The background of the cover is a photograph of rolling green hills. The hills are covered in lush green grass and are divided into various fields by stone walls or fences. The sky is filled with soft, white and grey clouds, suggesting an overcast day. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

# The Times

The McLeod Russel  
House Journal

**JANUARY 2013**



The WM Times is the medium to participate in the happenings which are woven into the fabric making up the vast canvas that is the Company today.

The Treasury of estates which lie at the heart of our enterprise are featured and Narration portrays the newest addition to the fold; we now have interests in two African countries, Uganda and Rwanda.

The Reminiscence of a retired colleague allows us to indulge in nostalgia; Planter's Punch and Kamjari re-affirm Tea 'dastoor' and way of life. We are proud of the

achievements of exceptional 'offspring' and the Cameos introduce two members of our upcountry family.

Cricket, the national obsession, has a long innings in Tea. From the days of the five day 'test' to the modern format of twenty 'overs', it is a popular sport for both players and spectators. The inaugural MRIL sponsored professional golf tournament, a four day jamboree, reiterates the Company's commitment to sports.

Beneficence is an integral element in the Company's ethos and we are pleased to depict a centre where a group of professional teachers work towards integrating the lesser privileged child into mainstream society.

It is a universal truth that personal finances must be managed thoughtfully and the suggestions included under Management Mantras are easily followed.

The Memsahab's Guide discusses the customs and traditions of a vibrant community whose culinary skills are enjoyed by all. The burst of colour in the article on 'gardens' amply illustrates the maxim that, "to garden is to open your heart to the sky".

Visitors' Vignette describes a colleague's trip to the Company's African holdings.

The benefits of the simplest and most effective fitness 'mantra' are represented in Health Watch.

The New Year, "...it's only the beginning now, a pathway yet unknown". The Planter looks beyond the winter chill and eagerly awaits the re-birth of the tea bush in spring.

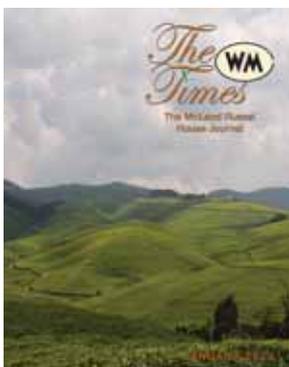
On behalf of The WM Times team I wish our readers a joyful year.

Salaams.

Vidya Kaul

## Features

Issue - 11 JANUARY 2013



### 01 Cover

Gisovu T. E., Rwanda

### 02 Editorial / Features

### 03 Narration

Gisovu Tea Company Ltd  
- H. S. Grewal

### 07 Reminiscence

The Path continues...- Sam Masood

### 10 Treasury

Beesakopie T.E. - Sarita Dasgupta

### 16 The Memsahab's Guide to Gracious Living

- Lucy Khong

### 18 Cameo

Sanjeeb Deka - Bharati Krishan

### 21 Visitors' Vignette

- D. Mehta

### 24 Beneficence

The Udaan Centre - Lesley Guha Sircar

### 27 Shabaash

### 29 Phu Ben Communique

- Sakina Hussain

### 32 McLeod Russel Tour Championship

### 34 How Does your Garden Grow?

- Pallavi Mehrotra

### 38 Management Mantras

Personal Finance - B. K. Newar

### 40 Cameo

Simalisa Baruah - Julie Bhuyan

### 42 Treasury

Nya Gogra T.E. - Vidya Kaul

### 48 Melange

Laurels, Weddings, Births and Events

### 54 Kamjari

Visitations - Dipin Mehta

### 56 African Beat

Genesis of the Uganda Tea Industry  
- Nick Paterson, Tarakwa & Gilgil

### 58 planters@play

Cricket - Ujjal Borah

### 60 Health Watch

The Benefits of Walking  
- Dr Supratim Chatterjee

### 62 Planter's Punch

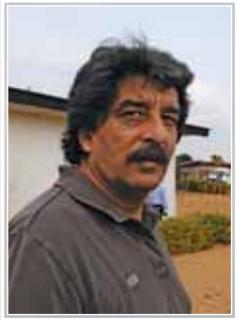
Memories of Another Day - Deepak Agha

### 63 Postscript

- Sarita Dasgupta

### 64 Tea Break

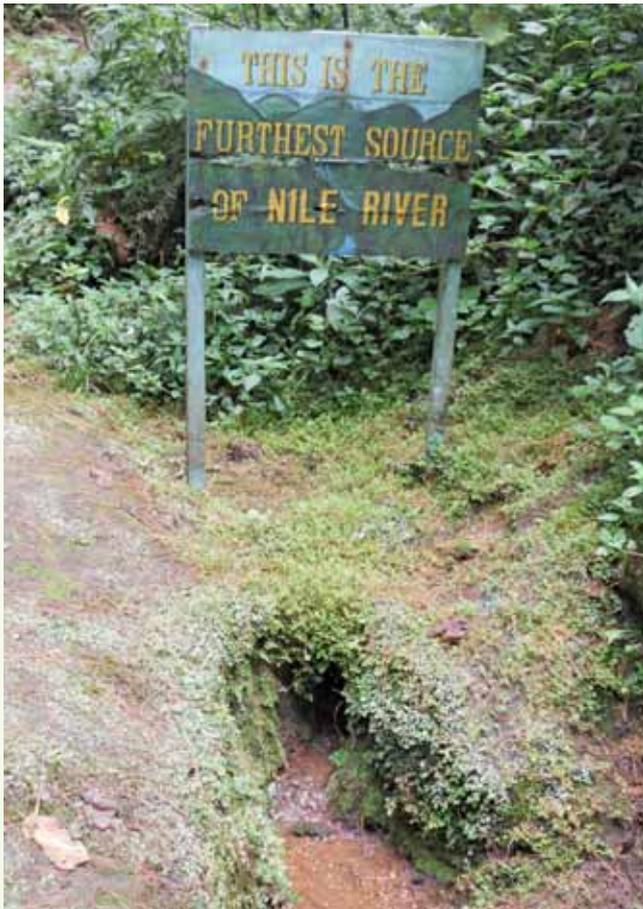
Misty Morning - Beesakopie T.E.



H.S. Grewal  
Gisovu T.E., Rwanda

# Gisovu Tea Company Ltd

**I**n the land of a thousand hills, Rwanda, situated in the heart of Africa at 8000 feet above mean sea level, the Gisovu Tea Estate is a place of pristine beauty, perched on the Nile Congo ridge above the Albertine Rift Valley. Gisovu became a part of the Company's holdings on 23 February 2011 as a joint venture between McLeod Russel and the Government of Rwanda and Coothegim Co-operative.



One reaches this wondrous place by driving for a couple of hours on a good highway from Kigali, the capital city, to Kibuye, a lake resort, before diverting to a “better” mud track for an hour and a half, driving at a ‘high speed’ of 15 kmph; the lake view along the way more than makes up for the bumpy ride. All fatigue and weariness is forgotten as one crosses over the ridge and encounters Gisovu spread over the horizon. Many countries claim to contain within their boundaries the source of the mighty River Nile and in Rwanda the source is a mere four kilometers from the factory at Gisovu. An hour’s walk down the ridge through dense forest gets you to a spring in the middle of the Nyungwe rainforest, the source of the Nyabarongo river, the head water of the Nile, ‘Sou de Nile’; this is the furthest point from the main river.

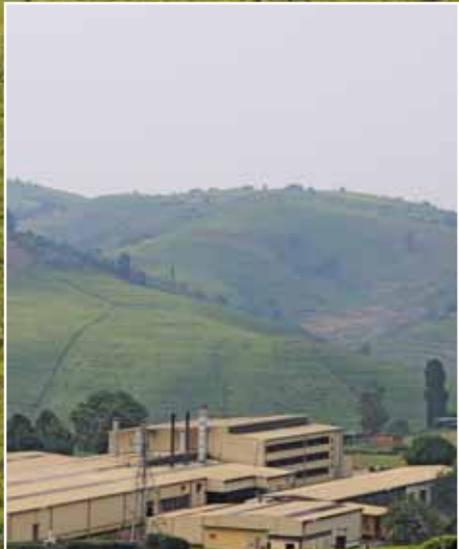
Gisovu is bound by the Nyungwe, the only preserved high grown large rain forest in central Africa, on its northern perimeter and Lake Kivu (famous for its methane saturated water, which will in due course power Rwanda) in the Albertine Rift Valley to the south and west. The estate includes 343 hectares of tea and 367 hectares of eucalyptus forest, and an outreach Tea Co-operative, Coothegim, of 853 hectares.





The views from the estate vary, from a glimpse of distant Lake Kivu, the Nyiragongo Volcano in DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) to rolling hills of tea and of course the beautiful Nyungwe forest. The air is cold, pristine and crisp. The local inhabitants are friendly.

Tea planting in Rwanda is a relatively new venture; the Belgian colonisers began tea cultivation in an attempt to introduce another cash crop. The first plantations were situated in the northern province though experimental plots were planted all over Rwanda. The trial plots established twenty years earlier thrived in Gisovu and planting in earnest began in the 1970s. The Government of Rwanda's initiative along with international aid to achieve another cash crop as well as better the living conditions of the local populace bore fruit. The Gisovu tea area is in the Western Province, Karongi district. The factory was constructed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The first Indians to be seen by the locals were turbaned workers and contractors. One can only imagine the efforts made to construct this factory with no skilled manpower and no electricity; in fact there were hardly any amenities on offer.





The factory produced the first teas in December 1983 and in the initial year of full operation the princely quantity of 2,06,079 kg of tea was manufactured. With the small farmers starting to plant tea and giving the green leaf to Gisovu, production has increased to 22,50,000 kg. There was a slow and steady rise in crop till 1993 but in the following year strife in the country halved the harvest. Thereafter, barring a few hiccups, there has been a steady growth.

The estate has twenty-three permanent employees including managerial staff; a further 900 to 1500 casual workers are employed for estate work. As all casual workers are employed from the surrounding villages the estate helps in the prosperity of the local community. Gisovu is involved in elevating the condition of the surrounding areas by spreading the message of banning child labour, encouraging vocational training, helping local schools with scholastic material and paying for the uniforms and school fees of very poor students. Training of mechanical workers to be self-sufficient and learn all crafts has begun thus ensuring most jobs can be completed in-house. Construction of buildings, fabricating factory requirements and other jobs for which management had to rely on outside help is being taken care of by our own workers.

Rwanda, a young country, has undergone many experiences in the short period after independence. In 1994 Karongi District, Western Province, and areas around Gisovu were severely affected by the upheavals in the country. Most of the staff lost their lives during this tumultuous period. There was no production in the months of August, September and October. All operations came to a standstill as everybody from here fled to neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (previously known as Zaire). Subsequently, operations began again with the small workforce. Once this trying phase was over, the estate prospered and its quality was finally

recognised; it now produces what is considered the finest tea in Africa and regularly obtains the highest price at the Mombasa Tea Auctions.

## Bush to Cup in Rwanda

### Yester-years

Plucking was taught to the workers who were in the habit of stripping the bush; the leaf was hand carried for miles to reach the factory, processed and then began the effort of transportation. It would take up to five days to reach Kibuye. Often, chests had to be carried as head loads over streams and rivers. The road from Kibuye too had its share of hazards; in rainy times, which are more frequent than dry days, lorries would remain stuck in slush or were prevented from moving for days on end due to landslides. Kigali to Mombasa would take another month if transport was found to carry the consignment, and sometimes even longer.

### Today

Things have improved though there is still a lot to be desired. Leaf is plucked from sections a couple of hours driving distance from the factory; it gets to the estate on roads which could compare with Africa's worst! After processing, then begins the hazardous journey down the mountain in small trucks to Kigali. It is a test of driver and vehicle, sliding down slushy areas, skidding down slopes and sometimes getting stuck in watery potholes. Many a time the trucks have to be helped on their way down by brute manpower. The tea consignments finally reach Kigali where they are transhipped into large containers to travel 1600 km for six to eight days across two countries (Uganda and Kenya) to Mombasa and thereafter to the best tea drinking countries in the world. Gisovu tea, valuable as it is, is used as a blend enhancer in the best blends of the world.

The Company's motto is 'Rwanda's Pride Africa's Finest' and we persevere in our endeavours to keep the flag flying.





## The Path continues... but the Memories remain!

– Sam Masood

**M**y entry into this profession was born of my fascination with life in Tea; be it the discipline, the style, the charisma, the

Clubs or the sports. Though I love sports and routinely work out, racquet games fascinated me more and I'm a regular tennis and squash player. "I like the ball coming to me to be hit and not chase it to hit!" Perhaps this is why I didn't get hooked on golf!

This fascination for Tea arose out of holidays spent with my planter cousins – Mahmood Ahmed, Late Niaz Ahmed, Khaled Ahmed, Late Babu Ahmed, Late Nessim Hazarika and Late Zufi Sultan. I joined McLeod Russel straight after graduating from Assam Agriculture University, Jorhat.

On 28 April 1974 began my life in Tea at Nya Gogra T.E. under Mr R.C Mahanta, a complete disciplinarian. One day, as I was doing 'kamjari' on my only mode of transport – a second-hand bicycle provided by the Company – the workers warned me, "Sa'ab! Baagh aata hai!" I was looking for an exit to get out of harm's way when I saw a plume of dust zip past me. I realized it wasn't a real tiger but my Burra Sahab that they were referring to!!

Being the only Assistant, I was at the factory every night and then in the field for planting early in the morning!

(An umbrella or raincoat was out of the question; one had to brave the weather along with the workforce, leading by example.) I slept more on the sitting room sofa than on my bed!

In the initial months I did think of resigning as life certainly wasn't the proverbial 'bed of roses', but my counsellors, the Sultans and Haques, at Behali T.E. and Boroi T.E. respectively, convinced me to stay on. They would come with pastries and sweets to make me feel better!!

Those eight months at Nya Gogra were tough but the experience was a trial by fire which forged and toughened me into what I am today.

I moved to Addabarie T.E. where my Burra Sahab was Mr Ashok Kaul – my mentor who groomed me as a planter in the truest sense. He would pick me up in his blue jeep in the morning and be back at New Addabarie Division that very afternoon, asking, "Sam, can we go around and see if the work has been done?" That was the pace he expected! From him I learnt the value of speed and getting involved in one's work. My Senior Assistant, Tarun Bordoloi, was a great motivator, support and guide. He was meticulous, methodical and disciplined; qualities I imbibed from him.

My tenure at Addabarie encompassed giving 'budli' to all Assistants so one can imagine the amount of cycling I did from New Addabarie to Balipara – a good 22 km to and fro!!



Addabarie T.E. remains fondly in my memory as it was here that I was confirmed, got my first motorcycle, my first car and where Shelly came into my life on 5 November 1978.

On the eve of our first meeting, Mrs Kaul advised me on how I should go about impressing my wife-to-be; even suggesting what colour combination I should wear!

Shelly keeps a beautiful house and is a fabulous hostess. Her talent for cooking is inherited from her mother who was known as 'Nashta Baideo' in recognition of her culinary skills. Shelly enjoyed being Catering and Lady Member at various Clubs. Her interest in gardening and growing potted plants has won her innumerable 'Overall Flower Show Winner' prizes. She dabbled in glass painting and captained the first Bishnauth Club Ladies' Football team – winners in 1996. Shelly enjoys collecting plates from our travels in India and abroad.

In 1979 I was transferred to Matelli-Morti T.E. where my Burra Sahab was Mr A. M. Khan. It was a tough assignment but full of good times too. Our elder daughter, Karishma, was born during my tenure there.

I moved to Halem T.E. in 1980, under Mr Khan again. One Wednesday afternoon, a genset broke down leaving us worried about completing the day's manufacture. When Mr Khan entered his office in tennis 'whites' and started going through the 'daak', I charged in and apprised him of the major breakdown. He looked at me and coolly said, "Anything else? See you on the tennis court." I related this to the Factory Assistant, Ramanuj Dasgupta, and we marvelled at his calmness.

My first Acting was at Halem; it was for 98 days at a stretch! Two years later, I moved to Hunwal T.E. where Mr Khan took over from retiring Manager, Mr J.N. Barooah, thus becoming my Burra Sahab for the third time!



Zonovia, our younger daughter, was born while we were at Dirok, where I moved to in 1984. Mr B.K. Purkasthya was my Burra Sahab – a great soul to work with. A very nice and warm person, he could talk for hours about horticulture. The gentleman was inseparable from his brown suede P-Cap (peaked cap) which used to be on even when he signed documents at his office in green ink; his trademark colour. George Ambooken and I christened the sweaty headgear his 'Thinking Cap'! One day, I was with George in the factory when Burra Sahab saw that the fermenting was overdone. He simply kicked the 'gumlah' and walked off, leaving us flabbergasted.

In February 1987 I was given my billet at Tarajulie T.E. Just as my initiation was a trial by fire, so was the start of my career as a Manager.

Those were the days when kerosene lamps were used as emergency lights in the Genset Room! 12 May 1988 is still etched in my memory. There was unrest in the garden as my Jeep had apparently splashed water from a puddle on some workers at Julie Division where Ashok Krishan was in charge. Unfortunately, the incident got blown out of proportion and there was a full scale 'gherao' the next day. As I walked through the mob I was pushed around, so I entered the factory and the chowkidar quickly closed the gates. Somehow the mob broke the gate, rushed in and assaulted me in the Factory Office. On the advice of the only staff member there, I played dead and he shouted,

"Sahab mar gaya!" The attackers dispersed and Dwipen Bordalai, Ashok and Dr S. C. Gogoi put me in a vehicle while R. P. Singh somehow managed to clear the road. After a night's hospitalization at Goswami Nursing Home, Tezpur, I was flown to Kolkata.



The garden was locked out for eight days and twelve of the assaulters were dismissed. Even at the behest of my superiors I did not accept a transfer but from then on, I carried a shotgun with me as threat chits used to be scattered all over the garden. I stayed on for four more years and in that time the garden was straightened out and we achieved the highest yield ever.

In 1991, I moved to Pertabghur T.E. My six years there, with VIPs around most of the time, gave me great exposure and experience and I learnt a lot.

I was at Bogapani T.E. for three years during which great achievements were made in the field. It was the No 1 Estate in the Company, with the highest yield, in 1999.



Bargang T.E. was another great experience. While I was away on leave Bijli Prasad, the Company elephant, ran away in search of a mate. Saneer Gurung, the Senior Assistant, moved heaven and earth to finally get him back! Poornima, now renamed Lakshmi, was 'imported' from the Dooars to be his girlfriend. The 'dastoor' at Bargang was that Bijli came to the Burra Bungalow every Monday after he was weighed at the factory, and the Burra M e m s a h a b personally fed him. This was a great time for the family.



I moved to Monabarie T.E. in 2005 and became General Manager in 2008. That year, Monabarie received the Company award for 'Overall Performance' and in 2011, was the highest yielding estate across all companies on the North Bank.



Life in Tea has been fruitful and enriching. As people say, Tea is not a profession but a 'way of life'. In my time, I have seen that 'way of life' change manifold. But I will truly be grateful for the life that I have enjoyed in the industry and the life that my family has been provided with due to my time here.

Working in the Company I have made great friends and had many a mentor, without whom this journey would have been very different. The list is long and I thank them all.

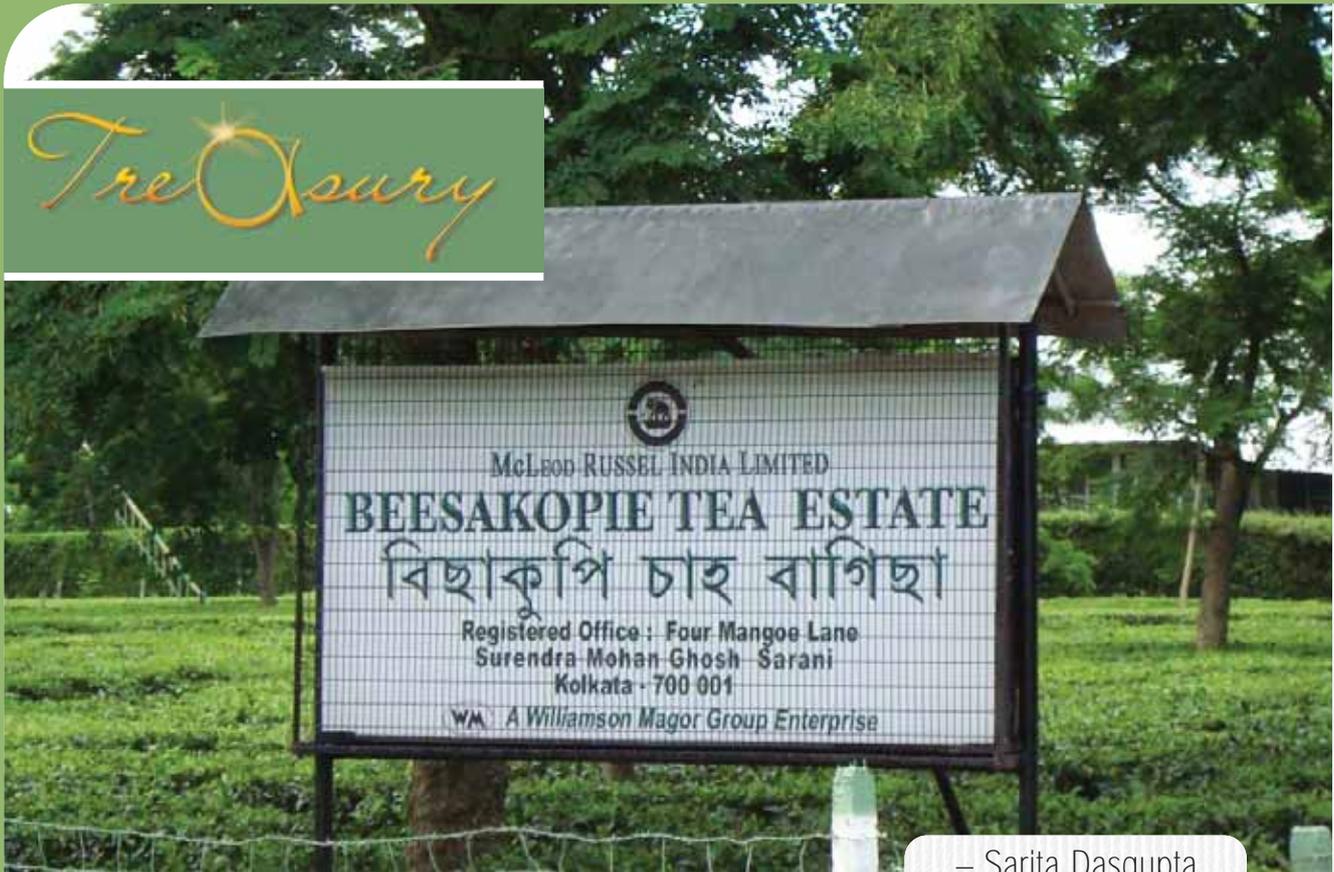
*"Small things make perfection but Perfection is not a small thing...!!"*

My entire career has been governed by the above quotation which remains displayed in my office and I have tried to impart the values of discipline, sincerity and hard work to my colleagues. I tell them that, at the end of the day, one must question oneself if one has actually earned one's 'hazira' for the day! Has one made a difference in any way, whether small or big, towards the good of the organization? If the answer is a resounding, "Yes", perfection is near!



Sam & his Girls

## Tree Osury



– Sarita Dasgupta

**T**here once lived a Singpho Chieftan called Beesa in a place called Dim Dima (meeting ground) in Upper Assam. It is believed that when the Warren brothers, James and Walter, came to that area in search of land suitable for planting tea in the late 1850s, he leased them his land. The brothers planted tea on the property, but, apparently, there was some disagreement over the rent. Beesa got so angry that he shook ('kopi gol' in the local language) in anger and went on a rampage, slashing the tea bushes. Thus, not only did he give the newly planted estate its name but, inadvertently, began the practice of pruning tea bushes!



This is the legend of how Beesakopie T.E., situated adjacent to Doom Dooma town in Tinsukia district of Upper Assam, was born and christened.

The partnership venture known as Warren Brothers was converted into a Public Company in 1887, with James Warren as the first Chairman. The Brooke Bond Group bought the company in 1962 and renamed it Doom Dooma Tea Co. Ltd in 1978. Unilever purchased it in 1984 and it remained a subsidiary of the group until 23 January 2006 when it was acquired by McLeod Russel India Ltd.

Beesakopie T.E. is bounded on the north by the foothills of the Himalayas and on the south by the Doom Dooma River. It comprises two divisions – Beesakopie and Fatikjan. The latter was named after a stream which, at one time, flowed along its boundary. Sri H.C. Bhattacharjee, who joined the group in 1959 and retired as Accounts Supervisor at the Head Office in Raidang T.E., recounts that, at the time of his joining, Fatikjan and Beesakopie were separate Divisions with independent Managers. The factory was looked after by the Group Manager who was senior to the Division Managers. Sri Bhattacharjee joined Fatikjan under Mr Hari Inder Pal Singh, a 'pucca sahib'

and strict disciplinarian better known by his acronym, HIP Singh.

Sri Gautam Tanti, retired Head Clerk, remembers the estate extending right up to the area in front of the present cinema hall in Doom Dooma town when he joined the property as a Health Visitor looking after welfare in 1967. He says that the Civil Hospital in Doom Dooma used to house the planters' club at that time. Sri Tanti has settled down just outside the estate and his son works at Fatikjan Division as a Mohurer.



The two divisions combined cover an area of 701.73 hectares and the HACCP certified factory produces an average of 1.8 million kg of tea annually. Part of the factory was demolished and rebuilt along modern lines after McLeod Russel took over the estate. However, quite a few relics of the past remain within the factory compound, among them being an idol of Lord Shiva beneath a 'peepal' tree, a Subsoiler and Giant Foam Engine, a wooden box containing hydrometers, a brass clock timer and an old

*Hydrometer*



*Projector*



tractor with a hood. The last two are still in running condition!

A film projector in its own 'suitcase' is kept in the office while an antiquated ECG machine is preserved at the Central Hospital.

The Beesakopie Central Hospital, earlier known as DoomDooma Tea Hospital, used to be headed by the Principal Medical Officer of the Company who held independent charge and reported directly to Head Office. Dr Bill Thorne, who headed the hospital from 1958 until his retirement in 1971, is fondly remembered as much for his kindness as for the formal suits he wore to work. Dr R.C. Bhuyan, Medical Superintendent from 1995 to 2000, had a 'Prayer Place' built in which the idol is the medical symbol – a sculpture of the Rod of Jupiter with entwined serpents.



Another stalwart of the hospital, Dr Sainen Dasgupta, used to play football for Kolkata's Mohun Bagan team before he joined the Company. Coincidentally, so did Siddharth Thapa, one of the young executives presently at Beesakopie T.E.

The hospital has a Radiant Baby Warmer, an OT, X-Ray and laboratory facilities. In addition to holding Cataract Screening and Operation Smile camps for the Company's Doom Dooma Circle estates, the Medical Specialists also ensure that new mothers and their babies avail of every government sponsored scheme for their welfare. To encourage parents to bring up children with proper care, hygiene and nutrition an annual Baby Show is organized at the hospital in which babies from all eight of the Company's estates in Doom Dooma Circle are encouraged to participate. Factors like hospital delivery (as



*Orange Orchard*



opposed to home birth), up-to-date immunization, weight (according to age), general health, hygiene and level of activity are taken into account while judging.

Sickle Cell Anaemia is widely prevalent at Beesakopie, so the estate's medical specialists are collaborating with the regional centre of the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) in an in-depth research project on the disorder.

An orange orchard, guava trees and papaya plants in the hospital compound provide fresh fruit while the kitchen garden yields seasonal vegetables for the indoor patients.

The estate's shade tree nursery has around 10,000 saplings while the tea nursery has 4 lakh plants growing. The 50 metric tonnes of manure produced annually at the two large vermicompost units helps these plants to flourish.



*Hollong Grove*

Apart from the 'seleng' and 'azar' trees planted along all the estate's roads, Fatikjan Division has a grove of tall old 'hollong' trees which is frequented by parrots and green pigeons. These birds also visit the Assistant Manager's



*Shade Nursery*

bungalow close by while the trees at the Burra Bungalow sometimes play host to partridges.

Two leopards have been regular visitors at Fatikjan for the last six years or so but they are quite reserved and keep to themselves; they have never bothered the workers, who, in turn, keep a respectful distance.



*Green Avenue*



*Worship*

The predominantly Hindu workers at Beesakopie are mostly from Jharkhand and Odisha. They worship at the new Shiv temple but pay equal respect to the deity beneath the 'peepal' tree in the factory compound; and, unlike in most places, the idol of Lord Viswakarma, the God of Machines, is kept in a permanent shelter near the factory gate.



The workforce lives in fifteen Lines, most of which have numerical names except a few like Trolley Line and Katakabheti Line. The former was thus named as a sub-station for the trolley line on which green leaf was taken from the field to the factory, was situated there. (One presumes the latter was inhabited by settlers from Cuttack, Odisha.)

Once the trolley line became defunct the rails were used to build cattle bridges; a good example of the adage, “Waste not, want not”! The railway line that runs along the estate’s perimeter is believed to be the second-oldest in India, after the old Bombay-Thane line.

There are two LP Schools – one in each Division – for children studying from Class I to Class V. The classrooms are well-lit and airy but the students still enjoy having their daily mid-day meal outdoors whenever the weather permits. The estate’s management organizes a Drawing Competition and a Sports Meet for all the school children on Children’s Day (5 September).

Quite a number of workers’ and staff children at Beesakopie have brought home laurels in various fields. One such is Sonath, the son of Sri Kaluram Tanti, a daily-rated worker. Sonath studied at the Beesakopie Division LP School before moving on to the local High School. An excellent football player, he has been a member of the Tinsukia district team and has also represented the district at kick-boxing. He was placed third in his category at an inter-district tournament held recently.

Barsha Rani, the daughter of Smt Amriti Rani Chetia who is the Nurse at Fatikjan dispensary, is a naturally gifted singer who has won prizes at various district and state level competitions, such as the All Assam Bhupendra Sangeet Competition. Her singing has just been recorded by a local TV channel and the programme will be broadcast soon. Barsha Rani is also a talented dancer, and won a prize in the Creative Dance category at the ‘Rabha Divas’ celebrations held in Tinsukia district last year.



*Barsha Rani*



*Kaberi*

*Parinita*

*Kakoli*

Kakoli, the daughter of PF Clerk, Sri Pulin Borah, is much in demand as a Bihu and Satriya dancer at various cultural functions. She has performed at events held in Kolkata and Agra and won numerous awards. Her sister, Kaberi, has played for Tinsukia at state level inter-district handball tournaments.

Parinita, daughter of Sri Dilip Borgohain, General Clerk, is a budding writer who ranked among the top three at the State Children's Summit in Guwahati.

Sri Biswajit Boruah, the electrician at Beesakopie, is the proud father of Karishma and Bidyanta. While Karishma has won many a prize for her talents as a Satriya dancer, her brother has represented the Assam handball team both in the country and abroad.

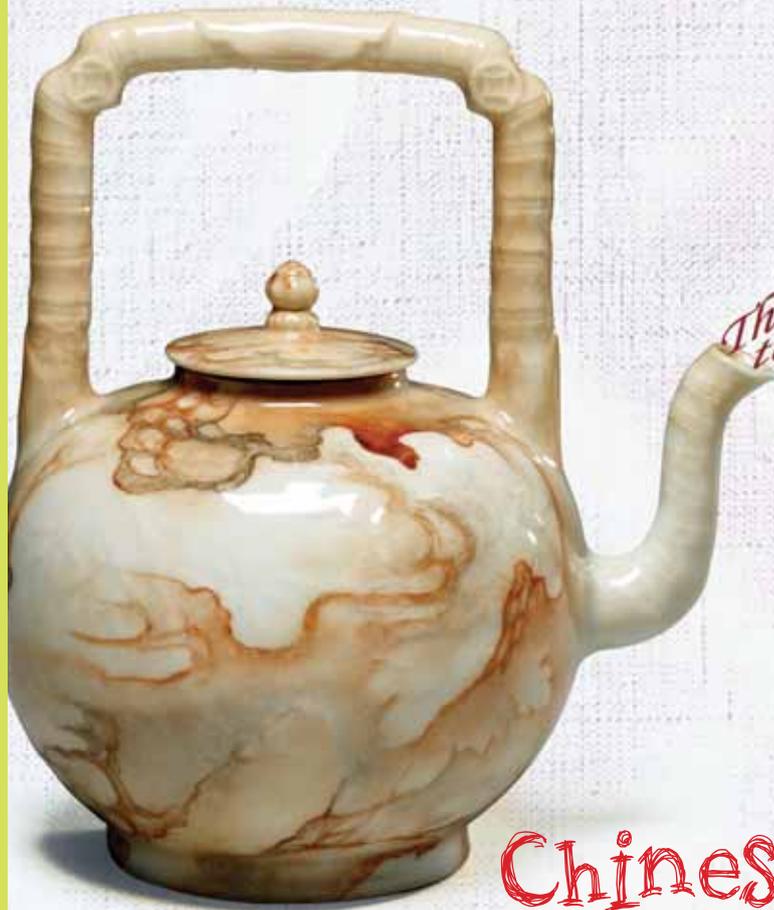
Beesakopie T.E. has progressed steadily since it came into our Company's fold six years ago. The estate received the Best Performance Award for Doom Dooma Circle in 2009-10.



The land has been prepared and filled with nourishment, the saplings planted and nurtured over the years. We hope they grow into sturdy bushes, yielding a bountiful harvest.



*The Team (L - R): D Nath, S. Thapa, A Dutta, A.J. Chakravorti, A Krishan (Supdt), Dr A.K. Talukdar, Dr B. Bhuyan, Dr D. Talukdar, Dr D. Gogoi*



## *The Memsahab's Guide to Gracious Living*



– Lucy Khong  
Pertabghur T.E.

# Chinese New Year

On 10 February 2013 the Chinese community around the world will get together with their families, celebrating the onset of the Year of the Snake, the sixth sign of the Chinese zodiac which consists of twelve animal signs. The first day of the lunar year is the New Year and falls on a different date each year because the calendar is based on a combination of the lunar and solar cycles. The month long celebration of the New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is now reduced to a week or even less due to our busy lifestyle! However, the essence and spirit of the celebration remains the same.

Memories take me back to my childhood learning from Aapho (Grandma) interesting stories of our culture and customs and how the Chinese community extended overseas. We were told that before the Chinese New Year arrives, homes should be thoroughly cleaned to sweep away any ill-fortune that may have collected over the past year and to make way for incoming good luck. No sweeping is done on the first day, as you risk sweeping away Lady Luck! At the stroke of midnight, firecrackers should be burst to chase away evil spirits, and lights remain on till dawn to usher in the New Year.

I recall the annual decorations in the auspicious colours of red and gold, the exchange of 'lei see' (money placed in a red envelope) and oranges, symbolising wealth, when we visited relatives and friends. We children were the happiest as we received 'lucky money' from elders and all we had to do was chant 'KUNG HAI FAAT CHOI' (prosperity and happiness) to everyone we met! And not to forget the exciting dragon dance (Mousse) competitions accompanied by martial drum beats and fireworks exploding. The streets of the China Towns in Kolkata still buzz with this excitement, albeit on a comparatively low-key as the Chinese population decreases each year.

The most important day is New Year's Eve when family members gather together to honour their ancestors. This is followed by a sumptuous

dinner that symbolises prosperity in the coming year. The aromas of our kitchen are still fresh in my mind. The re-union dinner would consist mainly of steamed chicken and fish, barbecued pork, soya duck, pork sausages, a variety of dumplings (filled with fish, prawn or pork), stir fried vegetables including greens (lettuce, bak choi, kai lan), noodles, spring rolls and other delicious items. The meal ended with fresh fruits and green tea. For those with a sweet tooth, there would be 'Niangao' (a cake made of glutinous rice flour and cornflour).

Most of the dishes served are symbolic of something positive. A whole fish represents abundance in the coming year from beginning (head) to end (tail); a chicken stands for prosperity and happiness, especially when served whole. Noodles represent longevity and hence they are never served cut, which would mean reducing your life span. Duck represents fidelity, while eggs signify fertility. Tofu is avoided because its white colour suggests death and misfortune! A number of dishes are chosen based on homonyms; turnip is cooked because its name (cai tou) also means 'good luck'. Other dishes are selected because they are homophones of words for auspicious qualities; fish (yu) is served because it sounds similar to the word for 'plenty'.

As a variety of vegetables are available in winter, it is easy to stir up different combinations of vegetables for a stir-fry of your taste. However, in summer it is a daunting task. During these months, squash and ridged gourd are available in plenty and these can be cooked with carrot, cabbage and capsicum for a stir-fried dish. Cucumber can be used in a sweet and sour dish, as given in my recipe. String beans and chives can be substituted for french beans and spring onions respectively when making fried noodles (chow mein). In fact, most of the seasonal vegetables can be used and they are the freshest. I'm happy to share recipes of 'Stir Fried Vegetables' and 'Sweet and Sour Fish' which are traditionally served during the Chinese New Year.

KUNG HAI FAAT CHOI!

## SWEET and SOUR FISH

### Ingredients

One medium sized whole fish (Bhetki, Rohu, Katla or any other river fish of your choice)

Cornflour

Salt for seasoning

Oil for frying

1 bowl cucumber (cut in juliennes)

1 bowl carrot (cut in juliennes)

2 medium sized onions (finely sliced)

1 tsp minced garlic

1 tsp grated ginger

### For the Sauce

4 tbsp tomato ketchup

1 tbsp vinegar

2 tbsp sugar

½ tsp red chilli powder

1 cup water

### Method

1. Marinate the fish with salt and keep it in the fridge for at least 30 minutes. Take it out and coat/dust the fish with some cornflour. Deep fry the fish and keep it aside on a serving dish.
2. Heat a little oil. Sauté the garlic and ginger slightly. Add the onions, followed by the carrot and cucumber. Sauté briefly and season with a dash of salt. Pour the sauce mixture over it, mix well and let it come to a boil. Stir in ½ tsp cornflour dissolved in 2 tbsp water. Once the sauce thickens slightly, remove from the fire and pour over the fried fish.
3. Serve hot.

**Note:** You can substitute whole fish with fish fillets. Marinate the fillets with salt, egg and some cornflour before frying.

In this case, the vegetables should be cut to about 1 inch size instead of juliennes.



## STIR FRIED VEGETABLES WITH CASHEW NUTS



### Ingredients

200 gm cauliflower florets (small size)

200 gm carrot (small pieces)

200 gm squash (small pieces)

2 medium sized onions (diced to about half inch size)

1 large capsicum (small pieces)

150 gm shelled fresh green peas (boiled)

100 gm American corn

50 gm cashew nuts (roasted or fried)

2 pods of garlic

Spring onion for garnish

Oil

Salt to taste

1 tbsp light soya sauce

2 tbsp cornflour (dissolved in half a cup of cold water)

### Method

1. Blanch the cauliflower, carrot, squash and peas separately, and keep aside.
2. Heat some oil in a wok or 'kadhai'. When hot, sauté the garlic and then add the cauliflower and salt. Stir briefly and if still under done, sprinkle some water. Then add the rest of the vegetables – one type at a time – stirring constantly and seasoning it with salt at the same time. The onion and capsicum will go in last. When all the vegetables are together, add the soya sauce. Mix well and then add the cornflour dissolved in water. Cook until boiled and the gravy thickens. Remove from the fire. Garnish with roasted cashew nuts and some spring onion (green part). Serve immediately. This dish can be eaten wrapped in lettuce leaves.

**Note:** For a non-vegetarian dish, add cubed chicken or pork (fried).

# Sanjeeb



– Bharati Krishan  
Beesakopie T.E.

Sanjeeb, the third of five siblings – two brothers and three sisters – was born in Tezpur, Assam. His elder brother is a scientist and professor at Cincinnati University and one of his sisters is a doctor, practising in Guwahati. Sanjeeb spent his early years in Tezpur, Karimganj and Shillong, and graduated with a B.Com degree from Dibrugarh University.

As a child, Sanjeeb played cricket but it was only when he was in Class IX that he realized how truly gifted he was and began to take the game seriously. With pace bowling as his forte, Sanjeeb was, and still is, an all-rounder and an effective fast bowler. So much so, that in his heydays he used to be known as 'Bullet Deka'!

Sanjeeb's entry into First Class cricket was rather unusual. He was selected and played national level cricket first; only then did he play at the district level. It was while he was still at Dibrugarh University that Sanjeeb qualified and played in the Assam team for the Ranji and the C.K. Naidu trophies.

He played for the Ranji trophy from

1973 to 1976 with legends like Dilip Doshi, Gopal Bose and Pranab Roy. In 1975 Sanjeeb had the honour of being coached by the famous Lala Amarnath and Col Hemu Adhikari. The Colonel even invited him to play in Mumbai for TISCO and be coached by the great Conrad Hunt. This was the time when Sanjeeb took a shot at international cricket by trying out at the MCC nets.

Sanjeeb is one of the distinguished league of Indian cricketers who have played national level cricket. Over the years he has received recognition in the form of privileges, from both the state and national government – the latest being an award of ₹50,000/- which he is to receive from the Assam Cricket Association on behalf of the BCCI, for playing in over sixteen Ranji matches.



*Assam Ranji Team, 1974*

# Deka – a profile



He strongly believes that if only he had persevered and not veered off into Tea, he would surely have made it and played in the Indian cricket team.

Sanjeeb has continued to play cricket of this high standard. It is an absolute thrill to watch him play. In addition to being a formidable bowler, he is a very

stylish batsman. In 1997, somebody scored a century for the very first time in the thirty-four-year history of the John Morice cricket tournament played between the Company's estates on the North and South Banks. It was Sanjeeb Deka.

It was a dream come true when in 1997, travelling from Delhi to Kolkata, he shared the flight with the cricket teams of Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Sanjeeb had the great privilege of meeting and shaking hands with his hero, Gary Sobers, and with Greg Chapell. Introducing himself and not believing his good fortune, Sanjeeb asked the gentleman if he was indeed Gary Sobers. Prompt came the reply, "No, I am Sir Gary Sobers!"

Sanjeeb loved cricket but was destined for something different. It was in 1977, while in Shillong, that his father brought to his attention a newspaper advertisement placed by the tea company, Jardine Henderson Ltd. They were

looking for young men to join them as Assistant Managers on their tea estates in Assam. Sanjeeb applied, was called for an interview, first in Guwahati then Kolkata, and was

duly selected. On 1 October 1977, he started work as Assistant Manager at Monabarie T.E. with stalwarts like Roy Eastment, M.M. Singh, Nandu Ganguli and Partha Dowerah as his colleagues.

In 1980, at his sister's wedding in Moran, Sanjeeb met his lady love and 'life partner', Manju, who was the bridegroom's cousin. Manju and Sanjeeb were married on 8 February 1981. They have two children, Dora and Diego, who have both settled in Melbourne, Australia. In 2004, Dora married Arijit Saikia, an IT engineer, currently working for ANZ Bank, Melbourne; he too is now part of the family.

*With Colleagues, 1977*



*Sanjeeb, Dora, Diego & Manju*





After joining Tea, Sanjeeb has become a good golfer and also tried his hand at other sports – football, tennis and even fishing – but cricket has remained his first love. (Oops, sorry, Manju!) He keeps track of all national and international level sporting events, but most religiously follows cricket.

He has a dashing personality and loves a laugh as testified by an old photograph of him standing on his motorbike!

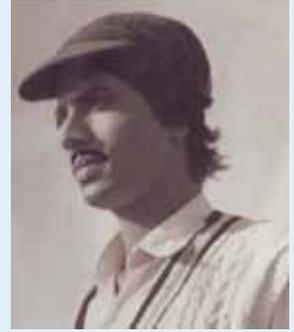


An outstanding actor, Sanjeeb has given some totally uninhibited, unique and, surely, award-winning performances at various club and in-house cultural events down the years. A memorable one was his portrayal of Helen in her famous dance sequence, 'Mehbooba, Mehbooba' from the classic film, Sholay, for which he even shaved off his signature moustache!

*Sanjeeb/Helen?*



During the 'cricket-active' days of their courtship, Sanjeeb sent pictures of himself to Manju. The young lady, deciding that he looked much better with a moustache, took it upon herself to draw one on each and every photograph that he'd sent! (The photograph shown alongside is one example!)



Although they like to spend leisure hours at home, Manju and Sanjeeb are keen travellers; they have spent holidays visiting USA, Europe, the Far East and recently, Australia and New Zealand too.

They are always ready to help their family and friends who are spread all around the world, making it a point to be in touch and communicating with them if not on a daily basis then quite often for sure. It's very heartening to see how Sanjeeb and Manju have built and maintained such a strong, close-knit family.

Keen believers in improving and enriching their lives they both did the Art of Living course and also have great faith in the yoga exercises taught by Baba Ramdev. Sanjeeb starts his day at 4 am with an hour and a half of 'pranayam' yoga and meditation. They also believe in helping to improve the lives of those less fortunate in whatever way they can.

Friends remember Sanjeeb as someone always ready to help people through any obstacle of life. Dibyajyoti Chaudhuri (Jeetoo) feels that Sanjeeb has been an excellent mentor and guide – somebody who has set good examples for younger colleagues to follow.

May the years to come be very special. I wish Sanjeeb and Manju the very best.





## A visit to MRUL estates in Uganda & Gisovu T.E. in Rwanda

– D. Mehta  
Borengajuli T.E.

Kevyn David, GM Monabarie T.E., and I visited the five MRUL estates – Bugambe, Muzizi, Mwenge, Kiko and Ankole in Uganda from 14 to 20 April and Gisovu T.E. in Rwanda from 21 to 23 April 2012.

We landed at Entebbe airport on 15 April around mid-day and John (driver) from Mwenge Central picked us up and took us for an 'Indian' lunch, before driving us to Bugambe T.E. The drive from the airport started with good tarmac roads but nearer the estate these were cambered and shingled, called 'marram'; John kept up the speed of the Toyota Fortuner as if he was driving on a highway and asked us to enjoy the bumpy ride, calling it the 'African massage'. He kept us occupied with details of every place we passed and answered every query with great enthusiasm and a sense of pride in his country. On arrival at Bugambe we were cordially received by the Manager, Mr Milton Muwadi, and his team at the guest house. All the executives and Mrs Muwadi joined us for a sumptuous dinner with some

Ugandan dishes prepared for us by Mrs Muwadi and the housekeeper.

A first impression of the landscape and countryside in Uganda can be described as 'the land of rolling hills' with plenty of vegetation and vast tracts of forests and rivers. The low lying terrain along the rivers had a lush growth of papyrus type of grass.



*Marram Passage*

*With Ernest Ejaku at Bugambe Guest House*



Mr Ernest Ejaku, Chief Plantation Manager, met us at Bugambe T.E. on 16 April and accompanied us during our visit to the factory and field. We found the eucalyptus plantations very interesting as this was the main source of fuel for their factory. The estate had 25% of its area under eucalyptus plantation, with no gas, coal or other source of fuel; an excellent example of conservation by avoiding fossil fuels. In fact this is the same for all five estates in Uganda and in Rwanda as well.

From Bugambe, we drove to Muzizi T.E. where Mr Alfred Omoya, Manager, met us and showed us around his small but very picturesque estate with its natural forests and undulating landscape, interspersed with rivers. A quick visit to the factory and then we drove off to Mwenge T.E.



where we settled in the beautifully located guest house for the night, very well looked after by the two housekeepers.

*At Mwenge Guest House*



The next morning we met Mr Billy Singh at his office at Mwenge Central and other officials:

- Mr Fred Ssegujja – Chief Factory Manager
- Mr Ernest Ejaku – Chief Plantation Manager
- Mr Hilari Muramuzi – Chief Accountant
- Mr Dipankar Malakar – Operations Executive
- Mr William George – Manager Technical Services

*Nursery at Mwenge T.E.*



Mr Singh and Mr Ejaku gave us a brief presentation on the MRUL estates in the conference room and we were then taken for a visit to the field and factory. Mr John Omodo, Manager, Mwenge T.E., showed us the tea nursery which was very impressive and the eucalyptus nursery where different varieties were being developed by clonal and grafting techniques, which was very innovative and interesting. Mr Singh took us around the young tea areas and extension planting site and gave us a detailed insight into the young tea upbringing methods and systems in place. The rainwater harvesting, soil erosion prevention, protection of flora and fauna in the forest land

within the estate and controlled harvesting of the fuel trees for tea drying in the factory were issues which have helped the estates in Uganda retain the ecological balance. It was indeed a pleasure to see that there were no pests on the tea bushes and pesticide spraying was not required at all.



The evening was spent with Billy and Alka Singh at their lovely bungalow, and the next day we drove to Kiko T.E. where the Manager, Mr Julius Byentaka, received us and showed us the factory which was again very well organized and neat and clean. We also saw the mechanical harvesters' workshop and maintenance department in the factory, run very efficiently by Mr Jules Cousin, a Belgian gentleman. From Kiko T.E. John drove us to the Queen Elizabeth National Park and we crossed the Equator during this journey. We booked in to the Mweya lodge in the afternoon and took a boat ride on the Kazinga channel during which we saw a variety of birds and animals.



The following day we drove around the famous Park and were lucky to be able to see the lions and photograph them. That evening we drove to Ankole T.E. where Mr Kiirya Lameck, Manager, received us and showed us around his very pretty and well kept property. We also spent an evening with the staff members at Ankole and after a comfortable night at the guest house, we left for Rwanda the next morning.

After crossing the border at Kigali, where Mr H.S. Grewal received us, we halted for a night's stay at Kivu lakeside resort which was breathtakingly beautiful. The boat ride was indeed enthralling and impressive. The next morning we drove up to Gisovu T.E. along with Mr Grewal and took in the pristine natural beauty of the countryside all along the drive. On reaching Gisovu, we literally had to stop and get out of the vehicle to soak in the grandeur and beauty of the estate – truly a 'jewel in the crown'.

*Kivu Lake Resort*



We visited the factory and met the Manager, Mr S. Jhijharia, who showed us the well laid out and very neat and clean factory. The standard of plucking was exceptionally good and only "two leaves and a bud" was being plucked – the main reason for the high quality teas being produced. The humble nature, the welcoming smiles and the gracious attitude of all the people we met during our trip to Uganda and Rwanda, won our hearts.

Our thanks to Billy and Alka Singh, Gary and Benu Grewal and all the Managers and officials at MRUL and Rwanda for taking the time to show us around and for making this trip so special. It was a great learning experience – very educative and entertaining.

# Beneficence



## THE UDAAN CENTRE

– Lesley Guha Sircar  
Kolkata

**G**ulshan dreams of becoming a doctor someday ...  
....and a classical dancer too. But foremost in her  
mind is that she would like to play a big role in  
helping those who are less fortunate, like herself. This is young  
Gulshan Khattom, all of fourteen and the daughter of a barber.  
She lives with her family in the New Market, Kolkata, studies  
in Indira Academy, off Royd Street, and her favourite subject  
is Life Science.

He has no such dreams yet. The elder son of a taxi driver,  
Devangshu, a Class XII Commerce student from Loyola  
School, Kidderpore, loves playing chess and watching tennis  
on TV. But one thing he is sure about, that by educating  
himself he could be a part of a system which would help in  
eradicating poverty.

*Devangshu Bagga*





As the city of Kolkata slips into siesta mode on Saturday afternoons, Devangshu and Gulshan are among the fifty children from classes VIII to XII who come together in search of academic and co-curricular comfort at The Udaan Centre, situated at 8/3A Park Road, Alipore. This free coaching establishment which is funded by The Williamson Magor Education Trust, is part of The Udaan Progressive Society, an NGO that has been working for the welfare of underprivileged children.

The Udaan Centre was inaugurated significantly on Children's Day 2011 by Mr Tim Grandage, Educator and Founder of Future Hope, Kolkata, who firmly believes that in order to educate and integrate the lesser privileged child into mainstream society, we need to interact with them regularly. So, under the able guidance and dedication of Mr Vijay Chowdhary (Secretary, The Udaan Progressive Society) and his lovely wife Anju, a group of experienced, professional teachers work tirelessly with these children on weekends. These educators are subject specialists, some of whom have their own coaching centres in different parts of the city and excel in their field of academics.

## Who are these Children ?

Theirs is the dark world of deprivation and they belong to the humbler institutions of Kolkata such as Loyola High School, St Pauls Boarding & Day School (DH Road, Kidderpore), St Aloysius Orphanage Day School (Howrah), Indira Academy (off Royd Street) and The Rungta Academy (Gariahat). The Williamson Magor Education Trust sponsors the education of a select few, based on the recommendation of the Heads of these institutions, and their tutorials at The Udaan Centre are deservedly complimentary.

## Against all Odds!

It was 21 July, the afternoon of a political rally, and most roads in Kolkata were either sealed off or traffic diverted. Three diehards of Class VIII found their way to The Centre. Sonu, Ajit and Dharmendra seemed unfazed when I asked them how they had managed to come. (Obstacles and overcoming them seem to be the order of their day!)

Unlike most children who would rather stay home and make up for entertainment lost during weekdays, these children who come to us forfeit the playing fields in their neighborhoods to attend classes at the Centre. They soak in the personal attention given them by the dedicated teachers who nurture their curiosity and give them confidence to carry on.



(L - R): Ajit, Sonu & Dharmendra

## The Weekend Curriculum.

On Saturdays, classes commence on a happy note at 1 pm with the Art Class. All subjects are taught up to 6.30 pm, with a break for the evening meal. On Sundays, classes begin at 9.30 am and conclude by 5.30 pm., with both indoor and outdoor games which include chess and table tennis.



Rugby is played on the odd occasion. The children are given lunch and an evening snack before they travel long distances back home. It must be noted that the time-table is very comprehensive and no more than three subjects are taught per day to avoid the coaching becoming tedious.

### **Their Window to the Sky**

There is a well stocked Library to encourage the children to read and a Computer Room as well. Besides this, General Knowledge classes are given and quiz competitions are conducted. Career Guidance is also a priority and talks are given to the Class XII boys and girls on how to step into the Corporate World not with just a degree in hand, but with confidence in Conversational English.

### **The Visit**

After completing their Class XII Board exams earlier this year and while awaiting their results, Gufran Danish, Saddam Hussain, Vikash Gorai Ashish and Manish Shaw were given the opportunity of visiting some of our tea estates in Assam to gain an insight into what goes into ‘the world’s cup of tea’!

*At Moran T.E. Factory*



They were hosted at Moran T.E and also visited Attabarie, Sepon and Margherita. In the words of one of the boys, Gufran Danish, “The soft smell of tea in the cold air was the most wonderful essence I have ever smelt!” The oil refinery at Digboi and certain places of historical importance around Sivsagar district were also included in their fortnight’s itinerary. These young lads returned to Kolkata enriched, exposed to a world beyond their imagination and grateful to the organization for providing them with this opportunity.

...As the sun sets over Kolkata on Sunday, the children make their way home refreshed, to face the week ahead secure in the knowledge that We Care.

# SHABAAASH!



**P**rasanta Bhattacharjee, Executive Officer, Visiting Agent's Office, Pertabghur T.E. and his wife Mithu are proud parents. Their daughter, Piyali, has graduated with honours from Calcutta Business School and is now employed with McLeod Russel India Limited in the Human Resource department.

Piyali excelled in academics from her school days. She completed the HSLC Board examination from St Paul School, Rangapara

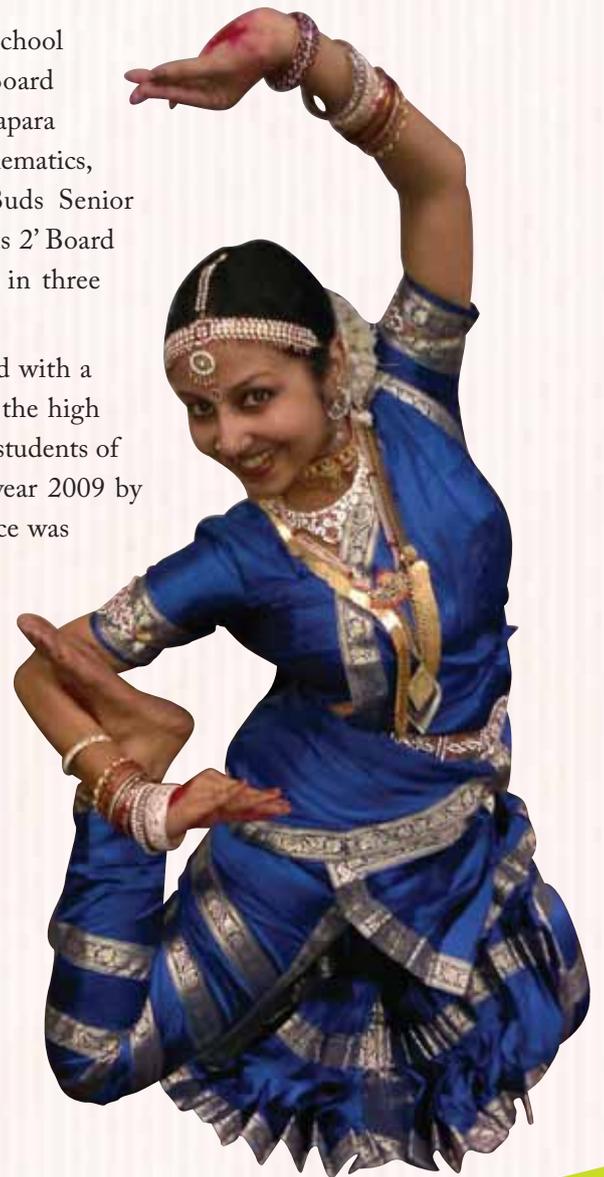
and secured a 1st Division with letter marks in four subjects: Mathematics, English, Science and Hindi. Thereafter, she joined Budding Buds Senior Secondary School, Tinsukia, from where she appeared for the 'plus 2' Board examination and again secured a 1st Division with letter marks in three subjects: Accountancy, Business Studies and English.

Piyali re-located to Tezpur to join Darrang College and graduated with a First Class Degree in Commerce, with a Major in Management; the high scores obtained in the examination ranked her fourth amongst the students of Guwahati University. Piyali was judged 'Best Graduate' for the year 2009 by Darrang College Commerce Society and a Certificate of Excellence was also issued by the Principal of the college. The Bagaria Foundation, Tezpur, felicitated Piyali with a Gold Medal, the Bagaria Scholar Award, for outstanding academic results.

Piyali's dream was to study management and she was accepted into the prestigious Calcutta Business School in 2010, graduating in 2012 with specialization in 'HR' and 'Marketing'.

In tandem with academic excellence Piyali has another passion, dance. She studied Bharatanatyam at Abhijaytri Kala Kendra, Jamugurihat, under Bhatkhand Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Lucknow, and completed 'Visharad' in this discipline as a young student of Class VIII. She has many stage performances to her credit during her school and college years.

Congratulations to Piyali....we wish her success in her many endeavours in the years ahead.



# Running For a Cause

Zuber (L) and Tahir (R) with Friends



Zuber and Tahir, the twin sons of Nisar and Namita (Mimi) Ahmed of Dirok T.E., and grandsons of Late Shantanu ('Chat') and Nazma Chatterjee, ex-Williamson Magor, have always enjoyed being active and contributing members of the community.

They were studying at Wabash College, Indiana, when the earthquake and tsunami caused such devastation in India and other parts of Asia. To raise money for relief and rehabilitation of the victims, they came up with the idea of selling T-shirts sporting a jigsaw puzzle of the world and the very appropriate message, 'Peace it Back Together'. The sale proceeds, \$1,500,

were sent to the affected areas through the offices of the Red Cross Society. The twins' project won the International Education Knowledge Community's 'Best Practices in International Education and Learning Award' in the 'Student Philanthropy' category.

Zuber and Tahir signed up for their first race in July 2011. "While training we were bitten by the racing bug," said the boys, "and registered ourselves for several other events – many of which were associated with charities and fund-raising efforts."

Some of the events they have participated in are the 'Beast of the East' mud run and obstacle course held at an Air Force, Army and Navy base to promote 'esprit de corp'; an adventure race to raise awareness and money for the general upkeep of the Brandywine State Park; the Tough Mudder event (based on the basic training obstacle courses that Special Service recruits are put through) which raises funds for the Wounded Warriors Project – a charity that supports and helps wounded veterans.

"Our latest challenge was the Chicago Marathon, one of the five World Marathon Majors," say the boys. "With support from our Company we have decided to run on behalf of St Jude's Children's Hospital because of the incredible work they do to help and support children fighting cancer. No child is turned away because of the family's inability to pay and their amazing mission has inspired us."

The boys have trained for over a year and were determined to cross the finish line (at 42.195 km); so they did in excellent time, Tahir - 4 hours 08 minutes and Zuber - 4 hours 32 minutes!!

We laud these fine young men's spirit of service. Their efforts will surely inspire others and benefit many more people in the future.





– Sakina Hussain  
Phu Ben, Vietnam

**“We are all visitors to this time, this place.... our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love.... And then we return home.”**



### The French Ambassador's Visit

The French Ambassador to Vietnam, H.E. Jean Noel Poirier, along with Mr Jean-Marc Gravelli, Director AFD (Agence Francaise De Development) Vietnam, Dr Jean-Charles Maillard, Agricultural Research for Development – CIRAD Regional Director for Continental South East Asia and Ms Claire Geroudet, Project Officer Agriculture Unit (AFD), visited Phu Ben on 18 April 2012. Phu Ben has been partnering with AFD in assisting local tea farmer development programmes. On 3 July an orientation and preparatory trip was made by Ms Claire Geroudet, Project Officer Agriculture Unit for AFD along with Ms Anna Coatmeur and Ms Marie An from CEFEB Marseille, France, to inspect the progress of the work that Phu Ben had carried out along with them for the development of the local farmer.

### Ringtons at Phu Ben

Mr Simon M. Smith, MD, Ringtons Ltd UK, and his wife, Sue, were in Phu Ben on 24 May 2012. A tea tasting session was held at Phu Tho factory and they were shown around the plantation. A luncheon was organized for the guests who were also on their honeymoon.



## Visit – Marubeni, Japan

Mr Makita Masatoshi of Marubeni, Japan, visited on 7 June 2012.



## Visit – MRIL Board

Phu Ben was honoured to have Mr Aditya Khaitan, Mr Rajeev Takru and Mr Azam Monem here from 25 to 27 June. A sit-down dinner was organized on the 26th with all the Office, Plantation and Factory Management teams in attendance. Mr Aditya Khaitan spoke on the occasion, citing the ‘Way Forward’ and appreciating the efforts being made. Needless to say, the confidence reposed on Team Phu Ben by the Board has greatly motivated everyone, and the enthusiasm generated thus will go a long way in fulfilling the commitments made.



## Visit – Worldwide Buying Team, Unilever

The Unilever worldwide buying team from across all their buying Hubs, led by Mr Arijit Mukherjee, visited on 27 July. Phu Ben is the only tea company in Viet Nam to be Rainforest Alliance certified. The visit was of paramount importance for Phu Ben to showcase its professionalism

and commitment towards continuous improvement and brand building, and to show the Unilever team of buyers how the Rainforest Alliance experience is promoting sustainable growth.



## Visit – CIFF

Mr Klaus Engelmann, Managing Director CIFF, along with his wife visited on 10 August.



## Visit – Henry P. Thomson, INC, USA

Mr Robert Spirito, Business Relations, from Henry P. Thomson INC, USA visited on 13 & 20 September. He is on a Viet Nam market survey to procure quality teas and build business partners for his Principals.



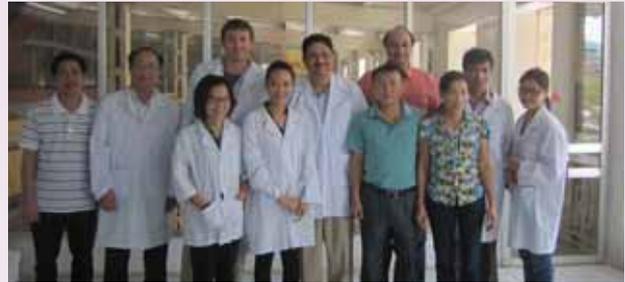
## Visit – All About Tea, UK

Mr Andrew Gadsden from All About Tea, UK, along with his friend, Mr Jamie Burnham from the British Foreign Service, was here on 18 and 19 September. They were shown around Phu Tho, Ha Hoa and Doan Hung factory and plantation. Tea tasting sessions were held at all the factories to showcase the teas. On the 18th the customary dinner with all our managerial personnel and the Board, was held. Mr Gadsden commented that he was pleasantly surprised with the standard of our facilities and systems, which is far ahead of any other he has visited in Viet Nam.



## Visit – Tata Global Beverages, UK

Mr Lawrence Richards of Tata Global Beverages, UK, visited on 24 and 25 September 2012.



## Halal Certification

All the four Phu Ben factories successfully underwent the Halal Certification Audit in September 2012 conducted by The Halal Certification Body. With effect from October 2012, all Black CTC, Green Orthodox and Green CTC produced will be Halal Certified Teas.



*Award -  
'Outstanding  
Enterprise of  
the Year 2012'*



*Award -  
'Outstanding  
Businessman  
of the Year  
2012'*

Mr S.N. Hussain was invited on 13 October 2012 to Phu Tho Province for an Award Felicitations Ceremony with the Party Secretary of the Province, the Province Chairman and other dignitaries of the Province and was felicitated with two awards at a grand ceremony attended by a cross-section of businessmen from the Province. The first award recognized Phu Ben as 'Outstanding Enterprise of the Year 2012' among 4100 companies of the Province. The second award felicitated Mr Hussain as 'Outstanding Businessman of the Year 2012'.



# McLEOD RUSSEL TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP

MRIL, in conjuncture with Professional Golf Tour of India, hosted the year-ending championship from 27 November to 1 December 2012. The event was played at the esteemed Royal Calcutta Golf Club with a prize purse which is the highest ever in India.

The Pro-Am event on 27 November saw participation from sixteen of our Company's up-country and HO golfers. The event was won by our very own Kishalaya Deb - GM (F & C) at Pertabghur and his team which included the 'Pro' Ashok Kumar. The champagne lunch at the marquee was a 'first' in Kolkata.

*Winners: Pro-Am*



*Kishalaya Deb*



*Champagne Lunch*



*Mr Aditya Khaitan  
(2nd from right) with  
team mates*



*Ranjit (the 'Pro', extreme left) with  
father Lakshman Singh (extreme  
right) & team mates*

McLEOD RUSSEL  
TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP

McLEOD RUSSEL  
*Believe in tea*



EL  
IP



This was followed by the main event from 28 November to 1 December in which players ranked amongst the top sixty in the Rolex Rankings 2012, competed for honours. The biggest names in Indian professional golf, like Jyoti Randhawa, Anirban Lahiri, S.S.P.Chowrasia, Mukesh Kumar, Ashok Kumar and others, teed off at the RCGC.

The Championship was won by Kolkata boy S.S.P.Chowrasia, two time European Tour winner who honed his skills on these very same 'greens'.



*The Champion with  
Mr Deepak Khaitan (L)  
& Mr Aweek Sarkar (R)*



Speaking on the occasion, Mr Aditya Khaitan, Managing Director, McLeod Russel, said, "Our family has *always* been a lover of the game... the tournament is something that was required – it brings to Kolkata and to the Royal sixty pro golfers."





# An Evergreen Garden

Nobody can deny what Ralph Waldo Emerson so aptly said, “The Earth laughs in flowers”. The myriad moods of the earth are captured only along with its trees, shrubs and the sprawling green fields. With the use of these we can create a beautifully landscaped garden which displays our imagination in endless forms.

## **Boundary Demarcation**

Boundaries of our garden have to be demarcated by a hedge. Hedges are planted primarily to act as a privacy screen thus the importance of choosing the right plant material cannot be over emphasized. Some plants that grow to make excellent hedge material are boxwood and bamboo . These provide the necessary thickness and can be contoured to one’s fancy.



Pallavi Mehrotra  
Behora T.E.

### Planting and Care

Sowing is best done during the monsoon season when the chances of survival radically multiply. Sow the plant material in a trench sized two feet by two feet, filling it up with mulch. Lack of rainfall necessitates heavy watering. Once the plant is established, begin pruning early to encourage a compact growth habit. New plants can be brought down to within twelve inches off the ground. Frequent pruning of the growing tips promotes dense growth of mature plants.

### Shaping

Once the hedge reaches the required height we need to decide on its shape. An informal straight cut is low on maintenance and easy on our untrained 'malis'! However if going in for a more formal and beautiful manicured look, we must try and maintain a pyramidal shape which allows penetration of light and water to the bottom. As a result of this, foliage remains dense all the way to the ground.

Vibrantly coloured foliage plants or creepers with attractive flowers are ideal to line walking pathways and tall flowering beds. Eye catching borders give a finished look to a flower bed like nothing else does.



*Bamboo Hedge*

## Trees

During the parched summer months, the abundant glossy foliage and colourful blossoms of the trees provide therapeutic value to one's eyes and dehydrated souls! It is impossible to ignore the riot of colour that they offer. Trees are an integral part of a large compound. Judiciously planted along the periphery of the garden coupled with the right mix of colour, shape and size, they enhance the beauty of the layout. A house with a backdrop of trees is the perfect poetic imagery straight out of the works of Yeats, Shelly or the tainted Silvia Plath.

Fortunately for us in Assam the growing conditions for conifers, deciduous trees, and dry and marshy area trees are equally conducive.

Trees should always maintain the balance and harmony of the garden. The names of a few flowering trees that come to mind are....

*Butterfly on the Bottle Brush*



- ❁ Callistemon Citrinus (Bottle Brush)
- ❁ Cassia Grandis (Pink Shower)
- ❁ Cassia Fistula (Golden Rain, Amaltas, Bandar Lathi)
- ❁ Lagerstromia (Pride of India)
- ❁ Delonix Regia (Gulmohar, Peacock Flowers, Flamboyant)
- ❁ Plumeria (Temple Tree, Dead Man's Flower, Life Tree, Frangipani)
- ❁ Tulip Tree (Flame of the Forest)
- ❁ The Ficus (Banyan, Bargad or India Fig)
- ❁ Ficus Religiosa (Bo Tree, Peepul)

Junipers are the most versatile evergreens and the lovely palms make you nostalgic for the sea side.



## Planting and Care

Trees should be planted at distances spaced by 20-30 feet, for they require adequate space to grow and mature. The planting time and methods are almost the same as those for hedges, however the pit here needs to be larger and water logging should be avoided at all costs.

To make the tree appear stately, proper pruning should be done at an early stage of growth. A well groomed plant encourages a stately crown.

The masterstroke is that ornamental trees after the initial years require little or no care.

If you inherit a compound with full grown trees, you can still reshape them with careful pruning which is best spread over 2-3 years. Interestingly, a mature tree can be



*Juniper & Palms*

transplanted to happier locations provided the root ball is not disturbed and the weather is conducive.

### Creepers, Vines and Shrubs

A well planned compound would look incomplete if bereft of these lovely plants. Unlike a painting the landscape is constantly changing. The abundant winter blooms wither and give way to the vibrantly coloured shrubs and creepers. Imaginative placement of these within the garden works its magic. Some of the summer flowering shrubs are Ixora, Hibiscus, Mussaenda and Nerium. Who can resist the heady perfume of Gardenia, Jasmine and Magnolia? The euphorically coloured Euphorbia and Bougainvillea add character to any winter compound. The summer and winter blooming shrubs can be cleverly placed to add just the right sprinkling of colour.

*Hibiscus Blooms*



Like the shrubs some of the creepers known for their startling blooms are Antigonon, Allamanda, Jasmine, Wisteria and Pyrostegia.

Creepers can also be trained into shapes and forms left to the imagination.

Espalier is a French term used to describe a plant trained to grow along a flat plane. This often adds interest to a bare wall, trellis or a fence. Of course this has to be pruned.

Apart from Espalier a more formal framework can be made and put up at a focal point in the garden. The ideal growing conditions of Assam take charge from there and all the human intervention it requires is in the form of tying up the branches to the framework and cutting the ones which grow outwards away from the intended pattern.

We can also train and prune the plants to Topiary. Topiary is a plant that has been trained to a geometric shape or animal form. It is encouraged to grow on a wire-frame. Sometimes vines are made to grow outside the wire-frame



which are called 'Mock Topiaries'. These are hollow inside and just trailing along the framework outside.

These beautiful forms, along with being the focal point of your garden, will also be the centre of conversation on a lovely coffee morning!

I must end here as it must end somewhere, for landscaping is a never ending art with always room for improvement.

Before I pen off, I'd like to let you in on a secret - Landscaping isn't just about creation, the God is in maintenance...

*Golden Shower*





# MANAGEMENT OF

*I thought of writing this article as I observed that many a time even those who are doing well in their career are under financial hardships. Therefore, it is imperative that personal finances are managed thoughtfully.*

## **The following are major steps:**

### **1) Calculate Your Actual Income**

Your real income is what you actually get by way of credit to your Bank Account. Do not consider your CTC as income because part of it is by way of perquisites / facilities.

### **2) Manage Your Expenditure**

You should clearly know your expenditure under various heads and quantum of the same. Therefore, you should record your expenditure for each month under broad heads viz. groceries, clothing, education, entertainment, so on and so forth. Please include everything – even small expenses and to ensure that you don't miss out on anything, cross-check with your Bank Account statements. Under each head, put expenses under two broad categories – Essentials and Discretionary. Please do this exercise every month for at least one year. This will make it easier to know where you can cut costs.

### **3) Know Your Financial Goals**

Write down each of your financial goals and the time period within which you want to achieve these. Include everything you aspire for – buying of residence, funding college education for your child, comfortable retirement etc. Please also calculate how much it will cost if you take inflation into account because you may find you are drastically short of



– B.K. Newar  
HO, Kolkata

# PERSONAL FINANCE

---

money when you actually approach the timelines. In case you have taken loans, repayment should also be included as a financial goal.

## 4) Match Your Savings With Financial Goals

Make a record of the savings (investments) you already have and the maturity value of the same nearer the time of your financial goals. Please include your accumulations in Provident Funds, Superannuation Funds etc. Try to correlate to see whether these will be able to fund your financial goals substantially. This will give you an idea of how much more savings you should make every month or every year.

## 5) Take Action

Your annual actual income minus your annual expenditure must take care of your requirement of additional savings. If it does not, then you have to either reduce your discretionary expenses or revise your financial goals. This would give you an idea whether you are living within your means or not.

From the above five steps, if you find that you are living beyond your means, you need to take control of the situation. Please note the following in this regard:

### ☆ Differentiate between 'Needs' and 'Desires'

There is a difference between 'need' and 'desire'. Needs must be fulfilled, while desires may be postponed or pruned. Discretionary expenses and highly optimistic financial goals may be downsized.

### ☆ Some loans are good and others are not

Loans taken for education and own residence are good loans because they create long term assets. Loans

taken for fancy cars or expensive gadgets are bad because they are financing depreciable assets. Loans taken on credit cards and personal loans are ugly because they do not create any asset. Even a loan taken for a second house is bad.

### ☆ Stay away from greed

Some people may speculate in share-market/commodity-market and make money, but most speculators invariably lose money. Long-term investment in blue-chip companies / good mutual-funds will generate satisfactory returns. Speculation leads to miseries.

### ☆ Teach your children the value of money

Children should know about hard work that is required in order to earn money and should start valuing the same. Also they should start making simple financial choices as early as possible because if they make financial mistakes at an early stage in life they will lose small sums of money. If they make such mistakes in later stages of life they will lose huge sums of money.

### ☆ Earnings of family members may be a helpful supplement

Last but not the least, encourage each adult member of the family to earn something in accordance with their age, capabilities and circumstances.

*In this article I have tried to just give an outline for personal financial planning. I would recommend you to devote a few Sundays to study these things in relevant newspapers and books (either print-media or internet).*



# Simalisa Baruah

– a profile

– Julie Bhuyan  
Bogapani T.E.

I first met Simalisa, better known as Jimli, when she came to stay with us before her marriage to Uddhav. DJ, my husband, was posted at Pabhoi and a clandestine visit was undertaken by Jimli and her friend to gather first-hand knowledge about life in Tea, before she finally decided to take the plunge. Uddhav in the meanwhile was pestering his parents to get him 'hitched' to a beautiful girl for his dear friend, DJ, was already married. Jimli and I, prior to meeting for the first time, were in touch over the phone.

Jimli was born in Guwahati and completed her school and college education from there. She studied at St. Mary's School and graduated from Handique Girls College. A valid license holding lawyer she does not practise at present. She has also completed a diploma course in Personnel

Management from IMM, simultaneously, whilst studying for her LLB degree.

Tragedy struck her family when she lost her father while she was still in college. With her elder sister married by then and living in Delhi and a younger brother still in school Jimli had to help her mother out, in running and looking after her father's business. Shouldering such responsibilities at a tender age made her a very strong, mature and resolute person.

Simalisa is a multifaceted personality. To begin with she is a trained classical singer. Music always fascinated her and she started learning music at the age of seven. Her father played a pivotal role in this development. She completed Visharad from Bhatkhande under Lucknow University, whilst she was still a student at school.

Jimli has also been a radio artiste and a stage performer. She has bagged the Best Singer award in college on many occasions. She can sing songs of all genres – from Bhajans, Bihugeet, Classical, Pop and Disco to the latest Bollywood chartbusters. Her all-time favourite, whenever everyone pesters her to sing, is "Ajeeb dastan hain yeh...". She is often invited to perform at the different clubs like Jorhat Gymkhana Club, Thakurbari Club and East Boroj Club. Her regular presence at the annual Monabarie Bihu functions is a much awaited event. She is very capable of singing with musicians whom she has never practiced with and performs with great panache and aplomb without suffering from stage fright. That goes to show and prove the confident and accomplished artiste that she is.





Jimli came to tea as a bride in 1997 and was based at Borpukhuri; the couple subsequently shifted to Pertabghur after a few years, where they are located today. Living at Pertabghur has given her the opportunity to regularly host many visitors and hone and sharpen her culinary skills. I constantly tease her these days by calling her our local Nigella Lawson! Testimony to this is winning the Home Produce Section at the annual Bishnauth Flower Show, more than once. Her artistic flair is also seen in creative flower arrangements and beautiful paintings, displayed in her tastefully decorated home.

Jimli is a wonderful mother to her two adorable children. Her son, Nivranshu, is eleven years old and studying at Assam Valley School and little Divyana is a toddler of two years. She is also a very caring and loving wife to Uddhav, having had to endure his absence during periods of his travels away on tour. Uddhav, on his part, has always been her pillar of strength.

Jimli has never allowed monotony to get the better of her. She is very social by nature and loves interacting with friends and colleagues. She is a great hostess, keeps a perfect home and is an active participant in all the club events like a true planter's wife. She is proof that Tea is the



ideal milieu, where the ladies get time as well as opportunity to discover and nurture their hidden talents.

Warm, bubbly, confident and full of energy – these are the words that strike me when I think of Simalisa Baruah. She settled and adjusted into her new environment from day one with great ease. Tea has become a way of life for her. Never did I imagine that I would get a chance to write a feature on Jimli.

As I conclude, I can only say that it has given me immense pleasure to pen down a few words about this beautiful person, who in front of my very own eyes has transformed from a carefree,

vivacious young girl into the perfect 'Cha Memsahab'.

# Tree Osury



– Vidya Kaul

**D**riving north from the township of Biswanath Chariali towards the border of Arunachal Pradesh, Nya Gogra T.E. is the furthest estate included in the Company's holdings. Established in 1926, the property was a part of Halem Tea Company, which amalgamated with McLeod Russel India Limited in 1977. The out division, Gohpur, a separate entity under Macneill & Magor Limited, merged with Nya Gogra in 1988. Two more divisions, Satrang and Gogra, constitute the 673.06 hectares which represent the estate today.



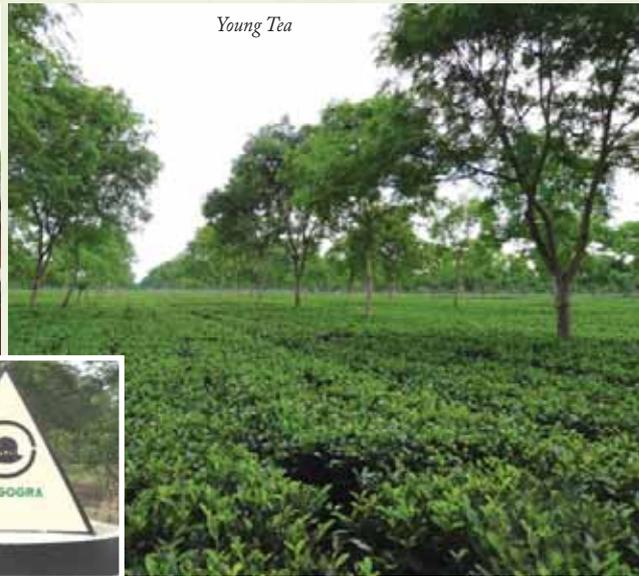
The original property, named Gogra ('enclosure' in the Bodo language) T.E., was located about six kilometers from the present establishment, in a swampy area towards the hills of the north known as Borpukhri. The historic Rajgarh Ali, a highway constructed by King Narayanarayan of Cooch Bihar, linking Narayanpur to Cooch Bihar, was close to the old factory site. However, on a fateful night in the early years of the last century, a severe tremor affected this region of Assam and in this perilous quake the entire complex was devastated and buried underground leaving behind a huge depression. This calamity occurred in the middle of the night when the factory was in full operation, with workers, staff and the Manager supervising manufacture. They all disappeared without a trace; nobody and nothing survived the disaster. But old timers believe that on certain nights of the year, one can hear the sound of running machinery and the cries of the unfortunate souls who perished on that fateful night.

Subsequently the garden establishment and factory complex shifted to its present locale and was re-named Nya (new) Gogra.

Main Office



Young Tea



To plant tea in this remote expanse of jungle the early planters employed local hill tribes like the Nagas and Misings. These hardworking individuals were expert at clearing the vegetation to prepare the land for planting tea seeds and the fertile soil allowed the saplings to flourish. The machinery needed to manufacture the leaf was arranged from England. Reaching Kolkata by sea, these pieces of equipment were loaded onto steamers which sailed upstream on the Brahmaputra to reach Gohmeri Ghat near Tezpur. Thereafter bullock carts transported the shipment, travelling through jungle and streams as the roads and bridges of today did not exist.

The estate followed a system of weekly wages for the workforce but communications being so poor it took days on horseback to collect the money needed for payment from the only bank in the district. On one occasion there was a delay in dispersing funds and the labour force became very agitated. In their anger and frustration they hacked the very bushes they had planted with so much effort and care and returned to their homes in the hills. Management was devastated but all was not lost. In a short period of time the bushes started sprouting fresh, healthy leaves; an accident which may have given birth to the pruning operations, so vital to the modern cycle of plantation systems!

The immediate need of the hour was to engage an adequate workforce and it was decided to do so from outside Assam.

Lakhom 'sardar' was entrusted with the task and he travelled to Odisha on a recruitment drive; these individuals, who were employed on a contract basis, traveled many miles on foot and then by steamer to reach their final destination. The hardships encountered on the way discouraged them from returning to their native place and soon Nya Gogra began to feel like 'home'; today their descendents constitute a major part of the labour community on the estate.

Mr R. M. Pizey was the first Manager of the newly created domain; he served for more than a decade, from 1926 to 1938. Nearly a quarter of a century later, Mr G.H. Page (1962-66) held charge. He was a colourful personality and a great 'shikari'. Old timers remember their fathers telling them that morning 'kamjari' began only after Burra Sahab confirmed that there were no lurking big cats in the sections, waiting to attack.

NYA GOGRA TEA ESTATE MANAGERS		
NAME	PERIOD	
1. R. M. PIZEY	1926	1938
2. H. D. GODBOLD	1938	1948
3. G. CLAYPHA	1949	1958
4. L. A. HENSON	1958	1962
5. D. St. F. THONGER	1962	1962
6. G. H. PAGE	1962	1966
7. V. K. NANDA	1967	1971
8. R. C. MAHANTA	1971	1977
9. K. M. RAM	1977	1980
10. D.K. SAHA	1980	1986
11. N. SINGH	1986	1986
12. N.L. GANGULI	1986	1989
13. M. ALI	1989	1991
14. R. K. BARUAH	1991	1996
15. P.K. KAUL	1996	2000
16. RANJIT SINGH	2001	2001
17. R. K. DUTT	2001	2002
18. D. J. BORAH	2002	2003
19. S. HAZARIKA	2003	2008
20. D. BHUYAN	2008	2012

Mr Page's 'bearer', Lobo, used to double-up as his gun boy when he went hunting and once he accidentally pulled the trigger, narrowly missing his master by a few inches! Unfortunately, Mr Page's career in Tea came to an abrupt halt when the Board decided against renewing his contract. His final words on leaving the property, written in the Visitors' Book, were, "Axed and Angry"!

Sri Thaneswar Borah remembers Mr & Mrs Page riding through his village. He was then working in a furniture shop at Baragabari, to support his family after the early demise of his father. The young man took a chance and approached Mr Page for employment at the estate. Fortune favoured him and he was offered the job of Carpenter, a post he has held for more than three decades.

Thaneswar remembers the difficult days during the amalgamation with the present out division. He was responsible for dismantling the factory at Gohpur and transferring the material to the main division, a task which was completed in spite of resistance from the workforce. The whole process took nearly two months after which all concerned were suitably rewarded by the Manager, Mr N.L.Ganguli (1986-89). The furniture in the office and computer room is the work of this skilled hand.

Besides carpentry Thaneswar is an expert welder and along with Sri Aikhya Mahanta fabricated a 'fibre extractor' from a photograph shown to them by Mr Ganguli!



*Sri Thaneswar Borah*



Like many plantations in Assam, Nya Gogra has a gushing watercourse within the domain. The Satrang River, flowing on the periphery of the main and out divisions, frequently changes its course and is a source of concern during the 'rains'. A seven kilometer long embankment in Satrang division and a four kilometer stretch in Gohpur division, built in the tenure of Mr R.K. Baruah (1991- 96) have been instrumental in reducing the destruction caused by flooding. However the heavy rains of 1998, which caused havoc in many districts of the North Bank, proved a difficult time for the estate. News was conveyed over the wireless that the out division had become inaccessible due to the collapse of a segment of the 'bundh' at Gohpur, endangering the inhabitants. In order to ascertain, verify and plan corrective action the Manager, Mr P.K. Kaul (1996-2000), and his young assistant swam across the Satrang to the out division. Manager Behali was requested to send out the JCB excavator to 'plug' the breach and the job was completed in record time. Thereafter the two weary executives swam back; this time they had to fight the river current flowing upstream so it was an exhausted duo who finally reached home!

Subsequent effects of the floods were indeed heartrending. Staff members and workers rendered yeomen service and travelled by boat with para-medical staff and relief materials in the form of medicines and food. A task force headed by Mrs Sunanda Chhabra, wife of Advisor Pertabghur, and the ladies of Bishnauth/Boroi Circle collected clothes and other essentials which were distributed at the government designated relief camps.

*Work on Satrang Embankment*



Over the years river protection measures like spurs and second tier 'bundhs' have been added to the existing structures though battling floods has become a regular occurrence.

On the other hand the 'cold weather' dry spell needs adequate irrigation measures and water harvesting is a focus area. Satrang division has large tracts of sandy soil which is prone to drought. With the change in weather patterns bringing less rain and with no irrigation facilities it was decided to utilize the waters of the Kukurjan River which flows in the division. Embankments are constructed across the waterway to divert the flow as the rainy season

comes to a close. This helps considerably in retaining the moisture content of the soil.

*Soil Conservation*



Planting of trees to attain self-sufficiency and encourage soil conservation is an important centre of attention.



*Water Harvesting*



### Immunization



Two hospitals are responsible for the medical needs of the community. Regular ante-natal and post-natal clinics are held along with immunization programmes. Mothers Club members work at the grassroots level to inculcate good health and encourage education; a high literacy rate is the positive result of their initiative.

As part of the Company's Corporate Social Responsibility venture twenty-two cataract cases were operated upon and one patient availed of the services of the Operation Smile team in the past year.

There are two LP schools with an enrolment of 300 students; the numbers have increased after Class V has been introduced in the garden establishments. For further education the students take admission in Gohpur town and the estate provides a school bus to facilitate travel to and fro. Those who complete High School are provided with a one time scholarship by Management. This year, forty-seven students cleared the Class X Board examinations, with seven securing a first division percentage. Chaiduar College, a centre for higher studies, was established on land donated by erstwhile Gohpur T.E.



Surya Namaskar at the LP School



Life on the estate follows the rhythmic cycle of the seasons, 'pujas', festivals and sports play an important role in fostering the bonds within the community.

Football is a passion at Nya Gogra. Traditionally, the first game of the season is held between Staff and Sub-Staff XI and the garden team. The annual Inter-Line matches are played with great fervour, with the winning team taking home a goat and the runners-up, five kg of chicken!



Football Trophies

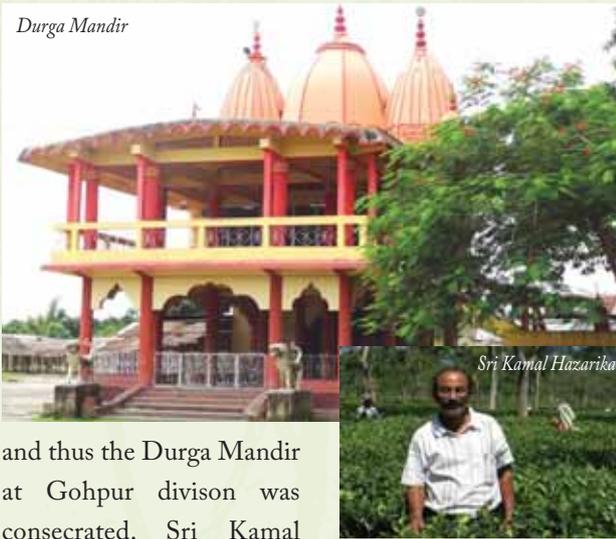
Magh Bihu, the harvest festival, is celebrated at the Staff Club with great fanfare. The annual picnic enjoyed by Staff and Sub-Staff is an age old 'dastoor'. A large section of the workers of Satrang and Gohpur divisions follow the Christian faith and during Christmas and Easter they hold cultural functions and rejoice by dancing and singing.

Celebrations



Durga Puja and Kali Puja are observed with devotion. In the mid 1960s Management used to arrange for the Willys jeep to allow Staff families visit the 'pandals' in town during the festive season. The realization that a temple within the garden premises would be a blessing activated all to contribute towards the construction of a place of worship

*Durga Mandir*



*Sri Kamal Hazarika*

and thus the Durga Mandir at Gohpur division was consecrated. Sri Kamal Hazarika, retired JB, is responsible for the finishing touches to this holy place.

The garden populace is responsive to the happenings in the world outside their environs. A case in point is when Staff and labour donated a handsome sum to the National Defense Fund during the difficult days of the Kargil conflict in 1999.

Today Nya Gogra is a HACCP certified unit, with an average annual crop of around 14.5 lakh kg. The modern factory which was completed in 1989 manufactures both Orthodox and CTC teas.

*Factory Complex*



It is a matter of overwhelming pride for Nya Gogra to have received the Company's award for Over All Performance and Best Quality, Bishnauth / Boroi Circle for the year 2011-12; truly, a validation of all their hard work and commitment towards excellence.

*The Staff*



*The Team (L -R):  
A. Thoumoung,  
Dr D. D. Goswami,  
D. Bhuyan (Manager),  
P. Borthakur,  
V. Bist &  
D. Mahanta*



## LAURELS

Unilever hosted the Partner to Win Awards to celebrate and recognize suppliers who have made a significant contribution. Over one hundred and forty entries were received in the following categories – Innovation, Sustainability, Business Integration, World Class Enterprise Support and Capacity, and Capability Development. McLeod Russel India Limited – Partner in Tea – assisted Unilever with its ‘just-in-time’ deliveries.

### Commentary:

“Improved manufacturing and production techniques have meant McLeod Russel are well equipped to support Unilever with its ‘just-in-time’ deliveries world-wide. Demonstrating their commitment to our partnership, McLeod Russel were one of the first of Unilever’s suppliers to attain Rainforest Alliance certification. The partnership with Unilever has seen McLeod Russel grow from a regional tea supplier to a global partner.”



The Third North American Tea Conference held at the Hilton Hotel, Fallsview, Ontario, Canada, between 11 and 13 September 2012, attracted around 350 delegates from around the world. African producers were present in force and representatives had come from Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Rwanda. Their participation in the events contributed in making this gathering the most successful and well attended in the North American Tea Conference's history.

Many African origins had taken the opportunity to enter the first ‘Gold Medal’ Tea Competition and show case their excellent quality; to make this a great variety of quality, every origin was presented with a winner's trophy.

The competition was judged by a select number of experts sourced from both the United States and Canadian Tea Associations. These individuals tasted batches on an origin basis and chose their winner according to quality and flavour.

Gisovu Tea Estate was awarded ‘Best Rwandan Tea’.

➤➤ The Telegraph Merchants Cup Golf 2012, Kolkata



Winners: WM 'A'

➤➤ MRIL Inter-Company 5-a-side Football Tournament 2012, Assam



◀ Man of the Tournament & Highest Scorer: Siddharth Thapa

Winners: MRIL 'A' ▶



# Weddings

**Pururaj**, son of Pradip  
& Sharmila Bhar,  
HO Kolkata, wed **Debarati**  
on 12 May 2012



**Shirumoni &  
Pankita Gogoi**  
Keyhung T.E.  
25 April 2012



**Amit & Rajni Jugran**  
Mijicajan T.E., 7 July 2012



**Animikha**, daughter of Rajat &  
Sanghamitra Dutt,  
HO Kolkata, wed **Nicholas**  
on 27 October 2012

# Births



1. **ZOYA**, daughter of Ranji & Sarika Saha, HO Kolkata  
1 December 2011
2. **AMREEN AND AFSHEEN**, twin daughters of Sayeed Muslehur & Sumi Rahman, Tezpore & Gogra T.E. 7 March 2012
3. **PRISNIPARNA**, daughter of Amarjit & Madhusmita Bordoloi, Corramore T.E. 6 April 2012.
4. **TRINAV**, (with elder brother, Bhargav) son of Parag & Smita Medhi, Bordubi T.E. 8 April 2012
5. **ADITRI**, daughter of Shyamal & Monalisha Singha, Dufflaghur T.E. 17 May 2012
6. **PRAGYAN**, son of Mrinal & Rajashri Hazarika, Dirai T.E.  
9 June 2011



# India International Trade Fair – 2012

The McLeod Russel stall in the Assam Pavilion at the India International Trade Fair 2012 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, showcased various varieties of Tea as well as Bodo Handloom articles.

On Assam Day, the book 'Tea- The Health Drink' by Mr R.S. Jhawar was released by the DONER Minister, Sri Pawan Singh Ghatowar.



## India International Tea Convention 2012





The India International Tea Convention 2012, held at the Lalit Golf & Spa, Goa, from 7 to 9 November, was attended by 300 delegates from eighteen countries across the world. Top quality Assam, Darjeeling and South Indian teas were showcased at this event.

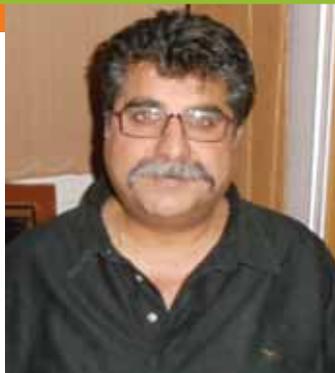
A group of senior executives represented MRIL, one of the chief sponsors of the Convention. The Company had its own stall displaying its teas and an interactive audio-visual of the tea production process.

One of the highlights of the Convention was a special tea tasting session conducted by internationally renowned TV personality, Jane Pettigrew, famous for presenting gourmet food and wine shows.

On the final night the Company hosted 'Goa Carnival' – a gala dinner on the beach for all the delegates.



## 'VISITATIONS'



– Dipin Mehta  
Central Dooars T.E.

We, the Planters' community, have a lot to talk about our past personal experiences; we keep narrating the same stories to our colleagues, over and over again, like the news channels these days – though we state the Truth!

It was in the winter of 1990 that I first set foot in a tea estate. The journey from New Jalpaiguri railway station to my estate was never-ending; and other factors were more dissuading than welcoming, but, "that's how it is if you want to be a successful planter," you are told by your Burra Sahab at the first instance and the rest follows.

Twenty-two years hence, I'm in his shoes and during this wonderful journey a few incidents happened which are worth sharing.

**STATUTORY WARNING:** All the incidents narrated below are true and not fiction; any kind of resemblance or similarity in character may please be taken in the PLANTERS' SPIRIT.

---

**W**hen I joined Tea in 1990 I was a 'Free Willy' Assistant doing all kind of jobs, from supervising spraying to night duty for withering in the factory. (All of us go through this, right?!) The Burra Sahab would not even bother to disturb you for the first few days and let you settle down in peace – the 'lull before the storm' as they say! Those days we used to have Annual Inspections by the Visiting Staff for one week i.e. Sunday to Sunday and it used to be one crazy affair. Since I was new and had practically no direct responsibility I was briefed by my Senior Assistant to be at a certain Section while the visit was on and also go up and exchange courtesies with the Visiting Staff. I was very excited about the entire thing because there was rampant activity going on everywhere, preparing for the visit and the Burra Sahab had become an Event Manager. (Believe you me, it was an event!) Finally, the day arrived and I had my eyes peeled for the Burra Sahab's vehicle, but nothing happened for almost five hours and there was no information either. A little frustrated I was sitting on the roadside when I suddenly heard a Tata truck (I still remember the number: WGV 9507) approaching and, wowie, what do I see? A table with two chairs under a garden umbrella placed on the hood, and the Visiting Staff with the Burra Sahab sitting on the chairs and 'inspecting' the garden! (This was only a prelude to the life I was getting into!) I approached the truck to exchange pleasantries and was told, "Hum log haathi par nahin bethtey isiliye hum lorry pe beth ke Inspection karte hain, young man. Yahaan se sab kuch

dikhta hai; goru aur chhagli bhi." (We don't sit on elephant back so we sit on a lorry and inspect the garden. From here, we can see everything, including cows and goats.)

Another story also goes back to the early nineties. A very senior Kolkata official was visiting our estate and was staying at the Burra Bungalow. The sweeper, Ram Charan's 'paali' (duty) finished at 5 pm and the visitor arrived after that. The next morning, the official went into the bathroom for his morning 'regime' without bothering to bolt the door, confident that in accordance with Tea culture and traditions, the Company Sahab's 'kumra' was sacrosanct, so no one would enter without knocking. We all know our bungalow workers and, sure enough, no one mentioned the guest to Ram Charan. Oblivious, he entered the 'faltoo kumra' to clean it as per his daily routine and, opening the bathroom door, to his utter surprise found the Company Sahab seated on the 'throne'. Shocked and embarrassed, Ram Charan closed the door and rushed out. Just before he was about to exit, however, duty and training prevailed so he turned back, opened the 'loo' door and said, "Salaam Sahab, galati se pehle Salaam karna bhool gaya tha." (Salaam Sahab, it was my mistake that I forgot to wish you earlier.) So saying, he closed the door and walked away, leaving the visitor flabbergasted!

The Heaven that we live in, the Life that we lead, is nothing but Divine.....and we thank God (and our Company!) for everything.



## Genesis of the Uganda Tea Industry and the Company that was to later become McLeod Russel Uganda Ltd

- Nick Paterson, Tarakwa, Gilgil

with considerable assistance from Alka Singh and Onesimus Matsiko, Mwenge T.E., Uganda



The first introduction of tea into Uganda was in 1900 and interestingly came from China although where it was planted is obscure as it is hard to find China tea in Uganda; but the most important introduction came from India from 1909 onwards. And from 1914, individual planters were issued with tea seeds to establish trial plots. Until the end of the Second World War, tea was an embryonic crop in Uganda.

After the war there was a rapid increase from 2286 hectares in 1947 rising to 14,981 hectares in 1968. Foreigners dominated this rapid rise up to 1959. At this time there was active encouragement made for Ugandans to plant tea through their smallholder or outgrower schemes.

By 1972 nearly 23,500,000 kg were being harvested annually, but from then it dropped dramatically to only 1,500,000 kg due to lack of political stability.

From 1986 the situation had stabilized

and the industry together with the whole country's economy started recovering. Early in 1990s the liberalization policies of Government of Uganda led to the privatization of plantations, and the return of tea estates expropriated by Idi Amin in 1971. By 2003 production had reached 32 million kg.

In 1994 with ownership of what is now McLeod Russel Uganda in the hands of Agricultural Enterprises Limited (AEL) many fields were abandoned and factories were either not functioning or extremely dilapidated. A new company was registered as Rwenzori Highlands Tea Company Limited (RHTC), where foreign investors made partnership with the Uganda government which retained 21%. The two British companies owned the shareholding balance, jointly registered as Rwenzori Tea Investment Ltd (RTI). This entity has been retained with successive changes in shareholding. RTI was owned by Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) 51%

and James Finlay (JF) 49%. In 2000, CDC sold their stake to JF leaving RTI wholly owned by JF, and in 2002 RTI bought the balance of shares still owned by the Uganda Government. With these changes JF changed the name to James Finlay (Uganda) Limited (JFU) in 2004.

Since the rehabilitation of RHTC/JF it has held a dominant position in the tea industry. By 2002 RHTC contributed 29% of Uganda's tea exports with five factories. The other producers were four small holder companies each with a factory, Ruwenzori Commodities Limited with four factories, Tooro and Mityana Tea Company Limited with three factories, and Uganda Tea Corporation with two factories.

The industry is lightly controlled which has been both a benefit and a disadvantage. The Uganda Tea Authority started in 1974, set up to develop the industry in Uganda and market manufactured tea. It was recently wound up in the interests of liberalizing the tea market. The Uganda Tea Association was formed in 1948 as a voluntary association of tea producers to meet and discuss common problems in the industry, and, in 2003, 95% of all producers were members. The objective is to act as a lobby group for its members. Uganda Tea Growers Corporation was established by act of parliament in 1966 with the role of developing a smallholder tea development program, but the act was repealed to allow for privatization and liberalization policies. On balance the lack of structure and government control is probably more helpful to investors, but the down side is that there is no effective lobby group and neither is there an active research body to assist the industry.

Names of the AEL management team are lost in the mists of time, but significant players since 1994 were Simon Hill,

the GM of Ruwenzori Highlands who faced the challenges associated with rehabilitating the tea and factories and starting up a new company. He used to wear sandals in the field and drive ferociously fast. He was assisted by experienced tea planters such as Tom Whitehouse from Malawi and David Candy from George Williamson Kenya. And some who had no experience of tea but were ingenious and motivated men of many trades such as Mark Potter, a plumber, but who had much to do with the rehabilitation of Bugambe factory. Hugh Back was working for RHTC before it was formed as he became a guide to investors and ended being employed as Chief engineer.

Simon Hill left in 1996. RHTRC was managed without a GM as part of the overall CDC East Africa Group, with Head Office in Kampala controlling RHTC and other tea investments in Tanzania and Malawi. Peter Rowlands, ex Lonrho Tanzania, and Tony Hewgill, ex JF in Kenya, and McLeod Russel in Zimbabwe were prominent at that time. In 2000 CDC divested their investments, and JF reinstated a Chief Executive based at Mwenge Central.

Cor Roest who was Manager Mwenge Tea Estate became the Chief Executive and embarked on an ambitious policy of Ugandanisation. It was from this time that local managers were elevated to Estate management positions.

Cor Roest was followed by Laurie Davies and finally by John Loades, who presided over significant increases in production. And as a last chapter before its transfer to Indian ownership, it was John Loades who was involved in the preparation and sale of the company to McLeod Russel.





## CRICKET – The Gentleman's Game

**D**o we need a sermon on 'Cricket'? No, for God's sake! An attempt to do that would be countered with, "What is he going to teach us? We know our cricket; it's our game". This is what the game of cricket has managed to do so very well – bring out the spontaneous self of everyone concerned. It has penetrated the deepest recesses of our psyche as a nation and has built a castle of pride; a feeling of oneness.

Cricket originated in England and gradually spread to the colonies. The beginning of cricket in India dates back around four centuries, the oldest reference being to a friendly match some sailors played at a seaport in Kutch in 1725. The Calcutta Cricket & Football Club was formed in 1792, the next cricket club being initiated at Seringapatam in 1799.

The birth of First Class Cricket in India was marked by a match between Madras and Calcutta in 1864, followed in 1877 by the Bombay Presidency Match which evolved into the Bombay Triangular and then the Bombay Quadrangular tournament. In 1892-93, the tournament was awarded First Class status.

The exact introduction of the game to Tea is not known. Who knows how many 'Laagans' were played out in the inaccessible terrain of the plantations in the days gone by! "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," was the adage followed religiously by the British Planter while interviewing candidates and the mention of cricket usually sealed the appointment. The tea industry boasted of some fine players who were regular members of the Assam Ranji Trophy team at some time. In fact, up until the mid-1970s, the Assam Planters team played an annual match against the Assam Ranji Trophy team.

Another fixture was their match versus CTTA (Calcutta Tea Trade Association). They also played against the GTAC

(Guwahati Tea Auction Centre), the match being hosted in alternate years at Guwahati and at Thakurbari club.

Thakurbari club is also the venue for the East vs West cricket match – the East team comprising the clubs east of the Bhoroli River and the West consisting of those west of it.

Inter-Company cricket was keenly contested and the rivalry between the VA of Williamson Magor, Mr John Morice, and the Superintendent of Jorehaut Tea Company Ltd, Mr Bath-Brown, is part of the folklore of Tea.

John Morice Cup cricket, which began as an annual contest between two companies, went on to be played between the South and the North Bank teams of MRIL and continues to be so. The Chatterji Cup cricket tournament, a regular fixture in the North Bank, is named after Mr T.M. Chatterji (Chatt), a keen cricketer who joined tea as a member of the clerical staff and rose to become the Manager of Budlapara T.E. in Mangaldai. He started the tournament and donated the trophy. It later became an annual LASA (Lower Assam Sports Association) fixture and the final match is always played at Mangaldai Polo & Gymkhana Club, of which Mr Chatterji was made a Life Member.



*T. M. Chatterji Cup*

Zaffar Rahman Memorial Cup



The club also hosts the annual Zaffar Rahman Memorial Cricket Match, better known as 'Burrhas vs Chokras', as it is contested between senior and junior planters.

The tide of change had its effect on cricket too. Over the years, cricket, which was THE sport in the tea industry, found itself sidelined. It was in 2010 that MRIL came forward to sponsor the Inter-Company T-20 Cricket Tournament in Upper Assam, proving a blessing to the very survival of the game! The tournament was an instant hit and has become a very important fixture.

The game has evolved since its inception and meandered its way from the six-day Test Matches through One Day matches to the modern day T-20. It has become a more vibrant 'cocktail' of showbiz and showcasing of talent. Even after being subjected to various changes or 'avatars', though, cricket has remained 'the gentleman's game'. One only hopes that, in this cacophony of modernism, it remains so and the real spirit of the game is not lost in oblivion!

On a personal note, I sincerely long for the day when **sportsmanship** overcomes **gamesmanship** and, while I wait, I take solace in these words of Sri Sri Ramakrishna:

*"Longing is like the rosy dawn,  
After the dawn, out comes the sun,  
Longing is followed by the vision of God".*

PS For the uninitiated, here are a few 'cricketing terms' explained!

-  It is a 'No Ball' if three fielders are placed between the wicket keeper and the Square Leg Umpire.
-  The 'Free Hit' in a T-20 match is only when a bowler oversteps the line while delivering the ball and not if he is called for 'chucking'.
-  If a ball is directed towards the wickets and the batsman puts his hand in front, he will be adjudged out, LBW (Leg Before Wicket).
-  If a ball that has been played by the batsman rebounds and heads towards the wicket, he will be declared 'Out'.
-  'Handling the Ball' – this term is used if the batsman stops the ball with his hands. (He can stop the ball with his feet, though.)

**As for the length of the wicket, the game has managed to bridge gaps and bring nations and people closer than the 22 yards!**



MRIL Inter-Company T-20 Tournament



MRIL T-20 Trophy

## THE BENEFITS OF WALKING



– Dr Supratim Chatterjee  
Borengajuli T.E.

Walking is a dynamic process which stretches one's mind and soul. It creates a sense of rhythm, awakens, energizes and then helps one's mind to relax fully. It promotes a feeling of happiness and can even ease mild depression.

### A Morning Walk

This is the ideal exercise as no partner or expensive gadgets are required to burn nearly as many calories as jogging, without burdening the body. In peaceful surroundings, it can clear the tension of mind and body.

### Preparing for a Walk

- ✓ One should not eat an hour before going for a walk as digestion takes a lot of energy from the body. Walking right after eating may overburden the body. One can have fruits or juices as they do not tax the system as much.
- ✓ It is important to wear the right shoes and comfortable clothes for walking.
- ✓ One should drink water, particularly during a brisk walk, to hydrate the body.
- ✓ An early morning walk is always desirable as the air is significantly fresher but walking later in the day is also acceptable.
- ✓ One needs fresh air and clean, green surroundings to relax the mind and exercise the body, so busy roads should be avoided.
- ✓ Walking as exercise should be supplemented with a balanced diet to maintain good health, while cigarettes and alcohol should be avoided.

### How to Walk

For walking as exercise to be more effective, the following points may be relevant:

- ✦ One should walk for at least 30 minutes daily at a pace of 3 – 5 mph.
- ✦ One should preferably take a variable route to avoid walking only on flat ground.
- ✦ People who cannot maintain a brisk pace should follow a couple of minutes' brisk walk with a more comfortable pace for the next two minutes, after which they can pick up the pace again; alternating between the two.
- ✦ If one can maintain a brisk walk, it should be done for approximately 20 minutes. Brisk walking every day helps to burn up to 200 calories and reduces body fat.
- ✦ Walking as exercise should be done regularly. It will restore peace of mind, make the blood pressure normal and control the appetite.

### The Effects of Walking on our Body

Walking can affect the five components of fitness, as mentioned below:

1. **Body composition:** The average person can lose 18 pounds in a year with no change in diet by walking for 45 minutes, four times a week. Walking helps to trim fat as well as tone muscles.

2. **Cardiovascular Fitness:** Walking at any level or speed for at least 20 minutes twice or thrice a week increases cardiovascular strength, thereby increasing one's ability to exercise longer and harder and also to perform everyday tasks without tiring.
3. **Flexibility:** As with any endurance activity walking does not significantly increase one's flexibility but the particular group of muscles used will tighten, straighten and perhaps ache!
4. **Muscular Strength:** Muscles that get an extra workout while walking include the entire back of the leg, calves, hamstrings (muscles of the back of thighs) and gluteus (muscles of the buttocks). The shoulder muscles are used when one swings one's arms. Walking is a low-impact exercise, which puts less strain on bones and tissues.
5. **Muscular endurance:** Walking helps to develop a moderate amount of endurance thus enabling a person to exercise or work for longer periods without fatigue. Race walkers have a higher level of endurance than marathon runners!

## Regular Walking – The Health Benefits

- ♣ Strengthens the heart
- ♣ Improves mood and self-esteem
- ♣ Reduces blood pressure and the risk of stroke
- ♣ Reduces blood cholesterol
- ♣ Strengthens joints and bones
- ♣ Helps control weight
- ♣ Contributes to 'brain fitness'
- ♣ Delays or prevents major diseases or illness
- ♣ Provides energy and a good night's rest
- ♣ Relieves stress and worry
- ♣ Improves balance and circulation
- ♣ Boosts the immune system

## Walking and Blood Pressure

Apart from avoiding too much salt, sugar, alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes, blood pressure can be reduced by losing weight. Regular walking combined with a low-fat high-fibre diet is an excellent form of weight control. Walking also makes the heart work more efficiently and improves circulation, thus reducing high blood pressure.

## Walking and Diabetes

Regular walking improves the Body Mass Index (BMI) and blood pressure levels in people with diabetes.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight in kg}}{(\text{Height in metres})^2}$$

Muscle movement leads to more use of glucose by the muscle cells and also involves utilization of more insulin which improves blood sugar levels. Low blood pressure levels can also protect against kidney failure, heart attack and stroke.

## Walking and Cholesterol

Cholesterol is transported in the blood by two types of lipoproteins – High Density Lipoproteins (HDL or 'good' cholesterol) and Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL or 'bad' cholesterol). The higher the HDL level, the lower the risk of heart disease. Regular walking can increase the levels of HDL in the blood, reducing chances of a heart attack.

## Walking and Improved Brain Power

Walking stimulates the blood flow and provides oxygen to the brain, leading to improved brain function and better ability to recall.

The human body is the ultimate exercise machine and walking is the easiest and safest way for us to rejuvenate our bodies and burn away the harmful effects of stress.

The executives of our Company are participants in the worldwide 'Stephathlon' competition which requires each person to walk 10,000 steps a day – a 'step' in the right direction indeed!



– Deepak Agha  
Gurgaon, Haryana



## PLANTERS' PUNCH

### ... Romai T.E.

It was on a warm, sultry afternoon in September 1967 that I arrived in Tea. I had been posted at Romai T.E., the only erstwhile WM estate in Dibrugarh District. Nearly 45 years later, as I sit to reminisce over my experiences of this wonderful 'way of life' which I enjoyed for three and a half decades, the memories come flowing as clearly as when I had encountered those exciting, sometimes thrilling, even scary moments.

My first Burra Sahab, Mr J.E. Batten, had permitted me the use of the Company jeep twice weekly for my visits to the club. Just two weeks into Tea, returning from the club one Saturday evening around midnight, the jeep stalled. The driver explained it as a 'fuel problem'. Unfortunately, the tools were not in the vehicle and the two of us pushed the jeep back for over 5 km till we found help at a neighbouring estate.

It was not uncommon those days for a Burra Sahab to be gifted with a leopard cub. John Batten had been given one which was nurtured along with his two golden retrievers for about a year. One afternoon, as I stepped out of the bedroom to leave for 'kamjari', I found that 'Spotty' (as the cub was called) had strayed into my 'chung' bungalow and parked himself on the stairway. With all the courage I could muster, I yelled, "Spotty, go!" Lo and behold, it worked!

### ... Phillobari T.E.

My first transfer was in 1969 to Phillobari T.E. My predecessor informed me that the estate was 20 minutes away from Doom Dooma. The road then was 'kutcha', and undulating, to put it mildly! He drove me in his Herald, 14 km to Phillobari, in 20 minutes flat; I didn't feel the bumps as I was 'airborne' most of the drive! That was the last I travelled with him. Meanwhile, the authorities decided to raise the level of the road so a couple of feet of loose earth was put on it. Monsoons set in and there was mayhem; a Fordson tractor had to tow the vehicles in and out of the estate up to Ghurni.

In 1970 I got married and brought Suniti to Phillobari. Early one morning the night 'chowkidar' rushed to the factory and frantically drew me to the bungalow. "There's something the matter with Memsahab," he said, quite concerned. As it transpired, Suniti, an early riser, was taking a morning walk in the compound, which he found strange to fathom!

### ... Behora T.E.

In 1974, I moved to Behora T.E. My Superintending Manager, Harcharan Singh, popularly known as Chunni, was a keen 'shikari'. A rogue elephant had been causing havoc in the nearby Letekujan forest and Chunni, who had an elephant control license, had been requested by the district authorities to put it down. I hopped on to the jeep. We drove to the village and were directed to a bamboo grove where the rogue was running amuck. The rifle was on my shoulder as I had been instructed how to use it in an emergency. (It was quite another matter that I had never fired a weapon that size before!) We moved on foot along with a couple of villagers. Within minutes we spotted the elephant, trumpeting to glory, knocking down bamboos and whatever else came his way. As he raised his trunk and 'bellowed' in annoyance, Chunni pulled the trigger and we heard a huge thud not more than 30 feet from us. I was still holding my rifle but my heart missed a few beats! A chilling and hair-raising experience indeed!

### ... Borengajuli T.E.

1978 saw us move to Borengajuli T.E., in Mangaldai District, where I got my billet. I had always maintained that this is the real 'Tea experience'. The spirit of camaraderie amongst planters was more apparent in a relatively cut-off district. Monday evenings was club football at one of the estates. That week the club was playing against Budlapara T.E. We drove across the Suklai River in our vehicles which included a Fiat driven by a 'youngster'. As was customary, we all assembled at the Manager's Bungalow, post-match, for tea and merry making. Soon it started raining and an hour later when a driver was asked to move the vehicles across, he returned to say that nothing could cross! (The Nonoi and Suklai Rivers in spate had to be seen to be believed.) After midnight, we were all bundled onto a lorry – ladies included. With a dozen guides holding 'marshals' (flame torches) and an elephant leading the way, we crossed the raging river. Exciting but scary!

I could go on, but more another time perhaps!



**I**t gives one great pride to hear about the laurels that the children of the estates' staff and workers bring home. Some excel in academics, others in the arts, sports or music. It is wonderful that the children

on the estates are availing of every opportunity to participate in district and state level tournaments and competitions, and winning scholarships for higher studies. One wishes them all the best.

I just finished reading a magical book of short stories written by someone I have watched grow from babyhood to young womanhood. Her father retired from this Company a few years ago. I was fortunate enough to be invited to her book launch by a reputed publishing house. Sitting next to her mother, my friend, I watched with pride as the young author answered questions in a poised and articulate manner. My gaze wandered to the others assembled there – mostly friends of her parents from their days in Tea – and everyone's face reflected the same pride and wonder. After all, she is one of *our* children.

This is the special feeling all of us in Tea have for the children we have known since babyhood. We are excited when we hear that a girl we have last seen as a carefree teenager has got her PhD degree. We marvel at the confidence of a young mother; it seems like just the other day that she was a baby herself! We share the happiness of a beaming young bridegroom and remember him furiously peddling his tricycle on the lawn. We are bemused that the naughty boy who drove us crazy with his antics has now become a most responsible professional; and we applaud the twins who played 'house-house' with our child, who have found a way to combine their love of sport with a way to serve society.

We rejoice in the accomplishments and achievements of each of 'our children', in whatever path they have chosen. Most of all, we are glad that their upbringing in Tea is such an integral part of their personalities.

It is the beginning of a brand new year – let's raise a toast to all our children; may they be blessed with good health, happiness and success in all their endeavours.

And to all our men – Season's greetings. (Pun intended!)

Happy New Year,

*Sarita Dasgupta*

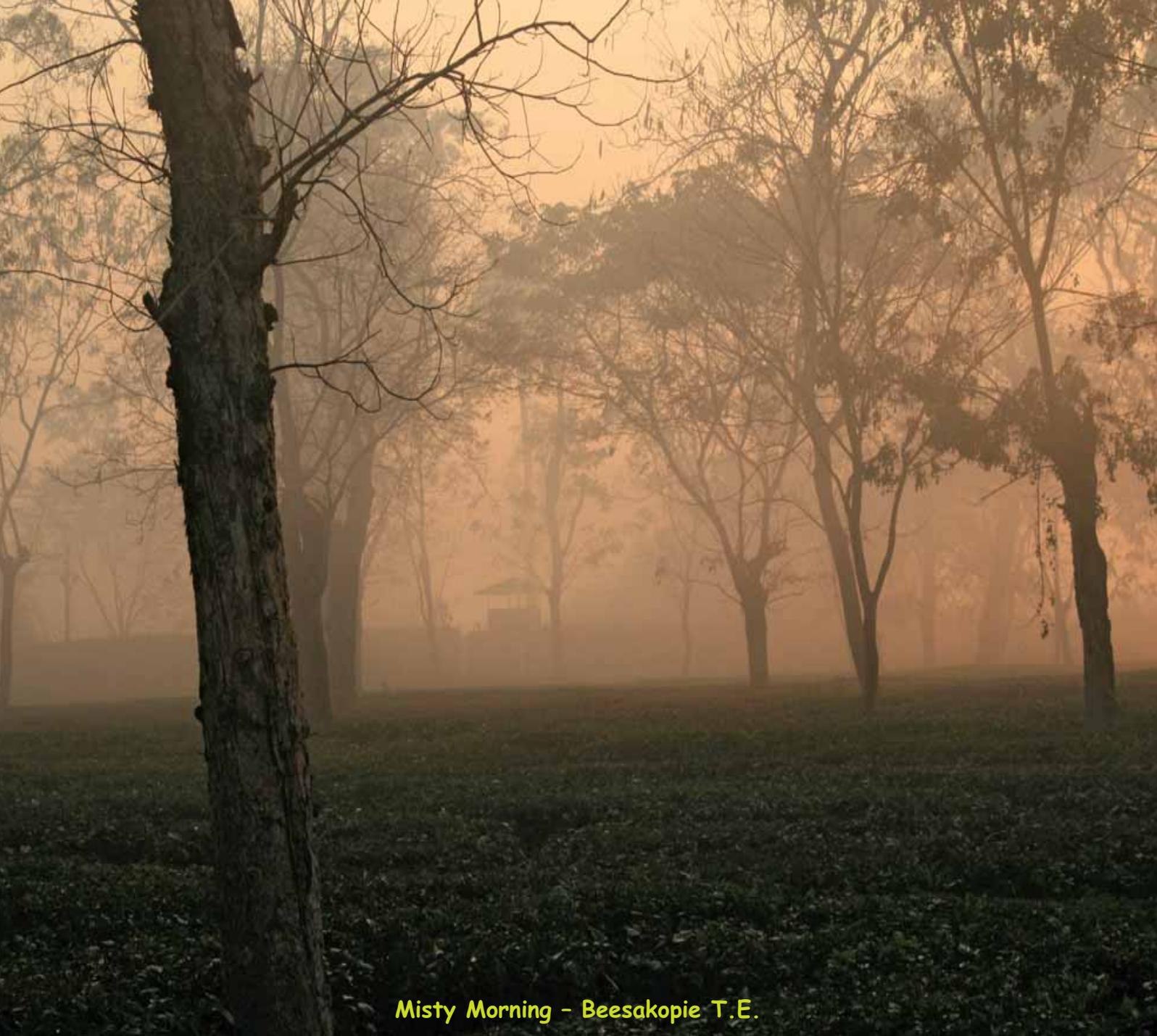
THE WM TIMES TEAM

Senior Editor : Vidya Kaul

Editor : Sarita Dasgupta

Co-ordinator : Gautam Bhuyan





**Misty Morning - Beesakopie T.E.**

**Winter dawn...**

**Nature's face obscured by misty haze;**

**Till gentle fingers of the sun**

**Reveal her to one's gaze.**



**McLEOD RUSSEL**

*Believe in tea*

Four Mangoe Lane, Surendra Mohan Ghosh Sarani, Kolkata - 700 001

Tel: +91 33 22101221, 22435393, Fax: +91 33 22488114

e-mail: [administrator@wmg.co.in](mailto:administrator@wmg.co.in) [www.mcleodrusselindia.com](http://www.mcleodrusselindia.com)