



## MUSINGS

## How do you like your tea?

"Ai chini beshi dudh kom. Likar barai diyo kintu!" my colleague blurts out as she collapses on her chair, throwing the laptop and a pile of papers onto the desk. She has a presentation today. And tea is her fuel. "The woman probably has tea running in her veins," I say to myself.

But her well-defined orders make me empathise with the office peon. How many cups of tea does he make everyday? How does he remember so many orders at a time? The variety of instructions one can give for a cup of tea is long.

Strong... decaffeinated... black... just a hint of lemon, please... a slice of ginger

would be nice... iced... steaming hot... does the list ever end?

How do you like your tea? Poisonously sweet? I remember a friend out on a blind date texting me, "She's sweet. Sweeter than my tea."

Or the bitter ones that help you fight the bitterness of your life with that of the tea, keeping you strong when all you want is to give up, go to sleep and forget about the pending work due tomorrow? Or, do you crave for tea thickened with malai, or those spiced up with masala?

Meanwhile, on the 'crazy' side are the several tea stalls in Dhaka which sells teas of

flavours of everything imaginable. From 'malta cha' to 'tok-jhaal cha' to 'Horlicks cha', everything is legit.

Tea is a universal language. And it has many dialects. The Moroccans serve green tea with mint leaves: "The first glass is as gentle as life, the second is as strong as love, the third is as bitter as death," their saying goes. The Tibetans add salty butter to their tea. The Thai iced tea is an extravaganza of sweetened condensed milk and sugar and spice. And so on and so forth.

We don't need a reason to drink tea. That doesn't mean there is not any! It is good for your health. It wakes up your senses in the

morning. It lends that energy and enthusiasm you need for a bogus presentation you actually don't give two dimes about.

Like that of my colleague's. I see her rush to the conference room, snatching the cup of 'chini-beshi-dudh-kom-likar-barano' cha. I mentally wish her well and also thank the peon for all the hard work he does. Just imagine all the demands of tea he is bombarded with everyday. He might not be a media sensation like Arshad Khan the handsome Pakistani chai-wala, but he too, is no less a hero!

**By M H Haider**

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