



Tea industry and Jhumoir Dance

For Prelims: Jhumoir dance, [Tea](#), [Geographical Indication](#), [Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana](#)

For Mains: Tea Industry in India – Challenges and opportunities, Sustainable Agriculture in India

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended **Jhumoir Binandini 2025**, a cultural event in Guwahati, Assam, celebrating 200 years of **Assam's [tea industry](#)** and its **Tea Tribe** through the traditional **Jhumoir dance**.

What is Jhumoir Dance?

- **About:** Jhumur, a traditional folk dance of **Assam's Adivasi tea tribes**, was brought by the tea garden community from **Jharkhand's Chotanagpur region**.
 - It belongs to the **Sadan ethnolinguistic group (origins to the Chotanagpur region)** and is performed during harvest, weddings, and gatherings.
- **Performance and Style:** Jhumur is performed by men and women in a circular formation.
 - It features rhythmic footwork, and lively music, accompanied by Madal, Dhol, Taal, and Flute.
- **Cultural Significance:** Jhumur dance reflects unity, pride, and the struggles of Assam's tea garden communities, with songs narrating migration, exploitation, and social struggles of the tea garden community.



Assam's Tea Tribe

- Assam's Tea Tribe or Tea Garden Communities refers to a multi-ethnic community of tea garden workers and their descendants.
- They migrated from **Central India** (Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal) in the 19th century to work in British tea plantations.
 - Many were forcibly brought under exploitative conditions, facing harsh labor, low wages, and restricted mobility.
- The tea tribe community forms **17% of Assam's population** and influences around **40 out of 126 Assembly seats**. The community remains a crucial part of Assam's tea production and cultural fabric.

What are the Key Facts About Tea?

- **Origin of Tea in India:** Tea cultivation began in the early 19th century when the British discovered the **Singpo tribals** of Assam consuming a drink from wild tea bushes. Recognizing its potential, the British commercialized tea cultivation.
- **Characteristics of Tea Plants:** Tea belongs to the **Camelliaceae** family, with two main species **Camellia sinensis** (Short-leaved 'China' variety) and **Camellia assamica** (Broad-leaved 'Assam' variety).
 - It is an **evergreen shrub**, growing **up to 30 feet if unpruned**. Thrives in **sub-tropical climates**.
 - Tea thrives in **16-32°C**, **150 cm annual rainfall**, and **80% humidity**. It requires a **frost-free** environment, and temperatures above 35°C and below 10°C are harmful for the bush.
 - Tea grows best in **slightly acidic, well-drained soil** with **porous subsoil** for water percolation.
 - Fresh leaves contain **~4% caffeine**. **Tea seeds** yield **tea oil**, used for cooking but different from tea tree oil used for medicinal purposes.
- **Tea Varieties:** India holds [Geographical Indication \(GI\)](#) tags for **Darjeeling Tea**, Assam

Orthodox Tea, Nilgiri Orthodox Tea and Kangra Tea.

- Darjeeling tea, known for its unique aroma and flavor, was **India's first GI-tagged product**.

▪ **India's Tea Industry:** India has **39,700 tea estates** and employs over **one million workers**.

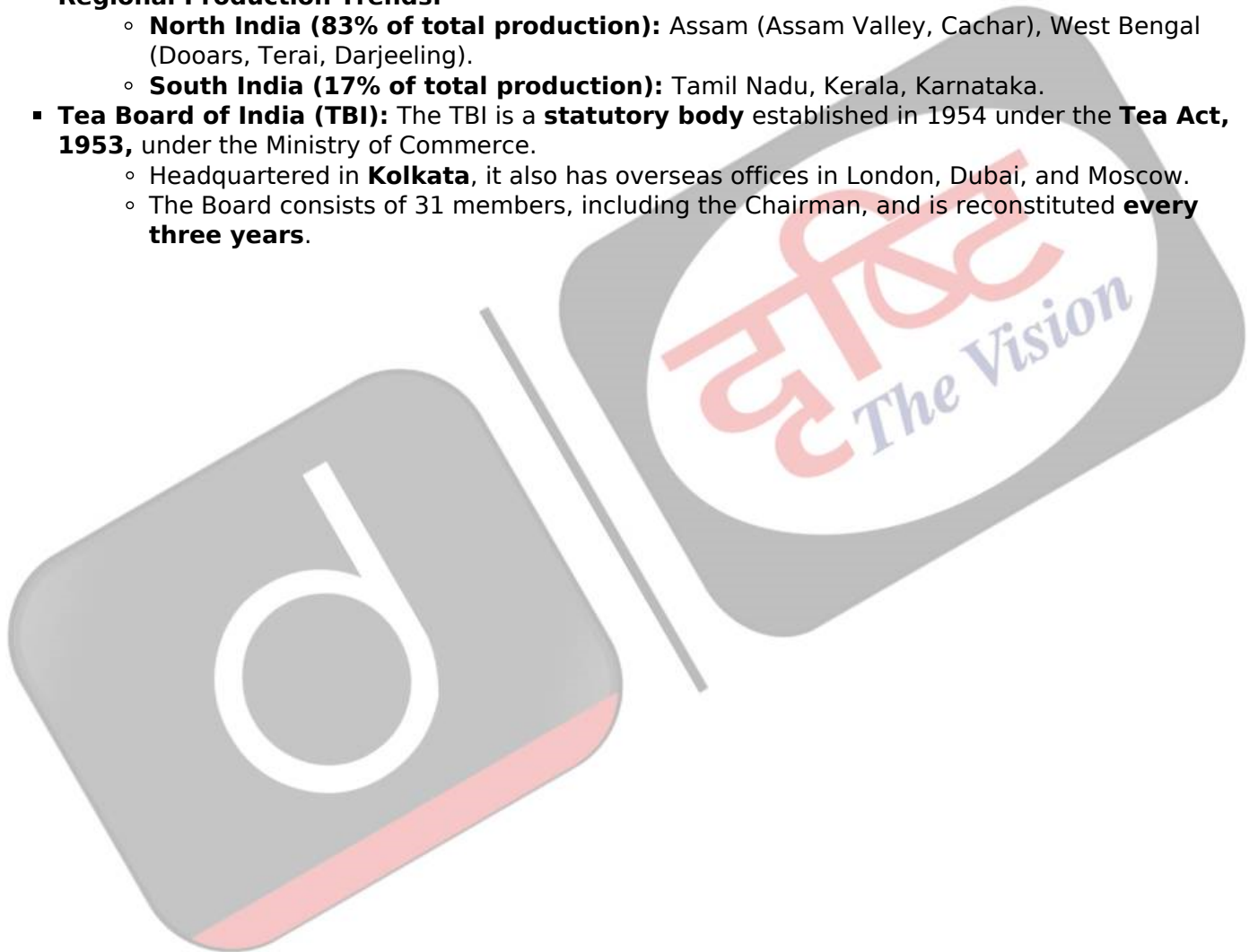
- India is the **second-largest tea producer after China**, contributing 21% of global tea production and the **world's largest producer of black tea**.
- India is the **4th largest exporter of tea**. In 2023-24, the tea export value stood at 781.79 Million USD.
 - India exports tea to over 120 countries, the top importers are Iraq, UAE, Russia, US, UK, Germany.
- India consumes **80% of its tea production** and **18% of global black tea**.
- The tea industry directly employs **1.16 million workers** and indirectly supports an equal number.
- **Small Tea Growers (STGs)** contribute **52% of total production**, with **2.3 lakh growers** involved.

▪ **Regional Production Trends:**

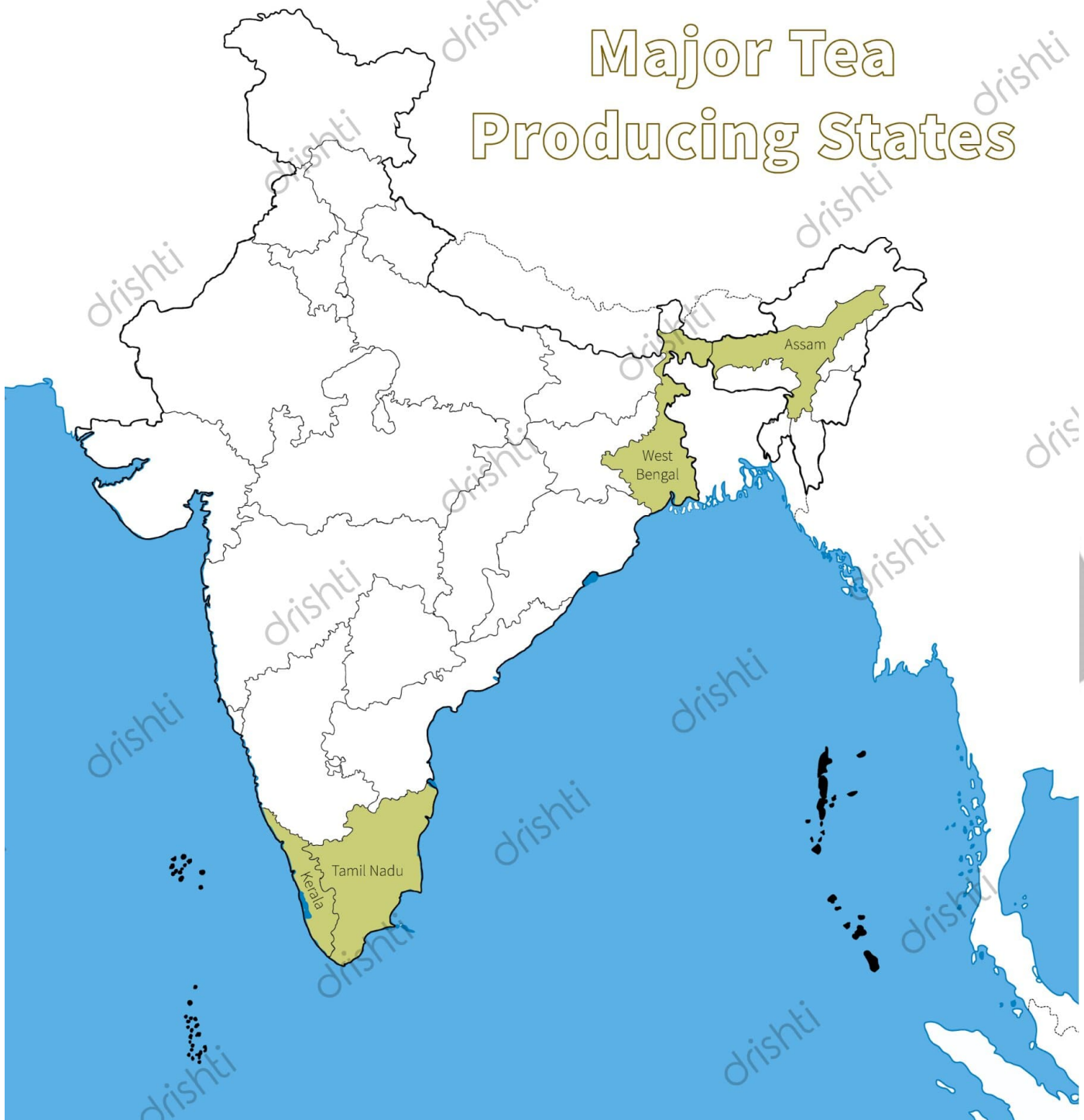
- **North India (83% of total production):** Assam (Assam Valley, Cachar), West Bengal (Dooars, Terai, Darjeeling).
- **South India (17% of total production):** Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka.

▪ **Tea Board of India (TBI):** The TBI is a **statutory body** established in 1954 under the **Tea Act, 1953**, under the Ministry of Commerce.

- Headquartered in **Kolkata**, it also has overseas offices in London, Dubai, and Moscow.
- The Board consists of 31 members, including the Chairman, and is reconstituted **every three years**.



Major Tea Producing States



What are the Challenges in the Indian Tea Industry?

- **Declining Tea Production:** India's tea production fell by **66 million kg** in Jan-Oct 2024, with a further **45-50 million kg decline** expected.
 - Loss of **first and second flush crops** (which fetch the highest prices) is impacting revenue and pushing tea prices higher.
- **Impact of Climate Change:** Extreme temperature fluctuations, including **heat, rain deficits, and excess rainfall**, harm tea bushes, reducing **yield and quality**.
- **Pesticide Ban:** The ban on pesticides like Aldrin, and Captafol has increased **production costs** as growers seek alternatives, while demand for pesticide-free tea has risen in **Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia**, growers struggle with pest control.

- **Wages of Tea Workers:** The [Comptroller and Auditor-General of India \(CAG\)](#) report highlights inadequate wages and lapses in labor law implementation for Assam's tea workers.
 - **State-owned Tea Corporation workers** face delayed or irregular salary payments.
 - **Lack of basic worker welfare measures**, including housing, healthcare, and retirement benefits.
- **Rising Costs and Market Pressures:** Production losses and rising costs are putting financial strain on STGs .
 - **Competition from Kenya, Sri Lanka, and China** is making Indian tea exports less competitive.

Way Forward

- **Climate Resilience Measures:** Promote **climate-smart agricultural practices**, such as drought-resistant tea varieties and better irrigation systems.
 - Encourage **agroforestry** to improve soil health and mitigate climate impact.
- **Sustainable and Organic Tea Production:** Expand **organic and pesticide-free tea farming** under the [Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana \(PKVY\)](#) to align with global demand.
- **Labor Welfare Reforms:** Ensure minimum and timely wages for tea plantation workers.
 - Improves access to basic welfare services and amenities such as housing, medical care, primary education, water supply, and sanitation to tea workers, in line with the [Labour Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, 2020](#), and the [Code on Social Security, 2020](#), which have subsumed the **Plantation Labour Act, 1951**.
- **Market Diversification & Export Promotion:** Strengthen India's presence in **new export markets** like Africa and Latin America.
 - Promote **value-added tea products**, such as **flavored and specialty teas**, for international consumers.
- **Support for STGs:** Increase access to **low-interest credit and modern technology**. Encourage **cooperative farming models** to enhance collective bargaining power.

Drishti Mains Question:

Evaluate India's position in the global tea market. What steps should be taken to increase its competitiveness in tea exports?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. With reference to the "Tea Board" in India, consider the following statements: (2022)

1. The Tea Board is a statutory body.
2. It is a regulatory body attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
3. The Tea Board's Head Office is situated in Bengaluru.
4. The Board has overseas offices at Dubai and Moscow.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3
- (b) 2 and 4
- (c) 3 and 4
- (d) 1 and 4

Ans: (d)

Q2. Consider the following States: (2022)

1. Andhra Pradesh
2. Kerala
3. Himachal Pradesh
4. Tripura

How many of the above are generally known as tea-producing States?

- (a) Only one State
- (b) Only two States
- (c) Only three States
- (d) All four States

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. Whereas the British planters had developed tea gardens all along the Shivaliks and Lesser Himalayas from Assam to Himachal Pradesh, in effect they did not succeed beyond the Darjeeling area. Explain. **(2014)**

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