

# Why Tea?

Dear Readers,

As we went about gathering and compiling material for this issue, the one question that kept coming back to us, is why tea? How is tea, relevant to the core sector? Like, why is a magazine focused on steel, coal, power and ports, picking up tea, that too as the cover story?

The reasons are not far to seek. For one, the importance of tea as an industry and as the driving force behind the economy of the entire north eastern and eastern parts of the country cannot be over emphasized. While its influence has reduced considerably from the days of yore it still packs a potent punch.

Secondly, tea as an industry has many an achievements that India Inc. Can take lessons from. Managing Agency may today be as dead as a doornail, but some other corporate legacies, like family owned corporations, auction, export and broking houses are thriving. As are corporate houses, that have long become institutions in themselves. The oldest tea company in the world. The first Indian company to strike oil in India (a subsidiary of Assam Company). The oldest tea auctioneer. The first company to embrace holistic farming practices, incorporating socially conscious organic farming practices. Companies whose heritage and legacy make them stand tall – companies who have stood the test of time, constantly evolving to remain relevant to market forces but are also firm in their conviction. Companies, whose guiding philosophies and management practices can and should become, staple for students and management practitioners alike.

The social infrastructure that the gardens built and sustained are also reason for us to cover tea. Here, in inhospitable and often hostile terrain, the early planters had created their gardens of Eden – and corporate India will do well to imbibe the thought and spirit that had gone into the creation and continued running of the same.

However, the key point that needs to be mentioned is that it is perhaps not entirely correct to compare the tea industry with the brick and mortar. For tea brews its own romance, unleashing aromas that are impeccably pukka on the one hand and are steeped in its own nostalgia, the kind of which can neither be matched by molten metal or cold steel.

Besides, after being in the doldrums for almost a decade, the industry is just about to greet its first flush of success and we believe that this is just the right time to take a look at this unique commodity, the contributor of vital foreign exchange in the national kitty.

A point of caution though: while the industry, to the last man standing is busy heralding the good times, one man refuses to tow the line and is pointing out the follies that the industry is perpetrating, sowing in its wake the seeds of its own potential destruction.

As always we have tried to compile a basket that has something for every palette. Hope you enjoy reading as much as we enjoyed creating the same.

Cheers.

Happy reading,

With Best Regards,

**Suvabrata Ganguly**