

India – Tea Capital of World: A health drink of century

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Kritika Kamthan** The tea industry in India is about 179 years old. India being the largest producer as well as the largest consumer of black tea in the world, tea has become one of the most important commercial crops of the country. The commercial production of tea started in India in the late 1830s, before which, the tea plant was growing wild in the jungles of north east Assam. The Government has been making concerted efforts to push the Indian tea to the forefront of the plantation sector. India obtained Geographical Indication (GI) registrations for Darjeeling, Assam and Nilgiri tea. A geographical indication is a name or sign used on certain products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin (eg. a town, region, or country). The use of a GI may act as a certification that the product possesses certain qualities, or enjoys a certain reputation, due to its geographical origin. The Indian tea logo being registered as a certification mark is a testimony to the quality it offers in terms of a leisure drink. The Indian tea is exported world wide. Some of the major importers of Indian tea include Russia, UK, USA, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Poland, Germany, Afghanistan et al. Apart from India, other countries that produce tea are China, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Turkey, Indonesia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania and others of such likes. There are distinct tea growing regions in India which are geographically separated, thereby, producing entirely different varieties of tea in terms of aroma and flavour. These regions include Darjeeling, Assam, Nilgiri. Darjeeling – Nestling in the foothills of the snow-covered Himalayan range, Darjeeling is home to this exclusive tea. The cool and moist climate, the soil, the rainfall and the sloping terrain all combine to give Darjeeling tea its unique “Muscatel” flavor. The combination of natural factors that give Darjeeling tea its unique distinction is not found anywhere else in the world. The tea has over the years acquired the reputation of being the “Champagne of Teas.” Assam – The land of the Tiger and the one-horned Rhino, Assam ensures a phenomenal tea growth here. These teas offer rich, full-bodied, bright tea liquor. For those who favor a bright, strong cup of tea, Assam is “your cup of tea.” Niligiri – The Blue Mountains or the Nilgiris are situated in South India. They are a picturesque range of undulating hilly landscapes where tea is grown. The climatic conditions favor the fine, elegant flavor and brisk liquor of Nilgiri teas. If you like a fragrant tea with good body and superlative flavour, Nilgiri should be the one for you. **Health Benefits** Studies, across the world, have shown that consuming green tea may help lower the risk of certain cancers and heart diseases, as well as weight loss and protection against Alzheimers. Tea contains caffeine and tannin that gives it tanginess, its scintillating aroma and flavor. It also relieves fatigue and aids lucidity of thoughts and digestion. Studies in China and Japan have shown that tea promotes longer life. The very fact that, Japanese smokers have only half the lung cancer rate as American smokers substantiates the above stated theory. New discoveries about the health benefits of tea have pushed the beverage to the forefront. Its antioxidants, lower cholesterol levels improve cardiovascular health and help protect against some cancers. Some believe its flavonoids may inhibit the growth of plaque on teeth. Flavonoids, an active ingredient of tea, are natural vitamin like compounds. They make blood cells called platelets less prone to clotting, and act as antioxidants, which subdues the free radicals responsible for arterial damage. Tea helps prevent tooth decay as it contains a solid dose of fluoride. Earlier studies on black tea have shown that it can be effective against heart and liver diseases. Properties in green and black tea called antioxidants are thought to be active agents against skin cancer. In the past 10 to 15 years, a growing body of research has shown that foods and vitamins with a strong anti-oxidant effect may reduce the risk of many diseases, including ageing. Whenever someone mentions the word “tea”, normally people will just treat it as a kind of beverage drunk by elderly, or perhaps, it may be a source of inspiration to those poets as well. Tea has been one of the most popular drinks throughout ages and we could find tea-related products everywhere. For instance, scrumptious green tea cake, green tea ice-cream, iced lemon tea, etc, can easily be found in most shops or supermarkets. All these types of food you take in every day are indeed few of the typical examples of tea products. One thing is certain: more

and more people each day are enjoying tea, perhaps not necessarily for the health benefits, but for the taste and refreshment. The health benefits crammed in these minuscule green leaves are indisputable. In the coming years, tea will surely make its impact on the health industry. ***Freelance Writer Disclaimer :** The views expressed by the author in this feature are entirely his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of INVC 

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