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NEWSLETTER

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CHAI FOR CANCER 2021

Raise a Cup
Drink to a Cause

Ek Chai Zindagi ke Naam

Donate online www.chaiforcancer.org



Chai for Cancer is the fundraiser initiative of Friends of Max, the world's biggest support group for patients diagnosed with two rare cancers – Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML) and Gastro-Intestinal Stromal Tumour (GIST).

It is the brainchild of Viji Venkatesh and was based on the idea that associating cancer with an everyman's drink would have recall value as well as bring a sense of comfort and normalcy to the feared condition.

The way it does that is unique in its own right. **Chai for Cancer deploys informal gatherings (Addas)** that bring together like-minded donors and supporters of the cause! Over the years, it has become an ideal space for individuals and families to talk about cancer as well as share and learn from each other's experiences.

Launched in 2014, Chai for Cancer entered its **Eighth Season** in very tumultuous times – in the wake of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The fundraiser had already been hit hard the previous year, when the pandemic

brought about unforeseen new challenges.

But as the world slowly stumbled into the "New Normal", so did we. Harnessing the power of communication technology, we decided to continue our Addas in a new format. Thus, the Virtual Adda was born – a gathering of like-minded people with all the usual elements of an Adda – tea, stories, donations – but one which also respected the mantra of "social distancing".

Of course, it would not have been possible without the support of our brave and ardent friends who not only signed up to host these Virtual Addas, but also added their own innovative ideas to the concept – Musical Addas, Antakshari, Story-telling sessions and more!

Because of our rich and encouraging experience of last year, we were able to march into Chai for Cancer Season 8 with a new vigour and confidence – following the same virtual format, but with our chins up and setting higher goals.

- Aashray Paul,
Communications Manager, Friends of Max

Amma Speaks

I had sworn to myself that I would never get into fundraising but it was not long before I realised what an integral part of running a non profit it was to find resources to support those who we worked for.

And in Chai for Cancer, I was able to find a way of raising funds that brought as much joy to the giver as succour to the one who received. "Fundraising is the gentle art of teaching the joy of giving", said Hank Sosso, and that's what I found Chai for Cancer ended up doing.

At no time other than during these difficult ones of the pandemic have I seen this being manifested.

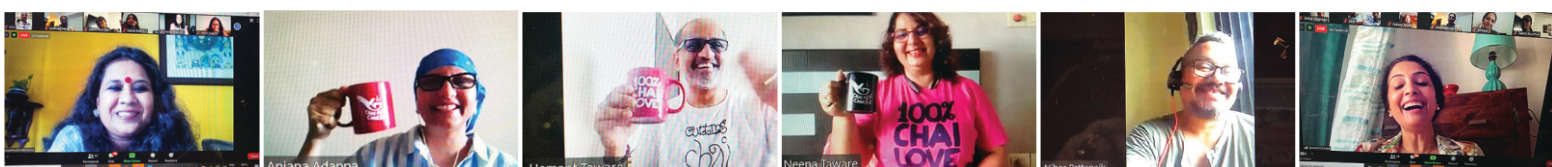
Where it was our (by now famous) Chai for Cancer Addas that brought in the maximum engagement, the pandemic put paid to it. So we encouraged our hosts to bring their Addas online. Our friends became so creative and found so much fun and yes joy in devising unique ways in which to engage their friends. I am still completely so overwhelmed at Rohini and Chirodeep's campaign that brought life to our Ek Chai Zindagi Ke Naam tag line.

And then after attending the Curtain Raiser Adda where RJ Rishi Kapoor of Red FM joined me in introducing this year's campaign, Meher Marfatia the city chronicler of Mumbai as she calls herself, was inspired to do her bit and decided to share some really rare and interesting vignettes from her cache of hitherto unpublished chats over chai on our platform. Adding more charm and history are tales from the chai bagaans of South Asia that Gowri Mohanakrishnan (who along with her planter husband Mohan has lived for more than half her life in Tea) decided to dedicate to Chai for Cancer via her blog, Indian Chai Stories. See, it does take a village and many kind and generous hearts to keep Chai for Cancer going.

- Viji Venkatesh,
Managing Trustee, Friends of Max and Region Head
(India & South Asia), The Max Foundation



From In-Person group meetings to Virtual Addas... The New Normal



Chai for Cancer Adda with Viji Venkatesh & RJ Rishi Kapoor

Viji Venkatesh and RJ Rishi Kapoor of Red FM (popularly known as Local Chokra) hosted the Curtain- Raiser Adda for Chai for Cancer Season 8. This Adda was attended by over 50 friends and family members, patient leaders, colleagues and physicians.

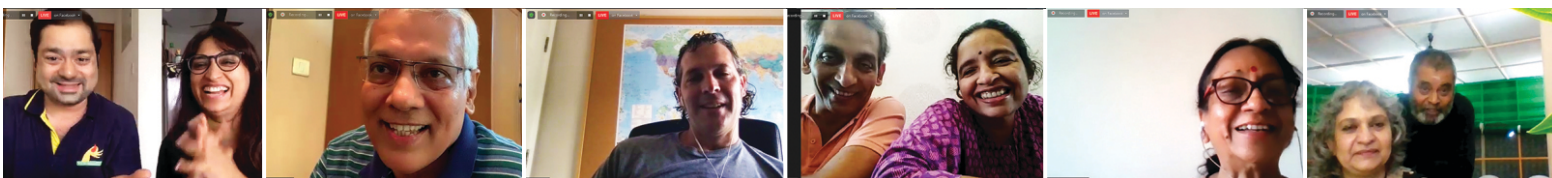
Keeping in mind the COVID crisis and the lockdown restrictions, the Adda was organized virtually on Zoom platform, which on the bright side, enabled well-wishers and supporters of the cause to join in not just from different parts of India, but even as far as England!



The evening began with Viji extending a warm welcome to all the early birds at the Adda. Many of the attendees were people who had hosted or previously attended multiple Addas over the last seven years. Everyone exchanged warm greetings and reminisced about the physical gatherings in the previous years.

RJ Rishi then joined in, immediately pushing the throttle with his energy, greeting everybody, and commending them for supporting a cause as noble as Chai for Cancer at a time when cancer patients need all the help they can get!

Viji then introduced all the guests one by one, as they spoke about their relationship with the cause and sharing their experiences- whether as hosts or as attendees of the previous Addas. Stories were shared, laughter was in the air, old memories were reminisced and new memories made; and in the middle of it all, was Chai for Cancer – the common cause that united people from different regions and different backgrounds and gave the people a reason to toast to!



Ek Chai - Ek Kahani, Ek Zindagi: A Cup of Tea - A Story of a Life in Tea

The biggest announcement at the curtain-raiser Adda on 9th May was that of our collaboration with Indian Chai Stories – A blog by Gowri Mohanakrishnan with almost 200 original stories from 58 contributors from the tea gardens of Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Sri Lanka!

These stories are now posted on our website and social media handles on a weekly basis.

Here's what Gowri has to say about our collaboration -

Tea, that life-giving drink, that warm, comforting brew that says, "Hey, sit down. I'm here. Take a minute and talk to me. I'm listening." Tea. A break from work. A deep breath. Energy. Life. Sharing.

Viji Venkatesh, my sister, has been a tea drinker ever since I can remember. Her 'Chai for Cancer', with a single cup of tea at the heart of the campaign, reaches out to touch millions of lives.

Viji - Amma - spoke to me about Chai for Cancer 2021. The slogan for 2021 is 'Ek Chai Zindagi ke Naam' she said, and asked me to share real stories about the lives of people from the tea gardens of India - I collect and publish these on 'Indian Chai Stories'.



The first thing I told her was, 'In the tea gardens, it is always 'Ek Zindagi, Chai ke naam'.

One cup of tea that you sip touches so many lives. Who knows how many different people plucked those leaves that went into your cup? How many more were involved in the manufacture? Who was the manager of the estate, who was his assistant overseeing the division where the tea was plucked, and who was the factory assistant? How many workers loaded the tea, who was involved in the despatch?

I had no idea of what life was like in a tea garden until I married my tea planter husband thirty-five years ago. Nor did anyone in my family, and we all marvelled at his stories of bungalows, forests, mountains, ghosts and wild elephants.

Life in a tea garden is a life like no other. The most improbable things occur as a matter of course.

Our little ones, born and brought up here, knew no other world. For them, the forest was not a place in a story book: it was what they had to cross to reach school. The sound of firecrackers didn't mean that Diwali was coming - it meant that the elephants had come - wild elephants, that is. We had no television or telephone, and our tea garden world was like a ship sailing on the high seas - self contained, and miles away from anywhere.

We love this life - whether we still live here or whether we moved to a city 50 years ago. Give any of us a chance, and we start talking about life in "the gardens" - Assam, Darjeeling, Dooars, Nilgiris or Coonoor. Our world abounds in stories. We never serve up a cup of tea without a story of something earthshaking, terrifying, absurd or just plain hilarious that happened to someone in a tea garden. Stories are our tradition. They bind us together as time and space melt away in the eternal present of the story.

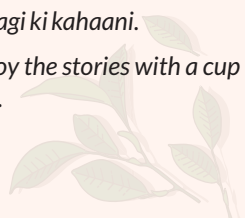
A story takes you out of yourself and ties you to another human being - the storyteller.

That's the gift that a story offers.

A story, a life - ek zindagi ki kahaani.

I hope you will all enjoy the stories with a cup of your favourite chai.

Cheers to all of you!



Chai for Cancer was based on the idea of bringing people together, sharing stories and raising funds for cancer patients in need. A CFC Adda encapsulates this idea. Our constant endeavour to bring to our audiences stories to tell over a hot cup of chai led us to collaborate with **Meher Marfatia**, author of *"Once Upon a City"*, to share some of the stories she had collected while writing her column for Mid-Day.

Here's what Meher has to say about our collaboration -

I first heard about a Chai For Cancer adda when my friends Chirodeep and Rohini hosted one last year. Though regrettably I couldn't make it then, I did attend a recent online adda. And was hooked.

That the Max Foundation does stellar work worldwide is known. But thanks to the dynamic way in which Viji Venkatesh



typically knit together everyone gathered for the Chai For Cancer session -- from office bearers and oncologists to benefactors and beneficiaries -- I just knew in an instant that I wanted to support Friends of Max. Creatively, in addition to monetarily.

Once Upon A City, my latest book, features

little-known oral histories of the ordinary people of Bombay who continue to contribute phenomenally to it. Each has perspired, inspired, never given up the quest for a better tomorrow and added value to the lives of others, for the larger good.

Much like the ripple effect of the cheery positivity Chai For Cancer instills.

Which is why I thought of twinning the two. Sharing small vignettes of charming local lore I've heard over cups of tea, with readers who enjoy savouring these snippets over a warm cuppa of their own. Feeling a sense of wellbeing. Paying this gratitude forward.

So, each fortnight, "Piyo chai, suno kahaani" regales and reminds us all to sip a bit, live a bit, give a bit.

*Raise a cup. Drink to a cause.
Kahaani bhari shaam
Zindagi ke naam!*



Rohini's Virtual Campaign

Our most sincere gratitude goes out to Rohini Bhowmick of Thane, Maharashtra. A home chef and long-time supporter of Chai for Cancer, she along with her husband, Photographer Chirodeep Chaudhuri, led her virtual fundraising campaign for Chai for Cancer from 16th to 25th May 2021.

Rohini added her own unique flair to our 2021 campaign by urging their friends, family and colleagues to not only donate to our cause, but by also spreading the joy of giving. Their efforts led to raising more than ₹2.8 Lakhs for cancer patients in need.

Here's what our MVP Rohini has to say about her experience running her campaign -

The anguish of the pandemic seemed to overpower every other emotion I had in me & almost abandoned the idea of hosting the Chai for Cancer online fundraiser this year, until I pushed myself & established an approach by playing on the theme, "Ek Chai Zindagi Ke Naam".

The idea was simple. Let's create a Virtual Chai Adda (replicating Viji's original format) by asking our friends to infuse moments of joy, serenity & a will to celebrate this life through a short video interpreting the theme rendered through a song, a movie dialogue, a recitation, an instrument played or sketches.

While only 10 videos were required as a quick start to this campaign, we suddenly had over 40 delightful videos, allowing us to transform it into an all-video format altogether. The affirmation was captivating!

Even the most hesitant (my husband & I included) collaborated & through this idea helped to lose one's inhibitions to 'perform' on

social media (a medium with perhaps the largest public reach), all for a cause. A cause to generate awareness, donations & a meaningful life for all the survivors / patients & their loved ones, distraught by the financial & emotional struggles.

In these few days, I witnessed some of the most heart-breaking stories from visitors on my media pages or friends via phone, yet at the same time was truly overwhelmed by the thoughtful & kind gestures met out by our dear friends.

I do believe the campaign not only achieved a sense of cheerfulness but encouraged many to generously donate from across countries, fulfilling the primary objective of extending hope.

Stay strong & be happy - just the bare necessities! Here's to Chai for Cancer & our cup to ek chai zindagi ke naam!





Ek Chai Zindagi ke Naam!

When Season 8 of Chai for Cancer was in its planning stages, we knew it would be different than anything else we had done before. **Fundraising is a crucial part of any Non-Profit organization that seeks to help the disadvantaged.** In times of great uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it becomes all the more necessary to ramp up our efforts.

The shortage of medical facilities, the restriction of movement, the economic

recession – have affected all of us, but even more so, cancer patients. **This Season, Chai for Cancer has set an ambitious goal – to raise ₹50 Lakhs for cancer patients in need.** With the help of our generous friends, and hundreds of individual donors, we have managed to raise more than ₹ 5 Lakhs so far.

Every last paisa raised through the campaign goes towards covering the patients' diagnostics costs, travel costs,

nutritional needs and the cost of their children's education. Every time humanity has faced a crisis, it has been our ability to come together as one formidable force that has enabled us to overcome and move forward.

The success of Chai for Cancer depends entirely on the people involved. So, once again, **we implore the hero in you to raise your cups and drink to a cause!** There are several ways to support our cause –

Participate in the Chaifie Challenge



Help heroes like yourself discover Chai for Cancer. Share a selfie with a cup of chai in your hand on your social media handle with the caption *"I raise my cup in support of Chai for Cancer"*.

Tag your friends and nominate them to do the same.

Donate a Cup of Chai Online



Donate the equivalent of what you would spend on a cup of chai at a café or restaurant.

Urge your friends to do the same!

Visit www.chaiforcancer.org to donate today!

Host a Virtual Adda



A Chai Adda is the best reason to bring your friends, colleagues, family and employees together for a fun evening over a cup of chai.

Hosting a Virtual Adda is easy.

Email us at chaiforcancer@gmail.com to know more.

Raise your Cups and Drink to a Cause... Ek Chai Zindagi ke Naam!



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LinkedIn : <https://in.linkedin.com/in/chai-for-cancer-702630117>

Twitter : @Friends_Of_Max
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To Donate:

Cheques should be drawn in favour of Friends of Max and couriered to our office in Worli (Mumbai);

To donate online visit www.friendsofmax.info;

Receipts u/s 80 G of Income Tax Act, 1961 will be issued.

Friends of Max is registered as a Public Charitable Trust: Regn No E-24284(B) Mumbai, dated 4-7-2007