from bulk commodity to curated craft. Driven by a confluence of changing consumer demographics, the saturation of the mass market, and the undeniable economic pressures on traditional plantation models, the future of the leaf is being rewritten. This is no longer merely an agricultural output; it is an artisanal experience, a lifestyle accessory, and a narrative-rich artefact.

A pan-continental shift is driving the demise of anonymity in the global tea trade

To understand this transformation, one must look beyond the borders of the subcontinent. The elevation of tea from a daily habit to an artisanal pursuit has long roots in East Asia. In Japan, the meticulous cultivation of shade-grown gyokuro and the ceremonial reverence for matcha have always commanded premium valuations. In Taiwan, high-mountain oolongs are treated with the same terroir-specific reverence as the finest Burgundy wines, with master roasters celebrated as artists.

What has changed in the past decade is the globalisation of this mindset. The Western consumer, historically accustomed to the uniform predictability of the teabag, has awakened to the nuances of

single-origin loose-leaf teas. The "Third Wave" coffee movement - which educated consumers on bean origins, roast profiles, and fair-trade sourcing - has paved the way for a parallel awakening in tea.

This global ripple effect has deeply impacted the Indian tea industry. For decades, India's finest orthodox teas were almost exclusively destined for export, prized by connoisseurs in Germany, Japan, and the UK, while the domestic market was left with the robust, milk-and-sugar-friendly CTC tea. But the barrier between the export-quality leaf and the domestic drinker has shattered. The Indian consumer is now demanding a seat at the connoisseur's table.

The Indian consumer renaissance

The catalyst for this domestic shift is undeniably demographic. India's younger, urban populations - Millennials and Generation Z - are fundamentally redefining consumption. Armed with disposable income, global exposure, and a deep-seated desire for authenticity, this demographic is turning its back on the homogenised brands of their parents' generation.

For the modern urbanite, a beverage must do more than simply caffeinate; it must resonate with their values. They are seeking out health, wellness, and mindful consumption. Green teas, white teas, and herbal infusions are leading the charge, but the interest runs deeper than simple category shifts. Today's consumer wants to know the provenance of their cup. They are asking questions that would have been unthinkable a generation ago: Which estate did this come from? Was it a first flush or an autumnal pluck? Is it ethically sourced?

In response, a vibrant ecosystem of direct-to-consumer (D2C) boutique tea brands has exploded across India. These agile startups are bypassing the traditional auction systems and multi-layered supply chains, sourcing directly from estates and blending facilities. They are offering curated portfolios: silver needles from the misty peaks of Darjeeling, smoky black teas from the deepest corners of Assam, and delicate green



teas from the Kangra valley. By democratising access to premium orthodox and speciality teas, these brands have transformed the domestic market from a dumping ground for inferior leaf into a highly lucrative frontier for craft tea.

Case story: The D2C disrupter - Vahdam India and the premiumisation of origin

The context: For decades, the finest Indian teas were exported in bulk and branded by European or British conglomerates, leaving the Indian producer out of the premium value realisation.

The Case: Founded in 2015 by Bala Sarda - a fourth-generation tea entrepreneur - Vahdam India fundamentally disrupted this colonial-era supply chain. Operating on a Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) model, Vahdam bypasses traditional auction houses and myriad middlemen. They procure directly from over 100 estates across Darjeeling, Assam, the Nilgiris, and Kangra.

The craft element: Vahdam's core value proposition is "garden freshness." By vacuum-packaging the tea within days of plucking at their centralised facility in the NCR region, they preserve the volatile aromatic compounds usually lost during months of sea transit. Furthermore, Vahdam leaned heavily into storytelling, highlighting the specific estates and the "face of the farmer."

The impact: By transforming a perishable agricultural commodity into a globally recognised wellness and lifestyle brand (famously making Oprah Winfrey's "Favorite Things" list multiple times), Vahdam proved that an Indian brand could command ultra-premium prices on the global stage. They also pioneered sustainability in the craft sector, becoming the first

tea brand in Asia to achieve both Climate Neutral and Plastic Neutral certifications.

Unlocking the alchemy of the leaf through artisanal processing and terroir

At the heart of the speciality tea movement is a profound respect for the leaf itself, treating it as a canvas rather than a raw material. This marks a return to artisanal processing methods that require immense skill, intuition, and labour.

Speciality tea is defined by its terroir - the unique combination of soil, altitude, climate, and topography that imparts a distinct character to the leaf. A first flush Darjeeling from a specific north-facing slope will taste markedly different from one plucked on a southern slope just a mile away. The commodity market ignores these nuances, blending them away into consistency. The craft market celebrates them.

We are seeing estates experimenting wildly to capture these premium markets. In Assam, traditionally the bastion of heavy CTC, visionary planters are dedicating sections of their estates to producing handcrafted, golden-tipped orthodox teas that rival the best of China's Yunnan province. We are witnessing the rise of rare Indian white teas, plucked only by moonlight to prevent the sun from initiating premature oxidation. We see the introduction of purple tea cultivars, rich in anthocyanins, catering to the health-conscious connoisseur.

This level of artisanal processing is inherently anti-industrial. It requires a gentle hand, precise temperature control during withering and rolling, and a master's instinct for oxidation. The yield is tiny,



The tea library at Leopold's of London in Abu Dhabi

but the value realisation is exponential. When tea is sold not by the ton, but by the fifty-gram tin, the economics of the estate undergo a radical transformation.

Case story: The alchemy of the auction - Assam's quest for the golden leaf.

The context: Assam has historically been synonymous with heavy, malty CTC teas designed for volume. However, the push toward speciality teas has led to fierce, artisanal competition among select estates, culminating in record-shattering auction prices.

The case: A paradigm shift became undeniably visible at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) between 2021 and 2024. Estates moved beyond standard orthodox teas to produce highly experimental micro-batches.

The craft element: In 2022, Pabhojan Organic Tea Estate (Assam) made global headlines when its "Pabhojan Gold Tea" sold for an astounding ₹1,00,000 (approx. \$1,200) per kilogram to Essel Tea Boutique. This tea was not produced via traditional machinery; it was meticulously hand-plucked from specific, rare clones and sun-dried to yield a liquor with a uniquely bright, golden hue and a complex, honeyed flavour profile. Similarly, the Donyi Polo Tea Estate in neighboring Arunachal Pradesh has consistently broken records with its "Golden Needles" and "Purple Tea" cultivars, fetching upwards of ₹75,000 per kg. Recently Dhekiajuli sold a line-crafted BP at ₹1,103 per kg in the Guwahati auction.

The impact: These micro-batches represent a fraction of total output, but they serve a massive strategic purpose. They act as "halo products," elevating the brand equity of the entire estate, proving that Assam's terroir is capable of producing luxury artisanal teas that rival the finest white and yellow teas of China.

Storytelling brews the currency of craft

If terroir and processing are the body of speciality

tea, storytelling is its soul. In the transition from commodity to craft, the narrative woven around the tea becomes as crucial as the liquor in the cup. This is where the intersection of lifestyle and industry is most apparent.

Premiumisation relies heavily on emotional engagement. Consumers are not merely buying dried leaves; they are buying a piece of heritage, a moment of tranquility, or a connection to an ancient landscape. The most successful boutique brands and progressive estates understand that marketing speciality tea is an exercise in high-end brand alchemy.

The aesthetics of packaging have evolved from utilitarian cardboard boxes to minimalist, tactile tins and biodegradable pouches adorned with elegant typography and botanical illustrations. But the story goes beyond the visual. It is about transparency and connection. Highlighting the "face of the farmer," detailing the history of a century-old estate, or describing the specific meteorological conditions of a harvest year elevates the product.

When a brand describes a Darjeeling muscatel as "plucked during the brief, misty window of the second flush, capturing the essence of the Himalayan spring," they are employing a vocabulary borrowed from fine wine and high fashion. They are transforming an agricultural product into an aspirational lifestyle choice. The leaf becomes a medium for cultural expression.

The Sommelier and the tasting culture

As the product elevates, so too does the culture of consumption. The speciality tea movement has birthed a new professional class: the tea

sommelier. Much like their counterparts in the wine industry, these experts are trained to deconstruct the flavour profile of a tea, identifying notes of stone fruit, roasted nuts, petrichor, or orchids.

This has led to the emergence of tasting rooms, high-end tea lounges, and experiential retail spaces



Herbal tea ingredients

in metropolitan centers from Mumbai to London, from New York to Shanghai. In these spaces, tea is not hurriedly poured from a metal pot. It is brewed with theatrical precision. Water temperatures are measured to the degree; steeping times are timed to the second; speciality teaware - from Yixing clay pots to delicate glass gaiwans - is utilised to extract the perfect liquor.

This tasting culture serves a dual purpose. It educates the consumer, giving them the vocabulary to appreciate the nuances of what they are drinking, and it justifies the premium price tag. It transforms the act of drinking tea from a passive habit into an active, mindful ritual - a much-needed antidote to the hyper-connected, fast-paced modern world.

The immersive origin experience of destination tea

The ultimate expression of this lifestyle narrative is the rise of tea tourism. Just as oenophiles flock to Bordeaux or Napa Valley, tea enthusiasts are now embarking on pilgrimages to the source. The tea estate is no longer a closed-off agricultural factory; it is a destination.

Across India, Sri Lanka, and East Africa, historic plantation bungalows have been meticulously restored and converted into boutique luxury lodges. These properties offer an immersive experience that intimately connects the consumer with the craft. Guests wake to the mist rolling over the bushes, walk the fields alongside the pluckers, witness the midnight withering in the factory, and participate in professional tasting sessions with the estate managers.

Tea tourism closes the loop between the producer and the consumer. When a visitor spends three days understanding the backbreaking labour, the reliance on unpredictable weather, and the sheer artistry required to produce a single kilo of hand-rolled silver needles, the price of that tea ceases to be a consideration. They have become brand ambassadors, emotionally invested in the survival and success of the estate. It is a powerful revenue stream that diversifies the plantation's income and elevates the global prestige of the region's output.

Case story: Closing the loop - Glenburn Tea Estate and the destination model

The context: As tea estates face squeezing margins from rising labour costs and climate change, diversifying revenue streams through high-end hospitality has become a viable survival strategy.

The case: The Glenburn Tea Estate, perched in the Himalayas overlooking the River Rungeet in Darjeeling, is the benchmark for immersive tea tourism in India. Owned by the Prakash family (the "Chaiwalas," with a tea lineage dating back to 1914), Glenburn transformed a working plantation into a world-class boutique luxury hotel.

The craft element: Glenburn does not merely offer a scenic view; it offers an education in craft. Guests are taken on the "Tea Experience" - walking through the *Camellia sinensis* fields, learning the nuances of "two leaves and a bud," visiting the factory to witness the withering, rolling, and oxidation processes, and concluding with a professional, multi-flush tasting session led by the estate manager.



The impact: By operating at the intersection of luxury hospitality and agriculture, Glenburn turns consumers into lifelong brand ambassadors. The estate creates an emotional and sensory anchor to their specific terroir. Guests who have walked the fields and understand the labour behind the leaf are far more likely to pay premium D2C prices for Glenburn's speciality flushes long after they have returned home.

Navigating the economic imperative for survival in a changing climate

While the aesthetic and cultural shifts toward speciality tea are fascinating, it is vital to recognise that this transition is also born of stark economic necessity. The traditional plantation model - heavily reliant on large labour forces and bulk CTC production - is facing an existential crisis.

The cost of production is rising inexorably, driven by wages, fuel, and the spiraling costs of inputs. Simultaneously, the realities of climate change are ravaging traditional growing regions. Unpredictable rainfall, prolonged droughts, and rising temperatures are impacting both the yield and the quality of the harvest. In this squeeze between rising costs and flatlined bulk commodity prices at the auction block, the traditional volume game is becoming a race to the bottom.

Speciality tea offers a lifeline. By pivoting a portion of their production to high-value, artisanal orthodox and speciality teas, estates can decouple themselves from the brutal economics of the commodity market. It requires significant investment - in training labour for fine plucking, in specialised factory equipment, and in marketing - but the return on investment can be the difference between bankruptcy and long-term viability.

However, this transition is not without its challenges. The market for ultra-premium tea, while growing, remains niche compared to the ocean of mass-market consumption. The challenge for the industry lies in scaling the ethos of speciality tea - quality, transparency, and narrative - without losing the exclusivity that drives its value.

The future in the cup belongs to the craft

The journey from commodity to craft is arguably the most significant evolution in the tea trade since the invention of the CTC machine. It represents a return to the leaf's origins as an object of reverence and artistry, updated for the modern global economy.

For the Indian tea industry, this shift is a profound opportunity to reclaim its narrative. By embracing

artisanal processing, championing terroir, and mastering the art of storytelling, India can position itself not just as the world's largest producer of black tea, but as the premier destination for the world's finest luxury teas.

The younger generations have made their preferences clear. They want a beverage that tells a story, respects the environment, and delivers a complex, curated experience. As the dust settles on the era of anonymity, the future belongs to the craft. The leaf has awakened, and the world is finally taking the time to taste it.



Swapan Chakraborty
Freelance columnist



Flavour from far

THE NEW TEA PARTY

The rise of Speciality Tea in America

Tea didn't just enter America's wellness era; it entered its aesthetic era. What was once a quiet pantry staple is now part ritual, part identity, part social currency. Speciality tea succeeds because it offers something modern consumers increasingly crave: a product that feels simultaneously healthy, indulgent, and deeply personal. In a culture obsessed with customisation and curation, tea has become less of a beverage and more of a lifestyle language - one matcha whisk, boba order, and hibiscus glow-up at a time. Suchetana G. Guha beautifully captures the flavour of this new kid on the block in the USA, tracing how tea transformed itself from a humble household habit into one of America's most stylish new obsessions.

Somewhere between the morning coffee run and the evening glass of wine, America found a new little luxury: tea. Not the forgotten box of black tea tucked behind the cinnamon in the pantry. Not the sad paper cup of lukewarm office brew. This is tea with a wardrobe, a mood board, and possibly a TikTok account. It is matcha whisked into cloud-like foam, hibiscus iced tea glowing ruby-red in a glass, milk tea crowned with chewy pearls, and loose-leaf oolong sold like fine perfume. In other words, tea has had a glow-up.

For a country long understood as coffee's most loyal admirer, the rise of speciality tea feels almost deliciously unexpected. But today's tea drinker is no longer satisfied with "just tea." She wants a story. He wants a ritual. They want lavender, adaptogens, yuzu, oat milk, ceremonial-grade matcha, ethically sourced leaves, and a cup that looks fabulous on Instagram.

Speciality tea's rise is partly a wellness story, but not the boring kind where everyone pretends to enjoy drinking something that tastes like boiled lawn clippings. Modern tea has mastered the art of being both virtuous and glamorous. Green tea, black tea, and herbal infusions are increasingly marketed as beverages that can support calm, focus, sleep, digestion, or immunity. Harvard's Nutrition Source notes that tea is rich in polyphenols and that observational research has linked moderate tea consumption with lower risks of certain chronic diseases, though it also cautions that more research is needed and that extremely hot tea may carry risks. Translation: tea has enough wellness credibility to feel smart, but enough flavour and ritual to feel indulgent.

That balance is exactly where speciality tea thrives. Mintel's 2026 discussion of global tea trends points to sustainability,

America goes special

with specialiTea, folks!

health benefits, diverse ingredients, and new drinking occasions as key drivers in the evolving tea market. It also notes that in the U.S., flavour is crucial because many tea drinkers are looking for more exciting taste experiences. This explains why the tea aisle now resembles a boutique beauty counter. Chamomile is no longer simply chamomile; it is “sleep support.” Green tea is blended with mango, jasmine, mint, or turmeric. Earl Grey comes dressed with lavender. Hibiscus arrives with ginger and sparkling water, looking like it should be carried down a runway.

And then there is matcha, the reigning supermodel of the speciality tea universe. Electric green, photogenic, and slightly mysterious, matcha did what few traditional beverages have done: it became both ancient and extremely online. The Associated Press reported in 2025 that U.S. retail sales of matcha were up 86% from three years earlier, driven by global demand, social media visibility, and interest in wellness-oriented beverages. Matcha’s appeal is obvious. It has caffeine, but not the frantic edge of a triple espresso. It has ritual, but not stiffness. It can be traditional, served simply with hot water, or modern, iced with strawberry foam and oat milk. It is tea as an accessory: elegant, energising, and camera-ready.

The rise of speciality tea is also a story of cultural crossover. Bubble tea, or boba, has helped introduce many Americans, especially younger consumers, to tea as something playful, customisable, and social. In place of the old “cream and sugar?” question, boba shops ask: sweetness level? ice level? tapioca

pearls? lychee jelly? taro foam? Suddenly, tea is not merely a drink; it is a design project. Grand View Research estimated the U.S. bubble tea market at \$953.36 million in 2023 and projected it to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 9.5% from 2024 to 2030. That growth reflects more than novelty. It shows how tea has moved from the quiet kitchen to the social marketplace, from grandmotherly comfort to Gen Z self-expression.

Speciality food experts have noticed the same cultural shift. The Speciality Food Association’s 2024 trend predictions highlighted black sesame, ube, and milk tea as Asian flavours following matcha into broader American familiarity. This is important because speciality tea is not rising in isolation. It is riding a larger wave of American curiosity about global flavours, texture, colour, and experience. A milk tea doughnut, a hojicha latte, or an ube-infused tea drink is not just a beverage choice. It is a tiny edible passport.

Even iced tea, that most classic American porch drink, has become newly polished. Once associated mainly with pitchers, lemon slices, and Southern afternoons, iced tea now appears in cold-brew formats, sparkling cans, botanical blends, and drive-through speciality chains. Texas-born HTeaO, for example, has built a fast-growing business around premium iced tea, offering more than 25 flavours and expanding beyond its home state. This suggests that speciality tea does not always need to be delicate or ceremonial. Sometimes it is bold, sweet, cold, and



sold by the gallon.

Another reason for speciality tea's rise is its flexibility. Coffee has a strong personality; tea has a full closet. It can be hot or iced, caffeinated or caffeine-free, minimalist or maximalist, morning ritual or midnight wind-down. A single category can include smoky lapsang souchong, floral jasmine pearls, earthy puerh, lemon ginger herbal tea, sparkling yerba mate, chai concentrate, and bottled peach oolong. In an era when consumers want personalisation in nearly everything, from skincare to streaming algorithms, tea is beautifully customisable.

The premiumisation of tea also mirrors what happened to coffee years ago. Once Americans learned to discuss roast levels, origin, acidity, and brewing methods, it was only a matter of time before tea received the same treatment. Loose-leaf tea shops now speak the language of terroir and harvest. Packaging tells stories of mountain gardens, small farmers, organic certification, and plastic-free sachets. Grand View Research estimated the global organic tea market at \$704.7 million in 2024 and projected strong growth through 2030, citing demand for natural and organic products as a major factor. The modern tea drinker is not just buying leaves; she is buying provenance, purity, and a sense of thoughtful consumption.

Still, the charm of tea's American rise is that it has not lost its softness. Coffee often announces itself. Tea whispers, then somehow takes over the room. It invites slowness without demanding it. It can be a five-minute pause between Zoom calls, a pastel drink in a college-town boba shop, a wellness ritual before bed, or a sparkling hibiscus can tossed into a tote bag before Pilates. It belongs equally to the café, the pantry, the car cupholder, and the carefully curated kitchen shelf.

So, is speciality tea America's next great beverage obsession? The answer is already steeping. The numbers show a broad base of tea drinkers. The trends show a hunger for wellness, flavour, ritual, and global inspiration. The cafés show lines for matcha. The grocery shelves show hibiscus, turmeric, chai, oolong, and cold-brew tea multiplying like fashion-week invitations.

Tea, once the quiet guest at America's beverage table, has become the one everyone wants to sit beside. It is elegant without being uptight, healthy without being joyless, and trendy without feeling entirely new. In its speciality era, tea has become a mood: a little ancient, a little modern, and very much ready for its close-up.



Suchetana Ghosh (Guha)
Cincinnati, USA



TEA TIME, REIMAGINED

Gen Z's new rituals

Tea, the quintessential beverage, has long been adored and admired - as a ritual, a treasured break, and a cultural anchor. For Gen Z, though, the cup carries fresh meaning. No longer bound to porcelain pots and quiet afternoons, tea is a playground of bubble pearls, matcha lattes, sparkling infusions, and wellness blends.

This shift is less about taste than identity. Gen Z treats tea as a lifestyle and statement, weaving sustainability, aesthetics, and social media into every sip. Cafés become stages, mugs become props, and brewing becomes a performance of values. Tradition isn't discarded - it's remixed: chai meets cold brew, and heritage meets innovation. Here, Swarupa Das explores how a centuries-old drink is being reshaped by the youngest consumers - and what their rituals reveal about culture today. Tea time is no longer about the clock but about the moment, the mood, and the message.

For generations, tea has been far more than just a beverage in Indian cities like Kolkata, it has been the rhythm of daily life, the silent witness to endless conversations, and the soul of the city's famed adda culture. From roadside stalls serving steaming cups of cha in humble bhars (clay cups) to artisanal blends now poured into café mugs, the story of tea is inseparable from the story of urban India itself.

Kolkata's love affair with tea once defined its cultural heartbeat. The city's colonial past, intellectual legacy, and bustling street life converged at countless cha stalls that lined every lane and crossing. These small, smoky shacks were the true cafés of the people - where office clerks, poets, rickshaw pullers, professors, and shopkeepers came together over strong, milky tea brewed with generous helpings of sugar. Here, conversations flowed as freely as the tea. Politics, cricket, cinema, and philosophy - all found a place in these spontaneous circles of discussion. The adda, a quintessentially Bengali tradition of unhurried, free-flowing conversation, transformed these roadside stalls into microcosms of the city's intellect and warmth. A single cup of cha could stretch into an hour-long debate, turning every street corner into a debating hall.

By the mid-2010s, Kolkata's tea culture had begun to evolve. While the bhar and glass tumbler continued to symbolise comfort and community, a new wave of cafés and modern tea lounges emerged across Park Street, Salt Lake, New Town, and South Kolkata. These establishments introduced green teas, herbal infusions, and exotic blends, catering to a younger, more health-conscious clientele. Their presence has been on the rise across the district towns. Yet,



Matcha boba tea

even as tea adapted to changing tastes, it remained deeply rooted in familiarity and nostalgia. Tea was still the chosen beverage for guests, still the morning ritual, still the rain-soaked companion on monsoon evenings. The soul of the city's tea culture lay in its ability to modernise without losing its sense of belonging.



Today, however, the cultural canvas is changing once more. Among Gen Z in metros and even tier-2 and tier-3 cities, time has become the rarest luxury. The fast pace of modern life - tight schedules, start-up working hours, and the omnipresence of smartphones - has shrunk the leisure once devoted to leisurely tea breaks.

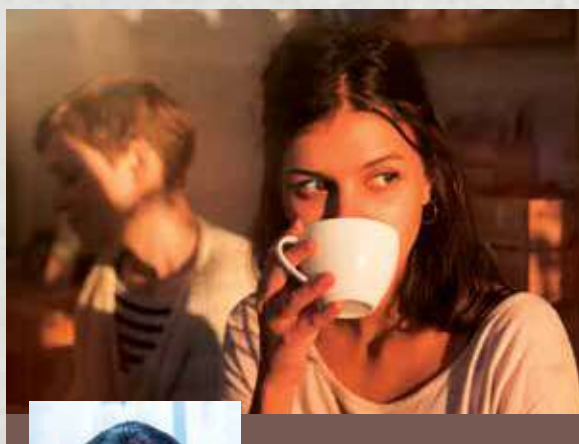
Traditional addas at roadside tea stalls now compete with Instagram-friendly cafés and co-working lounges. The new generation enjoys its tea differently - often as an accompaniment to work, solitude, or a selfie. The social aspect of tea drinking, once defined by passionate, face-to-face debate, now increasingly lives online through digital comment threads and group chats. While café culture has introduced innovation and variety, it has also replaced the spontaneity of the old cha stall. In the quiet disappearance of the tea-stall adda lies a subtle shift in our collective lifestyle. Conversations that once thrived in open air and shared cups are now condensed into hurried exchanges or distant digital messages.

Yet, all is not lost. Across cities and small towns, there are still pockets where the adda spirit endures - inside university canteens, in late-night hostels, on park benches, and in small modern tea houses that merge nostalgia with novelty. The bhar and the paper cup now coexist, each holding within them a different story of how India drinks and thinks.

In our pursuit of speed and sophistication, perhaps it's time to pause - just long enough for another cup - and remember that tea has always been more than a drink. It is a pause, a bridge, and a quiet act of connection.



Tencha matcha and Hojicha green tea



Swarupa Das
Contemporary Brokers,
Kolkata



WHY FRESHNESS FEELS DIFFERENT

Mass-produced vs single-origin tea



In tea, freshness is not merely a characteristic - it is an experience. It reveals itself in the aroma that rises when a pack is opened, in the brightness of the liquor, and in the clarity of flavour carried through every sip. Yet not all teas express freshness in the same way.

A key distinction often lies in how the tea is sourced and produced.

Mass-produced teas are designed around consistency and scale. Typically blended from multiple gardens, regions, and harvest periods, they are crafted to maintain a uniform taste profile throughout the year. This approach serves an important purpose: it offers reliability to consumers who expect the same familiar cup every time. However, in the pursuit of consistency, the immediacy and vibrancy of a fresh harvest can sometimes become muted.

Single-origin teas, by contrast, are deeply rooted in a specific place and season. They originate from one garden, one harvest period, and often even a particular section of an estate. As a result, they carry a distinct sense of character - reflecting the climate, soil, altitude, and craftsmanship associated with

that precise plucking season. When processed and packed closer to the source, such teas often retain more of their natural aromatic compounds, lending the cup a fresher and more expressive profile.

Another important factor is the journey from garden to consumer. Mass-produced teas often pass through longer supply chains that involve blending, bulk storage, and extensive distribution networks, all of which can gradually soften their original character. Single-origin teas, meanwhile, are often handled in smaller batches, enabling a quicker transition from garden to cup and helping preserve their freshness and individuality.

That said, the discussion is not about one category being inherently superior to the other. Both fulfil different needs and preferences. Mass-produced teas provide familiarity, affordability, and accessibility, while single-origin teas offer seasonality, nuance, and a deeper connection to terroir.

For tea drinkers willing to look beyond the everyday cup, recognising these subtle differences in freshness can open an entirely new dimension of appreciation. Sometimes, tea is not just about flavour - it is about experiencing a fleeting moment in time, captured in a leaf.



Ena Bandyopadhyay
Contemporary Brokers,
Siliguri

INTRODUCING

3 Unique Offerings of Ascendant

Humidification

EMC Cooling System

Water Jetting Cleaning

Humidification



sangyabs.in

We specialise in advanced humidification systems designed exclusively for the tea industry. We also provide customised tailor-made humidification system by integrating state-of-the-art technology.

ADVANTAGES

- Effective Humidification (up to 99 %) humidity by maintaining the optimal RH level in the air.
- Provides effective cooling without wetting the floor
- Auto control system with sensors, keep stable and suitable indoor environment
- Nano Iron Removal filtration system
- No leakage
- Easy Maintenance
- No bacterial contamination
- Power & Water Saving
- Adequate air exchange
- Specialised Nozzles
- High-Performance Fans
- Efficient Pumps.

EMC Cooling System



We proudly introduce the advanced EMC Cooling System, designed to deliver a temperature reduction of up to 10°C below ambient conditions. This breakthrough innovation plays a critical role in enhancing tea quality by optimising the CTC cooling process.

The EMC system intelligently draws in ambient air and processes it through a proprietary electromagnetic cooling mechanism. Within the unit, warm air is efficiently transformed into cooled air. The system then channels this cooled air directly into the CTC roller or connected ducting without losing any moisture, ensuring precise and consistent temperature control.

Water Jetting Cleaning



INDI CLEANS We introduce Water Jetting Cleaning (or hydro jetting) uses high-pressure water to remove grease, grime, sludge, and debris from pipes, surfaces, and industrial equipment.

ASCENDANT ENTERPRISE

+91 80131 33303 / 98319 97594
corporate@ascendanthumidification.com

ADVERTISE

**ADVERTISE FOR
TOP-OF-THE-MIND
AWARENESS
(TOMA)
WITH INDIA'S
DEFINITIVE
TEA VOICE.**

For over three and a half decades, Contemporary Tea Time has been the trusted voice of India's prestigious tea industry, shaping conversations and uniting its leaders. Imagine your message resonating with this discerning community, the very individuals at the forefront of the trade.

So, advertise with CTT and reach the apex of the tea industry and brew your success with Contemporary Tea Time.

Advertising Tariffs

COLOUR

Back Cover	Rs. 38,000 / US\$ 455
Front Inside Left Gate Fold	Rs. 28,000 / US\$ 335
Inside Front Cover	Rs. 25,000 / US\$ 300
Inside Back Cover	Rs. 25,000 / US\$ 300
Front Inside Right Gate Fold	Rs. 22,000 / US\$ 263
1st Normal Page	Rs. 19,000 / US\$ 228
Normal Full Page	Rs. 16,000 / US\$ 192
Centre Spread	Rs. 31,000 / US\$ 371
Half Page	Rs. 9,000 / US\$ 108

Black and White

Normal Full Page	Rs. 14,000 / US\$ 168
Half Page	Rs. 7,000 / US\$ 84

Ad Material Specifications (Ad Specs)

Frequency : Quarterly

Language : English

Material Required : Hi-Res PDF/EPS/TIFF for Colour
Advertisement & B/W Advertisements

Lead Time : 30 days prior to the date of issue

Bleed Advertisement : Must allow extra margin of 0.3 cm
on all sides for trimming.

B/W advertisements are not accepted in bleed size.

For details, contact

P K Ghosh

Contemporary Tea Time

Editorial & Marketing Office

Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd.

1, Old Court House Corner, 2nd Floor
Kolkata – 700 001, West Bengal, India

T +91 033 2230 7241/7242

M +91 98304 54544

E pkg@contemporary.co.in

U www.contemporarybrokers.com



SUBSCRIPTION



BROADEN YOUR TEA INDUSTRY INSIGHT

2 Years of Contemporary Tea Time for Just Rs.500/-

For over three and a half decades, Contemporary Tea Time has been the trusted source for comprehensive coverage of everything that keeps the world revolving around Indian tea. Don't just read about it - truly understand it. Subscribe now for only Rs 500/- and enjoy a special 2-year offer with insightful issues.

Own your connection to the heart of Indian tea.

For more, email

pkg@contemporary.co.in

Phone

+91 9830454544

Editorial and Marketing Office

Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd.

1 Old Court House Corner, 2nd Floor Kolkata 700001

To subscribe, please scan the QR code below or draw cheques/DD in favour of Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd.

payable at Kolkata, India and send it to

The Editorial Co-ordinator

Contemporary Tea Time

Editorial & Marketing Office

Contemporary Brokers Pvt. Ltd.

1, Old Court House Corner, Kolkata – 700 001

West Bengal, India

www.contemporarybrokers.com

For online payments details as follows : Account Name

CONTEMPORARY BROKERS PVT. LTD.

Bank Name

HDFC Bank Limited

Branch

Stephen House, 4, B. B. D. Bag East
Kolkata – 700 001

Account No

00080350003794

RTGS/NEFT IFSC

HDFC0000008

Swift Code

HDFCINBBXXX

“
I LOVE
READING MY
CONTEMPORARY
TEA TIME
”

SUBSCRIPTION RATE

INDIA

1 year Rs. 300

2 years Rs. 500

OVERSEAS

1 year US \$ 30

2 years US \$ 50



For subscription, please scan QR code





Targetea

INDIA'S TEA

Time for a premium awakening

India's roadsides hum with chaiwallahs pouring the nation's heartbeat, yet this humble brew - once an aristocratic import - now chains its own industry to low margins. As coffee lattes command café premiums and China's Chagee redefines tea as a billion-dollar luxury, can India awaken its leaf to claim the lifestyle throne it deserves? Saurav Nandi offers here his prudent take on the possibility of a transformation.

In the mid-19th century, British planters established tea plantations in India to break China's monopoly, targeting European markets over domestic ones. Over decades, they orchestrated a multichannel campaign - blending marketing, infrastructure, and habit-forming tactics - to turn tea from export commodity into an Indian household ritual. Ads fused colonial ideals of cleanliness and civility with local imagery, making tea aspirational yet accessible. Practical promotions accelerated adoption: demo stalls at fairs, bazaars, and railway platforms taught a simple boil-with-milk-and-sugar recipe; free premeasured leaf samples with instructions hooked trial users into routine buys. Planters sustained chaiwallahs with subsidised leaves on favourable terms, tethering tea to low prices. This cheap-refreshment model embedded tea in the national psyche - but also forged the commodity trap stifling value today.

Chai built India's domestic tea sector, yet fixation on this format caps its potential. Consider a workweek: four daily cups total 24 by Friday - ₹240 at roadside rates. That same ₹240 buys one café coffee on weekends. This gap reveals accessibility and perception woes. Quality tea is scarce, and most spots lack brewing expertise to showcase its true flavour. Consumer demand drives the divide: "tea" still means cheap chai, born in an era of low incomes as the democratic drink - affordable, energising, ubiquitous. India's per capita GDP has surged over 30-fold since independence, with tastes shifting to premium experiences. Yet tea clings to its

roadside identity, while coffee claims lifestyle status via cappuccinos and lattes.

Coffee's arc offers a blueprint. Its "second wave" elevated it from commodity to culture - prioritising roast profiles, birthing the modern café, and scaling brands with new lingo (lattes, frappuccinos). This pivoted from volume to margins, especially via cold drinks: Starbucks now draws nearly three-quarters of sales from chilled formats, up from a third in 2013. Cold beverages enable customisation, larger sizes, higher prices, and appeal to Gen Z and millennials. In India, Café Coffee Day sparked this café culture, redefining coffee for a generation. Tea now teeters on a similar cusp - ready to evolve from staple to lifestyle driver, mirroring coffee's global reshape.

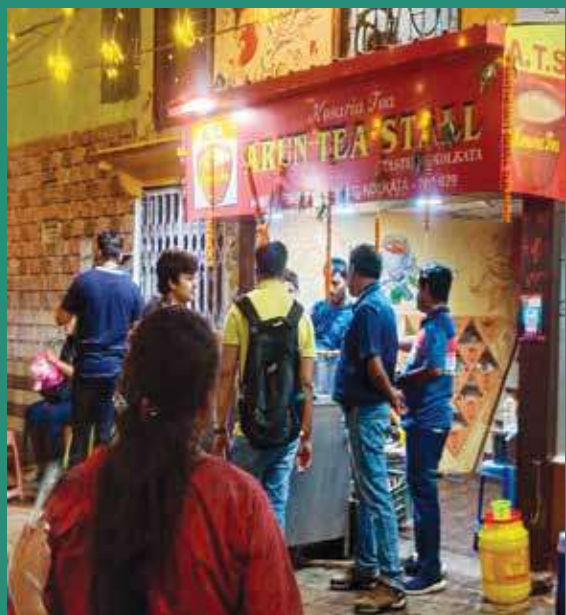
Matcha lattes chart tea's path forward. Once Japan's elite ritual, matcha exploded into a \$4-billion commodity by 2025, more likely in to-go cups than ceramic bowls - straining Japan's supply. Starbucks ignited the frenzy

with its Green Tea Latte. China's "New Tea" wave accelerates this: brands like Chagee dismantle commodity views, betting on chilled formats like Starbucks. They've recast tea as high-performance refreshment - severing hot-ritual ties for sophisticated, health-forward alternatives to speciality coffee. Chagee's Jasmine Green Milk Tea, a

clean-label cold latte with transparent calories, leads this shift from low-margin trading to premium luxury. These titans storm West: Mixue alone doubles Tata Consumer's revenue (tea, Starbucks JV, full FMCG); Chagee hits \$1.7 billion, dwarfing Indian D2C like Vahdam and Teabox.



A traditional Japanese tea gathering



India must break its dormancy - reclaiming tea as aspirational, shoulder-to-shoulder with coffee giants and East Asian innovators. Shift from stalls and kitchens to high-street cafés and artisanal bars. Wake up and smell the coffee, literally: while we hailed tea as the commoner's brew, disruptors made it the modern luxury. Fuse Indian iconography - opera masks for Chagee - with modern minimalism for a Starbucks-rival "third space." We boast heritage, biodiversity, stories; we lack audacity. Claim café-menu real estate with cold brews, artisanal kombuchas, and craft beyond chai.

This demands more than marketing: industrialise brewing for precision and professionalise "tea baristas" with espresso-like speed, theater, and science. Elevate chai itself - like lattes did black coffee - via a dual track: tradition as heartbeat, craft as economic engine. Evolve to sophisticated wellness (Matcha-style function, East Asian chic), or cede to coffee. Irony bites: the world premiumises our turmeric lattes and chai, while we export bulk in colonial shadow. Reclaim the narrative East-style - targeting affluent aspirants lost to matcha. This isn't reinvention; it's restoration to tea's aristocratic roots, a 21st-century imperative.



Saurav Nandi
Director, Topical Tea



THE GREAT INDIAN DUNK

There is nothing more British or, by now, fiercely Indian than sitting down with a steaming cup of tea and biscuits. While etiquette frowns on it, a new study reveals that 80 percent of us confess to dunking, with 38 percent doing so often. This beloved ritual dates back to the 16th century.

*Beyond the cup lies a ritual woven into everyday life - explore Asmita's *The Great Indian Dunk* for a retrospective on the world's most democratic obsession.*

There is an unwritten rule that governs tea drinking in India. The chai may vary - brewed at home on a quiet afternoon, poured at a frantic roadside tapri, or served during a hurried office break. It may be strong or light, spiked with ginger or cardamom, or simply boiled to a deep amber to shake off sleep. But almost everywhere, one thing stays constant: there is usually a biscuit nearby. It sits beside the cup as it has always belonged there, turning a simple beverage break into an essential moment of pause. We reach for it without thinking, breaking it mid-conversation or dipping it into the hot liquid, waiting for that brief moment when it softens just enough without collapsing.

This combination of "chai + biscuit" has transcended habit to become the unofficial national pastime. From evening tea after school to a quick break during stressful office hours, or sharing a pack with strangers on a crowded commuter train, biscuits have become an intrinsic part of our everyday rhythm, rather than an occasional indulgence. The Indian habit of dunking biscuits in chai is a beloved cultural ritual and a source of profound emotional comfort. Yet, looking back, this pairing was never actually meant to be. Biscuits were originally designed for endurance, not for pleasure.

The word "biscuit" comes from the Latin "bis coctum," meaning "twice-baked," a harsh preservation method used in ancient Rome to keep bread from spoiling during long, arduous military marches. These early versions were rock-hard and bone-dry, built purely for survival. Centuries later, European navies relied heavily on "hard tack," dense

biscuits baked to last for months at sea. To avoid breaking their teeth, sailors had to soften them in soup, ale, or saltwater brine. The dunk was not an art form then; it was a grim structural necessity.

As industrial baking techniques improved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, biscuits moved from naval survival rations into everyday civilian consumption. Factories made them lighter, crisper, more refined, and widely available. Around the same time, tea was cementing itself as a daily habit in Britain. Afternoon tea emerged as an elegant cultural pause built around conversation, company, and light refreshments. Cakes were too rich and sandwiches required tedious preparation, but biscuits fit the afternoon slot naturally. Easy to store, quick to serve, and incredibly versatile, they became a quiet companion to the teacup. The iconic Marie biscuit, introduced in 1874 to commemorate a royal wedding, captured this shift perfectly. Crisp, light, and subtly sweet, it became a fixture on elegant tea tables. Even though high-society etiquette strictly discouraged the messy act of dunking, people did it anyway behind closed doors because the combination simply worked.

When tea reached India through colonial plantations established in Assam and Darjeeling, it arrived as a tightly controlled commercial crop meant largely for British export and elite use. Over time, however, the subcontinent completely reclaimed and reshaped the drink. The delicate, water-forward British brew was transformed into a robust, intensely boiled chai simmered aggressively with milk, sugar, crushed ginger, and spices. It moved rapidly out of formal, porcelain-laden spaces into homes, railway stations, government offices, wholesale markets, and roadside stalls, establishing itself as the most accessible and democratic beverage in the country.

In Bengal especially, tea became an irreplaceable anchor for intellectual life and social rhythm. From morning newspapers to the legendary, hours-long





sessions of adda, chai was the catalyst for community life. Alongside it, biscuits naturally found a permanent home. Dunking became a highly strategic art form, driven by physics. When dipped, capillary action draws the hot, milky tea deep into the porous baked structure, softening the biscuit's dry texture while instantly intensifying its baked sugars and fats. The ultimate goal is a game of sensory chicken: getting the biscuit perfectly saturated and melt-in-the-mouth without it fracturing and sinking tragically to the bottom of the cup.

As tea became an inescapable daily habit across India, biscuits quietly adapted to local pockets and palates. Mass production made them incredibly affordable. Marie biscuits became household staples for light dipping; glucose biscuits offered a quick, cheap burst of energy; twice-baked rusks became a comforting monsoon companion to absorb strong tea; and savoury khari puff pastries settled into everyday morning routines. No single historical edict defined this pairing; it simply grew into the fabric of life.

What makes the great Indian dunk remarkable is how beautifully it bridges generations and social strata. A student studying late at night for competitive exams, a labourer taking a short break from manual work, a shopkeeper pausing between customers, or a family sitting together after dinner may all live entirely different lives, yet their comforting intersection is identical. A cup of hot tea, a biscuit nearby, and a brief pause in the day.

Nobody had to teach this habit. It stayed because it worked. Tea brings the necessary pause to a chaotic

day, and the biscuit extends it, turning something brief into something deeply familiar, comforting, and shared. From ancient Roman soldiers soaking stale bread to biscuit tins sitting beside modern Indian tea stalls, it has been an unlikely multi-century journey. Somewhere along the way, the biscuit stopped being just an accompaniment and became an absolute extension of the tea itself, completing the ritual in its own simple, unbeatable way.



Asmita Khanra
Freelance writer



Climate call

WHEN MONSOON SHIFTS, TEA LISTENS

The variability of the Indian summer monsoon plays a decisive role in shaping agricultural outcomes, particularly in climate-sensitive sectors such as tea. A study examining the relationship between Summer Monsoon Rainfall (SMR) in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) and the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) highlights how large-scale climatic forces interact with regional terrain to influence rainfall patterns.

Based on data from 1981 to 2005, the analysis explores how El Niño (warm phase), La Niña (cool phase), and neutral conditions affect rainfall across the North-western Himalaya (NWH) and the Eastern Himalaya (EH). A key insight is the contrasting behaviour between these regions. In the NWH, El Niño events show a significant negative correlation with rainfall, indicating reduced precipitation during such phases. In contrast, the EH region shows a positive correlation with La Niña events, often experiencing increased rainfall and a broader spread of heavy precipitation extending to higher elevations.

Seasonal rainfall anomalies further reinforce these trends. El Niño years are typically associated with below-average rainfall in both regions, with pronounced deficits recorded across Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and parts of the Eastern Himalaya. Conversely, La Niña phases tend to bring above-average rainfall, contributing to higher seasonal totals. That said, statistical analysis suggests that complex localised factors beyond large-scale atmospheric circulation also shape these variations.

Spatial patterns of rainfall distribution reveal that ENSO phases influence not just the quantity but also the spread and intensity of precipitation. El Niño and La Niña years exhibit distinctly different spatial

signatures, underscoring the need for region-specific climate understanding.

For tea planters, these findings carry clear practical implications. El Niño conditions - often linked to erratic rainfall, drought, and temperature fluctuations - can adversely affect both yield and quality. Moisture stress impacts leaf growth and may alter volatile flavour compounds, ultimately influencing cup characteristics. On the other hand, excessive or unevenly distributed rainfall during La Niña can pose its own challenges, including waterlogging and irregular growth.

In this context, proactive adaptation becomes essential. Efficient water management - particularly through rainwater harvesting and planned irrigation - can help mitigate drought stress during El Niño years. Ensuring irrigation before bushes reach the wilting point is critical for maintaining plant health. Equally, effective drainage management during periods of heavy rainfall remains vital.

A deeper understanding of ENSO-driven rainfall variability enables tea planters to anticipate risks, optimise field practices, and sustain both yield and quality. As climate variability becomes increasingly pronounced, integrating such insights into plantation management is no longer optional but imperative for long-term resilience.



Sujoy Mukherjee

Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri





Tea talk I

FROM BRICK LANE TO BREAKING THE INTERNET

How Amala Chai turned a humble cup of masala tea into a global cultural moment

What began as a small London pop-up inspired by family recipes and Himalayan journeys unexpectedly evolved into one of the most talked-about chai stories of the year. At the heart of it stands Akhil Patel, whose viral interaction with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi transformed Amala Chai from a niche artisanal brand into an international conversation around identity, nostalgia, and the evolving global language of chai.

Some businesses begin with strategy. Others begin with memory.

For Amala Chai founder Akhil Patel, the journey started somewhere between family kitchens, Himalayan travels, and the comforting familiarity of masala chai shared across generations.

Long before the internet discovered him during a now-viral moment serving chai to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the UK, Patel was simply trying to recreate a cup of chai that felt authentic - the kind brewed slowly on the stove, rich with spice, warmth, and memory.

The beginning of Amala Chai

The idea for Amala Chai took shape after Patel travelled through the Indian Himalayas in 2018. During the journey, he realised that chai was never merely a beverage - it represented community, ritual, conversation, and comfort. Returning to London, he struggled to find a version of masala chai that reflected the authenticity he had grown up with. Most offerings felt commercialised, overly sweet, or disconnected from tradition.

That gap became the beginning of something bigger.

Using his grandmother's recipes as inspiration, Patel opened a small pop-up stall on Brick Lane in London. The concept was simple: brew chai fresh, traditionally, and serve it with the same warmth found in Indian homes and roadside chai stalls.

What began as a modest self-funded stall quickly started attracting attention. According to reports, the business was launched with roughly £2,000 and grew organically through word of mouth and customer curiosity around authentic masala chai.

But beyond the aesthetics and nostalgia, Amala Chai also focused heavily on sourcing. Patel travelled through Assam and Kerala, building direct relationships with small farms and sourcing tea and spices more transparently. The brand positioned itself around freshness, ethical sourcing, and preserving the integrity of traditional chai-making.

The viral moment that changed everything

Then came the moment the internet could not stop talking about.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's UK visit in 2025, Akhil Patel was seen serving masala chai to both Modi and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer at Chequers. What made the interaction instantly memorable was Patel's now-viral line:

"From one chaiwala to another."

The clip spread rapidly across social media, turning Patel into a widely recognised face almost overnight.

For many viewers, the moment represented more than a viral soundbite. It symbolised the global reach of Indian chai culture - from roadside tea stalls to diplomatic conversations between world leaders.



Amala Chai



The visibility dramatically expanded awareness around Amala Chai. Suddenly, people who had never heard of the brand were searching for it, discussing it online, and connecting with its story. Media outlets across the UK and India began covering Patel's journey, transforming him from a niche entrepreneur into a recognisable cultural figure in the tea space.

More than a Viral Brand

What makes Amala Chai interesting is that the viral moment did not feel manufactured.

The business already had a clear identity before social media amplified it — rooted in storytelling, sourcing, and emotional familiarity. The Modi interaction simply accelerated visibility for a brand that had already built authenticity around its product and philosophy.

Today, Amala Chai stands at the intersection of tradition and modern branding: a chai company that speaks the language of younger audiences while staying deeply connected to heritage.

In many ways, Akhil's journey reflects a larger shift happening globally - where chai is no longer viewed merely as a drink, but as culture, memory, and experience.

And perhaps that is why the moment resonated so widely.

Because behind the headlines, the viral clips, and the political symbolism was something remarkably simple:

A cup of chai making people stop, look, and feel at home.

Ena Bandyopadhyay

Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri

WRITE TO READER'S MAIL BOX

We'd love to hear from you!

Share your thoughts on tea, ideas for stories, or suggestions to make Contemporary Tea Time even better. Your cup of words might just feature in our next issue.

Write to us at:
editorteatime@gmail.com



Contemporary Tea Time
Jul - Sept 2026

The World in a Cup: Sip Your Way Around the World's Major Tea Fests

Every region has its signature steep. In Tea Time's next issue, take your daily mug on an international reading tour across key tea festivals. From the vibrant harvest celebrations of the Assam Tea Festival to the serene, centuries-old matcha ceremonies in Kyoto, the globe's greatest tea galas offer an exhilarating take.



Coming Next



Tea talk II

THE STORY BEHIND EVERY CUP

A young tea planter's journey through heritage, hope and the future of Assam tea

Tea, like leadership, is ultimately about balance. A cup of Assam tea may appear deceptively simple. Behind it, however, lies a world shaped by uncertain weather, shifting consumer tastes, labour realities, global markets, and deeply personal convictions. During a long and reflective tête-à-tête with Nayanjyoti Hazarika of Contemporary Brokers, Guwahati, Vidyut Acharya of BISA Tea Estate shared his personal journey in tea and his vision for the evolving tea landscapes of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The conversation unfolded as both an intimate first-person account and an industry mirror - steeped equally in realism and hope.

Tea first entered my life as a habit, but it stayed as a calling.

What began as a simple appreciation for a well-brewed cup gradually evolved into something far deeper - a fascination with the journey of tea itself. I became curious about where tea comes from, how it is nurtured, what shapes its flavour, and how every cup silently carries the labour of hundreds of unseen hands. Over time, I realised that tea is not merely an agricultural commodity; it is culture, memory, geography, weather, labour, and emotion distilled into a single infusion.

That understanding drew me irrevocably toward the tea industry.

Today, as a tea planter and manufacturer associated with BISA AGRO ESTATE and Buridehing Tea Company, located in the frontier belt near Bordumsa on the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border, I see tea not just as a business, but as a lifelong responsibility. The land teaches patience. Tea teaches humility.

And perhaps that is why I have always admired Ratan Tata.

For me, he represents the rare combination of vision and values. What inspires me most is not simply the scale of what he built, but the dignity with which he built it. His belief that business must serve a larger social purpose resonates deeply with those of us working in tea landscapes, where communities and livelihoods are inseparable from commerce. In many ways, the tea industry too must constantly balance

profitability with humanity.

Our aspiration at BISA AGRO ESTATE is rooted in that very philosophy.

We want to preserve and promote the legacy of Assam tea while preparing it for a very different future. Assam tea has a global identity built over generations - bold, brisk, malty, unmistakable.

Yet preserving that identity today requires far more than merely producing tea. It requires storytelling, sustainability, innovation, and brand trust.

We aspire to refine every stage of the process - from leaf to cup - so that authenticity and quality remain uncompromised. We are equally committed to sustainable cultivation practices, better soil health, responsible land use, and improving the welfare of workers and tea-growing families who remain the backbone of this industry.

But beyond plantations and factories, I believe the future of tea lies in reinvention.

Globally, consumer behaviour is changing rapidly. Tea is no longer viewed only as a traditional beverage; it is increasingly becoming part of a lifestyle conversation around wellness, sustainability, and experience. This shift opens extraordinary opportunities for regions like Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

There is growing international demand for speciality teas, organic teas, wellness blends, and artisanal products with clear origin stories. Consumers today want traceability. They want authenticity. They want to know the story behind what they drink. That



TEA ESTATE PLANTERS
SINCE 1989

creates immense potential for Indian tea producers willing to innovate.

We are now seeing opportunities emerge in value-added categories such as herbal infusions, ready-to-drink teas, flavoured blends, wellness formulations, and premium single-origin offerings. E-commerce has further transformed the landscape. Earlier, producers depended heavily on traditional distribution channels; now, even relatively small tea companies can build direct relationships with consumers through digital platforms and global marketplaces. Tea tourism is another exciting frontier.

The scenic tea landscapes of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh possess tremendous untapped experiential value. Tea estates can evolve into cultural destinations where visitors experience not just tea tasting, but the history, biodiversity, cuisine, and rhythm of tea country itself. I believe the future of tea lies as much in experiences as in exports. At the same time, the industry stands at a deeply fragile moment.

One of the greatest concerns today is the widening gap between production costs and auction realisations. For many gardens, especially small and mid-sized operations, sustainability is becoming economically difficult. Climate change has intensified the challenge further. Unseasonal rainfall, rising temperatures, prolonged dry spells, and erratic weather patterns are disrupting plucking cycles and affecting both yield and quality.

In recent years, we have personally witnessed rainfall arriving at the wrong stages of production, impacting crucial flush periods. Tea is a crop extraordinarily sensitive to climate, and even minor disruptions can alter quality outcomes significantly. Labour remains another critical concern.

Tea is still fundamentally labour-intensive, yet younger generations increasingly prefer opportunities outside plantations. Rising wage pressures and statutory obligations, though important, are creating additional operational strain. Mechanisation may become inevitable in certain areas, but transitions of that nature are complex, expensive, and socially sensitive.

Equally worrying is the dilution of Assam tea's identity in the marketplace. Inferior teas are often sold under the Assam label, eroding consumer confidence and weakening the premium value associated with the region. Without stronger geographic identity protection and quality enforcement, the brand equity built over generations risks gradual erosion. And yet, despite all these challenges, I remain optimistic.

What gives me hope is the quiet emergence of a new generation of tea entrepreneurs who view tea



Vidyut Acharya
Owner, Bisa Tea Estate

differently from previous generations. The earlier leaders of Indian tea perfected cultivation and manufacturing. The new generation is attempting to add narrative, branding, technology, and consumer engagement to that legacy.

Young entrepreneurs today are experimenting with boutique tea cafés, subscription-based tea services, sustainable packaging, single-origin storytelling, and wellness-oriented products. Some are exploring matcha production and indigenous herbal infusions from the Northeast. Others are leveraging AI, data analytics, and traceability tools to modernise cultivation and quality management. For perhaps the first time, tea in India is beginning to intersect meaningfully with lifestyle branding, digital commerce, hospitality, wellness, and global artisanal culture.

That is an encouraging shift.

Personally, I draw much of my perspective not only from tea gardens, but from life outside them. I am deeply fond of animals, especially dogs, whose companionship often brings balance amid the pressures of work. I spend much of my free time

reading biographies and poetry. Biographies teach resilience and leadership; poetry teaches sensitivity and reflection. I also closely follow geopolitics and international affairs because the tea industry today is inseparable from global trade dynamics, shifting consumer behaviour, and economic policy.

But if I were asked who my greatest teachers have been, my answer would be simple: life itself.

Life in tea gardens teaches endurance. Nature teaches humility. Books teach introspection.

And above all, I remain indebted to two individuals - my late father and our former estate manager, Late Mr. M P Sharma Ji.

My father taught me discipline, responsibility, and respect for both land and labour. He believed leadership was not about authority, but about accountability. Mr. Sharma Ji, on the other hand, embodied extraordinary calmness, integrity, and self-confidence. Watching him navigate difficult situations with grace taught me that true leadership comes from character and clarity of purpose. Those lessons continue to guide me every day.

The tea industry today stands at a crossroads. Climate uncertainty, changing consumption patterns, rising

costs, and global competition present undeniable challenges. But alongside those challenges are equally powerful opportunities for reinvention. I believe Assam tea still has an extraordinary future ahead - provided we protect its authenticity while embracing innovation.

Because ultimately, tea is not just a beverage. It is heritage in motion.

And our aspiration remains simple yet powerful - to ensure that the story of Assam tea continues to travel across generations, cultures, and borders; for in today's evolving tea world, tea must increasingly tell a story, not merely fill a cup.



Nayanjyoti Hazarika
Contemporary Brokers, Guwahati





Tea talk III

FROM FOOTPATH TO FRANCHISE The remarkable journey of Ashrafia Tea

From washing glasses at a roadside tea stall to envisioning three lakh kilos of tea sales and nationwide franchises, Md Shamsher Alam's journey is nothing short of extraordinary. Yet this interview is more than the familiar arc of hardship to success - it is a reflection of a hard-earned life philosophy shaped by resilience, teamwork, and humility.

In this candid conversation with Srinjini Swar and Md Zubair Uddin of Contemporary Tea Time, the owner of Ashrafia Tea reminds us that success is not about where one begins, but how far determination can carry a dream. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once observed, "The reward of a thing well done is to have done it." Shamsher's story embodies that truth: achievement is not only measured in kilos sold or outlets opened, but in the values and vision that sustain a legacy.



How did your journey in tea begin?

My journey began in 1997 at a small tea shop on Elliot Road, earning just ₹900 a month. The work was grueling - washing glasses, brewing tea, sleeping on the footpath, and bathing on the roadside. At times, humiliation was part of the job; hot tea was poured on me when mistakes were made. Yet, those struggles planted a seed.

I noticed that among all suppliers - milkmen, sugar vendors, freight agents - the tea leaf vendor lived with the most dignity. That realisation became my turning point. I decided tea leaves would be my path to a better life.

After failing Class 10, I fled to Kolkata, terrified of punishment at home. I knocked on nearly 400 doors before finding work in a restaurant, agreeing to work only for food. That was the start. From handling three kilos of tea, I scaled to thirty, then three hundred, and eventually thousands. Today, our company sells 4,000 kilos of tea packets daily, with annual sales crossing 10-11 lakh kilos.

Q: What milestones shaped your growth?

I treated each stage like a grade in school. Three kilos was one grade, thirty kilos another, three hundred yet another. Even if it took ten years to pass a grade, persistence mattered more than speed.

The real breakthrough came when I realised growth

cannot be achieved alone. Thirty kilos is manageable for one person, but three hundred requires a team.

Once I built a strong team, progress accelerated. Together, we moved from hundreds to thousands of kilos daily. Today, we operate 48 tea stalls in Kolkata, with plans to expand nationwide.

Another milestone was financial discipline. In 25 years, not a single company cheque bounced. That credibility built trust among investors and customers. It took years of sacrifice, but it created a foundation strong enough to support expansion into groceries and restaurants.

Q: What challenges did you face along the way?

Challenges were constant. Financial struggles, my mother's illness, and the exhaustion of building something from nothing tested me deeply. During the pandemic lockdown, nearly two crore rupees of assets were blocked in the market. Recovery demanded sacrifice - time, money, patience. Yet, with God's grace and determination, we bounced back stronger than before.

There were also personal challenges. At eighteen, sleeping on the footpath, I often wondered if I would ever escape poverty. But every insult became fuel. Every setback became a lesson. That mindset carried me forward.



Mr Shamsher Alam
Founder of Ashrafia Tea Centre



Dawat - e - Hind restaurant



Restaurant interiors

Q: Covid was this century's greatest disruptive calamity, taking a huge toll on businesses worldwide. How did you face it and recover?

The pandemic was unlike any challenge we had ever faced. Overnight, nearly two crore rupees of our assets were blocked in the market. Payments froze, supply chains collapsed, and uncertainty became the norm. For a business built on trust and daily transactions, it was a devastating blow.

Recovery demanded resilience at every level. We sacrificed time, money, and patience, but never allowed despair to take over. Instead, we leaned on our principles - intentions, rules, knowledge, and ethics. We renegotiated with partners, supported employees through the crisis, and kept faith that consistency would bring us back.

It was not easy. Every step required sacrifice - delaying expansion plans, tightening finances, and working harder than ever to rebuild confidence. But the crisis also taught us the value of adaptability and teamwork. By standing together, we emerged stronger than before. Today, we are not only back to where we were, but better prepared for the future, with renewed focus on sustainability, diversification, and social responsibility.

Q: How did family and teamwork influence your success?

I came to Kolkata alone, but gradually brought my

family together. Today, 45 members are part of our extended household. Success was never mine alone - it came from good people I met along the way.

I listened to advice, accepted guidance, and built a team that worked harder than life itself. Some of my colleagues gave more than their lives could bear, crossing limits of endurance. Together, we created something lasting.

Family unity also mattered. Even relatives who once lived separately joined hands. That collective strength allowed us to expand not just a business, but a legacy.

Q: What sectors are you working in today?

We now operate across four major sectors with a diverse portfolio of

Tea stalls - 48 outlets in Kolkata, with plans for franchises across India.

Tea leaves - From three kilos to thousands daily, aiming for three lakh kilos in the next 15-20 years.

Groceries - Entered in 2012, with one shop on Pemantle Street.

Restaurants - Dawat-e Hind, launched in 2023, now has four outlets. Plans include 111 owned restaurants and 1,600 franchise models nationwide.

Q: What are your future plans?

The future of our enterprise is shaped not only by market realities but also by generational shifts within the family. While tea has been the foundation of our success, the younger generation shows a lukewarm, even indifferent attitude toward continuing in the tea business. Their interests lean toward newer ventures, and that has prompted us to diversify aggressively into restaurants - a sector that excites them and offers global potential.



We aim to open 111 restaurants immediately, expand tea distribution to every district, and strengthen grocery operations. The restaurant network, under the Dawat-e Hind brand, is envisioned as a bridge between tradition and modernity, appealing to younger consumers who may not feel the same emotional connection to tea. By expanding across different states and eventually into international markets, we are ensuring that the family legacy continues in a form that resonates with the next generation.

Our franchise model ensures market control by limiting competition within districts. Each district will host two franchises and one owned outlet, creating balance between exclusivity and accessibility. Long-term, we plan for IPOs and larger investments to sustain growth, with restaurants forming the spearhead of our expansion strategy.

We envision 770–800 owned restaurants and 1,600 franchises across India, with the possibility of taking the brand global. This diversification is not a departure from tea but an evolution - recognising that while tea remains our soul, restaurants may become the new face of our enterprise in the decades ahead.

Q: What social initiatives do you support?

Employment is our biggest mission. The boy who once begged for work at 400 shops now employs over 400 people. Our target is four lakh employees - because creating jobs is the greatest deed.

But our social engagement goes deeper. Having lived the pain of unemployment, I know how much a single rupee means. That memory drives us to create opportunities for others. We encourage women to sell tea packets within their neighbourhoods, offering free samples and supply support. With India's density, even a one-kilometre radius can sustain 25 kilos of daily sales, translating into ₹1,250 in earnings. For many women, this is the difference between dependence and dignity.

We also run Sisu Seva Trust, supporting 18 widowed women, funded by 200 members who donate ₹5 daily. This initiative grew from our belief that business must serve society. When you have struggled yourself, you understand the value of extending a hand.

Our philosophy is simple: if God gave us success, we must give back. Employment, empowerment, and social welfare are not side projects - they are central to our identity.

Q: Who do you credit for your success?

Many people shaped my journey. My Shibu uncle, a master taster, guided me in tea. Bank managers



Mr Shamsuddin Alam, Co-founder

taught me finance. Sanjay Gupta and Sumit Ji became pillars of support. Brokers like Parcon India stood by us when we were unknown. Success is never solitary - it is built on the hands of many.

Q: What philosophy drives you?

At the heart of my journey lies a simple philosophy: intentions, rules, knowledge, and ethics. First, decide why you want to do something. Then set rules and routines. Gain knowledge before jumping in. And always act ethically. With these, even the smallest beginnings can grow into empires.

But philosophy must go beyond personal success. A sound legacy is built through pro-people policies and environmental focus. Our business is not just about selling tea - it is about creating livelihoods, empowering women, and ensuring that growth benefits communities. Employment generation is our greatest mission, because we know the pain of unemployment firsthand.

Equally important is sustainability. Tea is a gift of nature, and protecting that gift is our responsibility. We are committed to eco-friendly practices, reducing waste, and ensuring that our expansion does not come at the cost of the environment. From recyclable packaging to responsible sourcing, we want Ashrafia Tea to stand for both prosperity and preservation.

Ultimately, success is not measured only in kilos sold or outlets opened, but in the legacy we leave behind - a legacy of dignity, opportunity, and respect for the planet.



Md Zubair Uddin
*Contemporary Brokers,
Kolkata*



Srinjini Swar
Editorial Co-ordinator



THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF BANGLADESH'S TEA INDUSTRY

Early beginnings of the tea industry in Bangladesh

The tea industry in Bangladesh traces its origins to the colonial era under British rule in the Indian subcontinent. Although the Sylhet region is now synonymous with tea cultivation, the earliest significant initiatives began in Chittagong. In 1828, the British East India Company allocated nearly 3,500 acres of land for tea plantations in Chittagong, while the first experimental cultivation was undertaken in Kodala village in Rangunia in 1840. However, the Kodala Tea Estate itself was formally established much later, in 1890.

Another experimental trial took place in 1840 at a site now occupied by the Chittagong Club, then known as Kunder's Garden. Mr. Sconce, the Collector of Chittagong, procured tea seeds from Assam and Chinese saplings from the Botanical Garden in Calcutta and cultivated them at Pioneer Garden. Both attempts, however, ultimately proved unsuccessful.

The first successful commercial tea plantation in present-day Bangladesh emerged in 1854 with the establishment of the Malnicherra Tea Estate in Sylhet - then part of the Surma Valley - under the initiative of Lord Hudson. This landmark development was followed by the establishment of the Lalchand and Mitringa tea estates in 1860. Around the same period, the discovery of indigenous tea plants in Sylhet further strengthened confidence in the region's tea-growing potential.

Initially, tea plantations in Sylhet were largely individual ventures. However, the economic depression of the 1860s necessitated a transition towards larger and more financially resilient enterprises. This period witnessed the arrival of major

players such as James Finlay & Co., which would eventually dominate the industry. These companies secured extensive tracts of wasteland through government grants, acquisitions from the Maharaja of Tripura, and purchases from local landowners.

One of the most significant expansions occurred in the early 1880s, when John Muir acquired nearly 13,609 acres of wasteland in Balisera from the Maharaja of Tripura. Such strategic acquisitions laid the foundation for the large tea estates that continue to define Bangladesh's tea landscape today.

Rise of major European companies

James Finlay & Co. emerged as one of the most influential names in the tea trade. The North Sylhet Tea Company Limited and South Sylhet Tea Company Limited were incorporated in the United Kingdom in 1882. By 1886, the two companies had brought 2,873 hectares and 3,254 hectares respectively under tea cultivation. Managed by Finlay Muir & Co. of Calcutta, with Sir John Muir as Chairman, the companies merged in 1896 to form the Consolidated Tea and Lands Co. Ltd. Another notable enterprise, the Baraooa (Sylhet) Tea Company Limited, was

incorporated in England in 1897. The Hart family maintained substantial shareholding throughout much of the twentieth century, while James Finlay later acquired a significant stake in the company.

Duncan Brothers also played a transformative role in shaping the tea industry. Walter Duncan, a Scotsman from

Glasgow, arrived in Calcutta in 1858 and established a trading business with Patrick Playfair under the name Messrs. Playfair. Initially focused on cotton, the company shifted decisively toward tea as the industry expanded.

By 1890, Duncan Brothers managed twelve tea



Tea factory in Bangladesh

gardens with a planted area of 2,350 hectares. In 1910, the firm acquired controlling interest in the Allynugger Tea Company and the trio estates of Madhabpur, Patrahola, and Kurma. By 1923, the number of estates under its management had risen to around 60, producing nearly 14.5 million kilograms of tea annually.

Following the independence of Bangladesh, Duncan Brothers (Bangladesh) Ltd. faced severe financial challenges during the 1971–74 period, eventually leading to a restructuring under the Lawrie Group PLC. Later, the company became part of Camellia PLC of the United Kingdom.

Octavius Steel & Company also expanded tea cultivation across Darjeeling, Dooars, Cachar, and Sylhet. Beginning in 1898, it managed the Lungla Company gardens, including Shumshernugger, Lungla, Etah, and Karimpore. In 1967, Duncan Brothers and Octavius Steel came under common ownership.

McNeill & Co., established in Calcutta in 1872, diversified into tea alongside coal, shipping, jute, and cotton. The company later merged with Kilburn & Co., strengthening its influence within the tea sector.

Among the early pioneers was James Buckingham, who played a key role in promoting tea cultivation in Assam and present-day Bangladesh. He is often credited with establishing the Kodala Tea Estate, one of the earliest successful examples of tea cultivation in the region.

Shaw Wallace & Company Limited, founded in 1886 by Robert Gordon Shaw and Charles William Wallace, entered the tea business in present-day Bangladesh in 1893 through the Silloah Tea Company in the Surma Valley. Over time, the company expanded its tea interests across the region.

Indigenous entrepreneurship and local participation

As the tea industry expanded, local entrepreneurs gradually entered the sector, although they often struggled to compete with established European companies due to limited access to technology and capital.

The Cachar Native Joint Stock Company, established in 1876, marked a historic milestone as the first indigenous tea plantation enterprise in Assam and Bengal. Spearheaded by Bengali entrepreneurs in the Surma Valley, the initiative received crucial support from prominent lawyer Musaraf Ali and bureaucrat Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee. This was followed by Bharat Samity Ltd. in 1880, which owned the Kalinagar Tea Garden, and the Indeswar

Tea and Trading Company Limited in 1896. Despite financial constraints limiting their expansion, these enterprises laid the groundwork for future indigenous participation in the tea economy.

Local zamindars also played an influential role in supporting tea cultivation. Braja Nath Chowdhury collaborated with Duncan Brothers to establish tea plantations, while his grandson, Brojendra Narayan Chowdhury, later founded the Mahabir Tea Estate in Tripura. The Mukherjee family of Comilla entered the tea industry through the New India Tea Agency, which eventually owned multiple tea estates including Chaklapunji, Brindabon, Baikanthapur, and Ramghar.

Contributions of Muslim entrepreneurs

A landmark chapter in indigenous participation emerged with Khan Bahadur Syed Abdul Majid, regarded as one of the pioneering native entrepreneurs in the tea industry. In 1904, he established the Brahmanchara Tea Estate along with several associates. Later, in 1911, he founded the All India Tea and Trading Company, which owned multiple tea estates in the Sylhet region.

Nawab Ali Amjad Khan established the Rangircherra Tea Estate, while Syed Ali Akbar Khandakar owned the Pallakandi Tea Estate in South Sylhet.

In 1921, Professor Majuddin Ahmed Choudhury founded the M Ahmed Tea & Land Company and acquired the Chandbagh Tea Estate from Octavius



The way ahead

Steel & Company. Under his leadership, the company evolved into one of the most respected indigenous tea enterprises in the region.

Another significant indigenous venture was Hamdard Tea Company Limited, established by Zamindar Abdur Rashid Chowdhury and his associates. The company developed the Dilkusha Tea Estate and subsequently expanded through additional land acquisitions.

Discovery of indigenous tea plants

A major turning point in the history of tea cultivation in Bangladesh came with the discovery of wild tea plants in Sylhet on January 4, 1856. T.P. Larkins, the Magistrate of Sylhet, reported the discovery to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, noting the abundance of tea plants in the Chandkhanee Hills.

He forwarded plant specimens to the Agricultural Society of India for examination and recommended a reward of 50 rupees for Mohammad Warish, the local discoverer. The recognition underscored the critical role played by local communities in the development of the tea industry. The shift from imported Chinese seeds to indigenous Assam varieties dramatically improved tea cultivation prospects in the region and firmly established Sylhet as a major tea-producing area.

By 1893, Sylhet's tea production nearly equalled that of Assam, and by 1900 it surpassed all other districts within the province.

Tea industry during the Pakistan period

Following the Partition of 1947, the tea industry

gradually came under the control of West Pakistani business groups. By 1966, West Pakistani owners controlled 56 of the 114 tea gardens in East Pakistan, while Bengali entrepreneurs owned only 11.

By 1970, West Pakistani interests controlled 74 of the region's 162 tea estates. Major business groups such as Adamjee, Ispahani, Bhawani, and Amin Brothers dominated the industry. At the time of Partition, East Pakistan possessed approximately 26,734 hectares of tea plantations, producing nearly 18.36 million kilograms of tea annually. Domestic consumption remained moderate until the mid-1950s but subsequently increased significantly, prompting the government to mandate annual expansion of tea cultivation areas.

By 1970, plantation acreage had increased to 42,658 hectares, while tea production rose to 31.38 million kilograms annually.

However, the Liberation War of 1971 dealt a devastating blow to the industry. Many tea estates were abandoned or damaged, factories deteriorated, machinery fell into disrepair, and productivity sharply declined.

Post-Independence challenges and revival

After Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, the tea industry faced severe challenges, including abandoned estates, shortages of skilled manpower, managerial disruptions, and infrastructural damage. The government nationalised large sections of the industry and established the Bangladesh Tea Industries Management Committee (BTIMC) to revive abandoned tea estates. Financial assistance



and reconstruction support were secured through institutional loans, while subsidies on fertilisers and tea production were introduced to stabilise the sector.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman placed particular emphasis on the welfare of tea workers, promoting access to housing, clean water, healthcare, infant care facilities, and primary education.

A landmark institutional step came in 1973, when the Bangladesh Tea Research Station was transformed into the Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI), significantly strengthening research and development in the sector.

Legacy and continuing evolution

The tea industry of Bangladesh has evolved through colonial enterprise, indigenous entrepreneurship, political upheaval, and post-independence reconstruction. From experimental plantations in Chittagong to the globally recognised tea landscapes of Sylhet, the industry remains deeply intertwined with the region's economic, cultural, and social history.

Today, Bangladesh's tea sector continues to adapt to changing global markets, sustainability challenges, and shifting consumer preferences - while preserving a legacy built over nearly two centuries of cultivation, resilience, and enterprise.



Monjur Hossain
Correspondent (Bangladesh)





INDIA-UK TEA PARTNERSHIP STRENGTHENED

TRA Tocklai and UKTIA form Joint Working Group



Joint Working Group - UKTIA & TRA Tocklai

The Tea Research Association (TRA Tocklai) and the UK Tea & Infusions Association (UKTIA) have formalised a Joint Working Group to advance sustainable, science-led tea trade between India and the United Kingdom. The agreement was signed on 30 April 2026 by Dr Sharon Hall, Chief Executive of UKTIA, and Joydeep Phukan, Secretary of TRA Tocklai.

Set against the backdrop of the new India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the Joint Working Group will tackle scientific, regulatory and trade issues affecting the tea sector. Its remit includes coordinated action on food-safety standards, trade policy alignment, and research collaboration - and, where relevant, considerations affecting EU and North American markets.

For TRA Tocklai, one of the world's oldest tea research institutions, the partnership reaffirms a long-standing commitment to grounding the industry's future in rigorous science and evidence-based standards. The CETA presents fresh opportunities for bilateral trade; the Joint Working Group aims to ensure the tea supply chain is prepared to capitalise on those opportunities through sustainability, competitiveness and resilience.

TRA Tocklai and UKTIA said they will engage industry stakeholders across the supply chain as the group develops its work programme and priorities. Further details on specific projects, timelines and consultation rounds will be announced in due course.

EIILM JALPAIGURI HOSTS INDUSTRY ACADEMIA DIALOGUE



International Tea Day seminar hosted at the EIILM University campus, Jalpaiguri

Jalpaiguri, May 23, 2026: International Tea Day found a new resonance this year at EIILM University, where a seminar hosted by Mr. Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty shifted the focus from auction floors and tasting rooms to an academic setting.

What began as a modest session quickly grew into a dynamic exchange. Students engaged with the realities of tea beyond textbooks - its journey from garden to cup, the nuances of quality assessment, and the meaning behind catalogue numbers often heard but rarely explained.

The seminar stood out for its spirited participation. Questions on pricing, exports, sustainability, and career opportunities revealed both awareness and ambition among the next generation. An interactive tea quiz added further spark, keeping the atmosphere lively throughout.

The presence of Mr. Kaushik Bhattacharjee, Director of NITM, alongside Tea Board of India delegates including Mr. Purojit Bakshi, lent weight to the discussions. Industry representatives added insights that linked legacy practices to current challenges.

By bridging academia and industry, the initiative underscored how the tea sector is evolving - where heritage meets fresh perspective, and where the next generation is invited to shape its future.

The seminar was made possible through the efforts of Mr. Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, whose vision brought together voices from classrooms and plantations alike, marking International Tea Day with a meaningful new chapter.

Ena Bandyopadhyay
Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri

BERRY CUP INAUGURATES PLANTERS' GOLFING TRADITION



Berry Cup 2026



Mr Raj Berry

Samdang Golf Course, Tinsukia, played host to the inaugural Berry Cup on 17 May 2026, a day of spirited competition and fellowship organized by M K Shah Exports Ltd. in honour of its Executive Director, Mr. Raj Berry. Fifty-five golfers - many drawn from the planter community and tea-garden leadership - took part, enjoying the course's immaculate greens and friendly rivalry.

Mr. Raj Berry attended the event, presenting prizes and urging the community to uphold sportsmanship and unity. The ceremony was also graced by Mr. H. M. Shah (Chairman), Mr. Joydeep Shah (Director), and Mrs. Rekha Shah (Director), who helped present awards across categories.

Mr. Sachin Singh clinched the Overall Trophy after an outstanding performance, becoming the first-ever Berry Cup champion. Organisers said the successful debut has set the stage for an annual tradition that will celebrate planter camaraderie, healthy competition, and Mr. Berry's lasting legacy in the tea industry.



KAMAL KISHORE TEWARI APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF AITWA APEX COMMITTEE



Mr Kamal Kishore Tewari with the AITWA Committee

Pandit Kamal Kishore Tewari, Chairman of Tewari Tea Corporation, has been appointed Chairman of the Apex Committee of the All India Tea Warehouses Association (AITWA) - a development widely regarded as a significant moment for India's tea warehousing sector.

Tewari brings decades of industry experience and a well-established presence in the tea trade to the role. AITWA, one of the country's most prominent bodies representing warehousing, logistics, and allied trade interests, plays a central role in upholding quality standards, strengthening storage infrastructure, and facilitating the efficient movement of tea across India's major producing regions and auction centres.

Industry stakeholders have welcomed the appointment with confidence, expressing expectation that his leadership will advance the modernisation of warehousing practices and deepen institutional support for the broader tea trade.

The appointment signals a renewed focus on the often-underscored but indispensable back-end of the tea value chain - one that connects garden to cup across a vast and complex national network.

Ena Bandyopadhyay
Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri

MAYFAIR TEA RESORT WELCOMES PM MODI IN SILIGURI



Mr Dilip Ray with PM Narendra Modi

The serene landscapes of Siliguri witnessed a momentous occasion recently, as the picturesque MAYFAIR Tea Resort opened its doors to a truly distinguished guest: Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The visit marked an unforgettable milestone for the resort and its leadership. Shri Dilip Ray, Chairman of MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts and a newly elected Rajya Sabha member, had the distinct privilege of hosting and personally engaging with the Prime Minister. Set against the lush, tranquil backdrop of India's premier tea-themed luxury property, the meeting beautifully bridged the worlds of world-class hospitality and national leadership.

Reflecting on the interaction, Shri Ray described the opportunity to host the Prime Minister as a profoundly proud and inspiring moment. He expressed deep admiration for the Prime Minister's visionary leadership, highlighting his unwavering dedication and steadfast commitment to the nation's progress.

"It was a significant honour to engage with a leader who continues to shape India's future with such clarity and purpose," Ray noted, emphasising the enduring impact of the Prime Minister's continued efforts to drive the country forward.

For the MAYFAIR Tea Resort - a property already celebrated for blending the rich heritage of Bengal's tea culture with unparalleled luxury - the Prime Minister's visit adds a historic new chapter to its legacy. It was a weekend where the finest traditions of Indian hospitality met the inspiring vision of India's future.

LOUD, PROUD, AND #1 The roadside democratiser claims the throne

India's iconic Masala Chai has officially been ranked the world's No. 1 tea in TasteAtlas' latest "Top 100 Teas" list, bringing global recognition to one of the country's most beloved beverages.

Known for its rich blend of black tea, milk, sugar, and aromatic spices such as cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and black pepper, Masala Chai has long been a symbol of Indian culture and hospitality. The drink is deeply woven into daily life across India, from roadside tea stalls and railway stations to homes and offices.

TasteAtlas, a global food and travel guide platform known for ranking traditional dishes and beverages from around the world, placed India's Masala Chai at the top of its international tea rankings based on audience ratings, popularity, and cultural significance.

The recognition has sparked celebration online, with many tea lovers calling it a proud moment for Indian cuisine and culture. Social media users from across the world shared their love for Masala Chai, praising its comforting flavour, warming spices, and unique preparation style that distinguishes it from conventional teas.

Food historians note that Masala Chai evolved over centuries and became especially popular during the British colonial era when tea consumption expanded across India. Today, it remains one of the most widely consumed beverages in the country and continues gaining popularity internationally through cafés, restaurants, and speciality tea brands.

The ranking highlights the growing global appreciation for traditional Indian flavours and culinary heritage on the international stage.

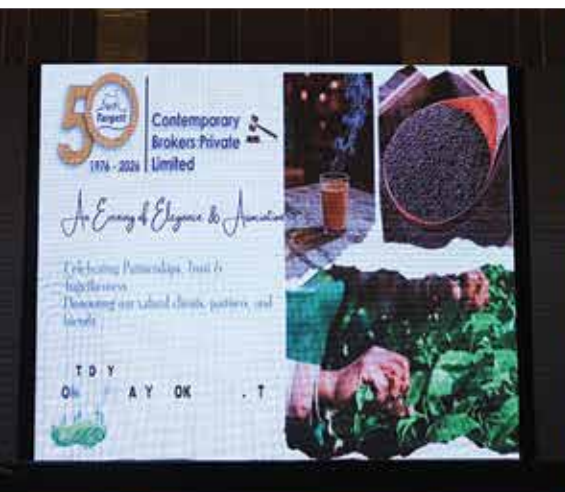
Ena Bandyopadhyay
Contemporary Brokers, Siliguri





Dibrugarh Gala

Contemporary Brokers' Corporate Dinner, May 22, 2026, at Manohari - The Tea Retreat, Dibrugarh.







Alvida to EterniTea

THE MASTER STORYTELLER GETS HIS FINAL STANDING OVATION

Ad icon Piyush Pandey awarded posthumous Padma Bhushan

{A farewell letter to a creative legend whose ideas remain forever brewed in our memories}

Dear Piyush,

From one old copywriter to another, you always knew how to write the perfect ending. Some news arrive like the light of history in the making, and it was exactly such a one. The government has conferred you with the Padma Bhushan posthumously. It's India's third-highest civilian honour, but honestly, you've held the Indian public's heart for decades. It feels heavy to talk about you in the past tense since you left us last October, but seeing your name on that honours list - right alongside Uday Kotak, Harmanpreet Kaur, and Dharam ji - felt like the final, resounding applause for a lifetime of brilliant work.

Back then, our industry was busy looking West, trying to write copy for a Madison Avenue boardroom. But you? You threw that brief out the window. You looked at the dust, the dialogue, and the sheer, chaotic poetry of the Indian streets. You didn't just write ads; you wrote the cultural soundtrack of our lives.

When you penned Mile Sur Mera Tumhara, you didn't just answer an integration brief; you gave an entire country goosebumps. When you wrote Do Boond Zindagi Ki, you gave voice to a movement that literally saved generations from polio. You taught us that the best copy doesn't come from a clever thesaurus; it comes straight from the soil.

Even the toughest critics had to stand up globally. You took our hyper-local insights, made the world pay attention.

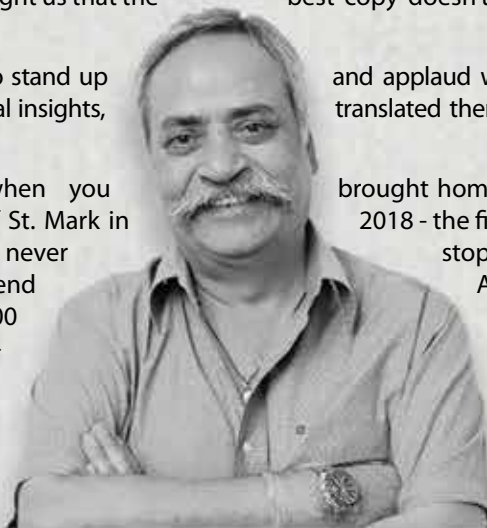
We all remember 2002, when you And bringing back the Lion of St. Mark in achievement award. You never the Created for Creatives Legend at ADFEST in 2024. Over 800 numerous national accolades - hunched over a keyboard that truly world-class.

You led Ogilvy and built importantly, you built us. You directors, showing us that our a shelf; it's about nation-building and finding honest, human connections.

and applaud what you did for Indian advertising translated them into universal human truths, and

brought home that first doubleGold at Cannes. 2018 - the first Indian to ever hold that lifetime stopped setting the bar, grabbing Award at LIA and the Lotus Legend awards, a Padma Shri in 2016, and you proved to every young writer our homegrown stories were

massive brands, but mos mentored generations of creative job isn't just moving products off



So, here's to you, Piyush. The Padma Bhushan is a beautiful validation, but your true legacy isn't the metal. It's the fact that your words are permanently etched into India's consciousness.

The campaign is over, the ink is dry, but the resonance of your work will echo in our agency halls forever.

Rest well, Piyush
Yours in words,
Chitto Ghosh



DUST, DHABA MEALS, AND DECADES OF TEA

Retracing a lifetime in the gardens

For Goutam Dutta - once an Assistant Manager at Jardines Henderson and now a Consultant - the Tea Gardens are not just places of work, but landscapes of memory. In this lyrical recollection, he invites us to walk dusty roads, share simple dhaba meals, and feel the warmth of a bygone hospitality. His journey of thirty-seven years is less an industry account than a tapestry of nostalgia, where every estate visit becomes a story of human connection and fading charm.

My journey into the world of Tea Gardens began with Mohurgong and Gulma, followed soon after by Huldibari. What started as a few visits grew into a lifelong odyssey - thirty-seven years of walking through estates, meeting managers, sharing meals, and witnessing the rhythms of life across countless gardens. From Gillanders Arbuthnot and Kothari Plantation to Tata Tea, Tea Promoters India, Bajoria Group, Bengal Tea & Fabrics, McLeod Russel, Rydak Syndicate/ Dhelakhat, and many independent estates, I have been fortunate to step into nearly every corner of this vast landscape.

Those years were marked by both warmth and hardship. Hospitality was often remarkable, yet circumstances could be unpredictable. In the early days, communication was slow and uncertain - letters sometimes reached the Garden Manager after the guest had already departed. Travel itself was a test of endurance: jeeps rattling over dusty, unpaved roads, journeys stretching for hours under the sun, and arrivals at airports where no vehicle awaited because word had not reached in time. In such moments, we relied on local drivers, trusting that fares would be settled according to the Garden's approved rates.

The journeys themselves carried their own suspense. Three or four hours on winding roads, unsure if the driver truly knew the way, yet somehow - almost miraculously - we always arrived safely. Around the Gardens, facilities were sparse. A weekly village market was often the only source of supplies, and when visits came unannounced, managers scrambled to arrange food and lodging. Despite these limitations, their hospitality shone through, improvised yet sincere.

Life in the Gardens had its own rhythm. Club culture



Mr Goutam Dutta

was central - one day each week reserved for gatherings, film screenings, and social exchange. Evenings were filled with conversation, almost always circling back to Tea. Social drinking was common, yet balanced with discipline; parties at bungalows stretched into the early hours, but work resumed the next morning punctually.

Meals at roadside dhabs remain etched in memory - their simple fare, fresh and delicious, carried a charm no luxury could replace. These small joys defined the Garden experience. Yet, not all was idyllic. At times, hospitality funds were misused, resulting in poor arrangements and consequences for those

responsible.

The Garden Manager, in those days, was a figure of authority - respected like a zamindar, his word final among villagers. Life was simpler, harder, yet richer in human connection. Today, with mobile phones, the internet, air-conditioned cars, and modern comforts, I find that the warmth of those relationships has grown rare.

I recall one visit when professional disagreements clouded the atmosphere. On my return, the hospitality felt colder, prompting me to seek accommodation elsewhere. Another time, an Estate Manager was transferred from a large Garden to a smaller one, and the difference in hospitality was stark - almost as if life itself had shifted overnight.

Such moments, both joyous and difficult, became part of my long journey. They taught me that Tea Garden life was not merely about estates and plantations, but about people - their warmth, their struggles, their resilience.

Though modernity has transformed the industry, the memories of those days remain vivid. The laughter at clubs, the taste of dhaba meals, the dust of long roads, the sincerity of hosts who managed with little yet gave so much - all of these are treasures I carry with me.

If any part of these recollections causes discomfort, I offer my sincere apologies. These are not judgments, but personal memories - shared with respect for all who shaped my journey.



Goutam Dutta
Tea enthusiast

OBITUARY



Rajdeep Basumatari
(1964 – 2026)

ELEGANT EXCELLENCE, LOVING LEGACY

Contemporary Brokers deeply mourn the passing of Rajdeep Basumatari, an alumnus of Darrang College, Tezpur, whose distinguished career spanned banking before finding its true calling in the tea industry. Over several decades, he served with integrity and commitment across Andrew Yule, Eastern Tea Brokers, Orang and Bahipukhuri Tea Estates, Assam Tea Brokers, and Contemporary Brokers.

At our Guwahati Branch, Rajdeep was known for his discipline, sincerity, and rare gentleness - a colleague who treated every person, from client to office assistant, with equal warmth and respect. His calm leadership made him a quiet pillar within our team.

He is survived by his wife, Nilakshi, and son, Vishal. Beyond work, he cherished music and lawn tennis.

His excellence lives in every life he touched.

Rest in peace.



Tea-Trails II

THE LOCKHART LEAF WALK

In Munnar, where every hillside seems dipped in green, the romance of tea often obscures the discipline that sustains it. A visit to the historic Lockhart Estate peels back that scenic surface to reveal a working landscape shaped by more than a century of organised planting, skilled labour, and precise manufacture. This personal travelogue moves beyond postcard beauty to touch the industrial and human processes that define South Indian tea, offering readers a gentle yet telling reminder that every celebrated view in tea country is also a site of production, heritage, and global commerce.

My recent visit to one of South India's oldest tea gardens and factories was not just scenic - it was quietly instructive. On a friends' trip to Munnar this December, we set aside a day for Lockhart Estate, a name that has shaped both the landscape and the legacy of the region's tea. Established in 1857 and now under Harrison's Malayalam Limited, the estate covers nearly 645 hectares of high-grown terrain, with its undulating sections forming the visual grammar of Munnar's famed tea country.

Located about nine kilometres from the town, Lockhart still retains the sense of an estate that grew with the hills rather than over them. The tourist entry opens to a sweeping view - layered slopes of manicured bushes giving way to meadow and then to rising ridges. Standing there, one understands that Munnar's celebrated beauty is not merely natural; it is cultivated, shaped over generations by organised planting, drainage, pruning cycles, and human endurance.

Walking through a narrow section of the fields, we experience - however briefly - the physical reality of tea plucking. The gradient, the closely spaced bushes, and the winding pathways offered a glimpse into the daily rhythm of field workers whose skilled hands sustain the industry's most critical operation. It also underlined how terrain influences both yield and leaf character in high-grown South Indian teas, known for their brightness and medium-bodied liquor.

The Lockhart factory, about two kilometres away, dates back to 1936 and continues to produce orthodox teas alongside green and white varieties. With a daily capacity of around 55 metric tonnes, it remains one of the region's significant processing units. A guided tour during working hours revealed the full manufacturing sequence - from withering troughs to rolling, oxidation, drying, grading, and

packing - where vintage machinery still operates alongside modern sorting systems.

Our guide's explanation of the distinctions between tea types brought home a familiar yet sobering reality: much of the finest leaf is destined for export markets. Lockhart, like many bulk producers, does not retail under its own label; its teas travel through auction and private channels before reaching consumers under other brand names, such as Hindustan Unilever, Tata etc.

The visit concluded with a structured tasting - green, white, orthodox grades, Orange Pekoe and CTC - each cup reflecting variations in leaf handling, oxidation, and firing. It transformed what had begun as a leisurely excursion into an education in manufacture, market hierarchy, and value realisation.

We left with packets of tea, but more importantly, with a renewed respect for the layered ecosystem that sustains the beverage. Lockhart is not merely a picturesque stop on the Munnar map; it is a working reminder that behind every cup lies a continuum of history, labour, science, and trade.



Sukanya Das
Tea enthusiast



Word Brew

STEEPED IN IDIOMS

The story of tea is a tale of maritime voyages and ancient Silk Road caravans, evolving from the Chinese bitter plant “tu” into the global sensation we know today. But as the coastal Min dialect’s “tê” transformed into the English “tea” and permeated Western culture, the beverage didn’t just fill our mugs - it entirely flooded our lexicon.

From polite rejections to desperate cravings, here is the fascinating history behind our favourite tea-soaked phrases.

Spill the tea: When someone asks you to “spill the tea,” they want the unvarnished truth. Surprisingly, this has absolutely nothing to do with Earl Grey.

Originating in Black drag culture, the phrase used “T” as shorthand for “truth.” It gained mainstream literary attention in the 1994 book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, where drag queen Lady Chablis defined “her T” as her personal business and reality. Over time, “T” and “tea” became culturally interchangeable.

Not my cup of tea: In late-1800s England, the land of ardent tea enthusiasts, calling someone “my cup of tea” was a high compliment meant to describe something deeply favoured. Naturally, throwing a “not” in front of the phrase became the perfect, quintessentially British way to politely swipe left on an unappealing situation.

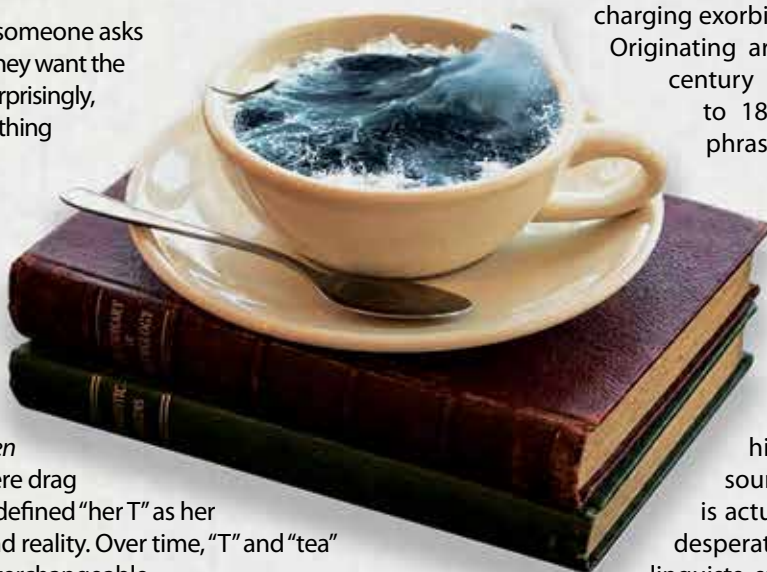
A storm in a teacup: Making a mountain out of a molehill? The roots of this idiom trace all the way back to 52 BC, when Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote of someone stirring up “billows in a ladle.” The idiom took on many international variations - like Hungary’s “tempest in a potty” - before the British coined “a storm in a teacup” and the U.S. adopted “a tempest in a teapot” to describe unwarranted drama.

Tea and sympathy: This phrase, meaning to offer kindness to someone in distress, stems directly from Robert Anderson’s 1953 play *Tea and Sympathy*. The narrative centers on a bullied young man whose instructor’s empathetic wife notes that sometimes, all you are supposed to do is give people “a little tea and sympathy.”

Not for all the tea in China: Historically, China held a formidable monopoly on the global tea trade, possessing all the leaves and charging exorbitant prices for them. Originating around the late 19th century - with strong ties to 1890s Australia - this phrase cemented the idea that no amount of unimaginable wealth could sway the speaker’s mind. Translation: Absolutely not.

I could murder a cup of tea: This highly aggressive-sounding British phrase is actually a declaration of desperate love. While some linguists speculate the use of “murder” stems from the old tavern slang of “killing off” a pint of beer, today it simply means you urgently need a hot brew.

Whether you are spilling it, craving it, or refusing it for all the wealth in China, tea continues to flavour our language just as richly as it does our afternoons.



Suchetana Ghosh (Guha)
Cincinnati, USA



Auction leafline

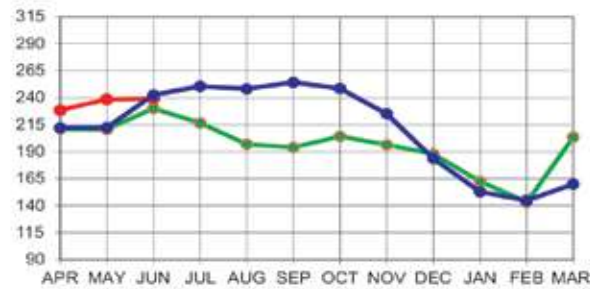
N. India Market Graphs April to June

North India - CTC Leaf & Dust

Months	2026/27	2025/26	26 vs 25	2024/25	26 vs 24
APR	228.33	211.10	17.23	211.91	16.42
MAY	238.35	210.52	27.84	212.11	26.24
JUN	239.06	230.03	9.03	242.39	-3.34
JUL		216.50		250.47	
AUG		196.78		248.17	
SEP		193.79		254.06	
OCT		204.03		248.46	
NOV		196.22		224.91	
DEC		187.60		183.59	
JAN		162.37		152.62	
FEB		142.95		144.69	
MAR		203.40		159.87	
April to June	236.63	219.69	16.93	228.06	8.57

Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust

Rs CTC LEAF & DUST N.I. AUCTION AVERAGE



Rs ORTHODOX LEAF N.I. AUCTION AVERAGE



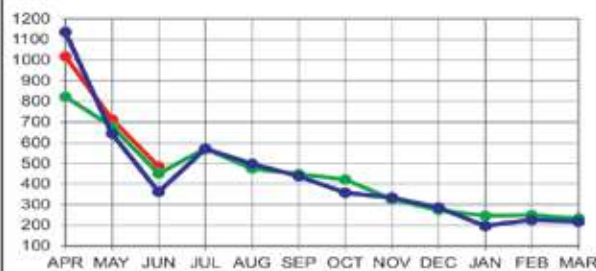
North India - Orthodox Leaf

Months	2026/27	2025/26	26 vs 25	2024/25	26 vs 24
APR	316.28	311.30	4.98	303.93	12.35
MAY	330.42	311.79	18.63	287.69	42.73
JUN	323.64	297.24	26.40	299.80	23.84
JUL		299.77		304.22	
AUG		301.03		314.61	
SEP		277.10		332.59	
OCT		286.79		302.23	
NOV		279.66		279.92	
DEC		258.06		254.20	
JAN		225.00		225.13	
FEB		224.18		205.14	
MAR		202.08		205.08	
April to June	325.07	305.61	19.46	295.33	29.74

Darjeeling Leaf

Months	2026/27	2025/26	26 vs 25	2024/25	26 vs 24
APR	1017.78	822.49	195.29	1136.32	-118.54
MAY	711.94	676.24	35.70	643.20	68.74
JUN	484.59	450.20	34.39	361.23	123.36
JUL		570.74		569.62	
AUG		473.40		496.89	
SEP		448.17		437.16	
OCT		420.75		356.69	
NOV		325.06		333.80	
DEC		273.01		285.33	
JAN		245.22		195.45	
FEB		248.61		226.14	
MAR		232.77		216.11	
April to June	620.91	549.30	71.61	482.39	138.52

Rs DARJEELING LEAF AUCTION AVERAGES



(*Subject to minor revision)

Rs CTC LEAF & DUST S.I. AUCTION AVERAGE



South India - CTC Leaf & Dust

Months	2026/27	2025/26	26 vs 25	2024/25	26 vs 24
APR	123.01	120.71	-7.49	110.55	12.47
MAY	118.67	118.29	0.39	113.26	5.41
JUN	124.02	111.78	12.24	121.40	2.62
JUL		104.85		113.45	
AUG		110.59		122.70	
SEP		107.86		149.00	
OCT		115.04		157.80	
NOV		124.19		139.38	
DEC		130.96		135.77	
JAN		136.88		137.40	
FEB		142.04		133.58	
MAR		133.29		134.42	
April to June	121.95	119.13	2.82	118.46	6.49

Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust

Month-wise District-wise Auction averages

CTC Leaf & Dust

Assam : Estate

Months	2026/27	2025/26	Diff (+/-)
APR	310.02	275.79	34.23
MAY	282.03	266.49	15.54
JUN	297.66	292.78	4.88
JUL		279.80	
AUG		243.07	
SEP		232.87	
OCT		244.22	
NOV		231.85	
DEC		211.41	
JAN		183.39	
FEB		165.04	
MAR		189.29	
April to June	293.19	281.80	11.39

Dooars & Terai : Estate

Month	2026/27	2025/26	Diff (+/-)
APR	271.74	257.10	14.64
MAY	271.92	243.14	28.78
JUN	267.89	265.72	2.17
JUL		241.23	
AUG		211.95	
SEP		201.43	
OCT		212.53	
NOV		216.71	
DEC		209.59	
JAN		200.87	
FEB		174.74	
MAR		315.29	
April to June	270.25	256.48	13.77

Cachar : Estate

Month	2026/27	2025/26	Diff (+/-)
APR	275.87	210.13	65.74
MAY	238.20	213.55	24.65
JUN	236.04	205.70	30.35
JUL		214.32	
AUG		196.38	
SEP		179.51	
OCT		187.87	
NOV		186.29	
DEC		185.74	
JAN		171.61	
FEB		165.56	
MAR		180.45	
April to June	240.02	208.83	31.19

Tripura : Estate

Month	2026/27	2025/26	Diff (+/-)
APR	269.34	237.77	31.57
MAY	203.48	179.93	23.55
JUN	197.21	171.48	25.72
JUL		161.86	
AUG		155.09	
SEP		140.61	
OCT		144.94	
NOV		163.78	
DEC		159.02	
JAN		142.53	
FEB		124.88	
MAR		127.31	
April to June	209.99	185.02	24.97

Assam : BLF

Month	2026/27	2025/26	Diff (+/-)
APR	228.19	187.11	41.08
MAY	214.48	177.69	36.80
JUN	222.70	197.15	25.55
JUL		189.66	
AUG		170.77	
SEP		161.86	
OCT		169.57	
NOV		163.97	
DEC		161.21	
JAN		144.41	
FEB		136.28	
MAR		131.28	
April to June	220.63	189.32	31.31

Dooars & Terai : BLF

Month	2026/27	2025/26	Diff (+/-)
APR	147.53	134.53	13.00
MAY	154.45	129.45	25.00
JUN	143.58	122.54	21.04
JUL		115.00	
AUG		110.99	
SEP		112.92	
OCT		122.32	
NOV		126.61	
DEC		130.57	
JAN		124.17	
FEB		121.55	
MAR		134.26	
April to June	147.76	128.08	19.68

Dust : Excluding Orthodox Dust

EXPERIENCE A NEW LEVEL OF TEA ENGINEERING

www.tiglobal.com



COMPLETE ORTHODOX & CTC MACHINERY SOLUTION!



Rollomax Rolling Table
(18", 24", 30", 36", 48" with
pneumatic automation)



Conquest Combination Dryer
(Available in various sizes, from
100kg/hr upto 650kg/hr)



MEYER Colour Sorter (Ancoo)
(Available in various sizes and in
3 stage, 4 stage, 5 stage, 6 stage,
with reverse sorting)



MATRIX CFM
(Available in various sizes,
from 100kg/hr upto 650kg/hr)



Kaizen CTC
(Available in various sizes,
from 100kg/hr upto 650kg/hr)



VIBRANT
(Available in various sizes, from
100kg/hr upto 650kg/hr)



TIGL stands tall as a globally trusted tea manufacturer, celebrated for its unmatched quality, steadfast support, and a rich legacy of delighting customers for over seven decades. At T&I Global Ltd. our passionate team of 500+ professionals operate across 28+ countries, uniting to transform the tea processing landscape.

Some of our renowned machines are, WIZARD Continuous Withering Machine, KAIZEN Nova CTC, MATRIX CFM, VIBRANT VFBD DRYER, SHOLA Cast Iron Heater, AXIS Auto Milling Machine, SMART AXIS Auto Chasing Machine, ROLLOMAX Rolling Table, CONQUEST Combination Dryer, QUESTEA Conventional Dryer. We do provide Turn Key solutions in Tea Factories.

CTC Tea Machinery
Green Tea Machinery
Orthodox Tea Machinery
Mini Tea Factory Machinery

COMPLETE SOLUTION

T & I Global Limited

4A Auckland Square, 11 Jassal House, Kolkata 700017
Call 033 40733556 | salesindia@tiglobal.com

FARMER EH-35[®] Plus

BATTERY TEA HARVESTER



After the tremendous success of the Farmer EH-35 Electric Tea Harvester, Zenith is now honoured to present the updated Farmer EH-35 PLUS Harvester which eliminates the chord connecting the battery backpack and the harvester unit making the machine more maneuverable whilst reducing breakdowns and service costs and now also with

DUAL SPEED CONTROL !

SALIENT FEATURES

- Lightweight- 1.12 Kgs without the battery pack, making it currently the lightest harvester in the market more suitable for female workers in Tea Estate.
- Dual Speed Controller (2100/ 2450 CPM) for using higher speed only when needed enhancing battery life.
- Blades made with best quality Japanese Steel to ensure minimum damage to tea bush.
- Safer and easier to use, with the latest cord-less technology.

Battery

- One of the highest average life cycle. (425+ charging cycles)*
- High Capacity li-ion cell batteries (18V/5AH).
- Shock Resistant to protect from daily use and accidental drops.
- Best quality cells used in the batteries to ensure highest retention of charge capacity even after multiple charging cycles.
- Two batteries are provided with every single machine.

ZENITH FORGING PVT. LTD.

13 Brabourne Road, Kolkata 700 001 (INDIA)

Call : +91 33 2242 8083, 98307 61166

Email: info@zenithforgings.com/pk@zenithforgings.com

Sales & Services:

COIMBATORE | JORHAT | TINSUKIA | B.CHARALI | SILIGURI



Contact



Web



Whatsapp

HARVESTING MACHINE (1MAN / 2MEN) | TEA PLANT PRUNER | BRUSHCUTTERS | HEDGE TRIMMERS | AUGER