



**UPCOMING EVENTS  
TO LOOK FORWARD  
TO IN 2024**

**SHOWCASING TALENT**



**WHOLESUME WINTER  
FARE**

# TEA TRAILS



**The President's Golf  
'Do'**



**Meetings  
and Greetings**



**Monsoon Mela  
Did you miss it?**





*With the Compliments of  
Asian Tea Group*



*With the Compliments of  
Rossell Tea  
(Division of Rossell India Limited)*



The recent Golf tournament, Tambola and Fête, organised by our dedicated Committee were a true testament to the spirit of unity and camaraderie that runs deep within our Society. These events not only provided us with opportunities for fun and enjoyment, but also showcased the commitment of our Committee Members towards ensuring that every gathering is a memorable one.

The events themselves were not just about entertainment; they were a celebration of our shared passions and a testament to the strength of our community. The success of these activities would not have been possible without dedication and hard work behind the scene, and their tireless efforts deserve our utmost appreciation and gratitude. Nor would it have possible without the enthusiastic and supportive participation of the PSEI Members.

Going forward, I urge all Members of our Society to continue embracing this sense of community spirit. Let us come together, not only during organised events, but also in our day to day lives, to foster a culture of inclusivity and support. Together, we can create a legacy that surpasses our individual accomplishments and leaves a lasting impact on the lives of those around us.

In the spirit of unity and shared enthusiasm, I invite each and every one of you to actively participate in the upcoming events that will be meticulously organised by the PSEI Committee. Let us look forward to more fun-filled experiences and create cherished memories that will be passed down through generations.

It is only through our **collective** efforts that we can truly make a difference in the lives of others and continue to strengthen the bond that unites us in the Tea Community.

Warm Regards

*Ashok K Bhargava*

President, PSEI



## *From the Editor's desk...*

Hello! This year seems to be flying by too quickly! By the time this magazine is in your hands, we are already entering the last three months of 2024.

No complaints though. We've had some great events, done a few good deeds, and generally survived the year with elan. Good news is that we still have the best season to look forward to!

It's the season of joy and cheer, of warmth and generosity. We're planning a grand Christmas party mid-December. Also on the cards is the joy of sharing the celebrations with the pupils of a charitable educational institution for small children. It's going to be a great event, and details will be shared in November, so do look out for the posts from the PSEI!

In the midst of all the chaos and horror erupting in our country and around the world, it's important to keep our outlook positive and our hearts happy, and do our own little bit to contribute positively. Taking a leaf out of Jadav 'Molai' Payeng's painstaking effort and breath-taking results at greening Majuli island, I began growing avocado plants from each fruit I bought. So far two have been planted in gardens, and three more are in the budding stage. The internet is a great place to learn how-to's and it's never too late to learn something new, or to try one's hand at something one wishes they can do! The dream to plant a hundred avocado trees will probably take me twenty years, but I'm keeping positive!

The PSEI is not only a great forum to meet and greet, but also to share our joys and sorrows. To be able to support each other in time of distress and need. To imbibe positivity being amongst friends. After all, it really is difficult to explain to 'outsiders' the type of life the tea community shares! Let's all pledge to contribute positively towards keeping this forum going, and support its endeavours.

Cheers!

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Sudipa Varma

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Kiran Grover

Brenda Dennis

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# Annual PSEI Golf Tournament 2024

By **Conrad Dennis**

At the first PSEI Committee Meeting for the year 2024, it was decided to kick off, or rather tee off the first event of the year with the 14th edition of the PSEI Golfing Do. The date was finalised as 6th April, and the tee-off slated to start at 3 PM. There was no discussion regarding the venue - as always, it was the iconic Tollygunge Club. Considering both the time constraint as well as the average age factor, it was, as always, a 9-hole tournament with a lot of prizes to be won.

We were so happy with the response and had confirmations pouring in until the last day. Forty-four golfers teed off, including nine lady golfers.



Goody bags from PSEI for each Golfer,

and the first to tee off



It was a fun game on the face of it for us novices, though an underlying sense of competition was palpable among the more competent golfers, who had their side bets going whilst keeping an eagle eye on their partners score cards and strokes! The game took a spiritual turn when Shanu Nag lost his soul (sole!) on the 6th hole!



Meanwhile at the Shamiana...

Chai pe charcha...or beer!





Different strokes for different folks!



Pro at chipping onto the green!



After the last hole was played out, the scores tallied to satisfaction, and handicaps adjusted, the final results were concluded. All said and done, I would have to admit that the busiest hole was the 19th! The evening concluded with a game of Tombola, the Prize Distribution for the Golf, High Tea and drinks!



Winners of the Lucky Ticket Draw - age no bar!





Prize Distribution





The Winners were as follows -

Bruno Cup - Debjyoti Moitra  
 Gautam Sen Cup - Anjani Sinha  
 Absolute Cup - Madan Lal  
 PSEI Putting - Rupa Sidhu

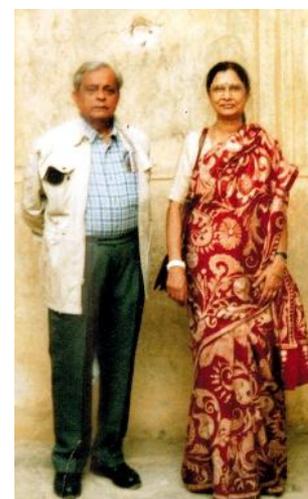
Kuku Memorial Cup - Mamta Bhargava  
 Bacchu Cup - Manoj K Varma  
 PSEI Invitation Cup - Meenakshi Mohta

## Meet Your Members

By **Brenda Dennis**

Mr Dilip Moitra retired from DBITA in 2001 as Secretary, and has been the backbone of the Planters' Society of Eastern India, PSEI, looking after the accounts and giving his valuable advice whenever it is needed. He is an avid Bridge player, and I must add he is good at it, and plays every week. I am so happy that even after knowing him for so many years, when I finally interviewed him, I got to know so much about the life he has led in the plantations of the Doors.

*What was it that made you think of joining the Tea Industry?* I started off with Indian Oxygen and I then came to know from my father's



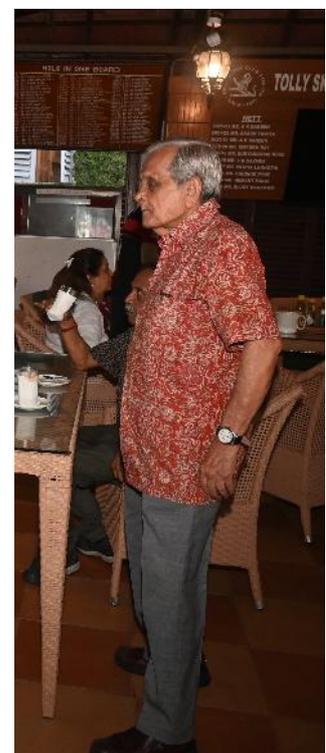
colleague that an organisation called the ITA or Indian Tea Association, was looking to recruit a Labour Advisor in the Tea sector in North Bengal for a region commonly referred to as DOOARS. When I was interviewed, the first thing I was asked was if I would be happy leaving city life and going into the wilderness. I was very keen to experience this new and , in a way mysterious life; and I must have said the correct things as I got the job and off I went to Nagrakata! There, I was asked by the then Secretary, Joe D'Souza, how I thought I would get along with the 'tea people' and I told him "Surely Planters understand quality and don't bother about caste or creed!" In a few days I started settling down and meeting a lot of the Planters and so life in tea began for me.

*He says he has had lovely times in Tea and mostly work-wise. As a human being, the best experience is in Tea! The quality of life was also clean, pollution free, in the midst of nature. What were your early days in Tea like?*

The work-life balance was very good in those days. There were two Club days, one on Wednesdays and one at the weekend. Every Wednesday there was a High Tea catered by one of the gardens in rotation and it was wonderful to see how the senior Planters' wives would guide the new brides and advise them on cooking, catering, gardening, decor and even etiquette, which was a great learning for my wife Protima and also for me. I particularly remember Mrs Kanak Saxena whom I found most helpful and the epitome of a Burra Memsahib.

*What was it like being in the Tea Garden in those days?* All visitors coming in from the City would be very impressed with the huge bungalows, the lawns, the *maalibaris* and all the servants, but life was actually quite hard those days. There was government electricity, and bungalows used to run on generators. After one got home from work it was actually quite lonely because most of the children were sent to boarding schools. The only reason why a Manager of a Tea Estate was given such luxuries was so that they would stay back, like an incentive. It took a special type of person who would actually enjoy the life and spend thirty to forty years in these surroundings.

It was a lovely experience reminiscing with Mr Moitra. He presently lives in Jodhpur Park, Kolkata, with his wife Protima. He is still actively involved in the PSEI, and also in the Jodhpur Park Residents' Association, where his valuable inputs are greatly appreciated. Their daughter Nivedita is married, and stays with her family in Kolkata.



# My Olympic Adventure

By **Namita Ahmed**

Winter is usually not a popular time to visit the United States, but when that country finally reopened its borders to visitors at the end of 2021, Nisar and I took one of the first available flights out - we weren't going to let snowstorms or blizzards stand in the way of our long awaited reunion with our sons! When the euphoria of being together as a family after two long years settled, the boys announced that we were going to attend some of the trials for the US Winter Olympics team! Since the US was at that time swamped by the Omicron wave they thought that the safest option for a short family vacation would be to spend as much time outdoors!

After several shopping trips to kit both of us out with the appropriate winter gear (nothing we had brought with us from India was deemed suitable for this trip) we set out on our five-day outdoor adventure. The change in weather became discernible just half an hour out from the boys' home in Princeton, New Jersey, where we'd only experienced some light snowfall during the past couple of weeks. As we drove north through New York state and entered the Adirondacks, the snow became increasingly more visible and, by the time we reached our hotel at Plattsburgh, just north of Lake Placid, there was almost a foot of snow in the parking area! Our first outdoor experience was at the Cumberland Bay State Park which skirts Lake Champlain where we were greeted by the incongruous sight of a sandy beach with snow and ice! We also discovered that walking in that is challenging and exhausting.



*Lake Placid*



As we drove from Plattsburgh to the ski slopes of Lake Placid, the rain and freezing temperatures had turned the overnight snow on the roads to ice, making them rather treacherous. However, thanks to the efficiency of the local administrations in the US who do a consistently exceptional job of clearing and salting the roads, we arrived safely at the site of

the Olympic trials. For our family of sports enthusiasts, who regularly follow both the Winter and Summer Olympics, witnessing the US team trials at Lake Placid, the venue for 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympics, was undoubtedly the highlight of the trip.

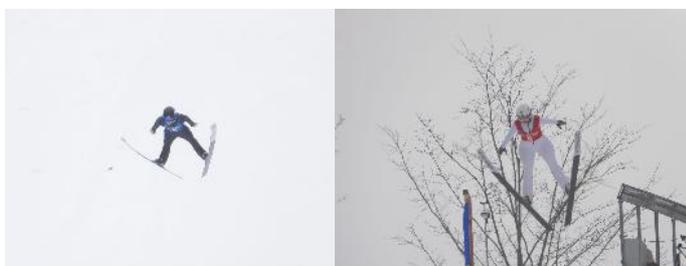


*Bobsled trials*



*Olympic Bobsled Centre and track*

Watching the fearless ski-jumpers take off reminded us of the film 'Eddie the Eagle' - the true story of a man's brave and determined quest to represent his nation at the Winter Olympics. Our sons' attempt at the bobsleigh run at the Olympic venue was reminiscent of "Cool Runnings", the inspiring movie about the Jamaican bobsleigh team, unlikely heroes of the 1988 Winter Olympics. As they hurtled down the track and negotiated tricky corners at a speed of approximately 55 mph (88 kmph), Nisar and I waited at the viewing gallery to get a photograph. We had less than 2 seconds to get the picture as they shot past us, but infinitely more challenging was the 15 minute wait inside the gallery, at a temperature of -16°C, for their run to commence! We were happy to get outside again where the temperature was a mere -10°C!



*Zuber and Tahir's Cool Runnings*



We were also struck by the incredible spirit of the spectators - many of them with small children and family pets in tow - who had travelled from different parts of the country, to witness the trials and support the athletes. They stood outside for hours in sub-zero temperatures, vigorously waving their American flags and cowbells, cheering on the aspiring Olympians. Later, at the Lake Placid Olympic Museum we relived the "Miracle on Ice" of an US ice hockey team consisting of amateurs defeating the fancied team of Russian professionals to eventually win gold at the 1980 Winter Games at Lake Placid, and also learnt more about Eric Heiden's amazing haul of five gold medals in speed skating at the same games.

Besides being a renowned Olympic venue, the village of Lake Placid, 4 miles long and 1.5 miles wide, with a population of 2500, is a picturesque and quaint mountain town that attracts visitors from all over the world throughout the year. We enjoyed exploring Main Street with its

upscale shops, bars and restaurants located on the shores of Mirror Lake and, also visited other scenic resorts and attractions in the Adirondacks area. Most challenging, exciting and memorable were our hikes, in ice and snow, at the High Falls Gorge - a 22 acre nature park - and at the Ausable Chasm - a sandstone gorge also known at the "Little Grand Canyon of the East". We also took the car ferry across Lake Champlain from Plattsburgh, New York to Grand Isle, Vermont and drove down to Burlington, a vibrant University town perched on a hill overlooking Lake Champlain. Church Street, a pedestrian-only walkway, is the centre of downtown activity with numerous streets branching off it, filled with cafes, bars, restaurants, upscale boutiques and shops. The Burlington Waterfront Park is a short walk away and the boardwalk runs along the lake's edge - offering spectacular views of the lake framed by the Adirondack Mountains.



Initially nervous about venturing out when the country was in the grip of a Covid wave, we were impressed and reassured by how strictly the Covid mandates and social distancing protocols were enforced and adhered to in the states of New Jersey, New York and Vermont. Masks were mandatory at all restaurants, shops and other public venues and, in many parts of New York State, even outdoors! Most establishments also required vaccination certificates. Nevertheless, we still made a conscious effort to spend most of the trip outdoors and as a result, Nisar and I mastered the art of dressing in several layers of clothing which we took off and put back on again as the weather conditions changed! This gave us the confidence to brave the snow and ice and venture out for several long hikes on our own after we returned to Princeton. We're winter veterans now.



Did you know? It takes around 2,000 tiny leaves to make just one pound of finished tea. There are more than 1,500 types of teas in the world. Tea plants grow wild in parts of Asia, but over 25 countries cultivate tea as a plantation crop. The very best tea comes from high elevations and is hand-picked.





## A Memorable Evening with the Grand Young Man of Tea

By **Sudipa Varma**

It was with much excitement that I looked forward to my trip to Assam last month. A trip of many firsts - the first time in eighteen years accompanying Manoj while he was on his official monthly visit; first time in a decade going back to Assam; and the first time I was going to meet the legendary Mr. Sagar Mehta after decades. Let's cut straight to the last one!

We were graciously invited to Khumtai T.E. one evening. On the (relatively) short drive there, our hosts Vikas and Meenakshi, and Manoj, shared their many memories with Mr. Mehta. My takeaway from their stories was the warmth, admiration and respect that underlined the high regard they held for him. On a more personal level, I remembered my father always speaking fondly of him. This was a really important parameter, as there were barely a handful of people he'd held in high esteem!

As we drove up to the Khumtai Burra Bungalow, the beautifully manicured lawns enthralled us. Ushered into the drawing room, it was as though we were back in another era of *chai bagaan* culture. In walked Mr. Mehta, greeting us individually. That little attention he gave to the welcome; the extra relevant sentence directed to each of us in turn - that's the magic of turning a simple greeting into an extraordinary one! Manoj was directed to the sideboard holding the best whiskey bottles to do the needful, and I quickly snagged a place next to Mr. Mehta on the sofa, so that my barrage of questions could begin. It was a bonus that his son Alok was visiting too. Whiskey glasses in hand, I wasted no more time..



*What led him to join tea?* Though Mr. Mehta had earned a post-graduate degree as well as an MBA (the first batch when the course was introduced), jobs were scarce in 1952-54. Tea seemed a viable and attractive option, and he thought he'd give it a try. That was in 1954, and seventy years on, he's still excelling with ease. With him at the helm, the approximately 1100 hectares of Khumtai T.E. continues to produce some of the best tea from Assam. As the men talked 'tea', it was apparent Mr. Mehta was an expert at multi-tasking, as he was also ensuring that snacks were being replenished and served to all by his staff, commanding them with very subtle signals, all while discussing garden labour issues.

They had a house guest staying that evening at Khumtai, who had lately

developed an interest in golf. Our host had had the foresight to set up an indoor carpet putting scenario for our entertainment. Meenakshi and Vikas are very fond of fruit, and have planted a great variety of fruit in their own bungalow garden, with varieties from around the world. There was a platter of regally dark Californian grapes and succulent peaches, as well as guacamole made from avocados from the Khumtai BurraKothi garden. The little details organised by Mr. Mehta for his guests underlines the keen interest and effort that he puts into each relationship or activity. Well thought out and from the heart. Even though I'd last met him whilst still in school decades ago, he made me feel I was a dear friend. It's a terrific quality and one that earns my respect completely.



We spoke about his late wife, and I wondered how and where they'd met. Mr. M chuckled and said their respective fathers planned it all. He met the future Mrs M, Shashi, in Patiala at a meeting set up by their dads. He went with little hope to the meeting, as she was not only an MBA, but was at the time employed in a good position at the World Bank in Washington. Why would she want to throw that all away and join him in the remote tea estates, he wondered. "but she said 'yes', surprisingly," he says. There is such a wealth of affection in his voice as he recounts how, even as she tried to overcome the frustration of not being able to return to her work, she devoted her life to bringing up their children, Alok and Rohini, and to the family and her new life in tea. It's very clear that she is greatly missed.

Seventy-plus successful years in tea is no mean feat. There has to be some magical mantra to this success? Discipline and strict adherence to timing, believes Mr. Mehta. He is up at 4AM each day, in office and in the garden by 7AM. Back for breakfast by 9, before another garden *chukker*. Lunch at 1PM, back at office by 3PM, and work until 6:30-7PM. I hoped he couldn't tell by looking at me how difficult it is for me to get up for a walk each morning!



I recounted an incident which took place in 1967, to which he listened with attention, as though my words were really important. After I'd finished speaking, he gently corrected me - "It was in 1968". Phenomenal memory, or did I mention that already?

Thank you for a wonderful evening, Uncle Sagar. There is still so much we can all learn from you. I'm definitely looking forward to spending some time with you again.

The Ancient Tea Horse Route - This 6th-Century trade route mostly ran through Yunnan, Sichuan, and Tibet. The people of the Yunnan and Sichuan provinces exchanged tea for horses with people in Tibet, giving the road its name. This trade route stretched almost 1,400 miles (2,250 kilometers) and was one of the harshest trails in Asia. At the time, it took about three months and they had to traverse four deadly passes that stretched to 1,700 feet (520 meters) in height. This was all to exchange 130 pounds (60 kilograms) of tea for a single horse.

# The Green Green Grass of Home

By **Narayani Nag**

Wherever I am wander, wherever I may roam,  
 May it be Mumbai, Paris, London or Rome  
 It's the sights and sounds and smells of my  
 childhood that keep coming back to me.  
 The smell of freshly cut grass or a single fruit  
 hanging from a mulberry tree,  
 The crunch of gravel as my Dad's Jeep came  
 hurtling down the long drive  
 Or the buzzing of bees around the ancient  
 beehive

The welcome whirr every evening of the soda  
 machine  
 And the clang of the full soda bottles with  
 marbles of green  
 The silent pitter-patter of footsteps of the  
 domestic staff  
 Who even if a joke was cracked in front of  
 them, would never laugh!  
 The smell of Waxpol polish on the floors  
 And the shining brass knobs on the doors  
 The great big splashes of water as we dived  
 into the pool  
 An activity that stopped when we headed  
 back to school

The sound of the mower on acres of green  
 lawn  
 And the amazing birdsongs from dusk to  
 dawn  
 The bearers in their starch white uniforms,  
 turbaned and smart  
 They looked so formal and took their servility  
 to another level of art



The aroma of freshly baked buns and  
 bread  
 How could we ever those extra pounds  
 shed?  
 Slathered with cream and home-made jam  
 And the yummiest sandwiches with butter  
 and Keventer's ham

The humming of the cicadas as soon as  
 night fell  
 And the crickets and dragonflies that  
 arrived with the sound of the dinner bell  
 The memories of the pluckers picking two  
 leaves and a bud  
 The sound of the tractor carrying coal,  
 going thud thud

The blazing coal fires in the lovely old  
 fireplaces  
 Of which nowadays there are no traces  
 The smell of tea and the sight of carpets of  
 green  
 Laying the ground with the most perfect  
 sheen

This idyllic childhood may have long gone  
 And I am now much older and much worn  
 But these memories will ever stay strong  
 And in my heart and in my mind  
 Will forever be a poem or a song.



## প্রেম

### সোনালী ঘোষ

তোমার চোখের আলো, হৃদয়ে এক রঙিন ছবি,  
 প্রেমের মধুর গান, ভোরের এক সুরেলা তান।  
 হাসির মধ্যে লুকিয়ে আছে সবুজ বন,  
 প্রেমের মাধুর্যে, বিশ্বয়ে ভরা মন।  
 তোমার হাসি একটি মেঠোসূর,  
 আমার চোখে তুমি চাঁদের স্নিগ্ধ চিকুর।  
 মনে বিষাদের সুর হলেও আনন্দ টোকা দেয় হৃদয়ে  
 তোমার উষ্ণ উপস্থিতিতে।  
 মেঘের ভেলায় ছুটে আসে বৃষ্টি,  
 আমার ভেতরে মূর্ছিত হয়  
 তোমার প্রেমের সুরগীতি।  
 প্রেমের রঙে রঙিন হৃদয়,  
 তোমায় সাথে চাই সব সময়।  
 প্রেমের মধুর রঙে রঙিন আভায়  
 আমার হৃদয়ে একটি অমৃত ফোঁটায়  
 বিশ্বয়ে ভরা দুই চোখের কোণ,  
 প্রেমের মাধুর্যে আমি আছি সারাফণ।



PSEI Members are welcome to send in entries for this bi-annual magazine for in-house circulation. We would love to print your stories, poems, recipes, anecdotes - anything you'd like to contribute!

## माँ तेरी वंदना

### Joy Deep Ghosh

माँ तेरे कितने है रूप  
 हर रूप में तेरा ही स्वरूप।  
 तेरे ही दम पे ये वसुंधरा है टिकी  
 इस सृष्टि की रचना तूने ही तो की।  
 आज मैं करता हूँ माँ तेरी वंदना  
 भारत के अखण्ड सौभाग्य का  
 माँ मुझको वर देना।

जननी है तू समस्त मानव जाति की  
 जननी है तू समस्त प्रजातियों की  
 प्रत्येक जीव की उत्पत्ति तुझसे है हुई  
 फिर समझता है क्यों मानव  
 तू उसकी है हुई।

बालक के कृन्दन पे  
 माता विचलित है होती  
 विनाश की ओर अग्रसर बालक की दशा  
 माँ के दिल को नशतर है चुभोती।

पश्चिम की ऐसी हवा है चली  
 बह गया मन, बह गया तन  
 बदली है भाषा-बोली।  
 नया युग है, नयी पिढ़ी है  
 नया है आचार-व्यवहार।  
 इस युग में अब जल्द ही होगा अंधकार।

कालचक्र के कलयुग का  
 अब आ गया है अंत  
 अगली बार जब जन्म देना माँ  
 ना देना ये दंभ।

# The PSEI Monsoon Mela 2024

On 6th July, we had the First PSEI Monsoon Mela. Held at the Bijoy Manzil, Burdwan Palace, Kolkata, a venue we were graciously gifted for the occasion, it was an exciting evening of fun and games.

Getting set up...



Parsi n Sri Lankan fare and Phuchka n Chaat



Fourteen stalls with tempting ware, the umpteen Raffle gifts displayed, and the Ahmeds getting ready at the entry desk!

All Raffle gifts were generously contributed by PSEI Members



We requested Members to send in pictures of the Monsoon Mela - everyone was so busy enjoying themselves at the noisiest games stalls; eating up everything at the food stalls in record time; and eagerly scouting the numerous stalls with their hand-made products, that very few paused to click a pic! An afternoon thoroughly enjoyed by all, and many could be seen leaving with loot from the Hoopla stall, as well as their purchases. There were so many Raffle prizes too, and the pictures below are just the few we managed to capture





Snapshots from  
the afternoon...

## Winter Fare

### Chocolate Peanut Butter Pie

by **Joya Roy**



#### Ingredients:

For the Crust - 200gm Marie biscuits (or any chocolate biscuit), 1Tbsp light brown sugar, 90gm melted butter

For the Chocolate Peanut Butter filling - 1 Tbsp gelatine, a little boiling water, 130gm sugar, 30gm cocoa powder, 1Tbsp coffee powder, 35gm cornflour, 1/2tsp salt, 3 cups milk, 100gm cooking chocolate, 135gm peanut butter, 2tsp vanilla extract

#### Method -

Crust - Grind biscuits and sugar until they are fine crumbs, add melted butter and mix to combine well. Pour and press into a 9" flan tin to cover base and sides, to form an even pie crust. Bake for ten minutes at 150°C. Set aside to cool

#### Chocolate Peanut Butter filling -

1. Dissolve gelatine in a small bowl by adding the boiling water, stirring well to completely dissolve. Set aside
2. In a saucepan, mix the sugar, cocoa, coffee, corn starch and salt. Gradually add the milk, mixing until smooth. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens and comes to a boil; about 10-15 minutes. The mixture should resemble a thick custard. Remove from heat
3. Add peanut butter and chocolate to the mixture until melted and well incorporated. Stir in the vanilla extract and gelatine mixture
4. Pour the chocolate mixture into the cooled pie crust garnish with salted peanuts (optional)
5. Chill the pie in the fridge for at least 3 hours, or preferably overnight, until well chilled and set. Slice and serve!

This pie should be stored in the fridge. It can be made a day or two earlier, prior to serving. The recipe can be halved for a smaller pie.

## Pork Sorpotel

by **Brenda Dennis**

Ingredients - 2kg pork, 20 dry red chilli, 1Tbsp cumin seeds, 1tsp mustard seeds, 1 Tbsp turmeric, 7 cloves, 10 peppercorns, 1" piece cinnamon, 1 bottle vinegar (this will be required for washing the meat, grinding spices, and adding to the cooking pot), 6 garlic cloves, 2" piece ginger, 5 green chilli, salt to taste, 6 Tbsp white oil

Method -

1. Grind all the spices to a fine paste in a little vinegar. Cut pork into small cubes and wash only with vinegar
2. Place pork in a dish, cover and let it cook in its own juice until dry
3. Add the oil and fry the meat until it turns golden-brown
4. Add the ground spices and cook until oil separates
5. Add vinegar to cover and cook until pork is tender

This can be stored in an airtight container in the fridge for a long time, and is enjoyed as a side dish or as a pickle.



## Kaccha Biryani

by **Dipi Ghaffar**



1. Grind to a paste a small raw papaya with skin, then rub 3/4kg big pieces of mutton with this paste. Leave aside for at least 1 hour
2. Chop 4 large onions, then fry until a golden brown. Reserve 1/4 of the fried onions for later. Grind the rest into a paste
3. Make garam masala by dry grinding together - 1" piece cinnamon, 4 cardamoms, 5 cloves, 1tsp cumin seeds, pinch nutmeg, one leaf of *javitri* (mace)
4. To meat, mix - ground garam masala, 1/2 cup *dahi* (yogurt), 1Tbsp ground ginger, 3/4tbsp ground garlic, ground fried onions. Mix well and set aside
5. Add to the water to boil rice - 2 black cardamoms, 2 bay leaves, 1tsp salt. Bring to the boil, then add washed rice and cook until rice is 3/4 done. Discard the cardamoms and bay leaves and drain water
6. In a large pan, layer meat, then pour over some white oil so meat is well coated, then rice, then sprinkle mint leaves, and some of the fried onions. Add the rest of the rice, then mint leaves, and the rest of the fried onions. Optional - add 2-3 strands of saffron in 1/4 cup milk and sprinkle over the rice. Drizzle 2 Tbsp ghee on top
7. Seal with a tight-fitting lid, and seal the edges with *atta*. Cook on high flame until *atta* cracks, then cook in the oven for 1.5 hours or place sealed pan on a *tawa* and continue cooking

This is a light and delicious biriyani. Will serve 3-4 people.

## Winter Warmers

### Miracle Soup

By **Bella Jhingan**



This recipe will serve 3-4 people. Multiply quantities as required. Tip - use a chopper!

1. In a large saucepan, add the following ingredients - 1/4 cup carrot, peeled and finely chopped, 1/4 cup French beans, deveined and finely chopped, 1/4 cup finely chopped cauliflower, 1/4 cup mushrooms, finely chopped, 1/4 cup finely chopped chicken (optional), 1Tbsp finely chopped onion, 1tsp finely grated ginger, 2 garlic pods, grated, 5 cups water, 1 vegetable stock cube (optional), 1/4tsp salt (omit salt if adding the stock cube). Bring to boil, then cover lightly and boil until reduced to 4 cups

2. Add 1tsp corn flour to 1/4 cup water or milk, and stir into the soup in the pan, ensuring that there are no lumps. Add 1/4 cup finely chopped celery leaves. Stir on low heat until soup is a creamy texture.

3. Garnish with bits of fried garlic and croutons. Add a tsp of butter to each serving if liked. This is a very soul-satisfying soup on cold evenings, and a favourite in our family. Enjoy!



### French Onion Soup

By **Joya Roy**

Ingredients - 5 large onions, finely sliced, 2Tbsp butter, 3 big cloves garlic, crushed and chopped, 1tsp sugar, 750ml chicken stock, 1Tbsp flour, salt to taste, 4 slices French bread, 150gm grated cheese

Method -

1. Add butter to a pan on medium heat, add the sugar and let it caramelize
2. Add sliced onions and fry until rich golden brown, then add garlic and brown
3. Add the seasoning and the stock, simmer for 15 minutes
4. In a cupped the flour to some stock and mix well so that it forms a smooth mixture. Add to the soup, stirring occasionally until the soup thickens. Remove from heat
5. Butter both sides of the slices of French bread. Sprinkle half the cheese on top and bake in the oven until bread is crisp and cheese has melted
6. Pour hot soup into individual soup bowls. Place a slice of the hot cheese toast on top, then sprinkle remaining cheese over

Vegetarians may substitute chicken stock with a vegetable stock cube, in which case avoid adding salt. A hearty soup to enjoy in Winter!

# Butterflies, Flowers and Tea

A I H U C Z R R Y A F Y T I B Z R  
 G M L C H D O O T F E Y E U Y D I  
 T Y C X A O O P E T Q U A B S G Y  
 E K D Z M X L Y A E U J C L Q G A  
 A Q A R O P O V Q R D D U A E P H  
 T N R T M F N D W N I I P C G H L  
 I N J T I P G S D O T E G K U E O  
 M A E E L P Y A O O S V P E T R W  
 E B E A E O Q K Z N V T A R W B U  
 W V L P T N Y O S N A C K S J A F  
 E K I O Y C H A I W C M F N L L U  
 S P N T R O E O Q N E Q V B S Y V  
 I R G S A U C E R S V M I R X J T  
 P P J S I N T Y A D W Y S X I H D  
 P Z O D R J D L J I H O T D S H T  
 E I C E D T E A Q R V M H B R E W  
 D X K C I I Q A A S O O T H I N G

darjeeling afternoon chamomile soothing icedtea  
 saucers teatime herbal oolong sipped  
 snacks teacup teapot black brew  
 chai hot Tea



## Blossoming To Bloom Tea Party

1. AET \_\_\_\_\_
2. VEOLSG \_\_\_\_\_
3. TEA CPSU \_\_\_\_\_
4. AET GBAS \_\_\_\_\_
5. IOSCKEO \_\_\_\_\_
6. SNHIAD \_\_\_\_\_
7. PUSRCMET \_\_\_\_\_
8. IHHG ATE \_\_\_\_\_
9. ACIH \_\_\_\_\_
10. TAE POT \_\_\_\_\_
11. UGM \_\_\_\_\_
12. STAH \_\_\_\_\_
13. RSSDEES \_\_\_\_\_
14. SGUAR \_\_\_\_\_
15. YNEOH \_\_\_\_\_



Is Your Brain in the Game?

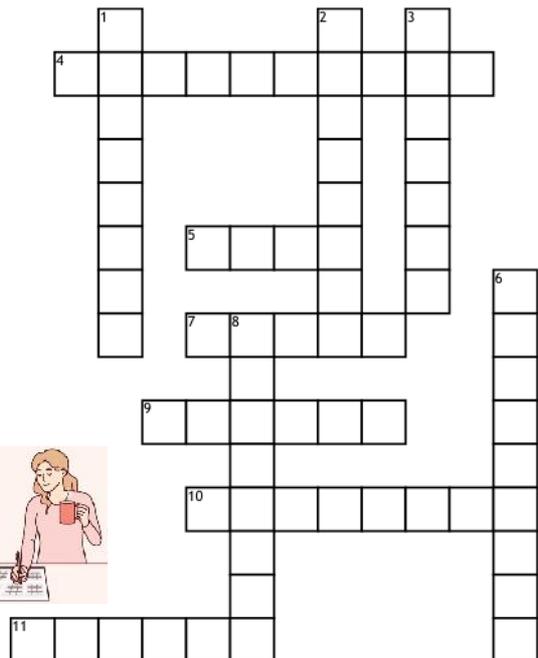


### Across

4. First step in the process of black tea
5. Spiced black tea
7. Another name for brew
9. Over-brewed tea
10. Process of extracting flavor
11. Not able to be seen through(not transparent)

### Down

1. Type of water used
2. Stimulant in tea
3. Tea bags are made from
6. Green tea is not
8. Relaxing agent in tea



## Yesterday Once More...

By **Anju Munshi**

A whiff greeted me, a fragrance burst around me, a scent that tickled me from within covered me from head to toe. My mind got flooded with undecided emotions, that which didn't know whether to cry or to smile.



A flutter in the heart coupled with a soft mistiness overpowered the eyes. This was my place of growth; from a young shy bride to a strong resilient and strong minded individual. Bleary eyed, I captured a faint scent of time. Time gone by. There was a hint of mortality.

My feelings had no definite name not even claimed an apt literary definition, except that it felt unreal. The passage of time spelt an uncanny fleetingness. The cat curled up at the entrance and watched me with a feline scorn or a questioning adulation, looking rather curious, with an undertone of affection even intimacy. It is said cats have seven lives. Maybe she knew me from before or her family had seen me, or we were in close association with one another some thirty years ago in a tea estate of the eastern side of India.

I looked cautiously in the direction of the formidable bungalow, where it all started. A strong bungalow that oozed out regality and perfection. A mesh room called the *jaali kamra* leading to a formal sitting room; an informal room, a children's room and then on the side flanks stand the majestic, restful bedrooms, cleverly designed with utility and beauty in mind. The *jaali kamra* is the traditional entrance to the bungalow and home to many species of house plants ferns and cacti and because of the mesh enclosure, it keeps getting its daily dose of oxygen that heals the eyes and the mind...



I entered to see a book-less wall, an empty children's room, for it was turned into an informal sitting place, a den. Formal décor, straight simple lines, nothing out of place, figurines adorned

the tables, abstract frames hung side by side...It was beautifully kept by another family who were serving their tenure in the company. It wasn't my space anymore, but the soul seemed to be lingering somewhere inside this façade, in hidden corners, on top of a tree, part of which



actually peeped into the kitchen lending an oozing charm and divinity to the whole place, gazed into my face inquiringly, confused, for a network of age spots and fine creases made an artwork across my face. I nodded..yes, it's me!

As tea was being served by the gracious hostess, nothing short of a ceremony in the estates, I sat down reminiscing. A visit down the corridors of the mind is a pleasurable exercise quite often tinged with sighs and elusive areas of unfulfilled agendas, eventually resulting in a lumpy heavy throat. No, it is not regret but it's the passage of time that makes one wonder and sit in awe. For now, the children have flown the nest, health has a different status update and many friends and family members who helped you start your journey holding your hands are not there anymore. It is a mix.

For me to come from the northernmost state of India to the northeastern may appear like a slight shift, a mere slide but actually it was a noteworthy change in terms of culture, habitat, food etc. It was different but exciting.

North Bengal and Assam in the East have a very vibrant tribal heritage that is engaged in land cultivation, tea plantations and local indigenous craft. Both places had one thing in common though. Abundant greenery, free flowing rivers and rivulets, enchanting and picturesque landscape unspoilt by man. Above all a free spirit, which I think I imbibed.



I mixed and blended into the new eco system with complete ease. My tiny bits and chips assembled all over again and moulded me into a person who was getting aware of the magic and the power of love. I was being reintroduced to the world and to myself as a mother, a spouse and as a homemaker. I was transitioning. The molecular emotions of a spouse and mother were being explored and what lay latent under years of protection and patriarchy was being excavated... The Universe had put in front of me a mirror, to study myself, my inclinations. Growing up in a community that had well defined boundaries for genders, I gradually allowed myself to ease out of such lines. My husband helped me in making it even more easy for me.

Grateful. This was my place. This was my home. And this is where I had come back to after three decades, where a cocooned worm had taken on different colours and the strength to fly high. Right now, as I am writing, I inhale the fresh air; absorb the moments and listen to the happy chirps and the busy buzz of nature. The garden siren says it's time to enjoy a break for the garden workers as well as for me. No, not a coffee break; that would be a sacrilegious term that amounts to a kind of betrayal. No one says it, but I feel so. It is not that you cannot have it; the tea bungalow staff gives you the



best cappuccino that one can ever have, but to me it doesn't feel right for I see the hard-working pluckers pluck every *two and a bud* with the utmost care to ensure a perfect cuppa. It is an unbeatable sentiment. Man, and Nature strive in unison to give you the best cup.

My cup of tea arrives, in the most glamorous way, again an elaborate ceremony, even though just a cup of tea, in a tray with a well adorned tea accessories, beckoning me to sip it and energise myself with the fresh aroma.



## Turning Dreams into Reality

By **Harsh Kumar**

I joined tea gardens in 1973, after a short stint with Telco Pimpri following my graduation from IIT Kanpur. My first Garden was Lakhipara belonging to Duncan Brothers, and I continued with the same Company until my retirement from Bagracot T.G. in 2009. My wife Neelam and I formed very close associations with tea gardens workers during our tenure in various Tea Gardens in North Bengal, integrating ourselves into their culture and attending functions, as part of our duties. We were deeply inspired to do something of a permanent nature with long-term continuity and self-sustainment towards the welfare of the labour.

North Bengal, comprising DOOARS, Terai and Darjeeling, has a total population of 22 lac labour in 450 tea gardens, of which 80% are below the poverty line. We were overwhelmed looking at the amount of work that was possible in order to make a difference in their lives.

One fine morning in 2005, my life completely changed when my wife suffered a massive stroke, resulting in her losing speech and becoming paralysed. She regained some speech and movement, and while we continued to fight for her recovery, we began the NGO Niswarth in 2006, to work towards our shared dream of helping the labour. It first began in a house donated by Duncans, called Niswarth House, and has since been added to by the DM Jalpaiguri, with another 6 acres of land, or land elsewhere when relocated. We have since been developing Niswarth Centre at Bagracot since inception.



Neelam unfortunately passed on in 2008, but her dream is thriving. Niswarth runs tailoring and computer classes, and a school for Deaf and Mute children in DOOARS. Niswarth also runs Camps occasionally, distributing blankets, hearing aids and wheelchairs. There is also an Annual Sports event for the disabled population in the tea gardens. To date, Niswarth has periodically held disability camps to arouse awareness about the differently-abled, free Eye Camps with Lions Netralaya, free Dental Camps and Blood Donation Camps. During Covid, 709 blankets, raincoats worth Rs 35,000, and food packets worth Rs 1,08,000 were distributed.

Relief Camps were organised during the Bihar floods, Niswarth volunteers went by boat to distribute blankets, clothes and rations to those in distress there.

It may be noteworthy to mention that Niswarth does not receive any financial support from the government, State or Central. We are deeply grateful to the APPL Foundation, and to Mira Devi Berlia LR Social Foundation, for supporting Niswarth's two projects under their CSR programmes. Niswarth is still miles away from becoming financially self-sustaining and depend heavily on annual memberships and donations.

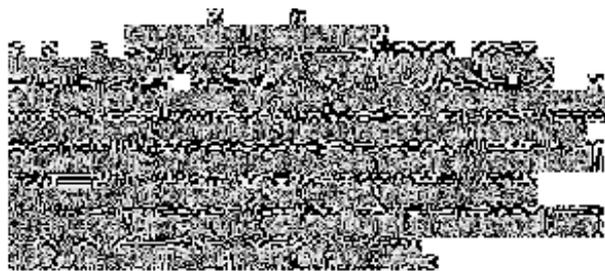
We strongly believe that we are not alone in our effort to make a difference to the lives of the specially-abled under-privileged population in the tea gardens. Niswarth would be grateful for your membership, which may be accessed on their website [www.niswarth.com](http://www.niswarth.com)



In the 1830s, British demand for tea was incredibly high, and the only source for it was China. Britain's problem was that the Chinese government decreed that all exports had to be paid for in silver, and as a result, British silver reserves began to suffer. They wanted their silver back and devised a plan to get it.

The British started growing opium in Bengal, which they then sold to the Chinese in return for silver. They then used the silver to buy more tea. This created the problems of opium addicts and dwindling silver supplies in China, and as a result, the Chinese banned opium.

The British then turned to the use of force to resolve the situation, and the First Opium War was fought between 1839 and 1842. Conflicts would continue throughout the next decades, and despite having won the war, the British decided to take matters into their own hands and start their own tea plantations in India.



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