
Preface

Tea is an important industrial crop that supports the life of several million plantation workers working globally. It is the morning drink of several million people worldwide. Interestingly, several wild species such as *C. japonica* are important due to its elegant flower colour. Because of its perennial nature with a life span of more than 100 years, breeding of tea and its wild species to improve the cultivars is difficult and limited to only few aspects. During the past 2 decades, as a student, teacher and humble science worker, I was, am, and surely will remain fascinated by this beautiful plant whose not only taste but also scenic beauty of plantation always refreshes my mind. While working with this plant, at various tea research institutes in the last 2 decades, I have experienced the present practices, gaps and scope of varietal improvement works and felt the need of *in vitro* culture, molecular breeding, and genomics to supplement the conventional breeding works. With the initiation of cell culture technique in 1968, a significant amount of work on various aspects of breeding and biotechnology of tea and its wild relatives has been done. Although several topical reviews and scientific articles have been published on tea and *Camellia* species, yet they are not codified in a single document.

I am deeply indebted to my teachers who blessed me to learn about this crop and plant biotechnology as a whole. Therefore, I sincerely acknowledge my thanks to my beloved teachers of Assam Agricultural University, Prof. P. S. Ahuja, Director and other Scientists of Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology, India, Prof. P. K. Chand of Utkal University, Scientists of UPASI, Tamil Nadu, Tocklai Experimental Station, Assam and Prof. P. C. Deka, Vice Chancellor, Sir Padampat Singhania University, Udaipur. Few people also inspired me to work further on tea breeding and they are Prof. N. K. Jain, Mr P. Haridas, and some of my planter friends of Southern India, Dooars, West Bengal as well as Assam.

I would also like to thank my wife, Dr. Bipasa Sarkar who helped me to improve the manuscript in several ways. Lastly, my son, Vaibhav, my younger sister, Tia and her family, elder brother, Prof. Swapan Kumar Mondal and his family, Kaku and his family are also gratefully acknowledged. I am also thankful to Profs. C. R. Park of USA, A. M. Vieitez of Spain, S. Matsumoto of Japan, Z. Apostolides of South Africa, Z. Chen of China, I. D. Singh of Sri Lanka, S. C. Das, T.R. Sharma, and L. M. S. Palni, India for my personal interactions with them since my student days. I apologize for those works, if any, which did not appear in this book despite a detail search worldwide.

I am also grateful to my PhD students Dr. Pranay, Olivia, Akan, Pratap, Mainaak and Showkat as I was enriched with knowledge while working with them. It is my sincere belief that this book will serve the requirement of students, scientists and industries involved in studies, teaching, research on breeding and biotechnology of tea and other *Camellia* species with an intention of serving science and society.

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Breeding and Biotechnology of Tea and its Wild Species

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2014, XVI, 167 p. 17 illus., 6 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-81-322-1703-9