

Atomic Energy Central School No. 3 Rawatbhata

Handout Class: X

Sub: English Language & Literature

Chapter 7 - Glimpses of India Part 3- Tea from Assam

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Module: 3/3

Introduction:

Tea is a popular beverage all over the world. Assam is known as the ‘tea country’. However, tea was not discovered in India. Then where was it discovered? How long ago tea was first drunk? These basic questions about tea are discussed in this lesson through a beautiful conversation between two friends- Pranjol and Rajvir who are travelling to Pranjol’s hometown Assam for the summer vacation. Assam has the largest concentration of plantations in the world. During their journey they discuss about the various ‘legends’ that are known to have discovered tea. The story also tells us about the popularity of tea as a beverage.

1. About the Author:

Arup Kumar Dutta is an Indian writer and journalist from Guwahati, Assam. He has written 16 books for adults and 17 adventure novels for young people. In 2014 he was awarded the Life Time Achievement Honour by Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children, New Delhi. He has been also awarded the civilian award Padma Shri by Government of India in 2018.

2. On the Way to Assam:

Rajvir is a student of Delhi. He is classmate of Pranjol, a youngster from Assam. Rajvir has been invited by Pranjol to visit his home during the summer vacation so they go by train. The lesson opens up with a scene set on a train station. There a tea vendor asks the two friends if they would like to buy some freshly-made hot tea. They decide to have two cups of tea joining almost everyone else in their compartment. Pranjol finds an opportunity here to highlight the fact that “almost eighty crore cups of tea are consumed everyday throughout the world.” Rajvir remains surprised on listening to it. Here we come to know that Pranjol is interested in reading detective stories, whereas, Rajvir is more interested in taking pleasure of the scenery and in talking about the increased popularity and use of the tea during the journey.

3. Beauty of Tea Gardens:

As soon as the train started moving, Pranjol got engaged in reading and Rajvir chose to look at the scenic beauty at the moment. The magnificent view of stretched tea gardens looked as a place of the green paddy fields. Rajvir had never seen tea gardens. He had never seen so much greenery before so he became very excited. There were trees' shades over the area. As far as he was able to look, only tea bushes were visible so much so that the narrator compared it to a 'sea' of tea bushes. In the background, there were hills with dense forests. In between the tea plantations, there were orderly rows of tall and strong trees that were moving because of the wind. It was an amazing view. There was an ugly building with smoke releasing from all from tall chimneys in the distance. The magical view of the gardens increased his excitement to share his information about tea.

4. Legends about Origin of Tea:

Rajvir read a lot about tea and how it was discovered before visiting the 'tea country'. Rajvir shared that there were many traditional stories about the discovery of tea though no one really knows the exact origin.

There were numerous theories and one of which was about a Chinese Emperor. He had a habit of drinking boiled water. according to the Chinese legend a Chinese emperor used to drink boiled water. Once few tea leaves fell into the boiling water giving a delicious flavour and were liked by the emperor when drank the water.

On being asked by Pranjol, Rajvir told another story about an Indian legend named Bodhidharma. The Indian Legend says that an ancient Buddhist Hermit, Bodhidharma cut off his eyelids to avoid sleepiness. Eventually, tea plants grew out of his eyelids which upon consuming after boiling with water helped in getting rid of sleep. Further, Rajvir highlighted a few facts. He stated that tea dates back to 2700 B.C. and the first tea was consumed in China. All such words such as 'chai and 'chini' have originated from Chinese language. Tea was introduced to Europe quite late- in the sixteenth century where it was considered to have medicinal properties.

5. Approaching Dhekiabari:

The train stopped at Mariani Junction. The boys took their way towards the Dhekiabari Tea Estate, Pranjol's tea garden. Pranjol's parents had come to receive them. After almost an hour, they reached Dhekiabari after taking a turn and making their way through a cattle-bridge. They witnessed acres of tea bushes on both sides. All the bushes were cut to the same height and they had been taken care of. Their tea garden was stretched upon a vast area of land. There were groups of tea-pluckers with bamboo baskets on their backs. They were wearing plastic aprons.

6. In Dhekiabari:

A tea garden, Dhekiabari was managed by Pranjol's father Mr Berua. On their way to the fields, Pranjol's father gave way to a tractor that was loaded with tea leaves. On seeing this, Rajvir

displays his knowledge by mentioning that this is the second sprouting period of the year. This period lasts from May to July and gives excellent yield. Mr Berua appreciated him for his gathered information. Pranjol's father replies that he seems to have done a lot of research before coming. Pranjol, who was excited about learning more about the amazing beverage showed his intention for the same.