



# *The Times*



The McLeod Russel  
House Journal

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As Hal Borland said, "Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us." So, with the wisdom gathered through the experiences of the last year, let us move into this brand new year with confidence to face challenges and eagerness to see what lies in store.

Last May, Mr Aditya Khaitan was invited to address guests at the London Tea Trade Dinner, an honour so far reserved for members only, with just one previous exception. We bring you his speech which was highly appreciated by the august gathering.

In 'Treasury', we highlight the unique features of two of the Company's estates – one in Upper Assam and the other in the

Dooars – and in 'Cameo', we get you better acquainted with our very own 'Pilot Sahab' who has made a smooth landing from the Indian Air Force to life in Tea.

A bright young schoolgirl who had the self-confidence to join an international talent hunt on her own volition is featured in 'Rainbow'; useful tips on Flower Arrangement and Healthy Eating are presented by ladies who write from experience; and in Melange, we bring you the usual mixed bag of latest events, births and weddings.

As the Assam Valley School, an initiative of the Williamson Magor Education Trust, completes two decades of excellence, we congratulate all those, past and present, associated with its success.

In addition to funding reconstructive surgery of cleft palate and lips, and the treatment of eye problems, the Company has recently started another project – this time, for the benefit of persons with physical disabilities. We bring you the details of the first camp held at our Phulbari Central Hospital in which people were fitted with the Jaipur Foot.

'HealthWatch' gives us useful information about common allergies while we are provided with an insight into the importance of developing one's EQ in 'Management Mantras'. Colleagues from Vietnam, Uganda and Rwanda keep us

updated in 'Phu Ben Communique' and 'African Beat' while in Visitors' Vignettes, a guest from overseas presents his account of a recent visit to some of our Assam estates.

A young planter shares anecdotes from his current working life in 'Kamjari', while in 'Reminiscence', a senior planter gives us glimpses of his tenure with the Company on the eve of his retirement.

As one retired planter recounts his experiences while serving on the Company's estates some decades ago, another celebrates his 80th birthday felicitating the deserving children of workers of the estate in which he served for over a dozen years. Truly, a planter's bond with his estate and workers is life-long!

Something old, something new... 'Narration' tells you something about old tea chests and their unusual uses, and a brand new feature, 'The Gem Collection', brings you a 'gem' from one of our estates – a bamboo grove which is a natural sanctuary for birds and other creatures.

As you sit back and prepare to read this issue, raise that steaming cup of hot tea and join me in saying, "Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right!"

*Sarita Dasgupta*

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Photograph: Mr Dipin Mehta,

Central Dooars T.E.



“In the arena of human life the honours and rewards fall to those who show their good qualities in action.” ~ Aristotle

## LONDON TEA TRADE DINNER

The annual London Tea Trade Dinner is held on the first Thursday of May, which was the 1st of the month last year. This, the 86th Dinner, was hosted at The Savoy Hotel, London. The tradition of hosting this Dinner began over a hundred years ago, in 1911, with a few breaks during the two World Wars. This prestigious event

is attended by guests connected with the tea industry from all around the world.

The Tea Trade Dinner Committee which organizes the entire event also chooses the guest speaker. Traditionally, the speaker has always been from the UK as it is a way to honour one of the senior members of the trade and recognize the impact he has made on the business over the years. There has been only one non-UK based speaker before – the head of the USA tea association – in his last year in office.

Last year, Mr Aditya Khaitan was chosen to speak at the Dinner because, as the Tea Trade Dinner Committee Chairman says, “He is MD of the world's largest private and perhaps most forward-thinking producer. Under his tenure the group has grown significantly and appears to carry a very definite view of, and aims for, the future. We wanted someone who is still very much part of the evolution of the trade; somebody who is helping to mould its future rather than looking back at his long career. This would give us a speech that was relevant and that people in the room would want to hear. To this end, Aditya proved the perfect candidate.”



Mr Aditya Khaitan at the Dinner flanked by Mr Robin Harrison (L) and Mr Edward Foster (R)

# London Tea Trade Dinner - Mr Aditya Khaitan's Speech

Ladies and Gentlemen, Chairman and members of the Tea Trade Dinner Committee,

It is indeed a privilege to have been asked to address the Tea Trade Dinner this year as I would be the first to acknowledge that there are many in this room whose years of experience in the industry far outweigh mine.

What I have is an abiding and continuing passion for the beverage, coming as I do from a family that has invested in Tea for several decades. My father, Mr B.M. Khaitan, who has just marked his 50th year as Chairman of our Company said, "Tea is not merely a commodity for us. It is heritage based on values and culture, full of sentiment and commitment." Our constant endeavour is to make sure that we are a sustainable business and do everything possible to deliver this wonderful beverage to consumers around the world.

I am therefore delighted to have this opportunity to share a few thoughts with you.

Being present amongst you in London is an opportunity to dwell on the strong links between England and India in our industry from its origins in the 1800s. Many of you might be aware that the botanist, Joseph Banks, sent tea seeds sourced from China to the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta. It was indeed Banks who asserted to the Directors of the East India Company that serious efforts should be made to cultivate tea in India as an alternative to China.

In 1833, the Lord Bentinck Tea Committee proclaimed the Crown's concurrence with its mercantile lobby in London and concluded that the discovery of tea in Upper Assam was "by far the most important and valuable that has ever been made on matters connected with the agricultural or commercial resources of the British Empire." Around the same time, Robert Bruce was first introduced to the Assamica version of wild tea by a Singpho Chief and he, along with his brother, Charles, the first Superintendent of cultivation, observed in 1838 that "all Singpho territories are overrun with wood jungle and if only the underwood was cleared...they would make a fine tea country."

I recount this history only to underscore the excitement and the pioneering instinct that drove people from this land to travel to a distant and largely unknown India and establish the framework of a vibrant industry that thrives today...almost 200 years later...and whose existence many take for granted. We in the industry today salute those early pioneers and recognize their contributions. Today, many Indian-owned businesses still proudly bear the names that reflect their British origins and heritage.

Tea continues to be the beverage that dominates the consumer landscape both in India and the United Kingdom – though its position in this part of the world presents worrying trends. Tea imports into Britain continue to be flat...if not suggesting marginal declines. Good Assams were once an integral part of an English Breakfast cuppa in the UK which may well have led to capturing consumers over coffee. Sadly, good Assams, even though costing the same as half a century ago (due to the repeated devaluation of the rupee) are now a rare commodity in blends. Therefore, has this 'lesser' cup taken away from the consumers, turning them to other more satisfying beverages? Have we now lost the 'bite' in our cups to 'malty' and 'fizzy' beverages?

Another piece of evidence of the shifting sands in Tea is the closing down of the Tea Auctions in London which was the Centre of the Tea World. On the other hand, the Calcutta Auction established in 1861 continues to thrive, registering a sales volume of around 170 million kg in 2013 and adapting into a modern electronic auction centre in 2009 with the aim of reducing transactional time and costs.

Recent reports in the UK suggest a resurgence of Afternoon Tea and the growing demand for products with a visible provenance, new product variants that strictly do not belong to the Camellia Sinensis family such as herbal infusions etc. The challenge therefore is to take steps to arrest the decline in the mainstream black tea market and bring in new drinkers.

Satya Nadela, the Indian born software professional, last year addressed an email on his first day of taking over as the CEO of Microsoft and, among other things, he said, "While we have seen great success, we are hungry to do more. Our industry does not respect tradition – it only respects innovation." I found this comment of Satya's very interesting. We in the Tea industry are steeped in tradition, have seen glorious days in the past but are viewed to be slow in adopting new ideas. The key to continued success and sustainability of the industry is the hunger for innovation. We in the industry have to think and act differently so that we may hand over our businesses to the next generation in robust health.

Today, Indian tea is a thriving business. Our annual production is 1.2 billion; our domestic consumption is around 900 million kg and growing at 3% a year. India is a young country and with growing prosperity there is likely to be still further local demand for tea.

Geographically spread over many provinces with varying agro-climatic conditions, Indian tea continues to reflect a variety that is unmatched in any other parts of the tea-growing world. The industry also reflects widely disparate forms of ownership – corporates with multiple holdings as also small proprietary ownership with one or two plantations in their stable. Adding to all of this is the phenomenal growth of small tea growers that have mushroomed since the mid-1990s, changing the socio-economic landscape until now characterized by subsistence level agricultural operations.



Till now the organized sector has been maintaining a constant growth with regular programmes of uprooting and replanting. However, the small tea growers' or outgrowers' expansion has become huge. They are likely to become as big as the organized sector and it is imperative that the industry bring these new entrants in line with standard practices, usage of pesticides, manufacture and quality control.

An occasion such as this enables the Packers to come together and re-acquaint each other with the features of our business. This, therefore, is as good an occasion as any to reassure them about what we, as tea producers, continue to do to ensure that tea remains a beverage of choice. The key to remaining competitive...and in business...is regular and planned reinvestment by replacing old tea bushes with new and better plant material. This operation is imperative on two counts: (a) to enhance productivity and thus help in reining costs and (b) to invest in quality planting material that delivers better value to the consumer. We need to also bear in mind that tea is, after all, an agricultural operation with the vagaries of weather and other natural conditions adding a twist of uncertainty to our business. The features of climate change are clearly visible and the tea planter's challenge to deliver higher levels of productivity and quality are considerable.

It is now as never before that we need producers, packers and consumers to come together for a common cause, and one that helps us protect this remarkable gift of nature. Let the trade be just as responsible for ensuring that good quality, safe and compliant tea is produced ethically and sustainably. But let the trade also take the responsibility of ensuring that the producer/planter benefits from such programmes and that he is provided a meaningful return beyond what inflationary and market trends can compensate. A long term partnership model between producers and packers is essential where sustainability continues to feature not merely as a buzzword but as an imperative that drives both our businesses and allows us to graduate from a mere transactional relationship into a solid partnership.

As if these challenges were not formidable enough the tea producer's lot is even harder when one sees the fast changing socio-economic landscape in India. With greater employment opportunities and rising aspirational levels leading to greater mobility of labour, the availability of workers in the tea sector can no longer be taken for granted.

Unfortunately, the perception of the role and the status of the tea plucker varies around the world. A Vietnamese small tea grower who owns his own plot cannot be fairly compared with a daily wage temporary worker in India. With the advent of mobiles and TV, the socio-economic landscape is changing fast in India and there is a strong pressure on the tea plantations to retain its workforce by increasing wages and benefits to compare with those of other industries. Then, there are the minimum standards from certification bodies that oblige us to provide our workers with living standards fit for the modern age. However, the simple fact is that all this leads to an increase in the cost of production and we producers must be compensated with long term loyalty from our buyers for meeting these conditions.

Still largely reliant on manual plucking – which many of us would argue still makes for the best quality tea – Tea is vulnerable to these changes and the introduction of mechanical plucking will be a major task ahead.

I predict the time will come when it will be difficult to get pluckers to manually pluck tea. The new generation of the workforce at the tea plantation is showing reluctance to work in the plantations and venturing into new areas of work in urban areas. The shortage of workforce has compelled a few plantation companies to mechanize their plucking operations, which obviously has its advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, with growing employment opportunities for our educated and qualified youth, we are also facing a challenge in recruiting managerial staff who aspire to make tea planting their chosen career. We are witnessing the signs on the ground today and we must prepare for the future.

Even as we grapple with these challenges there is a need to grow our markets without which the tea producer is not assured of adequate farm gate price realization to compensate for his efforts and ensure a sustainable long term business. I therefore ask leaders of the tea trade assembled here to pause and reflect on what should drive the tea business and make it sustainable for all the stakeholders in the years to come.

Today, the tea market is spread over all the continents with varying demographic profiles of competing products and beverages, and consumer preferences. It must be our collective challenge to be able to understand these patterns and through them, keep Tea as a beverage relevant to the consumer. We must not wait for the consumer to 'grow' into the middle-aged tea drinker but make it exciting for the child and the youth to embrace this versatile beverage in all its forms – be it cold or hot, malty or fizzy, green or black – but it must be TEA.

My thoughts... perhaps a trifle ponderous...were to present some of the challenges that tea producers and the trade face today and the growing importance of jointly addressing them.

Almost 200 years ago these early pioneers set sail from ports in this land to establish an industry several thousand miles away, that still provides many of us with a good living. I would like to therefore, once again, acknowledge their contributions and the long and deep relationships between the UK and the Indian tea industry and if I may say so...long may it prosper!

Friends, I was told that there are bets to be won on the length of my speech and for those on the brink, let me not take any longer but end with a quote from a well known author, Okakuro Kakuzo, who, in 1906, wrote (in English) 'The Book of Tea' in which he said: "Teaism is a cult founded on the adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence. It inculcates purity and harmony, the mystery of mutual charity, the romanticism of the social order."

Tea Cheers and thank you for your patience.



“Make the strengths of people productive and their weaknesses irrelevant.” ~ Peter Drucker



## Developing Human Resources at Mcleod Russel in Uganda

~ Onesimus Matsiko  
Administration & Human Resources Manager  
Mwenge Central, Uganda

Management at MRUL recognizes that Human Resource is the most important resource as it controls all others. Deliberate efforts have therefore been made towards Human Resources development through both conventional and innovative approaches.

When McLeod Russel took over in 2010, exercises in identification of performance gaps were undertaken. Appropriate investment then started an ongoing program for field and factory development, using a holistic approach towards development of Human Resources.

These included:

- Training (structured and unstructured hands-on).
- Review of organization structures to streamline responsibilities and accountabilities.
- Review of performance management and evaluation schemes.

### Training: Staff

This adheres to the following approaches:

1. **ON-JOB SKILLS TRAINING.** This has been emphasized as opposed to the earlier practice of hiring of ‘Gurus’ to provide classroom training. The main aspects of this are:
  - a) **Skills Transfer from India:** Uganda needs to benefit

from experiences gained in India in areas of tea manufacture and machinery maintenance. Skills Transfer commenced with experts making periodic visits from India to Uganda. It was further decided that Managers and other executives from MRUL would visit Assam to share live experience in operations. All Estate and Factory Managers as well as Heads of Departments at the Mwenge Head Office have since visited MRIL. This strategy has been extended now to deputing skilled personnel from India for specific periods, thereby leading to an increased contact time. Also a larger number of people can benefit when compared to the number that can practically visit India.



Mr Saneer Gurung shows Uganda Managers around Kolkata

- b) Skilled senior managers on their routine schedules continuously interact with and develop their junior colleagues in unstructured training.

2. **STRUCTURED TRAINING:** Staff members from different estates come together to share experiences. In most cases, External Resources/Trainers are brought in to conduct such specialized training.



Mr Daniel Ojara Training Junior Management

- a) **Managerial Skills Development:** Training is conducted by Mr Daniel Ojara of Management for Development (M4D). Daniel is a Chartered Manager and has many years of experience in Operations and Administration specific to Tea. An interactive approach is taken to training whereby intense discussions about real work issues are moderated by the Trainer. Workshops conducted at least once a year cover a particular module, while others are organized on needs basis. For example, as it was realized that Industrial Relations management required improved literacy in Uganda Labour Laws, a Workshop was accordingly organized.



Managers Trained on Uganda Labour Laws

- b) **Management Training Scheme:** Fresh University Graduates are recruited annually and trained for a period of 2 years. Trainees are taken through all aspects of field and factory management as well as other associated activities on an estate.
- c) **Standards Training:** The following standards are maintained by MRUL: Rainforest Alliance and Food Safety Management System (ISO 22000) on all estates, along with Fairtrade at Mwenge and Bugambe Tea Estates. Workshops and seminars by consultants are regularly arranged to maintain compliance with these standards.
- d) **Other Specialized Training Programs:** Some operations such as management of Estates’ Clinics require staff to keep up-to-date with emerging practices. In such cases staff members are sent out for specialized training for several days.



Staff Training on Rainforest Alliance

### Management Organization Structure

When MRUL took over, estates were organized on a Functional structure. This was mainly specific to field operations: whilst one person was in charge of the entire harvesting operation across the estate, someone else was responsible for field maintenance and so on. The objective earlier had been for an individual to focus on a particular function, it also meant that his development was restricted to that function. Structural reorganization into Divisions was done and the Divisional-in-Charge now controls all operations/functions in his geographical area. This has led to acquisition of all-round skills and greater accountability.



## Performance Management

Schemes for performance management have been reviewed and developed for more relevance, and increased correlation between performance and reward has been achieved.

**1. PERFORMANCE BONUS:** A system has been developed to segregate management from workers and different schemes developed separately. The structure of performance targets was developed to cover 3 sections:

- Team Targets with objective parameters covering each estate's key elements of the Business Plan. This motivates staff to work together towards collective achievement of broad objectives.
- Key Result Areas are spelt out for each individual. These are generally within target parameters that serve to recognize individual contribution to the Company's overall results and measurement is made to reward achievement.
- Subjective Assessment Parameters have been created to cover behavioral issues which are important in a person's overall performance. They attract a limited portion of the overall assessment and primarily offer an opportunity for managers to provide structured guidance on staff conduct.

**2. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL:** This system, covering all executives, has been developed to cover 2 broad objectives:

- To ensure that every individual has a relevant job description.
- To make certain that targets are clearly communicated and assessment on performance is conveyed back to the individual concerned.

Fulfillment of the above objectives encourages continuous improvement on every individual's part. Appraisals are conducted annually with reference to the previous year's operational results. The process concludes with setting of targets for the current year.

## Senior Management Discussion Forum

Senior Management Team members are periodically brought together in order to discuss operations. This forum permits senior colleagues to share experiences. It also provides an opportunity for the exchange of ideas on performance improvement, adding to the pool of

collective expertise. Managers' meetings are convened 3 or 4 times a year, bringing together Central Heads of Departments with Estate Managers. Most of them are planned to coincide with a wrap-up meeting by the Visiting Agent. It is a multi-layered approach and an important facet of Human Resource development in the senior echelons of MRUL.



*Managers' Meeting – November 2013*

The above initiatives are with reference to Managerial Staff development. For Supervisory Staff, the following schemes have been introduced and training correspondingly imparted:

- Productivity Based Pay (PBP) Review.** The scheme was reviewed, removing managerial staff and thereby strengthening its implementation. A good operational month automatically improves workers' earnings and vice versa.
- Harvesting Supervision Special Incentive Scheme.** This was carved out of PBP to make specific targets for Supervisors, Headmen and Quality Controllers in order to address green leaf standards.
- Operations Supervision Training (OST) Scheme.** An equivalent of Management Training Scheme, it is designed to enhance proficiency of Field and Factory Supervisors. Training lasts 6 months and covers either field or factory.
- Operations Supervision Improvement Training.** Supervisory Staff are brought together from different estates and training sessions conducted on one of the estates. Trainers are selected from Assistant Managers with Estate Managers and respective Central HODs overseeing the exercise.

Continuous improvement is our commitment in order to fulfill the aspirations of stakeholders. The aim: to nurture, guide and develop our most valuable asset - the people of MRUL.



“If the Land can be preserved long enough for its stories to be told, and retold, perhaps we all — as custodians of both place and memory — stand a chance at real preservation.” ~ Ari Berk



~ Sarita Dasgupta

One of the Company's most picturesquely located properties, Central Dooars T.E. is bounded by the Buxa Tiger Reserve and rivers Basra, Pana and Bhutri. It is situated in the North Bengal region, close to the Bhutan hills.

*Hazardous Crossing – Basra River*



Of the estate's grant area of 1225.60 hectares, 818.66 hectares bear tea and are divided into four Divisions – Hatimara, Pana, Basra and Rangamati.

Being a relatively isolated estate due to its situation, it is quite possible that it came into existence without the local populace being aware of the process! Even now, once the monsoon sets in, the rivers become uncrossable and the inhabitants of the estate are totally cut off from the rest of the world. Vehicles getting stuck in the river are a regular feature. Often, they remain under water for hours before being recovered with a great deal of difficulty. There was an instance in 2009, when nothing but the debris was found in spite of all possible efforts to save the vehicle. Fortunately the gentleman driving it escaped on time!





Retired workers such as Shri Madan Bahadur Pradhan, Shri Fagua Dhanwar, Shri Bhaktabir Lama and Smti Gourimaya Subba, who are all in their eighties now, remember earlier times when elephants were a part of the 'transport fleet' to ferry not only rations, fuel and medicines, but also the executives and visitors. Now, the 'Motorized Elephant' (JCB) is pressed into service for manoeuvring the rivers during emergencies.

It is a matter of pride to Shri Pradhan that his son is a senior staff member who has completed 25 years on the estate.

Shri B.N.Bardhan, Factory Supervisor, has been working in the factory for the last 39 years. His elder brother was also associated with the Company as Head Factory Clerk for 42 years while, earlier, their doctor father was posted at Bhatpara, Jainti and Chuapara estates for 44 years.



It is believed that Robert Simpson Hamilton, Superintendent of the erstwhile East India Company, established many gardens in the Dooars region of West Bengal, among them being Central Dooars T.E. He was also believed to have functioned as the revenue collector for Ugyen Wangchuck, the first hereditary Druk Gyalpo (Dragon King) of Bhutan in the early 1900s.

It is well known that the king and his entourage used Col Hamilton's Bungalow (the present Manager's Bungalow) for night halts while travelling to Thimpu by

way of Pana Tala - quite a tedious journey at the time and fraught with danger, as the estate, being isolated and on the border, was a safe haven for criminals and other undesirable elements.

*Pana Tala – The Ancient Gateway*



The Manager's Bungalow has a swimming pool and tennis court which, over the years, have been put to good use when the rivers are impossible to cross.

Col Hamilton was a farsighted man; a water source tapped by him in the early 1900s, called the 'Lamond Houda', still collects the seepage water from the Bhutan hills.



*Lamond Houda*

The water collected then gets filtered through brass strainers and gravitational force ensures that it flows into the overhead tank in the factory.

The estate still has a unique water supply system. Seepage water from the Bhutan hills is collected in a well at Singhijhora Water Pumping Station from where the



water is pumped to the filtration plant and then to a reservoir situated one kilometre away, on a higher ridge in Rangamati Division. The water is then supplied to the workers' Lines and factory reservoir through the natural pull of gravity.

Apart from his innovations on the estate, Col Hamilton also started a weekly market about 15 km away. The market area has since grown into a small township named 'Hamiltonganj' in his honour. The place, known for its wholesale markets and considered a business hub in the region, also has its own railway station.

A few years ago, the inhabitants of Hamiltonganj unveiled



a statue of Gorkha martyr Durga Malla, a major in the Azad Hind Fauj, in recognition of the sacrifices made by him and other Gorkha freedom fighters in the struggle for Independence and in protecting the territorial integrity of India.

Col Hamilton decided to start a small tea garden of his own where he lived after his retirement. There, he built a concrete grave in what is presently Section 9 of the estate, and gave directions that on his death he be laid to rest there in his Aston Martin car!



Central Dooars T.E. suffered a severe setback in July 2013 when the Basra River breached its banks and entered Basra Division. More than two hectares of tea were under water for several days and finally got buried under boulders and silt. The estate has since undertaken a massive 'river protection drive' and already constructed

seven huge boulder spurs at strategic places. These are working quite well at keeping the river waters at bay.



*Boulder Spur*



*Flood Irrigation*

For the last three years, the Basra River waters have been channeled into the tea areas and utilized for flood irrigation during dry months. This is one way of using natural resources without disturbing the environment.

In 2013, M/s Furaat, water management experts from Ahmedabad, explored the possibility of water harvesting and rain water conservation on the estate through recharging ground water. Following their recommendations, water bodies have been created in Hatimara and Basra divisions.



Minimum tillage and mulching are carried out on steep slopes, and citronella grass has been planted on slopes and the edges of drains to stop erosion of valuable top soil.

For the last seven years, emissions and effluent from forty-four factories in neighbouring Pasakha, Bhutan, have affected the ecological balance in and around the estate.

*Flooded Section*







The matter has been taken up with government officials and NGOs, but for now, the estate's extensive afforestation measures and eco-friendly practices are helping to combat the pollution to some extent.

The management is also in the process of getting FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) accreditation for the estate. FSSAI is an agency of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, established under the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, which is a consolidating statute related to food safety and regulation in India. The FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the regulation and supervision of food safety.

The estate has 15.77 hectares of well grown 'fuel baries' in Pana and Basra divisions under Project Afforestation and two new ones are coming up in Basra and Hatimara divisions. Avenues of 'Chap' and 'Chikrasi' trees have also been planted around the estate. In addition, each Division has a Shade Nursery growing Bokain, Albizia Odoratissima, Acacia Lenticularis, Acacia Mangium (Black Wattle) and other species of trees. Fifty thousand permanent and temporary shade trees have been planted in the last two years.

Organic manure in the form of vegetable compost and vermi-compost is used to enrich the soil. More than 100 metric tonnes of vermi-compost is being produced on the



estate every year since 2012 and all four Divisions have vegetable compost pits.

Being surrounded by the thick forests of the Buxa Tiger Reserve, the estate is visited regularly by elephants and occasionally by leopards, wild boars, peacocks, rabbits and other wild creatures.

Enriched Soil



The estate's two Medical Officers look after the health of workers and staff in the 66-bed hospital, helped by 8 paramedical staff and sub-staff.

The Mothers' Club, comprising a few leading women workers from all four Divisions, plays an active role in curbing social threats such as drug abuse among the younger generation, addiction to liquor and gambling. The members also help the Medical Team (the two Medical Officers, Health Assistants, nurses and midwives) to create awareness about the importance of nutrition, health care and maintaining personal hygiene.



With the help of an NGO, the estate's management organized an Anti-Drug Campaign for the first time last year, primarily targeting school children. The success of the campaign has encouraged the management to hold a similar drive this year in order to keep the momentum going.



Workers or their dependents with cleft lips or palate are regularly referred to hospitals in Siliguri under the 'Operation Smile' project with the help of an NGO based in North Bengal. Periodical eye camps are conducted in the estate's hospital under the supervision of eye surgeons and their team from Alipurduar Government Hospital.

Regular Pulse-Polio immunization camps are organized at the hospital and, since 2013, health check-up camps for school children have been held, in which Calcium and Iron tablets are given to those found with deficiencies.

The children of the workers are educated in the five LP Schools and one Junior High School on the estate. The management provides a school bus to transport a number of children to and from Higher Secondary schools in the neighbouring townships of Kalchini and Lothabari.

There are crèches for babies and toddlers in each of the four Divisions. The children in the charge of the Crèche Attendants are provided with milk and biscuits as well as with toys and other essential items.

The workforce at Central Dooars has been touched by urban influences, such as restaurants and motorbikes. They are interested in music and sports such as football. A new temple dedicated to Lord Shiva that was constructed last year attracts devotees who take part in the daily rituals, while groups of singers belonging to the estate's workforce sing devotional songs once a week. Others worship at the estate's church or the monastery close by.



The Team – Seated (L to R): Dr A. K. Maharaj, D. Mehta (Manager), D. Nandi & Dr R. Chatterjee  
Standing (L to R): A. Prasad, A. Roy, A. Sengupta & R. Sharma



The natural beauty in and around Central Dooars T.E. – the meandering rivers, tree covered hills, the upper ridges of the Bhutan hills taking on colour as the oranges start ripening – all make one believe John Keats' words, "The poetry of the earth is never dead."

In the hustle and bustle of modern life, we need places where "Nature has not been rearranged by the hand of Man."







## Memories of My Life in Tea



~ Partha S. Dowerah

My induction into Tea was forty years back when I joined Monabarie T.E. under Imperial Tea Company belonging to Jardine Henderson Limited, straight after graduation on the 1st of February 1975. I was one of the very fortunate ones to join under a legend named Mr R.A. Eastment. My Senior Assistant, Mr M. M. Singh, was a very powerful second-in-command at Monabarie. We had all the “big boys” namely, Nandu Ganguli, Tarun Bordoloi, M.M. Singh etc. I was like a mosquito in front of them and most appropriately named “Mosquito Sahab”.

I arrived at Monabarie on a Saturday and was directed to

Bungalow No 9 at Behupukhri division. I was to share the bungalow with Ashok Sen, one of the most adorable human beings I have ever met. He was about three years old in Tea and was the Assistant at Behupukhri division, which was over 550 hectares. Everything is massive at Monabarie. I was also given a bicycle to do ‘kamjari’ – my only mode of transportation for the next 10 months till I purchased my motorcycle. Out of many memorable events/incidents during my long career in Tea, let me mention some.

The day I joined Monabarie my Manager, Mr Eastment, who had seen me playing tennis at Tezpur before I joined



Tea, instructed my senior to arrange the second jeep for me to go to Bishnauth Gymkhana Club every Wednesday afternoon to play tennis. The second jeep was not to be seen for the next one and a half years!

I had my first and last taste of a ‘gherao’ on approximately the 15th day after joining Tea, when about 500 women pluckers came out of their ‘pahis’ and confronted me for alleged misbehaviour. Ashok Sen came to my rescue on time.

We did a lot of extension planting in the spring of 1975 and I was put in charge of all the extension planting. In the last part of 1975 Monabarie had a new division called ‘Lahorijan’, a name suggested by me, and I was made the first Assistant in charge of Lahorijan. This I would always cherish.

I met Rimi Mahanta in 1976 while playing cricket for the Bishnauth Club team at Tezpur, married her in 1981 and



our daughters Ripa and Risa arrived in 1986 and 1989 respectively.

I got my billet in 1989 at Paneery T.E. in Mangaldai district, where all kinds of militant activities were at their peak. Here I realized the strength of the planters when we all stood as one big family, confronted all the problems that came our way and came out with flying colours.

I thoroughly enjoyed the tennis days at various Tea clubs during my long tenure. A day's break in a week is most essential for planters and all executives must utilize the sports facilities in the tea clubs. Burra Sahabs must impress upon the youngsters how important it is to play games.



Camaraderie

The fondest memory I would always keep close to my heart would be the camaraderie amongst the planters – right from the ‘bosses’ to the youngsters.

Finally, to all my fantastic friends, “ADIOS”.





“Childhood is the most beautiful of all Life's seasons.” ~ Author Unknown



~ Sakina Hussain  
Phu Ben, Vietnam

## Moon Festival

### Greetings from Phu Ben!

Vietnam tops the list on the ‘Happiness’ scale, second only to Costa Rica. Yes, it is a country that thinks progressively and works tirelessly towards a happy and developed future. Relationships and family ties are very strong. Respecting the elders and indulging the children comes naturally to everyone. The two festivals that are looked forward to by the whole nation – Tet Nguyen Dan (Vietnamese New Year) and Tet Trung Thu (Moon Festival) – reiterate these sentiments.

*Dragon/Lion Dance*



I found the thought behind celebrating the Moon Festival really endearing. Work in the fields during the harvest season keeps the elders busy and exhausted,

leaving them with little time for their children. People also believe that children are innocent and pure, and thus are the closest connection to the sacred and natural world. On 15 August (Lunar calendar) the Moon Festival, also known as the Mid-Autumn Festival, is celebrated to rejoice after a good harvest and to let the children have all the fun possible to make up for the previous busy months. Along with expressing their affection, parents also try to impart knowledge of the history and culture of Vietnam. There are three popular folktales associated with the festival – the legends of Hang Nga (Moon Fairy), Cuoi (the Man in the Moon) and Ca Chep Hoa Rong (the Carp who transformed into a Dragon).

With the help of these stories parents instill in their children's hearts, good values and a sense of patriotism and love for the nation. Each household makes offerings to the God of Earth. Phu Tho Province has decided to celebrate Children's Day too on this day.

The festivities begin with the Dragon or Lion Dance; and the legends of Ca Chep Hoa Rong, Hang Nga and Cuoi are enacted. Children in fancy new clothes are seen out on the streets, singing and dancing to popular songs about the moon, stars and cakes. They carry colourful lanterns in different shapes and sizes; some of the popular shapes are fish, stars and butterflies. Another interesting one spins when a candle is inserted, representing the Earth circling the Sun. Lantern fairs are held throughout Vietnam. According to legend, an evil spirit took on human form and killed people at night. A mythological hero figured out a way of getting rid of the spirit by putting up lanterns throughout the village. Children carrying lanterns during the festivity is symbolic; they hope to exorcise any evil spirit around. The cultural programme is followed by games that are enjoyed by both the participating children and the indulgent spectators! It ends with a moon cake and candy feast. It is customary to gift each other ‘Banh Trung Thu’ (moon cakes). These are rich in taste; filled with lotus seeds, ground beans and orange peel. A bright yolk in the center represents the moon!

At Phu Ben, the Moon Festival is organized by the Youth Union and the Trade Union of every plantation (44 sections) and factory as well as the Head Office. The show is put together with a lot of enthusiasm, taking great care to ensure that the spirit and traditional activities associated with the festival are kept alive and enjoyed by all.

After all, children are special and the future of every nation!



*Moon Festival Celebrations at Phu Ben*



### LEGEND OF THE MOON FAIRY

Nine evil spirits in the form of crows lived deep in the forest and terrorized the villagers. Any attempt to chase them away often ended in the death of the villager, but Hau Nghe, a handsome hunter, decided to kill them. One day, as Hau Nghe gazed up at the moon which shone brighter than ever before, a majestic palace appeared from which the beautiful Moon Fairy, Hang Nga, flew down to earth on a moonbeam, landing near him.

She advised him to shoot the crows' wings and then bury them with their wings and feet tied. A banyan tree was planted over them and Hang Nga sealed the crows with a charm written on a long strip of red paper that she pasted on the base of the tree.

She married Hau Nghe and they lived happily in his humble home. In time they were blessed with a baby girl whom they named Ngoc Tho (Jade Rabbit).

One night a terrible flash of lightening destroyed the banyan tree and a gust of wind carried away the charm, setting the crows free. Transformed into fire crows they scorched and parched the earth causing drought, famine and death. Filled with grief, Hau Nghe vowed to destroy them. However, after he became King at the behest of the Chief Mandarins, greed and self-importance overtook all his good intentions and he brought great suffering and even death to his subjects, ignoring Hang Nga's good advice and pleas. When he was ready to sacrifice all the kingdom's children including his own for further riches and glory, Hang Nga gathered Ngoc Tho into her arms and flew back to her palace in the Moon.

### THE MAN IN THE MOON

Cuoi was a lumberjack whose only possession was his axe. One day, during his trip into the forest, he accidentally chanced upon a banyan tree with magical properties. If chewed, its leaves could cure any illness and even breathe life into the dead. Cuoi carried the tree back with him and took great care of it, using the leaves wisely to help people back to life. Unfortunately, Cuoi's wife got angry because he seemed to love the tree more than her, so one day, when Cuoi was out treating a sick neighbour, she desecrated the tree, which compelled it to leave the ground. Her husband returned at that very moment and saw the tree fly up to the sky. He tried to grab its roots but failed and was taken up to the moon, where he still lives with his tree.

Every year children light lanterns and take part in processions on the day of the Moon Festival to show Cuoi the way back to Earth.



### THE CARP WHO BECAME A DRAGON



When Heaven ran out of dragons, the Jade Emperor was obliged to make new ones, so he organized a contest among aquatic animals. As obstacles, he gave them three ‘gates of rain’ (waterfalls) to jump over. Those who could leap over all three ‘gates’ would be granted dragon status.

The Tilapia only cleared the first ‘gate’ and was rewarded with a black dot on its side. The Catfish passed the first level but hit its head against the second ‘gate’, which flattened its shape; he was compensated with dragon-like whiskers.

Next, the Shrimp overcame two ‘gates’ but stumbled and was crippled; its organs surged to its head, which is why shrimps now have a curved shape and move backwards! It was rewarded with the look of a small dragon.

The Carp worked hard throughout the year until he was able to jump over all three ‘gates of rain’ and be transformed into a Dragon. This is the story behind the mythical symbol, Ca Chep Hoa Rong (Carp Transforming to Dragons). Parents use this story to encourage their children to work hard so that they can become whatever they want to be, and the Dragon/Lion dance comes from this legend.



# BENEFACTORS



“Compassion is the basis of all morality.”

~ Arthur Schopenhauer

~ Dr P. K. Barman, MS  
Phulbari Central Hospital

## Aiding the Disabled

Inspired by our beloved chairman, Mr B. M. Khaitan, who seeded the noble thought in our minds to help the differently abled people, we initiated the programme, ‘Aid to the Disabled (Foot Disorders)’ at Phulbari Central Hospital under the guidance of Mr S. K. Mawandia. The very noble thought of helping the disabled besides our daily routine work made us impatient to do the least we could for them.

In end March we had a meeting at Guwahati with Mr R. K. Poddar, organizational head of the globally reputed Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (Guwahati branch) who showed great interest in helping the disabled through their organization.

BMVSS is a Jaipur based non-profit organization established by Mr D. R. Mehta in 1975 with a clear vision of helping the disabled person regain his mobility and dignity by fitting him with a high quality durable artificial limb and other aids and appliances.

As an initiation, all our North Bank estates were advised to identify the people with foot disabilities within the estate’s population, who could perform day to day activities on their own with a little bit of help from such appliances. All our estate doctors took much effort in locating 154 such people.

An assessment camp was organized at Phulbari Central Hospital on 30 June and 1 July 2014 where a team of experts from BMVSS Guwahati assessed those differently abled people and suggested various types of appliances, artificial limbs etc to correct their disabilities. Necessary procedures



fitted and demonstrated to get the best result.

Of the 145 cases selected to be provided with various types of appliances, 11 were fitted with an artificial limb (Jaipur foot), 52 were given crutches and calipers, 15 were given compensatory shoes, while wheelchairs and tricycles were suggested for 67 people.



and mechanisms were done to prepare different types of appliances meant for each person.

As the appliances were prepared and ready for use, the selected people were advised to attend the camp at Phulbari Central Hospital on 18 and 19 August 2014, when the appliances were



stood up and walked out of the fitting room. The initial awkwardness with the artificial limb turned to confidence and the faint smile soon turned into a smile of true happiness.

One must mention Aftab Hussain, aged 18 years, from Ameribari area of Phulbari T.E., who lost both his legs in a train accident a few years ago. When he got himself fitted with Jaipur feet and could stand upright and walk slowly, although with great effort to start with, his parents’ delight knew no bounds.

Those fitted with the appliances were asked to walk on the ramp as a procedure to get comfortable and habituated with the equipment. Initially staggering, they tried to stand upright and that gave us satisfaction.

People young and old, adolescent boys and girls, who came in crawling or limping, once fitted with the Jaipur foot,



Another patient, Debojani Behera, a young, energetic, attractive girl from one of our Mangaldai estates, was fitted with calipers. While walking cheerfully on the ramp, she informed us that she was doing an undergraduate course in a local college. With extreme determination and will power she has done a lot for herself with a disabled foot, but now, with the appliance fitted, it was a joy to see her walking with great confidence and ease.

The motto we keep in mind is to help the disabled...to make our society beautiful. Our heart is filled with satisfaction when the disabled walk normally along with others in the crowd and the nation moves forward.

All those involved in extending help to the disabled – doctors, executives, senior ladies – had a feeling of real happiness seeing them walking on their own. Among them were Mr Prabhakar Chaudhary from our Guwahati office, who facilitated the whole programme and Mr Mawandia, for whom the happiness of the beneficiaries was of the greatest importance.

Let us work without attachment to convert a noble thought into reality, and thus achieve eternal happiness.





“The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.” ~ Robert Maynard Hutchins



## ASSAM VALLEY SCHOOL – Celebrating 20 Years

Twenty years down the road, AVS, the brain child of Mr B.M. Khaitan, Chairman of the Williamson Magor Group of Companies, ranks among the top few residential schools in the country and continues to impart the best all round education, turning impressionable children into responsible, confident young adults.



The founder of my college at Cambridge, Sir Walter Mildmay, when questioned by a slightly suspicious Queen Elizabeth I as to why he had established an academic institution, answered that he had “set an acorn, which when it becomes an oak, God alone knows what will be the fruit thereof.” He added that it would be dangerous for the students to regard it as “a perpetual abode” – they were to look forward to spreading outside the knowledge they had acquired within its walls.

With respect to the Assam Valley school Mr B.M.Khaitan has shown the same visionary commitment as Mildmay. It is difficult now, after twenty years of achievement, success and national recognition of its excellence, to recapture the pioneering spirit of the first year. Here was a residential, co-educational, secondary school in...Assam! Many were suspicious of the venture – it was too risky, the scope was too expansive, the examination results would be compromised by the breadth of activities that were being offered, Assam wasn't ready for such a school. Mr Khaitan would have none of it.

Quietly but firmly he put his faith in the project and supported it exhaustively. More than that, he supported and encouraged those many people who were working to bring the dream to life.

On his visits to the school I was always impressed with the connection he made with the students, allowing them to say what they felt about their school and listening intently and carefully to them. His real legacy will be found in the lives of those who have seized the opportunity of what this special school offers and who have gone out into the world to bring their talents, gifts and skills to the service of the communities in which they live.

Instead of Mildmay's analogy of an acorn, Mr Khaitan might have employed the image of a tea bud, but whatever the picture the truth that cannot be denied is that the crop has been a rich and abundant one. Generations of students, teachers, parents and staff owe him a great debt of gratitude.

~ Paul Carling

*Founding Headmaster of AVS, 1994–1999*



~ Karishma Mahanta (née Masood)  
*Alumnus, 1st Batch – ICSE & ISC*

“The four years I spent at AVS were the most eventful and adventurous of my life. I moved into School in the year 1995 as the pioneer batch of students who would graduate Class 12 ISC in 1999. We were a small batch of seven, who started as classmates and became friends for life. These were our formative years, and a lot of what I am today I owe to the school, and its teachers, especially Mr & Mrs Carling. From the Carlings, I learnt my values and that the most mundane things can be made interesting, and every waking minute we were encouraged to think and be engaged in activities that broadened our perspectives.”



### AVS – VIBRANT, DYNAMIC ... DIFFERENT

The Assam Valley School will always hold a special place in my heart. My son, Norman, my wife, Vinita and I joined the AVS family in the year 1995. Twenty

years on, the road is strewn with memories worth cherishing. Although we joined as trained teachers with a number of years of experience already under our belt, the school provided the platform for us to grow and so enhance the learning experience for teacher and taught. It has been both a pleasure and a privilege in forging a partnership with scores of parents to help young people grow into happy adults.

The Assam Valley School has taken on the mantle of responsibility of educating young Indians and guiding them to live fruitful and enriching lives in the 21st century. While the school endeavours to be global in its approach, to respect all human beings irrespective of gender, race, caste, creed or colour, it has not dispensed with our Indian heritage and culture.

Education, it is said, comes from the Latin word ‘educere’ which means ‘to lead’ and this is what we have tried to do. We expose students to rich and varied experiences knowing full well that the path they choose as adults will be of their own volition and not dictated by narrow or popular schools of thought. Having given our students the ‘snowflake on the tip of the iceberg’, it is our fervent hope that they will go on to becoming autodidacts, for, what is life without learning!

~ Leslie Peter Watts

*Head of Hospitality, Event Management,  
Public Relations & Alumnus Affairs*



### A SCHOOL WITH A DIFFERENCE

People with vision, dedication and commitment work not merely for daily bread, power, affluence and opulence but for posterity; they look far into the future. In so doing they leave the world a better place to

live, a place where boys and girls can learn, unfettered by the cares of this ever changing and complex cosmos yet grow up as confident, happy and productive young men and women instilled with values that will hold true in the 21st century and beyond. This is how The Assam Valley School was born – the Founders were indeed men of vision and the school as it stands today is testament to nothing short of a labour of love. Mr. B.M. Khaitan, Mrs. Julia Magor and Mr. Richard Magor decided to turn their dream into a reality in 1989 and The Williamson Magor Education Trust pumped the necessary funds to start the project.

Mr. B. M. Khaitan together with his immediate family and his extended family in Tea then worked tirelessly over the next two decades to give to all Indians an educational institution that continually strives to be at the cutting edge of modern educational practices and pedagogies. The journey no doubt has been fraught with challenges but that has only spurred the team on to achieve greater success with each passing year.

“Education should be the biggest and best adventure in a child's life.” Based on this belief our education is committed to nurturing the children to develop to their full potential so that they are well-equipped to face the challenges in the future, with confidence, grit and determination.

AVS opened its gates to about 150 children of the North East and beyond on the 1st of April 1995 with Mr. D.P.K. Carling as its founding Headmaster. The school has never looked back. With the first phase of infrastructure and facilities completed, every year saw numbers soar, essential infrastructure like the library, the WM Hall, the Infirmary, the Sports Complex and more boarding houses spring up, services got better and just a decade down the road AVS was already on the national educational radar.

It is not by accident or by acts of faith but by sheer dint of hard work that the school has been represented at the NDTV debates, the India's Got Talent Show and regularly participates in State and National Championships in a number of sporting disciplines. Our alumni walk through the hallowed portals of many premier institutions in India and abroad to enjoy quality tertiary education as a result of grooming and superlative board results.

I believe that each child is a unique individual who needs a secure, caring, and stimulating atmosphere in which to grow and mature emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. It is my desire to prepare students for life in an environment that is safe, supports risk-taking, and invites a sharing of ideas. In our ever changing world, it is crucial for education to constantly reinvent itself. What was relevant even 5 years ago might not be so today. Our education system is still deeply entrenched in the philosophy of the industrial age whereas now this is no longer relevant. The Assam Valley School will help our students walk into the 21st Century with their head held high.

~ Ms Sonya Ghandy Mehta

*Head of School*





Prize-winning Arrangements by the Author



# The Art of Arrangements



~ Daljit Singh  
Margherita T.E.

“Flowers are a proud  
assertion that a ray of  
beauty outvalues all the  
utilities of the world.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Say it with Flowers

The familiar phrase – “say it with flowers” – is meaningful; flowers do say a lot of special things for which it is often difficult to find the right words.

The art of flower arrangement is not a difficult one to learn. Anyone who loves flowers and is passionate about growing them, can acquire the necessary skills and techniques. The whole charm and joy in arranging flowers and displaying them in one’s bungalow lies in the creativity of skillfully using one’s own home grown flowers.

A little organization is required before you start arranging flowers. For floral arrangements, the flowers should be fresh and presentable for as long a period as possible. A little effort should be put into picking flowers. Flowers are picked before sunrise and after sunset. They are then kept in water in a dark corner or shade for 2-3 hours.

Half an inch is snipped off the part of the stem which is under water to remove air locks. Preserve and revive woody stems like camellia, roses etc by pounding the bottom two inches before plunging them in water.

To reduce underwater decay, strip the stems of all foliage and thorns which fall below the water line.

Flowers like poppies and dahlias, with hollow stems, should have the stem end seared to prevent sap from escaping.

To prolong the freshness of an arrangement, spray with water both morning and night.

Materials like proper vase, pin holder, scissors, oasis, base, florist’s wire etc are used while making a flower arrangement. Types of arrangement vary according to the requirement, such as coffee table, mass, buffet table, sideboard, Ikebana arrangements for special occasions and so on.



Monochrome



There are a few points to be remembered before making a floral arrangement:

**Colour** – The colour blends of nature are so deft that it takes only a little practice to use them effectively. The aim should be to blend the colours well. Light colours

should be used at the top and bright shades at the bottom. We need to see the colour scheme of the room before the flowers can be selected. For example, an off-white background and yellow or yellowish-orange flowers harmonize well but if the room is multicoloured a monochromatic theme could be followed.

**Proportion and balance** – Flower arrangements are properly balanced when they give us a sense of stability and do not appear to be lopsided. They may be symmetrical or asymmetrical and they can be designed vertically, horizontally, in a curve, circle or triangle.

**Harmony and unity** – This should be the final goal in

Coffee Table



Right - angle



arranging flowers, by skillfully selecting the right plant materials, containers, accessories and setting. If all these elements have blended effectively, the outcome will be a satisfying design and will constitute a harmonious arrangement.

**Line** – The measurement of the main stem should be one and a half times longer than the vase if the arrangement is a fairly large sized one. The second stem should be a bit shorter and the third one a little shorter than the second. The tall stem or branches stay at the back and as you come forward the stems get shorter giving the arrangement its shape. The pin holder or the oasis should be covered with leaves.

**Fillers and foliage** – Leaves bring about the true nature of a floral arrangement. The gaps in between the flowers are filled up with leaves like ferns or palm leaves cut in shape. Fillers like sweet pea, lady’s lace and gypsophila can fill up the gaps and give the arrangements a lift – specially one’s done with roses, chrysanthemum and lilies.

## Types of Arrangements

**Coffee table arrangement** – Usually placed on the coffee table with a neatly spread table cloth, it is done in a small container with small flowers like sweet peas, zinnia, etc. It is a circular arrangement.

**Mass arrangement** – A good sized oasis covered with chicken wire can be put in a tall vase or a flat container. It is arranged in a compact form. Leaves are arranged at the back to give depth to the arrangement. The taller stems are put at the back and the shorter ones come in front. It should appear as if all the stems are emerging from a common point. A variety of flowers like gladioli, lily, larkspur and antirrhinums, with a combination of round flowers like gerberas, pompon dahlias and chrysanthemums can be used along with foliage like ferns, palm leaves, asparagus.

**Buffet table arrangement** – Here, the factor to be kept in mind is that the arrangement is placed in the centre and the food around it. So, the arrangement needs to be a bit high and look attractive from all sides. Arrangements can be circular or horizontal.

Special Occasion - Christmas



Mass Arrangement







**Sideboard arrangement –** This, again, is a mass type arrangement which is placed against a background; its front view is important. It can be symmetrical or asymmetrical.



**Foliage arrangement –** Summer is the time when flowers are scarce so leaves are often used as an option for an arrangement. There are different shapes and sizes of leaves found in nature.

The leaves need to be washed and cleaned before arranging them. The best part of using leaves is that they can be cut, trimmed and given shape also. Leaves like ferns, crotons, etc can be used. The principles of arrangement can be applied here too.



**Oriental arrangement –** This type of arrangement stresses on the line and asymmetrical balance. It also characterizes the use of fewer flowers to greater effect. There is minimal use of plant materials and frequent inclusion of an orthodox container as an

integral part of the composition. Every arrangement is done in three main steps which forms its structure. These are the tallest line – Heaven; Man looking up to heaven; and Earth, the lowest, looking up to both. The tallest stem is one and a half times the overall height.

In the following steps, the secondary flowers are placed. They are called the Mountain and Meadow. These are set into the triangles formed by the first three stems.

All the remaining flowers added to the arrangement must be helpers, strengthening the primary, not conflicting with them.

Containers determine the style of oriental arrangements.



Pillow vases, baskets, tall vases and shallow vases can be used. Things like driftwood, bamboo etc can be used too. The pin holder should be covered neatly with foliage. The flowers best rated for use in oriental arrangements are camellias, roses, chrysanthemum etc. Apart from these, irises, lilies, anthuriums, branches of peaches with flowers or buds, are often used to define the lines of arrangements. The flowers used in Oriental arrangements are always in odd numbers.

**Dried flower arrangement –** Many flowers and foliage



such as strawflowers, cockscomb, rye leaves, seed pods and ferns, can be dried and used for dry arrangements. There are many lovely materials growing wild, which can be dried too. There is an unlimited option in such arrangements. They can be kept for a long time as the flowers can

be varnished or painted golden and silver.

Flowers are collected during the season, tied with string and hung upside down in a dark corner of the house. They can also be dried by using silica gel or in a microwave, which helps in retaining the colour and shape. A large variety of flowers can be dried using these methods.

Flower arrangement is a joyful art. Fresh flowers enlighten one's mind and when used in arrangements, light up the room too. The skill of arranging flowers is one's own ability which is enhanced only with practice. It has unlimited boundaries and can be re-invented again and again.



*Editors' Note: The Chinese were the pioneers in flower arrangement as they were the first to put water in a container of cut flowers as far back as 207 BCE, in the Han era. While the rest of the world was making garlands or wreaths and flinging petals, they were arranging flowers aesthetically in a container!*



~ Pushpajit Singh Gill  
Bargang T.E.

“The person born with a talent he is meant to use will find his greatest happiness in using it.”

~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

## ‘Victor Charlie Romeo’ – On The Trail of Our ‘Pilot Sahab’, Captain Sameer Joshi – a profile

They say, “When a man is walking the thin rope of life and death, his whole past, present and future flashes before his eyes!”

This was the recognizable feeling at the back of a young Indian Air Force fighter pilot's mind when he was rolling into a dive to fire his sixty four 57mm rockets on the entrenched Pakistani soldiers at point 5140, on the icy heights of Kargil. As he released his rockets and watched them hurtling down to their target, he saw his humble past flashing in the smothering flames – of wanting so desperately to be a fighter pilot – and then transitioning into his present, as one of the first few to be given a chance to take on and eliminate a dire threat to the nation – and then the finality of it all, his future as a career officer in an esteemed service, which was the only thing worth meaning in his fast track life.

As he bunted his MiG 21 aircraft after his attack, into the adjoining ‘nullah’ to escape the barrage of enemy Stinger missiles and heavy machine gun, Sameer Joshi would never have imagined in his wildest dreams that one day, he would join Tea and fly as a ‘quasi’ planter!



The Man & his Machine

Born into a middle class family in Jullundur, Sameer's initial years at Bishop Cotton School, Shimla, shaped his near-fervent desire to become a fighter pilot, thanks to a defunct Gnat aircraft gifted to the school by the IAF. It was further fuelled by ‘Commando’ comics and a consistent diet of war movies. His father wanted Sameer to follow in his footsteps as an engineer, but the ‘look and feel’ of a fighter pilot, decked out in combat drab next to his war machine, was all that our young lad could breath and think of!



*The Fighter Pilot*

Hence it was only natural for Sameer to land up at the doors of the National Defence Academy in 1990, where he was inducted as an Air Force Cadet. After going through the grueling training at NDA and Air Force Academy, Sameer was posted to Assam in 1994 for operational training on the MiG 21 aircraft. We feel it is no coincidence that Sameer 'learnt the ropes' of flying in Chabua, an Air Force base nestled close to the place where tea was discovered for the first time by the Englishmen in the early nineteenth century!

Posted in the Kashmir valley in 1997, Sameer was mesmerized by the beauty of Jammu & Kashmir and spent four beautiful and eventful years at Srinagar. He saw action in the 1999 Indo-Pak Kargil war, where he flew thirteen combat missions against enemy-held positions in support of our ground forces. He was awarded his first Chief of Air Staff's commendation medal for his performance during Operation 'Safed Sagar' in Kargil. He, however, considers his chance meeting with Priyanka, his future wife, at the Srinagar base in 2001, as the most 'explosive' episode of this posting! They were married in 2001 as Sameer was posted to Gwalior to fly the Mirage 2000 aircraft with No. 7 Squadron, The Battleaxes, one of the most combat-proven squadrons of the IAF. This was a transition which in flying parlance was akin to moving from a Maruti 800 to a Mercedes AMG!

As part of the cutting edge Mirage 2000 fleet, Sameer saw operational service in various scenarios and was part of the first IAF deployment to South Africa and Mauritius. He was awarded his second Chief of Air Staff's commendation medal for exemplary service in the Mirage 2000 fleet. With an operational record amongst the top echelon of his peer group, some would say that Sameer's career graph was on an inspiring rise!

*The 'Explosive' Couple!*



But fate had a different set of events planned for Sameer. In 2005, on one of his combat training missions on the Mirage, the right maxillary sinus in his forehead was damaged. He was medically boarded out of the fighter fleet and was shifted to the less intense transport-flying environment with a loss of all career prospects. This was a great forfeiture for Sameer, who fancied a life in the IAF as a fighter pilot. He took premature retirement from the IAF in end 2007 with a shattered dream and a pledge to reconnect the dots in the civil flying domain.

He toyed with the idea of joining airlines like Indigo until a chance visit to our Company's tea estates in Assam. Finding the Tea environment akin to the armed forces and seeing a challenging career in the unique 'bush flying' operations of MRIL, he joined our Company in early 2008 and later took over the reins of the flying operations from Captain K.K.K. Singh. Thus started Sameer's journey in the realm of tea.

With his open attitude and ever-friendly nature, he has settled down with ease and élan in our Company. He admits that the variety and challenges of flying from unprepared company strips and the unpredictable weather in Assam add up to a gratifying flying experience. His flying skills are admired by one and all in the Company and his IAF past is well reflected in his hardworking ethos.

Sameer also maintains a beautiful bungalow in the finest Tea traditions, creatively assisting his better half whenever he can. Many amongst us fondly remember the warm hospitality we have received from him whenever he has hosted us.

*A Garden Party*



Sameer is a bundle of talent. He is an exquisite Master of Ceremonies, who has displayed professional flair on many an occasion. He is also a meaningful artist who has contributed towards many professional projects in the past. He is busy painting for the Indian Air Force 1965 war commemoration calendar project at present along with his extremely talented wife, Priyanka. We also remember his witty real life cartoons which have added substance to occasions such as Farewells and Golf Meets.



*The Objects of his Art*

He also has a flair for writing the 'right stuff'. Sameer has written expert Aerospace and Defence articles in many national dailies including the Times of India and Hindustan Times, and has handled a recruitment drive campaign called 'Are You the One?' for the IAF with his wife. The IAF considers Sameer an expert on military history and has recently commissioned him to write a book on the 1965 Air Campaign, which will be published in 2015.

A self confessed 'tech geek', Sameer takes pains to keep himself updated in all domains of technology and, arguably, has the most powerful computer this side of the Brahmaputra! On this, Sameer works on designing the first Indian Air Force 3D mobile air combat game called

'Guardians of the Skies' along with other like-minded 'geeks' at Threye Interactive. This game was recently released by the IAF and has recorded more than a million downloads on Android, iOS and Windows mobile platforms.

*IAF 3D Mobile Air Combat Game*



Sameer is also one of the founding members of 'Team Indus', the Indian entry in the international Google Lunar X Prize (GLXP) competition to execute a mission to the moon. Both his projects in gaming and GLXP have been featured in the print and video media and have been acknowledged by specialists as cutting edge in their respective domains.

"So, what is your secret to multitasking?" I ask Sameer, as he prepares to proceed on another flying sortie to Guwahati. He smiles and gleefully answers, "The same as yours; the tea ecosystem which our Company so gracefully cherishes and adds value to. Plus my loving wife, Priyanka, who stands behind me like a rock, and my adoring kids, Anushcka and Anikaith, who represent my future!" Saying this, he depresses the starter motor of the Cessna and the aircraft comes to life with a thunderous clatter. I ponder over his statement for a while, then look understandingly around the airfield, absorbing the aura of second flush tea bushes – acknowledging something I have always known. Yes, the Tea milieu gets the best out of us all!

As I see Sameer taking off in the Cessna, I see an ace pilot, a war veteran, a tech geek, a writer, an artist, a loving husband and father, a quasi-planter and a lot more. But assuredly one of us... our very own Pilot Sahab!







Winners:  
Williamson Magor 'A'  
L to R:  
Mr Aditya Khaitan,  
Mr Jayanta Gohain,  
Mr Sunny Uthup,  
Mr Lakshman Singh



## Darts, 2014

### West Bengal State Ranking Tournament:

Bengal Club - 11 to 14 June 2014

Men's Singles Winner: Mr Ranji Saha

Women's Singles Runner-up:

Ms Piyali Bhattacharjee

### West Bengal State Championships:

Anderson Club - 17 to 21 June 2014

Women's Doubles Runners-up:

Mrs Jacqueline Khanna & partner

Mixed Doubles Runners-up:

Mr Sunny Uthup & partner

### Inter-Club State Championship

Winners: CC&FC - Mrs Jacqueline Khanna,  
Mr Sunny Uthup & Mr Ranji Saha (from MRIL)

Mr Ranji Saha was also a member of the Winners -  
West Bengal State Team Foursome; and is currently  
ranked No. 1 in Men's Singles, West Bengal.

### National Darts Championships:

Calcutta Swimming Club - 29 to 31 August 2014

Women's Doubles Runners-up:

Mrs Jacqueline Khanna & Ms Piyali Bhattacharjee



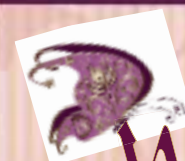
Mr Ranji Saha



Mrs Jacqueline Khanna & Ms Piyali Bhattacharjee



Team CC&FC



## Weddings

Kriti, daughter  
of Deepak &  
Abha Mehta,  
Borengajuli T.E.,  
wed Arjun  
Khandelwal on  
22 February 2014



Rahul Shaw,  
HO Kolkata,  
wed Sarita on  
6 December 2013



Saurav Jyoti Bayan of Harchurah T.E.  
wed Sethphen Yap on 9 May 2014



Pinaki Ranjan  
Dalal, HO  
Kolkata, wed  
Sangita on  
1 May 2014



## Rainbow

"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow,  
yet we forget that she is someone today." ~ Stacia Tauscher



Aanchal, the thirteen-year-old daughter of Bidyut and Praveen Bordoloi of Boroi T.E., is an  
avid guitarist, singer, poet, composer and horse rider. A student of Class IX at The Lawrence  
School, Lovedale, (Ootacamund, Tamil Nadu) Aanchal is a budding poet with a vibrant  
imagination who excels in creative writing. According to her teachers, her works are very  
interesting and mature beyond her years. Her literary contributions form a major part of the  
school's literary journal - Zephyr.

Aanchal had recently participated in an online international talent discovery competition founded  
by seasoned e-commerce, mobile and social media veterans based in Southern California. The  
organizers were looking for original compositions presented through creative videos. The

competition was based on votes from viewers and guest judges who were looking for excellent content and performances in  
order to discover tomorrow's stars. In a keenly contested competition with entries from all over the world, Aanchal, the youngest  
contestant, stood fourth having lost the third position by just eight votes!

We congratulate this talented and highly motivated young girl and wish her all the very best.



# Births



1. **KIAAN**, son of Junior & Roshni Dagar, Chuapara T.E. 11 March 2014
2. **AKSHARA**, daughter of Achyut & Parismita Dutta, Beesakopie T.E. 15 April 2014
3. **RYAAN**, son of Bikram & Nipa Rani Das, Bargang T.E. 22 April 2014
4. **PARAG**, son of Subrata Chakraborty, HO Kolkata, & Piyasi 7 May 2014
5. **MIHIKA**, daughter of Ritwik Palchoudhuri, HO Kolkata, & Amrita 2 June 2014
6. **DAARSICK**, son of Manuranjan & Lilly Karmakar, Phillobari T.E. 19 June 2014
7. **SAI SIDDHI KASHYAP**, son of Ranjit & Dolly Baruah, Paneery T.E. 23 June 2014
8. **WALTER**, son of Denis & Gertrude Havumiragira, Mwenge Central 8 July 2014
9. **ARINA BIDISHA**, daughter of Wasim & Benazir Haque, Paneery T.E. 22 July 2014
10. **ADITYA**, son of Biswanath & Priyanka Chowdhury, Attabarie T.E. 4 August 2014
11. **ARYAN MURAD**, son of Murad Daraius & Niharika Kaveri Cursetji, grandson of N.K. Devaya & Ratna, Margherita T.E. 6 August 2014
12. **BALRAJ**, son of Rakesh and Richa Dugar, Pertabghur T.E. 19 August 2014
13. **FERIN**, daughter of Gautam & Meena Saru Thapa, Rupajuli T.E. 26 August 2014
14. **ARYAN**, son of Hasibul & Mema Rahman, Nilpur Blending Unit 29 August 2014



## ➤ Makum Namdang Golf Tournament

Margherita Club – 6 July 2014



### Winners:

L to R: Dr Hemanta Bora, Mr Sandeep Nagalia & Mr N. K. Devaya



### Runners-Up:

L to R: Karanbir Singh, Anshuman Singh & Sachin Singh (with Mrs M. Deka & Mr J. K. Saikia)

## MRIL 5-a-Side Football Tournament <<

The MRIL sponsored inter-company 5-a-side football tournament was held at Tingri Club on 17 August 2014. Among the thirteen teams competing were four from MRIL. All four reached the quarter finals, but teams MRIL 'Blue' and MRIL 'White' crashed out at that stage. MRIL 'Black' ultimately defeated MRIL 'Red' by three goals to one in the thrilling final match.



The individual prizes were all won by MRIL players:

**Highest Scorer:** Bisswadip Banerjee & Siddharth Thapa (10 goals each)

**Best Goalkeeper:** Shahil Suraj Bora

**Most Promising Player:** Varun Monnier

Gateway to Samdang T.E.



~ Rupa Saikia

“Real treasure lies not in what can be seen, but what cannot be seen.” ~ Anon

Adjoining the small town of Doom Dooma in Upper Assam, lies Samdang T.E., one of the largest properties of the Company on the South Bank, with a gross area of 1819.20 hectares, of which 920.45 hectares is under tea. It was reportedly one of the first areas where tea was planted way back in 1902. Hitherto an unexplored region for many decades due to its dense forest cover, it was the British who first realised its potential for growing tea. Thus the jungles were cleared to set up the plantations and Doom Dooma town found a new identity as a 'Tea Town', primarily because it catered to the needs of the tea fraternity based there. Historically too, this town has found mention in the Mahabharata, as the Doom Dooma river which flows through the heart of the town was supposedly connected to the house of Bhima of the Pancha Pandavas while he was a resident at Manipur with his wife Hirimba. There have been many dynasties ruling this area, namely, the Ahoms, Kacharis and Morans before the impact of the British in Assam.

The name 'Samdang' was believed to have been derived from the indigenous 'Sam' tree which grew in abundance here earlier. Since these trees were the main source of firewood, the local people would collect just the fallen branches (dang) without cutting down the entire tree.







Factory

Thus the name Samdang came about. Samdang T.E. has three divisions - Mesaijan, Samdang and Panikhowa. Mesaijan, with 369.70 hectares, produces 42% of the total green leaf, Panikhowa with an area of 242.01 hectares produces 25% and Samdang with 308.74 hectares produces the rest. The factory, with an installed capacity for 1.75 million kg of made tea, manufactures some of the finest CTC and Orthodox teas. The estate also sources leaf from the Small Tea Growers, whose contribution is around 20% of the total annual production. Samdang has seen many changes in its ownership, with Mcleod Russel India Ltd taking over in 2006 from Hindustan Unilever Ltd. The factory compound has a number of old machinery and implements in spic and span condition, displayed on its premises.



Clockwise from bottom left: Pre-Independence Pumps & Motors; Mobile Fire Extinguisher 1944; Borbora Tea Leaf Conditioner 1964; Sub-Soiler 1977

There is an interesting story of how Panikhowa division got its name. During World War I, enemy forces were believed to have poisoned the drinking water sources of the entire area. Subsequently, the Army constructed a number of ringwells, the water of which was used by the soldiers and fiercely guarded too! Hence the name Pani (water) Khowa (drink). A number of such ringwells are present even today in this division.



WWI Ringwell



Raising Awareness - RA Certification



The estate is in the process of getting accredited with the Rainforest Alliance Certificate in 2014-15 and the management has been instrumental in raising awareness of the same among the workers. To this effect, the women workers here have played an important role in educating the workforce of the importance of this certification. Elina Nag, one of the women working towards this end, has been educating the workers by reading out the programme in the local dialect for better understanding. HACCP and ISO 22000 certifications have already been awarded to Samdang in 2008 and 2013 respectively.

Sometime in the 1950s, the then Superintendent, Mr C.S. Caseborn, had started a piggery, a dairy farm with around a hundred cows, a fishery, an orange orchard and a pineapple 'bari' in the Tokoni section of Panikhowa division. The produce, sold at concessional rates, catered to the needs of the executives, staff and workers of Samdang and its neighbouring estates - Raidang, Daimukhia and Beesakopie. In 1989 however, this entire area of 70 hectares was reclaimed for tea planting.



Visitors...

The ecosystem is well preserved here, with an abundance of local flora and fauna. The garden is frequented by herds of wild elephants especially during the winter months, when they come for paddy in the nearby fields. They also visit the places where the local brew (Hariya) is made, it being their favourite drink! As such, it has been told that many such 'businesses' have had to close shop on account of four-legged customers who do not pay! Leopards are often seen in the Sections and one such magnificent animal who was creating some havoc was captured with the help of forest officials and released in the jungle in December 2013. The management plays an important role in ensuring the safety of wild animals and birds, and awareness on this issue is raised with various signs displayed all around the garden.



The vermi-compost unit provides organic manure for the tea and shade nurseries.

Prize Day at LP School



There are three Lower Primary schools with an attendance of around seven hundred children, taught by dedicated staff. The students too have actively participated in protecting the environment and recently initiated an awareness programme on this theme through street plays.



Sailen Jyoti Baruah, son of Shri Gopi Nath Baruah, a member of the field staff, won the Nehru Award for academic excellence at school in 2010-11. He is

presently in his final year of college, studying Science at J.B. College, Jorhat.

The majority of the workers are of the Hindu faith, with Christians comprising about ten percent of the total populace. There is a lovely Shiv temple where Shiv



Ratri is celebrated on a large scale each year. The vast number of pigeons present in its premises, have found a home in a large pigeon coop constructed next to the temple. Christians attend the church adjoining the estate.







Football is widely played here, with inter-Line competitions held annually. A garden team is fielded for the tournaments held in nearby towns. Cricket has only just started gaining popularity in the last few years.

The Doom Dooma Golf Club or Plateau Club, as it was originally known, is a 6339 yards par 71 course situated on the estate. It was designed and built by Dr D.P. Williams, who also held the distinction of being the first Golf Captain here. The club has a record of a hole-in-one being scored by one of the caddies, using but a club made of bamboo and wood. Records show that tournaments have been held here since 1922, with the President's Cup still in the reckoning since that time, this trophy being played for during the Captain's Prize Day. The Hopping Mad Cup Golf Tournament, since discontinued, was another interesting game played here. The rules required that a seasoned golfer be partnered with an amateur player. The wayward shots of this poor greenhorn literally resulted in the experienced player getting 'hopping mad'! This scenic course is maintained by all the member gardens of Doom Dooma Planters' Club.



The hospital is an impressive hexagonal shaped structure built under the supervision of a Chinese contractor around 1950. This unique shape is evident as one enters the building and finds a lush lawn with lovely old trees, shrubs, beds of flowers and small pathways tucked away in the central area, with each wing of the hospital opening out onto it. A Birth Register dating back to 1938 has been carefully preserved.



The fruit garden adjoining the hospital provides fresh seasonal fruit for patients as well as for the children of the estate.



Samdang has a total of three dispensaries along with the main hospital. A number of welfare schemes for the benefit of the workers have been undertaken over the years by the resident doctor and his able team. A large number of cataract cases have been operated upon under the MRIL Vision Project. Health camps on family planning, hygiene, sanitation, malaria, etc are held from time to time. The Mothers' Club comprising around 20 members plays an important role in convincing the workers on preventive measures to be taken against illnesses such as malaria, diarrhoea, dysentery, tuberculosis and Japanese encephalitis as well as the ill effects of alcohol and tobacco products.

Samdang had been declared by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, New Delhi, as a highly malaria resistant area after two severe outbreaks of this illness. To counteract this, an entirely new regimen of treatment was formulated and this was found to be very effective in treating such patients. Anti-malarial spraying is carried out each year and mosquito nets impregnated with repellent are distributed among the workers. All these measures have brought down the incidence of malaria cases drastically, with zero mortality rates.

Laparoscopic sterilization camps have been widely attended, with around 320 women undergoing this operation between the years 2007 – 2011. In 2013, a total of 97 women accepted IUCD ( Copper T) in a camp held for the first time with government liaisoning.



Dipen Tanti, suffering from Fallot's Tetralogy (four defects in the heart) since birth, was referred to Narayana Hrudulaya Hospital in Bangalore, in 2011, for an operation to correct this defect under the Government of Assam's Free Congenital Heart Disease Treatment Scheme. The operation was successful and this youngster is leading a normal life now. This was the first such case in Doom Dooma circle.

There are around 12 'ASHA' members who help in the routine immunization of children and taking care of pregnant women. Health check-ups are done in March, June and September for the factory workers and staff each year.



The Team – Seated (L to R): S. B. Singha, S. Deka (Superintendent), Dr A.Tamuli, P. Tirkey  
Standing (L to R): S. Yadav, S. Sah, R. Gogoi, V. Singh



Medical Officer visits the garden schools and gives talks on the various aspects of health and hygiene.

Since April 2014, the hospital has started complying with various instructions of Rainforest Alliance especially on bio-medical waste segregation and its safe disposal. Samdang hospital was presented with the prestigious Best Hospital Award in the South Bank for the year 2009-2010.



Samdang T.E. has been the proud recipient of the Company's Quality Award twice – in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 and the Best Performance Award – Doom Dooma district in 2011-2012. It is this tremendous commitment to excellence that has catapulted this garden to an outstanding performance each year.





# Pot-o-Tea

Brought up in the Defence atmosphere, I was made to understand that there was no better profession other than the Army. It was like you see the horses which draw 'tangas' in Delhi. Blinds are fixed on the sides of the horse's eyes to prevent it from looking at the sides and getting distracted. Finally at the time of taking up a career, I cleared the CDSE (Combined Defence Service Examination) and applied for Tea as well. Coincidentally, I got joining letters from both on the same day and having seen the other side, opted to join Tea. I have no regrets today about making the right choice as I feel proud to be a part of the world's number one tea company.

Jainti was my first tea estate, where I had a very short tenure. The training was very tough and those days there was a saying that Dooars was the launching pad for Assam. One evening my Burra Sahab landed up in my bungalow, handed over my transfer orders and told me to report to Mathura T.E. by the next morning. He briefed me that it was a new acquisition and I might have to stay in a tent as there were no bungalows. Mathura was a totally different ball game altogether. Kamjari was 24x7. Being a new property, we had this tremendous task of bringing it up to our Company's standards in all respects. The entire team managed to stay in one bungalow for a couple of months – Burra Sahab on the top floor, sharing

with an assistant and the rest of us in the dining hall with partitions made from tea chests. As there were no closets to keep our clothes in, I grabbed an old fridge lying in a corner where I managed to keep them. The best thing I cherish even today was the dinner we all used to have together. Conversations during the meal provided opportunities for us to bond, plan, connect and learn from one another. For at least half an hour we would discuss how our day had gone, talked about kamjari and made future plans. This pleasant time seemed like a reward for the day's hard work, which I still miss today.

I presume I am the only planter in the entire tea industry who was given the responsibility of harvesting and selling potatoes in the 'mundi'! The Company decided to have a land project in Falakata, Dooars, as acquisitions of land were made. Planting of tea commenced immediately after land preparation in blocks. But as the planting was done in phases, to guard our land against encroachment it was decided to cultivate potatoes on some stretches. It so happened that at the time of harvesting, the assistant in charge had to go on annual leave and I was sent on deputation. Every morning I would go to the land project crossing the

Torsha river by ferry, carrying my lunch box on my bike, as those days there was no bridge over this river. My kamjari was to arrange the buyers and sell my product, so I would carry potato samples and visit all the potato dealers in Falakata and Cooch Behar. With great difficulty I managed to sell the entire stock. A few kg of potatoes, nicely packed in a carton, was also sent to HO, kind courtesy Brindaban Division! This land project was later christened Brindaban Division.

Once, during routine kamjari in Assam, I received a message from Burra Sahab that a disabled child had been taken captive behind the Burra Bungalow servant's quarter. It was similar to a hostage situation. The culprit was carrying a machete. Cops were informed but as usual they were not on time. Before I arrived at the site, the Senior Assistant Manager along with ATPSF personnel had surrounded the quarter. We started talking to the person to release the child and asked him to come out of the quarter, giving all kinds of assurances that he would come to no harm.

After a long negotiation, when there was no response, I decided to enter the quarter to rescue the child. At the back of my mind I was prepared that he would attack me as soon as I entered and I would have to act fast. And yes, this was exactly what happened – he attacked me with the machete and within a fraction of a second I ducked, grabbed him and immediately the ATPSF personnel behind me overpowered him. Finally, after more than an hour, the agonizing hostage crisis ended in a dramatic climax.

This, for me is Tea – all shades of colour, where one has to be prepared for any kind of eventuality and for which no training or code of conduct is provided. It's a management skill which is imperative to a labour intensive industry like ours.



## Kamjari

~ Shashi Kant Subba  
Tarajulie T.E.

“Nothing is really work unless you would rather be doing something else.”

~ James Matthew Barrie







## CERTIFICATIONS IN GISOVU, RWANDA

Rainforest Alliance Certification



~ H. S. Grewal  
Gisovu, Rwanda

In 2010 a major tea buyer of Rwandan teas, Betty's and Taylors of Harrogate, committed to buying purely Rainforest Alliance certified teas by 2015.

Gisovu was an essential component of their brand, Yorkshire Gold. For all their efforts the parastatal under OCIR THE was reluctant to go ahead, as they would have had to bear any expenses involved in certifications. The only way they could convince OCIR THE to get compliant was to assist in their certifications. MOUs were signed and work began.

The estimates, mostly inflated, were made and, surprisingly, sanctioned. Grandiose ideas of bathrooms in the plantations/expensive water treatment plants etc were asked for. The first hurdle was child labour and in a survey done, 130 children were found working. Waste water treatment was paid for by Taylors through a DIFID grant. Down stretched a pipe taking the wash water 500 metres into a settling tank. In stepped Borelli Tea Holdings in February 2011 and had to take over all the commitments of OCIR THE.

In a re-survey of the child labour allegedly employed, we detected only 50 children – the balance turned out to be child-faced adults who had claimed to be children expecting some gratis, and 30 others who had reached the age of 18 in the interim.

“Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.” ~ Joshua J. Marine

Of the children detected in the re-survey, most were sent to school while 10 were trained as seamstresses at the local parish. All of them were sponsored by Gisovu.

**Thereafter began the main work, adhering to all principles:**

1. Environment and social management systems
2. Ecosystem conservation
3. Wildlife protection
4. Water conservation
5. Fair treatment and good working conditions for employees
6. Occupational health and safety
7. Community relations
8. Integrated crop management
9. Soil management and conservation
10. Integrated waste management

Each principle was taken up and worked upon – training workers in a language which Surrender (Manager at Gisovu) had still to pick up! Most of the staff spoke French, a few knew English and all the workers communicated in Kinyarwanda. Sometimes with actions, some by demonstrations, some through translation, the message was passed.

Records kept, trainings conducted, and we thought we were ready.

The bigger challenge was the small holders who had to be coerced into learning the standards and adhering to them. Audits of 3412 farmer sites spread over many a mountain were conducted and training imparted.

The initial surveillance audit did throw up a few nonconformities. Our consumption and storage of chemicals is one litre at a time and usage is only in the nursery. Interestingly, we were forced into making a PPE storage room (for one set), a chemical storage room as well as a bathroom for the user! The stifling standards... Anyway, the nonconformities were corrected and we got certified within six months of starting. No mean achievement in an alien country with

language issues, including with the supporting farmers.

Credit was given where credit was due – the Manager Gisovu along with his support team.

Gisovu scored 94% in the last audit.

### ISO 22000:

Rainforest Alliance done, ISO 22000 work started.

A manual had to be prepared. Intellectual Copyright was cited for not getting a base document from colleagues. A lot of time was spent on drafting one incorporating all Company standards relative to Rwanda and omitting the extraneous material we had in the FSMS manual in India.

We reduced the CCPs after discussion; only the essential ones were kept.

The factory was in stages of change – with renovations and new machines being installed – getting all parameters up to standard was a near impossibility. However, the team at Gisovu pulled up its sleeves and got down to work.

Hygiene stations made, workers' changing room made, trainings (though similar to Rainforest Alliance) were conducted again, and validations done.

All documentation updated, and in came the preliminary pre-audit auditor. A few suggestions and corrections later, we were ready. The audit was done in February 2014 and Gisovu got its ISO 22000 certificate in April 2014.



Rainwater Tank





*The Memsahab's Guide  
to Gracious Living*

“Life expectancy would grow  
by leaps and bounds if green  
vegetables smelled as good as  
bacon!” ~ Doug Larson



~ Krishna Paulo  
Jainti T.E.

## Healthy Eating for Healthy Living

Remember, nobody and nothing is worth more than your body. Today's stress is all because we are more focused on improving our life 'style', rather than our life. Gracious and healthy living is an Art we need to cultivate.

Food forms the basis of our thriving. For healthy living, it is important to eat healthy. Stop junk and oily food. Avoid eating in the late hours which is very hazardous to health. It gives you acidity and the oh-so-unwanted 'tyres' around the belly!

Eating balanced food, drinking lots of water, getting plenty of exercise and proper sleep maintains your health and hence gives you happiness. A healthy person is a happy person.

When you are happy, you look good, when you look good, you can't deny the fact that you feel confident of yourself. And when you are self-confident, the world is yours to take!

A few years back, when we were at Bhooteachang T.E., I was down with a very bad back and had been bedridden for almost six months. I normally weigh 50 kilos, but the months doing nothing and just eating in bed escalated my weight to 60 kg... a weight difficult for my near petite

frame to carry! Little did I realize this till a dear friend of mine, posted at nearby Paneery T.E., visited me. He was horrified to see me with so much weight, having always seen me on the lighter side... going far back to our school days. Today, I owe him a big 'thank you' for this one sentence of his, "Krishna, do something about yourself; get back into shape!"

That was when I woke up and faced what I hated, a 'fat me', with all my ailments! Along with exercises – starting with light exercises and gradually seasoning myself to do more – I sat down and innovated my own menu plan. Out of sheer desperation, an initial attempt at dieting concluded by giving me severe acidity and made me go through another traumatic phase. I slowly came upon my own diet plan and was happy because it worked well. I simply cut down on refined flour, starches, sugar and saturated oil.

Being immobile and eating unhealthily for so long had added to my body weight. I knew now that I would have to eat right and healthy.

I am thrilled to be sharing two of my favourite recipes with you here. Chicken is something which is popular with almost everyone. So here goes...

## Chicken Stew (my way)

### Ingredients

Chicken	- 750 gm (cut into regular bite size pieces)
Onion	- One medium (chopped large)
Garlic	- Eight cloves (mildly crushed)
Ginger	- ½ inch (mildly crushed)
Fresh coriander	- 10 leaves (gently crushed)
Dry red chillies	- 4 whole (coarsely grounded)
Tomatoes	- 1 medium (chopped into 2 or 4 pieces as per size, crushed)
Fresh green chillies	- 3 whole
Salt to taste	
Soy Sauce (optional)	- ½ to 1 tsp

### Method

Bring the water (about 1 litre) to half boil then add the chicken pieces to it. Add all the ingredients (except tomatoes, green chillies and half the quantity of coriander leaves) along with the chicken pieces to the water. Add salt as per taste. Cover well and cook until the chicken is nearly done (about ¾th).

Then add the tomatoes, the rest of the fresh coriander and fresh green chillies. Cover and cook well until the chicken pieces are fully done.

... And there you have a healthy, yummy dish ready to eat! Keep your health diet from getting boring and monotonous by bringing in variations. You may try the same recipe substituting chicken pieces with seasonal vegetables of your choice.



## Basil Chicken

### Ingredients

Chicken	- 750 gm (cut into bite size pieces)
Lemon juice	- ½ tea cup
Ginger juice	- 1 tbsp
Honey	- 1 tbsp
Red chilly powder	- 1 tsp (or as per palate)
Salt to taste	
Fresh basil leaves	- 1 cup

### Method

Marinate the chicken pieces in all the above ingredients, except basil leaves, for 2 to 3 hours. Then cover and cook. Once done, simmer and toss in half of the basil leaves. Remove from heat. Garnish with the remaining leaves and it's ready to serve. As a complementary additive you may serve this dish with extra sauce made with the remaining marinade, comprising the lemon juice, honey, ginger juice and the chicken juice. You could also serve plain chicken soup with fresh basil leaves and julienned ginger garnishing.



In this way, you can innovate your own way of cooking oil free food and still enjoy your favourite dishes.

So, work hard and enjoy your work; rock at your workouts and exercises and sculpt a well defined physique... It's a winning recipe for success for anyone looking for transition to a happier and healthier way of 'life' – rather than life 'style'!





~ Dr Abhijit Bora  
Dehing T.E.

The word Allergy means an exaggerated response of the immune system, often to common substances called allergens. A substance that is foreign to the body and causes a reaction is called an allergen. These reactions are acquired, predictable and rapid. Allergies can develop at any age and there is a greater risk of developing allergic conditions if a person has a family history of allergy, especially in parents or siblings.

An allergy develops when the body's immune system reacts to an allergen as though it is harmful, like it would an infection. It produces a type of antibody called Immunoglobulin E (IgE), to fight off the allergen. When the body comes into contact with the allergen again, IgE antibodies are released, causing chemicals like histamine to be produced. Together these cause the symptoms of an allergic reaction.

“Health is like money, we never have a true idea of its value until we lose it.” ~ Josh Billings

## Common Allergies – Signs, Symptoms & Medication

Although the reasons allergies develop are not known, there are some substances that commonly cause an allergic reaction. People who have allergies are typically allergic to one or more of the following: pet dander, bee stings or bites from other insects, certain foods, certain medications such as penicillin or aspirin, certain plants and pollen.

The symptoms of an allergic reaction can vary from mild to severe. If a person is exposed to an allergen for the first time, the symptoms may get worse if he is repeatedly exposed to the allergen. Symptoms of a mild allergic reaction can include: hives, itching, nasal congestion (rhinitis), a rash, watery or itchy eyes etc. Severe allergic reactions can cause other symptoms such as abdominal cramp or pain; tightness in the chest; diarrhoea; difficulty in swallowing; dizziness or anxiety; flushing of the face; heart palpitations; swelling of the face, eyes or tongue; weakness; wheezing; difficulty in breathing; unconsciousness etc.

Sl No.	Affected Organs	Symptoms
1	Nose	Swelling of the nasal mucosa (allergic rhinitis), runny nose, sneezing
2	Sinuses	Allergic Sinusitis
3	Eyes	Redness and itching of the conjunctiva
4	Airways	Sneezing, coughing, broncho-constriction, wheezing and dyspnea, sometimes outright attacks of asthma, in severe cases the airway constricts due to swelling known as laryngeal edema
5	Ears	Feeling of fullness, possibly pain and impaired hearing due to the lack of Eustachian tube drainage
6	Skin	Rashes, such as eczema and hives (Urticaria)
7	Gastrointestinal Tract	Abdominal pain, bloating, vomiting, diarrhoea

## Types of Allergies

**Food Allergy** – Food allergy is an immune system reaction that occurs soon after eating a certain food. A wide variety of foods can cause allergic reactions. 90% of allergic responses to foods are caused by cow's milk, soy, eggs, wheat, peanuts, fish and shellfish.



**Contact Allergy** – Contact allergy is also called allergic contact dermatitis. Here patients develop allergic reactions on the skin when it comes in direct contact with what they are allergic to and their skin becomes itchy and red with blister formations at the point of contact. Examples of contact allergy are – nickel allergy present in jewellery, buttons or clothing; gold; Balsam of Peru – a fragrance used in perfumes; Neomycin Sulfate – a topical antibiotic common in first aid creams and ointments and Formaldehyde – a preservative found in household cleaners, cosmetic products and fabric finishes.



**Environment Allergy** – Environment allergy refers to an allergy to pollen, dust mite deposits, mould, proteins or animal dander. Allergic rhinitis, asthma and atopic dermatitis are



common types of reactions to these allergens.

**Insect Venom Allergies** – Some people are allergic to the venom injected into the skin during an insect bite or sting. The more severe and potentially life-threatening insect allergies include reactions to bee, hornet and wasp stings.



**Allergic Rhinitis** – Allergic rhinitis is inflammation, swelling, excessive secretions and itching within the



nose and sinusitis. Allergic rhinitis is the result of inhaled allergy triggers, including dust, mould, pollen, and dog, cat or other animal dander.

**Anaphylaxis** – Anaphylaxis is a dramatic and dangerous response by the immune system to specific allergens. In anaphylaxis abrupt changes affect the person's nervous system, cardiovascular system and the breathing mechanism. Anaphylaxis can lead to death if immediate medical attention is not given to counteract the reaction.



## Medication

**Antihistamine** – treats allergies by blocking the action of the chemical histamine, which the body releases when it thinks it is under attack from an allergen.

**Decongestants** – help to relieve a blocked nose, which is often caused by hay fever, a dust allergy or a pet allergy.

**Leukotriene reception antagonists** – tablets that block the effects of leukotriene, which are chemicals released during an allergic reaction and cause the airways to

become inflamed (swell).

**Steroid sprays** – corticosteroid sprays designed to act on the nasal lining and airways are effective in suppressing the inflammation.

**Immunotherapy** – this is a course of vaccines that lasts for three years. It may be an option for a small number of people who are unable to effectively control their systems by avoiding the allergen or using medication.

The environment is changing, technology is advancing, and our food and living habits are evolving – not always for the better. All these changes may bring new allergens into our lives.





## IQ & EQ - Enhance your EQ



~ N. K. Dutt  
HO Kolkata

“Each of us is a being in himself and a being in society, each of us needs to understand himself and understand others, take care of others and be taken care of himself.”

~ Haniel Clark Long

We probably all know people either at work or in our personal lives who are really good listeners and masters at managing their emotions. No matter what kind of situation we are in, they always seem to know just what to say – and how to say it – so that we are not offended or upset under strenuous situations. They can look at a problem and calmly find a solution. They are excellent decision makers who know when to trust their intuition; caring and considerate; and even if they fail to find a solution to one’s problem, they usually leave one feeling more hopeful and optimistic.

Regardless of their strengths, however, they are usually willing to look at themselves honestly. Not only do they take criticism well, but they also know how to use it to improve their performance. People like this have a high degree of **Emotional Intelligence Quotient**, or **EQ**. Knowing themselves well they are able to sense the emotional needs of others. People with high EQ are usually successful in most things they do, and are always wanted as part of a group. They always receive a positive response from others as they send out good vibes. Their emails get answered and they get help when they need it. Because they make others feel good, they go through life much more effortlessly than people who are easily angered or upset.

The smartest people are not the most successful or the most fulfilled people in life. Many academically brilliant people are inept and unsuccessful at work or in their personal relationships. **Intellectual Intelligence Quotient** or **IQ** is not enough on its own to make one successful in life. One’s IQ can help one to get into college, but it is one’s EQ that will help one to manage the strain and emotions one faces.

In his 1996 book ‘Emotional Intelligence’, author Daniel Goleman suggested that EQ might actually be more important than IQ. Why? Some psychologists believe that standard measures of intelligence (i.e. IQ scores) are too narrow and do not encompass the full range of human intelligence. Instead, they suggest, the ability to understand and express emotions can play an equal if not even more important role in how people fare in life. So, IQ alone is not enough; EQ also matters. In fact, psychologists generally agree that among the ingredients for success, IQ counts for roughly 10% (at best 25%); the rest depends on everything else – including EQ.

### What are the Differences between IQ and EQ?

IQ is a number derived from a standardized intelligence test. Earlier, scores were calculated by dividing the individual’s mental age by his or her chronological age and then multiplying that number by 100. So, a child with a mental age of 15 and a chronological age of 10 would have an IQ of 150. Today, IQ is calculated by comparing the test taker’s score to the scores of other people in the same age group.

EQ is a measure of a person’s level of emotional intelligence – the ability to perceive or recognize one’s emotions, control them, evaluate and understand what they are telling one, express them, and realize how they affect the people around one. People who function at a high rate of emotional intelligence have the ability to adjust their behaviour and are more effective at recognizing and managing their own emotions as well as the emotions of others.

Since the 1990s, emotional intelligence has made the journey from a semi-obscure concept found in academic journals to a popularly recognized term. Researchers such as John Mayer and Peter Salovey as well as writers like Daniel Goleman have helped shine a light on emotional intelligence, making it a hot topic in areas ranging from business management to education.

Today, one can buy toys that claim to help boost a child’s emotional intelligence or enroll one’s children in social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes designed to teach emotional intelligence skills.

### Emotional Intelligence – Why is it Important?

Many people hang their success in life on their IQ level. Yet, there are really smart people who are limited in their lives because they just do not interact well with others. They have high IQs, but horribly low EQs. The good news is that while an individual’s IQ may be a bit harder to change, anyone can work on developing a better EQ in order to enjoy more success in every area of life: social, emotional, physical, and financial. Life involves interacting with other people, and high EQ people just make each interaction more rewarding for everyone.

### So Which One Is More Important?

IQ is still recognized as an important element of success, particularly when it comes to academic achievement. People with high IQs typically do well in school, often earn more money, and tend to be healthier in general. But today experts recognize that it is not the only determiner of success. Instead, it is part of a complex array of influences that includes emotional intelligence among other things.

The concept of emotional intelligence has had a strong impact on a number of areas, including the business world. Many companies now mandate emotional intelligence training and utilize EQ tests as part of the hiring process.

Research has found that individuals with strong leadership potential also tend to be more emotionally intelligent, suggesting that a high EQ is an important quality for business leaders and managers to have. Emotional intelligence equals interpersonal effectiveness; the more effective you are with others, the more successful you will be.

If emotional intelligence is so important, can it be taught or strengthened? According to one analysis that looked at the results of social and emotional learning programmes, the answer to that question is an unequivocal YES. While EQ is not always easy to change quickly, with a bit of effort, most people can

improve it with coaching, self-introspection, and feedback from others. The other good news is that **EQ naturally increases with age**, even if you do not conscientiously work on furthering it.

### The Six Pillars of Emotional Intelligence

If your desire is to raise your emotional intelligence, here are the six pillars to incorporate into your life:

1. **Self-Awareness** - Being able to identify how you feel as well as who you are, helps you make important life choices. Reconnect with your inner self through silence and meditation, and watch your perspective of life transform.
2. **Empathy** - Extremely powerful and essential to raising your emotional intelligence, empathy increases your ability to identify with others and get closer to them, gain their support when you need it, and potentially defuse highly charged conflicts in your professional and personal life.
3. **Self-Regulation** - By learning to control your emotions, especially your impulses and moods, and direct them towards serving your purpose, you are able to prepare yourself for emotional self-management.
4. **Motivation** - People who are emotionally intelligent are highly motivated, excellent decision-makers, know when to trust their intuition and are willing to defer immediate results to establish long-term success. They can look at a problem and find a resolution in a calm and rational way. They also take criticism well and know when to use it to improve their performance.
5. **Social Skills** - You can raise your emotional intelligence by talking and connecting with others better. Being socially responsible demonstrates that you care about others and not just about your own personal gain. Individuals who focus on the development of others rather than their own, practise emotional intelligence as well as humility and learn to manage the emotions of others too.
6. **Happiness** - Unfortunately, very few people know how to manage their happiness as it is frequently associated with material goods or gifts they receive from others. Raising your emotional intelligence involves knowing when to be happy, sad, excited, anxious, or even vigilant. Generally, people with a high EQ are happy people. Remember, it costs nothing to spread happiness, and what you receive in return is priceless.

To raise your emotional intelligence, it is essential that you try to incorporate these six pillars into your life in order to create and maintain more meaningful and intimate relationships in your professional and personal life.





**“Guests bring good luck with them.”**

~ Turkish Proverb



~ Nicholaos Yiannakis,  
Unilever – Mombasa,  
Kenya

Twenty-five hours later I finally land in Dibrugarh... Upon exiting the airport I find a very similar climate to what I left back home in Mombasa – temperature in the 30s with high humidity, and I ask myself, “Is this really where tea grows?”

My name is Nick Yiannakis, and I run Unilever’s African Tea Buying office in Mombasa, Kenya. My role is to support Unilever’s ambition to source all their tea according to the principles of sustainability. As the world’s biggest tea company, we are changing the tea industry with this commitment to sustainability. Since 2010 we are sourcing the tea for Lipton Yellow Label and PG Tips in Europe from Rainforest Alliance Certified™ estates.

- By 2015, we aim to have the tea in all Lipton tea bags globally sourced from Rainforest Alliance Certified estates.
- By 2020, all Unilever’s tea will come from sustainable sources.

I am greeted at the airport and handed a most welcoming letter. The letter is from Nisar Ahmed, General Manager Dirok, welcoming me to Assam and Dirok, including the words, “Hope you had a pleasant flight and the landing wasn’t too bad.” This got me thinking if Dibrugarh airport is indeed prone to bad landings. I’m yet to find out as the landing was pleasant and I never did ask Nisar. During my journey to Dirok I catch my first glimpse of

tea fields multi-cropped with trees. In Africa trees are grown in independent blocks for fuelwood. I later come to learn that the Assam practice is to create a micro-climate and shade due to the high temperatures, whilst factories in Assam run on other sources of energy and do not require fuel-wood forestry.

I met my hosts, Nisar and Mimi, and was then taken to the club for the evening. I learned that Wednesday is sports/club day and gives all planters an opportunity to maintain their physical fitness as well as socialize afterwards in a relaxed environment.

My Dirok visit included a fascinating overview of the estate, factory, Rainforest Alliance projects and neighbouring forest reserve. I joined Nisar for his 6am daily operational review. Nisar was in a good mood, largely owing to the much needed 3.5 inches of rain we’d had overnight. Each divisional leader reconfirmed the day’s plan with Nisar in about five minutes or less – labour numbers and operations were adjusted where needed and priorities set. It was most impressive how each unit head had complete clarity for each day.

I then had the luxury of spending a morning with Devaya tasting MRIL South Bank invoice teas. Devaya and I must have tasted at least two hundred of them, which I found quite different to what we have in Africa, especially the Orthodox, which is only made to order. To make me feel at home, Devaya brought out some of

MRIL Rwandan Gisovu’s teas. My main observation was that Assam teas have all quality attributes – Mouthfeel, Taste and Colour.

The afternoon was spent with Sivaji visiting Margherita estate. Both the factory and field visit was great – we saw most operations in motion as well as an afforestation project which had just started. The day concluded with an in-depth conversation with Sivaji around the intricacies of running plantations, accompanied by a few cups of Margherita’s finest tea.

It was time to move on from Margherita/Dirok and I was driven to Bordubi estate where I was to meet with Ramanuj and Sarita. Ramanuj ensured I got a comprehensive tour of the factory and drive around the estate. The factory was in immaculate condition and estate was well looked after with an abundance of shade trees – I was delighted to hear Ramanuj had a passion for planting trees. This got me thinking again how we can add shade trees to the African Tea landscape. Ramanuj also included a general tour of the area surrounding the estate, including the Sunday market in DoomDooma town, which was definitely bustling. On our return, I was shown the full capabilities of a Maruti Gypsy and why it was the vehicle of choice for both the Indian Army and MRIL Estates. We then came upon a loaded ‘tuktuk’ (autorickshaw) climbing a very muddy and bumpy hill without a hassle – so possibly the future vehicle of the Army.

My final day was to be spent with Vivek and Tamanna at Koomsong estate. This was a thoroughly interesting visit with some leading edge organic solutions to fertilizer (vermicompost), plant strength and pesticides. The crop looked very good, with a bright green tinge – almost fluorescent. We also drove past a 2 hectare conservation area which has resulted in some indigenous birds to be attracted back to the area – something the entire estate is rightly very proud of. I was also extremely impressed with the recovery Koomsong has made from the hail damage a few years back. Lastly I have to give a special thanks to the entire team at Koomsong, not only for a fantastic visit, but also for finding a way to get Skype to work in Assam at short notice, with network connections down, allowing me to wish my wife happy anniversary and catch up with my kids after a week of no connectivity.

Overall this has been a fantastic and insightful visit which I would recommend to all. I am proud to drive market transformation in tea with partners such as McLeod Russel, focusing on achieving Rainforest Alliance certification and driving a move towards a sustainably sourced industry.

A special thanks to all that have helped to arrange my visit and hosted me and sincerely look forward to meeting again!

*Editors’ Note: Mr Yiannakis has since been appointed MD of Unilever Tea, Tanzania*

## Visitors from Taylors of Harrogate, UK



On 17 September 2014, seven executives from Taylors of Harrogate, UK – Keith Writer, Simon Hotchkin, Cris Coats, Pete Mullen, Chipiwa Zimbwa, Ian Brabbin and Frank Tanner – escorted by a team from HO Kolkata, visited three of our Company’s estates from which they source their teas – Bukhial, Behora and Hunwal – in order to formulate future strategies and areas of collaboration. In addition to looking over the manufacturing units and facilities, they also visited the Bodo Handloom Scheme outlet at Behora T.E. and were favourably impressed with the standard of the items produced by the BHS, one of the oldest community welfare projects undertaken by MRIL.





“The challenge of history is to recover the past and introduce it to the present.” ~ David Thelen

## Ye Olde Tea Chest

~ Sarita Dasgupta

Until a few decades ago, tea was packed and transported in square boxes of varying size. They were made of plywood sheets held together by metal edges riveted to the sheets with nails. The number of nails was always the same in boxes of the same size. In fact, the ‘box mistry’ became expert at spacing the nails and hammering them in without having to resort to a measuring tape. The chests were lined with metal foil and, depending on the size, each box could hold between 42 and 58 kg of tea. Since there was no lid, one simply removed one of the sides – usually, the top.



Model of a Clipper's Hold



Tea Chests – MRIL Estates

The earliest use of tea chests was by the British East India Company, to ship tea in bulk from China and India in the late seventeenth century. The design and weight of tea chests were standardized as was the design of the holds of the ships that carried them, so that the maximum amount of tea could be fitted into each cargo.

At first, the company used the large, strong, slow ships known as East Indiamen, which could carry 1,200 tons of cargo. Each trip from the Orient to the London docks took a year if the weather remained fair, but could take much longer if the conditions were unfavourable. Then came the Clippers, sleeker and faster ships that carried less tea in their holds but travelled faster, so the teas arrived in London that much fresher. The last surviving Clipper, one of the fastest and most famous in her time, the Cutty Sark, is on display in Greenwich, London. The famous ship has been elevated so that the visitors can see it from underneath as well as climb aboard and explore the hold where the tea chests were stored on those epic voyages.



The Cutty Sark

Over the years, thousands of tea chests have made their way from India and China to England and other parts of the world where people found many innovative ways of reusing them in their original or recycled form.

Some chests were used in their original form for storage. Others were reinforced with a lid and handles, and even wheels, and beautified before being used for the same purpose.

Tea Chest Furniture



'Attabarie' at Los Angeles Airport!

Some tea chests were dismantled and the sides polished and used to panel walls or the front of cupboards. They were even used as table tops. Sometimes one comes across old tea chests inscribed with our Company's logo and the name of one of its estates, in unexpected places! I found the name 'Attabarie' on a panel of the Tea Leaf outlet in Terminal 7 of Los Angeles airport!





*The Robinson Half Chest*

## Historical Tea Chests

Perhaps the most historical of all tea chests is the Robinson Half Chest, displayed at the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum. It was found half buried in the sand near the shore by a teenager called John Robinson the morning after the historic 'Boston Tea Party'. It stayed in his family for generations until it was bought by a gentleman from Texas. The Boston Museum purchased it from the Texan gentleman's family and brought it back 'home'.

## A Few Unusual Uses of the Tea Chest



**An Instrument of Escape:** Flight Lieutenant Dominic Bruce of the Royal Air Force used a tea chest to escape from Colditz Castle, Germany, during WWII. The new Commandant had asked the prisoners to pack all their

extra belongings into assorted boxes, including tea chests, which would then be placed in the storeroom. Lieutenant Bruce, being small built, fitted himself into a Red Cross tea chest! With the help of a file and a twenty metre length of 'rope' made with bedsheets, he made his escape

from the third floor storeroom that night. The guards found the 'rope' dangling from the window and a message in German inscribed on the side of the empty tea chest. It said, "The air in Colditz no longer pleases me. Auf wiedersehen!"

Although he was caught a week later, this escape made the Lieutenant famous as the 'Medium Sized Man' and the escape itself came to be known as the 'Tea Chest Escape'. It featured in the BBC television series of the 1970s called 'Colditz', in which David McCallum (who famously portrayed Ilya Kuriakan in the U.N.C.L.E. series) played the role of Flight Lieutenant Simon Carter, the fictional Dominic Bruce.

**A Musical Instrument:** An upright broomstick with one or more strings attached, fitted into or alongside an empty tea chest becomes a musical instrument called a Tea Chest Bass! The chest works like a resonator. As the pole is moved it stretches the string and alters the tone, sounding at least four different notes. This instrument was used by bands playing Skiffle music (a combination of American folk music, jazz and blues) since the 1920s, to give the bass note to their music.

In the 1950s and 60s, Skiffle became popular in Britain and among the well-known British Skiffle groups was The Quarry Men, whose members included John Lennon, George Harrison, and Paul McCartney...later to become famous as The Beatles.

Interestingly, a Macneil & Barry tea planter actually played with The Beatles! Ron Aston, a member of the Margherita based planters' band, **The Mudguards**, played the drums for The Beatles (then known as 'The Silver Beetles') in the UK before he joined Tea.



*The Borgang River Boys*



*PB4 at Tingri Club*

The tea chest bass was, appropriately enough, played by quite a few tea planters, most of whom were based on our Company's estates. In the late 1950s, **The Borgang River Boys** was a very popular planters' band on the North Bank. The band comprised Hamish Pirie, Mike Dawkins, Tom Saltau, Peter Swer and Jeff Tomlin. The tea chest bass was one of the instruments they used.

Peter Baxter (Bordubi T.E.), Jimmy Pariat (Koomsong T.E.) and Eric Singh (Dirok T.E.), along with Terence Morris of Pengeree T.E. formed a band called **PB4** in the 1960s. Peter Baxter played the saxophone, Jimmy Pariat the guitar, Terence Morris played percussion and the clarinet, while Eric Singh became quite an expert on the Tea Chest Bass made for him in the factory.

Alan Leonard of the **Broken Pekoes**, a Mangaldai-based planters' band, played the Tea Chest Bass too. The band



comprised him, Sanbah Pariat, David Ojha, George Barry and David March.

There exists a picture of an elderly lady playing the Tea Chest Bass...and the chest has 'Bishnauth Tea Company Limited, 4 Mangoe Lane, Calcutta' stenciled on it!

**A Model of a Castle:** In the 'Room of Good Fortune' in Drogo Castle, Exeter, England, one can admire the large model of the castle, made from old tea chests. The Castle itself was designed by Edwin Lutyens, one of the greatest architects of the 20th century, responsible for designing most of the colonial structures in Delhi.



*Tea Chest Model of Drogo Castle*

**Homes for Owls:** The barn owl, whose numbers have been declining significantly not only in Britain but all over Europe due to the loss of nest sites, have been given new homes as part of a wildlife project in several parts of England. Old tea chests have been transformed into homes for pairs of breeding barn owls. An entrance hole is cut and a tray fitted in front of this to provide an exercise area for young owls.

*The Barn Owl at Home*



"There is a great deal of poetry and fine sentiment in a chest of tea," said Ralph Waldo Emerson. Actually, there's so much more!



*Colditz Castle and (inset) the Red Cross Tea Chest*



“The earth is like a beautiful bride who needs no manmade jewels to heighten her loveliness.” ~ Kahlil Gibran

## SOME OF THE BIRDS IDENTIFIED AT THE BAMBOO GROVE



~ Vivek Seth, Koomsong T.E.

## THE BAMBOO GROVE AT KOOMSONG T.E.

On a hot, sultry summer's day, if you happen to be driving around with a frown on your face and suddenly encounter a cool area with a slight breeze that instantly brings a smile to your face – you have just entered the magnificent Bamboo Grove at Koomsong T.E.

This patch of coolness not only brings a smile on every passerby's face but is also a haven for all kinds of flora and fauna. Although the vintage of this terrestrial ecosystem is lost in history, everyone who has been at Koomsong remembers it, and it is believed to have existed before the estate was established in 1904.

The majestic Bamboo Grove covers an area of approximately 15 hectares with crossroads running through it. The workers believe that animals sought sanctuary around a mound in this bamboo 'bari' with a 'trishul' (trident – the three-pronged spear associated with Lord Shiva) on it, apparently a relic from the Shiva temple that once stood there.

A decade ago a keen ornithologist from Spain mapped this bamboo 'bari' and identified over 200 species of birds, both local and migratory. Lately, we have managed to identify over 50 species. Certain areas get swampy during the monsoons thus harbouring some aquatic and semi-aquatic species of plants and animals.



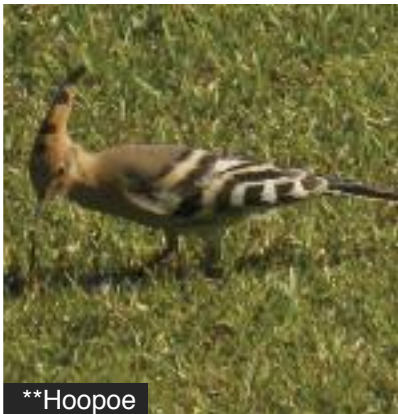
\*Owl



\*Shikra



\*\*Common Mynah



\*\*Hoopoe



\*\*Indian Magpie Robin



\*\*Parakeets



\*\*Speckled Wood Pigeons



\*\*Chestnut Tailed Starling



\*\*Shrike



\*\*White Wagtail



\*\*Sparrows



\*\*Indian Roller

The workers and inhabitants of the neighbouring villages use herbs found in the grove for medicinal purposes. Solanum nostrum is used for people suffering from jaundice; 'Drona' as first-aid for cuts and burns; and wild basil is used to soothe those suffering from colds, coughs and sore throats.

With Koomsong acquiring RA certification, the grove has now been declared a 'Conservation Area' and, amongst others, forms the most formidable terrestrial ecosystem of this estate. It is a sanctuary for butterflies, dragonflies and other small creatures, animals such as leopards, jackals, hares, mongoose, and a large variety of snakes, in addition to the vast selection of birds.



\*\*Beetle



\*\*Snail



\*\*Grasshopper

\* photographs: vivek seth

\*\* photographs: sarita dasgupta





“Every man's memory is his private literature.” ~ Aldous Huxley

# Yarns from Yesteryears

## The Bard at Bogapani

In the 1950s and 60s when the London Director made a visit during the Cold Weather some gardens put up a concert in his honour. One such concert was held at Bogapani T.E. to welcome Mr J.H. Kilburn. I did not personally witness this but am assured by Simon Penney, who was Senior Assistant at Bogapani then, that The Merchant of Venice, as a one act play, was the presentation! It went thus:

The hessian curtain opens revealing a rudimentary stage and a man sitting at a table. There is a loud knocking on the door at the side of the stage.

**Seated man:** “Kaun Hai?”

**Muffled voice (from behind the door):** “Hamara nam Shylock hai.”

**Seated man:** “Kya mangta?”

**Muffled voice:** “Hum adha seer gosht mangta.”

**Seated man stands up kicking over the chair, shakes his fist and shouts at the door:** “JAO SALA, KABHI NAHIN MILEGA!”

The curtain closes!



~ Larry Brown  
Southport, Queensland,  
Australia

One concert that I did personally witness at Bogapani, along with Jim Maltby, Peter Furst, Jimmy Beven, Polly Rajpal and Raj Bhasin, was in the 60s, where Jack Kilburn was fêted. One of the acts featured a garden worker, one Aksing, who was to present a folk song from his native place. The harmonium player was a Staff member and after the introductory bars Aksing opened his mouth wide but no sound came. Another introductory bar was given, and another, and another, till finally Aksing found his voice...after which he went on, and on, and on ... while the listeners started squirming in their seats.

The Factory ‘Bara Babu’ rescued the day when, from the side of the stage, his umbrella shot out, hooked Aksing round the neck and hauled him offstage. This action brought the loudest applause from the audience!

## Personal ‘Training’!

In the ‘old days’ when Peewee (Peter Bursnell, Manager, Margherita T.E.) and his friends had a cricket match down the line, he would phone the Margherita Stationmaster who said he would have the train ready for the required time. Peewee and friends then drove the train!! Between stations, the train stopped at the cricket venue and as the cricketers got down, the engine driver would enquire, “What time shall I bring the train, Mr Bursnell?”

A bygone era indeed!!



Waiting for the Train

## Namdang Notes

When I was at Namdang T.E. many, many years ago, Namtok was almost impassable jungle, with no tea, and, as we went through this area we could see the leeches on branches and at the top of the long grass stems. When anything warm blooded passed by (us and the

dogs) they dropped off their perches and tried to make contact with us – which they did on many occasions. Fortunately, we all had a puff or two at Simla, Charminar – but definitely not Bidis! The glowing end of a cigarette soon made the leeches let go.

Soon after my arrival at Namdang in 1960 the Manager, John Marshall Phillips, and his wife, Marion, went on leave and I was to look after their bungalow while they were away. It was a huge bungalow with beautiful surrounding lawns and flower beds and I was really in awe of the whole situation.

It was there that I had my first encounter with a snake – a spitting Cobra – but another incident turned out to be one of the Company’s best kept secrets. Everyone in the Makum, Namdang Companies knew; the only exceptions who were kept in the dark were John and Marion!



Below the Bara Bungalow was a little stream where, every morning, a large number of Jungli Murghis gathered and I often stopped to watch them while riding my bicycle to the office. My brother in Belfast, a keen fisherman, had given me his 12 bore rifle when I left home and mentioned that the male Jungle Fowl had a beautiful plumage, ideal for incorporating in fly tying. He said if I ever had the opportunity, I should shoot one or two for their feathers.

Well, one Sunday morning I decided to do this. I took the gun, went to the stream and, being reluctant to shoot ‘sitting birds’, shouted and kicked up a racket but to no avail; they paid no attention to me. In desperation, I threw a stone and they took to the air. Bang! Bang! I got four!

I took these to Chris Gathorne, the Acting Manager, who was delighted. He said they were good eating and that he would ask his wife, Pam, to make a curry. He asked where I had shot them and I told him, “Below the Bara Bungalow.” There was a long pause after which he said, “We’ll eat them but we have to make no mention of this.” He then told me that Marion Phillips had been hand feeding these birds for a long time and as such they were practically tame. The birds were cooked, enjoyed at the table, and the secret kept!

As the very new Assistant in charge of ‘East Side’ Division, I rode my bike alongside Chris Gathorne on my way to the work area in the early stages as he was showing me the ropes. Some women were coming late to take up their positions in the tea and I asked Chris to teach me how to

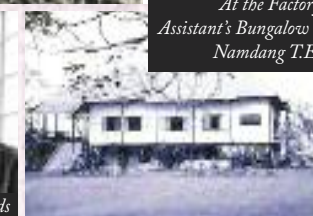
The Mudguards (L to R): Bob Powell-Jones, Larry Brown & Ron Aston



At the Factory Assistant's Bungalow - Namdang T.E.



Larry (2nd from right) with friends



say, “If you come as late as this tomorrow, you will not get work,” so as we rode our bicycles I repeated what Chris had taught me – “Kal itne deri anneyse kam nahin milega” – over and over again. When some stragglers reached the tea, Chris said, “Go ahead,” so I put on a stern face and started, “Kal...” but had forgotten the rest!! Chris laughed and said, “We’ll try again tomorrow.”

I am now fairly fluent and can even manage a few songs like ‘Mere samne wale khirke mai, ek chand ka tokera rahta hai’, ‘Dil deke dekho’ and ‘Mera sapano ki Rani kab ayegi tu’.

My three best Hindi films are ‘Sholay’, ‘Lagaan’, and one I saw just last month, ‘Rang de Basanti’.

At the age of seventy-seven, I’ve recently bought an electric keyboard and have already mastered “Hallelujah”, “The way you look tonight”, “Silhouettes” and a few other numbers.

Incidentally, a copy of my guitar shape was made by the head carpenter at Namdang and he carefully shaped the body and neck from solid pieces of Nahor timber. Radha, the head fitter, who kept Namdang factory always operational, made the stainless steel plate for the neck/body attachment and the string anchor too. Bob (Powell Jones) and I arranged to get a double pick up from Hong Kong, and a fretboard, machine heads and strings from Calcutta. The Namdang carpenter fitted and glued the fretboard after painting. The guitar was completed and thanks to this craftsman, we had a perfect bass guitar!

**Editors’ note:** Mr Larry Brown and Mr Robert Powell-Jones had formed a planters’ band in 1963, called The Mudguards. They were later joined by Mr Ron Aston and Mr Douglas Russell. They played ‘Shadows’ and ‘Ventures’ instrumental numbers, and were invited to play at various events in almost all the South Bank clubs, from Margherita to Mariani, in the 1960s.



# EAST BOROI CLUB

“Guard well your spare moments. They are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be known.

Improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



~ Rimjhim Sarma  
Halem T.E.

The erstwhile British planters left behind a rich colonial legacy in the form of various clubs. These

clubs are basically patronized by tea planters and their families. The purpose behind these clubs was social interaction, recreation and sports.

The East Boro Club situated in Sonitpur district of Assam is one of them. It is surrounded by lustrous greenery of the Halem tea estate and the mighty hills of Boro, and is approximately 120 km from Tezpur.

The club was built sometime in 1935, as a tennis club with five tennis courts. The golf course now, was merely green pastures for the grazing cattle. Earlier, the club was situated at the Behali Golf Course (presently the property of Catholic Hospital, Kettela). The members of Boro District had to ride on horses and cross rivers to get to it. The bridge over the Boro River was built years later. In the early seventies, the infrastructure of the club was renovated and gradually it got its new look. The liquor license of the club was issued in 1965-66. The contribution of Mr Saibal Ghose, Honorary Secretary of the club

from 1985, is worth mentioning. The new building, the squash court and the kitchen were constructed during his tenure.

The membership of this club comprises the residents of the East Boro District, which means those residing in the area bound on the west by the Borgang river, on the east by the North Lakhimpur District boundary and on the south by the Brahmaputra river. The present members of this club are from Nya Gogra, Dufflaghur, Nirmala, Halem, Boro, Behali, Borgang and Kettela estates. The family of EBC flourished with the inclusion of Hurmutty Tea Estate recently in 2013.



EBC has three tennis courts, a 5-a-side football field, a squash court, an air-conditioned bar and a hall where most of the activities are held. There are also table tennis facilities, a billiards table, and a well stocked library,

all of which are utilized by the members regularly. The golf course of EBC is one of the most beautiful in Assam.

The activities of the club are controlled by the Committee of members who are elected at the Annual General Meeting. The meetings are presided over by the Honorary Secretary of the club.



The Chairman gives an account of the various activities during the year under review. An Extraordinary Meeting can be called by the Committee of members at their discretion. A minute book is maintained where all the proceedings of the meetings are recorded. All the accounts of the club are looked after by the Honorary Treasurer.

Mrs A. Maini proposed for a flower show for EBC at the 55th AGM in 1989. It was felt that such an event would be an encouragement for the Assistant Managers and Medical Officers in the district. The compound judging was also included to encourage the upkeep of the bungalow compounds. Thereafter, Mrs A. Maini was requested to convene the first flower show of EBC. Subsequently it was held on 21 February 1990. Earlier, the ladies had to



participate in the Bishnauth Flower Show. There is always a healthy competition and all the ladies participate in this show with great zeal and enthusiasm. Various festivals are also celebrated in the club premises like Bihu Nite and Diwali where some members of Bishnauth Club are also invited to enjoy the evening. ‘Uruka’, celebrated on the night before Magh Bihu, needs a special mention as a local band enthralls the audience in the chilly winter, and the night ends with a bonfire and delicious Assamese cuisine. The other fixtures include Rain Dance and Men’s Nite. The New Year’s Eve party is a grand affair, with a DJ rocking the club with foot tapping numbers. The members of other planters’ clubs also join EBC at this musical bash. The managers of each garden are requested to contribute towards the celebrations. These events are followed by a sumptuous meal prepared by the ladies. The children also look forward to a series of entertainment all through the year.

The club also arranges cinema shows for the members once a month and videos on some Wednesday evenings as well. The Honorary Entertainment Member looks after the screening of movies and the music as well as of the maintenance of all related equipment.

The EBC members make a special effort to maintain the decorum of the club. It is certain that anybody who leaves this district carries fond memories and forever cherishes good times spent in this club.





## Ties That Bind...

### 80th Birthday Celebrations of Mr K.N. Chaurasia

"The ties that bind us are sometimes impossible to explain. They connect us, defying distance, time, and sometimes, logic. Because some ties are simply... meant to be." Anon

Mr Kailash Chaurasia was Manager Sepon T.E. from 1973 to 1983, and although as Superintendent of the Moran estates – Sepon, Attabarrie, Moran and Lepetketta – from 1984 to 1986 he operated out of the Superintendent's office (present GM's office) at Moran T.E., he continued to be stationed at the Burra Bungalow at Sepon T.E. until his retirement.

To mark his 80th birthday, Mr Chaurasia bestowed Rs 80,000/- to meritorious students from the estate. A function was organized on 26 September 2014 to felicitate the eight students hailing from the four Divisions of the estate and present them with bank drafts of Rs 10,000/- each. The function, presided over by Mr Nareswar Sonowal, General Manager, Moran, was attended by the executives, senior staff, union officials and Mother's Club members of all four Divisions, as well as the parents of the recipients.

Mr Sonowal advised the students to utilize the money judiciously for educational purposes only. The students were elated to receive the prize money and assured everyone present that they would work even harder to secure better results in future.

A cake was cut by all the eight recipients to celebrate Mr Chaurasia's 80th birthday, while three senior staff members – Shri H. N. Dutta, Shri R.T. Phukan and Shri P. Handique – shared fond memories of his tenure at Sepon. Mr Chaurasia had appointed Shri Phukan as a permanent staff member in the factory in 1982 while Shri Handique was appointed as a temporary staff in 1983, and made permanent in 1984. Shri H. N. Dutta, who was the ACKS Secretary in 1983, has cherished photographs of Mr Chaurasia's farewell function held at Sepon T.E.

We would like to thank Mr Chaurasia for the benevolence showered on the deserving students who join us in conveying their gratitude to him.

Mr Chaurasia's kind gesture demonstrates the strong bond that exists between planters, and the staff and workers of the estates that they serve in, even after they (the planters) are no longer in service.



~ Prithipal Singh Aswal  
Sepon T.E.



One would think that years of residing in the solitude of the gardens would have had me hankering for the bright city lights. However, a few days of the hustle-bustle, the noise and pollution, and I am raring to run back to the clean, verdant green surroundings of my home! Here, the stillness is broken only by the melodious bird calls, the humming of the insects, the occasional roar of a leopard nearby, the howl of the jackals or the distant trumpeting of wild elephants in the vicinity, but to name a few. It is indeed a charmed life one leads here, where with the close proximity to Nature, one inevitably encounters various forms of wildlife. Many a planter will have at least one interesting tale to recount about his brush with these wonderful creatures.

Returning home late, many of us have spotted majestic leopards in all their golden glory, lounging around on the garden roads and hardly ever in a hurry to clear the way. Quite often, they seem rather miffed at having those glaring headlights on them, disappearing among the tea bushes with an annoyed swish of their tails. Then there are the herds of wild elephants one stumbles upon unawares as they silently plod to and from the paddy fields nearby, often stopping by to feast on the bananas in one's 'malibari'. And of course, it is such a pleasure to see those wild hares furiously hopping away from approaching danger. Snakes, mongoose, civet cats and many such animals too can be spotted in and around the bungalow compounds.

Many a rescue mission has been launched to save these animals from some disaster or the other, while a lot of other destitute or injured animals have been nurtured and set free. Recently, two little leopard cubs, barely a month old, were found in our present garden, Dehing. Efforts to reunite them with their mother by forest officials proved futile and they were given to us to be looked after as they were refusing food. This proved to be a unique and enchanting encounter. Having had prior experience in raising some wild animals, we set about trying to feed them, but with no luck since they were such babies and probably still



Zoya & Zoey with Thunder



suckling on their mother's milk. So a large sized syringe was filled with a concoction of Cerelac baby food mixed with fish or chicken soup and we would squirt this into their mouths every two hours. This they relished and would greedily drink up. However, after a month of this routine, our daughter and I started looking like two raccoons, with dark circles beneath our eyes, as a result of babysitting! The cubs, christened Zoya and Zoey, were fast learners though, and soon learnt to feed by themselves. They were also very friendly with our dogs, especially our eight-month old German Shepherd, Thunder, and the room would often be in a shambles after their hide-and seek games. After a month, we introduced them slowly to raw food for they would return to their wild habitat soon. I could go on and on about our time with them but that would result in pages and pages! Well, to cut a long story short, the forest officials returned after three months to take them away for rehabilitation, and we were left with memories and broken hearts, happy nevertheless that we could do our bit in saving these beautiful creatures.

It is said the earth has music for those who listen – thus we hear the song of Nature in the leaves rustling in the breeze; the rhythm of the falling rain; the myriad calls of the animals, birds and insects around us, but most of all, here, we find peace and joy in the 'sounds of silence'.

*Rupa Saikia*

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poSt  
Script





There is a time sometime, and a place where in the perfect stillness of the evening  
within the sunset's serenity we rekindle in the glow...

Sunset by the Basra — Central Dooars T.E.



**McLEOD RUSSEL**

*Believe in tea*

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