Indian Tea: Its Pride and Glory by Ronojoy Ghose

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India is the worldâ€™s second largest tea producer and consumer and it ranks next to China. After being the highest tea producer of the world for nearly hundred years it has been surpassed by China in recent past. Indian tea has extremely been popularized around the world in the brand of Assam Tea and Darjeeling Tea. The process of tea cultivation in India has started since very ancient period. The hint of tea consumption in India was evident from mythological depictions. Tea cultivation can be traced out to the northern and eastern parts of the country since long ago. But commercially, tea started to be produced and manufactured in India only after the advent of the British East India Company.

Indian tea has acquired global recognition. Large numbers of renowned brands like Darjeeling tea, Assam tea etc are available nowadays in the commercial market. The Indian tea industry has evolved over times and it ranks amongst the best technologically advanced tea industries around the globe. The process of tea production, manufacturing, export and other aspects involving this trade in our country are regulated by the Tea Board of India. A number of renowned Indian tea manufacturing companies have successfully taken over many internationally acclaimed brands. The per head consumption of tea in the country is around 800 grams per person because of the huge population in one hand as well as enormous poverty-stricken state on the other.

Even if Indian tea leads the pack amongst the most technologically sound trades, the methods that are generally adapted for the cultivation process, vary in accordance with the tea variety and conditions on which it is grown. Fine tea leaves are plucked by hand and manual shearing equipments are used since tea is grown over steep slopes which are inaccessible to the tractor driven shearing machines. In the early days, manual hand shear machines were utilized by skilled personnel to harvest around 100 kg of tea leaves daily. But in order to maximize the productivity automated machines came to the forefront yielding nearly about 2000 kg instead. But the automated harvesting machine finds greater preference in case of relatively lower quality tea, mostly marketed as tea bags. As soon as harvesting is complete, the plucked leaves are collected and taken for further processing such as drying, cutting and sizing, sieving followed by final packaging, labeling and bulk packing.

Tea industry as a whole has earned enormous international pride for India when Indian tea has been sold at the highest price in international auctions in different parts of the world. This besides, Indian tea has earned substantial foreign exchange through exports over the years. Indian tea industry therefore rightfully deserves to get more improved technological support and more investment from Indian and foreign investors to regain the topmost spot in the international tea trade.

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