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CLUB DAY 2023

The cover of this issue of SAM is a stylised depiction of Jamalpur Gymkhana's Armorial Bearing, which embodies the core values of this unique institution. The Wings of Progress and the Calipers depicting control by measurement are held aloft by the heroic figure of a young Special Class Apprentice. The shield is shaped like a gear typifying design, machinery and production. The tiger represents strength and proud leader among all the living creatures of the world. The stylised scroll carries the motto "Sapientia Et Labor" in Latin, meaning Wisdom and Labour.

The colors worn by our young SCA are Maroon, White and Green - Maroon for strength and depth of learning, White for purity and balance of approach, and Green for nature, realism and practice. The dramatic composition captures the force, vigor and energy that have been the hallmark of our beloved Alma Mater.



ARMORIAL BEARING

The wings of progress are placed prominently on top with a pair of callipers passing through them, indicating a practical measuring instrument, symbolising control by measurement. The shield is equally divided between the tiger, representing strength and proud leader among living creatures of the world and an assembly of a shaft running through the boss of a spoked wheel which typifies design, machinery and production. The scroll above the shield carries the motto “sapientia et labor” in Latin meaning “by wisdom and labour”. This free translation would be appropriately through theory and practice.

The colours are maroon, white and green; maroon for strength and depth of learning, white for purity and balance of approach, and green for nature, realism and practice.



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- Annakkampoyil Kalladi Meppadi Road Tunnel Project in the State of Kerala
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President's Letter

- J L Singh '65

Dear Sams and Simis,

All of us, including those who left the railways very early in their careers, are aware of what a transfer means and does to you. Just when you feel that you are comfortably settled, you are moved from your well-established environment to one that at its best will take some time to provide the same level of comfort. Well, transfers are a way of life in the railways and you are mentally prepared that, sooner or later, it is bound to happen. Of course, the transfer may be only from one post to another in the same set up, or a movement from the Ministry of Railways to another Ministry on deputation: but there is no way that you can avoid the movement.

Be that as it may, the saving grace is that normally you are mentally prepared for a transfer all the time, and, in most cases, your transfer order mentions the place you are being posted to and the post you will occupy. Both these very obvious situations did not apply to the Jamalpur Association (JA). We never imagined that a day would come, when the JA would be jolted out of its peaceful existence at Jamalpur and left in the wilderness without knowing where it would go or if at all it

would go anywhere. For three years, from the passing out of the last SCA from Jamalpur in 2019, the JA was homeless and not sure what lay for it in the future.

Thus, only in 2022, rechristened as the Jamalpur Alumni Association (JAA), the JA has finally found a new home in New Delhi, where it was registered as a Society on the 29th day of April, 2022. It went through all the pains and traumas of a transfer and it will certainly take some time to settle down. Of course, with a committed team who are members of its management committee, I have no doubt that its teething problems will soon be over and things will proceed smoothly once again.

Since the registering of the JAA in New Delhi, we have been successful in transferring the funds of the SAM Society (which included the JA as well) to the JAA. These funds are being held as a corpus only and will not be used for day to day expenses. We will, of course, use the interest that accrues from this corpus. The amount transferred is Rs. 30,30,643. A small amount was left in the SAM account to take care of any expenses that may be required to close the society and to take care of the



Autumn issue of the SAM magazine. The next magazine will be taken care of by the JAA itself.

We have also conducted a successful Annual General Body Meeting on the 6th of November 2022. The Meeting was conducted in the dual mode of physical presence and members joining through a zoom link. Minutes of the Meeting are placed at pages 5 to 7 of this magazine.

At the time of writing this letter, we are preparing for organising a Club Day at New Delhi on the 14th of February this year. You are perhaps reading this during the Club Day when the current magazine is going to be released. Since a Club Day at Jamalpur as the main celebrations is not possible now for obvious reasons, after much deliberation in the management committee meetings, it was felt that the Club Day in Delhi should be the primary celebration for the simple reason that New Delhi/ NCR has the largest concentration of Sams. We are also considering the idea that the main celebration can be conducted at some other location as well if the local Sams there are prepared to organise it. Would like your views on this suggestion.

One of our main concerns is that we are not able to reach all Sams and Simis. We are particularly

worried about not being in touch with Sams who are no more; we do not have the contact ids of many of the Simis. May we request all Sams to not only update their contact ids but give us ids of as many Sams and Simis that they are aware of. There is no harm if we get this information repeatedly from different sources. At least we can be sure that we have the information.

As requested in the past as well, the JAA is your society and we would like you to tell us what type of activities we should organise and arrange. We will, of course, have a regular Club Day on the 14th of February and bring out Sam at least twice a year. We are keen to add other events: your ideas are most welcome.

All the best for our birthday on the 14th of February. It is a coincidence that it also happens to be Valentines Day.

Cheers and goodbye,

(J L Singh)

Editors Ramblings

The running serial number on our SAM folder reminds us that this is the 7th SAM magazine to be published from Delhi. From the time when we first started on Club Day 2020, the continuing support of the larger SAM community has ensured that the magazine has braved both the initial euphoria and a global pandemic and is here to stay.

While creating SAM Club Day 2020 for publication, we took great care to ensure that the character of the magazine remains unchanged. A few things however, did change. For the first time ever, the senior-most Editor was comfortably senior to the President! With the formation of the Jamalpur Alumni Association (JAA) in Delhi (*read more about it in the President's Letter*) we have been able to restore some parity on that account. The President and the senior-most Editor are now of the same batch. (It seems to help that they are the same person!) The one other thing we continued to miss out on was the Cover Design by a Sam.

Well, it's 7th time lucky! Pankaj Singh '90 – a creative and gifted soul - revived his decades old skills of sketching and painting that *“proved to be more difficult than anticipated”* but he *“struggled on manfully”* enduring *“the traditional trope of the suffering artist”* to deliver for us, just-in-time and a wee bit after, the cover of this magazine. We sincerely hope that this tradition too stands revived.

So here's a shout-out to all the Simis and Sams with creative skills in this direction to please drop us a mail on edsams2020@gmail.com letting us know that you could help with the cover of SAM Autumn 2023 or later.

Simis and Sams from across batches have enriched this magazine with their contributions. Once again, this issue has contributions from *all* decadal batches, starting from the 1950s and working its way to the 2010s. Please continue to contribute prolifically. It encourages us to put together the magazine and reach it out to all of you.

1973 is the Focal Batch for Club Day 2023. We celebrate the batch on pages 47 to 68 of this magazine with contributions from the Focal Batch itself. A special thank you to Sh. V K Jain'73 for helping us to co-ordinate this effort.

AI, ChatGPT and its brethren have entered our daily conversations as also our everyday lives. It is no wonder then that they should slink in between the covers of this magazine as well. Rituraj Verma '84 hence used Playground to *“conceive”* his article. Rahul Tyagi '89 assigned the spelling and grammatical check of his article to ChatGPT. His most recent encounters with ChatGPT, as reported on the WhatsApp Batch group, were being devoted to training ChatGPT to respond correctly

to that all important question - "What is Jamalpur Gymkhana?"

Creating a connected Sam Community remains the overarching objective of both SAM the magazine and the JAA. Means of communications available today come in multiple flavours. In our case, to begin with we refer you to page iii of this magazine for the PO Box, Email and web portal that already exist. **Additionally, the Jamalpur Alumni Association (JAA) can be contacted over the email connect.jaa@gmail.com.**

In this day and age of the ubiquitous cell phone and real time information, WhatsApp groups have become par for the course. We could debate, ad nauseum, on the question "WhatsApp Groups – A Boon or Bane?" without necessarily reaching any universally acceptable conclusion. In the interim, however, we have created a one-way communication WhatsApp group called "JamalpurGymkhana NoticeBd" that is used sparingly and allows the Managing Committee of the JAA to disseminate information. All other members can only read without posting a response. In cases where a response is being sought, we normally share the link to a Google Form or an email address to respond to. At the time of this magazine going to print the said WhatsApp group had 325 members.

If you are not already on this one-way WhatsApp group but would like to be, please drop us an email on connect.jaa@gmail.com and include in the email your name, your batch and your mobile number.

Serving railway officers may kindly share only their personal mobile numbers.

In our bid to leverage multiple means of forging connections, also on offer is a listed Group on LinkedIn called "SCRA IRIMEE". Cofounded by Rahul Saxena'82 in March 2009, this LinkedIn group is being opened to all within this community who wish to join. All you need to do is find the group on LinkedIn, drop a "Request to Join" and give us some processing time to admit you.

As we grapple and come to terms with the change in epicentre of our community, we also realize that the more things change, the more they remain the same. Articles still require chasing and the advertisements remain far and scarily few.

Hence, we conclude with the Editors' Refrain

*The magazine editor's in a spin
His articles are not coming in
He's seeking contributions
And more advertisements' solutions
So send them in, let's get this to win!*

While we thank ChatGPT for the limerick above, gender sensitivity is clearly something ChatGPT still needs to work on!

Have a Great Club Day and Stay in Touch!



J L Singh '65



Mayank Tewari '89

Minutes of The 1st JAA AGM held on 6th November 2022 at CSOI, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi (held in hybrid mode)

Mr. PC Verma '57, the senior-most SAM present, and Mr. D.C. Sharma '81, the senior-most serving SAM present, joined Mr. JL Singh '65, President JAA in chairing the meeting.

26 members attended the meeting physically, while 12 members joined on-line. Following Agenda Items were taken up for discussion:

1) To brief members of the background and objectives of the formation of the Society

President, Secretary and other MC members briefed the members. For better communication, a Jamalpur Gymkhana Notice Board was created on Whatsapp, where the JAA Registration Certificate, By-laws and Rules etc. have been uploaded. Members are constantly being added to this group. Since the posting of content on the Board has been restricted to a few, members are requested to convey to the Group Admins, the contacts of their batch-mates, and any other members known to them so that the coverage is further expanded.

The letter seeking the initial subscription of Rs 5000/- from members has also been posted on the Notice Board

2) To brief members of the nomination of Mr. P.C. Sen as the Chief Patron of the Society, and a 7-member Advisory Committee by the Managing Committee in terms of Paras 13 and 14 of the Rules and Bye-laws of the Society.)

Members were duly informed of the nomination of Mr. P.C. Sen '49 as the Chief Patron and his kind acceptance of the same. The members were also briefed of the nomination of following as the advisory Committee members.

- i) Mr. D. Nagarajan '57 based at Hyderabad
- ii) Mr. V. Anand '62 based at Bangalore
- iii) Mr. Rakesh Mishra '72 based at Lucknow
- iv) Mr. Sunil Bajpai '80 based in NCR

v) Mr. Rahul Tyagi '89 based at Memphis, USA

vi) Mr. Prashant Kumar Singh '96, in service, presently at UIDAI/Lucknow

vii) Ms. Smriti Rao '09, in service, presently based at Jamalpur

3) To brief members of the other decisions taken by the Managing Committee during its 1st meeting on 1st October 2022, current state of finances, and other activities planned duly seeking additional suggestions of the house.

Secretary SK Luthra '75 & Treasurer K. Narayan' 88 briefed the members, and answered queries/clarifications sought by members.

The minutes of the 1st MC meeting are being attached to these minutes for better appreciation of the various issues by the members.

4) To approve the proposal of the Managing Committee the appointment of M/s Goel, Gupta & Maheshwari as Auditors of the Society for the year 2022-23, in terms of para 19 of the Rules and Bye- laws of the Society.

The proposal was unanimously approved.

5) To designate the Managing Committee as the Authority for appointment of the Auditors henceforth in terms of para 19 of the Rules and Bye- laws of the Society.)

After some discussion, the proposal was unanimously approved.

6) Any other items with the permission of President /JAA.

The following issues were raised and discussed:

i) Mr. G Shankar '57 suggested creation of a library where important technical papers/documents which senior SAMs may like to bequeath for posterity may be kept

ii) Other members suggested a proper storage of important Gymkhana memories like incumbency boards, old SAM copies, other records etc. Mr. D C Sharma '81 suggested that while Gymkhana may be closed down and maybe used for other purposes, IRIMEE will stay, so Director/IRIMEE should be asked to create a safe room/place for custody of these items.

iii) Mr. Vivek Mohan '2k wanted to know whether JAA would think of creating a Relief Fund for helping SAMs/families in distress. Members were apprised of the presence of

the Gymkhana Benevolent Trust (GBT) floated by some members, which is already providing assistance to ex-Gymkhana employees based on verification of claims by

Director/IRIMEE. The assistance to SAMs/families in distress may also be covered by this Trust. K Narayan'88, who is the Managing Trustee of GBT will share the details of this Trust in the Notice Board in due course.

iv) Mr. PC Verma '57 suggested that while closure of the SCRA scheme appears final, we must not give up efforts to revive it, maybe with modified scope, for example, opening it students from other countries, who may lack such training facilities.

v) Mr. Sourav Kumar Modi '2k12, and others from some junior batches brought up their on-going struggle to reverse certain actions of the Railway Board effectively suppressing their seniority with retrospective effect. They explained the issue, and the actions taken by them so far in filing a representation in CAT. While members were unanimous in assuring that principally the JAA would stand fully in support of this struggle – both financially, and by extending their knowledge and experience available with some of the senior members in developing the appropriate approach and strategy. It was decided that the one or two of those in forefront of the litigation may attend the next meeting of the MCM with the details of the case and also the exact nature of assistance required, so that appropriate action can be initiated.

vi) Mr. V. Anand'62 suggested that since SAM magazine is the most important medium of contact amongst SAMs, we may consider making it more frequent from being bi-annual presently. While this was noted, it was explained that the effort required for maintaining the present frequency is already a lot, hence does not appear possible immediately. vii) Mr. OP Chaube '73 suggested we create a Directory of SAMs working outside the Railways as that is now a large number. Joint Secretary Mayank Tiwari '89 informed that a data-base was created when SAM magazine was moved to Delhi, and that we will definitely work towards taking this forward.

viii) Mr. DC Sharma '81 pointed out that the number of SAMs who have paid the Life-time membership fee is very small, and feared that this may be indicative of a low degree of interest in JAA. It was agreed that while we have just begun, and once communication with the wider group of SAMs increases, as is being done through the Notice Board, this should improve. It was also emphasised that this contribution is voluntary, and all ex SCAs continue to be members of JAA irrespective of their paying the life-subscription, which only makes them voting members.

Meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

Milestones

Expired

- T P S Kent '45 on 20th November 2022
- Mrs. Usha Kapoor, wife of the late K B Kapoor '47 on 19th October 2022
- Mrs. Haribala Singh, wife of Udain Singh '52 on 29th October 2022
- Blair Robert Williams, '56 on December 21 2022
- Ashoka Bajjal '63 on November 4 2022

Anniversaries

- Sunita and Subhash Saxena '63:
50th wedding anniversary on
21st November 2022



The golden couple - Sunita and Subhash Saxena

Born

- To Rahul Bharti '09 and Shriya, a baby girl, Meher, on 22nd April 2022

~~CANCEL~~ CULTURE: HOW TO RECOGNISE, AND AVOID IT.

- Vinita Srivastava '91

Cancel is a verb used by consumerists, mostly. You might CANCEL an order, a subscription, or anything you no longer need. But CANCEL CULTURE is a more vicious, subtle form of action that people and communities often indulge in. It has been recognised in social media and online circles, as akin to bullying. Many a discerning corporate have put out codes of practice to guard against it. It's useful then, to examine the term and its meaning in our lives.

On Twitter, people speak of "cancelling themselves", as a pre-emptive measure, since presumably any of us could be cancelled at any time by a content moderator! The Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan in his 1967 book "The Medium Is the Message" eerily predicted the "womb-to-tomb surveillance" made possible by "the electrically computerized dossier bank —from which there is no redemption, no erasure of early mistakes." The title is a typesetter's mistake which the author

embraced as an apt naming of his work. Indeed, online platforms are unforgiving records of thoughtless actions, the trails of which are faithfully captured by relentless electronic means.

In the early 21st century a new internet phrase had slipped into Chinese slang: renrou sousuo, literally translated as "human flesh search". A request would go out for wangmin (web citizens) to come together as a kind of ad hoc detective agency in order to ferret out information about objects and figures of interest. Attention soon turned toward supposed wrongdoers, those thought to exhibit moral deficiency, like a low-level government official spotted flashing a designer watch far above his pay grade, hinting at corruption. Once these offenders were identified and their personal details exposed online, they were hounded, verbally flogged and effectively expelled from the community. Witch hunts in rural medieval times are another example,

targeting female recluses who were charged with manipulative powers and then ostracising them.

Communities have long indulged in ritual practices which are mimicked by the online practice of Cancel Culture. Asia is far less individualistic than America or Europe, with group action often setting a pseudo moral compass justifying the most public of CANCELS. Actions resorted by Cancellers range from vigilante justice to hostile debate to stalking, intimidation and harassment, online or offline. To emerge from outright or subtle Cancels requires work. A compassion and action filled approach is needed that goes far beyond codes and practices governing chat rooms or club lounges.

To recognise Cancel Culture is an easy first step. Look and Listen to those around you. Spot echo chambers, full of those that agree too easily, crowd your view and your thoughts incessantly. Try listing the voices and opinions that do NOT reach you as often. Have they been "CANCELLED"?

The second and more difficult step is to seek feedback from the non-included. Examine the focus group which may be a family, a small office, a large organisation or even a widespread and loosely connected internet community. Check to see who doesn't have a

voice. Often it's not for lack of something to say.

The third step is to loop back to the medium of communication most often resorted in the group. Those who have not spoken out in a long time might just lose their voice, and that is neither just nor sustaining growth. If the complaints irritate a majority of listeners, try to moderate content in a way that adds value.

Cancel culture springs from deep-rooted survival instincts that encourage herd behaviour. A very effective way to curb it is to occasionally silence its most vocal practitioners. An unusual, abrupt cancel in a high profile gathering or event makes the individual realise quickly just how painful their actions are to those affected.

Reversing cancels are not so short-term, however. It can take years, sometime generations, to award and reward inclusivity; to make it the norm rather than the exception. As the Organisational Behaviour adage goes, Cancel Culture eats Change for Breakfast.

Darjeeling

- V Narayanan '55

Late 2004, Subadra & I plan to visit Darjeeling. One of the main motivations why we decided to take up the journey then is the presence of my former colleague Saibal Bose (1983) in the pivotal position of Secretary to GM/SER. We can expect to get a whole lot of assistance to facilitate our travels. In the event our expectations were more than met making our tour memorable. Firstly, the Garden Reach railway rest house had been transformed. Meals were cooked, rooms were furnished well, clothes washing had been organized and above all precise tariffs were published for all services.

Saibal had made sure that from the time we boarded the train at Sealdah all requirements had been anticipated and provided for. At



Illuminated Kanchenjunga

Siliguri we had the station supervisory staff and even RPF staff were available to facilitate our onward travel. After freshening ourselves and breakfast we were on our way in a Tata SUMO for the breathtaking and often times what seemed to be a risky journey to Darjeeling. The experienced driver and his assistant took it all in their stride and reached us safely to the NF Railway guest house.

But even as we had planned for Darjeeling, the queen of all attractions, viz., a visit to Tiger Hills was not in our agenda, as we had not known about it! But the guest house caretaker had alerted a taxi who offered to ferry us at 4 AM next day morning to Tiger Hills. It was indeed a fascinating drive and as we got close to the viewing point there were many attractively attired young girls with Thermos flasks selling coffee and tea. I opted for coffee which turned to be lukewarm and disappointing. Subadra opted for tea which turned out to be sizzling and tasty.

Often times we were told that a Tiger Hills visit could turn out to be a damp squib due to cloud cover. We were hoping that we'd be luckier. We

indeed were. The sky was largely clear. Just above hill crest there were some slivers of cloud. This delays the sunrise a wee bit, but the effect is spectacular. First rays peep through the slivers, barely illuminating the foreground. As you turn to the left the Kanchenjunga becomes barely visible. Back to the Sun and there is a little more brightness revealing what was earlier referred to as foreground as a seriously undulating cluster of hills. Time to turn to left and the Kanchenjunga has acquired a breathtaking dull bronze hue. And now onwards, even those without so much of an inkling about dance, could be seen oscillating one's head left to right and back rhythmically and precisely to witness what can at best be described as celestial play with lights till the Kanchenjunga becomes brilliantly golden and the sun has emerged fully above the slivers of cloud. And the assembled audience of a couple of hundred persons break into a spontaneous applause for an event that takes place every day, viz., the sunrise! Subadra & I had experienced what can be termed as the high point of our visit on the very first morning.

Subadra compares this with sunset experience in Kanyakumari when the radiant setting sun illuminates the Arabian sea but seems to suddenly drop below the horizon. Here too, she'd say, the assembled audience breaks into spontaneous applause. It is fascinating how what has been happening for millennia, viz., namely sunrise and sunset is found to be so fascinating that assembled folks

rejoice at this event!



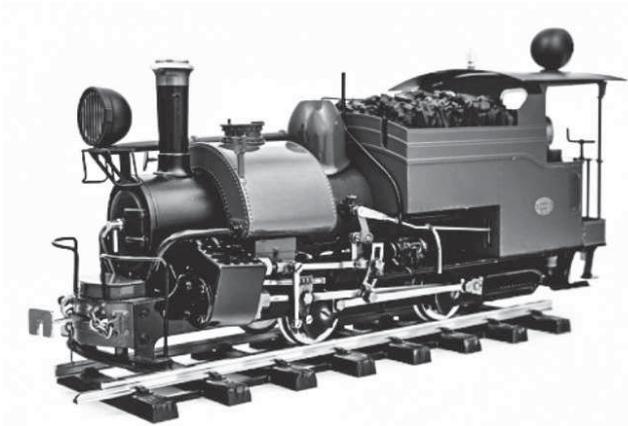
Bhatasia Figure-8 Loop

As a railway man, my aim was also to see the famous Bhatasia figure 8 railway loop. My fascination with the engineering marvel was tinged with sadness as I felt that uniqueness of the site was diminished by the space being used for a war memorial. Surely a more fitting site could have been chosen for a war memorial! And the space could have been used to highlight the unique features of the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway. That said, it'd have to be admitted that the upkeep of the memorial is indeed very pleasing with lovely landscaping.



Bhatasia Loop Now

With diesel locomotives being used to run the service from Siliguri, steam haulage was initially limited to the run from Kurseong to Darjeeling. Nowadays the run is even further curtailed to just a couple of stations from Darjeeling and back. Had heard from the steam locomotive restoration expert Mr. Rangaswami, formerly of Loco Works, S. Rly that he has been sounded



DHR Steam Locomotive

but no concrete steps have been taken by NFR towards restoration of a few locomotives. Mr. Rangaswami feels that Tindaria workshop is indeed well equipped to take up restoration/rehabilitation of a few locomotives to preserve this magnificent technology for posterity.

My visit to Darjeeling would, however, will always remembered with a touch of sadness as I had failed to see the magnificent snow leopards kept in captivity in Darjeeling Zoo. Ever since I had read Peter Mathiessen's account published in the New Yorker (I was a regular subscriber in 1970s) of his Nepal travels accompanying naturalist George Schaller (the latter's National Geographic funded project was to conclusively establish if the Himalayan Bharal was indeed a goat or a sheep!) in which he outlines his fond hope of setting his eyes on that elusive animal. In a



snow leopard

piece that can be likened to poetry, he'd relate to the reader his faith in Buddhism, his enduring pain at the death of his wife, his visit to the Kali Ghandaki river where Salagramas are found, his amazement at the crippled, uncomplaining monk whose abode is not covered with snow etc. etc. In the year 2000 however, I had set my eyes on those magnificent animals kept in captivity in Bronx Zoo courtesy BR Williams (1956).

During this Darjeeling visit I did not have a worthwhile digital camera to capture all the beautiful sights. That is a pity. Wish I had the Fujifilm camera that has served me so well since. And the smart phone cameras are so good these days!

Our return journey is uneventful. Dinner had been carried from Darjeeling which we'd finish the meal in the time available at Siliguri. Not unexpectedly our transfer from Sealdah to Howrah had been precisely organized and after endless train travel, we reach Bengaluru full of fond memories.



The Way Forward for Mechanical Department

- Sarabjit A Singh '61

My objective of writing this essay is to propose that JA establish a group of SAMs who are interested in looking at challenges facing the Mechanical department in particular and railways in general. The myriad challenges that IR presently faces spring from the transport sector becoming subject to wider competition as the Indian economy becomes more market driven. A new paradigm is need of the day, which can only evolve through a structured dialogue. For kicking off and moderating the dialogue, I feel, a group is required that understands how to reshape the existing monolithic railway system into a market sensitive transport entity. It needs to be kept in view that current political thinking considers this reshaping as vital and a universal objective for enhancing market share.

Newly independent India opted for central planning which required IR to produce maximal amount of relatively

undifferentiated output with minimum input. The traditional monolithic railway, (which is a strictly hierarchical departmental organisation) is most effective for meeting this objective, hence it became the favoured mode. However, the political conditions that existed after independence which favoured a monolithic organisation no longer holds true.

The current political conditions looks at the strictly hierarchical departmental organisation structure and in-house production of rolling stock as an anachronism and believes that it has led to extreme mismatch between what the railways offer and what the customers want as exemplified by falling market share. Moreover, the extreme centralising of economic decision making especially of revenues and costs is dissipating, which has caused pronounced economic inefficiencies by raising logistic costs and severe financial

strain to the railways and government as owners having to sustain IR through budgetary support.

Specifically about rolling stock a slow and incipient move to bring in private players in rolling stock induction has been in existence for sometime. The two Joint ventures for manufacturing and maintaining Diesel and Electric locomotives at Marhowrah and Madhepura respectively started the process which has now gained momentum. It is likely that gain in momentum may be a result of enormous pressures from private players on government for restructuring IR and its relationship with the government, for increased role of private sector in railways.

The justification seems to be that the existing administrative structures for induction of rolling stock are inadequate to develop new designs and induct latest technologies. It is argued that PUs are unable to constantly evolve and improve rolling stock technologies even though the technologies are no longer esoteric despite the success of Train 18. For addressing this supposed infirmity the

railways should use outside suppliers and purchase purely on economic considerations..

It should be clear from the foregoing that IR is under transformation, which perhaps was long over due. It also needs to be appreciated that the underlying emphasis has shifted from production efficiency to effectiveness in meeting market needs, which as the reasoning goes, can be best met by involvement of the private sector.

The above thinking has far reaching implication for the future relevance of the mechanical department. Phasing out of steam traction is indicative of the kind of changes the department can expect. In the steam loco era train operation was a team effort of operating and mechanical departments. With induction of diesels and now replacement of diesel locos by electric traction this is no longer true. However, even if there is a large involvement of private sector both in IR and induction of new types of rolling stock IR will still have to manage the key function of rolling stock provision and maintenance. How to manage this key function will become the role of the

department even if the department is managed by the IRMS.

After independence the department was charged to make India self reliant in manufacture of rolling stock. It fulfilled this task substantially if not fully. It established PUs and created a vendor base and through development orders fostered upgradation and encouraged Indian industry to play a growing role in development of technological intensities. The department is once again at a defining moment since opening up IR rolling stock market to private sector has thrown up challenges of transforming the Indian rolling stock industry, in partnership with Indian Railways, into a global hub whose home base lies in India. This requires that the microeconomic business environment to be sportive.

The existing arrangement of Ministry of Railways joint with the Railways Board is ideal for integrating the microeconomic and competitive thinking into the macroeconomic reform process. Ministry

of Railways is in a position to underpin the competitiveness of the rolling stock industry through appropriate political, legal and macroeconomic reform. And the Railways Board will be able to take purposeful action, in both government and private sector, for constituting a favourable microeconomic business environment that will lift the industry to global levels.

This is huge challenge of policy development which needs deep thought. And the mechanical department must take on this gauntlet for its own relevance and survival. It is thus essential that JA become a participant in this debate and contribute towards defining the contours of the new organisational arrangements and linkages with the private sector.

In the end I would just add those who are interested in such a group are requested to contact J.L.Singh or me (Mob 9818241606)



FAMILY OF BRUSHES: AN INSIDE VIEW

- Atulya Sinha '83

My son Raghu cultivates a beard these days, but I can recall the day before his eighteenth birthday, when he had shaved for the first time. Naturally, we had bought a fancy razor and a new shaving brush for that occasion.

Assuming that most men would use at least fifty shaving brushes in their lifetime, less than 2% of all shaving brushes in the world would have the honour of lathering a boy's face for the first time – and that little brush was one of those privileged few. But it was doubly blessed, as it was destined to join one of the world's largest families of brushes!

Allow me to explain.

There are three of us, so we have three toothbrushes in the house. All of us keep (or at least try to keep) separate toilet kits for travel, which accounts for another three toothbrushes. Next come the shaving brushes – one in the bathroom, another in my travel kit; besides the new arrival, of course. Sonali has two or three hairbrushes, a nailbrush and a couple of mysterious little ones that – to the

best of my knowledge and belief – she never uses!

Then we have two coat brushes, one with stiff salt and pepper bristles and the other with a soft red surface that is supposed to attract dust.

My favourites are the two shoe brushes, a black and a brown; of course, they have their own travel versions, bringing the total number of shoe brushes to four.

Back in each of the three bathrooms, we have a brush for the washbasin and another for the bigger chunk of ceramic. Each bathroom is also equipped with a brush for cleaning combs, as well as a brush with plastic bristles for scrubbing the clothes, still another for dishcloths and yet another for scraping shoes before washing them!

Next comes the kitchen: we have three bottle brushes (but naturally) in different sizes, apart from an assortment of old toothbrushes whose uses I have yet to figure out... but despite my pitiable ignorance of such matters, I'm fairly

sure that the small red brush with shiny metallic bristles is meant for de-clogging the holes in the gas burners!

Then there is the big wire brush, used for cleaning the gauze on the windows and the long-handled one with curly bristles used for removing cobwebs from the ceiling. We are also the proud owners of no less than three carpet brushes; one for each of the two small carpets we own - and the best one preserved for the grand carpet we will buy as soon as we move into a house with a large drawing room (This dream house, by the way, will also have a hedge of bottlebrush)!

Before you stop reading and brush me off, I must admit that my camera kit contains a shortened paintbrush, which is used for removing the dust from crevices that are hard to reach otherwise. There is also a blower brush with a rubber bulb that exhales a little puff of air, used for cleaning lenses. And did I mention the brushes used for cleaning the other brushes?

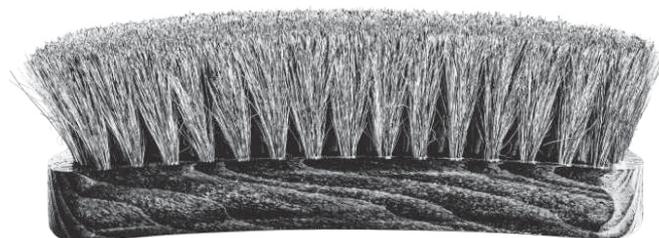
It's not just the number or variety; brushes have their own place in the family chronicles. Just a few months ago, a new maid sealed her fate when she used the wrong brush for

washing the precious napkin used for wrapping rotis!



Perhaps you are wondering where all these brushes come from. Well, each weekend, when we collect our bags before setting out for Spencer's, we religiously check the stocks of necessities like Harpic, Vim bars, washing machine detergent and – needless to say – different types of brushes (In our eagerness not to miss out such staples, we sometimes overlook superfluous indulgences like atta, cooking oil, tea, sugar and salt...)

One last secret: we are not afraid of nuclear war breaking out, because we have stocked two shelves with new brushes to clear the debris!



Steam Engine's Dream

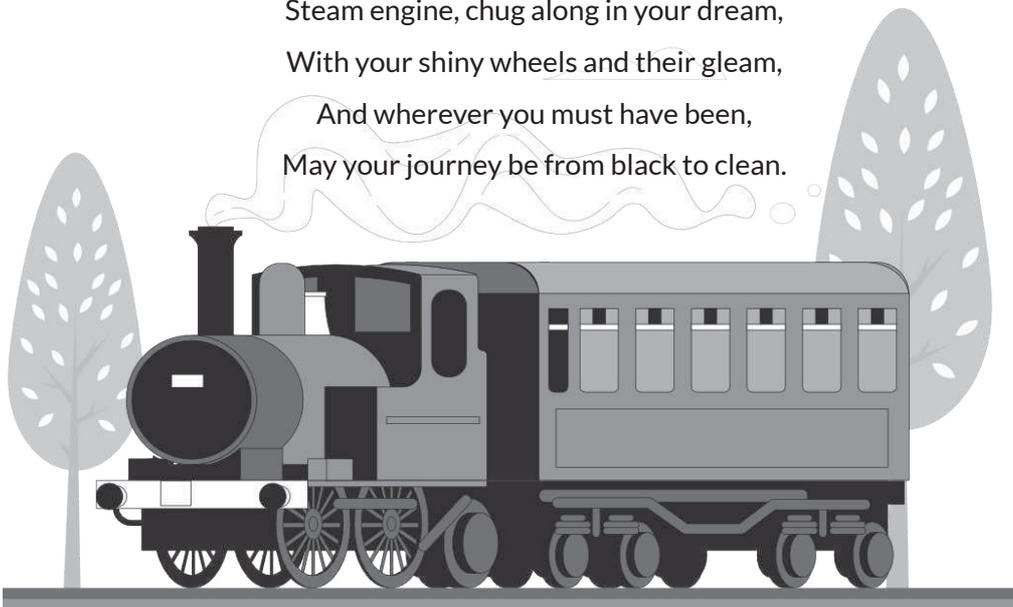
- Shivani Kochak w/o R S Kochak '74

Steam engine, sleek and long,
With wheels that spin and whistle a song,
Speeds along the tracks with might,
A symbol of our ancient sight.

With every turn of its metal gear,
The countryside would disappear,
And in its place a city scene,
Hustle and bustle, but not very green.

Steam engine made the passengers binding,
As it went past the ghat catch siding,
It's destination was far away,
But then it had its day.

Steam engine, chug along in your dream,
With your shiny wheels and their gleam,
And wherever you must have been,
May your journey be from black to clean.



Resolutions for 2023

- K Narayan '88

Just feels like the other day the millennium we did cross,
But then time does ever flow silently without breaking for a pause

Hence here we are, at the turn of 2023,
Time for resolution making on First of January

Resolve we must to limit our basic needs,
For mother earth has many more of our brethren to feed

Resolve we must to see in all beings the same biology,
The sameness of heartbeat pumping blood into similar artery

Resolve we must to pray that in the powerful, better sense does prevail,
Calming king-sized egos of the petty minds, which has made many an orphan wail

Resolve we must to replace cribs by contentment of what we do possess,
For we have more than we bargained for, truly we are blessed

Resolve we must to be ever joyful, ceaselessly spreading that loving smile,
Which magically effaces the darkness of mistrust mile after mile

Resolve we must to remember Him above, they say He ever gives never expecting in return,
But methinks, we got it a bit wrong here as, for our love He does surely yearn
Happy New Year, May love spread

Off Beaten Path

- Jayanthi Mallya W/O Gajanan Mallya '79

It was 5 o' clock in the evening. I was taking a stroll in the garden, my usual evening walk of 60 minutes, to keep myself fit and healthy when the loud sound of blowing horn and Dhud Dhud Chak chak sounds of a moving train could be heard at a distance.

Even after so many years, like a small kid, I still get drawn to the chugging sounds of the train. My heart beats with rhythmic beats of the moving train, which takes me to reverie and I become nostalgic.

I still remember my first ever train journey and a long one too was in the year 1987. Both myself and my husband were travelling from Mangalore in Karnataka to Kazipet in Andhra Pradesh (presently the State of Telengana) after marriage, where he was posted at that time. It had taken almost 2days and 2nights to reach the destination.

Married to a Railwayman (my husband being an officer in Indian Railways), my association with Railways through train journeys has been long and memorable one too. The sight and sound of a moving train always makes me feel nostalgic.

The fond memories of train journeys, visits to places and postings at different places across

the States has built a strong bond between me and the 'Winding Beauty'.

Children are always fascinated by the sight of a train be it a real or a Toy train. A 'Toy Train' is a prized possession of any child and always has a coveted place in his toy collection.

I still remember, my nephew Narasimha when he was a kid and now my grandson Pratham both having the same penchant for toy train. For me too, though I have become a grand mom now, still the sight of a moving train fascinates me.

Indian Railway is one of the largest organizations in the world with its network connecting the length and breadth of the country. I should say, it is like a chord that keeps the people connected and binds them together.



The Railway working is 24x7x365 days and is really tough. For a layman, moving train is a normal thing, for he is unaware of the intricate working system of the Railways.

Be it a small boy or a grown up man, watching a train moving at a distance is always full of excitement and gives joy. However only a Railwayman knows it is not as simple as it looks, but requires meticulous planning and co-ordination amongst various departments to make it perfect.

I wonder how well the well oiled machinery works continuously with hardly any glitch. The dedication and hard work put in by Railwaymen is many a time not noticed by the people and passes off unseen.

The smooth running is taken for granted, which is not. It is really marvellous and one cannot but appreciate and pat the men on the back, both frontline and behind the scene, who facilitate the smooth running of trains.

As I sit back and reminisce, I feel, times have changed of late, though slowly but surely for the better. The jobs which were once considered difficult and performed exclusively by men in the past have seen a sea of change.

Now we see many women joining the mainstream and performing the work with ease and perfection, henceforth proving their mettle.

Though I am fascinated by the Railway working,

I had never got the opportunity of meeting the field staff personally or interacting with them. It was about 8 years back when my husband was posted as Divisional Railway Manager/ Ranchi Division, one of the Divisions of South Eastern Railway, I met Deepali Amrit.

It was during International Women's Day celebration organised by women employees of the Division, that, this tall, slender and confident looking lady was introduced to me as Assistant Loco Pilot (ALP).

Deepali was a young girl married and a mother of 2 year old girl child. She was managing her home and a tough job perfectly well. I was impressed by her enthusiasm and confidence.

Later when I took to writing as my hobby, I wanted to write about these women who are first generation Railway employees, who chose the unconventional field for their career and proved themselves in their chosen fields.

In this context, I telephonically interviewed Ms Poonam Topno, Assistant Station Manager (ASM)/Namkom, Ranchi Division. Though it was first of its kind experience for me, I enjoyed talking to these women and felt these women are the real achievers who are to be lauded for their grit and determination.

Pratham, my five year old grandson is a great fan of trains. Curiosity is in his blood. Though a small boy, he is curious to know about running of trains, its signal system and working mechanism etc, etc.

Unlike boys of his age, he is very sharp in grasping things. When he came to Hyderabad, to spend his summer holidays with me, we decided to take him to the Railway station, so that he can have a feel of working of trains.

The very next morning after the arrival of my grandchildren from Bangalore we planned a visit to Secunderabad station to see a locomotive and to meet a loco pilot too. Just like Pratham, even I was excited as it was first experience for me too.

It was a pleasant surprise to meet a lady ALP, Secunderabad Division. She was Sarita, a short, lean young girl who explained in simple words about the working of the locomotive. It was a welcome change for all of us from our routine and a not so common holiday outing.

It was educative and we all liked it. The clever questions asked by Pratham, raised everyone's eyebrows. I wondered about his curiosity, information and knowledge which he holds in such a small mind and felt proud.

My dormant curiosity and love for the 'Serpentine Beauty' was kindled once again by my grandson Pratham. It was almost a year that my husband had taken over the reins of South Central Railway as General Manager.

By virtue of his post, I too had inherited the responsibility of heading South Central Railway Women's Welfare Organisation (SCRWWO). I feel it gave me an opportunity to render service through welfare activities. It provided me the

platform to interact personally with the women employees too.

It was in the month of March, as a part of International Women's Day celebration, Railways had decided to run 'Special Trains' with all women crew to mark the occasion as special and pay tribute to women.

South Central Railway has six divisions and from each division one special train with all women crew was run and it was a great achievement for women and a proud moment for the Zone as well.

An interview with the crew was flashed on many TV channels both at local and National level and news was well covered in Print Media too. This event triggered my desire to meet these ladies personally.

A group of women employees working in different categories as Assistant Loco Pilot (ALP), Deputy Station Superintendent (Dy SS), Points woman etc. were selected and a meeting was fixed.

The meeting was first of its kind experience, both for me and the field staff as never before such meeting had taken place. I on my part was excited by the very thought of meeting which was going to materialise.

During interaction with the women employees, I was surprised to learn that many of them were first generation Railway employees and had no idea of the working of the Railways.

Though from economically humble background, almost all were well educated like Engineering Graduates, Post Graduates and some had worked in Multi-National companies before joining Railways.

I was wondering about their decision to choose Railways. Unlike other jobs, these jobs are tough and needs more stamina, enthusiasm and love for the job to make the work easier. For women balancing work and family commitments is not an easy task.

Among the group of ladies some were appointed on compassionate grounds. Almost all of them agreed on one point that it is job security that outweighed the comfort of other jobs.

A layman is ignorant or unaware of the working system of Railways. So naturally one cannot appreciate the hard work and dedication of Railwaymen. For many, it is the Station Master, Loco Pilot or Guard who are visible to the public, are the only employees connected with Railway working.

Though men working as Station Master, Loco Pilot, Track Maintainer etc. are in the fore front, there are thousands of other men who work behind the scene handling a multitude of operations for the smooth running of the trains.

Each plays an important role in the system and one cannot undermine their role or responsibility.

When I saw a lean, short and timid looking lady interviewed by a reporter of a well known TV channel, being aired on International Women's Day, viewed by viewers across the Nation I felt proud as she was a Loco Pilot, Secunderabad Division, South Central Railway.

A Loco Pilot's job is tough as it requires sitting for long hours in one posture inside the engine cabin where the temperature is higher compared to outside. Unlike their counterparts their cabins are sans air-conditioner or comfortable furniture.

They need high level of concentration and alertness as they are not dealing with the files but carrying on their slender shoulders, the responsibility of carrying thousands of people where there is no scope for mistakes.

Apart from the training received, they need diligence while handling challenges on the job. They have to be alert, physically fit and need a cool mind to find a solution for the problem.

Equally challenging is the job of track maintenance. Track inspection is one of the



toughest jobs being performed round the clock in all seasons. It needs dedicated effort and there is no scope for negligence or a carefree attitude towards the job.

The job of Station Superintendent is also tough. Other than the routine work of running trains, they have to handle public ire sometimes which needs tact and diligence apart from the practical training.

After about three hours of interaction with the ladies, I could get little insight about their work, on duty challenges and the way they handle them. I appreciated their hard work and dedication.

Women by nature handle multiple tasks with ease and working women carry dual responsibilities. Many a time the role of woman is under played and her work goes unnoticed as it is taken for granted. Women need appreciation to keep them motivated.

I feel, celebration of International Women's Day provides a platform to felicitate the genuine achievers. An Award is a small gesture but a big motivator to perform better.

These women have chosen a tough job for their career. Though they play a vital role in running a train, they are not in the limelight which they rightly deserve. These jobs are definitely not glamorous.

What impressed me most was their dedication towards work, enthusiasm to learn more, willingness to perform, boldness in handling challenges and in turn giving their best performance.

Kudos to these women who proved that they are in no way inferior to their men counterparts with their ability, grit and determination.

As I left 'Anurag', the venue of the meeting I was silently admiring and saluting them.



Of Days Gone By

- H N GUPTA '56

Old age brings wisdom, but it also brings second childhood. Shakespeare, the bard of Stratford upon Avon stated that old age was a second childhood. One begins to remember incidents long buried in the inner recesses of the mind. Like changing patterns of kaleidoscope, these incidents show up, one after another for a few seconds each. Some times they merge into one another lacking precision but compensating by profusion.

When I look back as SCRA and a railway man, the first picture I see is of S.K. DIKSHIT. My first encounter with him took place on a early winter of 1956. He came to St. John's college, Agra to meet me. Both of us had made it to the successful list of SCRA (I had topped) of 1956 batch. His father was the principal of railway school, Tundla. Tundla is only 16 miles from Agra. I asked him as to what he was doing these days? I was completing my B.Sc. He said he was studying civil engineering at Roorkee and was C1 which meant that he had topped the Roorkee entrance examination. Subodh was not only my batchmate but also my room mate for some time.

My next memory is of Mr.P.C.Sen, 49 batch. He was posted as AWM in JMP shops. He and Mrs.Sen lived in the bungalow at the southern end of the North road. Junior SCRA s were always welcomed by Mr. & Mrs Sen (dada and boudi to many of us). Dada practiced Yoga and was a great admirer of Swami Vivekanand. He exhorted us to follow Vivekanand's teaching. Dada soon left JMP on promotion as DME, Sealdah, where his inspection carriage was involved in a serious accident when it was occupied by Dada and Baudi. They were both seriously injured.

After some time, Mr Sen resigned from the Rly and joined a number of private companies like Arco, and Stone India. Ultimately he rose to be the CMD of Burn Standard Co and Peerless Finance. As CMD of Peerless, he was really powerful as many state Governments including WB were debtors to Peerless.

On one of the last few clubdays held in Gymkhana Mr & Mrs.Sen brought their daughter along. She was doing a course in museology. During the discussion, I happened

to quote Dr R.C.Majumdar, ex V.C.DHACCA university and famous historian. Dada intervened and with a twinkle in his eye asked me if I knew how his daughter was related to R.C.Majumdar! He was the maternal grandfather of his daughter...

Once he conducted audition test for a selecting master of ceremonies for functions held in JMP. I was selected as Mr Mahadevan was impressed by my knowledge of English as my pronunciation. Mr Mahadevan was a very good tennis player and had been Karnataka state champion. Once in a tournament being played in the Officer's club, in the lucky draw, I partnered him. Without any doubt, I was reason for our defeat. But he never chided me for missing easy shots. He kept on encouraging me throughout the tournament.

Once during Pooja vacation, Mr and Mrs Mahadevan travelled by Toofan Express (now called Udyan Abha Express) from Kiul to Agra Fort en route to Gwalior where their son was studying in Scindia School. They had a reserved compartment. I and some other SCRA's also boarded the same train but without any reservation. Seeing our plight, he invited us to spread the bedding on the floor of the compartment, where we passed the night comfortably. On reaching Agra they had some time available before the Gwalior train, so I invited them to my

home. There they took a bath and some lunch. Agra Cantt station is 7-8 miles from my house and we drove them there in my Pontiac car. We were just in time to board the Janta Express going to Gwalior. Mr Mahadevan remembered the visit to my home and often referred to the hospitality received.

Mr Mishra took over as Principal of IRIMEE after retirement of Mr Mahadevan.

There seemed to be frequent changes in DyCME JMP shops. He was the head of the workshops. When our batch reported at Jamalpur, Mr RBL Mathur was the DyCME. One day our entire batch was invited for a garden party. He was replaced by Mr ISaran of 37 batch. He soon left having resigned from the Rly. Mr MLPuri of 37 batch became the next DyCME. Mr Puri was quite strict about training of SCRA's. He has had a posting in Germany and expected us to match the skills and devotion of German counterparts.

He was transferred to Rly Board as Jt. Director (ME) which was a position of great responsibility. Mr NNTandon of 35 batch became the next DyCME. He was made in the mould of a pucca Sahib. Before independence, Tandon was spelled as Tenon. Before our batch completed four years at

Jamalpur, Mr K.Prasad took over as DyCME. He was reputed to have graduated in engg. from Glasgow.

Five DyCME in 4 years! During these years, Mr KC Chopra of 30 batch periodically visited JMP shops. He was the DyCME (W) in eastern railway HQ at Fairlie place, Calcutta. He would always find time to visit Gymkhana and have a chat with us. He would also call for his bearer who had served him in Gymkhana when he was under training in the thirties and tip him Rs.10 (present value 1000) on every visit. He was a very generous man.

On purpose, I have skipped over all details about life in Gymkhana as all SCRA's are aware of it having lived there. They are aware of the spirit of Gymkhana life. We all had good time as well as harrowing time during four years at Gymkhana. We all remember different aspects of Gymkhana life which we enjoyed. For me personally, the most enjoyable time was the winter months when after the forenoon spent

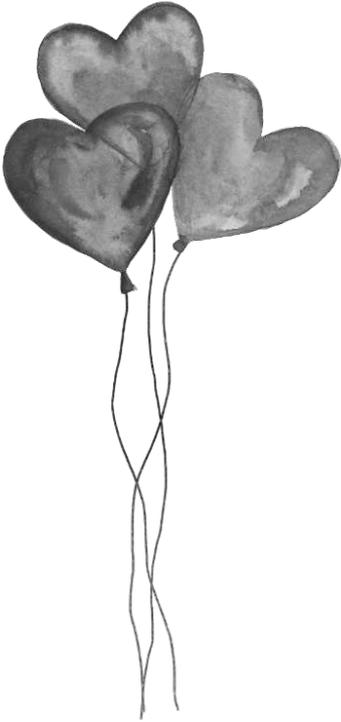
in shops from 7 to 11, I would quickly finish the lunch and lie down in the sun in the inner quadrangle. It was half an hour of bliss which was spent in watching the clear blue sky with a patch of white cloud floating occasionally. It was this half an hour which I relish till today. Otherwise life was a mad rush, rush through the toilet after waking up at six, then rush through the breakfast at 6.30 and further rush to punch the attendance card at 7 AM in the workshops. Then again rush back to Gymkhana for lunch at 11 and of-course rush back to workshop at 12. Afternoon and evening was also a mad rush, first to the games field and then to take bath and dress for the night class at 6.30 PM. Back at 8pm for dinner and repetition of the same regimen on the next day and the days thereafter. But despite this regimen, we loved Gymkhana life and the apprenticeship.

(Concluded....HN GUPTA 56 batch.)

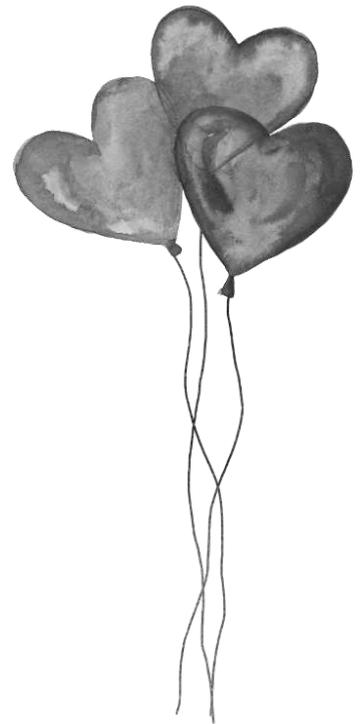


Gift of Love

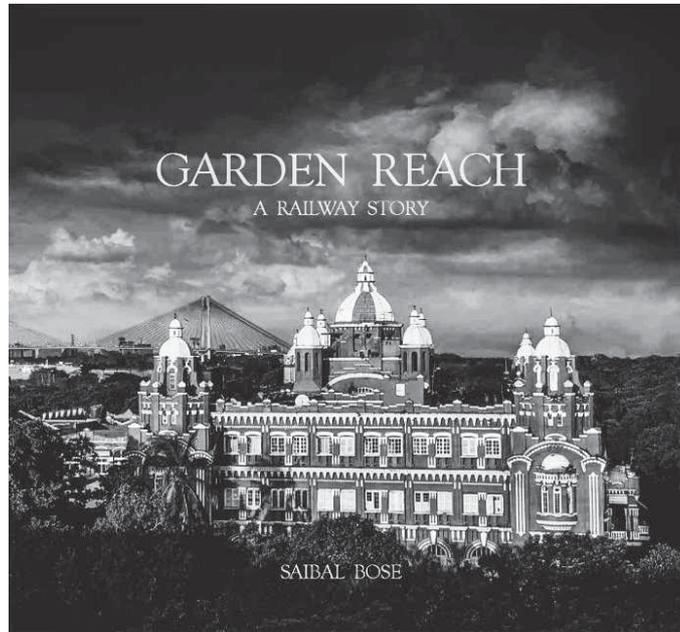
- Jayanthi Mallya w/o Gajanan Mallya '79



As the clock ticked away
Making me realise the day gone by
Announcing the arrival of a New day
A day that is so special in my life
A day filled with fond memories
Loads of good wishes n blessings pouring in
Filling me with happiness and cheer
Making me feel special and loved
The loving and caring by dear ones
Making me feel pampered and proud
The affection and attention by near ones
Makes me feel young and energetic
Ticking clock signalling the time moving faster
Adding one more year to my age
Age being only a number in my life
Failing to make me feel older anyway
Blissfully unaware of the time passing by
Growing from a young girl to a grand mom
Feeling happy and contented in my own world
A beautiful world surrounded by my near and dear ones
Gift of love and affection showered on me
Making me feel blessed and humbled.



Trysts With Tigers And Snakes



Garden Reach – A Railway Story by Saibal Bose

Hardbound, Printed in full colour on art paper, 75 pages.

Published by: CPRO, SE Railway, 11 Garden Reach Road, Kolkata 700043

Price: Rs. 1499/- only

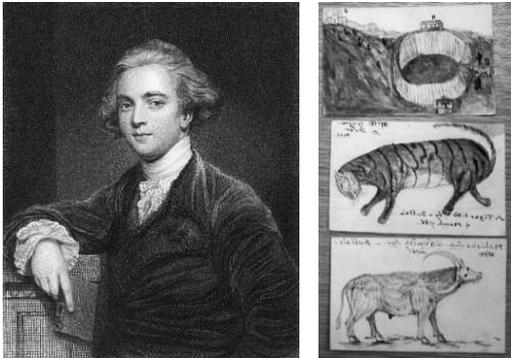
Back in the 17th century, European traders who came to Bengal had established themselves to the west or north of the River Hooghly. They did not venture on the other side of the river, where there was a dense forest inhabited by tigers and snakes.

Following the Battle of Buxar, the English East India Company was granted the diwani, or right of tax collection, of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765. The Company, which had already established its headquarters at Fort William south of the river, started clearing the forest to expand its settlements. By the late 18th century, Garden Reach had become

an exclusive suburb of the newly developing city of Calcutta.

In those days, the best-known resident of Garden Reach was Sir William Jones, a judge of the Supreme Court and Founder-President of the Asiatick Society. He was an extraordinary scholar who took pains to learn Persian and Sanskrit; and studied a wide variety of subjects in these languages, including history, literature, law, music, botany and medicine. Sir William and Lady Jones had a variety of exotic pets, including a crocodile, a tortoise and a tiger cub named Jupiter who had

been suckled by a she-goat! The garden residence of the Joneses still stands in the Garden Reach colony of South Eastern Railway.



Sir William Jones and sketches of a tiger and a buffalo made by Lady Jones

In the mid-19th century, Garden Reach became the home of Wajid Ali Shah, the exiled Nawab of Awadh. The Nawab was a patron of literature, music and dance and he is also remembered for having brought Awadhi cuisine to Calcutta. It is said that he missed the River Gomati which flowed through his erstwhile kingdom, but consoled himself with views of the Hooghly. His extended household consisted of several thousand of his erstwhile subjects – apart from a menagerie of exotic animals, including a pair of tigers who are said to have escaped by swimming across the river! The riverside mansion once occupied by the Nawab is now known as BNR House, the official residence of the General Manager of South Eastern Railway.



Nawab Wajid Ali Shah the last ruler of Lucknow, who settled in Garden Reach

The Bengal Nagpur Railway was incorporated in London in 1887 and its headquarter was shifted from Nagpur to Garden Reach in 1897. Many old buildings were re-purposed and new buildings were constructed by BNR, most of which are still in use. The best known of these is the BNR Headquarters building designed by Vincent J. Esch in Indo Saracenic style, which is depicted on the cover of the book.



Crest of Bengal Nagpur Railway

The dreaded East India Company was long dead, but the tigers and snakes – displaced by the Company in the previous century – found a new home in the BNR shield. They can still be found in the crest of the South Eastern Railway which now occupies the Garden Reach estate!

The richly illustrated third edition of Saibal Bose's acclaimed book *Garden Reach: A Railway Story* gives an authentic account of three centuries of history of Garden Reach, from the mid-18th century to the present day.

Please contact Chief Public Relations Officer, South Eastern Railway, 11 Garden Reach Road, Kolkata 700043, Mobile no. 9002080081 email address cproser2022@gmail.com for your copy.

- Atulya Sinha '83

Jabalpur-Nainpur-Chhindwara-Nagpur Narrow Gauge Travel, April 2007

- R Ramnath '84

This was a long awaited and a long overdue trip.

I had always wanted to travel on the Satpura Narrow Gauge Railway for the longest time. I realized that there was not much time left to fulfil my wish as the Satpura Narrow Gauge Railway was to be consigned to history by the Broad Gauge conversion.

Kapil, a colleague, another railway buff, and I decided to do this trip over the long Good Friday weekend in April 2007.

The Satpura Narrow Gauge Railway had a network of 1134 kms in Central India covering Nagpur, Jabalpur, Nainpur, Mandla, Gondia and Chandrapur. These lines were constructed between 1903-1918. The reason for constructing these lines was to ensure food supply to these remote regions, after the famine of 1868-1870. I am not sure if these railway lines were constructed really out of altruism or was constructed to exploit the mineral resources of the region.

Mumbai – Jabalpur

We passed Khandwa, where there was not much railway action. The Metre Gauge part of Khandwa is sadly deserted and not in use any more. We reached

Itarsi on time. Itarsi was one of the cleanest major junctions that I had seen for a very long time. The train cleaning, watering and platform cleaning has been contracted out to Eureka Forbes who I must say did a very good job. The stalls were clean and the staff pleasant. In general, Itarsi was a very customer friendly station.

At Itarsi the traction changed to diesels. Itarsi diesels, 16309 and 18370 leading were attached.

The only action at Itarsi was the Jan Shatabdi from Jabalpur coming in.

The twin Itarsi diesels kept to time and we reached Jabalpur on time. We passed the Narrow Gauge Howbagh station on our right and saw ZDM4A 210 stabled there, which would later be hauling our train to Nainpur.

Jabalpur- Nainpur

We immediately went and bought 2 tickets for Nainpur from the regular computerized ticket counter. The clerk told us that the next train was at 14.15. We gobbled down the decent vegetarian thali lunch at the Refreshment Room and were on the Narrow Gauge platform, by 14.10. The Narrow Gauge platform is on the Itarsi side of the station.

There was no sign of the train. While waiting for the train we could not help notice that the Narrow Gauge platform was dirty and looked unkempt unlike the Broad Gauge platforms which were clean. In Jabalpur, it seemed BG was the favourite and NG was the step child!

While we sat at the platform waiting for our train we saw a double headed freight train, towards Itarsi, waiting for the starter. We noticed that the locos were not MU coupled; they had two sets of crew, one in each loco. I am not sure why they operated the train this way.

Our train, 2NJ finally drew into the platform around 14.45. It was a 9 coach rake all 2nd class. We took our seats in the first coach after the loco. The train started sharp at 15.00 and till the first stop at Howbagh, it runs alongside the BG line to Itarsi. The train got fully occupied at Howbagh.

At the next station, Jamtara Paraswara, a lot of bananas were being sold. The 2 passengers, who sat in front of us bought a dozen and then forced the young girl, selling the bananas, aged about 12years, to give one more banana [bakers dozen] before paying the money. The passengers then wanted to buy another dozen and the girl this time was smarter; she got the money before she handed over the bananas.

As the train left Jamtara Paraswara station we briefly glimpsed the bridge on the Narmada, about 3-4 kms away, that we would cross later. The train then takes a turn to the left and then a wide turn to the right to approach the river at right angles. The

train passes through Charghat Pipariya station before crossing the Narmada. There was a new bridge being built to accommodate the BG line and construction was in full swing.

At Sukri Mangoli, there was a crossing with 5BJ. While waiting for the crossing we examined the tracks and found the rails to be 75lbs/feet manufactured in 1899. Maybe, these rails had been brought here after serving some part of their life on some Broad Gauge section.

There was another crossing at Shikara at 1745 with the 1 Balaghat-Jabalpur Satpura Express, hauled by ZDM4 208. The Satpura Express was waiting for our train. This train had a 1st Class and we jumped out of our train to see the 1st Class and later spoke to the Guard, Mr. Chakraborty who said that the Satpura Express was possibly the only 'Narrow Gauge Express Train in the world'. He lamented that Narrow Gauge would soon cease to exist. The Satpura Express left soon after. We walked over to the Tea Stall on the platform and saw it selling dark brown jelabis which we were told were 'khoya jelabis'.

After Shikara the train begins climbing the plateau. Kapil and I sat on the steps and watched the train climb and take the tight curves and slowly gain altitude. There were langurs and peacocks by the side of the track. There was a stream in the valley which the train followed for a short distance. In the valley below there were small villages and herds of cows returning home after grazing. The sun was setting in the west and evening turned to dusk and as the train reached the top of its climb, it became

dark. There was a board informing us that we had crossed into Seoni district.

We reached Ghansaur at 19.45. It was a medium sized town but there was load shedding and so the whole town including the station was in darkness. At the dark station, we stopped for a crossing. We knew we were in for a long wait because the loco driver switched off the loco (as seems the practice with all NG locos) keeping only the cab lights and marker lights on.

We bought some peanuts, and then went to speak to the station master who was a friendly person. Throughout our journey on Narrow Gauge, we would find the railway personnel extremely friendly, customer focused and open to conversation. Mr. Saru, the station master who was working with a lantern, was from UP and shared with us his experiences of working in this Narrow Gauge section. He seemed apologetic and defensive about working on the NG section rather than on a 'more glamorous' Broad Gauge section.

In the darkness and in the absence of any light pollution, standing on Ghansaur platform we did some star gazing. We identified the Great Bear, Cassiopeia and the Orion. We also saw the lights of an aircraft, which quickly disappeared.

The train we were waiting for at Ghansaur, 7BJ arrived and we departed again. In darkness we passed Nidhani, Puttera, Tuhiapani, Pindrai and Jeonara before we arrived at Nainpur.

The train takes a curve to the left as it approaches Nainpur. It then travels flat and straight for about

300metres, parallel to the Chhindwara line before arriving at Nainpur platform, 110 kms from Jabalpur.

Nainpur Station

Nainpur is a beautiful, clean, well-laid out and busy station. The retiring room dormitory was empty and the booking was done smartly and efficiently. The dormitory is not within the station premises but at the Jabalpur end of the station, across the tracks next to the FOB. The dormitory is on the 1st floor of the building; on the ground floor of which is the ticket counter and the computerized reservation center. We deposited our backpacks and went down for dinner.



Nainpur Railway Station early in the morning seen from the Jabalpur-end, before the hectic activities at this busy narrow gauge started for the day

At the platform there was activity. The 8CN departed for Chhindwara as we walked to the dormitory. The last train from Mandla Fort had just arrived.

The Non-Vegetarian refreshment room looked better than its vegetarian counterpart. It was full and no tables were empty. We decided to go for a walk, while waiting for the tables to be free. We walked along the track towards Balaghat. We saw the coaching siding, the old steam shed, the

officer's guest house and the railway employee's cooperative society. The streets were empty and clean.

Night action at Nainpur

7CN arrived from Chhindwara behind ZDM3B 180. The next train in was 9BJ from Balaghat, which had a fully operational RMS Coach # 515, attached at Kantaki. 1NNJ and 2NNJ, both had 2nd Class sleepers. We would see 1NNJ again at Chhindwara the next night. More on 2nd Class sleepers later, since we would travel by one from Chhindwara to Nagpur.



A view of the narrow gauge 2nd Class Sleeper coach

Nainpur railway colony

The next morning, I woke up early to explore Nainpur and the railway colony. Nainpur was a very well laid out, well maintained, clean and tidy railway colony. The ADRM Office was close to the Dormitory with a Steam Loco 'Satpura' plinched there. The ADRM would be in Nainpur once a week on Fridays; that is what the board outside declared. The Railway Hospital was fairly big. The AEN's bungalow was well maintained with a decent garden and large verandah. There was a training establishment housed in a big bungalow. The most

beautiful building in the colony was the Officer's Guest House. The Railway colony extended to the other side of the railway tracks, which has the coaching siding, loco shed and staff quarters. Nainpur has no other reason for existence other than the fact that it is a Railway junction.



This colourful locomotive which hauled our train to Mandla Fort

Nainpur-Mandla Fort

We were to take the 07.20 morning train to Mandla Fort. The loco, ZDM4A 223, was a colourful red, yellow and blue liveried loco with a friendly driver. The train was a 9 coach rake and started only at 07.40 which gave us sufficient time to have some tea and biscuits. The Mandla-Nainpur section is a one-train-only system.

We reached Mandla at around 09.10 and took a cycle rickshaw to see the Fort. The Fort was a disappointment with encroachments and the ASI not maintaining the fort. Very little of the ramparts was left. Having nothing to see in the fort we took a boat ride on the Narmada. This part of the Narmada had many temples and ghats. After the boat ride we went to the bus stand and caught a bus back to Nainpur.

The bus ride was a contrast to the train ride; the bus ride was costlier, slower, uncomfortable and bumpy. Throw in a punctured tyre and the difference

became even more glaring. That explained why the train was so well patronized.

Nainpur-Chhindwara

We had to catch the 14.40 6CN to Chhindwara. The train departed at 14.55. It goes parallel to the line to Jabalpur before making a curve to the left. The road runs parallel to the railway line.

The landscape is rolling dry scrub land, with a few hillocks. It was tinder dry and hot.

We passed Kevalari, Khajri, Palari and Kanhiwada. There was a crossing with 5CN hauled ZDM4A 207 at Bhoma. The speed limit on this section was reduced to 40kms per hour from 50kms per hour, after an accident a couple of years back.

After Bhoma, the scenery was spectacular. It is unlike anything I have seen before. The train began climbing and turning. The hills were on one side and on the other side was a valley a few hundred feet below. On the valley floor were curved rocks, with the curved surface of each rock about 200-300 sqm in area. The valley was about a kilometer in width. I sat at the door and enjoyed this landscape. This spectacle went on for about 20 minutes before the train took a sharp left turn, reached the top of the plateau, passed a gate signal and then the railway gate itself.

The track after this was flat. We saw lots of Black Bucks. We reached Seoni at 18.00. The next crossing was at Karobaher with 169 ZDM3A hauled 7CN. We passed a big town called Chaurai, which had two microwave towers and the Beas Satsang

had a center here; identifiable by their distinctive red and white building design.

We reached Chhindwara, which was extremely busy. Chhindwara has possibly the longest Narrow Gauge platform in India capable of accommodating two 9 coach rakes on the same platform. On the rear part of the platform stood a train to Nagpur, which departed soon after our train reached. On the front part of the platform stood 1NNJ waiting to depart towards Nainpur and it had a 2nd Sleeper which was full.

There was no dormitory at Chhindwara and we had to look for a place to stay the night.



At Ramkona railway station on the Chhindwara-Nagpur section

Chhindwara-Nagpur

The next morning, we caught the 0540 train to Nagpur hauled by 194 ZDM3A. We boarded the 2nd sleeper which had sleeping berths on top and sitting on the lower side. Each coach had 10 sleeping berths and 40 seats.

There was a ghat section here with tight turns and curves. After Bhimalgondi the train took a left turn and opened up into a wide valley on the right with orange groves and a burst of greenery.

At Sausar there was a crossing with 197 ZDM3A hauled 2NRC. At Ramkona we had hot samosas and a fruit similar to a 'kharbhuj'; very juicy and sweet. We crossed into Maharashtra at km 1351/10-11.

At Patansavangi platform, there were 2 dogs which were fed by the loco driver. The dogs knew that the train was coming and were waiting for their food. This driver had been feeding the dogs for the past 5-6 years. It reminded me of a story I had read in the Reader's Digest a long time back about a dog who traveled the trains in Italy around World War 2.

After this we crossed a cable car carrying coal to a power station and few kilometers later crossed another cable-car. Then the Broad Gauge line from Khorada crossed above the Narrow Gauge line. Shortly thereafter the line towards Howrah and

then the line from Howrah cross above the Narrow Gauge line.

We reached Itwari at 11am, just as a Narrow Gauge train to Naghbir, with ZDM4A 224 hauling it, was entering the platform.

We reached Nagpur at around 11.20 and our 443 kilometers of travel on NG, over the last 3 days ended!!

We had some time at Nagpur and saw the excellent Railway Museum there, at Motibagh close to the Narrow Gauge Diesel Shed and Narrow Gauge yard.

We caught a train to Mumbai and were back at work the next day, having fulfilled a long standing wish.



Спокойная НОЧЬ

- Debatra Majumdar 2k13



The lights are out. There is a storm outside. The cold yet somewhat comforting wind hits my face. The only thing I can see is a glowing rectangle in front of my eyes. There's background music running in this little story. Kino is playing.

The roofs tremble under the weight of the day
The heavenly herdsman, herding clouds
The city shoots at the night with bullets of light
But the night is strong, her might is great

The ice in my glass slowly melts as I turn around to look at the flickering light coming from my bedroom while I sip the whiskey.

There is a storm outside. I lied about not being able to see anything. My wretched eyes are used to the dark. The lightning helps like the camera flash. It's grey outside. I see the dark silhouette of the trees gently moving. Looks like the night is finally calming down.

To those who lay down to sleep: calm be your dreams
Good night

But I am not sleeping yet. Things are just getting started. But I think I should at least go back to bed and lie down a little. Looks like the whiskey is doing its job after all.

I notice that Forum is playing. Fine, it's not them but one of their songs covered by one of those neo-Soviet post-punk bands. I probably like this version more than the original synth-pop one. The candle in my room is gonna go out soon.

I haven't written down stuff like this in ages. I miss writing. I need to go back to Kino.

My phone doesn't have a lot of juice. It's been a while since the lights went out. I don't like being around people. I often cannot relate to them. I think I like being alone.

Anglo Indians-SAMs and others

- V Anand '62

What is an Anglo Indian?

This term was originally coined by the British to designate Britons who had spent most of their lives in India in the Civil and Military Services and who held senior positions in Government Departments or spent years in India as merchants and professionals, traders and planters. They were men like Sir Thomas Munro and Charles Metcalfe. Many died during their service in India and are buried in India. There were men like David Ochterloney and William Frazer who lived like Indian Princes complete with harems and concubines. Many took Indian wives and mistresses. Some, like Robert Clive (married to Margaret Maskelyne) and Warren Hastings remained faithful to their British wives.

Till about 1911, therefore, the term Anglo Indian meant a Briton (Anglo Celt) who had spent most of his life in India, loyal to Britain but committed to governing or developing India. In the process they lost some "Britishness" and gained some "Indianness."

During the census in 1911, the Government of India designated the people born of European Fathers and Indian mothers as "Anglo Indians." Till then various derogatory terms like "eight annas" or "half caste" were used to describe people of mixed descent. The true-blue British coined the term

"Eurasians" for persons of such mixed blood.

Article 366(2) in the *Constitution of India 1949* defines Anglo Indian as follows:

"(2) an Anglo Indian means a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only."

The SCRA scheme was introduced with the aim of enabling Indians to become managers in the mechanical department. It was understood that Britons would not be selected. It was also understood that Anglo Indians would be inducted as SCRA's.

According to the SAM souvenir published on Club Day 2011 only eighteen SAMs were Anglo Indians.

1927 Batch: H.V.M. Stewart and C.J. Butler

1928 Batch: D.B. King

1930 Batch: J.O. Burns, A.H. Marley, H.O. Toomey

1931 Batch: W.C. Britter. E.L.T. Jones

1932 Batch: J.B. Rosair. *(Not Sure)

1942 Batch: D.N. Marchant. *(Not sure)

1943 Batch: M.A. Plunkett

1944 Batch H.G.T. Woodward

1945 Batch: E.J. Kingham

1949 Batch: Trevor Malcom Fritchley

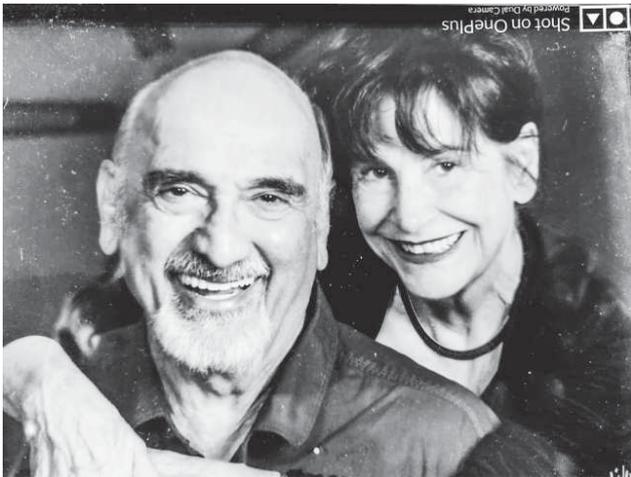
1951 Batch: Richard David Kitson

1954 Batch: Ronald Rebeiro

1956 Batch: Blair Robert Williams

1958 Batch: Norbert Neil DeSouza

I have not worked with or for any of the Anglo-Indian Sams. The only ones I know personally are M/s R.D. Kitson, R. Rebeiro, N.N. DeSouza and B.R. Williams.



BR Williams with partner

From the various boards displayed in Jamalpur Gymkhana, I learnt that Mr. H.G.T. Woodward retired as Chairman of the oil company, ONGC.

Mr. Plunkett was a billiards champion of Gymkhana.

Mr. H.V.M. Stewart migrated to Australia. One of the earlier issues of SAM carries a report of Shri Arun Bhagra's (1967 batch) meeting him in Australia. He has authored a book.

Harold Vivian Moore Stewart, 1'27	Guide to Efficient Maintenance Management	Publisher: Century (Jan. 1 1963) Link to buy: https://www.amazon.com/Guide-Efficient-Maintenance-Management-Stewart/dp/B0010XQVH2
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Mr. Britter has also published a book.

W.C. Britter, 1'31	New types of rolling stock and maintenance facilities on the Western Australian Government Railways / W.C. Blakeney-Britter.	The book is available in the State Library of Western Australia. Most likely his full name was William C. Blakeney Britter. He was CME in WAGR in 1966. Print year is not known exactly. Link to buy is the link to the library. Print year: 1950 Link to buy: https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/7558484?selectVersion=NBD13683156
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Mr. T.M. Fritchley migrated to UK

It appears that all the pre-independence Anglo Indian SAMs had left India, mainly for Australia.

Mr. Kitson was a Deputy Director (Carriage) at RDSO when I reported for training in the Wagon Directorate. Mr. Kitson was overall in charge of training probationers. My batchmate and I had managed to scrape through the viva voce in Motive Power Directorate, where the Deputy Director was very strict not only about punctual attendance but about the project reports.

It was a welcome relief from the oppression of Motive Power Directorate when we reported to Mr. Kitson. "What do you fellows want to do?" he asked.

"Sir, we would like to go to Calcutta for a few days."

"Okay. In that case, you can visit the various Wagon Manufacturers and component suppliers."

We visited M/s Coventry Springs, Burn Standard Howrah, Jessops and GKW. I am beholden to Mr. Kitson for enabling me to combine business with pleasure.

Mr. Kitson worked in different railways and was DRM Bhavnagar and Ajmer.

He rose to the pinnacle of the Indian Railways and retired as Chairman Railway Board

Mr. Kitson has settled down in Gurugram. His daughter lives in Bengaluru.

Anyone who has either worked with or just met Mr. Kitson would describe him as “Mr. NICE”!

Mr. Ronald “Ronnie” Rebeiro served in Southern and South-Central Railways.

I met Mr. Ribeiro once when he was CMPE/Diesel and I was in DLW. However, after I retired and moved to Bengaluru, I have had the pleasure of meeting him at the get-togethers of the RROA (Retired Railway Officers Association). I am glad to report that he is still his sprightly self and advancing age has not dimmed his zest for life in general and SAM affairs in particular.



BR Williams (extreme right) at V Narayanan's Club

I had never met or worked with Mr. B.R. Williams during my railway career. I have heard with awe and admiration about his exploits in the North East Frontier Railway where he was posted in those difficult times when armed militancy was at its peak

in Assam and West Bengal.

He later joined RITES and after taking voluntary retirement, he now resides in USA. A suave, handsome man, he resembled Sean Connery. I have had the pleasure of meeting him and his wife, Ellen, in USA as well as India.

He visits India once in a while to pursue his charitable activities connected with the Calcutta Tiljallah Relief Inc., a charity to help indigent Anglo Indians in three major cities of India.

He has also published several books, including seven anthologies devoted to the Anglo-Indian Community. He has had his share of sorrows including the passing away of his wife. He has since re-married.

I met Mr. N.N. DeSouza for the first time in 1962, when the 1958 batch had come to RDSO Shimla for training.

I chatted with him and his batchmates, trying to find out what special qualities they had to have passed the very difficult SCRA Examination. “You will come to know when you come to Jamalpur,” said Shri R.K. Pachauri ‘58. Indeed, Mr. DeSouza took extra care of me during my initial days in Gymkhana.

“Nobby” was a cheerful person, a good sportsman and elegant stroke player.

He spent his entire career in Western and Central Railways. He was the leader of our team of twelve IRSME officers who visited Canada and USA in 1982 in connection with the modernization of

Diesel Traction. This was the first time that a private entity (Canadian Pacific Consultant Services) had been entrusted with training of Indian Railways officers. The terms and conditions, including the per diem allowances were somewhat vague. Shri O.P. Gupta '59 batch managed to get a copy of the relevant document and cautioned us against the possibility of M/s CPCS cutting corners. Thus briefed, DeSouza negotiated very favourable terms for us.

My next meeting with Mr. DeSouza was in connection with the machining (edge preparation of the girder plates) of components for the bridge across the Zuari River. He was CWM/Parel Workshop, Central Railway and offered to part with a surplus planing machine.

He passed away a few years ago.

It appears therefore, that there are only three surviving Anglo-Indian SAMs namely, M/s Kitson, Rebeiro and Williams.

(Editor: Blair Williams '56 passed away after this article was penned)

Section II

Anglo Indians in my Railway Career.

The first Anglo Indian I encountered in Jamalpur was a Mr. Taylor, who could have passed off for an Englishman with his fair complexion and grey eyes. He was an instructor in the Basic Training Center. He caught me and my batchmates goofing off in the railway yard. We pretended that we were retrieving

some scrap material. He made us dig out a heavy iron casting. It was the viceregal coat of arms, now displayed in the IRIMEE (Indian Railways Institute of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering (Photo Enclosed)

Mr. Roberts was a machine shop supervisor. He was in charge of the Hand Grenade Shop which was carved out of a portion of the Die Sinking Shop.

It was a very hush hush affair set up in the aftermath of the Chinese War of 1962. The hand grenades were cast in the Grey Iron Foundry and machined in the Hand Grenade Shop. The casting and machining had to be very precise. Too thin a shell would result in a weak explosion and shrapnel would not shatter well. Too thick a machining would not allow the explosion to shatter the shell and the products of the explosion would escape harmlessly.

Having got thoroughly bored in the BTC one day, my batch mate Vipin Nanda and I sneaked into the hand grenade shop. After some time, we were spotted by Mr. Roberts.

"Oy! What are you fellows doing here?" he yelled.

"Just looking around," we said lamely.

"Have you looked around enough?"

"Yes."

"Well, in that case, will you please F**k O*f Sir?"

The supervisors, even the most senior ones, were quite respectful – after all, we were their future

bosses. However, they did not hesitate to speak their mind.

In my final year I was training in the Progress Office under the guidance of Shri Vijay Kanwar, 1955 batch, who was Works Manager (Finishing) at Jamalpur. Roberts was the Foreman Progress. With the help of Roberts and Roberts Sundaram, another Foreman, a large number of discrepancies in the account of finished components were rectified.

Mr. Roberts claim to fame was however, his exceedingly beautiful daughter "Pinky" Roberts who was a good singer. She left a trail of broken hearts in my batch when she married an army officer and left Jamalpur for good.

During our training in the Electric Locomotive Shed at Asansol Eastern Railway we came in contact with some remarkable Anglo Indians. There was Beale, our instructor. He was not only a very knowledgeable supervisor but also an accomplished saxophonist. He and another Instructor Rose taught us the intricacies of electric locomotive operation and maintenance.

Then there was a Mr. Duncan, an Assistant Security Officer in the Railway Protection Force. As there was a shortage of Railway Quarters, Mr. Duncan stayed with us in the so-called Officers' Rest House—nothing more than a dormitory. There was not much to do in Asansol. One could go to the Durand Institute which was in a sad state after the Railway Ministry cancelled its excise permit. The other attraction was the Atwal's restaurant which

boasted of a crooner and where Beale played the saxophone.

The evenings in the rest house were enlivened by Mr. Duncan's flute recital. After every tune he would look up ask whether we recognized the tune. At the end of the recital, he would solemnly get up and we would all come to attention as he played the National Anthem. Duncan would shake the flute vigorously to remove the accumulated saliva. We would hurriedly move out of range.

During our stay in Asansol, we had occasions to ride with the legendary Mail drivers M/s Craker and Tocher. In those days they were based at Jhajha (roughly midway between Howrah and Mughal Sarai) and worked the diesel hauled trains from Howrah to Mughal Sarai, a distance over about 700 kms.

They were selected for working the First Rajdhani Express which was diesel hauled. They were transferred to hauled. I am not sure who took the first train out of Howrah. According to Eastern Railways sources it was Tocher.

Craker knew the entire section like the back of his hand. I was keeping time looking at the working time table.' "You have gone over an ashpit at 100 km/hr. I observed. "Sir, the ashpit has long since been covered, but the time table has not been corrected"

A batchmate of mine and I were travelling by the 5 up Howrah Amritsar Mail with Tocher at the controls. As we approached Khana Junction, we saw that the home signal had the lunar lights on and

showing amber. Not being familiar with the newly introduced colour light signals, he asked Tocher what it meant. Ocher said, "Sir it means we are going on the loop line"

My batchmate thought that the train was being diverted by the Sahibganj Loop and exclaimed, "What happens to all the passengers who are waiting on the main line?"

Tocher's typically Anglo-Indian retort was, (addressing me)," Sir, your friend has had too much to drink"

When we were in Jamalpur, the then Director, Shri S.C. Misra used to say, "Pray that you do not have any cold breakage of axles, because that shows the absolute nadir of mechanical engineering branch. Pray hard that it does not result in an accident. If there is an inquiry by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, pray even harder that you do not have to face "Heartless Hart"

He was referring to Mr. Hart, the legendary CRS of Eastern Circle.

Fortunately, I did not have to face any inquiry by CRS though there were many cold breakages.

I met Mr. Hart at the Anglo-Indian Convention held at Chennai in 2003 to which he had been invited to release the Souvenir.

I was allotted Southern Railway as requested by me. Shri S.C. Misra's reaction was, "Why are you opting for Kala Pani? You should go to the Eastern or Central Railways"

"Sir, my parents are in Mysore"

My travel to Mysore from Jamalpur required travel by the Howrah-Madras Mail. It was worked by Waltair based Diesel Locomotives. I travelled on the footplate with a St Denis, an Anglo-Indian driver. He was a devout Catholic as evidenced by hit keeping a crucifix on the locomotive brake handle.

In the Southern Railway Headquarters office, the CSTE was Mr. McAuliffe, a cryptologist by choice and telecommunication engineer by profession. In the hush-hush confines of the Cipher Room there was a Mrs. Hart. Many of the stenographers and telephone operators were Anglo Indian girls.

The Madras Division had its Broad-Gauge Mail Locomotive Shed at Arakkonam Junction. The locomotives worked up to Raichur on the Bombay line and Bangalore. There was a Mr. Tennant, the unofficial "speed King". Magee used to work the Brindavan Express which used to cover the distance in 5 hours flat with halts at Bangalore Cantt. Jolarpettai and Katpadi. (Fifty years later the Shatabdi, with only one halt, takes 5 hrs. 15 minutes! Long live Electrification!)

It so happened that Brindavan Express once rolled in ten minutes late at Chennai. The COPS, Mr. Godfrey Saldanha happened to be at Madras Central Station. He told Magee, "You're late" Magee replied "So would you be, Sir, if you had to pass all the loops from Arakkonam to Madras."

My batchmate and I were under training at Villupuram, an important metre Gauge Junction with lines going to Chennai, Katpadi, Trichy,

Pondicherry and Tanjore. We used to travel to Trichy by the 137 Dn Trivandrum Express. There were a number of Anglo-Indian Drivers. Andrew Batty would cover the 180 km run in three hours with a watering halt at Vriddhachalam. Trichy was 124 km away from Vriddhachalam. Batty would skip the auxiliary watering halt at Lalgudi and arrive Trichy 25 minutes before time. "There is a good movie at the Aruna Cinema at %.30 pm sir. I don't want to miss any of it"

Batty, Besterwich and some other Anglo Indian Locomotive drivers of Villupuram stood by the administration during the fireman's strike of 1968. This was due to the exemplary leadership of Sri V. Narayanan DME Trichy.

My first posting was in the Preambur Locomotive Works. My colleague was a Mr. Edwards. There were Foremen of various degrees of competence. However, Mr. Egan was an outstanding Forge Shop Foreman, who made the snubber shoes for Diesel Locomotives. Under the able direction of Sri Narayanan, Production Engineer.

Perambur Locomotive Works was asked to recondition the aging Sulzer Rotary Air Compressors of Integral Coach Factory. We fitted the stators with new cast iron stators, but did not know how to bore and grind the bore. Mr. Brown who was working earlier in Loco Works and was now in ICF told me that our horizontal boring mill had a grinding attachment. He searched through the tool room and located this attachment. I had never seen anything like it-not even in Jamalpur.

WE soon restored the compressors to their pristine condition.

As the years went by, the number of Anglo Indians in the Railways dwindled. By 1980, when I was in Central Railway, there were only a handful of Anglo-Indian Locomotive Drivers left. There was Mr. Bent, and the Dick brothers of Jabalpur, Misquitta Mascarenhas, Domingo and Whittle of Bhusaval.

My stenographer in Bhusaval was a Ms. Whittle.

Most of the younger Anglo Indians had emigrated to Australia and persuaded their parents to join them. "Look, my son pays more income tax every month than what I earn every year!" Mr. Allwyn, Assistant Works Manager, Perambur Carriage Works would say waving his son's pay slip.

The last of the Anglo-Indian Power Controllers in Bhusaval was Mr. Noel Dickson, who passed away a few years ago.

I had just assumed charge as Sr.DME (Power) Bhusaval after a five-year stint in RDSO. I was not accustomed to the daily rough and tumble of the division. The CME, Sri C.N. Kapur had told me sternly that I should be ready to explain any case of punctuality lost on Mechanical Account.

As instructed, Dickson telephoned me on one morning and announced, "Sir, 116 up Bombay-Lucknow Express lost punctuality on mechanical account."

He read out, overruling my interruptions.

116 up arrived Bhusaval right time. Departed right

time. Engine Number WP 7378. Loaded with 18.3 tonnes of Churcha B grade coal.

Driver R.R.Pali First fireman Bhika Pardesi and Second fireman Waman Dagdoo.

Arrived Khandwa right time, left 25 minutes late, handed over to Jhansi division 20 late at Itarsi.

“Why?” I asked

Sir, Dr B.G. Kulkarni Assistant Medical Officer Khandwa got delayed because his car BMY8354 failed to start and had to be push started.

“Dickson don’t talk rubbish! Kya Hua?”

“Sir, lake Hua”

“Sir, one female passenger name Rameeza Bibi

travelling from Bombay VT to Lucknow on ticket number 684389 in coach number WGSCNY 7631 berth number 21 delivered male child. Colour of eyes brown. colour of hair black. Dr Kulkarni attended. Mother and child* elected to continue the journey”

*(As if the child had a choice!”

“Dickson, how is mechanical department responsible?’

Sir, the AOS Sri Nagnath says there is no column for medical department. Since Dr Kulkarni’s car is responsible, it is on Mechanical Account”

I shall leave it to my friend Rakesh Misra (1972 Batch) to recount the story of Mr. Booth of Lucknow and the control chart.



Golden Jubilee Batch

This year's Golden Jubilee batch is the 1973 batch, i.e. this is the batch that has completed 50 years of association with the SCRA scheme. The idea of giving special recognition to a golden jubilee batch is comparatively new. Such recognition was possible from 1977, but it started only in 1990 when all batches senior to and including the 1940 batch were given special invitations for Club Day. They were then looked after exceptionally well and given attention even more than the usual Gymkhana high standards. The concept was the brainchild of the late L R Gosain '40 and A H Khan, also '40, during the 1989 Club Day. A H Khan was at Jamalpur with a group of Pakistani Sams who had been able to grace the occasion that year. Fortunately for the duo, the then Director, the late Vinod Vij '62, followed it up. The late S S Godbole '63, who replaced Vinod Vij as Director, continued inviting the 50-year batch and the Golden Jubilee batch idea took root.

The golden batch – 1973 – is a large batch after a succession of 4 comparatively small batches. The largest of these 4 batches (1971) had 10 members and their total was 36. On the other hand, 1973 were 17 strong. Members of the batch are:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Prem Chandra | 10. Kalyanesh K Bajpai |
| 2. Anup Sahu | 11. Pankaj Kumar |
| 3. Himanshu Sanwal | 12. Aditya Kumar Kansal |
| 4. Rajiv Vishnoi | 13. Prafulla C Gajbhiye |
| 5. Angshumali Ghosh | 14. Hemant Kumar |
| 6. Om Prakash Chaube | 15. Vinay Kumar Jain |
| 7. Sunil Kumar Sood | 16. Mukesh Sahai Mathur |
| 8. Rakesh Vatash | 17. Ashok Kumar Agarwal |
| 9. Deepak Gupta | |

Unfortunately, five of these 17 stalwarts are not with us anymore and have left for their heavenly abodes. These are Himanshu Sanwal, Angshumali Ghosh, Deepak Gupta, Pankaj Kumar and Mukesh Sahai Mathur. It is a humbling thought that almost one third of the batch did not live to see themselves as the golden jubileers.

Batch of 1973



Passing out picture of the 1973 Batch

Members of the 1973 batch are all seated in the first row.

Sitting (from left to right): K K Bajpai, O P Choube, A Ghosh, H Kumar, M S Mathur, D Gupta, R Vishnoi, R Vatash, P Chandra, S K Sood, A K Agarwal, V K Jain, P C Gajbhiye, P Kumar, H Sanwal, A K Kansal, A Sahu

Dear Departed - Recollections

- Rakesh Vatash '73

Recently, at a gathering to celebrate Prem Chandra ('73)'s son's wedding in Varanasi, Rakesh Misra ('72) stated that among more recent batches, 1973 and 1963 batches were significant for losing the maximum number of batchmates as of now. Given that 1963 batch, on an average, is chronologically aged 10 years more than 1973 batch, this startling observation highlighted the loss of our five batchmates who are no longer with us. Whether it was Hemanshu Sanwal's eccentric genius, Pankaj Kumar's technical virtuosity, Angshumali Ghosh's professional apathy, Deepak Gupta's liveliness or Mukesh Mathur's studiousness, each of them left indelible memories in our lives. Now, my other batchmates have colluded with me to recollect these guys, who have given us much to remember since our Gymkhana days.

Hemanshu Sanwal

Belonging to a family hailing from the hills of Almora in Uttarkhand, Hemanshu Sanwal was a dynamo of energy. In the first year at Jamalpur, a fast hockey ball with an unpredictable bounce on an uneven Gymkhana sports ground knocked in his front upper incisor. A visit to BR Singh hospital at Sealdah allowed him to acquire an artificial tooth. Thus, along with his infectious laughter, his toothless grin became a permanent fixture in Gymkhana, as he was not regular in equipping his

jaw with the plastic appendage. His red and black checked Cotswold shirt, which he was extremely fond of, and his hair, which stood out like a porcupine's quills, were his other prominent markers.

Prem Chandra said that Hemanshu always reminded him of the eccentric genius of "Rancho", portrayed by Aamir Khan in 2009 blockbuster "3 Idiots". Part of that visualization stems from a crazy project Hemanshu undertook at IRIMEE. A discarded outboard engine in the Thermodynamics lab got him so charged up that he took upon himself the onerous task of bringing it to life. Over a period of nearly two years, he stripped the entire machine, de-rusted, cleaned the components, and assembled the outboard again. Then he discovered a few spare components and washers that had been left out. Undeterred, he succeeded in firing up the outboard, and bringing it to life, much to the amazement of faculty and all of us. Despite his history of scoring in single digits in Mechanical Drawing exam in the first year at Jamalpur, he finally became the Princi's favourite thereafter - a budding Mechanical Engineer with a penchant for IC engines and automobiles.

Batchmate OP Chaube recalls that during his wedding at Chaubepur (see accompanying story by Hemant Kumar '73), Hemanshu sat in his Dad's

Mercedes car and raved over its “terrific suspension.” During the same visit, Hemanshu also enjoyed a ride in an open, vintage Jeep at Chaubepur.

Hemanshu possessed a Royal Enfield Bullet mobike since probation. Being a geek, he would insist on tuning the mobike’s four-stroke engine himself. I remember trying to assist him once, but with disastrous results. He handed me a plastic ball point pen, opened the combustion chamber by removing the spark plug, and asked me to hold the pen in contact with the piston. Idea being to capture the top most position (TDC) as he cranked the piston. As he kicked, the sudden movement of the piston caught me by surprise, and the cheap plastic pen crumbled inside the cylinder. The volley of curses I received from Hemanshu remain etched in my memory till date. Our valiant batchmate then had to open the cylinder assembly, an arduous task by any yardstick. He cleaned up the combustion chamber, reassembled the engine, and got the bike up and running. That was Hemanshu for you.

Hemanshu and I had a tenure together at Railway Board during the early nineties. I recall that he programmed the entire Gazetted payroll of Railway Board on Lotus 123 spreadsheet software. Such was his mastery of the spreadsheet that Railway Board adopted Hemanshu’s program for payroll on a regular basis at that time.

For reasons I have not been able to completely fathom, Hemanshu remained a lifelong celibate. He retired prematurely from Railways and subsequently settled down in a small town on the

outskirts of Bengaluru – Gauribidanur. He attained reasonable fluency in Kannada. At Gauribidanur, he adopted half a dozen children, including some orphans, from the marginalized sections of society. He boarded them at his residence, financed their schooling and personally coached them from time to time. His “children”, as he called them, were very dear to him. When I met him at Bengaluru over lunch to catch up, he insisted on picking up some healthy snacks for his “children” on his way back.



Hemanshu Sanwal with some of his adopted children (Picture courtesy Vinay Kumar Jain '73)

Vinay Kumar Jain '73 reminisces:

“Himanshu Sanwal, the man with a smile and a hearty laugh, was a happy-go-lucky soul. He was too freewheeling type to be bogged down by the rigours of married life. He bid farewell to IR in 2005 and returned to his native place in Uttarakhand. The climate did not suit him and soon after the demise of his parents, he took a big leap south to land in Gauribidanur, a small town north of Bengaluru. He took under his wings 5/6 children, who stayed with him 24x7 in a small house. He took care of their upbringing, their education and all

their needs. We often used to wonder what Sanwal was up to in that remote place but I was overwhelmed by the enormity of what he was doing when I happened to visit him and his wards in May 2017 with my wife. The guy was his usual jovial self. We had a meal with all of them there. While taking leave that day, little did I realize that that would turn out to be our last meeting and that he would go away never to return.”

Angshumali Ghosh

A maverick or downright unconventional – it is difficult to nail down Angshumali Ghosh’s personality. Non-conformism was perhaps in his blood. Frequently referred to as G’Da, Angshumali came from Lucknow, and stood out for his distinctive mannerisms in Gymkhana – a pocket comb taken out with a flourish from back pocket, followed by combing of hair, and shirt adjustment accompanied by his typical gesture of a jerk in opposite direction. Academics were never his forte, and he seemed quite content to be the self-confessed “brake van” of the batch.

While an apprentice, G’Da wangled an ORS trip to Lucknow, his hometown, from Professor Sharma, aka, “Lallu”. After about a week, when he returned from Lucknow, “Lallu” asked him whether his job at Lucknow was done. Cool as cucumber, G’Da informed “Lallu” that he had been unable to locate the address. “Lallu” was reportedly left tearing his hair in frustration.

G’Da pursued Sangeet Bhushan course while in Jamalpur, honing his skills in tabla playing. Pranks came easily to him. During a Gymkahana inspection

by a professor, G’Da, hiding behind the eastern wing window blinds, shouted out “Lallu” at him, A complaint to the then Principal Mr. Jagati led to our entire batch being lined up in Principal’s chamber. Each of us was questioned, but in a rare display of batch unity, nobody squealed. An appreciative Principal applauded, and “Lallu” did not know how to react.

Rajiv, Hemanshu & G’Da, the three Lucknowites of our batch, were once returning to Jamalpur after Durga Puja holidays when their train stopped at Lakhi Serai station. G’Da and Rajiv got down to have tea on the platform. G’Da, never the one to hurry things, and savouring every sip of his tea, noticed his train moving. Before the duo could realise, their train picked up speed and both just about managed to leap and hang on to the SLR door, which would not open, jam-packed as the compartment was with passengers. From inside, passengers shouted and warned them about the upcoming girder bridge. With their bodies clinging to the coach side, the duo held on for dear life as the Kiul river bridge girders rushed past them, barely a whisker away. Luckily, the train stopped at Kiul after crossing the bridge, and both Gymmies survived the ordeal.

In keeping with the trends in the mid-seventies, G’Da let his hair grow long, reaching his shoulders. One day, Mr Jagati, the Principal, walked into the class room and spied G’Da’s flowing mane. Annoyed, the Principal told G’Da, “Wear a brassiere also.” G’Da, who later swore that he misheard the advice as “Wear a blazer also”, nodded and replied, “Yes, sir.”

G'Da's mis-use of motor car advance while he was posted at DLW, Varanasi, is stuff of legends. His love for music was well known, as also his propensity for playing loud music at his residence every evening. G'Da ended up using a better part of his motor car advance to purchase music cassettes in hundreds, which added to his already immense collection. One has no idea how he squared up with the administration for his loan misuse.

Batchmates at DLW recall a particularly nasty boss who accosted G'Da there. Gesturing G'Da to sit, the boss proceeded to lecture him on priorities. G'Da, listening attentively, was asked by write down boss's instructions. A deadpan expression on his face, G'Da reportedly told the boss – I can either listen or write. I can't do both things at the same time. The look of bewilderment on that boss's face was the stuff of legends.

A generous host, G'Da accommodated Sunil Kumar Sood ('73) in his residential quarters at Tilak Bridge colony, when the latter was transferred to RCF. Sometime later, when both he and Sunil shifted to Kapurthala, G'Da was allotted Bungalow no. 13. A superstitious guy, G'Da refused to occupy it. Sunil Sood reciprocated his gesture by accommodating G'Da in his allotted, adjacent bungalow at RCF. The then GM, unhappy with the arrangement, asked Sunil to throw out G'Da. Sunil refused, and had to face a lot of unpleasantness from the top honcho thereafter.

Deepak Gupta

Deepak was the cheerleader and life of the '73

batch, always full of fun and frivolity. Very few knew that Deepak had the unique distinction of having played cricket with Diana Eduljee in his younger days. He had an enduring passion for dogs, and he was very fond of having them as pets. He relished idlis and consumed them in large numbers.

All batchmates remember him for his meticulous record keeping of batch expenses during technical tours. If two batchmates shared a cane juice, each was charged @ 20p for his share of the 40p glass (yes, paise in money still counted in those days). A third person, who as much as share a sip would end up getting charged @ 13p. To lend a touch of officialese, he even got a rubber stamp made for '73 batch expenses.

As mess manager at Gymkhana, he curated lavish dry dinners with plenty of cheese slices. These dinners were memorable.

On the sports side, he was a mean TT player who could take on the best with his smash & volley game. Very active in the football and hockey field, he once took our Iraqi football coach's advice to heart in an inter-batch football match. The coach's advice was simple – to prevent opponents from scoring at any cost, even if it meant holding on to the opponent's attire. As Prabhat Sahai '75 ran away with the ball and looked nearly certain to score a goal against '73 batch, Deepak held on to Prabhat's shorts for life. All hell broke loose, and the match was abandoned after that incident.

Deepak hosted half a dozen batchmates at his New Delhi residence during CEI Part 1 examinations in

1975. His dad, an Electrical Engineering department officer in the Railways, was posted in the Board at that time. Those batchmates who stayed at Deepak's place remember the warmth and hospitality that they experienced during the tense examination period. They also recall the cutlery collection that Deepak showed off with immense pride.

Sunil Sood recalls his running rivalry (room decoration) with Deepak while at Gymkhana. Once, in Sunil's absence, Deepak created a pyramid on Sunil's bed, stacking a trunk, stool and a water-filled surahi on top of the bed. When Sunil stepped into his room, his fan, upon starting, promptly demolished the pyramid, and created a huge mess which took quite a while to clean up.

Our batch once camped on the nearby hills, taking tents from the Territorial Army camp. Deepak, ever enthusiastic tippler, brought an obscure quarter bottle of whisky from Universal stores. One sip of that whisky later, it was declared - "Ghaas". We never bought that whisky brand again.

O P Chaube described a train journey with Deepak during probation. The duo were travelling through Gujarat, a dry state then and now. With great ingenuity, Deepak managed to carry liquor in an Old Spice after shave plastic bottle. No wonder both guys had a good time in their first-class compartment, imbibing the forbidden pleasure as their train rumbled through Gujarat.

In his later years, Deepak developed a cancerous growth in his brain which led to frequent loss/

diminution of vision. He underwent multiple surgeries over 13 years before succumbing to the disease. He braved those with tremendous courage, retaining his sense of humour all the while. I recall meeting him when he was posted as AGM WR. He proudly introduced me to some of his colleagues, proclaiming that our friendship went back to over four decades. Sunil remembers him performing a short jig in Secy. to GM's office at WR. Fun-loving he was, till the end when the disease finally won.

Anup Sahu '73 recalls:

A little poignant anecdote from Chaube talking about health being the greatest wealth anyone can have:

"Yes, it is truer than true. It always reminds me my conversation with our dear Deepak. When he got into GM's panel, I called him to congratulate. His response with complete disappointment was, "Yar Chaube, let someone give me my health back, I don't have any desire for GM". I was numbed sensing his problem has reached a serious stage, though during our DRM Paris training, he was yet absolutely fit and fine.

सेहत ही नियामत है, कई बार सुना है लोगों से – अमीर, गरीब, ज्ञानी , अज्ञानी सभी से।"

In this connection I also remember a similar incident. After finishing my tenure as DRM/Malda, ER, I was posted as CWE/CR. After sometime Deepak, on completing his tenure as DRM/Rangiya, NF, joined as CWE/WR. I had started going for morning walks at Marine Drive, as many of us used to do. One day Deepak was talking about his numerous brain operations. He already had about 9 surgeries by then. He said that another one is scheduled within a month.

He mentioned that his surgeon had told him about 6 years back that he does have more than a year or two. And then he said, "Sahu, your friend is already running five years overdue and may fail anytime now." This remark of his shook me to the core. I tried to make light of the surgeon's prediction, telling him that the surgeon had already been proved wrong and that he has many happy years ahead of him.

To think that this man, the prankster of our batch, always cheerful and lively, was living with that dreadful knowledge and yet retained his cheerfulness, and his courage till his very last years, makes me feel very fortunate to have Deepak as my friend.

Deepak, we miss you so much. You will forever remain in our memory as a whiff of fresh air, full of life, cheer, happiness, and fun."

Pankaj Kumar

I last met Pankaj Kumar at Bengaluru in July 2017. At that time, he informed me of his illness (cancer). We spent a pleasant evening together, going out for dinner. Pankaj remained the ever-gracious host, cheerful and chirpy despite his grave illness. He passed away two weeks later.

Pankaj was one of those seniors who had ragged me in IIT/K (he was in 3rd year when I joined IIT in 1st year during 1973). At Gymkhana, I was amazed to see him lined up along with rest of '73 batch. He joined along with Aditya Kumar Kansal on 14th February 1974, i.e. on Club Day. Despite the busyness, seniors made him and Aditya run the Frog race in the football field. Pankaj beat Aditya to the 11th position in seniority by running a race where

he merely feigned frog jumps. His baby face prevented any backlash. His plump profile earned him the nickname "Rolly Polly", and that stayed with him till the end.

During our ragging period, he became popular for his funny imitation of Helen dancing to R.D. Burman's hit composition "*Piya tu ab to aaja*". Pankaj imitated Helen's cabaret moves, jiggling on the carpet during the many lounge sessions in Gymkhana, in the process inviting catcalls & whistles from senior batches.

Post the ragging sessions, Pankaj became a good friend. Together we discovered the forbidden pleasures with initiation into alcohol drinking. During a weekend binge where Pankaj had one too many, he sauntered into the toilet next to club, a bit unsteady on his feet, while I relieved myself in the adjacent cubicle. After I had finished my business, I found Pankaj still grappling with his trousers. In alarm, he loudly exclaimed - "I can't find it. Help". After helping him, I nearly died laughing that day.

Pankaj was also the unwitting victim of a "flooding" episode that Vinay Jain writes about in an accompanying piece in this issue. The '73 batch blokes had targeted a senior batch Gymmie, but a miscalculation led to Pankaj being flooded instead. Some bad luck, you might add.

At Gymkhana. Gymmie boys are in the prime of youth and physical fitness. We all had voracious appetites. Pankaj and Deepak once challenged each other to a hogging competition. Both guys ended up gorging on '*puris*', and each crossed the 50 '*puris*'

mark, while we gaped in disbelief. I do not recall who won, but I do recall that both had a horrid time thereafter, as they ended with severe stomach disorders.

Among Pankaj's hobbies was his love for photography, which was rivalled only by his love of reading. His photography skills propelled him to manage Technical Society in Gymkhana, while he also devoured books by the dozen. I recall that he had managed to get colored film rolls from his brother, who was settled in Canada. After exposing the rolls, Pankaj posted the rolls for developing to Canada. A couple of months later, the prints came to Gymkhana. I featured in a couple of those pix, and it was a great novelty at that time, given that coloured photography had not yet arrived in India.

Aditya Kumar Kansal recalls going for a movie show – Mughal-e-Azam – at a movie theatre in Chowringhee area of Calcutta after a sumptuous lunch at popular Anarkali restaurant. Midway through the movie, Pankaj discovered that he had left behind his bag at Anarkali and insisted upon Aditya to accompany him to locate the bag. They both walked back, retrieved the bag, and returned to the theatre. To this day, Aditya rues that he missed Madhubala's evergreen dance on the hit song "*Jab pyar kiya to darna kya ...*", thanks to Pankaj's forgetfulness.

Pankaj always remained an overgrown baby - right from the time of his student days, till he superannuated. He was fun company outside office hours. He developed considerable flair for stock investments and is reported to have made

significant gains during the period he dabbled in stocks.

Mukesh Sahai Mathur

Mr Sincere of the batch, Mukesh Mathur exuded confidence during his Gymkhana stay. Many remember him for his talcum powder that he used to spread liberally on his chest and throat. Some others remember him for his song "*Yaad main teri jaag ke hum, raat bhar karvatein badalte rahe ...*". An enthusiastic singer, he was over-shadowed by the more talented guys such as Rajiv, Prem and Hemant in our batch. But he always joined stage performances during Club Day events, participating enthusiastically.

OP Chaube ('73) recalls with amusement that before joining Jamalpur, during his BSc. admission process at Allahabad University, he would invariably find a checked red shirt ahead of him in the queue at various counters. This happened at least three times. To Chaube's utter disbelief, he encountered the same checked red shirt yet again at Gymkhana, though not in a queue this time. That red shirt was owned by none other than Mukesh Mathur. As Chaube and Mukesh exchanged notes, they realized that they had been batchmates at Allahabad University, and also became railway batchmates after joining Jamalpur.

Studious to a fault, Mukesh was always looked up to for his shop notes. He had a way of making friends with artisan staff during workshop training, perhaps to gain an edge over other batchmates. No wonder that his shop notes were much sought after, as rest

of the batch lacked the apparent meticulousness of Mukesh's notes. During one such session, Rajiv recalls, batchmates stumbled upon the expression "Mausam Garden" in Mukesh's shop notes. When he was questioned about it, Mukesh defended it vociferously, stating that it came from none other than a master craftsman in Fitting Shop. A massive controversy erupted. Two batchmates escorted Mukesh to the shop floor the next day and accosted the friendly fitter. The seasoned artisan clarified that there is no "Mausam Garden", but he had discussed the component "Motion Girder". A sheepish Mukesh had to eat humble pie, while triumphant batchmates exuded "I-told-you-so" attitude.

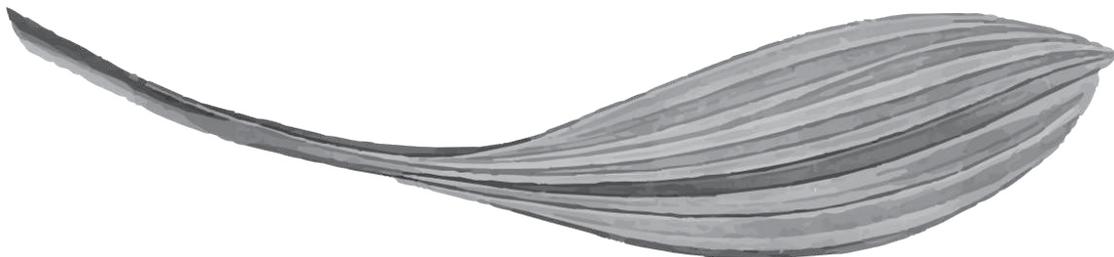
Many batchmates remember the Tech Tours from Jamalpur. At every destination, Mukesh was the first one to get ready in the Mobile Training Car. Suited and booted, so-to-say, he would prod the

lazier ones among us to get ready and move punctually.

A noticeable feature was his typical response to a Ticket Collector, while walking out from a Railway Station – "1A pass hai". Batchmates like me would merely mention "pass", but Mukesh would state the class with due emphasis.

Mukesh developed arthritis in the third year at Gymkhana. Unfortunately, that plagued him for a long time, with him having to undergo multiple surgeries during his railway service. He endured it cheerfully.

While his better half, Kumkum, vowed to never serve liquor at her home, Mukesh enjoyed an infrequent tippie and was not averse to sharing a glass of wine or beer with other batchmates.



In Remembrance

- V K Jain '73

This quirky sketch of members of '73 batch was penned by Pankaj Kumar, my batch mate, who is sadly no longer with us. I don't recall when he wrote it but it was many years back, maybe 14-15 years, and apparently as a response to a post having something to do with the '62 batch. Since then, we have lost him and 4 more colleagues of the batch. I am reproducing this verbatim and would like to dedicate this to the memory of all my 5 deceased batchmates, whom we all remember fondly. I am taking the liberty of assuming that I have Pankaj Kumar's permission to do so (as also of others).

Respected Sir,

I will not join you in the argument about the colour aspects of '62 batch, but will only say that it was definitely full of some very outstanding and interesting individuals right from AKP Sinha who was our APPT to the late KB Srivastava and late VK Vij. It is also a pity that the batch having so many outstanding individuals was not given an opportunity to lead the Mechanical branch due to Board politics.

Having said that, even subconsciously I would not think of belonging to any batch other than 1973. I won't say that 1973 is full of outstanding individuals, simply because one can't imagine his batchmates to be anything other than a bunch of

duds (myself excluding obviously). However, it does have a number of very interesting personalities.

1) Prem Chandra - the batch senior, he has a very gifted voice for singing but is never known to have worked hard on that gift. Also never known to have taken a decent bath during the four years at Gymkhana. Being an introvert - he was the most under rated guy in the batch. Never known to have highlighted or projected his achievements which are not less in number. Being the batch senior he worked for a consensus - though he was still shouted at and criticised by other batchmates specially when he was the General Secretary of Gymkhana. He is the only one in the batch to have done IIM (Ahmedabad) although he eventually came back to Railways. Now having his second stint as Professor saheb at the Staff college. Though not a born sportsman, he tried his hand at all the outdoor and indoor games and always came up with a better than average and sometimes quite a good performance.

2) Hemanshu Sanwal - the techie of the batch. Eternal bachelor but always threatening to get married. Also named "porcupine" for his hair and Taurus for his uni-directional charge on hockey and football fields. Surprisingly, got 3 out of 100 in engg drawing in first year, but was very sound and solid at anything technical.

3) Anup Sahu - Our man from Danapore - used to speak English with a *phoren* accent when he joined JMP. An introvert - he gives impression of being aloof when one meets him first. A very decent and well mannered individual - a gentleman to the core. Got very good offer (with handsome dowry) right in the first year from the daughter of owner of Neelum cinema (Moghyr). Hey, ha ha ha, I am just joking. A pretty good sportsman he always used to achieve a fairly decent level of proficiency at any game he took up. A very avid reader of the books and a very fair minded person.

4) Rajiv Vishnoi - the official *Gawaiyya* of the batch and for that matter Gymkhana during the middle and late seventies. Unlike Prem Chandra, he was not endowed with a very rich voice, but made up with his talent and sheer hard work, thus being the most outstanding singer in Gymkhana during that time. Very methodical in his work both in Gymkhana (be it school, workshop, games or dramatics) and later in Railways. Second in the batch eventually. Considered to be an extremely good officer on the Rlys, he is going to provide a very tough competition to Hemant Kumar for the top job. The first angle of the triangle with IRAS female at Staff college while in foundation.

5) Late Angshumali Ghosh - a very unconventional and unusual character. While you could get into fight with him quite easily but would love him if you come to know him closely. Terrific sense of humour if not directed on you. Basically a very simple soul in deepest of deeps.

6) O.P. Chaube - no comments, I do not want to

worry him. Though I do remember the *nautanki* at his (Chaube's - don't you get confused) *sasural* when we all went for his marriage in first year. I also remember the blush on RS Viridi's face (visible inspite of his beard) when one of the *nautanki* girls tried to fool around with him (Viridi), and did not leave his hand till he gave a handsome tip. In the same context. I also vividly recall the enjoyment we had on the morning after wedding, When we did # 1 (or # 2 for that matter) in the lush green fields, at the *sasural* village (was it Ghazipur) of OP Chaube.

7) Sunil Kumar Sadd (sorry Sood!) Lambu of the batch. Spending most of the time fighting with Deepak Gupta for various known and unknown reasons. Wanted to prove that his room was best decorated even if it meant destroying the decor of Deepak's room. Also never liked Deepak coming like a Afghan on pay (stipend) day for clearance of reds in the batch ledger. Useful in football and hockey for the batch.

8) Rakesh Vatash - SAM Editor. Nicknamed as "dud" by 1969 batch during our first month for reasons not yet known. Will be viewed with suspicion initially due to his heavy voice and frequent use of the word "bugger", but a decent, nice, lovable and most helpful character at heart of heart. A very well read person, he started a book club for the batch. A successful SAM Editor with a lot of innovations to his credit. Also a very intelligent and hard working officer, he has earned a very good name wherever he has worked - be it Central Rly, Board, or Lilluah shops. Though fifth in the batch, he could prove to be a dark horse in the run up to the top job. On the

other hand, being a straight person (he will not do politicking - be it for a posting station or for a prized post) may prove to be his undoing

9) Deepak Gupta - nicknamed Chimp since he looked like one. Manager of the batch - efficient at whatever he touched, right from the Batch ledger (a most innovative concept emulated by many other batches subsequently) to the Batch Pondie club. Was always there to arrange rly reservations, outside accommodation during the batch tours, and anything on the earth which had to be arranged. Surprisingly, was very emotional at times. Universally liked by one and all including seniors, batchmates and juniors. Played the lead role in the shorts pulling incident during the soccer match with '75 batch. Very good forward in Hockey and Soccer. Very good and useful in most other outdoor and indoor games. Tried to show promise in singing but his talents were nipped in bud by the batchmates. Did beat Sanwal in engg. drg by getting 9 out of 100 in the first year but has since learnt how to read drawings as claimed by him. He was so many things to the batch - sorry if I forgot something.

10) KK Bajpai - nicknamed Doctor, he was doing PhD in Physics when he joined JMP. The political person of the batch. Started calling himself KK Vajpayee when BJP came to power in nineties. Will borrow alarm clock from you (in Gymkhana) by convincing you that it will be more useful with him and of no use to you - though he will promise to wake you up with it but will never do that.

11) Pankaj Kumar - "Outstanding", "Genius" and "Excellent" are three synonyms.

12) AK Kansal - Rocket Mama as nicknamed - has very clear concepts of the jet propulsion and the rockets. Favorite song - "*ao tumhe chand pe le jayen*". A born optimist - will find the silver lining in most adverse circumstances. Was the second corner of the triangle with IRAS females during foundation at Baroda, another batchmate being the third. Has earned name as a very efficient and succesfull officer on Railways. The best billiards and bridge player of the batch.

13) PC Gajbhiye - nicknamed nozz. Hailing from Nagpur, Vidarbha, not surprising that he was also nicknamed "Vulgaranand. Used to narrate dirty and vulgar tales from the land of Vidarbha. Also told how crowd pushed around Lata Mangeshkar when she came to Nagpur, how someone pricked a pin on her buttocks and how she vowed never to come back there. Keeps track of all the live floor shows at Lahori joint of Nagpur. Very good at fluid mechanics - specially the construction and the working of nozzles. An ACE SPORTSMAN outstanding cricketer, most useful on hockey and soccer field and does exceptionally well in any game he touches. A music buff, tried a few unsuccessful attempts at singing. A famous quote - "I am even willing to work as a Khalasi if posted in Nagpur.

14) Hemant Kumar - nickname Z-Baby and the topper of the batch. A talented *quawwali* singer - did *quawwalies* with Vishnoi during the 1975-78 club day functions. Will always give side while hitting the cue ball even if it may be a straight shot on the billiards table. Has good sense of humour even if sometimes at other people's expense. A very non-

controversial and steady officer who has always carried out his transfers. Will be extremely difficult to dislodge for R Vishnoi or AK Agarwal if they try to get around or get past him. Did not believe too much in outdoor sports while in Gymkhana but a decent player of billiards and bridge.

15) VK Jain - although nicknamed as Mr "growl" by batch, he is a very nice and decent character at heart if you get to know him closely. The best all round sportsman of the batch who excelled in any game he touched be it field games, cricket, athletics racket games, or indoor games like bridge, TT or Billiards. Equally good at studies whether school or workshops. Pretty good in singing and dramatics also. Stood second in the batch after Hemant Kumar. Believes in fair and straight dealings with everyone and therefore took no time to get disgusted with Railways and thus joined RITES permanently. In spite of being quite good at the studies, he fell foul of the mad Bhatta (Math) in the first school session, and was branded as the "Join -"waaast boy of the class" by him.

16) MS Mathur - nicknamed as Mathur Shaab. Most studious and sincere person in the batch, he will not miss a school or the workshop session for anything. All the batchmates used to copy his assignments, shop diary and the workshop notes. Very good at singing and also tried his hand fairly successfully at dramatics. Was not very keen on outdoor games but was a fairly decent player of billiards and bridge. Having the problem of the knee joint since a number of years - for which an early recovery is wished by everyone known to him. A very polite and

decent soul.

17) Ashok K Agarwal - Nicknamed Bugs Bunny (which has emanated from the term Buggerwal), he was very well known for his PJs which made the batchmates and others cry and run for cover. Very good at studies - did well in school sessions but lost out in workshop interviews and could only come fourth eventually, even though initially he was tipped to top or at least be second. Not exactly an outdoor person, he still was regular on sports field and was quite a decent soccer goalkeeper. Tried his hand on each and every sport and did achieve better than average proficiency in almost all the games he tried. Was however regular on bridge and teen patti tables. Also the fourth (the extra) angle in the triangle enacted with IRAS females during the foundation at Baroda. Has now become a senior member of AIDS, and has adapted himself well to play Delhi / Board power games. A very very strong contender for the top job and will undoubtedly give a run for their money to Hemant Kumar and R Vishnoi.

Not much in the ultimate analysis! No outstanding individual. Just a bunch of decent, better than average, sometimes unconventional or even eccentric guys. However, they all possess a very outstanding and unmatched quality - they are all my batchmates. For this simple reason, I have no wish whatsoever, whether subconsciously or knowingly of belonging to some other batch - be it 1962 or any other batch.

Pankaj Kumar ' 73

The Hole in the Mosquito Net

- V K Jain '73

During our stay in Jamalpur, there were myriads of incidents that happened, which were very unique to our lifestyle in Gymkhana. Later in life, these became the stuff of much fun and enjoyment and have regaled us on many a occasion and during batch gatherings.

There was a tradition in Gymkhana of a ritual, interestingly called "flooding". With the beginning of summer would start the season of flooding. Those who used to stay in the rooms on ground floor were the potential recipients/victims of flooding. Every SAM knows what flooding is but to put it briefly, it involved throwing a pail of water from outside the window (and sometimes the door) into the room on the hapless poor guy sleeping soundly in the dead of night. The trick was in not getting caught or identified. The wet mattress, sheets, etc. spread out in the quadrangle to dry out the next morning were a sure give away of the nocturnal happenings and the victim would be found sheepishly going around avoiding the knowing glances of all. Though there was some risk involved yet I think, any incidence of the perpetrator having been caught was rare.

The one incident that stands out in my memory was one such act of flooding that was very different from the usual floodings that used to take place. Usually in summers, some of those staying on first floor used to shift their beds to the eastern and western terraces to enjoy sleeping under the open skies. I along with one of my batchmates decided that we would 'flood' someone sleeping on the eastern terrace. Immediately, we realized that this was going to be an extremely risky affair as the danger of being caught and beaten up was very high. We would have to plan meticulously.

First step was the identification of the target and the bed that he occupied. Next, it was decided to tie the mosquito net to the iron frame and mesh of the bed securely on all sides to thwart any attempt of the target from coming out of the bed quickly. This job would need to be done after he had got into bed and was fast asleep. Once this was accomplished, I was to carry the bucket of water right upto the bedside, release the cascade of water on the intended target and immediately rush out and make my way to the western terrace, where I

had my own bed. The problem was how to get rid of the bucket. So a third team member was co-opted, who would be standing on the central staircase below, waiting to catch the bucket dropped by me while fleeing across the east-west corridor. The bucket would be taken by him to his room on the ground floor and hidden there, while I would quickly slip into my bed on the western terrace and pretend to be asleep. The plan seemed to be fine and workable. It was as daring as it was foolhardy. Anyhow we decided to go ahead with it.

On the appointed day, action began late into the night as had been planned. We were naturally feeling nervous and jittery. After ensuring that target was in deep slumber, my batchmate slid under his bed and stealthily worked for several minutes till the mosquito net had been firmly tied to the bed all round. Once this crucial task was done, he signaled all clear to me. With my heart thumping wildly, I approached the earmarked bed, paused a moment and with one single swoosh emptied the contents of the bucket on the motionless form on the bed. There was an anguished scream, I scooted, ducked timely while jumping down on the corridor, and ran for my life. Suddenly there was lot of commotion and I could almost feel footsteps following closely behind me. While running I fortunately remembered to let go of the bucket into the waiting hands of our accomplice below and I literally flung myself into the safety of my bed on the western terrace.

Hardly a moment had passed and there were a number of guys milling around shouting and trying to figure out who the culprit was. They were even noting the direction of slippers at each bed. Slowly I got up and joined the melee, feigning total surprise. Then all trudged over to the eastern terrace to see what exactly had transpired. I couldn't believe what I saw. The impact of water hitting his face had propelled him out of his bed right through the mosquito net, leaving a big gaping hole as if the net had simply evaporated from there. I silently thanked my batchmate for having done a great job with the tying of the net. But there were more shocks in store. We discovered that the person who had been flooded was not the intended one but none other than Pankaj Kumar, my own batchmate (may his soul rest in peace). We had made a big mistake in our execution.

This incident evoked considerable excitement and remained the topic of discussion for days. Though Pankaj had a strong suspicion of what we had done but he could never manage to get enough evidence to pin it on us.



A Memorable Village Wedding

- Hemant Kumar '73

It was early 1975. Our first year had passed like a blur. We took a collective sigh of relief when Ravi Shankar Kochak of 1974 batch joined, and the tag of 'firstee' was passed on to the next batch.

Soon after, one of our batchmates went home and came back beaming. The reason – he had got engaged and was to marry soon. Entire Gymkhana suddenly came alive. None of the residents of Gymkhana were married. In our batch itself some were just 18, most were 19 and a couple were 20 years of age. The groom to be, Om Prakash Chaube, was 20 years old. Luckily, at that the minimum age for marriage was 18 years for boys. Wherever one went in Gymkhana, the topic of discussion invariably was the wedding of Omi, as Om Prakash Chaube was known among his family and friends.

Omi was the eldest of his siblings and his father had been eagerly waiting for the marriage of his first-born. He hailed from a village 30-35 km from Varanasi, aptly named Chaubepur. The bride was from a village not very far from the groom's.

As could be well imagined in a hostel full of young boys (no girls at that time) the excitement was palpable and omnipresent. The batch was pricking

Omi to tell us about bhabhiji, but he clammed up, and did not reveal even the name what to talk of showing her photo that we were sure was with him. He asked us to guess the name. Many of us shot out names like Vibha, Jaya, Usha, Nisha, Prerna, Sudha, Rashmi, and many more. He denied all of them, though we later came to know that we had nailed it that evening, but Omi's poker face did not reveal anything.

Soon, there was an invitation to all SCAs for the wedding. It was once-in-a-lifetime event. More than two dozens SCAs of '73, '72, and '71 batch made plans to attend the wedding. Fortunately, the date was not clashing with any examination schedule of any batch.

I do not remember how so many people made there way to Mughalsarai Junction. Uncle (Omi's father, known to me and my family, being from the same city Allahabad) had arranged for two buses to ferry us to Chaubepur via Pandeypur. There was a car too, with open top. A couple of us jumped into the car, and were feeling mighty privileged. We were apprehensive and excited at the same time for our journey through the village roads, or rather dirt

tracks. As the bus negotiated the route we enjoyed the fields and the crops growing and the fresh air all around. Soon the bus stopped outside perhaps the only pucca house – call it a two-storeyed mansion – in the village that had mostly mud houses. Yes, it was the house of Omi the great. Uncle was there to receive us. The two boys who had jumped into the open car at Mughalsarai, were completely covered in dust, and no longer feeling privileged. Our stay had been arranged comfortably, though like all weddings of that time, mattresses were arranged on the floor as in a dormitory. We were accommodated in tents.

Villagers usually went to the fields to attend to the nature's call. The house had toilets but they were going to be insufficient for the gathering. Uncle had got a few toilets with tin sheets constructed for our convenience. SCAs are quite adaptable and this was only a minor adjustment. For bathing, it was a borewell that was filling water in a *hauz* from where it was being supplied to the fields for irrigation. Some of us pretended the *hauz* to be a giant bathtub and frolicked inside, while others enjoyed the thick water-jet emerging from the pump outlet. We were enjoying the village life to the full.

During the day we went around the village, and were overwhelmed by the warm hospitality of the folks. We were not the guests of uncle, but of the entire village. Everyone offered something from their farms and insisted that we take it.

It was a typical wedding spread over three days. First day was *tilak* ceremony, followed by an entertainment program organized specially for us,

though most of the village menfolk too were there. It was a combination of slapstick comedy performed by two men in rustic language. They were in their vests and pyjamas, and after cracking some double-entendres they would lift their pyjamas by a few inches, holding at the side seams, and exclaim, “*Are baap re!*” rising on their toes at the same time.

There were also a few dancers with not-so-graceful movements, which the village gentry loved. We were behaving ourselves, when one of the dancers came near one SCA of '72 and spread her *pallu* on him. He got alarmed and took back a few steps. This dancer had taken an instant liking for the smart boy in the *baraat*, much to his discomfort. Another dancer became enamoured of one of our batch - a shy boy, really. His discomfort was only too evident when she caught his wrist. He wriggled out deftly. Other SCAs were on their guard and were secretly enjoying the interaction between the two dancers and their objects of attention. The two heaved a sigh of relief when the show ended.

The next day was the wedding day. We went on the bus to the village nearby, where the bride hailed from.

Uncle later recounted the event. The bride's village was apprehensive seeing so many young boys alighting from the bus, and, the bride's father told uncle (as recounted by him), “*Aaj to gaon ki izzat gayi*”. When the *baraat* went back after the wedding the bride's father was mightily impressed with the well-behaved boys and wondered which part of the universe had they come from.

Next day was *bhaat*, when typically *kuchcha khana* (*roti, chana dal*, boiled rice, as against *pucca khana* comprising puri, kachori, pulav and the like) are served and is on the day after the wedding. The wedding meal is necessarily *pucca khana* – a sign of formality for guests. *Bhaat*, on the other hand, is when the guests are part of the family through the wedding, and could be served *kuchcha khana*, which is more informal. While we were taking food at the bride's place, the ladies were singing inside the house, loud enough for us to hear. We were surprised to hear choicest abuses being hurled at the groom's party, all of us included, within the lyrics of the vernacular songs being sung accompanied with beats on *dholak*. As it turned out, this was a custom where the womenfolk from the bride's side abuse the groom's party for taking away the bride from her parental house. They did not mean any offence. None was taken.

The same evening we bid adieu to the village to take our return train to Jamalpur from Mughalsarai station. We had not got any reservation in the first class but had used the Privilege Ticket Order (PTO) and taken third class tickets. We ended up occupying the unreserved compartment for the return journey, in the company of several other passengers.

If you think Omi had started his wedded life after this, you are mistaken. *Gauna* of the bride was to be performed a few years later and only then they were to live as husband and wife. In any case, Gymkhana had only bachelor accommodation. I am sure anyone who had been to Chaubepur wedding would have memories of the same, which would be impossible to forget. If the memories had started to fade with time, they would be revived after reading this account.



Glimpses of our Gymkhana days from my album

- Rajiv Vishnoi '73



Freaking out at Kharagpur Lakes

(L to R: Standing: PC Gajbhiye, Pankaj Kumar, Deepak Gupta, SK Sood, R Vatash, Hemant Kumar, OP Chaube, H Sanwal, Prem Chandra; Sitting: A Ghosh, R Vishnoi, KK Bajpai, A Sahu)



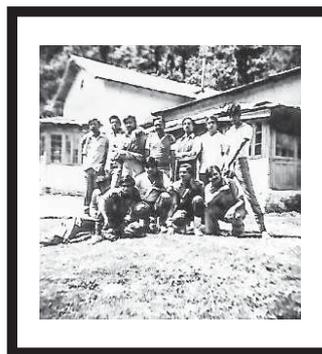
Visit to Kharagpur Lakes, Monghyr after ragging period

(L to R: S.K.Sood, P.C.Gajbhiye, H.Sanwal, Hemant Kumar, Pankaj Kumar, R.Vatash, A.Sahu, R.Vishnoi, V.K.Jain, Prem Chandra, A.K.Kansal, Deepak Gupta, A.Ghosh)



Out on Tech tour in the good old DTC

(Prem Chandra, VK Jain, PC Gajbhiye, Deepak Gupta, KK Bajpai, Hemant Kumar, A Sahu)



Our abode at Rock Climbers' Roost, Nainital during Rock Climbing training

(Pic on left - L to R: Standing: PC Gajbhiye, H Sanwal, A Sahu, AK Agarwal, Hemant Kumar, Prem Chandra, SK Sood, Sitting: Deepak Gupta, AK Kansal, MS Mathur, KK Bajpai)

(Pic on Right L to R : SK Sood, Deepak Gupta, AK Agarwal, VK Jain, R Vatash)



In the August company of Tenzing Norgay at Darjeeling

(L to R: R Vishnoi, AK Agarwal, Hemant Kumar, Tenzing, OP Chaube, MS Mathur, Prem Chandra)



With the flamboyant Jeetendra at Simla

(L to R: AK Kansal, A Sahu, Deepak Gupta, VK Jain, R Vatash, Prem Chandra, Jeetendra, PC Gajbhiye, AK Agarwal, R Vishnoi, Hemant Kumar)



Additional flowers at Shalimar Gardens, Kashmir

(L to R: AK Agarwal, A Kansal, R Vishnoi, Hemant Kumar)



Encore of Golden Jubilee Qauwwali with GM/ER and senior SAMs

(L to R: Kabeer Ahmad '74, GM/ER Mr Swaminathan, Rajiv Vishnoi '73, Hemant Kumar '73, Mr B. Basu '27, Principal/IRIMEE Mr HCS Jagati '47, Mr S.S. Kochak '36)



Last tango before passing out

(L to R Standing - Pankaj Kumar, O.P. Chaube, M.S. Mathur, Anup Sahu, V.K.Jain, Deepak Gupta, A.K. Kansal, A. Ghosh (rear), R. Vatash, A.K.Agarwal, S.K.Sood (rear), Hemant Kumar, Rajiv Vishnoi, P.C.Gajbjiye, K.K.Bajpai)

Sitting- Prem Chandra (L) and Hemanshu Sanwal (R)

Picture Memories

- O.P.Chaube '73 batch



Tech Tour near Shimla

L to R - R.Vishnoi, Hemant Kumar, P.C.Gajbhiye, H. Sanwal, V.K.Jain,
A.K.Agarwal, Deepak Gupta, R.Vatash, A.K.Kansal, Anup Sahu)



Snow at Shimla

(Front row L to R - R.Vishnoi, P.C.Gajbhiye,
A.K.Agarwal, A.K.Kansal, Deepak Gupta, V.K.Jain;
Rear - Hemant Kumar, Anup Sahu and H.Sanwal)



L to R - Front row - Om Prakash Chaube, Pankaj Kumar, Angshumali Ghosh,
Ashok Kumar Agarwal, Deepak Gupta, Rakesh Vatash & Rajiv Vishnoi)

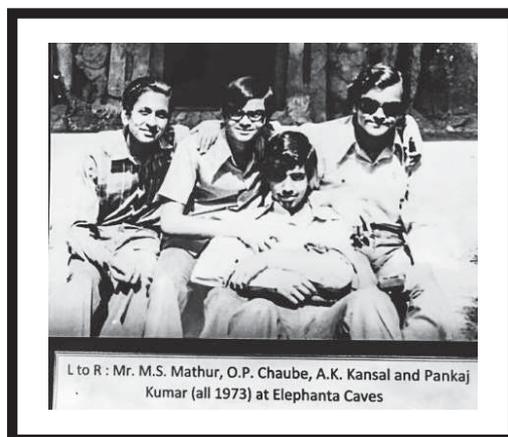
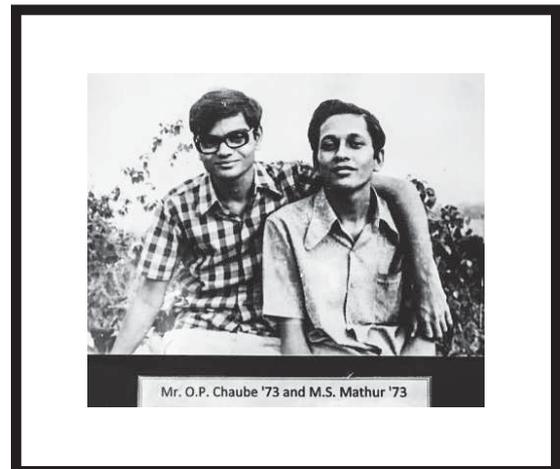
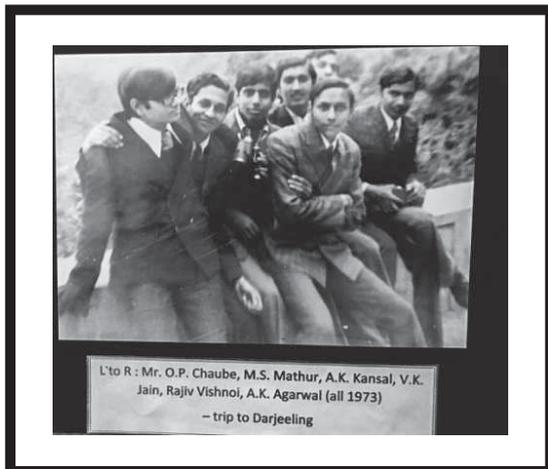
L to R Rear row: Prem Chandra, Sunil Kumar Sood, Mukesh Sahai Mathur, Anup
Sahu, Aditya Kumar Kansal, Vinay Kumar Jain, Hemanshu Sanwal, Hemant
Kumar, Praful Chandra Gajbhiye & Kalyanesh Kumar Bajpai)

SAM CLUB DAY



Camping at Jamalpur Hills (circa 1975)

L to R – A. Sahu, Hemant Kumar, R.Vishnoi, M.S.Mathur, A.K Kansal



Mirza Ali Imam Ji Kabuterwale and preventing World War III

- Anl Khurana '74

As a reintroduction to SAM after 30+ years, I thought I'd start by sharing a bit of a personal perspective of my journey the past 40 years. I've also not done any non-business writings for a few decades, and promise more entertaining writings in the near future! I've had fun much of the time and its been satisfying (and occasionally frustrating). These short narratives are partly actual (so not quite exciting fiction stories) and partly interpretations of my experiences. Draft title for an autobiography some day - "Four decades, several short stories, family and life, and a few careers ... the journey of life".

Chapter 1: 1978 to 1983 - The budding career of an engineer, Jamalpur, Mirza Ali Imam Ji Kabuterwale and preventing World War III

It is Summer of 1977. I have just finished Class XI in Chandigarh, and have gotten into IIT Delhi. I had wanted to be an economist, but I am as excited about the next 5 years and of having a career as an engineer (I did like to disassemble and reassemble things, and thought that qualified as an interest in engineering). My father is also very excited for me.

He happened to be going to Delhi and said he would visit IIT-D and get me ready for college. When he returned from Delhi a week later, his view had changed 180 degrees; he had seen students in the hostels drinking and shooting drugs, and his conclusion was "... no son of mine is going to that rotten place ...".

So it was time to change gears, and do my Pre-Engineering (Class 12) from Panjab University in Chandigarh (August'77-May'78 - the highlight was that Kapil Dev was in the same college, and used to come to play with us). Sometime in early 1978, my father brought me UPSC forms for something called SCRA (those were the days ... when kids listened to their dads!). The obedient son took the UPSC exam and forgot all about it (aside from some science and math questions, I recall some interesting and intimidating questions on valves and pipes and flows etc ... assume these were meant to evaluate my intuition with steam locomotives and such 😊)!

I did pretty well in my University exams in April'78, and Punjab Engineering College (and a few others) came knocking. I chose to stay in Chandigarh and

joined PEC (I have some vivid memories of a few hundred of us at the “induction” at the PEC auditorium). I chose Electronics & Computer Science, and the program started in August’78. Interesting theory and applied courses in electromagnetic theory, thermodynamics and engineering drawing and electronic circuits, soldering and such. And a bit of entertaining “ragging” as par for the course (more on that another time). And the surprise that there were only 4 girls in the whole batch of something like 250 first year engineering students (Kalpana Chawla was one of them)!

I then got a letter that I had qualified for the SCRA interview ... went to Delhi ... and was asked some random questions on why I wanted to be an engineer and my interests in space and the stars (yes, that was starry eyed me way back then)!

Fast forward a bit to January’79 and the post-emergency blues found their way to PEC and a bunch of student leaders led an extended “strike” ... which was perhaps interesting to me for 2 days and then, to kill time, I went into a cocoon of idle pondering ... and decided that I had enough of strikes and meaningless processions and speeches (clearly not cut out for politics!). Happily, I received an appointment letter for SCRA, with instructions to show up at some place called Jamalpur Gymkhana and IRIMEE (pre Google Maps and mobile phone days, mind you, and I had never been east of Delhi). And I took the easy way out ... or so I thought (I was excited to get free rail tickets!) ... and my father and I (yes, I used to accept being

chaperoned then) took a train to Delhi and then the TeenSukhia Express to Jamalpur. I recall taking a rickshaw from the Jamalpur train station to Gymkhana the evening of March 11 or so (not absolutely sure 43 years later) and being welcomed by a bunch of folks on the front porch and cat calls from the terrace (firstee! firstee!).

Like many of us, I have a lot of memories of the next 4 years in Jamalpur and Gymkhana, with a few worth sharing (see photograph circa 1982 at the 1977 batch passing out):

- In April’79, a few weeks after joining SCRA, I recall being asked if I was interested in being Editor, SAM. The next thing I know, I was asked (I think by Luthra’75) to write a 5-6 page essay titled “Mirza Ali Imam Ji Kabuterwale and how he prevented World War III” (@Ali Imam’75). I have very little recollection of what I wrote – between several “jai Hanuman” jaunts – other than being told that I had written somewhat of a masterpiece, and was selected as Ed, SAM! (PS: if anyone has a copy of that masterpiece, please feel free to send to the Nobel Committee for the next Nobel Prize for Literature!)
- I also have some fond memories of S3 (S-cube = Sam Sunday Special ... and not Satyam Shivam Sundaram!), working tirelessly Friday night through early hours of Sunday morning (I have a couple of vivid memories of slogging it away with Luthra’75, Khosla’76, and Srivastava’77), to post the weekly (or maybe fortnightly) wall newspaper on the bulletin board ... a splash of news and stories, hand written with illustrations

and cartoons and graphics! Since we did not have iCloud or Google Drives those days, I don't know that we stored them anywhere ... again, if anyone has a copy somewhere, it can go into our nostalgia collection (limited prints only!)

- Being the “Mess Manager” (for a full month) was something of an experience... juggling the conflicting goals of great food with minimum per-head monthly bill! Designing the weekly menu, going to buy vegetables and groceries at 5am a couple of times a week, supervising the cook, keeping an eye on pilferage, ..
- Being called to task by Mr. D. Ray ('64) for teasing one of our instructors, Mr. B.B. Pal, who taught Properties of Materials (POM) and who we lovingly (and teasingly) called POM POM (Manu bhai motor chali). After a complaint in the late evening, Mr. Ray found out that the major culprits for “POM teasing” were yours truly and two others from '78 batch. The “punishment” was to “pick up some bricks and bring to IRIMEE at 4am”. The route the bricks took was something like this (MAYBE ONE OF THE SAM TEAM CAN REPRESENT THIS GRAPHICALLY):

1am: Batch 1 - Gymkhana to IRIMEE (all walking)

2am: Batch 2 - Gym to IRIMEE

4am: Batch 1 - IRIMEE to Gym

5am: Batch 2 - IRIMEE to Gym, followed by a long lecture

In this case, we guess that Mr. Ray wanted to do an all nighter for some reason (😅😅) ... and maybe secondarily to teach us a lesson!



1977 and 1978 batches, likely in March'82 when 1977 batch were graduating

Chapters 2-19 coming in a future issue!

Ch 20 & Epilogue: 2022 onwards - Too much energy, and envisioning a plan for the next 40 years

Its full circle in June 2022, 45 years on from when I started my professional journey to become an engineer. I've decided to “retire” (in the US, age based retirement is not legal, and so it's generally a personal choice, though some professions and companies do have guidelines and norms). For the first time since 1978, I have choices ... lots of them. Do nothing and just have fun, all the way to doing another full time something.

I had recently read about Tom Brady, a professional quarterback in American football, who decided to retire from the sport, but then after only 2 months, decided to make a comeback. Note to myself, “I don't want to do that ...”.

I then did a couple of things.

First, I happened to speak with one of my MBA classmates. He, a successful software entrepreneur, has recently gotten a CEO coach, who asked him, at age 54, if he had a plan for his life! Rajeev was surprised and asked him what his coach meant. What followed was a short lesson on longevity and Rajeev agreeing that he would likely live to 100+, and so a “plan” of sorts made sense ... Around the same time, one of my acquaintances (of Irish origin) shared his social media post with me, which went something like this, “My Irish father told me a story when I was young. A group of hungry Irishmen who see a mountain of food may fight and grab and eat until they are full, but the same group of people who see a mountain of money will never stop taking and wanting more”. The takeaways from both anecdotes? Have a purpose and a plan, and make the rest of our lives count!

Second, my wife and I met with a couple of “retirement” specialists, both from within my corporate team as well as external “advisors”. They helped us understand and calibrate some of the financial mechanics of “retirement” (savings, retirement plans, cash flows, fixed income, risk etc.), but perhaps more importantly, helped me change my mental compass. What we took away was that the deeply embedded (Indian) mindset of saving for our kids wasn’t always relevant. In our case, we’ve already invested in our 2 daughters through a balanced upbringing and a world class education, and they were doing very well. While a bit of financial help from us has and will help them in many ways, they really don’t need much more from us. So, we can actually live like the current GenX -

draw down our principal (savings) over the remaining lifetime, and truly use our savings to do what we think is appropriate over the next few years!

Third, I decided to review the philosophy of the four ashrams and interpret what that might mean for me. It sounds logical and organized - the notion of life phases of Brahmcharya, Grihasth, Vanaprastha, and Sanyasa. For me, and in today’s life and age - of life long learning, multi-tasking (or deliberate ADHD), and other - I conclude that Vanaprastha (which is technically the phase I’m at), could also mean parallel processing of multiple things.

So, finally, I sit down with myself - pretty difficult to that sometimes - and in true consulting fashion, write out my thoughts along with pros and cons, and let them sink in ... over the course of 6-8 months ... that’s how the best wines are made, right?

After further reflection and framing, I conclude that my priorities are something like this (also see sketch showing my handwritten notes from mid-2021).

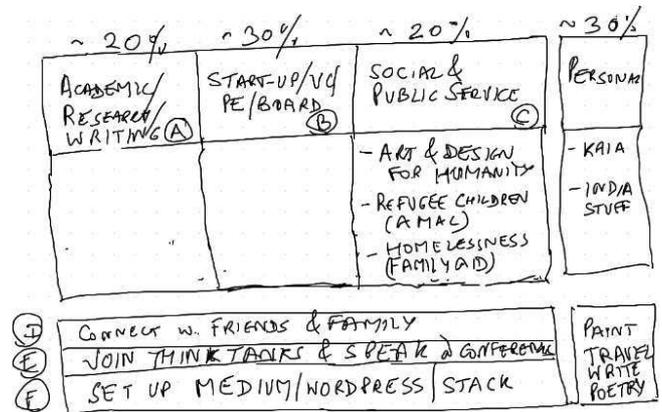
The first priority is my two-and-a-half year old granddaughter ... and future grandkids, my wife, and family, and friends; meet as many relatives and friends as possible and spend time with them. That includes making it to as many Feb 14 Jamalpur Day get-togethers over the next few years and meeting as many SAMs as possible. Life happens when one is busy!

Second priority is me (and my wife). The past 40 years or so have been about career and taking care of kids and family; how about taking care of my/ our

own bucket list or explore further? Whether it be traveling, or catching up on my reading list (Chekov, Wodehouse and Ludlum ... to Roy, Ishiguro, Khaled Hosseini, ...), or learning how to meditate, or doing a bit of yoga and learn about chakras and kundalini, or trying my hand again at painting, or playing squash again ... no, I never could adopt golf, which is a favorite post-retirement sport (I'll use a line from one of my friends ... the adrenaline to time ratio is just not right for golf especially when compared to squash!). And then, there's the lifelong intent to improve oneself .. patience, cultural awareness, staying positive, admire the roses, build a deeper personal sense of equity, and so on ... many of the things I read daily in the "good morning" messages in my WhatsApp groups!

For my third priority, I am clear. We are fortunate and privileged to have seen a degree of financial success, while a significant majority don't (most of us are likely in the top 5% or better in the world, even if we don't feel super wealthy!). I've always done a few things for social causes around me, but have wanted to do something meaningful and at scale. Whether it's education, or children's causes, or homelessness, and more recently sustainability, I hope to contribute in multiple ways. I had tried my hand at mentoring several years ago, and recently rejoined TiE as a Charter Member and am coaching a couple of entrepreneurs (in US, India, and ME) and a special interest group focused on advanced manufacturing. I've also recently joined the boards of a refugee children education non profit and a US family homelessness NGO, and am working with them on making an impact!

My fourth priority is to continue my intellectual and business curiosity (yes, there is a tinge of continued ambition ... which I'm trying to curb) while contributing to the well being of humanity. Themes that have been and are important to me are - effective and responsible capitalism, better bridging the gap between academics (knowledge) and business (action), use of technology and digital tools to enhance business and industrial activities, and more recently sustainability and climate ideas and topics (do good and do well!). I've joined a couple of corporate and start-up boards in these areas and have just taken on the leadership of a think tank at Georgetown University. And maybe a book or two over the next few years (may or may not be connected to business ...).



Copy of my handwritten notes from mid-2021

So then, I do have a plan. At least for the next couple of years, and hope to execute. Will report back soon!

Say EyyyAyee

- conceived by Rituraj Verma '84

Time was a scarce resource when it came to writing articles for SAM, mostly as an excuse for procrastination, rather than an actual fact in the busyness of life. So as the deadline drew near, I decided to delegate the job to an AI called OpenAI. So I typed in

Me: Write a satirical piece where Elon Musk is the big bad wolf and twitter is the Little Red Riding hood and make the tone comical.

Open AI wrote back-

Elon Musk and Little Red Riding Hood

Once upon a time, there lived a tech mogul named Elon Musk, who was the big bad wolf. He was an intimidating, powerful figure who roamed the internet looking for unsuspecting victims. One day, Musk spied an innocent Twitter user, known as Little Red Riding Hood, who had been tweeting foolishly about the stock market. Musk's eyes gleamed as he thought of the potential profits he could make by preying on her naiveté. He approached her, dressed in his finest hoodie, and said in a deep, booming voice, "What a lovely tweet you have there, Little Red Riding Hood. Would you mind if I followed you?" Little Red Riding Hood was taken aback by the sight of Musk, but she agreed. Musk thanked her, then began to follow her every

move on Twitter. He watched as she shared her thoughts on the stock market, tweeted about her favourite companies, and posted her opinions on various topics. Musk was pleased with the information he was gathering, and he was even more pleased when he saw that she had started to invest in some of the stocks that he was interested in. Musk was now ready to make his move. He sent out a tweet of his own, offering Little Red Riding Hood a "special deal" on a certain stock. He promised her massive returns if she invested her money. Little Red Riding Hood was so excited by the prospect of making money that she quickly agreed and invested her money. Unfortunately, what Little Red Riding Hood didn't know was that Musk had already sold his own shares in the stock and was now enjoying the profits from her foolish decision. The moral of the story? Be careful who you trust on the internet, especially if it's the Big Bad Wolf.

Next I told the AI to

Me: Write a jingoistic poem on Train 18.

OpenAI:

Oh mighty Train 18, shining bright and bold, You soar through India's landscape, stretching o'er the world.

Your speed, your strength, your precision make us proud, You proudly fly the Indian flag, proud and loud.

Faster, stronger, more efficient is your goal, Delivered to us in this Indian soul. You are breaking records, we are winning the race, Heading to our destiny, at breakneck pace. We celebrate your every stride, You make us feel invincible inside.

You bring distant lands and cultures close, Expanding opportunities for all who partake in this show.

Train 18, here's to the pride you bring, Flying the Indian flag forever and ever it will sing!

Next I asked the AI to

Me: make up some jokes about the mess that is already IRMS

Open AI

Q: What do you call a heartless IRMS implementation?

A: A mean machine!

Q: What did the unhappy customer say after hearing that they were getting IRMS? A: I'm in misery!

And finally I asked the AI to

Me: Design a future SCRA program that will be more relevant to Indian Railways today

Open AI:

The Indian Railways Safety and Reliability

Assistance (SCRA) program is an initiative to improve the safety, reliability and efficiency of railway operations. This program will focus on:

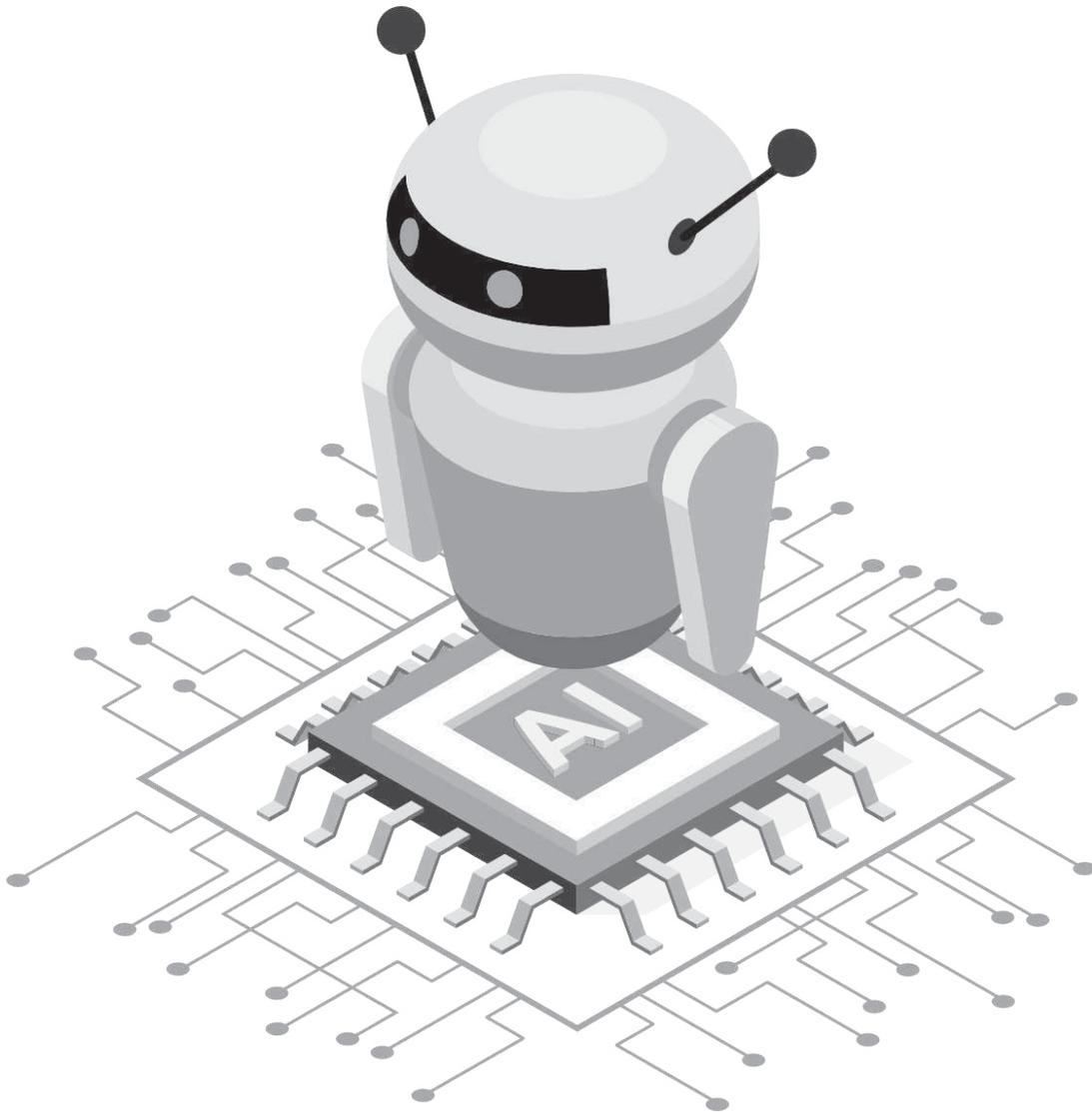
- 1. Enhancing train maintenance standards through regular inspections, preventive maintenance and repairs;*
- 2. Improving track conditions by conducting periodic checks for defects in infrastructure such as bridges, tunnels, rails etc.;*
- 3. Introducing technologies like automated monitoring systems for efficient tracking of trains;*
- 4. Reducing delays caused due to overcrowding or other technical issues by introducing better scheduling systems;*
- 5. Investing in research & development for new materials that can be used for rail construction with improved durability;*
- 6. Increasing operational efficiency via automation of processes such as ticket booking and freight management;*
- 7. Developing a comprehensive approach towards accident prevention through awareness campaigns among passengers/employees regarding safe practices while travelling/working on railways respectively;*
- 8. Strengthening security measures using advanced surveillance technology at stations & onboard trains to prevent any untoward incidents from taking place ;and*

9..Promoting eco-friendly initiatives throughout the network by encouraging use of renewable energy sources like solar panels & wind turbines wherever feasible

Now if only our politicians were as smart as this AI.

And would you believe me that this entire article was written in under two minutes?

That is the power of AI and it's going to take over the world.



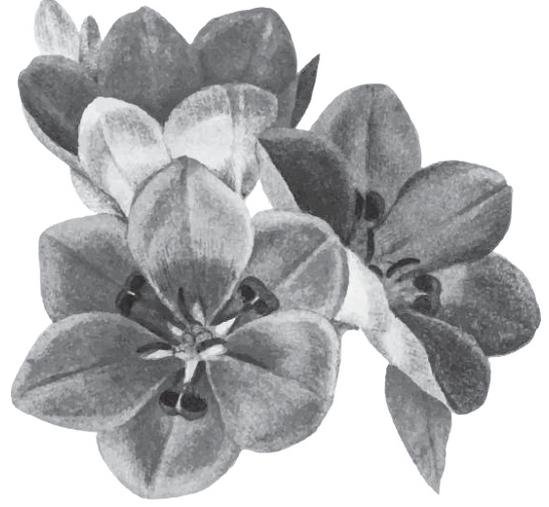
फुर्सत और पोस्टकार्ड

- Aastha Sneha 2k9

दूर से आते देखा था तुम्हे, फिर लगा की नजरों का धोखा है
इतने बरसों बाद, ऐसे अनजान शहर में, एक कॉफी शॉप में मिलना, ऐसा इत्तेफाक..
एक बार को लगा कि तुम्हे फिर जाने दूँ, क्यों फिर पुराने जख्मों को यूँ वापस कुरेदना ?
पर फिर लगा की छू लूँ, क्या पता के तुम सच हो या एक सुहाना सपना ?
पर फिर तुमको आर्डर करते सुना, आज भी वैसे ही कॉफी पीते हो..
एक कप कैपुचिनो, उसमें एक चम्मच ब्राउन शुगर द
तुम्हारा कन्धा हलके से थपथपाया और तुम्हारा नाम पुकार लिया
अच्छे लग रहे थे तुम, नीली शर्ट खिलती है तुम पे द
ऑखों में अब चश्मा लग चुका है, शायद इसी को उम्र का तकाजा कहते हैं द
और हाथ में, अरे वाह, वही पुरानी घड़ी जो कभी मैंने तुम्हे दी थी...

मैं पीछे मुड़ा, एक मिनट के लिए लगा कि जिंदगी थम गई
एक मिनट में आया यादों का सैलाब
तुम, फिर से हरे रंग का कुर्ता
तुम्हारा बिखरा हुआ काजल, और आधी मिटी हुई नेलपॉलिश
मुस्कुरा उठा, याद कर, देख कर..

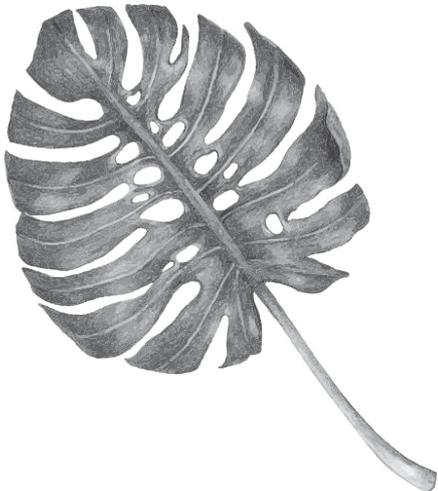
याद है, हॉस्टल से पोस्टकार्ड भेजना?
इतनी सारी बातें, जजबातें, कॉलेज की किस्से कहानियाँ
सब एक पीले पोस्टकार्ड पर उड़ेल देना
समेत देना..
जिंदगी समेट देनी थी पोस्टकार्ड पे
बताना था, कि मलेरिया हुआ, और याद आयी तुम्हारी मीठी फटकार, और तुम्हारा नींबू पानी।



बताना था, कि घर बनाया, और तुम्हारे सपनों का सस्टडी रूम बालकनी के साथ।
बताना था, जब जब ऑफिस में परेशानी हुई, और जब प्रमोशन हुआ।
कितना कुछ तो बताना होता है ना तुम्हे!
तभी तो..
चलता रहा वो सिलसिला पोस्टकार्ड का..

हाँ, पोस्टकार्ड..
वो छोटे से, जिनमे लिखने को जगह कम पड़ जाती थी, जाती है..
कैसे समेट दूँ क्या कहना चाहता था मैं, जब लेह में नदेमज देखा तुम्हारे बिना ?
जब पापा चल बसे और तुम्हारा कंधा चाहिए था, कैसे आएगा पोस्टकार्ड में?
और मेरा टॉमी, हमारा टॉमी, जिसने तुम्हारी खुशबू शायद हमेशा याद रखी
सब कुछ कैसे बयां कर दूँ पोस्टकार्ड में?

पर लिखे ...
कितना कुछ तो बताना होता है ना तुम्हे!
आज बरसों बाद जिंदगी में, फुर्सत थी, बातें थी, हम थे !
अचानक घड़ी के काँटों पर नजर गई
कॉफी, और यादों की, कश लेते हुए पता ही नहीं चला के कब समय को कहीं दूर छोड़ आए ..
और अब फिर वापस मुड़ जाने का वक्त था द
शायद फिर मिलेंगे वापस कभी यूँही अचानक, अनजान तलक,
फिर कभी बैठेंगे फुर्सत में,
फिर कभी अनकही बातें होंगी, और,
और वो पोस्टकार्ड्स, जो कभी भेजे नहीं गए ..



Divine Intervention

- Parth Adhikari '2K11

There were classrooms on both sides of the long corridor leading out to the college cafeteria. Today, they were to be our examination halls.

According to the new policy, the rooms were not to be opened until the clock showed ten minutes to ten. Last year, some post-graduate students had been caught with marks on their tables. And The Mole, the head of the Examination Disciplinary Committee, was unable to construct any case against them as they had all submitted valid reasons to the effect that the squiggles had not been their creations. But, post the Bench-gate, as this incident quickly came to be called in our circles, The Rat – our devious and whiskered Vice-Chancellor had substituted The Mole with The Forelock at the head of the Committee.

Now, The Forelock - so christened because of the scant comma-shaped tuft growing on the broad forehead of his otherwise bald head - was a man-eater. And eating would be considered a pity compared to what he did to students he caught cheating.

It was a legend that The Forelock had joined Herbert Hewitt College a spring chicken. But his

rise through the ranks as the leader of the veritable Flying Squadron - the roving section of the Examination Disciplinary Committee - had been quick. The F.S. was, in those days, led by a lean South Indian man who supervised laboratory sessions for physics graduates. The Forelock (who was not called The Forelock then as, at that time, he had possessed quite a fertile scalp) had merely been one of his wingmen. After Spindly Swamy retired, The Forelock had ascended the pecking order from being an auxiliary to being the sidekick – the navigator, the Goebbels to The Mole's Hitler. The Mole served as the leader for a decade or so, and he was quite effective with his orthodox methods. But the Bench-gate hit him hard, and The Rat made it clear that he had to step down. Out with The Mole, welcome The Forelock.

The Forelock was almost invisible on the regular days of our academic calendar. Some PhD students said that he had once been a fellow here, and then had joined the faculty as a thesis mentor. Others said that he was a technician in the Rocketry laboratory. As both these departments were nearly obsolete in our college, his exact vocation remained a mystery. This aura was only compounded by his

name. We knew his initials – P.B.S., from what he went by even among the college academia, and from his hasty counter-signatures on applications signed “p.p. Dean” and sent to students’ residences to inform their parents about the deeds of cheating. We guessed ‘S’ stood for ‘Singh’ but it could as easily have been ‘Sharma’ as ‘Sinha’. As for ‘P’ and ‘B’, as often was the case as not, our lack of information led to the loss of curiosity.

But now, The Forelock was the Alpha himself. And what an austere attitude he had towards unfair means! Many of those caught in his claw never saw through the remaining semester to tell their tales of a subtle look here or an innocent chit there. Inordinate punishments were meted out. Evidence meant culpability. If it was palpable – as in slips of papers or marks on calculators, the capital punishment was straightaway handed – suspension from the semester, red dots on the grade sheet, a letter of regret to parents, and ousting from the hostel. In case the evidence was not presentable – as in verbal complaints from the invigilator or a report of ‘caught talking in the lavatory’ – an ‘F’ in the subject could be guaranteed to ensue. The Forelock was, in summary, the most feared predator in the jungle of our college examinations. We would listen with vicarious thrill to any survivors who had any tales of The Forelock’s brutality to tell, all the time hoping that it would never be us on the receiving end of it.

On both ends of the corridor, with their backs to the parallel walls, students tightly held on to books and notebooks in their hands. They could be seen

cramming up the details. A few had highlighters, and fluorescent colours of two kinds lined their materials’ black and white pages. It was a frantic atmosphere: people striding up and down the aisle with photocopies, some checking their stationery boxes for admit cards, others for the one identity proof, whose requirement had been stipulated as the first fresh rule under the new disciplinary regime. It was the last paper of the end-semester examinations and the tensions were at a peak.

A peon came and stopped in front of our examination hall. He put one hand in his pockets and a jingling sound later, a large key-ring came out. He squinted and finally found the key to room number 4. On opening the glass doors, he stepped aside. I looked at the tunnel of a corridor, thinking of the small rectangle of suffusing sunlight at its end as a symbol of freedom from the semester. I was waiting in anticipation for the moment when I could safely get out of all this, step into the brightness after the exam and sit with friends at the cafeteria before leaving for the month-long break. A whistle from the impatient peon returned my thoughts to the matter at hand and I entered the hall. Seeing the crowd outside thin down, the peon went on to open another room. It was like we had been corralled like cattle. Taking note of the clock perched on the hall’s front wall, I set my watch to its time and sat down at the bench on which a slip with my roll number was carelessly glued. After taking out the stationery box, I went to the dais in front and thumped down my bag there, just like everybody else did. Coming back, I shifted to the right of the two-seater bench

and silently sat down with the admit card in one hand and the identity card in the other.

The room was now starting to fill up as students from other batches joined us. They were mainly those who were appearing for electives. Some were there to write *back* papers – second or third attempts at a failed subject. A boy with a goatee came to sit in the seat beside me. Two invigilators – SoulPatch and CleanShave - entered with four large brown envelopes in their hands.

As the students settled down, CleanShave got to the front row and asked two students to sign over the envelopes. From the first envelope, he took out a bundle of blank answer sheets and handed one bundle to the front desk of each column. “Take one for yourself and then pass on the rest.” SoulPatch went to the end of each column to collect the surplus sheets. “Is there anyone who has not received an answer sheet?” On hearing the silence, CleanShave ripped off the seals of the other envelopes and shouted out, “Mobile phones are not allowed, even if they are switched off.” SoulPatch took the envelopes from his hand and took question papers out from each of them. “Network Theory?” Ten students raised their hands to the call and he passed that envelope on to CleanShave, who walked to each of the candidates and gave them the question papers. My entire batch answered to SoulPatch’s enquiry “Manufacturing Processes?” and we got our papers too. I looked at the one in my hand. It appeared tough at the cursory glance.

My bench-mate was one among the five students who raised their hands on “Thermodynamics?”

CleanShave came to our desk to hand him the paper. On the way, he stopped a student - a muddled mix of nervous-enthusiastic - from beginning to answer already. On our table, he saw a book titled ‘Steam Tables’ in front of Goatee. He eyed him suspiciously and sensing the inquiry, my innocent-looking bench-mate replied, “Sir, we need these for solving the numerical questions.”

CleanShave found the explanation satisfactory. He too must have been an engineering student once. I took a look at Goatee’s question paper code. ME/RE/2201. I knew ‘RE’ stood for re-examination. It was certainly a *back* paper.

The gong sounded a sonorous tone. For a moment, I revelled in the dichotomy between the feelings of foreboding and aspiration the bell’s ring brought to us.

I set to writing down whatever came to my mind, which was not much. I answered this and that, all in a rather haphazard fashion. I skipped questions which I thought could be attended to later, and concentrated on those which I felt comfortable dealing with right then.

A quarter of an hour into the exam, having completed a quarter of the answers, I let my sight wander around the room. Most of my friends were writing voraciously and vehemently. One was scratching his chin – I knew it meant that he was searching for an answer that wasn’t there; another was tearing at his hair – perhaps he was thinking too hard. I saw one student looking around, just like I was.

I looked down, taking time in shifting my gaze upwards at the slowly circling fan overhead. Then I concentrated on the answer sheet.

Around a quarter of an hour passed. After attempting a few more questions, the second round of my freewheeling glances began. By now, those who had previously been warming up sheets with the tips of their pens had somewhat slowed down. The chin scratching was continuing. The awkward and wayward angling of the eyes and heads was just starting to spread throughout the room.

CleanShave was sitting comfortably at the front, sipping tea from a disposable paper cup, and SoulPatch was nowhere to be found. To my left, Thermodynamics was not going too well for Goatee, who was fiercely drawing lines and then erasing them from the charts. Just as I was withdrawing my gaze from him, he did the unimaginable.

He turned the sheets of his data book and ran a fleeting look at the inner margin of a page. There were illegible grey marks so light that in a dimly lit space, they would be invisible. The guileless-looking Goatee was cheating! And that too in a *back* paper!

He went about it with immaculate subtlety. He acted as if he was frustrated: knitted eyebrows and the constant pushing of the spectacles up the nose - all adroit. He would sometimes make noises of irritation, lightly clicking his tongue to give just the right impression to the invigilator of being hard at work.

Goatee had written small notes on almost every other page. Sometimes, they ran horizontally,

sometimes vertically - as the space permitted. He would look at the desired jotting while keeping a finger at one specific page in the book. Once the job was over, or when he sensed danger from the invigilators, he would turn to the same cover-up page. Then he would rush through the job of repeating on paper what he had just read, sometimes even taking another look in case the answer was long. He seemed to be doing pretty well.

I, on the other hand, had my struggles to manage and answers to write. My gaze shifted upwards at times, then downwards, then after a while to my sheet; I would even look towards Goatee, who was cruising by then. He happened to catch my eye and a half-smile of camaraderie appeared on his face. He knew that I knew. He also knew that I was certainly not going to tell anyone. I was careful not to stare sideways for too long, lest one of CleanShave or SoulPatch should suspect anything.

Another hour and a half passed, and I was almost through with the question paper. Making the basic addition of the marks I expected to be awarded for each answer, I found the sum to be fairly unsatisfactory. I went about the exercise again, only this time giving myself a little leeway in the marking scheme: it seemed to me that I would make the cut, and then some. Just when I was completing the calculation for the third time, a commotion was heard in the corridor outside the hall.

Enter The Forelock, a case of reading glasses clipped in his breast pocket, and a red-ink pen

pivoting between the index and middle fingers of his right hand.

With the famous bunch of hair adorning his temple a little astray, the swarthy, famed P.B.S. revealed himself in front of us. He appeared to be in full swing.

CleanShave and SoulPatch had been either gossiping or roaming the aisles between the columns of benches in their own lazy and predictable ways all this while. On hearing the glass doors open, and seeing the strictest-of-the-strict on his left side, SoulPatch jumped out of his chair. CleanShave, who was standing near the middle row, rotated on the balls of both his feet and to the rear marched. I looked up again to see The Forelock near the invigilators' desk in front. He signalled the invigilators towards himself. The obsequious obliged. There was a little conversation in hushed tones, and then concluding their huddle-talk, The Forelock roared, "Who all among you are appearing for Thermodynamics?"

It dawned on me for the first time that this ought to be how a lamb must feel when it sees a lion. In some time, it could all be conspicuous, inches away from me. Who all would fall? Was Goatee going down?

Goatee was calm and composed. He raised his right hand. Four other hands, scattered across the hall, were also up. The Forelock, assisted by CleanShave and SoulPatch, led the way along the aisle between the first two columns and reached the girl in the last row who had raised her hand. The Forelock turned to SoulPatch, pointed towards the book on the table

and commanded, "Check." SoulPatch didn't need any further cue. He grabbed the data book from the girl's desk and flipped through it.

"Nothing, Sir."

The atmosphere of the classroom had changed. I noticed that barring a few, no one was writing anymore. There was a premonitory silence, except for the creak of the dysfunctional fan above. Those appearing for Thermodynamics had still not lowered their hands. Students moved in their seats: some squeezed their stances while others altogether shut their answer sheets. Seeing the looming trepidation I also put my stationery case on the shelf beneath my desk and put my identity card over it. The Forelock now moved to the adjacent column and continued with his routine starting from the last row. SoulPatch found the third student he checked to be cheating.

"What is this?" The Forelock was showing the student his answer sheet. We couldn't see what it was that he had found there.

The poor lamb didn't make a sound.

The Forelock asked him to go towards the dais at the front. He told CleanShave to escort him.

Then, after not finding anything on the fourth student, he walked towards our desk, followed by SoulPatch, who on reaching us, picked up the data book from the table. On turning the pages, he declared it clean.

"Give it to me," The Forelock boomed. Everything he

said seemed to be loud without effort.

I don't know what came over The Forelock. He flipped through the book once but found nothing. He placed it back, then picked up Goatee's answer sheet but found nothing there either.

But The Forelock had his suspicions. Maybe it was the fact that Goatee and the other fellows were all appearing for a re-examination, or he knew him from the previous year, or perhaps it was Goatee's goatee. I felt that somehow, somewhere The Forelock knew all that was going on; he had such a veritable olfactory faculty for academic misconduct.

He picked up the data book again. This time he turned it over and then flipped through its pages with care. He just caught sight of something and opened a page wide.

Clearly to be seen were the pencil scribbles on the page's inner side.

"What is this?"

"What, Sir?"

"This!" He held the page to Goatee's face, which exuded shock and bewilderment.

"I don't know, Sir. That is not my handwriting."

"Is this your book?"

"No, Sir. I do not own it. I got it issued from the library a week ago. Here is the borrowing card, see," said Goatee pointing to the inner side of the book's back cover. "And I had also lent it to a friend."

"Anything written on the reference book brought inside the examination hall is considered to be the use of unfair means," CleanShave, to contribute to the scene, parroted, as if from a mythical compendium on the conduct of examinations.

"But I am not even using that formula, Sir. You can tear that page if you want." Goatee put his best naive face up for the invigilators' benefit.

"Anything written on the reference book brought inside the examination hall is considered to be the use of unfair means," The Forelock repeated CleanShave verbatim. It was his daily bread. He would not let this get away from between his talons. "Your roll number. Give me your roll number!" On his left, CleanShave pursed his lips in a suppressed smile. He appeared proud to have lent his quotation to the Alpha.

Goatee wouldn't budge. SoulPatch, taking the opportunity to give CleanShave a metaphorical run for his money, intervened, "Sir, you can get that from the attendance sheet. Let me tell you."

With that, he marched to the front. He picked up the sheet and called the first defaulter by his roll number to confirm it for good measure. Then he headed towards us and in as stern a voice as he could muster, asked Goatee, "Roll number 16420?"

"Yes, Sir."

The Forelock uncapped the case of his spectacles and put on the gold-brown rectangular pair. He then unlidded his scourge of a pen. With a flourish, he made a large, lurid, blood-red note in a sloppy hand

at the front cover of the answer sheet – “Not to be assessed due to usage of unfair means.” Leaving a little space below that, he branded the page with “P.B.S.” It was all so symbolic. The Forelock glared once at Goatee, looked around the examination hall, possibly for effect, and asked the two incriminated students to follow his lead to the Dean’s office. With this, all the students who had followed this episode, and even those whose pens and rulers were still running riot on their sheets, understood that he was done with us.

Goatee had stood quite motionless all this while. He looked disturbed. He had no words left, to say, or to write (but maybe that was why he had resorted to this plan in the first place). Before moving out, he looked at me once, with a sombre expression brought on by his ill fortune. I tried to empathise with him with an upward movement of my jaw. Today was not his day.

With five minutes remaining on the clock, CleanShave abruptly stopped at my desk while he was on one of his rounds. The sudden halt of his burly shadow that had followed a set pattern put my work on a jarring hold.

“Students should never cheat in examinations. Look at what happened to him. He might be rusticated, or even worse, barred from appearing again for Thermodynamics. We were also students some years ago, you know, but we used to be content with whatever we were able to score in exams.” He appeared to me to be a sagacious social man: somewhat pedantic, but genuinely concerned.

“Yes, Sir. It was utterly wrong.”

“No result is worth this kind of risk. Your entire career may suffer. Even invigilators can’t help anyone if such blatant evidence of examination malpractices is found.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Here, staple the extra sheets you have used.” He passed me the stapler and I did as advised.

“Sir, I am finished with the examination. Here,” I hastily passed him my answer sheet, but he refused and slid it back to me.

“What’s the hurry? There is still time; you must revise it once. Even good students commit silly mistakes. Have you drawn lines in between the answers?”

“Yes, Sir. I have already gone through this twice, Sir. Please,” I passed him the sheet. He relented, albeit still a little reluctantly.

“Thank you, Sir.”

The din of staplers in action hinted that the examination was in its last few minutes. The hurry was palpable. The invigilators were busy talking with each other. I stood up and picked up my stationery case from the shelf underneath the table. I gathered my admit card and identity card and put them inside it. Then I sat back down and ran a sweeping hand over the shelf to collect anything I might be leaving behind. I put everything I got hold of into my back pocket. I double-checked lest I miss something.

SoulPatch was now busy on his round far from where I had been seated. Taking my bag, I thanked a mirthful CleanShave seated at the dais and got out of the classroom.

As I left the corridor, I dug out all the stuff I had just minutes ago put inside my pocket. I took off my watch and put it and the stationery case in my bag, moving towards the lit end of the corridor's tunnel.

I came out into bright daylight. The small square pieces of paper that I had grabbed a while before from under my desk, I threw away in the canteen's

dustbin. Written in my minute hand, they had contained information on 'Welding', 'Casting' and other manufacturing processes. During the examination, every time I looked down, I found them to be just what I had assumed they would be while I was preparing them the night before under my study lamp – useful and life-saving when the correct questions came up in the exam. The Goatee incident had been a close shave. A frightening, yet godsend distraction - a divine intervention.



My Brush with the Railways

- Kakoli Ghoshal W/O Shekhar Ghoshal '82

The morning hour would be the most difficult. The jarring five o'clock alarm would shake us out of our reverie every morning, heralding the onset of yet another long and rigorous day ahead, to be taken head on.

Unspool to more than four decades ago the birds would barely have started chirping, but already there would be hectic activity in our household. Two small girls aged ten and thirteen (me and my younger sister respectively) had to be coaxed out of our beds, bathed... long hair braided... breakfast shoved inside half open half asleep mouths, tiffin boxes packed, (along with a bagful of books) and finally pushed into the 5.40 bus. This ramshackle apology of a local transport would take us to Barrackpore Railway Station, from where, along with thousands of nameless faces, with stars in their eyes and dreams in their hearts, we too would scramble onto the second class Ladies Compartment of the 6.30 local train every morning standing out in our green pinafores and shining boots. Our destination every morning would be Kolkata's prestigious Pratt Memorial School where our admission had been secured by our ever vigilant Dad,

always anxious to provide the best education to his children.

In his search for the most premier education, Dad had to go beyond the safe and cocooned boundaries of the military camp of Barrackpore. The challenge lay in undertaking this journey to and fro, from Barrackpore, to our school located in the heart of Central Kolkata almost more than a two hour journey every morning all by ourselves! Today when I look back, I am amazed at the enormous courage and conviction displayed by my parents, when they set forth their young daughters every morning on this arduous path, to face the battle of life with a bright smile, a cheery wave, and perhaps a silent prayer on their lips!

As the Local would whiz past the paddy fields, the placid ponds, reed thatched cottages, coconut groves and giant banyan plantations the wide-eyed young child in me would be transported into another world where new vistas, new slices of life would open up. Even today I wistfully carry the memories of the pungent and acrid smell of processed paper wafting into my nostrils as the thundering train

would pass through the famed paper mills of Titagarh. In my memory's landscape I can still see the fragile old lady boarding the train at Khardah station with her delectable booty of sweetmeats, which would be our morning dessert! I remember with a smile the young flock of gaggling school teachers from Sodepur station, exchanging notes incessantly about their respective mother in laws, which I would devour with rapt attention, eagerly waiting for a fresh instalment the next day!

I saw very closely the humane face of a milieu, where care and concern for a co-traveller would be almost in the realm of the sublime. Absence would be noticed with concern, health conditions of a fellow traveller or any member of his family would evoke anxiety... festivals would be celebrated with great bonhomie and deaths mourned with shock and grief in the true spirit of a cohesive family.

As the giant carrier would speed past one station after another... Agarpara, Belghoria, Dum Dum...the crowd would also start swelling and finally, like a pot bellied middle aged man, bursting in the seams the train would arrive at Sealdah Station !

As soon as the train rolled into the station, the jostling and shoving crowd would all spill onto the platform. The daily passengers would merge with the fish vendors, the vegetable

sellers and the fruit merchants who would alight from the Vendor compartments, and this huge motley crowd would surge forward, all rushing simultaneously towards the exit gates! Initially after trying unsuccessfully to negotiate our passage through the milling crowds for the first few days (losing water bottles, dislodging school bags, being displaced ourselves in the process!) we finally mastered the strategy of exiting! All we had to do was stand still and the waves of humanity, would simply lift us and deposit us in front of the main exit gate of Sealdah station!

And then would begin the last and most romantic leg of the journey, by the ubiquitous tram, with its old world charm, its quaint bell tinkling through the crowded and busy thoroughfare of Moulali, finally depositing us in front of our school gates, well before 8 o' clock. !

This intimate brush with the Railways at such a tender age left an indelible impression on my psyche. The train became for me a symbol of co-existence in an egalitarian, democratic society. I perceived that in this vast platform of life, the fish vendor is as much a "lord of the land" as the white collared office babu; that the vegetable seller has as much a 'right of way' on the platform of life as the pedantic scholar...and most significantly that in this

journey of life ultimately we are all equal co-travellers, forged together by one simple goal....to reach our Final Destination.! It is said that the best lessons of life are learnt in the crucible of daily existence and perhaps this insight of a thirteen year old stood me in good stead throughout my life.

Many decades later as I sat inside the UPSC office in Dholpur House after having qualified in the Civil Service Examination, and a form was thrust into my hands by a clerk, to indicate my service options, I had no hesitation in filling up in bold black letters 'Railways' as one of my preferred

service choices....a choice which I have not regretted for a single day...a choice propelled by the nostalgic yearning of a thirteen year old longing to weave those childhood experiences forever into the fabric of her life ...a choice which I have embraced with the utmost love, dedication, gratitude and respect.

If ever I script the story of my life's most enduring love affair, it will certainly be with this great engine of growth and progress, with this harbinger of change and prosperity and above all, with this greatest leveller of mankind - the Railways !



FROM : BARRACKPORE STATION



TO : SEALDAH STATION

The Story of a Humble Bicycle

- S. Manikutty, '64

*With lifted feet, hands still,
I am poised and down the hill
Direct, with heedful mind,
The air goes by in a wind.
Henry Charles Beeching,
Going Downhill on a Bicycle*

One day in early March 1965 (or was it late February), I received a letter from the UPSC officially declaring that I have been selected as a Special Class Railway Apprentice for the Mechanical Department of the Superior Establishment of the Indian Railways. Needless to say, my joy knew no bounds, especially since I took the exam quite casually and the interview as a jolly outing and an opportunity to see Delhi with little expectation of getting selected. Well there it was, the letter in black and white, transporting me to the Superior Establishment. This was followed by another letter from the Principal, Technical School, Jamalpur (as IRIMEE was known then) asking me to join "forthwith" and report to the Principal. In that letter, as all SAM readers of this article may vouchsafe, was a formidable list of items to be brought (Is this still the same list, at least till the last batch of SCAs?).

1. Six pairs of khaki trousers and khaki shirts
2. Six pairs of white trousers and shirts

3. Six pairs of white shorts, T shirts and socks
4. Six pairs of black socks
5. One (fortunately not six) pair of shoes for workshops (laced shoes, not slip-ons)
6. A pair of black shoes for evening wear
7. Six pairs of ties
8. A pair of football shoes
9. A pair of white canvas shoes
10. Tennis racket
11. Badminton racket
12. Swimming suit
13. Rain coat
14. A dressing gown
15. Lounge suit
16. A hockey stick
17. A slide rule,
18. A drawing board and a T squire, and last, but not the least
19. A bicycle.

The shopping spree that followed ended with the last item: A Hind bicycle, a hefty, sturdy contraption with big wheels and with a tare weight that more than made up for my ultra light weight of 55 Kgs.

The other items could be carried as luggage but the

cycle needed to be booked through to JMP (no one in our area knew where it was) from a place called Kollengode in Kerala, where I resided. This was not an easy journey, involving change of 5 trains, and the poor bicycle had to follow suit. It was through booked, and by a miracle of sorts, it did reach JMP, although may be a week after I reached JMP.

March 17, 1965, the day I reached JMP, was a holiday, being Holi, and the next day the question was how to get to the workshop. It was a well recognized rule in Gymkhana that the next senior batch ('63 batch in our case) had the responsibility to ensure that we reached the workshops at 7 AM the next day. So they had to carry us to the workshop (or give their bikes and ask us to carry them). The modern generation should not, when I talk about bicycles, imagine them as the modern geared ones; they were the good old plain vanilla cycles with no such thing as a set of gears, and we had to carry our seniors (or be carried) in these contraptions, twice a day back and forth. I was light, as I mentioned earlier, weighing all of 55 Kgs, and hence my requests were not met with much reluctance by those good souls like KK Gupta and SC Saxena who, despite already being in the second year, were still going to the shops regularly. Who it was who carried me on my first day, 18 March 1965, I don't remember, but KK, Saxy and some others did chip in marvellously on those initial days.

The Cycle Arrives

In due course, perhaps after a week, my cycle arrived at JMP station, with no damage except a conspicuous lack of pneumatic pressure in the

tyres. Of course, getting them filled up outside the station was not a problem, with some people ready and waiting for giving the needed service during such crises. The tyres having received their quota of air, I was on my way to Gymkhana on my first ride in JMP.

No discussion on bicycles in Gymkhana would be imaginable without taking the name of that angel in human shape, tending to the cycles with a sense of mission, keeping them all rolling, namely, Shakoor. This amazing man, a wizard of sorts, could keep the 60 plus Gymkhana cycles in such a shape that they could all be depended upon to reach the workshop, but with no guarantees of the return trip. Getting this fleet of bicycles ready at 6.45 AM every day was not a mean task, considering that many of the cycles belonging to the senior batches were not exactly in ship shape. But keep them running he did, using some techniques of maintenance, with plenty of what is fashionable termed jugaad these days, the details of which are not known till this day. I suspect he employed also some advanced statistical techniques to predict how many from each batch were likely to go to the shops on each day so that they could be given priority. I recall not even a single occasion when any of us had to ask for a lift for going to the shops (many of course exercised the option of calling off their planned visit to the workshops if the cycles were not ready, and went back to their rooms to do more fulfilling activities such as playing bridge).

Going to the shops was thus assured, but not the return. At 11.30 or 4.30, when we were ready to

start our return journey, we would discover that the tyres were flat. Bringing the cycles back to Gymkhana involved what was known as “trailing”. This involved riding on your own cycle with one hand and rolling the dead bike with the other, something that needed considerable balancing skills. Not surprisingly, only a few in each batch had this skill, and they were popular and were in high demand in times of crises like these. I am happy to report that by the time I was in the second year, I was one of those who could do this complex manoeuvre.

Cycles Were Not Only for Workshops

In our time, we all depended on our cycles for all our locomotion needs. These vehicles took us not only to the workshops but also to movies at Monghyr (returning at mid night, something no one can imagine today), to CI for billiards, to the Officers’ Club in our fourth year, visits to the houses of senior officers, and picnics. Some tough guys used them to pedal up to the water works as well. The very first picnic we had was within some 20 days after landing in JMP, to the Khadagpur Lakes, requiring some three hours of cycling each way, getting a chance to take a close look at the famous tunnel on the way. Our cycles thus were our constant companions during our stay; no one had a scooter or motorcycle.

When we passed out, we all took our cycles along, for they were needed at many places during our probation as well. We used our cycles at CLW, ICF, RDSO and other places, and at ICF, we used them for touring the city of Madras, including going for movies at Mount Road. Visits to Charbagh at

Lucknow were also done on these faithful companions. During our entire first year of probation, when many of the batchmates moved together, so far as I recall, only two of us acquired scooters: A K Gupta and S K Chopra and they were of great help during our stays at many places, especially at New Katni, where we stayed at Katni and the diesel shed was some 10 KMs away at NKJ.

It was only during our second year of probation, that we started getting our own scooters. Bidding good bye to the cycle was not an easy task for me, and I suppose it was the same with many of our batchmates as well. Today I don’t remember to whom I gave it and it must have served that person some more years before it gave up its ghost. Wherever you are, my dear bicycle, rest in peace.

Back at JMP

I revisited JMP after a long time, probably around 2015, and among the first places I visited was the good old cycle shed, half expecting Shakoor to emerge out in his pyjamas. But he would have been at sea there, for the world had changed. Most, if not all, of Gymkhanites had scooters or motorcycles and Shakoor’s jugaads would not have probably worked there (you never know, of course, with Shakoor). No need to attend daily to punctured tyres, and trips to Monghyr were now a breeze. But who would go to Monghyr today to see a movie, with Netflix and CDs around?

It is still not goodbye to the cycle

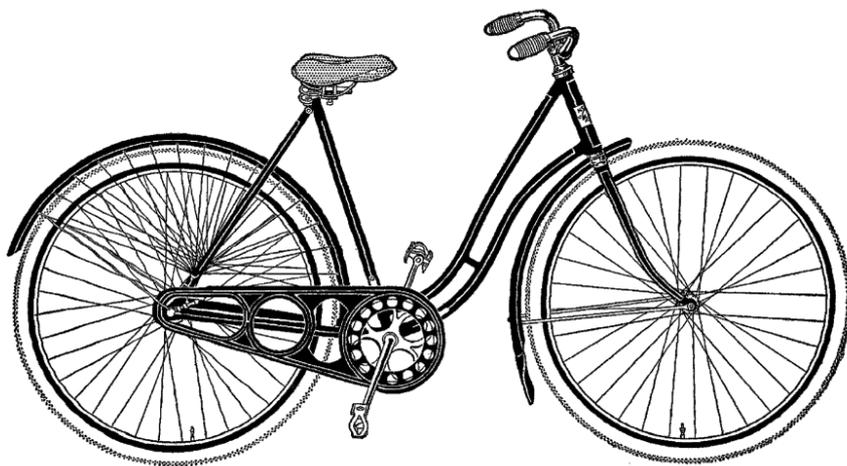
For a long time, I did not have a cycle. It was only in the nineties when I joined IIMA as a faculty member

that I got a cycle, this time not for going to the shops or office but for exercise. I purchased an Atlas, again a non geared bike and it is still with me, as a source of excellent exercise. I had a 4 to 6 KM ride every evening at Ahmedabad during my entire stay, including on rainy days when I would ride wearing a rain coat. At IIMA, when I had a major ankle sprain, I could neither walk, use my scooter or my car, but could cycle. I have continued my daily cycling practice at Bangalore after retirement till today. I am one of the very few, almost a curiosity, to have such a bicycle in Bangalore these days, what with geared beauties all around. But my present Atlas cycle has now served me for thirty years, much longer than my JMP Hind cycle, though, like the Ship of Theseus, every part has been changed except the frame (So is it the same bike I purchased in 1992: A question of philosophy?). The cycle has not, so far, asked for retirement.

The story of the love affair between my bike and me is thus still ongoing, and I hope it goes on for a few more years. My cycle has taught me many things during our companionship, and since I suspect no one reading this is in a mood for being philosophised upon, I shall stop after merely making the statements. First, there is nothing humble about it, or humble about anything. Everything has a place in life. Second, many good things are still free in life, and cycling gives you a great feeling. Many can go to work on a cycle even today. Last, even the most devoted and passionate cyclist will have to give up cycling one day. As the poet has said:

*Alas, that the longest hill
Must end in a vale, and still
Who climbs with toil, wheresoe'er
Shall find wings waiting there.*

From the same poem quoted in the beginning



A Jamalpur Sans SCAs

-Smriti Rao '2K9

As the SCRA scheme has been laid to rest and Jamalpur is no longer hosting SCAs, there are a few 'frequently asked questions' that I have come across during conversations. Therefore, when I got this opportunity to contribute an article, I thought, let us report the situation from Ground Zero.

Without further ado, let us find out the answers to the FAQs.

What shape is in Gymkhana right now?

It has been two and a half years since Silabhadra Das '09 and I started the IRIMEE tenure as Professors. It has been three and a half years since Gymkhana has seen SCAs as its residents, which basically means that we did not encounter any SCA batches undergoing training. However, Gymkhana has been well maintained or rather has improved from what it used to be during our SCAship days some 12 years back.

The L-lobbies on either side are secured with the help of iron-grill. The entry and exit into the premises is possible from the main gate only, which is now guarded 24 hrs by a contractual staff. The dining hall is now air conditioned, a huge relief to

the occupants during a typical super humid Jamalpur summer. Almost all the rooms in the eastern and western lobbies have the facility of attached toilets for the trainees. Each western lobby room boasts of a TV, cable connection and air-conditioning. Similar work is planned in the eastern lobby by the end of this year.

While the basic purpose of the Lounge remains the same, a 55-inch television (gifted by the 1963 batch) adorns the wall too. A pool table has been installed for those wanting to enjoy a game with their favorite TV show on. One place that has not lost its sheen post closure of SCRA is the CLUB at Gymkhana. Rounds of billiards, coffee and music in the club is how Silabhadra '09, Pritam Kumar '09 and Shashwat Gupta '10 and yours truly spend the Saturday evenings at Jamalpur. The Sports field, badminton and squash courts are still in decent shape whereas the Tennis court has washed out. The Basketball court now consists of only the baskets but not the court, since the construction work of attached toilets of rooms in the Eastern Lobby has subsumed the court area.

The Little Shantipur Locomotive was given a much

needed touch up to reinstate its original color scheme in Feb 14, 2021. The Lily pond still exists sans the water. The Eastern Terrace (ET) of Gymkhana has fallen silent due to absence of SCAs. The ET, earlier notorious for being frequented by the Alcoholics of Jamalpur, has shed the tag since the implementation of Prohibition law across Bihar 2016 onwards.

2. That sounds fine, but what is the use of such facilities? Who occupies Gymkhana?

The Gymkhana, aka Special Grade Hostel in IRIMEE parlance, is being allotted to the IRSME and the other services probationers batches as and when their training attachment is at IRIMEE. In addition, the officers nominated for the courses are being accommodated in the hostel. Two rooms in the lower western lobby are kept reserved for the visiting dignitaries.

3. Can the non-SCA occupants appreciate the legacy of the place?

All Efforts are being made to preserve the heritage of Jamalpur Gymkhana. The General Secretary's room shall be upgraded into a Heritage room. Pictures and other memorabilia telling stories of Jamalpur Gymkhana's glorious past shall be preserved and displayed sometime during this year. The various shields and trophies will be polished and displayed in a trophy cabinet in the heritage room. Some of the old iconic pictures are currently displayed in the club area.

4. What about Jamalpur in general?

The saddest part of all this change is that the livelihood of private bearers, mess workers and washermen took a massive hit when the scheme closed. However, we have tried to retain them in service to the extent possible. Some mess-workers namely Shambhu, Ravinder and Sanjay still work for the SGH mess. The washermen Chedi and Prem are involved in the official linen washing work for the hostels and the trainees.

The Bharat tailor and Paris tailors have stopped stocking uniform fabric since 2019. They are now engaged in regular tailoring jobs. Gymkhana's barber Ramvilas (Rambo) has difficulty walking these days. Yet, completely neglecting our advice, he visits the East Railway Colony on weekly basis. His son, Abhishek has picked up the work of barber. His college fee and Rambo's treatment expenses are being reimbursed.

The Gymkhana Benevolent Trust (GBT) has been of immense help to the ex-bearers whenever any medical/education-related requirement turned up. K. Narayan sir of '88 batch has been instrumental in this initiative and extended help to the needy whenever requested.

The Jamalpur Association (JA) has now been transferred to Delhi. The managing committee of the JA earlier consisted of the Director IRIMEE, one SAM faculty (Preferably JAG officer) from IRIMEE and one SCA as treasurer. After discontinuation of the SCRA scheme, IRIMEE's SAM faculty was looking after the work of treasurer. However, in the future, it is highly uncertain whether a SAM Director and a SAM faculty will be available in

IRIMEE all the time. Amid this, the JA account has been shifted to Delhi after taking concurrence of the GBM and is now being operated as Jamalpur Alumni Association under the able supervision of Shri J.L. Singh '65.

The Chandra store on Albert road incurred huge losses when the scheme closed. That, combined with the COVID-imposed lockdown has made things very difficult for the shop. The dimly lit store does not have exciting stuff to offer anymore. Sometimes, we shop from there just to support them.

Back in the day, there was a dearth of good restaurants in and around Jamalpur where SCAs could throw a birthday treat. However, the situation has slightly improved after the scheme closed. The age-old Madras Coffee House no longer exists and has now been replaced by a KPC family restaurant with better ambience and air conditioning. Restaurants such as Chai Sutta bar and Mc Olives have come up 'Pul paar', offering a wide range of delicacies suiting the palette of youngsters. However, the Good old 'Cooking House' has stood the test of time and continues to offer delectable Samosas, Egg Chops, Vegetable chops and Mughlai paranthas.

Probationers and trainee Officers can now order food online at their hostels using Zomato with an average delivery time of 45 minutes.

5. What is IRIMEE's engagement now that there are no SCAs?

Contrary to the popular belief, IRIMEE has the

highest amount of workload per faculty than ever. At least, that is what we have been informed. The main focus remains on the probation training and numerous 1-week long courses that are open for the officers and supervisors posted in the field. Not a week goes by without at least 2 courses running in parallel. With new ways of pedagogy being introduced in this ever-changing era, IRIMEE is now making and updating content for iGOT (mission karmyogi) in addition to the regular courses. Courses, webinars and field visits in association with outside agencies are regularly conducted. DFCCIL's Heavy Haul Institute shall be utilized for off-campus courses in Delhi soon.

A recent development has been the operation of the NRTI campus at IRIMEE. The National Rail Transport University, NRTI is a vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. It is India's first university focused on transport-related education, research and training. A Deemed-to-be University under the de Novo category now has an IRIMEE campus for its MRE course (Mechanical and Rail Engineering) with 45 students enrolled. However, unlike SCRA, no jobs are promised in the Indian Railway after completion of the degree.

Without the SCAs, the nature of work for the faculty is entirely different from what it was some 5-10 years ago. There are no raids, no batches to discipline, no anti-ragging complaints, no bicycle theft reports, no morning assembly, no FLS invites by the SCAs, no sports field injuries, no industry visits to plan for the undergraduates, no one hogging faculty chambers demanding cooperation

for something slightly unfair. Whether it is a good thing or bad, I leave it up to you to decide.

6. Is there still a thing called club day?

Club day celebration is a cause close to our heart. With the initiative of ex-Dean IRIMEE Ajay Nandan sir '86 batch, we continued with the tradition in 2021 and 2022, albeit on a much smaller scale and in a different format. Officers from Eastern Railway and East Central Railway are invited. The

management is not easy without the foot soldier SCAs, yet we tried doing as much as feasible.

Although the name has been changed to Annual Day, the spirit of club day remains when the schedule includes lunch in the Gymkhana quadrangle and a high tea, cake cutting and a digital photo exhibition on the front lawn in the evening. However, the traditional Dinner at the Director's Residence on the eve of Club Day has been dispensed with.



The club



Jamalpur Gymkhana on a winter day



NRTI campus office operational at IRIMEE



Kumar Ashish '05 and Silabhadra Das '09 with Rambo in Yantrik Niwas Hostel



Mini-FLS organised for Aman Raj '03 and family in the lounge by Jamalpur SAMs



Little Shantipur Loco in its glory during Club Day 2021



High tea and cake cutting during Club Day 2022



McOlive's restaurant: New hang out place discovered



General Secretary's room: soon to be upgraded into a heritage gallery



A glimpse of the Chandra store on Albert Road



Lounge equipped with a television and a pool table

A MESSY AFFAIR

- S. Manikutty, '64

Every firstee, within a few months of his arrival at JG, is asked to take up the unenviable task of being a “mess manager (may be shortened to MM, if one so likes)”. He (in our time, there were no “she”s in JG, hence no gender bias here), would be the “junior mess manager”, the senior one, usually from the second year, would be dealing with lofty policy decisions. In our time, there were enough of us around, so that there were not much difficulty in catching some “bakra”, giving him some pep talk on what an honour has been conferred upon him (he has become the MM at the start of his career!), and usually there was no need to draw upon the services on the third and fourth years who would be beyond such low grade tasks. So much so that even among the first and second years, there were quite a few who managed to get away without discharging this duty of filling every one’s tummy (and getting *gaalis* for the trouble).

Among the onerous tasks of the junior mess manager was the issuing of “daily rations” to the mess staff. The various vegetables and groceries were kept in a “strong room”, worthy

of being the safety lockers of a bank, and the keys were with the mess managers. The menu was not a fixed weekly menu, as is seen in many hostels, but had to be given each day, and the stuff needed to deliver the day’s meals were issued to the mess staff and, of course, entered in a register. This, along with the bills, had to be kept carefully, to be submitted later for audit. For fellows like me, who knew little about north Indian vegetables let alone dishes, found it hard at first, and the mess staff helpfully suggested the menus and I dutifully nodded my head. But it was certainly a great opportunity to learn about North Indian cuisine.

While this system generally worked well, it was hardly effective in controlling the “DD”, or the daily dividend, the basic figure, which, when multiplied by the number of days in the month would give the basic mess bill. Then there were the “extras” which, in many cases, would be more than the mess bill itself: things such as eggs, special items and above all, what would be needed for a party in the rooms. These had to be signed for, and tallied at the end of the day (as for example, the eggs issued). Woe to

the manager who produced a higher than usual DD, the general expectation being that while the food had to be top class, the DD had to be the rock bottom. The mess manager would get the *gaalis* for food on a daily basis, especially during summers (his daily dividend) and for the mess bill at the end of the month. The only person I knew who could get away without too many *gaalis* by managing to give good food with a low bill was Sri Debashish Ray, who treated his mess managership as a sort of divine mission.

With the mess staff knowing the state of mind and the competency levels of the managers, especially the firstees, it was pretty much a case of the mess staff helping themselves rather generously. To plug such leakages, at least with chicken, the legs had to be counted in the evening by the junior MM (the mess manager, that is) and tallied with how many were brought and the bill. Many times, the number of legs were short, implying that besides the cooked food, live chicken themselves found their way to the homes of the mess staff or whoever). When asked for an explanation, Asghar, the formidable chef, would reply with a straight face, that some chicken had only one leg (or that two of them just flew away!! Rather special chicken for Gymkhana, no doubt, these one legged ones). You accepted the explanation

with a suppressed smile, if you knew what was good for you.

Winter was (and still is) the time to get a good variety of enticing vegetables such as *gobii*, *matar*, *gajar*, cabbage and tomatoes, apart from the ever present *aloo*. I still remember being fascinated by those red *gajars* which were almost translucent and certainly most attractive and inviting. I had not seen such stuff in the South. Tomatoes were available for dirt cheap prices: I remember an extra glass of tomato juice was 5 paise per glass! We could as well as given them as free for all the impact they would have had on the DD. You also would get a variety of menus to choose from. Summer, on the contrary, had very limited choice: *lauki* which all hated but hardly could suggest any replacement, and *paraval* with some cabbages and tomatoes thrown in at times. Aloos were, of course, ever present. The poor mess manager had to put up with comments such as "oh, no, not *lauki* again!" Nowadays, with Baba Ramdev extolling the virtues of this wonder vegetables, probably we could have organized some seminars by him on the benefits of *lauki* juice for breakfast, cooked *lauki* for lunch and *lauki* salad for dinner.

Saturday lunches were special. They had the paneer dish, eagerly looked forward to after the week of toil in the workshops (and in the

rooms after class hours, for those in the school). There was much scramble for the paneer dish, the competition for the few pieces of paneer floating in the container being very heavy, and this treat as followed by the snooze by the vast majority.

“Special dinners” were looked forward to, naturally. These were arranged whenever a visiting dignitary visited Gymkhana, senior SAMs, and parents of the inmates of Gymkhana. After the mandatory lounge session with the gup shpping and singing, we would adjourn to the dining hall where the “special dinner” would be awaiting. The main thing about these dinners were the *paneer* dish, pulao and *raitha*. Sometimes cutlets were thrown in, depending on the mood of the mess manager. Needless to say, we tried to make up our nutritional deficiencies to the extent possible.

At least for me, getting introduced to so many desserts was an experience by itself. In the South, the dessert was not a part of the daily food, it being reserved for special occasions and as a part of a feast. Here the astounding variety of fabulous dessert dishes (sweets, if you will), especially the Bengali ones such as *rasmalai*, *sandesh*, *rosogullas*, *rajbhog* etc. left me as a worshipper of sweets which stood me in

good stead when I was in Gujarat at IIMA. Not to mention the great *gajar ki halwa*, of course mainly in winters, and I could specify my own favourites when I was the mess manager.

All told, managing a mess (anywhere, I suppose), would be one of the most thankless jobs in the world, and a perfect example of where you would need to apply the principle of *nishkama karma*. But if you can find the fun part of it, it had plenty of that as well.



Vignettes from The Past

- Rahul Tyagi, 89

This is the fifth edition of Vignettes from The Past, and it has been written with assistance from ChatGPT! I dictated my thoughts in MS Word and then ran the text through ChatGPT. The resulting output was free of spelling and grammatical errors. A final round of manual editing to impart style and flavour produced the finished output.

Quad Cricket

“One tip one hand.” That was the only rule that mattered, in the game of tennis ball quad cricket. Everything else was negotiable or up to interpretation. The length of the “pitch”, the size of the bat, and even scoring methods could vary. One could chuck, throw underhand, or even kick the ball to the batsman (okay, kicking was out of bounds and didn’t happen 😊). There was no dress code and no minimum team size. One could play in formals, shop dress, or even in a bathing gown if one happened to be on one’s way to the bathroom. The stage at the North end of the quad served as the wicket, the bowlers always “bowled” from the South, and the fielders stood or sat wherever they liked. The batsman could be clean bowled, caught, or caught “one tip one hand”, i.e. if the ball bounced, the catch had to be made with one hand. Other methods of dismissal were conveniently ignored. There was a

great big bush, almost a tree, at roughly the short mid-wicket position (for a right-handed batsman). The ball hit into the bush would generally make a delayed and unpredictable descent as it encountered many branches and leafy clusters on its way down. It was incredibly hard to take a catch “off the bush” and on the rare occasion that a such a catch was made, it required the use of both hands. This would invariably lead to violent debate, argument, and even stomping of feet as the batting side (or more specifically, the batsman) would contend that the “one tip one hand” rule should be invoked.

Diwali Celebrations

I distinctly remember the 89 batch's first Diwali at Gymkhana. All the local SAMs and SIMIs attended the festivities. There was a grand dinner followed by fireworks on the front lawn. As the senior batches chatted and mingled with the guests, we firstees muddled about pretending to be sociable, ever so conscious of committing a faux pas that would haunt us for days to come.

Then, a genius among us came up with a brilliant idea! Or perhaps he was coaxed by a helpful secondee. We will never know. Armed with several sparklers alight, he made his way to the group of SIMIs engrossed in animated conversation. With youthful charm and all the gentlemanly grace he could muster, our hero offered the sparklers, fiery end first, to the ladies. But they recoiled in horror, their terrified shrieks drowning out the staccato burst of the firecrackers. This gauche firstee, still in the dark, mistook their reaction for delightful

surprise or perhaps a mild fear of pyrotechnics. He continued to grin sheepishly and almost thrust a crackling stick into the hands of a frightened SIMI. "You are burning my saree!" she yelled over the din, continuing to retreat hastily. A few seniors rushed to the rescue and pulled this inept neophyte away. Later, it came to light that the act resulted in significant and irreparable damage - the fiery assault had burned hundreds of tiny holes in the expensive sarees!

PC-XT!

The first computer to arrive in Gymkhana was a PC XT 8088 with a 20-megabyte hard drive and 640 kilobytes of RAM. It was housed in an air-conditioned room adjacent to room #58. One had to make a booking to use this PC and write one's name on a green-painted board outside this room if they held one of the five keys. Occasionally, the secretary of the technical society would suspend all bookings, and put up an ominous-sounding notice, "The PC is being cleaned and reformatted. All user files will be deleted. Please back up your files on floppies."

For the uninitiated, operating the PC required following a fixed set of instructions. There was a switch at the back, and you just flicked it the "other way." Then you waited and once the C:> prompt showed up, you just typed `cd dbase` followed by `dbase` (assuming, of course, you belonged to the dBase III plus cult). Peter Norton's books (which were in abundance in the IRIM&EE library) explained what `cd` meant and if you were interested, you could also master piping and redirection techniques. That was cutting-edge DOS

5! The more advanced users would write clever batch files and even change the parameters in the `config.sys` file. Lotus 123 was also quite the rage as enterprising Gymmies attempted to eliminate the drudgery of doing mess bills and club dues manually. Microsoft Word and WordStar were the favorite word-processing programs. A lot of folks took to typing shop notes on the PC, double-spaced, so the final output would look impressive and voluminous. The even more technologically inclined of our ilk used these applications to conceptualize, write, and develop programs for their final-year projects. None of these programs ever amounted to anything, but they gave us decent exposure into the workings of a machine that was to become standard in the decades to come.

And then, there were the true geeks, who could delve into the inner workings of the PC, write programs in C, and embed assembly language code. One such wizard committed himself to an even nobler cause: to outsmart the IRIM&EE faculty! Our super-savvy instructors would print exam question papers directly from 5 ¼ inch floppies inserted into IRIM&EE computers, thereby leaving no trace of the question paper for SCAs to "steal." However, this Gymmie wrote a program that would capture any output sent to the printer and stored it in a file to be retrieved later. Needless to say, this was done on an experimental basis (as an ethical hack) and never put into actual practice.

Vignettes from the past will continue in the next issue of SAM.

Horse Couture

- V S Mathur '87

In this year of the Amrit Mahotsav, we celebrate the 75th year of Independence from colonial rule. A lot has been achieved in the last 3/4 century! A lot has been lost. We've moved forward in parts, backwards in parts and sideways elsewhere. Pockets of progress shine like a thousand suns in the vast universe.

We communicate all the time through our devices, planning just-in-time meetings and flash mobs, conveying our moods and innermost thoughts to anyone following, and pushing our pulse rates and real-time SpO2 readings into the anonymous cloud.

We crave personal experiences, gazillions of trips to 'Everest base camp' immortalised in identical blogs and personalised decaying litter. Multitudes walk the beach with noise-cancelling headphones listening to carefully curated and influencer approved "calming ocean tide noises". We neglect our real-world responsibilities immersed in the Metaverse. We embrace every retailer giving us Hobson's choice as long as we can be led to believe it's a 'FANTastic DEAL!' (Exclamation mark included)

We "Other" others, building increasingly tighter walls around smaller and smaller groups of "Us". We live in our minds, we fight and never lose.

And we are increasingly self-righteous, outraged, and adroitly trying to right the leftists wrongs of the past.

We are more politically correct than ever before, and every identity has been appropriated and given a label.

"That Visio-audio-orally challenged preteen, sure plays mean legacy arcade game!

He's a Pinball male Wiccan..." never said The Who...

Urdu words in Hindi movies have been pared down to the bare essentials, and 2 rhyming word families remain. (You can replace the x,y, with any 2 letters of your choice):

T-x,y-ir (Takdir, Tasvir, etc.)

I-x,y-aar (Inkaar, Izhar, etc.)

But let us go back to an earlier time, when the Nightingale governed, and independence was new in the United Provinces. Imagine if you will, Lucknow in 1948.

Festivals are being celebrated, and unite and divide the polity. The 2 main religions of India are equally celebrating their days of enjoyment with religious fervour. For one group, it means a

procession winding through the narrow streets of the old city, Aminabad, Chowk, Qaiserbagh, Nakkhas,

And of course, the Police have to be informed and approve the route, and police escort has to be arranged. So the forms are filled out, discussions held, and a request is made for the senior-most police officer to accompany, in light of the recent riots and unrest.

After all, the countries have seen a schism, a rapid and bloody migration, and a resultant sense of injustice and wariness in every person.

Surprisingly, our hero, the local head of police himself, the SP, agrees to guide one of the processions, and the organizers are elated! This is an unexpected support from the official machinery for their plan, and emboldens them to push something further than originally planned. Edgier brinkmanship is called for.

.... Some backstory to introduce the heroine of the story, or should I say a character actor with an important role in the story: The mare, Pica, that the SP would ride while on escort duty.

Normally not picked for any serious duty, due to her flippant behaviour, this day she is requested for specifically by the SP. Well fed, curry combed, washed, reshod, she is all set for a night on the town.

And so, close to midnight, we find the procession lingering in the ghetto, chanting and raising the communal blood pressure of the

residents. The situation is barely under control, ready to explode, adding one more bloody episode to the chequered history of Post-Partition Depression.

Our hero sidles Pica close to the procession leader, behind him, while he is proudly observing the dancing young men and watching the situation slowly edging towards upheaval: safe, in that the police is with him.

Meanwhile, our mare's characteristic is that she sees grass and wants to graze..... even if the 'grass' is actually hair on a man's head.

The next events are obvious, of course. Pica starts to nibble and give the leader a haircut - the first recorded instance of Horse Couture.

The procession leader is startled and turns about. "Oh no," says our hero. "The horse is a bit uppity, I will have to leave, but no worries, you can continue and move ahead at your pace."

Without police presence, the leader knows it is too risky, and can only end in loss for him and his followers. Post haste, the procession is rallied and rushed out of the locality into more neutral areas. Tensions drop and an ugly incident is averted by a playful horse and a rider who knows to use his team's imperfections to benefit.

The hero of our story narrated this incident to me in Dehradun where he had settled after retirement.

The love of train journeys - from reel to real life

- Deepak Sapra '92

The first train movie I saw was as a young child in kindergarten. It was titled, *The Burning Train*. I remember a lot of action and drama from the movie, which is about a train called Super express, which catches fire on its inaugural run. Super express is depicted as India's fastest train, and is the endeavour of Vinod, a railway engineer. Things don't go as per plan. The hero plays out of his skin to save passengers and on the way, fights the baddies. And there is a happy ending.

Much later, when I saw the movie again, I relived the thrill of the movie. The hero was played by Vinod Khanna and the bad guy by Danny Denzongpa. Cut to present day, the song "Bang Bang" which was used for the advertisement of Apple iPhone X in 2018 drew music from "Meri Nazar Hai Tujh Pe", a song from *The Burning Train*.

In the mid to late 80s, I would occasionally have access to a TV in a common Club area. That is when I would watch *Chitrahara*, aired on

Wednesday evenings. It was a program that played popular Bollywood songs.

In one of the episodes, I saw a song from the movie *Aradhana* - '*Mere sapnon ki rani kab ayegi tu*'. It was picturized on Rajesh Khanna and Sharmila Tagore, the hero on a jeep, and the lady on the Darjeeling Hill Train. The song showed the train, the hills and the landscape. It was a breath of fresh air.

Much later, when I became interested in railway trivia, I realised that the jeep sequence and the train sequence were shot separately. There was a clash of schedules and the director couldn't get combined dates from Rajesh Khanna and Sharmila Tagore. Sharmila Tagore couldn't make it to Darjeeling and so only Rajesh Khanna's portions were shot, showing him driving the jeep across the hills. Sharmila Tagore's footage was separately shot in Mumbai where a train set was erected in a studio. The two footages were later edited together to appear as if in the same frame. I also

figured out that the book that Sharmila Tagore was reading was an Alistair McLean thriller titled, *When Eight Bells toll*. The actress was holding the book upside down.

The Darjeeling hill train scenes also came about in equally refreshing forms in later day movies- *Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman*, depicting Shah Rukh Khan setting off on his journey to Bombay, and later in *Main Hoon Na*. Many years later, in the movie *Parineeta*, Shekhar Roy, played by Saif Ali Khan, thinks of Lalita, played by Vidya Balan, in a similar Darjeeling setting, oblivious to what has happened in the intervening years. The beautiful song *Kasto Mazza* plays in the audio track. In more recent years, the movie *Barfi*, has the Darjeeling hill train prominently featured.

When I came to Jamalpur in 1993, one of the early trips with seniors was to the 'Sholay Tunnel', named after the most iconic Bollywood movie of all time. In the movie, Sanjeev Kumar reminisces about his glory days in the police and says with pride - "Jab main Jamalpur mein inspector tha....". It is a beautiful Jamalpur legend that I continue to believe in, even though I am aware of the fact that the tunnel scene was not shot in THAT Jamalpur tunnel but rather in a tunnel on Central Railway on the Bombay-Pune sector.

While at Jamalpur, in 1994, I saw the movie *Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa* on the video cassette player at the Gymkhana movie. The opening sequence, the one which plays while the credits

roll, is shot on the Pune- Bombay route, with the song, *Deewana dil deewana* in the background. It was the greenery and magnificence of the scenery that made me want to undertake that journey as soon as possible, which we did a year later on our Tech Tour. In the song, when Shah Rukh Khan excitedly does a head roll at the station Platform (with the board saying - Vasco da Gama, while the scene is shot at Kurla station), the energy of the moment zipped through the movie room.

Next year, in 1995, came THE movie. A movie which had trains written all over it. D.D.L.J. *Dilwale dulhaniya le jayenge*.

In one of the initial scenes at the King's cross railway station London, Kajol just about manages to catch the train (earlier stating that she got up late in the morning, while the departure board at King's cross read 15:00 hours). There are a host of other scenes on the Eurail, the Swiss Rail, and then, the piece de resistance, on Indian Railways, culminating in the iconic '*Ja Simran Ja*' scene.

DDLJ was THE movie that made Shah Rukh Khan my favourite actor. The '*Ja Simran Ja*' scene, with the train being pulled by a WDS4B shunting locomotive, is shot at the picturesque Apta station. The scene is imperfect and illogical in many ways (I won't recount the imperfections here except just one- if he saw her running, why didn't he just pull the chain, or simply get down and catch the next train). It is the imperfections that make me love the scene

a lot more. And made me firm in the belief that if I had to fall in love, it would happen on a train. Many years later, when I did propose to the girl who became my wife, it was on the back of a Calcutta Metro ticket.

Come probation on Indian Railways, Baroda became a very important part of life. The Bombay Rajdhani and the August Kranti Express were trains I would routinely take from Delhi to Baroda. On the way was Ratlam station. For some strange reason, I loved the name Ratlam - I don't know why, maybe it sounded nice, a beautiful nostalgic fusion name.

Much later, in the 2000s, the movie '*Jab we met*' was released. It was accompanied by massive marketing of its CDs, which were priced at Rs 34, much less than the then prevailing price of pirated CDs. The sales of CDs zoomed, and in addition to people watching *Jab we met* in cinema halls, people like me would watch it many times over at home on the Rs 34 CD.

Back to Ratlam, it is there that Kareena Kapoor misses her train, and her romance with the hero, Shahid Kapoor, begins. The depiction in the movie is that of a typical intermediate station between major cities, a station where important trains transit at night. The ecosystem of the place revolves around the timing of these night trains.

On the personal front, after getting married and having a child, we did many train trips as a family. I would tease my wife by mirror imaging

the iconic dialogue from the movie *Pakeezah*, '*Aapke paaon dekhe, bahut haseen hain. Inhein zameen par mat utariyega, maile ho jayenge*'.

Salim, played by Raj Kumar, says these lines on the train to Sahibjaan, played by Meena Kumari, a dialogue that laid the foundation for their love story. My mirror image version of the dialogue had to do with my unwillingness to accept flaws pointed out by my wife about the railway's maintenance of coaches - I would tell her - '*Aapke paaon dekhe, bahut mitti hain. Inhein zameen par mat utariyega, coach maila ho jayega*'.

In *Nayak*, a Bangla movie, the *Nayak*, played by Uttam Kumar, is on a 24-hour train journey from Howrah to New Delhi to receive a national award. His co-passenger is Sharmila Tagore, playing a journalist. During the journey, he opens up about his life and shares the trials, tribulations and troubles that lie behind the cocky, arrogant and overconfident facade of a movie star.

In *Hyderabad Blues*, the protagonist lands in India after spending several years in the United States. He lands in Bombay, and then takes a train to Hyderabad. It is a first class compartment that he is in. The journey takes 24 hours, more than what it took from the US to Bombay, and he makes it a point to mention this fact. Much later, in 2018, I had the privilege of Nagesh Kukunoor launching my book, '*The boy who loved trains*', in Hyderabad. The other person launching the book with Nagesh was Mr D Nagarajan⁵⁷. The banter between

Mr Nagarajan and Nagesh , on whether the railways should lend trains for movie making , had the audience in splits . Nagesh said that the railway officials should help movie makers in giving expedited permissions, and reduce the bureaucracy in the permission process. Mr Nagarajan said we did so once , that's when the movie makers burnt the train (referring to The Burning Train). Everybody clapped for Mr Nagarajan. So did Nagesh.

A few years after we travelled to Pakistan and had a hugely intense experience of hospitality and friendship , came the movie Veer Zaara. A tribute to the oneness of people on both sides of the border, a crucial scene in the movie shows Attari station , with Zaraa returning to Pakistan after her visit to India.

Finally, I wish to talk about Praktan, a Bangla movie, in which the story revolves around a set of passengers on the Gyaneshwari express from Bombay (Kurla) to Calcutta (Howrah). Calcutta, Bombay and Nagpur, as the major

stations on the Gyanwshwari express, feature prominently . The movie is about life paths of passengers in each coupe of a First AC coach intersecting in the course of the train journey. Amongst the parallel stories, the standout one for me is of an elderly couple. There is a scene in which the elderly lady, played by Sabitri Chatterjee, complains to the coach attendant about the AC, the cooling and the maintenance. Spoken in Bangla accented Hindi , it is the best part of the movie for me. Her husband in the movie, played by Soumitra Chatterjee , bursts out laughing after his wife has given a piece of her mind to the coach attendant in Bengali Hindi.

There are many other movie scenes set on trains that I love. While these are shot on reel, they hold true just as well for real life. A train journey is much more than just going from point A to point B - it is about one's life becoming intertwined with that of co-passengers , in a way that would never be otherwise possible.



The kettle song

- Shivani Kochak w/o R S Kochak '74

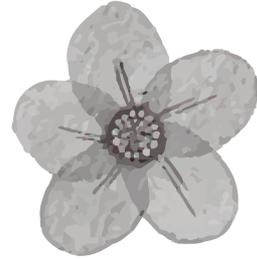
The kettle sings a melodious song,
As it bubbles on the gas stove,
With symphony of steam along,
That warms my heart and soul.

With each whistle for a cup,
The sweet tunes that it sings,
A song of comfort and of joy,
The happiness that it brings.

The kettle sings its song of cheer,
I brew my morning cup of tea,
It's a melody that's always here,
To start my day with glee.

My singing little kettle,
With your song that's always true,
May you keep singing on,
Along with everything I do.





Shruti Vohra

(daughter of the late Rohit Vohra '63)

Life of any person who is born has to end one day. The tragedy is that some very promising lives are snuffed out in the prime of life. One such life was that of Shruti Vohra, daughter of the late Rohit Vohra '63, who breathed her last on the 8th of August 2022. Not having been provided with accommodation when I was posted as AME(C&W)Baroda, I was staying with the Vohras when Shruti was born. The obituary below has been written by her brother, Bharat Vohra.

- J L Singh '65

Shruti Vohra, a renowned producer and director of music videos, short films and documentaries, passed away in New Delhi on August the 8th 2022. She was 49.

Born in New Delhi to Sarita and Rohit Vohra ('63 batch), Shruti lived and worked in Mumbai. Her education - apart from a couple of years at Loreto Convent, Lucknow, where her father was posted at RDSO - was completed in Mumbai (then Bombay) as well. She attended St. Annes High School - where her mother taught, and graduated from Sophia College with an Economics degree.

Growing up, Shruti was closest to her father, Rohit; a bond that would persist well into adulthood. Her mother, Sarita, a trained classical singer and accomplished theater personality,

and her uncle, Suresh Mullick, creative head for Ogilvy & Mather, known for groundbreaking films such as *Mile Sur Mera Tumhara*, helped nurture Shruti in a highly creative environment. An early interest in music, dance and films, coupled with the strong influences within her family, led her to pursue a program in Media Arts at the Xaviers Institute of Communications. Shruti landed her first job with Zee TV, and after a few years there, moved on to Script Shop, a boutique production house. There she honed her skills in the craft of filmmaking, before striking out on her own.

Shruti's illustrious career spanned several decades, working with some of the biggest artists and labels across genres and cultures, amongst them Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, DJ Aqueel, Bombay Vikings, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Kumar Sanu, Shaan, and Rekha Bhardwaj. She shot in locations as diverse as Malaysia, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, and was the first Indian to film a music video in Morocco. All told, she produced over a hundred music videos, many of them winning her awards, and some highly acclaimed short films and documentaries, such as *Phulkari*, and more recently *Chotti Shameez*, which was the official selection at a handful of film festivals.

In her personal life, Shruti loved to travel, thoroughly enjoyed cooking, was an avid reader, and despite her very hectic schedule, incredibly diligent in her exercise routine. She was a very spiritual person, having embraced the Soka Gakkai school of Buddhism over two decades ago, and over time, rose to Chapter Chief in her District in Mumbai.

Shruti was unfailingly thoughtful and giving, always putting the needs of others above herself. She was an animal lover through and through, and cared immensely for her stray canine friends wherever she went. She kept a beautiful home - a true labor of love, as anyone who visited would attest to - both in Mumbai where she lived, as well as in Alibaug, which she used as a retreat and loved spending time in.

Shruti was taken away most tragically at the very prime of her life. She is survived by her mother, Sarita, and her brother, Bharat. Her energy, her positivity, her magnanimity, her hearty laugh, a smile that could light up any room, and her sheer zest for life, will be forever missed.



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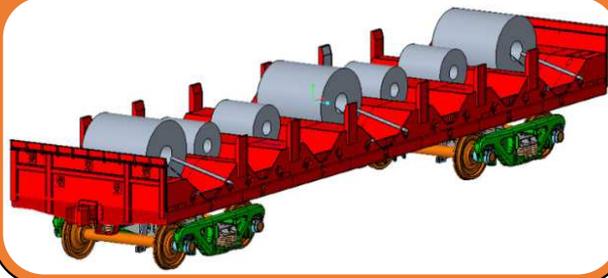
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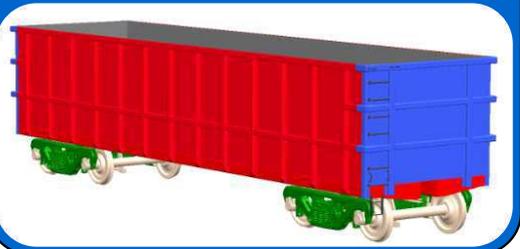
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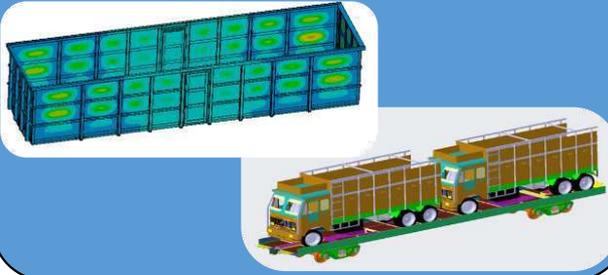
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