

Darjeeling Tea Planter's Journey From Makaibari to Rimpocha



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"Chai Time - A Darjeeling Tea Planter's Journey from Makaibari to Rimpocha," the latest book from Bose Creative Publishers, was launched at a special event held at Berlin Coffee House in Siliguri, 13th April 2025. Besides a galaxy of eminent citizens, participants from 9 countries joined the event on-line.

Authored by Mr. Swaraj Rajah Banerjee, a fourth-generation tea planter in the Darjeeling hills and former doyenne of the renowned Makaibari Tea Estate, the 583-page book spans 40 captivating chapters. It narrates Mr. Banerjee's transformative journey from managing Makaibari Tea Estate to establishing the artisanal tea brand Rimpocha.

The book details how Mr. Banerjee, after completing his studies in the United Kingdom during the 1970s, spearheaded pioneering changes in Darjeeling's tea industry. His initiatives included biodynamic and organic practices that revolutionized tea cultivation, with Makaibari becoming the first Darjeeling tea garden to earn organic certification in 1988. In 1993, the estate further adopted Fair Trade policies and biodynamic farming methods, earning Demeter Certification.

During the turbulent Gorkhaland uprising in the 1980s, Banerjee's innovative partnership-to-ownership model sustained Makaibari, even as other tea estates in the region faced closure. Reflecting on his approach, Banerjee emphasizes the role of holistic and sustainable synergy in navigating political upheaval.

Despite personal setbacks, including the destruction of his 160-year-old ancestral home by fire in 2017, Banerjee continued to mentor small tea growers across abandoned Darjeeling hamlets. His efforts fostered low-cost, self-funded, carbon-neutral farming that he claims meets all 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in five hamlets.

With Rimpocha—a name derived from the Lepcha Tibeto-Burman language meaning "reincarnation"—Banerjee's journey showcases resilience, sustainability, and innovation in the tea industry.

Chai Time offers a compelling read for entrepreneurs, tea enthusiasts, planters, historians, and anyone captivated by real-life narratives enjoyed best over a cup of freshly brewed Darjeeling tea.

CM Paul

Former HoD, Dept of Mass Communications at Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati, C.M. Paul was editor of The Herald weekly in Kolkata and director of Don Bosco International News Agency (ANS) based in Rome. He did MA in Journalism & Mass Communication from FORDHAM University, New York.

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