

SAMI



AUTUMN 2023





ARMORIAL BEARINGS

The Wings of Progress are placed prominently on top with a pair of Callipers passing through them, indicating a practical measuring instrument, symbolizing 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 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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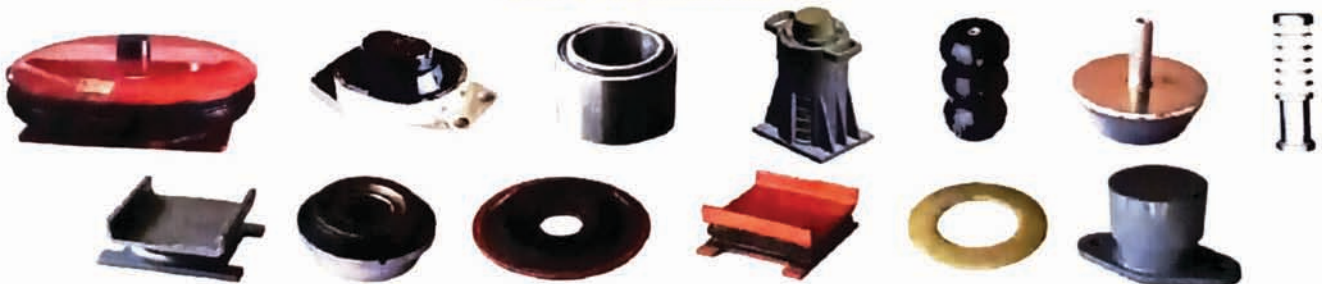
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SAM is bi-annual magazine of Jamalpur Gymkhana. It is distributed free of cost to all alumni of Gymkhana and honorary member of the Jamalpur Association. All enquiries regarding SAM may be addressed to:

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Index of Contents

01	President's Letter	-J L Singh '65
03	Editor's Ramblings	-J L Singh '65 and Mayank Tiwari '89
06	Milestones	
07	Never Retire, Inspire!	-Rituraj Verma '84
09	Gurubhyo Namaha Salutation to the teacher	-Jayanthi Mallya w/o Gajanan Mallya '79
11	Dog Days	V Anand '62
13	Experience on First Posting	-H.N.Gupta '56
15	What Jamalpur and Gymkhana Mean to the Service	-Sarabjit Arjan Singh '61
17	IRMS: A Ray of Hope for the Mechanical Department	-Sarabjit Arjan Singh '61
19	Zoi Gin Heng Kong (Goodbye Hong Kong)	-S.S. Mathur '81
25	Last Night I Dreamt I went To Jamalpur Again	-Atulya Sinha '83
29	Check your horoscope-will you get good bosses?	-Vijay Mathur '60
31	Encounter of a "BONG" kind!	-Kakoli Ghoshal w/o Shekhar Ghoshal '82
33	When a Jail speaks to you	-Shakti Ghoshal '74
37	Step into La La Land	-Anupama Mani w/o S Mani '75
41	The Falling	-G Venkatesh 2K3
44	Accolades	-Doraiswamy Nagarajan

45	The Diamond Jubilee Batch 1963	
47	The Diamond Jubilee Batch – 1963	-Subhash Saxena '63
49	They left us during their service	
50	They are also no more with us	
54	Random Reflections	-Jagdeep S. Chhokar '63
59	Some Sad, Some Funny, Some Unusual Stories of Railway Life	-Sumant Chak '63
62	The Gymkhana Diaries	-Vaishali
63	Climate Change Perspectives:	-Anil Khurana '74
71	The Perils of a Transfer	-Prithiwish Halder 2k14
73	IRMS Arrives	-S.K.Luthra '75
75	Motherhood and Snakes	Archana Mittal '92
77	Evolution of Luggage	-S. Manikutty '64
80	No Heading	-Aastha Sneha 2k9
83	Victory Over Evil	-Jayanthi Mallya w/o Gajanan Mallya '79
84	Plavi Voz	-R. Ramnath '84
91	Effing the Ineffable	-V. S. Mathur '87
93	One foot, two feet, one moose, two...?	-Anupama Mani w/o S Mani '75
97	Club Day '2023 at Lucknow	
103	How I made myself useful in my first year at Jamalpur, and earned the short leave	-Deepak Sapra '92

President's Letter

-J L Singh '65

The Jamalpur Alumni Association (JAA) was incorporated on the 29th day of April 2022, making us about a year and half old. Unlike a Home sapiens of an equivalent age who would have just about learnt to stand on its own and say a few words, we have come a fairly long way. Of course, to borrow the words of Robert Frost, we still do have "Miles to go before we sleep". I am reasonably confident that with the enthusiastic and spirited management committee that we have, and with your support, we will continue to do better and reach a higher standard in the future, covering the 'Miles' required with aplomb.

What have we achieved over the last year or so? For one, we are continuing to bring out SAM regularly. Even before the incorporation of the JAA, SAM had been well-established and it continues to flourish. Thanks to all contributors in terms of articles and advertisements, although the latter has been a little tardy. These are the two mainstays of the magazine and we hope that your support will continue.

We organised the first Club Day by the newly constituted society in New Delhi on the 14th of February earlier this year. Since the largest concentration of Sams happens to be in the National Capital Region, we envisage that this Club Day will replace the Club Day that used to take place at Jamalpur. We are also expecting and hoping that just as many of you travelled to Jamalpur to join in the celebrations, you will continue to do so for the celebrations at New Delhi as well. We did have a few Sams joining us from outside Delhi/NCR. The most significant among them was Prof. Shyam Sunder '62, who was here all the way from the USA. It would be welcome and good if the focal batches can make a special effort to participate and join at

Delhi. For the 2024 Club Day, the 1964 batch is the Diamond Jubilee, 1974 the Golden Jubilee and 1994 the Silver Jubilee batches. Please try your best to join in.

There is a question of whether we should continue to celebrate Club Day on the 14th itself or shift it to the nearest weekend. There are merits on both sides. While the 14th is the 14th and has its own significance, there are a number of particularly older Sams who find it difficult to travel at night. They would be quite happy and willing to join for a lunch. It is for this reason that we are actively thinking of a lunch on the weekend preceding the 14th of February. In addition, even working officers find it tough to join in time for a dinner. Lunch on a Saturday or Sunday would be good for them. We would like your views. Please send them by email to connect.jaa@gmail.com.

We have worked on two more initiatives to help Sams who may be in need. The first one is to help those of our members who have attained the senior citizen category, or are fast approaching it. With many of the next gen settled across the seas or even away from them if in India, there can come such moments in the lives of the seniors amongst us, when they need the support of someone. The support could be for getting something organized in a hospital or a bank or just learning to use some App on our mobile. Usually this support is provided for by some known relatives, neighbours or friends.

But Sams and Simis have another family – that of members of the fraternity, who can also help at such times. Keeping this in mind, the JAA has enlisted the support of some well-meaning

SAM CLUB DAY 2023

younger/serving Sams as Senior SAM SIMI Seva (S4) Volunteers in some of the cities where many of us are residing. Here is a list of these volunteers - three cheers to them!

In Delhi/NCR, we have Pranjal Chandra '96 (8320828090), Vinamra Mishra '98 (9311848770) and Romen Rawat '99 (9717630040). I am sure, you do not need the skills of Sherlock Holmes to work out that the numbers that follow their names and batches are their telephone IDs. At Patna, these services will be provided by Anupam Kumar Chandan '92 (9472392720), while at Lucknow, we have the duo of Amit Srivastava '92 (9118772345) and Prashant Kumar Singh '96 (9005139007). Moving East, Kolkata will also have two S4 volunteers - Yatish Kumar '93 (8777488959) and Rishav Chaudhary '14 (8083501198). In the South, we have three volunteers each from Chennai and Bengaluru, those offering their services being Abhishek Mishra '89 (9840898070), Amlan Tirkey '89 (9424290977) and Dilip Kumar '01 (9003141413) at the erstwhile Madras and Shivendra Srivastav '93 (9866894323), Priyank Tiwari '01 (8861555233) and G Venkatesh '03 (7259839660) at the former Bangalore. Slightly to the North, at Hyderabad, we have Deepak Sapra '92 (9963027709) and Ramana Alla '98 (9848212928). Traveling West, Mumbai has the services of Tarun Huria '90 (9910090810) and Anshuman Mohapatra '96 (9833972800). In the desert state of Rajasthan, we have Shashi Kiran '99 (8788840080) at Jaipur.

So remember, help is just a phone call away. Thanks to all the volunteers in advance. As and when we get more volunteers, we will inform you through the Gymkhana Notice Board.

The second initiative is to help those Sams who may need financial assistance. This stems from one of the clauses (Aims & Objectives, Para 3H) in our Memorandum of the Society (MoS) that the Society seeks "To provide assistance to individual members and their immediate family in times of crises including but not limited to financial, health related

and legal assistance". In this connection, the Managing Committee of the JAA has been apprised of:

- a) a Court Case being fought by the Jamalpur Gymkhana Batches 2012 to 2015, triggered by a change in rules that adversely impacts their seniority on account of their being from the SCRA scheme.
- b) Three separate cases implicating three different retired senior SAMs, the main accused being an ex-Minister, although there appears to be no direct accusation against the officers in each case till now.

Both these instances are viewed as fitting cases that merit intervention, support and assistance from the JAA. It is, therefore, proposed to do the following:

- a) Set aside an amount of Rs. 500,000 to provide financial assistance if and when sought by the impacted parties.
- b) Initiate a special money collection drive for creating a larger corpus for these and future such endeavours. We have already shared the details of the logistics of this collection through our Gymkhana Notice Board.

We would, of course, welcome suggestions from members who would like to help in any capacity at connect.jaa@gmail.com or through individual contact. I would also request any Sam who is not on the Gymkhana Notice Board to send us his WhatsApp phone number and we will add him to the Notice Board Group. You will get all notifications and messages on this group. Since it is a notice board, you cannot post anything on it; this is the prerogative of the Management Committee.

Au Revoir till the next issue,



(J L Singh)
President JAA

Editor's Ramblings

Sorry, folks! This is an eSAM only. With a lack of response from you (with a tiny number of exceptions) for ads for this issue, we have no alternative but to limit ourselves to an e-copy only to save costs. Therefore, all those in a position to do so are requested to pull up their socks and use all the good offices they have to get us a large bagful of ads so that we can bring out a bumper issue of SAM Club Day '24, our 97th birth anniversary.

Be that as it may, whether physical or a mere e-copy, it gives us immense pleasure to bring you the Autumn '23 issue of SAM. Of course, the date of the issue makes it closer to a Winter rather than an Autumn issue, but whatever date it hits the stands, the Autumn issue will always remain an Autumn issue. This is the 8th magazine that we are bringing out from Delhi and hope that we will soon hit the 10th, followed by the 15th, 20th, the Silver Jubilee issue and beyond.

Going through our records, we find that we do not have copies of the first three SAMs that had been brought out in 1967-68. If any person has a copy of any of these SAMs, if you can spare it, please give it to us. If you would like to retain it, scan the entire magazine for us or loan it to us for scanning. The 4th issue happened to be the Club Day '69 issue; an extract from its Editorial, penned by the magazine's founder, S K Chopra '64, makes interesting reading. Here's the passage that we are referring to:

“What sort of ‘mag’ really does SAM aim to be— a literary delight or a technical treat; TIME-ly or MAD-like; a harmless humorous popsheet or a caustic or pungent PUNCH; a Gee-Whiz fab or an Aw Nuts snigger?

“To these asked questions, our answer is simple - Neither. SAM never copies; it adopts and adapts. It may have picked up colourful bits from various other magazines; it may have a smack of Swift's Satires or a touch of the tongue-in-cheek; its style may be informal like that of a popsheet or have literary overtones at the same time; it may even dole out information packed technical fare. It is all these and a lot more besides. These are carefully (and skillfully) cocktailed into a fuming, frothing, foaming mixture for the readers' delight, which sums it up. SAM aims directly at you, its reader. Immense readability is its first, last and only Commandment.”

Although SAM has changed a lot over the years, including its place of publication, the basic objective remains the same: to provide its readers something readable, something that they look forward to; something for all tastes and likes, something for you whether you are a veteran of the 40s batches or a youngster of the most recent batches who is still waiting to settle down. I hope we are being able to live up to this. We look forward to your feedback, so that we can modify our content or style to match and suit your tastes. We even look forward to criticism, as long as it is constructive.

In a little over three years from now, we will be a century old. We are planning a massive publishing event on the 14th of February 2027. Apart from the normal Club Day issue of SAM, we propose to bring out at least two, if not three, books. One will be a coffee table book of the kind that was brought out in 2022 when we completed 75 years.

The second intends to be a formal history of the SCRA scheme and its contribution to the nation. This will be a serious historical book that will rely on primary sources only and be properly referenced and indexed. The intention is that this book becomes a reference book for any person who may want information on the SCRA scheme. This book should be in libraries where it can be referred to by historians, bureaucrats, or any other interested party. A possible third is a directory of all Sams from the 1927 to the 2015 batches. About one third of a page for each person. We need inputs for all three books. Please send any stories, anecdotes, incidents, pictures, etc. that you may have to us. We need particular help in case of the pre-1945 batches. There are cases where we have no lead to some members of the early batches. If you know their children or grandchildren, please let us know. If you yourself have information, it will be most welcome. All contributions will be duly acknowledged.

Since this is an e-copy only, it is quite possible that the magazine does not reach all our readers, i.e. Sams and Simis. We, therefore, request that you share the magazine with any person you are in


touch with. In that way, we are hoping that no one is missed and the magazine gets to each and every Sam. At the same time, there are many instances of the Club Day issues of SAMs that we posted, returning to us. Therefore, even if we already have your address, it could well be outdated. Request that you post us your current address specially if you have shifted premises. This applies more to retired and non-railway Sams; for those in service, we normally do not post the Sams but send them to one person on a zonal railway or location who distributes them.

This issues cover has been the contribution of two of our fraternity: Rajaji Meshram '92, who clicked the original picture, and Prashant Kumar Singh '96, who did the designing. For those who may not be aware, Rajaji is married to Archana Mittal of the same batch. Theirs was the 6th Sam-Sam marriage.

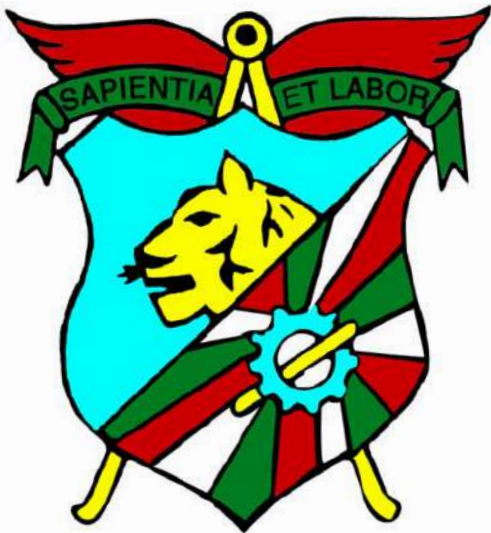
Anyway, enough of our ramblings. We leave you to read the rest of this magazine, albeit an e-copy only. Happy reading...



(J L Singh)



(Mayank Tewari)



Milestones

Expired

■ Mrs. Lokanathan, wife of S G Lokanathan '55 on 01.02.2023

■ Rajanish '56 on 05.06.2023

■ M G Sripathy '57 on 04.09.2023

Born

■ To Smriti Rao and Silabhadra Das, both 2K9, a baby girl, Anaisha, on 09.03.2023



The proud parents, Smriti and Silabhadra, with their daughter.

Editor: As requested in our earlier issues as well, please do not limit Milestones to deaths and births only. Anything of consequence that you may like to share with the Sam community is welcome. It may be your own achievement or that of one of your family members. We have not received any Milestone of this type till now.

Never Retire, Inspire!

Rituraj Verma '84

As I turned 56 a few weeks ago, my thoughts turned towards financial matters and alternate careers beyond the age of 60. So I ended up looking at what my batch mates and seniors were planning after retirement. Coincidentally, I realised that in four years i.e., in 2027, I would have retired, while Jamalpur Gymkhana would have completed a century of its existence. The number of serving officers in the Railways in that year who would celebrate such an event would be a small fraction compared to the vast numbers of Gymmies who would have retired and/or stopped working and in another twenty years there would be no serving Gymmies in the Railways. So other than nostalgic walks down memory lane, what topics would we be discussing in our centenary gathering, should such an event be held?

Perhaps a moot point in such discussions would be about the significance of our institution and more particularly, our own selves, with a context to our effort to remain relevant to society, our families, and our friends. Of course, all of us would have many opinions on the run of the mill discussions on health, post retirement opportunities, foreign travel, sons and daughters, rites of passage of friends, and other subjects typically brought up in small talk. But the real conversations may start after a few drinks, right before the dancing starts, and such conversations may revolve around the whole spectre of courage and responsibility.

The whole point of the British setting up a Gymkhana in Jamalpur, was to create a set of men (and later women) who would have broad shoulders supported by a strong spine, which in effect meant becoming a bit of a "Brown Saheb," since the mould was the white man's to

start with. That was our colonial birth, and at every point, in every sport, in every classroom, in every forum, in every workshop and office, this legacy was vibrant. It was hugely resented by our rivals and by our colleagues, and hence, as time went by, many cracks in our facade widened and fell prey to attacks, eventually leading to the complete demise of the SCRA scheme.

But a certain spirit remains alive.

And though it is flickering, the spirit remains one of courage to take up responsibilities. So an obvious question is - if most of our clan is retiring or retired, what responsibilities can we take? And to this focussed subject, I will limit my attention, and to the limited objective of pushing ourselves to lead a more significant and socially relevant life, I will dedicate this poem.

Never Retire

In the hallowed halls of Jamalpur Gymkhana,

Where spirits soar and hearts entwine,

A tale unfolds, a whispering mantra,

Never retire, for you shall shine!

Within these walls, where friendships bind,

Men and women of strength and grace,

With years well-lived and wisdom mined,

Eagerly march, not to slow their pace.

In senior years, when shadows cast,

And twilight hues begin to bloom,

They forge ahead, their spirits steadfast,

To conquer summits, break the gloom.

For age is but a number, they declare,

The spirit's fire knows no bounds,

With every challenge, they're prepared,

To grasp the stars and leap the mounds.

Never retire, the motto holds,

Emblazoned deep in every heart,

*A call to action, as life unfolds,
Each soul a masterpiece of art.
With laurels earned and battles won,
New horizons beckon them forth,
They find fulfilment in the rising sun,
Guiding others, showing their worth.
So, men and women, warriors bold,
Let never retire be your creed,
Together, you create a story untold,
A legacy that all shall heed.
In Jamalpur Gymkhana, you shall see,
A testament to dreams on fire,
With hearts aglow, forever be,
In higher roles, never retire!*

There is of course, a contrasting argument that proposes that life starts after retirement, that while we were all slogging away, life continued alongside. That we largely ignored and sped past the roses but faced the brickbats, and continued walking down our own paths blindly and that hey, its time to open our eyes. This literally means that we have to be selfish enough to not work on anything at all, and just enjoy life and modify our workaholic behaviour because have discovered the folly of our ways.

But a lot of us were already on this path, much before retirement.

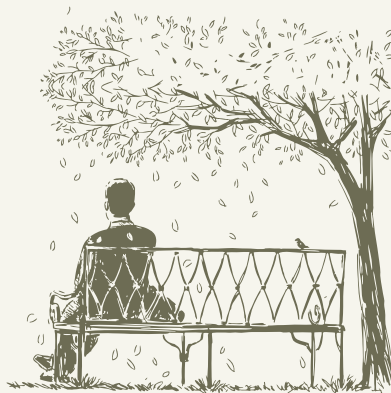
We were complaining about how miserable the job content was, how difficult the working conditions were,

and how in essence, it was not fun to work any more. In short, we retired or stopped working while on the job, much before our due date came by. For these among us, retirement is a justification of a follow on attitude and there is hardly any change of life, because retirement lifestyles had already set in prematurely anyway.

There is a lot of concern for health post 60, and the concern comes from not practicing dietary discipline, not exercising daily and not keeping the brain alive in their 40s and 50s. The preoccupation of such among us is with our own decimated egos and our tendency is to get into depression post retirement, and hence stop living, despite whatever opportunities life offers us as a challenge.

It's easier isn't it, to not be courageous, to not take opportunities that come our way, to not pay for our sins, knowing there are thousands of ways that we can be dishonest with ourselves, and avoid being paragons of virtue, safely choosing inaction over action, minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year, until the day that its too late. It's easier to glorify the past and paint ourselves in a golden light, while we spin yarns of how courageous and responsible we were in our careers and simultaneously, back away when offered opportunities to work responsibly again.

Lets not do that from now on. Its not over yet. There is still a lot of life left, perhaps more years than the 30 odd career years left. Lets try to make this journey from 60-100 as healthy, happy and fulfilling as possible. The biggest responsibility we can take is for our own selves.



GURUBHYO NAMAHA

Salutation to the teacher

Jayanthi Mallya
w/o Gajanan Mallya '79

The sweet memories of childhood linger long in our memory. One cannot forget the role played by teachers, who are the guiding lamps, who guided us on the right path in our journey of life. We all are like tender sapling needing love, care and warmth while growing up and getting the right amount of all these reflects in our personality as we grow up.

With 'Teacher's Day' round the corner i.e on 5th September, my mind started recollecting the mentors in my life. True to the name, my parents are my first teachers in my life. Both of them were very religious and introduced us to our culture and religious scriptures. Reading Bhagavad Gita, the holy book and chanting prayers were introduced very early in our life, which now



has become a second nature and part of our daily routine.

As we grew up, we were taught about the need and importance of religion in our life. Both my parents are living embodiments of values, moral and emotional. Humble by nature, simple by living they were strict disciplinarians and had inculcated values and discipline in our life.

The urge to enhance knowledge in us got impetus by introducing to the world of books, which facilitated to quench our thirst for reading by access to books on various topics. It paved the way for strong foundation of education in life.

My father was a voracious reader. He used to read on wide varied topics of his interest like business, automobiles, economic and financial news including political updates to keep him abreast with time. He used to encourage us to read in English whenever he came across some interesting articles and that kindled reading interest in me.

As I grew up, books became my companion wherever I went and I started spending my leisure time in reading good books which helped me expand my mental horizon.

The role played by teachers in school cannot be undermined. It is the firm foundation which one gets in the initial years that stands strong and goes a long way in building a better future.

It was during one of my recent trips to native place, I met my primary school teacher, who had taught me English in 5th, 6th, and 7th standards. It was a pleasant surprise to meet him in one of our family get together and I was overjoyed to see him after a long gap of more than 40 years.

Finding short of words, I touched his feet in reverence to seek his blessings. I was touched when he could recollect our association of three years as student and teacher, a genuine relationship of true affection and real care which one cannot expect to exist in modern times.

He was Annappa sir to all of us. Short with medium build, he could beat any youngster with his agility. He was sharp in his memory and dedicated to his work.

Being a strict disciplinarian and perfectionist, he was generally thought of as a terror though most people were



in awe of him. He was never satisfied by less than 100 percent of our attention, effort and results achieved in our studies.

He insisted on neat handwriting, right spellings, perfect pronunciation, and a command over the subject. Though it looked difficult and cumbersome at that time, I feel all the grinding under right tutelage was worth it.

It was really an unforgettable moment, when student and teacher met each other at the most unexpected venue. The fond memories of yesteryears were recollected.

I lacked words to express my feelings and gratitude for a great teacher who laid the foundation for a new phase of life. It was a happy and proud feeling when my teacher heaped praise on me in front of all my relatives and friends, my hubby being one amongst them.

I blurted out to him in a hurry that I have started writing as my hobby and it is my husband who initiated and motivated me to this field and sought his blessings.

Now after all these years, when I have three books of mine in print, I realize, the man whom I married is also like a 'Guru' in my life, for, it is he who introduced me to the world of English literature right after marriage by introducing me to books on varied topics.

It is my dear hubby, who encouraged me in pursuing my hobby, guided me and helped me to express myself in words.

He is such a wonderful husband, more than a companion in all respects, a true friend who gave me moral support throughout and motivated me to come out of my cocoon.

Years flew by with books as my companion and now when I look back, it is with a sense of gratitude that I remember all my teachers.

It is to the credit of my husband who has taken pains to put all my writings, articles, and poems in print in a book form and gave me a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

I feel there is a right time and place for everything in our life and what is gone is gone forever, even though we would like it to come back. The strong foundation which we get during our childhood and growing up years is the golden period in one's life which depicts our ability to move on in our life.

The childhood and the primary school are the right time and place to instill good values and learn the value of hard work and its need. The time we spend in learning, the amount of effort put in and the proper utilization of our energy will pave the way for a better future.

I feel, I am fortunate and blessed to get such wonderful parents, affectionate teachers during my initial years and a caring companion as husband in my life.

I bow my head to the Almighty, the greatest teacher in expression of my gratitude.



Dog Days

V Anand '62

The inter railway tennis championship of 1965 was held in the clay courts of Gymkhana Jamalpur. There were a number of VIP guests including five General Managers. The SAMs presented a variety entertainment programme. The highlights were a superb rendering of "Itan Joban.." in Raag Bhopali by my batch mate M.D.Kakkar and a short skit staged by V.K.Vij and myself.

In the skit Vij acts as a senior officer of the Railway Board, a SAM, a wheeler dealer and "go to" officer. For some unknown reason Vij had named this character "Mephistopheles"

"M" is an officer of the old school, a "pucca sahib". His private secretary is a Tamil Brahmin "marx", a closet communist who secretly resents "M"'s position. "M" characteristically has only a vague idea of the rules and regulations of various departments. Marx, on the other hand, is a veritable encyclopedia of rules and "marx" is not above pulling a fast one on "M" every now and then.

"M" is the nodal officer dealing with complaints from the travelling public.

He receives a letter

Mr Mephitopheles,

Your coach has given my poodle fleas

Judging from your care

He probably got it from your hair"

Sd/- Mrs Zarine Waysidepetrolpumpwala

After uttering a few unprintable expletives about the complainant's ancestry "M" asks Marx how dogs are carried on the railways. Marx replies that dogs travel by the buffer track method, viz, the dog is tied to the buffer of the last vehicle and runs along the track. This

explanation was too much even for "M" to swallow and he castigates Marx.

"I was just joking, Sir!" says Marx and reads out,

"Dogs shall ordinarily be carried in the dog box of the brake van, and parcel rates as applicable will be levied. However, if other passengers have no objection, the dog may be carried in a First class cabin. Should a dog be detected travelling ticketless, it shall be charged at twice the normal rate subject to an additional penalty of 1.61 paise per 1.61 kilometres from the last ticket checking station"

(Neither Vij or I knew the rules and we just made this up)

The skit got Vij and I into serious trouble with the Principe (Director IRIMEE) Shri Satish Misra 1939 batch. He called us to his office and roundly chastised us, saying that Shri G.P.Bhalla (1930) batch, then GM/Eastern Railway was very upset.

"Is this what you are teaching them? Are you treating the Railway Board as a joke?"

Vij replied, "Sir everyone enjoyed the skit. Even you were rolling in the aisle"

Be that as it may, I would like to narrate true and not so true stories about dogs.

Urban Legend. A pedigreed dog was booked by the 5 Dn Punjab Mail from Bombay VT to New Delhi. It was duly accommodated in the dog box and sufficient food and water was provided. At Jhansi, where the Guard changed, the outgoing guard advised the incoming guard that perhaps it was time to let the dog out to eat some food. However, no sooner than the box was opened, the dog bounded out and disappeared into the milling crowds.

Meanwhile, the engine driver sounded the starting whistle. The Guard grabbed a mangu cur (there is no dearth of stray dogs on railway platforms) and shoved it into the box. This wretched specimen was duly handed over to the recipient at Delhi. The recipient was furious "This is not my dog! What have you done with the dog?"

The Guard replied "Sir, I received one no: dog from the incoming guard who must have received it from the

guard at Itarsi who must have received it from the guard at Bhusaval”

The Railway Department replied “There was no deficiency in service”

True story, with some embellishment.

An army officer was travelling with his family consisting of his wife and their two teenaged daughters in a four berth bay in a two tier AC sleeper coach. They had a large fierce looking German Shepherd. The co-passengers objected to the dog. Their pleas to the army officer being of no avail they approached the TTE. The Army officer was belligerent and refused to shift the dog to the break van.

Early next morning, when the train arrived at Chalisgaon, the Army Officer decided to take the dog for a walk on the platform. He was assured by the co passengers that the halt was long enough for him to walk right up to the end of the platform. However, the train started after the scheduled halt of two minutes. The army officer’s daughters stood at the doorway and beckoned him. The dog bounded in, but the officer was left behind.

There he was, penniless in a strange place, clad in his sleeping suit, but holding on to the train tickets. He was rescued by the Assistant Personnel Officer, Bhusaval. He was provided with a hearty breakfast and boarded a following train. The APO also sent a telegram to the Station Superintendent, Bombay VT advising him to have

the officer’s family received.

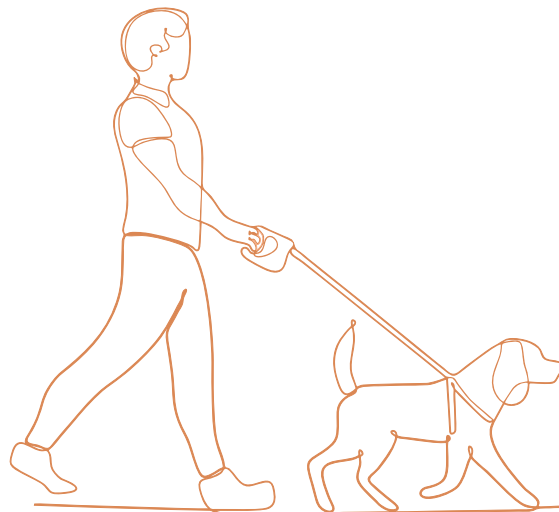
True Story.

The Southern Railway received a complaint, followed by a notice from the Consumer Forum as follows.

“Sir, I was travelling from Puri to Chennai Central with my wife and two children from Puri to Chennai. We boarded the Coromandel Express at Khurda Road. We had reserved four berths in the AC two tier sleeper coach and had the bay to ourselves. However, the co-passengers objected to my pet dog travelling with us. I was advised by the TTE to put my dog in the dog box. I walked to the rear of the train, but the dog box in the rear brake van was already occupied. So I ran all the way up to the front brake van. I was just able to board the van but due to a jerk I fell down with my dog into the dog box. The box was full of excreta. I travelled in this condition for the next three hours. When the train halted at Brahmapur, I ran back to my compartment. I was so dirty that my family could not recognize me. I went to the toilet to clean myself, but there was no water in the toilet.

For the inconvenience and mental agony that I suffered, I demand a sum of Rs 35000/- as compensation.”

The Southern Railway replied, “There was no deficiency of service. One no: dog received by 2842 Coromandel Express was duly handed over to the passenger. Your complaint has been forwarded to the South Eastern Railway, where the cause for action resides.”



EXPERIENCE ON FIRST POSTING

H.N.Gupta '56

Articles published in SAM usually describe life in the first four years in Gymkhana, but give little information about 5th and 6th years of apprenticeship. (now the apprenticeship is of four years only). After the apprenticeship, one became a class one officer of the Mechanical Engineering Department of Railways. What were the first few years of service like? The experience and treatment received from seniors would mould the young minds and their attitude to work. The experience of different persons would be different depending upon the place of posting, staff supervised, and most importantly upon the bosses. Hence instead of generalizing, I shall recount my own experience.

I was given a working post 5 months before my apprenticeship expired. SCRA's from the topper's list of 55 and 56 batches were called to SHIMLA (RDSO was at SHIMLA) and given a 3 hrs design test. This was followed by a viva voce by Director Standard Mechanical. DSM was in charge of loco, carriage and wagon directorates. RDSO was a very compact and small organisation in early sixties but very momentous decisions were taken at that time. I was posted as Assistant Director (wagon) and was to contribute in decisions that would revolutionise freight operations in the railways. What should be the unit of loading, should the wagons switch over to roller bearings, adopt pneumatic braking system instead of vacuum brakes, using CBC instead of screw coupling etc. were the decisions taken at that time.

Apprehensive that a long stay in RDSO may render us rather unsuitable for a line posting on our parent railway I applied for transfer to Western Rly. My

request was granted and before RDSO shifted to Lucknow, I was relieved. I had completed two years tenure in RDSO. The experience in RDSO was extremely useful and informative. WR posted me as AME (C&W) at Kota division.

BBCI, the forerunner of WR worked on a regional system and not on divisional system. The regional HQ of RME were at Gangapur City. Kota division was formed recently and there was a great shortage of officers houses. None could be allocated to me. The waiting room on the railway platform was allotted to me. Fortunately, it had an attached bathroom and a side room where I stored my furniture etc. I also used it as a makeshift kitchen. But I and my wife were largely dependent on the railway refreshment room supply. Some times for a change we would buy poori aloo and dahi pakori from the vendors on the platform. Despite all this hardship, it was a great learning experience. For the first time I had to conduct an accident enquiry and fix responsibility. Condition of wagons was not good and hot box cases were frequent.

It was certainly a downhill experience from Shimla days, but worse was to come. After living for 6 months in the platform rest room, I was asked to vacate it as DS was not empowered to allot it for more than six months. So what was I to do? My wife returned to her parents. Fortunately, Mr Biswas WM, Kota Workshops was a bachelor and invited me to share his house. Since he didn't possess a car, I could use the garage for storing my luggage. Unfortunately, this arrangement did not last long. Mr Biswas was transferred to some other railway and had to vacate the house.

Mr OP Vohra '55 batch was AWM Kota was promoted as WM and moved in to the Works Manager's house. He was married with two children. I again found a sanctuary and started living like a waiting room passenger. But this is not a fair statement. Actually Vohra's treated me like a younger brother. So life went on. Fortunately I had become due for promotion to Senior Scale. I was posted as WM Pratapnagar NG workshops, Vadodara.

SAM CLUB DAY 2023

I knew that I should be ready for another shift very soon as this was a very small charge for a class one officer.

Soon after wards, I was transferred as DME Bhavnagar division. There was an earmarked residence for DME. It had a big compound, but being rocky, it was largely unkempt except for a small garden around the house. There were a lot of snakes.

I reported to DS/ BVP on my arrival and got to work. BVP division was a large sprawling division covering about two thirds of Saurashtra peninsula starting from Ahmedabad westward.

It had many interesting places of which I had read like Veraval, Junagadh, Porbandar, Gondal, Palitana, Diu and not the least Gir Forest. It seemed like a mini empire of M.G Rly system. Since it was away from the main line from Ahmedabad to Jaipur and New Delhi or Abu Road to Kandla Port, WR HQ did not take daily position of the activities of the division. There were 13 loco sheds and equal number of C&W depots. The passenger train operation was complicated because at every major junction on the train's route half the train went in one direction and the other half in a different direction. The punctual running was very important as the halves had to be coupled with the halves of another train arriving at the same station before departing for their new destination. This routine applied even to the mail and express trains.

There were absolutely no rest houses in the division,

but DME, DOS and other important officers were given earmarked inspection- carriages. With a large number of sheds C&W depots I had to go out quite frequently. Steam locos of a great variety had to be maintained. Even saturated steam locos like WPs built in early eighties were still in service. Spare parts were a problem. However loco sheds at Jetalsar and Bhavnagar had good machine shops and very competent staff. We were therefore able to keep engine failures well within the target. Other important task was to avoid any accidents and maintain punctuality especially of mail and express trains. This kept the DS and HQ happy.

I will have to end the article. But before I do so I will relate an Incident on my taking over as DME on the very first day. In the evening I received a message from DS that he wanted to see me. So I rushed to the Officers Club from my office. DS mentioned that he was told that I played Tennis. Yes, so I do was my reply. DS countered why I had not come to play today when he played at 5 pm. I told him that the office got over at 5.30 PM.

His reply was that I could send the files to my home and deal with them later, but tennis timing was sacrosanct. Both DS and his wife were very good players (they were reputed to have been Coorg state champions). Playing with them, my game improved a great deal.

My tenure as DME Bhavnagar division lasted for two years and a half and was truly memorable.



What Jamalpur and Gymkhana Mean to the Service

Sarabjit Arjan Singh '61

(This article is a reproduction of the same article that had appeared in the Club Day issue of SAM in its Golden Jubilee year – 1977). The editor posed the question and this was the prize winning response...)

There are many among 'Sams' who will answer that Jamalpur and Gymkhana mean nothing to the service. They are the cynics. And it is always easy to be a cynic. Therefore, I do not propose to either take up the issue with them or try to refute their arguments. On the other hand, I belong to the majority who feel that the basic concept of the Institutions – to produce a person who was a leader having a superior knowledge of mechanical engineering – is as valid today as it was when it was set up.

What does Jamalpur and Gymkhana mean to the service – I think there is no straight answer to this question as to a very large extent the service itself is not clear what it wants from its young men and its Institutions. This is no reflection on the service but more of a statement on our times – to use a Toynbeeian expression "a time of troubles". Today, the nation is in a flux, a flux which is a search for a better life. In this march the nation is questioning the *raison d'être* for the existence of any and every institution and asking what its contribution towards building the nation is. Jamalpur and Gymkhana find themselves in such a situation. They find when this atmosphere of questioning every concept, every idea, which was considered basic has put them on the defensive – leading to cynicism and loss of spirit when made Gymkhana and Jamalpur what they are today. But there can

be no respite from this questioning and unless the institutions are able to stand up to this attack and change the needs of the nation, they will die out. So, it is best to ask such questions and come out with meaningful answers.

I would, therefore, like to restructure the question as - what Jamalpur and Gymkhana mean to the service - cannot be answered in a meaningful manner - to: have the Institutions contributed capable men, as envisaged by the founder; and does the service consider this function has been satisfactorily performed.

The answer to this question, that is, have the Institutions contributed in producing men capable of running the service with leadership qualities and a high knowledge of mechanical engineering, is a very substantial 'yes'. If this were not so, this Institutions would not have been celebrating their Golden Jubilee. For, these Institutions were as much an eyesore for colonial rulers as they were a symbol of hope to the people of this country. It was these institutions which called the bluff that Indians could not be Mechanical Engineers and run the complex industrial machine of modern society. In the regard, I think, the Institutions have "redeemed their pledge very substantially" to use the expression of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

Let us then ask, do these Institutions have anything to offer for tomorrow? Do they have any role to play in building a happier and more just society and taking an active part in the great developmental endeavour currently underway? To this also, the answer is a substantial 'Yes'.

The nation today lacks neither know how nor

resources but leaders for the newly created Institutions. Leaders who are creative men with the will to solve problems. Leaders capable of unleashing the energy locked in the social of this country so that we may move with a redoubled vigour towards achieving a better life for the masses in a single generation.

The basic concept of Jamalpur and Gymkhana, as already stated, has been to produce men capable of doing just this. Therefore, the relevance of these Institutions to the nation is obvious. If on this Golden Jubilee Year the Institutions and its alumni rededicate themselves and set forth this as a clearly stated objective and persuade the authorities to set up the necessary infrastructure then Jamalpur and Gymkhana can confidently face the future. The spirit of despondency will be replaced by an 'elan' which will make the coming 50 years more glorious.

So much for the future, what about today? The basic question 'What Jamalpur and Gymkhana mean to the service' remains unanswered for the present. We have seen that these Institutions have fulfilled their role as envisaged by the founders very substantially for the past and that these Institutions have a very relevant role to play in the development of this country for the future. Can we then say that these Institutions have made the expected contributions in the furtherance of the developmental goals of the country after 1947, or putting it another way, does the service consider the contributions of Jamalpur and Gymkhana after independence to be of a substantial nature?

In this regard, people may have mixed feelings. The cynics obviously say 'no'. But I think that the

mere fact that the officers from these Institutions were able to run the railways after the country lost a large portion of the 'Raj' officers—is contribution enough. It not only ran the system but kept its productive capacity intact, nay, increased it manifold. The service has introduced modern forms of traction and the Institutions have helped in mastering the maintenance problems associated with them. The alumni of these Institutions have trained a large body of workers, men capable of carrying out the complex and advanced technical tasks and have actively associated themselves in setting up the diesel engine industry in the country. They have made positive contribution in creating indigenous suppliers for a technology unknown to the entrepreneurs of this nation. With pride, the Institutions can point out that no small part of this very exciting work, very difficult work, very valuable work, work which has gone to make the country a South-East Asian power, has been done by men who passed out from its portals. From this it should be clear to all and to the cynics that the contribution of these Institutions is the 'Mechanical Engineering Industry' in the country. In addition, the service has come to rely upon the men of these Institutions to solve intractable problems and looks on the 'Sams' as people who are able to handle tough situations and come out with creative answers.

The answer to the question should now be apparent. To the service these are Institutions mean a place from where it gets its regular supply of capable men, in whom it can place its trust to lead the organisation in the present and in the future with necessary dynamism and creativity.

IRMS: A Ray of Hope for the Mechanical Department

Sarabjit Arjan Singh '61

(As part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations, the editor of SAM posed an intriguing question: "What Jamalpur and Gymkhana mean for the Service," offering a token prize for the most captivating response. The essay I wrote in 1977 has been reproduced just before this piece in this issue of SAM and I request you skim over it to better appreciate this companion piece written with the hindsight of 46 years)

In 1977, I had the privilege of being a Deputy Director in the Motive Power (MP) Directorate of RDSO, a department that embodied the essence and spirit of the mechanical era at that time. Our remarkable Director, Shri Prakash Bhalla, fondly referred to us as his boys, who would lead and consolidate the epoch of the Diesel locomotive.

The mechanical department firmly believed that the cost reduction achieved by diesel traction in comparison to steam made it the natural successor to steam locomotives. While electric traction boasted even lower operating costs than diesel, the significant capital investment required for overhead electrification (OHE) rendered it financially viable only on heavily trafficked sections, surpassing what was known as the break-even point. As such, electric traction would remain limited to certain sections, leaving the mechanical department's dominance unchallenged.

However, in hindsight, we can now see that this perception was wishful thinking. The electrical

department saw the end of the steam era as a turning point in the history of traction on the Indian railways. They sought to seize this opportunity to establish themselves as the pre-eminent mode of traction. To do so, they strategically capitalised on the prevailing severe foreign exchange shortage by justifying electrification on the grounds of diesel traction's dependency on imported oil, a notion that resonated well with the political dispensation of that time.

In retrospect, it becomes apparent that this argument was flawed. Electric traction, dependent on electricity supply, faced its own challenges due to growing demand and insufficient generating capacity, leading to power cuts and the proliferation of small, inefficient standby generators. Consequently, diverting electricity for train movement would have increased overall fuel consumption, making the electrical department's claim erroneous.

Despite presenting a well-reasoned counter-argument, I, like many others, faced limited receptiveness to this perspective. The establishment of CORE (Central Organisation for Railway Electrification) led to a self-sustaining dynamic for electrification. This also gave rise to a political-industrial complex that vigorously advocated for electrification as the natural progression towards a more modern form of traction, saving precious foreign exchange. Even a political party included electrification of railways

as one of their manifesto objectives.

However, funding constraints initially limited the pace of electrification. Recently, the government's decision to invest substantial amounts in developing railway infrastructure removed these constraints, propelling the Complex to advocate for 100% electrification and the discontinuation of nearly five thousand diesel locomotives.

In light of these developments, the mechanical department now finds itself contemplating its position. To better appreciate the situation, we must revisit the unstated underlying assumptions of the 1977 essay. At that time, the prevailing economic thinking leaned towards autarky, emphasising self-sufficiency and public control over commanding heights of the economy. This mindset led to the belief that the Indian Railways would continue manufacturing its rolling stock in-house. However, with the liberalisation of the economy in 1991, the paradigm shifted, and the railway budget became subject to populism, allocating funds without adequate long-term vision or plans for the overall development of the Indian Railways. Financial viability as a principle for project selection was diluted in the name of social justice, further impacting the mechanical department's position.

Consequently, as steam locomotives phased out, the mechanical department's dominance began to wane. The decision to split traction

responsibilities between mechanical and electrical departments accelerated this decline, leaving the department feeling marginalised.

However, there is hope for a resurrection. The emergence of IRMS (Indian Railway Management Service) and the proposed merger of rolling stock functions under a single member could offer a fresh perspective and a chance for revival. By focusing on managing the induction of rolling stock and fostering collaboration with the private sector for manufacturing and maintenance and building a global level rolling stock industry, the mechanical department can play a pivotal role in shaping IRMS's future and establishing itself as a dominant voice within the organisation.

The challenges are undoubtedly significant, but the potential for rejuvenation is equally tangible. To meet this challenge head-on, the mechanical department must embrace adaptability and innovation, ultimately revitalising its position within the ever-evolving landscape of the Indian Railways

The challenges are undoubtedly significant, but the potential for rejuvenation is equally tangible. To meet this challenge head-on, the mechanical department must embrace adaptability and innovation, ultimately revitalising its position within the ever-evolving landscape of the Indian Railways.

I leave you with this thought: Are we up to this challenge?

Zoi Gin Heng Kong (Goodbye Hong Kong)

S.S. Mathur '81

When my daughter, fresh out of school, went to study in the University of Hong Kong five years ago, we had fondly planned weekend trips to Hong Kong, hoping to meet her on and off during her course of study. But then Covid hit, and flights from India came to a sudden halt. For well-nigh three years, my daughter was reduced to an apparition on Whatsapp video, and my wife and I were reduced to anxious nail-biters.

Finally, in late 2022, regular flights restarted. My daughter in the meanwhile had completed her degree and got admission for further studies in Singapore. My wife and I planned to go to Hong Kong to help in her relocation. Once again, unexpected events intervened, and so, one December morning, I found myself alighting alone from a Cathay Pacific flight at the Hong Kong International Airport, and taking a bus to Wan Chai, right in the middle of Hong Kong Island, where my daughter lived. My mission – to help my daughter pack her things, and pack her off to Singapore.

My daughter, though, had other ideas. All the holidays she had been planning for us throughout her stay, she decided to unleash on me during my 5-day visit. So, from hour 1, we had a packed schedule.

The first thing I noticed when I reached Hong Kong was how cold it was – Hong Kong is at Kolkata's latitude, but the place was freezing, colder than Delhi. I later came to know that the dip in temperature was unusual for December – but at the time I was glad to have my padded jacket and cap on.

The second thing I noticed was how small Hong Kong flats are – my daughter's flat was like a doll's house, and, at first, I felt like Gulliver in Lilliput, afraid to move my arms for fear of knocking something down. After I got used to it, though, I began to marvel at the flat's design. The bedroom had just enough space for a bed, but had a spacious closet and drawers, and storage space under the floor. The kitchen had a range, sink, draining board, shelves, a fridge, and even a washing

machine, all cleverly laid out in the tiny space. The large windows let in adequate natural light, despite the 40-storeyed buildings jammed in all around.

Packing anything in this tiny space was a challenge on its own. Simultaneously trying to sort out stuff into throwable and keepable articles almost made me tear out my hair in despair. Ultimately, I realized that my real role was to cheer my kid on while she sorted out



HKU Main Campus

and packed her things.

All the while, we were going round Hong Kong with a vengeance. Our first tour was of the Hong Kong University, set into a hillside on Hong Kong Island – a short distance separates the Main Campus from the Med Campus, both prettily laid out with flowering plants and greenery. The buildings, like all buildings in Hong Kong, were tall and packed together. The view from the Med campus of the old Hong Kong harbour was very picturesque, though a chill wind blew throughout the day and froze the daylight out of us.

In the evening, we went to a traditional Hong Kong restaurant. The proprietor spoke to me at length in

SAM CLUB DAY 2023



View of harbour from Med Campus

what I took to be Chinese; I politely indicated to him that I did not speak the language. Later, my daughter, who looked embarrassed and uncomfortable throughout the exchange, told me that he had been speaking in English, and had been welcoming me warmly to his restaurant and Hong Kong in general, as one of the first tourists to have arrived after lifting of the Covid restrictions. “Kya Papa... you should have been more attentive.”

At the time, Hong Kong had a system of QR codes that you had to download to your phone to indicate that you were Covid free. I had been sent a green-coloured code to load on my phone before the journey. Little did I know that on my arrival in Hong Kong, I had to apply on a website to convert it into a blue-coloured code, which was acceptable in restaurants and public places. After numerous misunderstandings and entry denials, I got it right on the third day – only to find that from that day, all requirements of Covid vaccination had been relaxed in Hong Kong, and no QR codes were needed thereafter.

View of Hong Kong Island from the Peak



Public transport in Hong Kong is extremely convenient and frequent. There is the Hong Kong Metro (MRT), different types and sizes of buses, a tram line, and boats, all plying to schedule. Taxi drivers, are, however, not averse to taking tourists for a ride (pun intended). The Octopus Card is good for payments in all modes of transport, in shops, restaurants, etc. Traffic is organized. The city is safe all twenty-four hours (I ascribe that to the Chinese tendency, when push comes to shove, to make criminals and other undesirable folk disappear). It is the ideal tourist destination, with a mix of modern urban development and natural open spaces.

The second day, we went to the Peak, the highest point on Hong Kong Island. It was freezing cold, but the views were spectacular. We froze our behinds off as we waited till sunset at the Peak, then went down to the waterfront, walking along the old Harbour on a well-laid out walking track until we reached Wan Chai.



Sunset from the Peak, old tram in foreground



View of HK Island from waterfront

SAM CLUB DAY 2023



View from waterfront at night



HK's tallest building at 484m

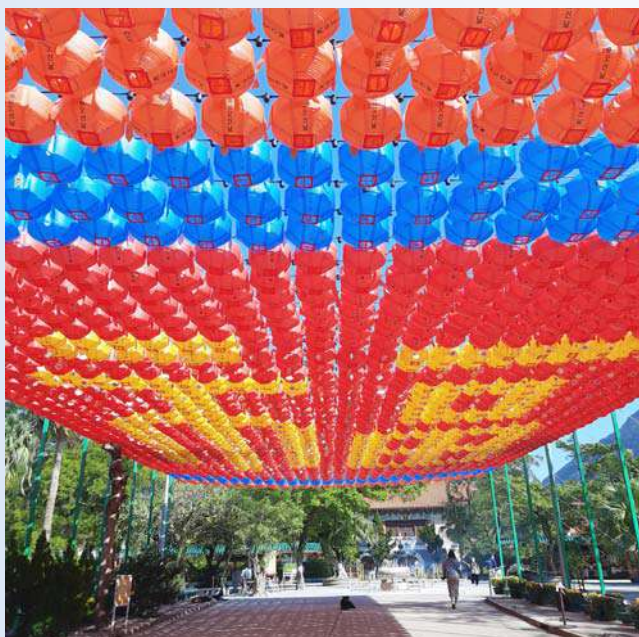


Road tunnel to mainland China

SAM CLUB DAY 2023

On the penultimate day, we took a trip to Lantau Island, which is outside the main city, and took the cable car to the Tian Tan Buddha, a 34-metre bronze statue of the sitting Buddha, the largest in the world, constructed about 30 years ago. Fortunately, the weather was clear and we got a good view of the Airport and the road tunnel to mainland China from the cable car. After going up to the statue (via a long stairway) and staying there for a while, we went down to Lantau beach. Hong Kong beaches are generally clean and well-maintained, although December is off-season for them.

Tian Tan Buddha



Traditional Chinese decorations

We had also visited Peng Chau, one of the outlying islands that surround Hong Kong. It is a fishing village, but very well appointed – it was clean and the houses and shopping areas were no less than any city. Hiking is a popular activity for Hong Kong residents, and there was a hiking trail all around the island. Boats to the outlying islands are fast and frequent, although they do not ply at night.

We went out with her friends for lunch. I felt young again, just like another (white-haired) college student. Nice kids – her Korean friend gave me a

Peng Chau Island



Traditional tram on HK Island

SAM CLUB DAY 2023

traditional bow of respect (when she thought the others were not looking), when she first met me and before she left. Everywhere in the world, there are good kids, respectful kids. Family values are the same everywhere.

On the last day, we visited Clear Water Bay, which is a little outside the city. We took the MTR till its last station, then took a bus to the Bay. Again, the well-organized transport system, even outside the city, impressed me. This time, we were planning to take a more difficult hiking trail. It turned out to be much steeper than I had expected, so after an hour of climbing hundreds of steps, I realized I was completely fagged out and had to call a halt to the

View from Clear Water Bay hiking trail



Steep hiking trail at Clear Water Bay



outward journey. The offspring, having more energy than me, exhorted me to continue because she could see the trail leveling off in the distance. I was loath to continue, however, and persuaded her to turn back.

On the way back, we came across a Spanish family with an over-friendly dog. Afraid that I would tumble down the steps if he leapt at me, I scolded him in advance. My daughter was embarrassed – “why were you talking to the dog in Hindi??”. I replied – “It’s a dog – how does he know it’s Hindi? I don’t know Spanish that well in any case.” But she gave the dog’s owners an apologetic glance, and continued to give me “Kya Papa!” looks after that until EOD.

Clear Water Bay is near the HK University of Science and Technology, another top-class university, which we went through on our way back. Hong Kong has been giving much attention to its institutions of higher learning, and now has seven world-class Universities with students coming from mainland China, Korea, South-east Asia, India and South Asia, and other parts of the world. The facilities and faculty in these universities are superb, and exchange students come in regularly from top US and European universities.

Finally, the time had come to get down to the actual

purpose of my trip – packing my child’s luggage. Lots of clothes and articles had to be given away or thrown out – for her, just clothes that no longer fit; for me, little bits of her childhood getting lost. But there was no time for sentiment. At the airport, too, her baggage was overweight. I debated whether I should ask the check-in lady to weigh my daughter too, since she was so much lighter than the other passengers. Better sense prevailed, though. Ultimately, more things had to be discarded at the airport – that favourite piece of stationery, those t-shirts that don’t fit anyway. Check-in, immigration, security check, a quick hug, and she was gone, on to Singapore, to begin a new life.

While I went back to my old life – my flight was a little later. I listened to the onboard music collection on my way back. I re-discovered an old album from Roxette – the last song “Milk and Toast and Honey” got over just as the plane landed at Delhi. The plane had a high-resolution bottom camera that actually worked. On the screen, I could see the Qutb Minar, the streets of Delhi, “Lay a little loving baby, you’re getting close to me...”. Then the airport boundary wall, then the perfectly-centred white dashes on the runway ..., “is everything that matters to me, is everywhere I wanna be...” – a slight lurch, then taxiing on the runway; back to normal life from my five-day hiatus.

LAST NIGHT I DREAMT I WENT TO JAMALPUR AGAIN

Atulya Sinha '83

There are at least eight places in the Indian subcontinent (including one each in Pakistan and Bangladesh) that lay claim to the name "Jamalpur," which literally means "a beautiful place." For the readers of this magazine, however, just one of these seemingly obscure places has a special significance: the place where we once lived, the place which we might have visited later – or continue to do so, if only in our dreams.

Jamalpur has many firsts to its credit: it was the site of the first railway workshop in India (probably in all of Asia) set up in 1862. It was the site of the first iron foundry, the first rolling mill and the first captive power house on Indian Railways. Since railway technology was then considered the highest manifestation of mechanical engineering, Jamalpur Workshop was the natural choice for imparting practical training to supervisors and technicians of various trades. Mr B.R.Williams '56 says that the British established the category of Special Class Apprentices in 1927 "probably for the 'brown sahibs' – young Indian gentlemen who were very English in upbringing, language and thinking, usually from well-known families." Beginning as Jamalpur Technical School in the 1880s, IRIMEE went on to become the first of the centralized training institutions for training of officers of Indian Railways.

As for other claims to fame, Jamalpur happens to be the birthplace of spiritual guru and composer Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, who was employed at the Workshop when he established the Anand Marg movement in 1955. The name "Jamalpur" also features in an oft-quoted dialogue in the Bollywood blockbuster Sholay, but in fact no portion of that iconic movie was shot at "our" Jamalpur!

Over the years, Jamalpur has been visited many people who have recorded their observations in many different forums. Some representative extracts of such writings are shared here.

Among the Railway Folk: Travelogue by Rudyard Kipling

Nobel prizewinning author and poet Rudyard Kipling had visited Jamalpur in 1889 when he was just 24 years old. He went on to write a series of three essays with the heading Among the Railway Folk, which were eventually included in his travelogue From Sea to Sea. One can get a lot of insights into Jamalpur from Kipling's account (though he begins with a statement which is factually incorrect, as the headquarter of East Indian Railway was in Calcutta, not Jamalpur).

Jamalpur is the headquarters of the East India Railway. This in itself is not a startling statement. The wonder begins with the exploration of Jamalpur, which is a station entirely made by, and devoted to, the use of those untiring servants of the public, the railway folk. They have towns of their own at Toondla and Assensole; a sun-dried sanitarium at Bandikui; and Howrah, Ajmir, Allahabad, Lahore, and Pindi know their colonies. But Jamalpur is unadulteratedly "Railway," and he who has nothing to do with the E. I. Railway in some shape or another feels a stranger and an interloper.

Later we have a description of the vegetation (with wellingtonia mis-spelt as mellingtonia) and the topography of the railway town:

Crotons, palms, mangoes, mellingtonias, teak and bamboos adorn it, and the poinsettia and bougainvillea, the railway creeper and the bignonia venusta, make it gay with many colours. It is laid out

with military precision to each house its just share of garden, its red brick path, its growth of trees, and its neat little wicket gate. Its general aspect, in spite of the Dutch formality, is that of an English village, such a thing as enterprising stage-managers put on the theatres at home. The hills have thrown a protecting arm round nearly three sides of it, and on the fourth it is bounded by what are locally known as the "sheds"; in other words, the station, offices, and workshops of the company.

Here is Kipling’s evocative description of the Railway’s “babus” –

The Babus make beautiful accountants, and if we could only see it, a merciful Providence has made the Babu for figures and detail. Without him, the dividends of any company would be eaten up by the expenses of English or city-bred clerks. The Babu is a great man, and, to respect him, you must see five score or so of him in a room a hundred yards long, bending over ledgers, ledgers, and yet more ledgers—silent as the Sphinx and busy as a bee. He is the lubricant of the great machinery of the Company whose ways and works cannot be dealt with in a single scrawl.

Eventually Kipling visits the “shops” and produces his own “shop notes” -

Four-and-twenty engines in every stage of decomposition stand in one huge shop. A travelling crane runs overhead, and the men have hauled up one end of a bright vermilion loco. The effect is the silence of a scornful stare—just such a look as a colonel's portly wife gives through her pince-nez at the audacious subaltern. Engines are the "livest" things that man ever made. They glare through their spectacle-plates, they tilt their noses contemptuously, and when their insides are gone they adorn themselves with red lead, and leer like decayed beauties; and in the Jamalpur works there is no escape from them.

Kipling has a surprisingly high opinion of the Stores Depot:

Whatever apparent disorder there might have been in the works, the store department is as clean as a new pin, and stupefying in its naval order. Copper plates, bar, angle, and rod iron, duplicate cranks and slide bars, the piston rods of the Bradford Leslie steamer, engine grease, files, and hammer-heads—every conceivable article, from leather laces of beltings to head-lamps, necessary for the due and proper working of a long line, is stocked, stacked, piled, and put away in appropriate compartments.

Kipling concludes his account with the oft-quoted description of the European Institute (later renamed Central Institute, where a large swimming pool was still functional and weekly cinema shows were being held during my apprenticeship in the mid-1980s):

Best and prettiest of the many good and pretty things in Jamalpur is the institute of a Saturday when the Volunteer Band is playing and the tennis courts are full and the babydom of Jamalpur—fat, sturdy children—frolic round the band-stand. The people dance—but big as the institute is, it is getting too small for their dances—they act, they play billiards, they study their newspapers, they play cards and everything else, and they flirt in a sumptuous building, and in the hot weather the gallant apprentice ducks his friend in the big swimming-bath. Decidedly the railway folk make their lives pleasant.

Night Train to Jamalpur: Fiction by Andrew Martin

British railway detective Jim Stringer is the protagonist of a series of novels written by Andrew Martin. This book (first published in 2013) is the ninth in the series, set in pre-Independence India. Jim is deputed to the East Indian Railway (EIR) to investigate allegations of corruption amongst the

middle and senior management. He reaches Calcutta in April 1923 to find himself in a cauldron of crime, corruption, racial tensions and professional rivalries. While travelling on a night train to Jamalpur, he shares a drink with John Young, an Anglo-Indian co-passenger. Before the train reaches Jamalpur, Young is shot dead and Jim becomes a suspect. Meanwhile, several passengers of EIR are killed by venomous snakes which keep turning up in first class compartments. To add to Jim's woes, he is working with Major Fisher, a colleague who he does not like or trust. Besides, he is travelling with his wife and teenage daughter, leading to many unexpected complications. Not surprisingly, the plot is quite convoluted. The storyline is slow in the earlier part of the book, with many digressions, including the social lives of the British and the Anglo-Indians in Calcutta and Darjeeling.

But what does the author have to say about Jamalpur? Despite the title, Jamalpur plays a very minor role in the story. Jim Stringer and his colleague are received by the head of the railway police at Jamalpur and offered breakfast (Since this story is set in 1923, a few years before the first batch of SCAs joined, the venue might be Queen's Road Hostel):

We had arrived at the great railway colony and workshops officially known as Jamalpur Junction at 0900hrs on 24 April... Inspector Hughes (who ran the police operation at Jamalpur) walked us over to the great railway refectory, which was empty just then – the apprentices' breakfasts having all been served – and which smelt of curry and carbolic. We sat down at one end of a long table, and a bearer brought tea, toast, jam and soda. We were joined by a sub-inspector and a new chap, also Indian. Our voices echoed as we talked, and we sat in a tight blue cloud of our own cigarette smoke.

Later they are taken on a tour of the workshop:

Anything metal at Jamalpur was too hot to touch, and all day long, the air was overcharged with black smoke from the foundry chimney. We were shown the railway barracks, the railway hostels, the railway college, railway cinema, railway sports grounds, and the railway golf course. We saw the railway workshops: iron foundry pattern shop, brass fitting shop, turning shop, erecting shop, carpentry shop, paint shop. Hughes said they made almost any part of a train on site except wheels, which seemed perverse of them...

Mungerjamalpur.com and other websites: Articles by various authors

There is no dearth of information on the Internet, but the challenge lies in uncovering the information which is relevant to one's purpose.

Mungerjamalpur.com on Internet archive Wayback Machine offers short articles/blogs on different aspects of Jamalpur by different authors. For example, in a blog posted in 2015, Robert Evangelista, a retired electronics professional living in the US, recalls that his father Ivan was a part of a community of about 20 Filipino musicians performing in India:

In 1938, Ivan Evangelista moved to the town of Jamalpur in Bihar's Munger district, which was home to an East Indian Railway workshop that employed approximately 25,000 people. The town had an enormous Railway Institute, with its own movie theatre, a six-lane swimming pool, four tennis courts, two billiard rooms and a bowling lawn. The dances held there drew railway employees from across eastern India... Ivan Evangelista's band played in Jamalpur on Fridays. "The rest of the week, the band travelled up and down the rail line for about 300 miles in either direction, playing the Anglo-Indian communities that ran the railway workshops (steel plants),

SAM CLUB DAY 2023

stations (big ones, not like the little US railroad seen in the West in the old movies) and kept the tracks in good shape,” recalled Jim, another of his sons.

Another account of pre-Independence Jamalpur comes from John Alton Price, who was born at Simla in 1923 and had joined the British Indian Army during the Second World War. He first recalls the prejudice against railway employees prevalent in his childhood, in an article posted in 2010:

When quite a child in India I had gathered, from the odd word I happened to overhear, or the odd attitude one observed when the subject of Railways was mentioned there seemed to be an antipathy towards ‘those Railway people’... I found out as I grew older and a bit more knowledgeable that the Railway people were considered a bit ‘Racy’ and not quite up to the mark or shall we say a bit common. In much later days I was to discover for myself that these opinions were positively unfair and rather, or downright ignorant...

During the Second World War, Price was posted at Jamalpur where he was warmly welcomed by railwaymen and their families. We get yet another description of the Institute from him:

The Troop train taking us East to Jamalpur went very slowly across the hot dusty plains of Northern India, along the Gangetic plain and took two days for the thousand mile journey. The CO tried his best to make us comfortable by having the train supplied with ice blocks to lessen the high temperatures of the compartments. Jamalpur was a very important Railway town having a very large Railway Workshop. The civilian population of the town were nearly all employed by the East Indian Railway. We were made quite welcome and were told to use their Institute Club facilities whenever we wished. In fact we were made Honorary

members. The Clubhouse was very comfortable and one could play tennis, Billiards, Swim, use the library and attend Dances. There was even a Cinema. My stay here was for about eleven months and was a happy period, this was of course due largely because of the friendly way the civilians treated us.

(http://www.pricewebhome.co.uk/Docs/Price/Colonial/Colonial_Boy.htm)

As the last offering of this selection, here is a rather sentimental description of Jamalpur posted in 2010 by Richa Sinha, a native of Jamalpur who lives in Delhi.

I hail from a small town in Bihar (India) called Jamalpur. And, I wouldn't blame it on you for not having heard of it earlier. I would start with describing it for you as the most beautiful town ever, picturesque, full with its share of hills, lakes & waterfalls. It is best known for hosting India's first & the largest Railway workshop. It also boasts of churning out in its foothills, the most revered Special Class Railway Apprentices, better understood as the Indian Railways' top brass, its mighty officers...

Everything about this place, small and big is special. The tinned Workshop boundary with long entwined black pipes welcome you as your train enters Jamalpur Junction. The majestic spread of the Workshop can leave great architects spellbound. As you enter this small town, be ready to appreciate the warmth that its people & buildings have to offer. The Kali pahaad defines the skyline of the town. Climb up and you get to see the Water Works and the ancient Kali temple. Come monsoon and the sparkling waterfalls would be ready to wash down the hills...

Jamalpur is also known for some exquisite delicacies. Who would have sampled anywhere else on this planet, Mughlai Parantha the way Cooking House and Madras Coffee House prepared it & served so uniquely with a South Indian sambhar!

Check your horoscope - will you get good bosses?

Vijay Mathur '60

For all of us choosing a Railway career, the significance of our ACRs is clearly recognised from the day we join as Asst. Officers. What we do not always realise is that getting a good boss is kismet! A good boss teaches you the ropes of your job, builds your self confidence by delegating authority and then backing your decisions and action, and ultimately puts you on the road to promotion with a positive CR. On the flip side, a bad boss does exactly the opposite. I recognise that, statistically, each one of us will get some bosses of both types over the course of our careers, but what also matters is the sequence in which one gets the good bosses, and importantly, at what stage in our career one gets them. A bad boss at a critical stage of their career has destroyed the rise of many talented and efficient officers, and many outstanding successes will certainly acknowledge the critical role played by some of their bosses.

In retrospect, I realise that I have been very fortunate that, though I have got some bad bosses at the earlier stages of my career, but was truly fortunate to have got some outstanding ones at the crucial phases (mid career) of my professional life. Some illustrative examples:

As a green Asst. Manager with all of 10 months of service, I was asked to conduct a disciplinary enquiry. No instructions were given, and having never done or seen such an enquiry, I am certain that I did a horrible and incompetent job. Unsurprisingly, my boss called me in, dropped my report in the waste paper basket, and sarcastically told me that it was not worth the paper it was

written on. He then dismissed me with no word on why it was bad, or what should have been done. As a result, I am still ignorant on how to conduct a proper Disciplinary enquiry.

Some years later, and in a completely different environment, I was asked to keep the minutes in a high level meeting. Again, something I had never done before. I frantically kept track of the deliberations and came up with a five page minute. My boss took one look at it and laughed, and said 'Vijay, if I wanted a transcript, I would have called a stenographer, and he would have done a better job. Now take this back and record as bullet points the decisions taken and the actionable points on each item". In my subsequent career, I paid a lot of attention to drawing up the agenda for meetings, and then to careful and pithy minute writing. I gained immensely in efficiency and effectiveness by doing so.



After joining the Maruti project, I often heard Mr. V.Krishnamurthi, the Maruti Chairman, say that the new Maruti plant must only get the latest technology for car manufacture. When leaving for Japan to draw up the project details with Suzuki, I went to him for any key instructions to keep in mind, and asked if he could spell out what he meant by high technology. He said "I'm a big picture man, so don't ask me for definitions -you can define/choose any technology you think appropriate- only one caveat, I must like what you choose"!!! Three weeks later, in Suzuki Motor Company HQ in Japan, O.Suzuki, the hard driving, tough Suzuki Motor President, revealed their proposed project design and layout for the new Maruti plant. This had minimal automation, and a basic hand push production line, similar to what we had seen at when I had earlier escorted him to the Hindustan Motors plant in Uttarpara as part of a familiarisation trip to show him the existing Indian automotive industry. When I said we could not accept this, he blew me up and cited the HM visit to make his point that we needed to keep the investment cost down and not buy expensive equipment just to be fashionable. Since I was too junior to argue with him, I asked to speak to Mr. Krishnamurthi and brief him. When he came on the line a few minutes later, I explained the issue and my reasons for disagreeing with the

Suzuki concept. He agreed with me and told Mr. Suzuki to follow my suggestions- thus strongly backing a subordinate when he needed it.

Later, during press conferences, he would refer all questions on the project to me, saying that Vijay can answer these better than I can.

Towards the end of my career I then had to deal directly with politicians, something that Mr. Krishnamurthi shielded me from in Maruti. This was much tougher, particularly when asked to favour potential suppliers. When push came to shove, I finally decided to seek premature retirement, much to the satisfaction of my then Minister!

Post retirement, as one thinks about all this calmly, and with the benefit of hindsight, the great good fortune one has had becomes evident, and one can only give thanks to one's lucky stars. The good things have cancelled out the bad and the nasty, and still left one with a comfortable retirement. My strong takeaway for all of you still in mid career- stay positive and optimistic particularly when things look bleak, and have faith that it will get better. There is an exciting new world opening up, and Indian professionals are finally getting global acceptance, so keep scanning the environment for different opportunities, and don't hesitate to seek help and advice.

Encounter of a “BONG” kind!

Kakoli Ghoshal
w/o Shekhar Ghoshal '82

We were little kids, well ensconced in one of Delhi's premier schools – wearing starched pinafores, having dainty tiffins and jauntily reciting cute nursery rhymes in “Convent bred” English, when one day my Dad suddenly dropped a bombshell. He had been selected by the Defense Ministry – Govt. of India, for a UN Peace Keeping Force assignment to Vietnam for two years and was amongst only five Indian Armed Forces doctors to be so chosen.

Such momentous occurrences, however always have their flip sides, and ours was packing the starched pinafores and nursery rhyme books in neat boxes and heading for our ancestral home in Kolkata to be under the care and tutelage of the family Patriarch – our Grandfather for the next two years !

Soon Delhi schooling and whatever we had learnt was happily un-learnt, and we settled down to a delightful routine of pottering around the household and generally doing nothing ! My Grandfather, the benevolent and indulgent Patriarch was quite content to allow this state of affairs to continue, till he received several missives from my Dad, initially polite and gentle, later firm and business like, urging my Grandfather to promptly admit us in a school, or else there was a fear of our losing the whole academic year !

As the missives grew stronger and more frequent, my Grandfather finally one day took out his pristine white dhoti and kurta and announced to my mother that he was admitting us in a school. My mother

delirious with joy (for she had been unable all this while to summon the courage to broach the topic to the Patriarch!) rustled up a delicious, meal of the choicest fish curry and rice for him in the morning (No Bengali worth his salt will step out of the house without devouring his fish curry and rice, and my grandfather was no exception !) to put him in an “appropriate” frame of mind, for the assigned task.

We were then bundled in a rickshaw, which stopped at the gate of our destination – our new school. From Lytton's Delhi's high brow institution we suddenly found ourselves, outside the portals of a pure vernacular-Bengali medium, hoi-polloi school, in the by-lanes of North Kolkata, (whose USP for our Grandfather was its proximity to our residence!), where even breathing the word “English” was taboo, a blasphemy, while as far as we were concerned, Bengali was a language which only aliens studied in Mars -- “and the Twain Shall Never Meet”, I thought in dismay as we tumbled out of the rickshaw.

Admission formalities duly over, I was handed over to the class teacher, a Hitler like Iron lady, who promptly declared her great distaste for my “Delhi-heeled” pedigreed, educational credentials declaring that there was no room for any English – Vinglish and with a rap on my knuckles, made it clear that if I did not pick up my Bengali alphabets and Namta (the Bengali numeric table), soon enough, the rap on the knuckles would turn third degree, compounded with some good scaling of the palms (those days corporal punishments in schools were common and teachers derived great pleasure in exercising it, as a hallmark of being an efficient and effective teacher !).

Under such a grim scenario and having encountered a “preview” of what was to follow, the dolls and toys were hastily abandoned, and under the hawk's eye

supervision of the Patriarch, (who by now had started getting equally alarmed over our fate) we started grappling with the intricacies of the Bengali alphabets and by a combination of burning the “Mid-night oil,” and day-time periodic “scaling” and “knuckling”, the impossible was achieved and after one year of “blood and sweat” the Lady Hitler declared in a voice of shock and astonishment to the class, that I, a “rank outsider” had secured the highest marks in Bengali !!!

And thus friends, began my foray into the world of Bengali language, which over the years gradually led to my initiation into the hitherto, unexplored, veritable, treasure-trove of the works of some of the world’s greatest luminaries—thinkers, intellectuals and writers ... Rabindra Nath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Bimal Mitra, Tarasankar



Bandyopadhyay, Mahashweta Devi, Asha Purna Devi the roll call of eminence is endless !

As I blissfully settle down with yet another immortal classic, I cannot but raise a toast in thanksgiving to the three architects of my enrichment – the Hitler like Iron Lady - my Class Teacher, the doting, but assiduous Patriarch - my Grandfather, and above all the “Renaissance Man” my Dad, who thousands of miles away, across the globe, in strife-torn Vietnam, never forgot for a minute, how intrinsically important it was for his little daughters not to remain unschooled & untutored even for a single day!

The Renaissance Man – My Dad ... in the Call of Duty
- Serving during the Vietnam War

Proud to be your Daughter

When a Jail speaks to you

Shakti Ghoshal '74

“No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but its lowest ones.” - Nelson Mandela



Alipore Jail in Kolkata had recently been converted into a museum and we made a visit. I found the place refreshingly well laid out with directional signs to the various highlights.

Though not well known, there are actually two Alipore Jails. The first Alipore jail, later called the Presidency jail, was built more than two hundred years back. The newer one, which continued to be known as the Alipore Jail, was built close to the earlier one in early twentieth century. Known as a 'correctional home', it was used by the British to hold political prisoners.

A few miles away from Alipore jail is Dalhousie Square. Named after Governor General Lord Dalhousie, who held office in the mid nineteenth

century, it was and continues to be the administrative and Business epicenter of Kolkata. Standing majestically at the center is the Writer's Building with its French renaissance style architecture, Roman facade and rooftop statues.



Dalhousie Square is today known as Benoy Badal Dinesh (BBD in short) Bagh and therein hangs a tale of an interesting connect it has with Alipore Jail.

It was 1930. With the Indian freedom struggle at its peak, Alipore Jail was bursting at its seams with political prisoners. Colonel N. S. Simpson, the Inspector General of Police, had become the epitome of brutality when it came to dealing with political prisoners. Seeing himself as an able administrator, Simpson had devised an efficient and brutal system to force the prison inmates to reveal their political ideologies and 'terrorism' plans. Merciless beatings while hung from a tree, putting chilli powder on the genitals etc. were common place.

Three Bengali revolutionaries Benoy, Dinesh and Badal, aged twenty-two, nineteen and eighteen, chanced to come together. Members of the Bengal Volunteers, a group set up by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose a couple of years earlier, they had found their life's calling in revolutionary activities. The threesome, having heard horror stories about Colonel Simpson's notoriety, decided to take the fight to the British administrator.

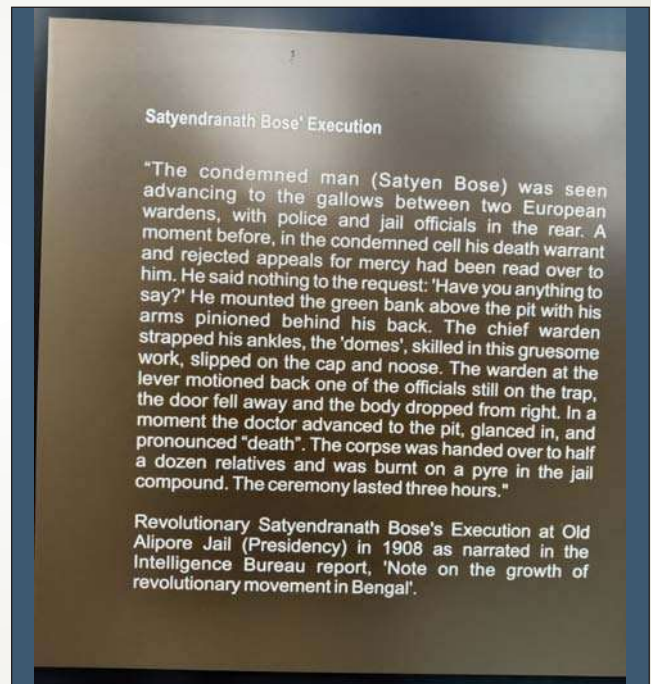
To gain access to the Writer's building the three youngsters entered Writer's building wearing immaculate western attire. Asking to meet Colonel Simpson, they shot him dead point blank. BBD Bagh today stands testimony to the courage of these threesome.



As I stood looking at the Alipore jail gallows, I heard a sound and turned around to see an old tree standing forlornly in the courtyard. The rustling leaves seemed to be whispering to me about the killings and the merciless beatings it had been witness to. Did I hear Dinesh shout 'Vande Mataram' as he was being taken to the gallows?



As dusk fell, I watched the red bricked Jail walls come alive and take on the colour of blood. The multi-hued lasers of the ongoing Light and Sound show pranced to and fro. A multitude of voices ebbed and flowed, from various directions.



Netaji Subhas Bose protesting against brutal assaults on other inmates, just before he was knocked unconscious from a head blow.

Subhas Bose inviting Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das to a frugal meal which he had painstakingly cooked himself.

Young Indira 'Priyadarshini' Gandhi meeting her father Jawaharlal Nehru (first Prime Minister of independent India) when he was incarcerated in a cell for participating in the civil disobedience movement.

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy (a future Chief Minister of the state of West Bengal), himself serving a sentence, treating sick and injured prisoners in the jail hospital.

The whisperings of the guards on watch tower duty.

The tales that the jail was relating to me were of innumerable shades. Of sacrifice and suppression. Of idealism and brutality.

PhotosNight had fallen when I stepped out of the Alipore Jail complex to go back home.



As I got into the cab, I mused on the dichotomy of the Western civilizational ethos about freedom and bondage. Did that ethos emanate from a deep down racial distrust of ‘non-western’ people and their purported non-adherence to western civility and norms which had justified Europe’s colonization (it was never termed conquest!) of almost all of the planet?

When it came to India, The British parliament and administration had gone to great pains to justify its ‘colonial intervention’ in the name of rule of law, human rights and upliftment of the natives. An image of a benign Raj was fostered, a righteous mask was worn through setting up parliamentary commissions and enquiries every time there were

reported cases of extortion and torture. The British would always take the moral high ground claiming ignorance of torture and beatings indulged in by the indigenous havildars and policemen a category which was illiterate, poorly paid and only too happy to curry favours with the British Sahebs.

The general tenor of these observations can be summed up by a witness to

the 1854 commission established to investigate allegations of torture in the revenue and police departments in Madras, who scathingly declared that:

The police establishment has become the bane and pest of society, the terror of the

community, and the origin of half the misery and discontent that exist among the subjects of

In 1854, the Madras torture commission, which had been set up to investigate allegations of torture in the police department, had scathingly observed:

‘The police establishment has become the bane and pest of society, the terror of the community, and the origin of half the misery and discontent that exist among the subjects of Government. Corruption and bribery reign paramount throughout the whole establishment; violence, torture, and cruelty are their chief instruments for detecting crime, implicating innocence, or extorting money. Robberies are daily and nightly committed, and not unfrequently with their connivance; certain suspicious characters are taken up and conveyed to some secluded spot far out of reach of witnesses; every species of cruelty is exercised upon them; if guilty, the crime is invariably confessed, and stolen property

discovered; but a tempting bribe soon release [s] them from custody....'

A hundred and seventy years on, does the above sound eerily familiar? As I sat thinking of all this in the cab, the irony of the situation did not escape me. The British have long gone, our tryst with destiny is now three quarters of a century old. But our governance and law enforcing structures seem to perpetuate those very aspects which our

forefathers had fought against.

Would the shifting of the jail facilities away from the British structures like the Alipore Jail finally allow for fresh thoughts and mindset to set in? I wondered.

Note : The museum boasts of an excellent coffee shop which we thoroughly enjoyed. A visit is recommended.



Acknowledgement : "Very wicked children": "Indian torture" and the Madras Torture Commission report of 1855: by Anuj Bhuwaniam Replicated from Sur - Revista Internacional de Direitos Humanos, São Paulo, vol.6, n.10, pp. 6-27, 2009

Step into La La Land

Anupama Mani
w/o S Mani '75

I run in fields, take my shades off,
lift my arms, then break into song...



My sincere thanks to Steve Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim, the founders of YouTube, for they have made watching films of any era, any time, anywhere possible with a mere click of the mouse or tap on the screen. The icing on the cake are Netflix, Amazon Prime and a host of other platforms which have made the task even easier, no need to look for and hoard DVDs and CDs now. No wonder then, I always remember not to do anything illegal and punishable for we haven't yet heard of prisoners in India being provided the option to watch movies/programmes of their choice on mobile phones, laptops or television. Stay away from jail, is my motto and everyone else's should be too.

But there is another aspect. The joy of watching a story unfold on the conventional large screen has its own charm. It can be combined with eating out, meeting friends or shopping, making it a major activity.

The first film I had watched was Rajesh Khanna – starrer Anand. A small girl, I did not understand much but remember being physically sick and mentally distraught when the sick hero died in the end. What shook me to the core was that a hall full of people just sat calmly and watched somebody die in front of them. I am happy to say I have grown up since and realise well that the hero got paid to 'die' and came back in the next film. I slowly learnt that even if it is based on a true story, a film is not 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth'.

With time I have come to the stage of watching Bollywood films because of an actor and then I see the work of several others' too in it and may or may not choose to watch them in action. I am not



anyone's fan, and with India's nearly 100 million film-watching population (my guess), no actor is getting nightmares if I am not among those yearning to watch their films.

This time Anil Kapoor's name caught my attention and so did Tisca Chopra's. Let us ignore the name of the movie.



Film: Jugjugg Jiyo

I slid into the comfortable reclining seat in the super-cooled hall, all ready to watch a multi-crore work of fiction, a Hindi *masala* (spice) film. It is supposed to have all the ingredients romance, action, comedy, a touch of tragedy and violence, struggle, with a visit to the temple/church thrown in and of course, a lot of music.

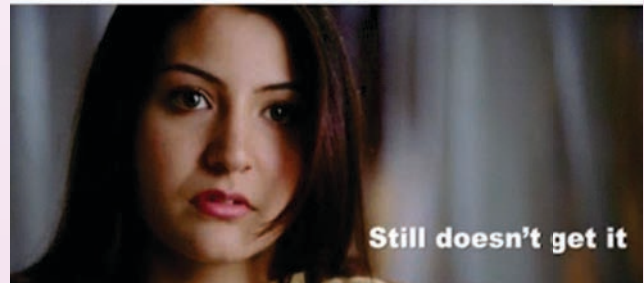
The experience started well. I positioned myself as the toll tax collector and whatever food was passed, took a portion of it. Full of popcorn, spicy corn, *bhel* and sandwiches with stringy onions, I began to feel large-hearted and tolerant. It did not matter whether they showed Pune in place of Patiala or Moscow for New York, I planned to enjoy it.

Slowly, the fiction started to feel like a disjointed fantasy about a big fat Punjabi wedding. What had started with the serious issue of souring relationships, marital exhaustion, male infidelity, not to forget patriarchy, turned into an escape from intelligence and common sense.

Somebody later pointed out that nearly 50 years

since *Abhimaan* was released, male ego and patriarchy continue to be issues our society is grappling with.

You would think the film dealt with these issues quietly. No, several times during the 150 minutes, the huge ensemble cast would break into a song and dance sequence with opulent sets. In real life, I have never been to a wedding where every guest dressed in shiny costume, joins the dance with synchronized steps.



Film : Rab ne Bana di Jodi

Not even seen a guy take off his shirt in public (like the hero) for no reason! Mercifully, Anil Kapoor, who was among the first Hindi heroes to appear shirtless (only saw in films) when chest hair was still in fashion, chose to keep his dressy kurtas on.

We Indians love staging protests. But I have not heard even a small voice against we Punjabis being irreverently depicted as boisterous, forever singing

and dancing, whiskey-guzzling community and sending the message – no need to take us seriously.

Where was the Anil Kapoor of *Mr India*, *Tezaab*, *Ram Lakhan*, *Nayak*, *Dil Dhadakne Do*?

And Tisca Chopra? In view of her sensitive portrayal in *Taare Zameen Par* (Stars on Earth), Ankur Arora Murder Case and short films *Chutney* (which sent a chill down my spine) besides *Chhuri* (knife), was this film some kind of compulsion for her?

Yes, the hall was full. Shapes of human beings sprawled on recliners in the dark hall lit by the screen, made me realise it was merely- come spend your money game. But I shall stay away from going into the economics of tickets or food prices.

I survived the nearly three hour assault on my aural and visual senses, acting deaf to people clapping or laughing and repeating the dialogues they found funny, because I kept waiting for the real story to start. Had I whimpered, the two older men with us so far busy with their phones, would have found the perfect excuse to leave, as they had done during *Simmba*.

When I got introduced to Hindi potboilers with *Trishul*, *Trimurti*, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, I knew fully well that it was not real life.

Item songs are a must in most films nowadays

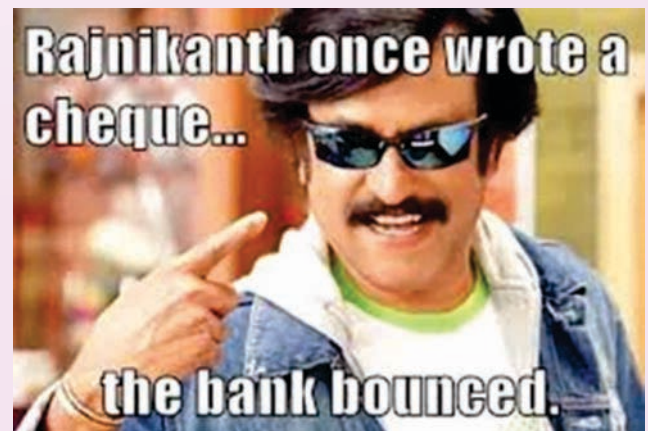
I happily sat through films expressing discontent/ disilluionment over social, socio-economic,



socio-political conditions, rural issues/urban poverty, corruption/violence, (*Kaalaa*, *Trishul*, *Majboor*, *Roti, Kapda aur Makaan*, *Hindustan ki Kasam*), crime thrillers (*Sarkar*, *Satya*, *A Wednesday*, *Haider*), musicals (*Bobby*, *Kaho Na Pyar Hai*, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, *Kal Ho Naa Ho*), family dramas (*Biwi Ho to Aisi*, *Do Dooni Char*, *English Vinglish*, *Masoom*), female-centric attempts (*Pink*, *Kahani*, *Queen*), those with a message (*3 Idiots*, *OMG! Oh My God*), inspirational ones (*Chak De India*, *83*), pure clean comedies (*Golmaal*, *Angoor*), realistic ones (*Ram Prasad ki Teherveen*, *Manthan*, *Raazi*, *Accidental Prime Minister*), experimental (*Ek Hasina Thi*) I could go on and on, and most of the time I have enjoyed the music too.

But lately, things have become a little difficult. The story-lines have gone bizarre, actors loud and brash, the music strange. (And what is an item song anyway?) More often than not, the experience poses a serious challenge to your intelligence. And yet, people rush for the first day, first show of Rajnikanth and Salman Khan movies, with repeated story-lines.

While I sit worrying about some film-makers treating



us as imbeciles, I recall having seen fans in Bangalore celebrating birthdays of their heroes by garlanding cut-outs the height of a three-storey building and cutting huge cakes, at roundabouts. How does the actor acknowledge their love and

dedication? In the end it is the producer laughing his way to the bank in the name of family entertainment.

A friend once suggested that to watch such movies *dimaag hall ke bahar chhod kar jana* (leave your brains outside the hall).

215 feet high cut-out of Tamil superstar Suriya

Film-maker and scholar Roopa Swaminathan has

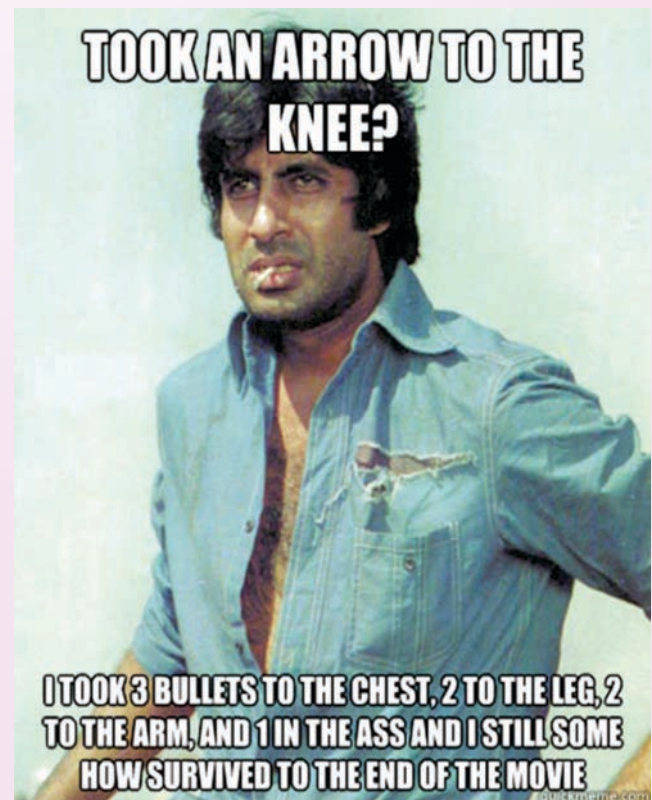


said, "Bollywood cinema is one of the strongest global cultural ambassadors of a new India." Does the rest of the world imagine us wearing clothes/make-up worn in the films? Or they think we as a nation are that melodramatic?

Somebody please tell them that most of us lead dull lives devoid of a mixture of inherited wealth, meeting with long-lost family, about-turn in fortunes, love triangles, high-decibel verbal exchanges, sacrifices for love and family, loads of crime and corruption. And of course, we do not break into spontaneous song and dance routines in snow-covered Alps, that too with a troupe of dancers in the background following our moves.

Maybe I should not let one experience destroy the hopes of better ones to come for film-goers like me!

Life is too serious anyway, so I do not advise anyone to watch tragedies unless they are real-life stories and you want to watch them for a purpose. You may ridicule me but I am going back to watching Crazy Rich Asians for the ...th time to bring myself back into the realm of my kind of sanity.



The Falling

G Venkatesh 2K3

He often thought of kites, for he had admired and envied them even as a kid. He had been a skinny lad, on the lines of his mother, a frail thin lady who went into bouts of farting when she had anything greasy. She couldn't live off pizzas or gorge on burgers and was thus, off all those things that made people fat. Even the portions of her regular meals were rather small. She could have coke but somehow she never liked the taste of it. It was all fine when she was young, she looked thin and hence, attractive but with age and wrinkles, she seemed emaciated and sick.

It wasn't good to be a skinny kid as he often got bashed by school bullies. The principal was a disinterested man content with smoking in his office and the teachers' thought they had better things to do. So, his Dad took him along, a little away from their home, into the country to cheer him up. The grass extended up to the horizons, there were a few trees here and there, and in the evenings, the sun would dance on the horizon with promiscuous breeze swaying and kissing it. The cattle would be walking back with their bells jingling and egrets would hop on their backs, looking for ticks to eat and would float around in the breeze after they had had their fill. Often, his Dad had nothing to say. They just sat on a rock and watched the mundane proceedings, so commonplace, so everyday and yet, so deep and profound. Sometimes, the kites would be up there

floating and looking around for careless prey as dusk descended. The silence soothed him in a weird way, it sucked him in, enveloped and cajoled him; convinced him that for all its faults nothing was amiss with the world, for the kites still flew and the sun rose without a fail. Sometimes they spoke, but never about the bullies or even the school. Just general questions that kids often ask about the grass, the egret and the mysterious stars that popped up in such huge numbers every night.

Often they stayed late, so late that they could hear the wolves howling, but it was fun to see the stars, they came in oddly familiar arrangements, got blocked by mere wisps of passing clouds. They looked in their clusters like little herds of sheep, with no standing of their own. But, then the books said they were giant solitary demons with lives of their own, some so big and so bright that even the sun was just a little candle in comparison. And they couldn't care less about us seeing Orion, the hunter or the Big Dipper. Just wee little tricks of the mind.

He loved the kites for they were cut off from the cacophony, floating far above it all, in pristine blue skies. And they didn't even move, they just floated- lazily and effortlessly, they went about an impossible task.

He wondered why he felt so light in the head. Why all those memories kept coming back as blood gushed in and out of his head? He could hear his heart beat in the silence. But, he wasn't like the kites. He was sweating profusely, and yet he felt cold. He was whizzing, he was floating and then he was falling too. He wasn't in any sort of control. There were no bullies. No egrets or kites either,

just him and only him.

His mom was a weird lady; everything scared her- barking dogs, cockroaches and even dead poultry in the freezer. She fancied her dinner would hop out and peck her as she slept. So, she left the lights on every night quite sure that bird brained spirit would now stay away. Over time the list of things that scared her just grew longer. She stopped walking out at night, thought pesticides in her mango would cause cancer or the plastic would seep in from bottles to choke her. All her fears weren't without a basis though like the one about pesticides, but her imagination filled them with such life and form that they weren't just pesky little fears anymore but giant demons stomping through the mind. He was scared. He always felt he had inherited her genes, a cursed jumble of DNA that made him skinny, made him fear the bullies and fart when he was scared. He sweated like a boiled egg, he farted and then he smelt like a really spoiled one.

Dad was different. He was handsome, well built, had hair that he never lost and never turned white with age. And even his wrinkles blended with his sharp features in such a way that he looked wiser and not older. When they back late in the country and the wolves started to howl, he would throw a worried look at Dad. But, he would say, " Don't worry. I can wrestle a wolf." It wasn't what he said but the way in which he said it. He really sounded like he believed he could wrestle a wolf; and that helped him plunge into the silence and let the distant stars envelop him.

He felt blood rushing into his head and then everything went blank. He heard voices in his

head that were dark, distant and alien. A searing pain ran through his entire body and his lungs strained to breathe and just when it seemed that he would be crushed to pulp, he felt light, he floated, his bulged eyelids moved and he saw himself in a deep swirling yellowish smoke, an endless weird fog that enveloped everything as he looked around. It thinned and thickened alternately, was unwelcoming and menacing, and yet as he fell through it, he felt nothing. It just parted and let him go. He muttered to himself to keep calm, but he quaked, it was like passing through the gates of hell.

He felt free like the kites, floating in the endless blue expanse of his childhood. Only this wasn't blue or pristine or pure or anything of that sort. Deep within himself, he knew he was bound, being pulled down ruthlessly and not free or floating, just he wasn't feeling it. He said to himself, "I am a kite, free and floating." The thought calmed him. Sweat no longer flowed in copious amounts. The swirling layers appeared to fade a bit. He felt cooler.

The mist separated. He saw tall mountains, jagged and with tall sharp peaks cutting through the yellow skies like daggers. There was no sun as he looked around. Just a pale yellowish light that was spread all around. The palpitations started again.

Some screens around him came to life and little motors whirred. He magically manoevered between the peaks and cut through the mist. He saw small patches of flat ground amidst the mountains and steep drops. There were lakes with thick tarry oil. Flames went up here and there. There was whitish frost on some of the peaks.

He had seen some of the images earlier but they hadn't been so clear. It was mesmerizing, it was scary. He touched the flat ground. He finally felt a heavy weight, he struggled to move his limbs. He had been cooped up in his heavy smelly suit and contraption of a flying machine for too long now. He heaved a sigh of relief. There reigned an eerie silence all around.

The heavy gravity scared him a bit. His suit felt like a lead chain now. He remembered his father, smiled about his mother. He let the silence consume him. This was scary and yet comforting.

And then, just as he was checking the data, he saw the ground crack in a brilliant explosion. There was no sound. Just a few shards flying here and there, dust that moved slowly in the heavy gravity and hung around eerily. The craft turned and hit the rock hard, got entangled in it upside down. The dagger like mountains were now over him and they cast eerie dark shadows. He fumbled awkwardly for the controls. Just a minor mishap, we will fly again, he muttered to himself trying to switch on the radio.

He heard a loud hiss and when he turned around, the craft was tearing itself apart like paper. There was no sound. Just silence. He noticed a huge shadow and then there were THOSE BIG BLANK

EYES, dancing warts, so many of them- eerie, soulless and blank- a code of alien DNA.

He shrieked in vain. He shrieked as much as his lungs could muster. The silence remained unbroken. The yellow mist swirled calmly. The eyes came closer and closer. They appeared blank, but they danced with curiosity.

After several hours, in a secret facility in the midst of a desert, a few technicians in brilliant white suits said, "I think, it's over."

"The signal takes just about an hour to get here from Xerex A. Its been a long time now."

"There are just sporadic beeps now, are think he's been attacked, sir."

"Uh, the biologists were right then. They expected to find huge creatures there."

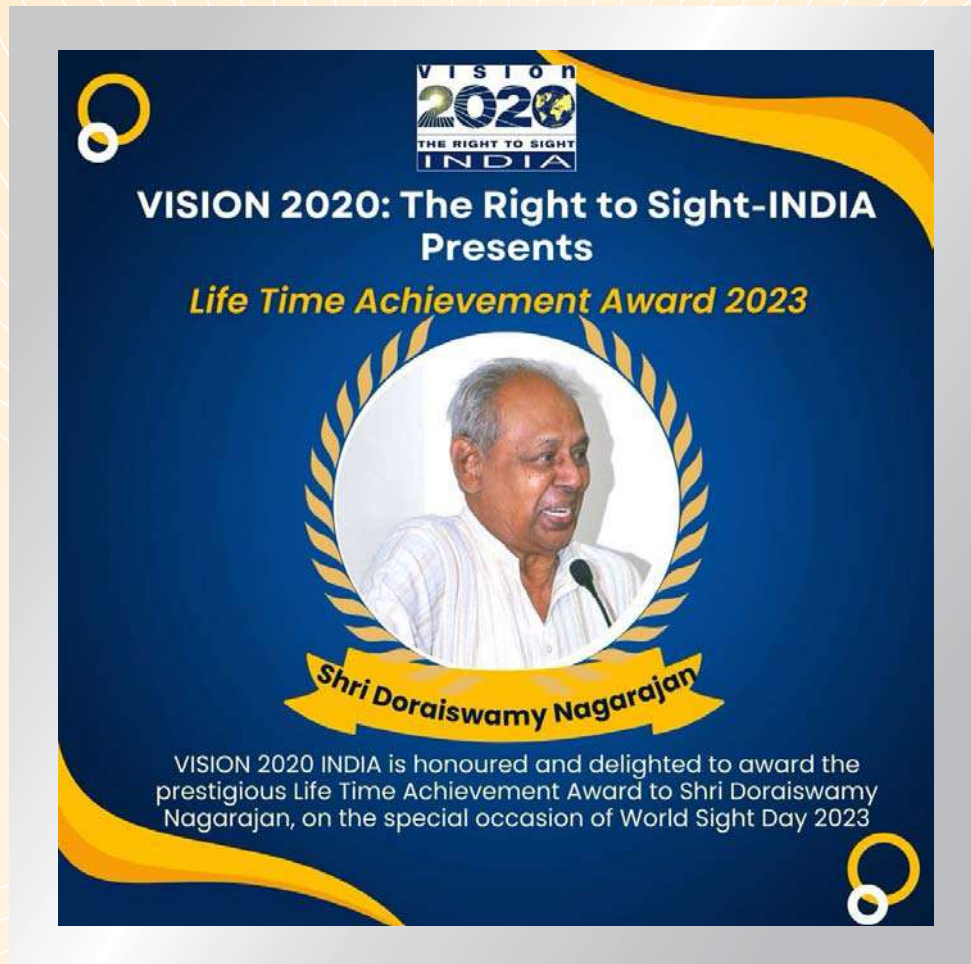
"Sad, we had to loose him this way. We could have sent a probe."

"Oh, but the Directors were impatient. We are so short of funds. Anyway, even if we get one snap of the dead man or the creature that might have got him, we will be celebrities."

"What about him?"

"We will pray. But, isn't he a celebrity already. We will name the valley where he died after him."

Accolades



Doraiswamy Nagarajan

Doraiswamy Nagarajan '57 has dedicated his life to care of those with eye problems. It gives us enormous pleasure to inform that this dedication and passion has been duly recognised. Vision 2020 India has bestowed their Life Time Achievement Award to none other than our very own Doraiswamy Nagarajan. This was on the occasion of the World Sight Day 2023. You can see a copy of their citation on this page.

Way to go, Nagarajan, Sir!



The Diamond Jubilee Batch 1963

The Diamond Jubilee batch! The batch that completes 60 years of association with the SCRA scheme. This year, this milestone has been reached by the 1963 batch. A big batch of 20 (the average across batches is a little less than 15), its members excelled in virtually all fields of endeavour. You will get a good idea of what members of the batch excelled in, be it academics, sports, dramatics or bataalis, through the write-up by Subhash Saxena that follows on the next few pages.

1. Rohit Vohra	11. Devendra Sharma
2. Devraj	12. Sumant Chak
3. Pramod Kumar	13. Kiranjit S Paintal
4. Vinod C Kohli	14. Subhash C Saxena
5. Ashoka Baijal	15. Brahmanand
6. Mohd. Sirajuddin	16. Tapan K Biswas
7. Subhash S Godbole	17. Vijay K Bhargav
8. Jagdeep S Chhokar	18. Arun K Bhatnagar
9. Mohd. Zaki Ansari	19. Krishna K Gupta
10. Shamsher Jang	20. Ponani N Sukumar

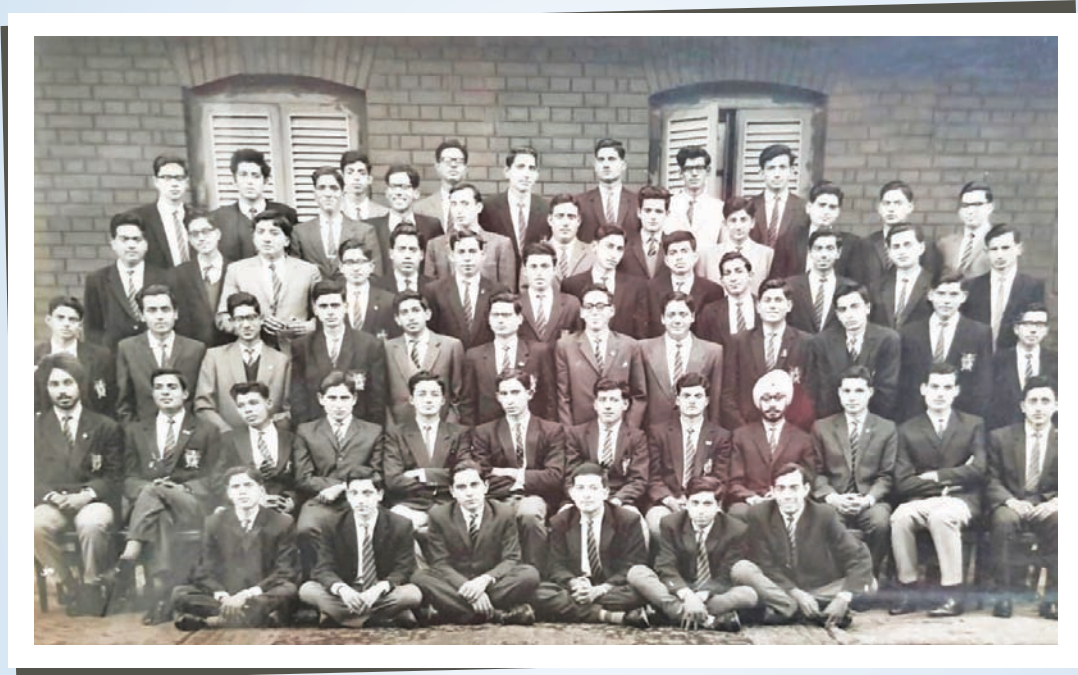
The 1963 batch has been unfortunate in having lost nine of their members already. Of these, Rohit Vohra, Vinod Kohli, Shamsher Jang, Kinty Paintal and Arun Kumar had left for their heavenly abodes while still in service. Others who are no more with us include Devraj, Ashoka Baijal, Subhash Godbole and Vijay Bhargav.

1963 Batch Photograph

The picture below is the passing out photograph of the 1961 batch. It appears that when the 63 batch passing out photograph was due, a large number of them were nominated for election duty and were not present when the photograph was taken. As a result, that photograph has many of them missing. It just happens that, perhaps owing to this, none of the members who were contacted had a copy of their passing out photo.

We have therefore reproduced the passing out picture of the 61 batch. In this, all 20 members of the 63 batch can be seen. This is perhaps one of the few pictures where we can see all of them together during their stay at Jamalpur.

Below, we give the names of members of the 63 batch only who are in the picture. The names are left to right with the number indicating the position of the member in the concerned row.



Sitting (Chairs): This row is all 61 batch, the batch passing out

Sitting (Ground): This row is a few members of the then junior-most batch – 1964. Remaining rows are mixed.

Standing (Row 1): 4 - JS Chhokar, 6 - KK Gupta, 9 - S Chak, 10 - R Vohra, 11 - S Jang, 12 - MZ Ansari

Standing (Row 2): 3 - P N Sukumar, 4 - VK Bhargav, 6 - Md. Sirajuddin, 7 - VC Kohli, 9 - D Sharma, 10 - TK Biswas, 12 - SS Godbole

Standing (Row 3): 1 - P Kumar, 2 - K S Paintal, 3 - Brahmanand, 5 - A Baijal, 9 - Devraj, 10 - A Bhatnagar

Standing (Row 4): 3 - SC Saxena

The Diamond Jubilee Batch – 1963

Subhash Saxena '63

During the Golden Jubilee Year of our batch (1963) in 2013, I had penned a brief sketch of members of our batch. Now, on the occasion of our Diamond Jubilee, here is an updated version.

Ours is a batch of 20, of which as many as 9 have quite prematurely “moved on”, leaving us much the poorer. I am devoting a paragraph to each of us to bring out what I remember them for. The names come in order of batch seniority as determined by our arrival at JG.

Rohit (Billoo) Vohra ... flamboyance personified, the batch senior was a “natural”. He was one of the three to leave the portals of St. Stephens College, Delhi, to join the '63 batch of SCAs. By far the most athletic of us all, he led the batch's attack in both football and hockey. Those were the steam engine days and foot plating, including “firing”, was an essential part of our training as probationary officers. I for one hated this, but Billoo was in his element and was at his best when on the Delhi-Ahmedabad Mail engine footplate, with his trade mark handkerchief bandana and jute stuffed in his trouser pockets. My wife, Suneeta, met him first at Baroda (as it was then called) station, when we were on way back from our honeymoon, and was quite taken in by this “tall, fair and handsome guy!” Sadly, a couple of mobike accidents in later years left him with an uncharacteristic limp. Though he was keeping indifferent health, his sudden demise due to septicemia came as a shock.

Dev Raj, of regal bearings... my senior by one year at IIT Delhi before we opted for JG, was one of a kind but occasional butt of jokes relating to late responses. He was playing baddy with batchmate Zaki Ansari in the quadrangle. Zaki asked him the score and DR replied 7-11. To which Z naughtily responded, “Aarey kal (yesterday) ka nahin, aaj ka.” But nobody could deny his regal bearing and habits, with “jee abhi bhara nahin” his signature statement, when asked why he had not vacated his railway house long after his super-annuation or why he hung around at a particular pleasing dinner venue long after the party had wound up. Dev Raj planned to live for 120 years but very sadly and inexplicably passed away in his sleep with no apparent medical condition.

Pramod Kumar (PK) is the “burra sahib” of the batch. Serious guy, whom we did not fool around with!! Stephanian, General Secretary, batch topper and winner of Mahadevan Shield, he was also the squash champ. He headed the batch quartet of those allotted Northern Railway, helped the other three open their first bank account and introduced them to sizzlers in the Gaylord restaurant in Delhi's Regal Building. PK remains to this day the connoisseur of style and elegance.

Vinod C. Kohli ... pure innocence, also from Delhi, like the previous three and two others, was nicknamed “Hansraj ka dada” after the college he went to, though to be honest he was a dove in words and deed, of child like simplicity and more

than a wee but absent-minded. Post Jamalpur, he developed health problems which finally consumed this very loveable character at an extremely young age.

From the stable of the famed Allahabad University and more precisely the Muir Hostel, came two gems to our batch – Ashoka Baijal and Mohammad Sirajuddin.

Ashoka was one up on us because he played tennis and our Principal, the late Mr. S C Misra, was fond of it too. Ashoka was equally comfortable in the school, workshop and the playground. His famous lines, “Aankh se aankh na larh jaaye kahin” were spoken with characteristic “thahar”, prolonging the mystery only for it to collapse in a peal of laughter following the utterance of the second line, “Issi liye khuda ne beech mein naak bana di.” I seem to remember that his hairline had begun to recede, or so it seemed. But the fact that it has pretty much stayed its latitude all these 60 years seems to suggest that he was born with a wide forehead!! Among my batchmates, we lived the closest to each other post retirement and became very close as he battled fibrosis of the lungs for 5 years and succumbed to it in Nov ’22.

I first met with Mohammad Sirajuddin ... the original Nawab, in the Central Hospital in Delhi during our medical test and almost collapsed when he mentioned he was an MSc student in the University of Allahabad. Nawab sailed through the ragging session, reciting his 4 “shers” and those same 4 have seen me through many a social occasion in later years!! Nawab spent most of his waking hours in JG teaching all the others, seniors as well. Many of us owed it to him for helping us

through I Mech E. Nawab was also a skilled exponent of the badminton racket, a touch artist, who had bettered on an occasion in a Muir hostel tournament, the great Suresh Goel. On the hockey field, he would be “studiously steering” the ball as the left outer, with his spectacles firmly held in position by a tightly bound kerchief. At times it fooled the opponent into thinking that Nawab was searching for the ball, while in fact he was doggedly guiding it into the distant goal.

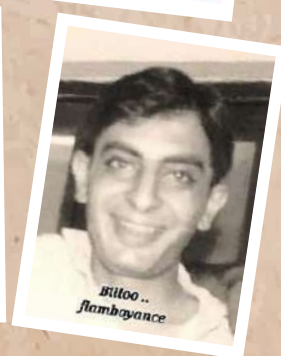
Subhash Shivaram Godbole (Guls), the lion hearted... cat eyed and a very fair Maharashtrian from Indore, was simplicity personified. His penchant for launching a battery of questions in the class rooms, kept the professors busy. While I am pretty sure he already knew most of the answers, but the replies to his questions would clear the air on the subject for the others, who felt shy of asking them. Once on a tech tour, this strict vegetarian thought he was ploughing into paneer bhujri, commented how well it tasted, only to be told that it was egg bhujri. Rather than look for ganga jal to bathe in, Guls converted instantly into an eggatarian without any fuss. While his athleticism and sporting talents were minimal, he had a flair for volleyball, which sadly was not a front-line sport at JG. Guls passed away end ’21 from complications of multi-organ failure.

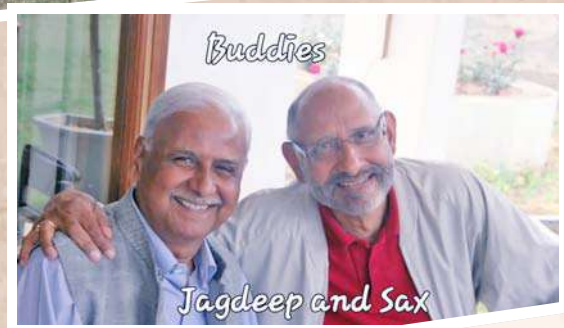
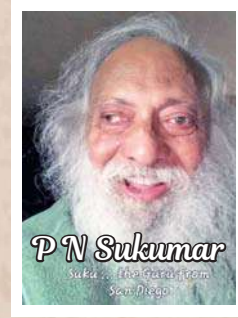
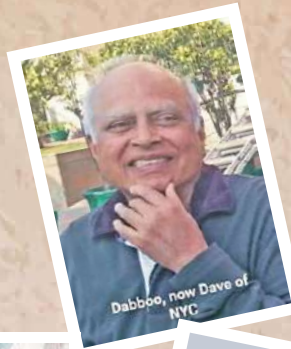
Jagdeep Chhokar, a “Modernite” and also from Delhi’s St. Stephens College, was and is orderliness personified, systematic and neat in everything he did. But having survived the schools and shops over 4 years he, like me, appeared the kind who would never go back to school. He did prove me wrong by doing just that, perhaps to catch up with



They left us
during their
service

They are also
no more with us





a more academically decorated spouse! He flaunts a PhD in Management from the US and was Professor, Dean, Director-in-charge of the prestigious IIM-A. The good Professor having left his mark in academics is founder member of the Association of Democratic Reform, relentlessly engaged in trying to clean up politics in India.

Zaki Ansari, BSc (Gold Medallist), was one of 5 from the same batch at IIT Kharagpur to have crossed over to the '63 batch of SCAs. These BSc types made life miserable for others like me with just the 12 years of school behind them. Zaki played a decent hand of badminton, with a particularly deadly reverse flick at the net. He displayed a degree of maturity beyond his years and this was his hallmark throughout his railway career. One hellava solid guy.

Shamsher Jang, from Bulandshahr and IIT-K, was tall, muscular and handsome and constantly keeping his locks from covering his forehead, by a tilt of his head (the Rajesh Khanna style). A more sincere and sensitive friend and colleague would be difficult to find. Full of energy and enthusiasm and a desire to excel and "kuch karke dikhana hai" attitude, Shamsher virtually gave his life at the alter of work while he was Sr.DME Diesel, Howrah, in what was a freak accident. They still hold an annual hockey tournament in his memory in Patratu. The Patratu shed has a bust of the man installed in its compound. What more can be said of a guy held in such high esteem.

The next four were Lucknowites, who boarded 6 DN Punjab Mail via LKO around noon on 12th January, 1964 on way to Kiul. At Kiul station, we spent about 5 hours drinking kullarhs of tea and

strategizing how to combat ragging! In the waiting room we ran into a senior, VK Mathur '60, who was returning from Gauhati after playing Inter-Railway Tennis. The introductory conversation was held in a most cordial atmosphere, putting at rest all our ragging related fears and gave no indication of the storm that awaited us at JG!

Devendra Sharma (Daboo and now Dave)... the unflappable, was schooled at the prestigious Colvin Taluqdaars College and graduated from Lucknow University. Daboo's good looks typed him for the lead female roles in the JG dramatics and despite all the practice through the 4 years; he just didn't learn to keep his legs together when seated in a chair on stage, with the audience at a lower elevation. As firstees to JG would know, letter writing homewards was a strict no-no during the first month of ragging. Well, Daboo got hold of a post card and scribbled a letter home on a rickshaw he was travelling in for a weekend outing. Daddy Sharma, Judge of the Oudh bench of the Allahabad High Court, read a little more into the unsteady handwriting and dashed off a telegram to the Princi demanding to know what ailed his son. That brought a small pause to the ragging! Daboo was a stylish tennis player, but he usually lost to the more solid Ashoka, the Baijal! But the most remarkable thing was his high coefficient of performance in school exams. This is measured by dividing the marks by the number of study hours put in. I think he outscored every one by at least 500% in that index, 'cause on the day before the exams he was invariably on the last questions of the first chapter. He is now one of the two in our batch who are US citizens and lives in NYC. Some years ago, we were numbed of the

passing of his wife, Usha, due to acute liver failure while on a trip to India.

Sumant Mohan Nath Chak, my schoolmate in La Martiniere from 1955 through 1963, and thence from IIT-K, was perhaps the most talented of us all. He literally strode the JG dramatics stage like a colossus, winning the Best Actor award year after year and rocking the audience with famous rendering of “Matilda”. Cricket, hockey, football and tennis – he was enormously skilled in all. But he was at his very best spinning yarns and raised the art of the “bataali” to amazing heights. He would mix these up with an unending repertoire of interesting real-life occurrences. While he had settled in Gurgaon, he moved to Juhu, Mumbai, to be close to his elder son.

Kiranjit Singh Paintal (Kinty), the incorrigible, was curly haired and tall, but a physique which gave no indication of his athleticism in any form of sport. He played bridge tirelessly, smoked heavily and enjoyed his drink at Unis. A soap dish cover was enough water for his toilet necessities. For his flamboyant exteriors, he kept things very simple. While most of us managed within our stipend, he was regularly tapping his dad for various “capital” purchases, to cover his revenue expenses! Kinty “passed on”, some years ago.

Next in line is yours truly. Unlike most SCAs, nothing spectacular happened while at JG, except that my cycle was robbed twice! And considering that I stupidly didn’t believe in “phanki”, that was the unkindest cut of all. I played a decent game of cricket and was active on the stage. Was surprised to have been voted for the JA Award. I also survived being run over by 1GND passenger at

Delhi Main (MG). “The train was stopped, AME crawled out and taken to Hospital. Train suffered 10 min detention on this account” read the train control chart. At the hospital, AME was under observation for 48 hrs. as there were some head injuries and overheard the lady docs discussing why a young unmarried CI 1 officer should be attempting suicide!

Brahmanand Thowre ... the reliable and dependable, from Nagpur Engineering College was and is to this date, a quiet and unassuming guy, always neatly turned out. He was solid in the workshop and in the schools. Don’t remember him being on the sports field much. He was among the first in the batch to be a computer whiz kid. He was also the first to move to RITES, where he left an indelible imprint. Settled in Delhi.

Tapan Biswas (Topan Da), from Kolkata and Doon School, was the mercurial forward of the football team with a lethal left footer. The two of us, the tall and short to the batch, combined in a hilarious play on one Gymkhana Day. Settled in a Kolkata, with a very busy schedule socially, with frequent trips to his sons in Hong Kong and Spain.

Vijay K Bhargav left BITS Pilani for JG despite his professor’s taunt that “an engineer in the making is throwing it away for becoming a skilled artisan”! Vijay took handwriting to calligraphy level, was the “techy” of the batch and a deeply religious person. But it was his ability to doze off at the least provocation, or indeed lack of it, which kept him fresh all the time!! He could even doze off writing a note on an official file as could be noticed by the pen making a straight line across the page as his head drooped into sleep. Vijay was in some physical discomfort while we were at JG for our

batch Golden Jubilee in Feb 2013. It was diagnosed as lymphokaemia in April and he bravely underwent chemotherapy. A remission, however, was to prove fatal. But during his final months he unleashed a varied portfolio of paintings. These were donated by wife, Sarita, to WAP, which used some of them for their annual calendar. Talent knows no bounds.

Arun Kumar... cool bird, was from Allahabad and joined after leaving IIT-K. He was a rather quiet guy with a nasal twang to his soft voice and a subtle sense of humour. He played a good game of squash. Once when he was DME on SE Rly and on board the CMEs saloon on inspection, he kept stone walling all the “wise” suggestions of the CME. Realising that he should be doing otherwise, he said, “Sorry sir, I will give it a try,” to which the venerable CME responded, “The sorrow is noted, but the incident is not forgotten.” Later on, Arun suffered from chronic kidney disability and succumbed to it very early.

Krishna Kumar Gupta (KK), maha-confidence, was

also from IIT-K and a man of grandiose ideas and plans and full of cheer, came a close second to Sumant Chak as a “batalibaaz”! Showed a keen business sense and was amongst the first among us to enter the stock market.

And last but not, by any stretch of imagination, the least was Ponani Narayanan Sukumar, Suku from IIT-D. He was brilliant, but to most, a lot of trouble!! Soon after our entry into JG, there was some kind of enquiry into leakage of a written paper. Suku showed his mettle by deposing continuously for over a month, till the Tech School ran out of typing paper! Loved his tel maalish champi, ate huge portions of vegetable stew specially prepared for him, and followed a body building routine. He re-discovered his scholastic brilliance in the US after he quit the Railways; seems to have made it big time and now lives in San Diego, flowing beard and all.

That, dear reader, is the 1963 batch for you, as seen through the eyes of this writer.

Random Reflections

Jagdeep S. Chhokar '63

This piece is the outcome of a message from J.L. Singh, '65, of July 20, 2023, asking me to write an article for the "Autumn 23 issue of SAM ... (on) any topic that will interest other Sams." The first thought that struck me was that the topic that would interest a significantly large majority of "other" SAMs (I write this with the deepest apologies to all SIMIs who happen to read this piece but this MCP-ness is totally attributable to JL because all I am doing is to quote him. Lady SAMs will have to make up their own minds!), will, by definition, be unprintable in the SAM Magazine. But JL's instructions are not to be toyed with, so I banished that thought immediately and set out to think what else may be of interest to "other" SAMs. This process took several days given how common the activity of "othering" is these days and how there also seem to be at least some takers for "inclusion".

While I oscillated between these two extremes of "othering" and "inclusion", it occurred to me that I should do the easiest thing possible; write about what I currently do. The label that I use for myself these days is that of being a "concerned citizen". The question cropped up: Would this "interest other SAMs"? The answer was clearly "Nah!" which was immediately followed by the perennial doubt: maybe there might be some among the 'others' who might be interested.

Seeking other possibilities, I chanced upon the tried and tested, my "experiences", usually a euphemism for my "life story", which of course almost always is a string of daring and innovative

actions that were always super successful but most of which the bad, wide world did not fully understand because I was always ahead of my time. Again, "Would this 'interest other SAMs'?" Sure, there would be some snooping variety among the 'other SAMs' but should I pander to or encourage this kind of snooping (or would stooping be more appropriate?) inclination? In any case, I have more to hide than tell about my life and making up of a string of sterling successes would be too much work. So, that was put on hold.

Followed the stage of 'let's get it over with' and 'let yourself go', and a thought flashed before my eyes which brought back memories of a kind-of special occasion when in a moment of extreme vulnerability, I had paraphrased a line of the old, famous song *Qué será, será* to myself and asked "What would I be?" and in a momentary lapse into 'simple living and high thinking', I deluded myself into thinking that I should be an observer of the human condition. The thought was enticing and has stayed as a passive part of my thinking ever since.

Then came the mega question: Which of the three? While in my self-ascribed role as a concerned citizen, I am a votary and an avid advocate of NOTA (None Of The Above), in this instance that would mean that this piece ends here but with only 534 words, I was not sure if that would meet JL's approval. So, I decided to change my allegiance to NOTA and in this case, decided to follow AOTA. Therefore, here goes.

Concerned Citizenship

Part II of the Constitution of India consisting of Articles 5 to 11 defines citizenship and deals with the issues connected with it but it is neither fair nor realistic for ‘other SAMs’ to read the Constitution because it is not even a tiny patch of the Saturday afternoon readings during days of yore in Gymkhana! However, all SAMs, not only the ‘other’ ones, would most certainly have given some, however cursory, thought to what does it mean to be a citizen. I have myself been engaged in thinking about citizenship for many years now but that has not left me any wiser.

Just for example, one of the ways I stumbled onto citizens while thinking about voter turnout (number of voters who actually cast their vote as a percentage of the total number of voters eligible to vote, or registered voters). Stuff like differences in voter turnout in rural and urban areas, between men and women, and the like. This is not confined to the developing or the developed worlds but seems to be an across- the-board phenomenon. This has serious consequences for societies and nations. In the words generally attributed to Plato: “The price good men will pay for not getting involved is to be governed by bad men.” An example of the inability and unwillingness to participate in processes of the larger society is the low voter turnout during elections, of people not fulfilling their primary duty as citizens.

How do we become ‘good’ citizens, whatever ‘good’ means? Having been involved in the system of education for a significant part of my life, I believe this might be at least a part of the responsibility of the education system in any

society. We could begin with thinking about the purpose of education. The coaching industry, like the one in Kota, and the IIT-IIM craze, tells us what society at large thinks is the purpose of education, but to put it simply, the first and basic, or primary, purpose of education should be to make every child a good human being. This could be called *primary education*. Optimistically, once we do have good human beings, then we can attempt to turn them into good citizens. The belief is that one cannot be a good citizen unless one is a good human being. Making good human beings (from primary education) into good citizens is thus the second purpose of education which could be referred to as *secondary education*. Once we have good human beings and good citizens, then we can attempt to develop them into productive members of the society or contributors to society. This then becomes the third purpose of education which may be called *tertiary education*. Something that I have tried to argue for, for a long time is Education for Citizenship.

Some of these thoughts are best expressed in a quote attributed to a US Supreme Court judge, Felix Frankfurter (1882-1965):

“Democracy involves hardship – the hardship of the unceasing responsibility of every citizen. Where the entire people do not take a continuous and considered part in public life, there can be no democracy in any meaningful sense of the term. Democracy is always a beckoning goal, not a safe harbor. For freedom is an unremitting endeavor, never a final achievement. That is why *no office in the land is more important than that of being a citizen*” (Emphasis supplied).

I could go on ... and on ... but for now, let me stop here.

My experiences/My life story

This is obviously very risky. As I said “I have more to hide than tell about my life”, so out of the little that I can tell, what should I tell? How and why did I join SCRA? I had no conscious desire to study engineering, 53 students in the Higher Secondary class in my school had ‘chosen’ to take Drawing which, I seem to recollect, was formally called something like Geometrical and Mechanical Drawing, in addition to the compulsory Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and English. I was one of the three out of this 53 who had not taken the IIT Entrance Exam (as it was, I think, before the JEE era). Again, without any conscious desire to study anything specific, I had applied for, and been admitted, in a course of BSc (Hons.) in Physics following a general trend. As an aside, this is where I first met two of my batch mates, Pramod Kumar and Rohit Vohra.

While happily cruising along, I was informed by my father one evening that one of his friends had told him there was some UPSC examination and if one was successful one could get an assured job with the Railways. My father’s friend had said that one of his nephews had done that and was doing very well. The next morning found me at the UPSC office (my parents and I lived in Delhi then) and I discovered, to my surprise, and shock, that that particular day was the last day to apply for this examination. So, I got hold of a form and tried to fill it. It needed some certifications from the college which was not easy as summer vacations were on but I managed to get it. The biggest

challenge was to get a photograph to be put on the form. The year 1963, when photographs were ‘clicked’ in a studio and the film was sent to some mysterious laboratory (these were not called ‘labs’ back then) and one usually got the photographs on about the third day, was obviously not one of the easiest to get a photograph in a few hours (the form had to be deposited at the UPSC office by 4:30 PM) but one got lucky and deposited the form, with a photograph duly pasted, just a minute or two before 4:30 PM.

Gymkhana and Northern Railway followed till I requested a posting to Delhi due to some pressing family requirements, parents’ illness to be specific. This led to two major developments. One was the discovery of the fragility of senior officers in the Railways. The same person who caustically dismissed my personal requests for leave while I was standing in his office and who got a Registered AD (those who do not know what this is will have to find out on their own) to my home address saying that I should “report for duty” at particular divisional headquarter within ‘x’ number of days from the receipt of this letter otherwise “disciplinary action will be initiated against you”, called for my personal file two days later after a word put in by an “important” person, and sanctioned me leave for a duration longer than what I had applied for! This, in retrospect, made me lose faith in the so-called senior leadership of the Railways.

The other major development which can actually be considered the initiation of the major change in the trajectory of my life was, hold your heart, the discovery of the MBA. I was not aware of something called an MBA till late 1973 or early

1974, and first heard of it while driving home from Baroda House in New Delhi to my home in Civil Lines, on scooter on the Ring Road in the evening when a colleague, a Stores Officer, drove up alongside. Knowing that he lived near Hardinge Bridge (now known as Tilak Bridge), I asked him where he was going. He said he was going to the Delhi University to attend his MBA class. I asked him what an MBA was and he said let's talk about it in the office tomorrow.

So, the next day, sitting in office, over a glass of coffee (yes, the Baroda House canteen served pretty good coffee in glasses those days) I learnt about what an MBA was, applied for it, got admission, and completed it. There is a LOT compressed in the immediately preceding sentence, getting admission was not easy (I Mech E was not recognized, I was on emergency duty in Moradabad because of a strike on the date of the admissions interview). Completing had its own complications such as getting permission from the Railways, getting transferred out of Delhi during the three-year period, and getting married.

The MBA, after some time and several complications including a deputation to a Public Sector company in Delhi, led to a PhD and to a switch to academics. The last switch was messy but it happened.

A major health event came along when I thought my active life was over but strangely it became even more active. I got into bird watching and into what, I guess, is best called social activism. As a result, I got a law degree just a year before I formally retired from academics. This social activism led to concerned citizenship, thus completing the loop.

The Human Condition

This, obviously, is fluffy and a catch-all category. It can mean everything and it may mean nothing. But what does it mean to me? To me it means humanity at large and its condition. I don't think there is any so-called 'objective' way to assess it despite myriad indicators by everyone and their third cousin. It has to be felt, experienced. These English expressions are not adequate to express what I understand from it. It is best captured in the lyrics of a song Gulzar wrote for the 1969 Hindi film, Khaamoshi:

“हमने देखी है इन आँखों की महकती खुशबू, हाथ से छू के इसे रिश्तों का इलज़ाम ना दो;

सिर्फ अहसास है ये रूह से महसूस करो, प्यार को प्यार ही रहने दो कोई नाम ना दो”/

“Humne dekhi hai in aankhon ki mehakti khusboo, Hath se chhoo ke ise rishton ka ilzaam na do;

Sirf ehsaas hai yeh rooh se mehsoos karo, pyaar ko pyaar hi rehne do koyi naam na do.”

An English translation by a WordPress site

(<https://bollywoodtarjuma.wordpress.com/2016/06/03/humne-dekhi-hai-in-aankhon-ki-khamoshi/>) is as follows:

“I have seen the magic of those fragrant eyes, don't touch it;

Just soak it in the soul, let love be love, don't taint it with a name.”

The operative part in Hindi is “सिर्फ अहसास है ये रूह से महसूस करो”, the English translation of which reads “Just soak it in the soul”. The Human

Condition has to be felt, absorbed ... whatever that means, to each one of us. In this way, it is a uniquely personal experience. Since I am writing this, here is my take.

I believe 'The Human Condition' today is sad, bordering on tragic. I feel this despite all the technological marvels, including space exploration, medical advances, and ChatGPT. I will not go into what can now be cynically called mundane stuff such as ecology and environment, destruction of biodiversity, replacement of education with training, commercialization and exploitation of healthcare and education, and so on.

What disturbs me most about 'The Human Condition' today is the ubiquitousness of selfishness and avarice. With of course extremely few exceptions, these two seem to almost universally applicable to individual, groups, communities, societies, and nations.

These two, combined with the seemingly universal retreat of democracy pretty much all over the world and the rise of autocracy and authoritarianism, and the ever increasing inter and intra group strife across large parts of the world, do not seem to offer an encouraging scenario for 'The Human Condition'.

So, Friends, the future of 'The Human Condition' appears to be bleak, if not on the brink!

Tailpiece

There is a tradition of ending such pieces on an 'optimistic' note. The only way I can possibly do

that is to quote two couplets written in Urdu by the poet Muztar Akbarabadi and wonderfully sung by singer Munni Begum:

“गुलिस्ताँ को लहू की ज़रूरत पड़ी, सबसे पहले थी
गर्दन हमारी कटी;

फिर भी कहते हैं हमसे ये अहले-चमन, ये चमन है
हमारा तुम्हारा नहीं“/

*“Gulistan ko lahoo ki zaroorat padi, sabse pahle thi
gardan hamaari kati;*

*Phir bhi kahte hain hamse ye ahle-chaman,
ye chaman hai hamaaa tumhaara nahi.”*

“When sacrifice was needed for the garden (country), I was the first one to be beheaded, Still, the custodians of the garden (country) say that this garden (country) is ours not yours.”

The same poet retorts to the above lament as follows:

“ज़ालिमों अपनी किस्मत पे नाज़ां ना हो, दौर बदलेगा
ये वक्त की बात है;

वो यकीनन सुनेगा सदाएं मेरी, क्या तुम्हारा खुदा है
हमारा नहीं“/

*“Zaalimon apni kismet pe naazaan naa ho, daur
badlega ye vaqt ki baat hai;*

*Vo yakinan sunegaa sadaayen meri, kyaa
tumhaaraa khudaa hai hamaaraa nahi?”*

“Tyrants, do not be smug about your good fortune, things will change with time;”

He will definitely hear (and heed) my cries of anguish, is God only yours and not mine.”

Some Sad, Some Funny, Some Unusual Stories of Railway Life

Sumant Chak '63

I want to start this article with a salute to a SAM who probably set an example of extreme devotion to duty - A.C. Chatterji '41 Batch. I heard this story from the older staff, who worked in the ART, while I was working in Bhusawal Division in the early '70s.

Mr. Chatterji, while he was DME at Bhusawal was travelling with his wife and two children in his carriage attached to a passenger train which met with an accident near Bhusawal. His carriage was badly damaged but Mr Chatterji, was not hurt and immediately started assessing the situation. The ART and the Medical Van reached the site after some time and rescue work commenced. Mrs. Chatterji came out of the wreckage but the children were trapped and shouting for help. The Mech relief staff hearing the cries of the children, rushed to save the kids, but were halted by Mr. Chatterji. He gave strict orders that no one would rescue his children until all the passengers had been rescued. The rescue operation continued while the voices of his children became feebler as time ticked by. Eventually, all passengers were rescued and the staff rushed to the carriage and retrieved the children only to find that they were could not be saved alive! I do not think I have heard about a greater example of devotion to duty in my career. Having known Mr. Chatterji when he was DS Bhusawal, I felt that this story needed telling. Maybe my facts may not be exactly correct as I am recounting hearsay and would request any Sam who may have more details to correct me if am wrong.

While on Mr. Chatterji, there is another story about him and not a sad or morbid one. He as Works Manager, in charge of Matunga Workshop, when

the Unions were very strong and influential. During one of the Union demonstrations, headed by George Fernandes, Mr. Chatterji asked the Watch and Ward Staff (forerunners of the RPF) to let fly some lathis on George Fernandes, which they did. Many years later, Mr. Chatterji was CMD, MAMC and had applied for the post of CMD, Heavy Engineering Corp, Ranchi. George Fernandes was then the Minister of Heavy Industries and was selecting the CMD. When Mr. Chatterji appeared before him, some old colleague in the Union present there, told him that this was the same man who had got him beaten at Matunga. Mr. Fernandes is said to have remarked, "Then, he is just the man to set HEC right!" Mr. Chatterji was selected.

In the 1960s and 1970s, officers remained as DS (for our junior colleagues - today's DRMs) for many years even a decade at times and were quite independent. My batch mates, Jang and Devraj, doing their probation, experienced an incident featuring Mr. Chatterji and Bhusawal Division. It was learnt that CME, who the DS did not exactly like, was coming to Bhusawal on inspection and was expected to finish breakfast and emerge from the carriage at 9 am. At around 8 am, the DS called the DME, a SAM, and asked him to accompany him to the Yard in the staff car and told the Probs to receive the CME! Those were the days when there was only one staff car on the Division and the duo ran around until they got a friendly AEN to give his Jeep. CME, emerging from his carriage, found two nervous Probationers standing to receive him with an AEN and a Loco Inspector and was informed that the DS had taken the DME with him to the Yard. An

obviously angry CME then told them that he would go to the Yard to meet him. They arrived at the Yard and found the DS and DME standing some distance away and made their way toward them. CME, to avoid showing his anger, told the DS that it was nice that both he and DME were in the Yard as he wanted to inspect somethings there. The DS told the CME that he was going back to the office since he had finished his work in the yard and pushed off taking the DME with him! Jang and Devraj were left with a boiling CME who just stood there for about 5-7 minutes and then they bundled into the Jeep to go back to the DS office, where they escorted CME to DS's chamber and scooted!

While I was AME(D) New Katni Jn, I applied for a month's leave well in advance as my wife and I planned a trip to the South. I made all the arrangement, reservations for the trip. However, my leave sanction was not received until the actual day of departure arrived. CME, that day was in NKJ for inspection and I requested my DME, R N G Dastidar to speak to him for the sanction as otherwise all arrangements would go waste. DME Jabalpur was also accompanying CME for the inspection in NKJ. Dasti spoke to CME and told him that since all reservations had been done and leave application had been sent almost 6-7 weeks earlier, I may be allowed to leave. The CME told him to ask me to postpone the trip by a week till he tended to the application on his return to Bombay. I was both deflated and angry but could do little. The inspection of the Diesel Shed finished before lunch and CME went with DME Jabalpur for inspection of NKJ Yard. I spoke to Dasti as to what I should do now. Dasti told me that I should proceed for the holiday and he would tell the CME that he had permitted me to go. I quickly went home where my wife was waiting with all our luggage packed and

we made haste to Katni station as the train came around 3 pm. While we were waiting on the platform, I saw the CME coming towards us with DME, JBP after inspection. When CME came close, he asked me what I was doing all packed up. I told him that my DME had told me to proceed on leave and hence I was waiting to catch the train. The CME, K L Bery'38 Batch Sam, just looked at me and wished me an enjoyable trip and moved on. Working with Dasti was an experience both in terms of technical knowledge and his strength of conviction.

This one is connected to the previous one in a comical manner. After enjoying a trip to the South for a month, we returned to NKJ and I found that my batchmate, Devraj, who had been posted in my place during my leave had not turned up. Dasti spoke to the DS, Jabalpur who told him that I should take over as AME since no replacement was sent. So far so good and I assumed charge. Four days later Devraj turned up with his kit wagon from Bombay! and wanted to take over. Dasti spoke to the DS who confirmed that I should continue and Devraj's posting be decided by CME. The PA to CME told Dasti to let Devraj take charge which was turned down by the DS. After much wasted efforts by PA to CME, Devraj was asked to return to Bombay and take leave for the period he was away to which Devraj agreed. I then told Devraj that since he was on leave, he would have to pay for the kit wagon from Bombay to Katni and back! He told PA the problem and HQ then made some proforma postings of Devraj so that he could return to Bombay and also avoid paying for the kit wagon. Such are the ways of the Mechanical Department.

People who have worked with Ranjit Singh '55 Batch will tell you many tales of Bull Singh. But the one here is extraordinary and a reflection of his way

of thinking. He was DME(D), Itarsi when I was AME at Bhusawal and spent much time with him as Itarsi was in Bhusawal Division and the yard and steam shed there were always an area of concern. They did not have a vehicle for the shed and since it was almost 6-7 kms from the station this was a problem. People normally got on to a locomotive going to the station for the journey. Itarsi's proposals for a Jeep kept being turned down by the FA&CAO office. One day the FA&CAO came for inspection of Itarsi Diesel shed in mid-summer. Ranjit Singh went to receive him at the station and when they came out the FA&CAO, asked for the vehicle to go to shed. He was told that they had no vehicle; as such would have to walk to the shed. Imagine an elderly person, his peon, Ranjit and his Inspector trudging 6 kms under a strong sun on a semi-pucca road. Ranjit had a cap on but the FA&CAO had to walk bare-headed all the way. After reaching Itarsi shed and doing his inspection they had lunch after which the FA&CAO had to go to the station to catch the train back around 2.30 pm in the blazing sun. Ranjit told the FA&CAO that he was totally exhausted as he had walked from shed to station to receive him and then walked back. If he went back with him to station, he would have to again walk back which was not possible. He requested the FA&CAO to go on his own and an Inspector would accompany him. The poor FA&CAO walked back alone in the sun with his peon at 3 pm in extreme heat and caught the train. On his return to HQ, the FA&CAO cleared the proposal for the Jeep!

This is about probably the most infuriating officer, a Sam, to work with, who never wanted to put his signature on any file and troubled officers as much as he could. I was WM in Parel Workshop around 1977 and a non-SAM officer, simple and sincere,

was the DyCME in charge. His father had died the previous year and he wanted to go for the ceremony after a year in Meerut. He applied for leave at least 3 months in advance to the Sam who was CWE and was desperate for the sanction. Every time he asked the CWE he would be told to wait. This continued until only a week was left and was told there was still 7 days left, then 5, then 4, then 3 and then 2 days! The DyCME was getting more and more desperate as the whole family awaited him for the ceremony at Meerut. Eventually, only 1 day was left and we found that the CWE had pushed off to Jhansi. The DyCME went to the CME and requested him to sanction the leave and was told that CWE had left word that he should be contacted in Jhansi. Efforts to get the CWE in Jhansi were proving difficult and then word came from the DyCME in Jhansi that CWE had conveyed his orders on the leave to DyCME, Matunga who rang up to inform that the leave had been turned down. I was sitting with the DyCME in his office throughout this exchange of messages. Suddenly the DyCME told me that he could not see and had gone blind. He again told me that and I immediately took him to the C Rly Hospital at Byculla where they diagnosed that his blood pressure was very high and because of that he had temporarily lost vision. They said he would be kept in hospital for a couple of days and the sight should be restored within 2 days. The ceremony to perform puja on his father's death a year ago went out of the window. So much for the Mechanical Department's treatment of its officers. No wonder it went on a downslide.

There are many such tales to tell but let's leave them for another day. Others also may have their own tales to relate.

The Gymkhana Diaries

Vaishali

Subhash Godbole '63 was the Director at IRIMEE in the early 1990s. His niece, Vaishali, visited Jamalpur during this period. It will not be out of place to mention that Vaishali had the looks of Madhuri Dikshit and the voice of Asha Bhonsale. Very unfair on the boys that she was the Director's niece.

Thirty years on, Vaishali remembers her days at Jamalpur with her uncle with nostalgia...

I was but a young girl when I first arrived at Jamalpur after having travelled alone bravely into the 'Bihari Heartland' of the Indian Railways! To the bastion of railway mechanical engineers, that pelted out multitudinous, finely-turned-out, bright lads (also women in recent years), who carried the tradition of IRIMEE, on their strong young capable shoulders with elan...

'The Gymkhana' is dotted with some lovely young memories for me. The Club Day, the badminton court, the pool table, and the string of friends I made there.

To start with, there were the 'Gymkhana boys', literally all over the place!

Some, with obvious wonderment in their eyes, at the sight of a new female presence, some trying to play down the interest and acting rather nonchalant, some disarmingly flirtatious, some cautious, some supremely attitudinal, and some downright disinterested!

All in all, a whole lot of male attention for me, and a whole lot of 'sardard' for Mr. Godbole, who was then the Director at IRIMEE. There was a twinkle in his green eyes as he fluctuated between being the dotting uncle, and the careful caretaker. Ready to growl at the youngsters, at one wrong turn, and grinning inwardly all the time, for their endearing



impishness.

Jamalpur in those days was a quiet, happy town. The grace of living, evident in the Railway colony, with its large bungalows, showcased by the gracious women who were married into the Railways. My memories take me back to quiet streets, the sun-baked lazy redolence of the afternoons, the surrounding hills immortalized by the filming of 'Sholay', and always the 'Gymkhana' as a backdrop to everything.

Seems like an era gone by since I grew up. Life has now assumed a fast pace amidst the intense digitalisation. But I remember with nostalgia, the simplicity and wholesome goodness that 'living' was all about then. As also the elders, who held us secure in our lives, with the correct admixture of wisdom and positivity.

Subhash Godbole, father like, has always been an inspiration for me.

Immensely capable, gifted, sharp, witty, intelligent! Intensely proud of being a 'Jamalpurian'! A man who lived his life with dignity and a pronounced sense of joie-de-vivre...

Am sure he still has twinkle in his eye!!!



Climate Change Perspectives: John Doerr, Bjorn Lomborg and William McDonough in conversation with Anil Khurana '74

In recent years, I have been doing a bunch of serious thinking and work related to climate change and climate-tech. Always a believer and conservationist, the analyses I read over the past 10 years have led me to personally adopt several good sustainability practices, and also espouse them in my professional life as well as when persuading individuals or masses. During my stint as a strategy consultant, till late 2022, I advised several companies, senior executives, and boards on climate change and strategies and actions to make progress. Since I left my full-time role, I now dabble in a couple of corporate and private equity board roles, some social causes (education, refugees, and environment), a think tank that I run at Georgetown University, and some personal investing - mainly in climate tech and digital/ AI - with start-ups and private equity.

During February and March this year, when I visited India to attend Jamalpur Club Day in Delhi, and a couple of weddings, I happened to have discussions with several Indian executives, government officials, and other friends. These included formal and informal meetings, dozens of conversations with the "(wo)man on the street", visits to several Indian cities (all north Indian cities - Delhi, Gurugram, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Panchkula, Sawai Madhopur, Lucknow, Agra, Noida), and attending two (not so sustainable) weddings. There were many insights from these, and many takeaways from both my own observations as well as

discussions with this sampling of government officials, executives, investors, and normal citizens (from India and internationally).

Both in India and globally, I've also run into a fair number of skeptics - including well known business and political leaders, colleagues, and several friends and relatives. The views we hear are a mix of opinion, hearsay, and facts. This article is a short overview of the debate that goes on around the world. I took the perspectives of 3 well known business and academic leaders with somewhat differing views, as also reflected in some of their recent books, and turned it into a simulated panel discussion.



L-R: Bill, Anil, John, Bjorn

I recently sat down with a couple of leading executives, researchers, and authors on climate change to discuss their views on the urgency, approaches, and prognosis on climate change.

- **John Doerr:** A renowned venture capitalist and philanthropist with a strong focus on climate change mitigation and clean energy investments. His visionary approach to goal-setting and strategic planning, has

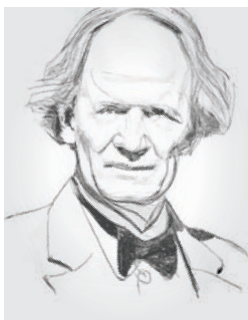


transcended industries, and in his book "Speed and Scale," Doerr applies his OKR (Objectives and Key Results) framework to plan to tackle the urgent challenge of climate change, offering a compelling roadmap for driving impactful action and achieving meaningful results in the fight against global environmental threats.

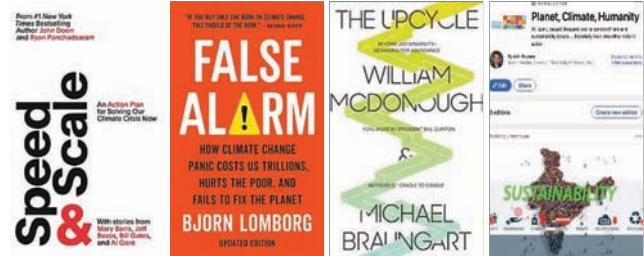
- **Bjorn Lomborg:** An economist and environmental skeptic who advocates for cost-benefit analysis in addressing climate change issues, and does not believe that climate change impacts will be significant enough to warrant major estments such as those that are under way. Though not a climate naysayer, many call him a kewarmer”, for the way book “False Alarm” has portrayed facts.



- **William McDonough:** A pioneering architect and designer renowned for his commitment to sustainability and ecological principles. He is widely recognized for his innovative concept of "Cradle to Cradle" design, which envisions products and systems that regenerate rather than deplete resources, while being effectively lower cost too. His philosophy encapsulated in his 2013 book “The Upcycle: Beyond Sustainability – Designing for Abundance”, is the idea that design, business,



and technology can work in harmony with nature, leading to regenerative solutions and circular economy solutions that benefit both the environment and the economy.



(Disclaimer: The rest of this article is based on simulated arguments and perspectives based on the personas of John Doerr, Bjorn Lomborg, and William McDonough. The views expressed in these arguments do not represent the actual comments from these individuals.)

Anil Khurana: May I request each of you to make a short opening statement. Let’s start with John, then Bjorn, and then Bill.



John Doerr:

All, thank you for joining this crucial conversation on climate change. As a venture capitalist and philanthropist, my work has centered around driving innovation and investments in clean energy solutions. Climate change is an undeniable crisis threatening our planet, the scientific evidence is clear, and the consequences of inaction are dire. Through strategic investments in renewable energy, sustainable technologies, and policy support, we can create a greener and more prosperous future for generations to come. Let us focus on concrete actions and policies

Bjorn Lomborg:

Good day, everyone. As an economist, I believe in approaching the issue of climate change with a

pragmatic and data-driven mindset. While acknowledging the challenges posed by climate change, we must also consider the costs and benefits of proposed solutions. Striking the right balance between costly environmental goals and policies, and economic growth is essential - let's focus on those initiatives that offer the most substantial and sustainable returns, and try and tackle climate change without sacrificing economic prosperity. The negative GDP impact of doing pretty little by 2100 is pretty low - a couple of % points - compared to the investments and costs required to fully address climate change, which run into more than 10% of GDP across the world.

William McDonough:

Greetings, all. As an architect and advocate for sustainability, my approach centers around reimagining our relationship with nature and resources. Climate change is an opportunity for us to adopt a regenerative mindset, embracing the principles of "cradle to cradle" design. By creating products and systems that mimic nature's circularity, we can minimize waste and pollution, while maximizing the positive impact on the environment and society. Through innovative and ecologically inspired solutions, we can thrive in harmony with the planet. Let us explore how sustainable design can revolutionize industries and pave the way for a resilient and vibrant world.

John Doerr:

Bjorn, while I agree with the need for ensuring economically viable investments, we have to recognize that time most technologies take some time to reach breakeven, and given that time is short, given the exponentially increasing effects of climate change - especially when we don't understand the interaction effects and self-reinforcing nature of some of the changes such as

ocean temperature increases. We do need to make many investments right away especially where government investments fill the feasibility gap, which my good friend Bill Gates calls the "green premium" and technology economics such as Moore's Law suggest that economies of scale and scope bring costs down rapidly.

Anil Khurana:

Bjorn, what's your view regarding the urgency of action. You say not much damage is happening today and only some by 2070, not enough to disrupt the world. Yet, most others disagree.

Bjorn Lomborg:

Anil, all - while I acknowledge the concerns surrounding climate change, this alarmist rhetoric surrounding climate change often overshadows the need for a balanced and rational assessment of the costs and benefits of proposed solutions. While there is evidence of climate change occurring, attributing it solely to human activities requires further scrutiny.

Further, allocating vast resources to immediate and aggressive climate policies may have unintended consequences for global economies, especially the suppression of economic growth, particularly in developing nations, where access to affordable energy is crucial for poverty alleviation and socio-economic progress.

Focusing solely on climate change neglects other pressing global issues, such as hunger, disease, and access to education. Allocating significant resources to climate policies might come at the expense of tackling these urgent problems.

William McDonough:

Bjorn, I must interject here and challenge both your skepticism of the scientific evidence about climate change, as well as the conjecture that

climate policies and various investments in GHG reduction etc. are too costly. As I have shown in my work over the past few decades, circular and sustainable designs are economical provided they are done correctly. I fully endorse John's emphasis on technological innovations and climate policies being key parts of the overall solution for the planet.

You talk about energy - we do not have an energy problem, but we have a material problem. We have carbon as – a material – in the atmosphere, whereas it should stay in the earth, as fossils! Why do we need to dig it up when we have easier energy sources such as the sun. Take the NASA project example I have written about in my book and Forbes. Just imagine you're a naked astronaut. You land in Mountain View, California and look around and say what am I going to do now?...Where's the energy going to come from? Are you going to go digging and looking for fossil fuels? I don't think so. Are you going to build a nuclear plant? Why? What you're going to do is say 'I've got a nuclear reactor 93 million miles away, the light is 8 minutes away and its wireless. It's free every day..., and we call it "solar" these days. Oh, I need coldness. Hmm, how about the earth? 55 degrees all the time. So at NASA we used the ground under the parking lot. Geothermal...and you just run through the scenarios. Our team built a building ahead of schedule on a normal federal budget and if we did anything extra we did cost-benefit analyses and gave it a payback period that was legitimate commercially. And we came up with a protocol that the building could be able to capture 120 percent of the energy (it needs) being generated by renewable sources. A building like a tree—that can give more than it takes.

An approach based on a simplistic cost-benefit

analysis is limited when addressing complex, interconnected issues like climate change, and also fails to account for the true value of natural resources, ecosystem services, and the well-being of future generations.

The pursuit of sustainable solutions is not a hindrance to economic growth; on the contrary, it presents a tremendous opportunity for innovation, job creation, and market expansion. Design and intention is the key to the whole thing. We've been designing our way into trouble for quite some time - recycling is a good beginning but most things get "downcycled" and are constantly losing quality - and it's going to take some turbulence to get us moving in the right direction. There are significant synergies between sustainable practices and economic development - circular economy principles help reduce waste, increase resource efficiency, and enhance product durability, resulting in a win-win scenario for both business and the environment.

John Doerr:

Thank you, Bjorn, for sharing your emphasis on pragmatism and cost-benefit analysis, however I must respectfully disagree with some aspects of your argument, which ignore several facts.

Firstly, the scientific consensus on climate change is overwhelming, with numerous studies attributing the rising temperatures and extreme weather events to human activities, particularly greenhouse gas emissions. We are all seeing the practical manifestations in our daily lives around the world every day and every year. Ignoring or downplaying this consensus can lead us astray from taking the necessary steps to address the crisis proactively.

While it is true that some climate policies may incur

costs, we must also consider the potential economic benefits of transitioning to a low-carbon economy. Investments in renewable energy and sustainable technologies can spur innovation, create new jobs, and drive economic growth in emerging industries. In fact, many countries have experienced significant economic gains by embracing clean energy technologies.

Additionally, climate change disproportionately affects the most vulnerable communities, exacerbating poverty and inequality. By acting decisively on climate, we have an opportunity to improve the lives of millions while protecting the planet for future generations. The cost of inaction, both in human and economic terms, is far greater than the investments required to address the crisis now

Market-driven solutions have their place, and I commend efforts in that direction. However, the scale and urgency of the climate challenge necessitate a coordinated response that includes strong government policies and regulations. Effective climate action requires a multi-faceted approach, where public and private sectors collaborate to drive meaningful change.

Anil Khurana:

Let's consider the question that Bjorn has raised a few times - can we afford the significant investments in climate change, and who will pay for these? Bjorn, let me start with you.

Bjorn Lomborg:

I always think of the cost-benefit as a starting point. For climate change too, important as it is, the estimated scale of investments that climate change mitigation and adaptation may require exceeds any benefits.

As I have written in my book, False Alarm, William

Nordhaus' DICE (Dynamic Interchange model of Climate and the Economy) model suggests that a 4.1 increase in temperature by 2100 would only reduce global GDP by about 4%, and even the more extreme warming of 7 would lead to a loss of GDP of just 15%. According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, even if we did absolutely nothing to respond to global warming, the total impact by the 2070s will be the equivalent to a 0.2 per cent to 2 per cent loss in average income. That's a challenge that requires our attention — but it's far from the end of the world, and much much lower than the costs and investments being proposed.

Now, let's look at the costs. If fully implemented, the Paris Agreement will cost US\$1 trillion to US\$2 trillion every year in slower economic growth for several decades. Our response to climate change is so expensive because alternative energy sources remain expensive and inefficient in most scenarios. It is still very expensive to switch from fossil fuels — hence the fortune being spent on subsidies, to little overall effect. I suggest a much smaller targeted spend of ~US\$84 billion/ year focused on renewable energy R&D (and stop all subsidies)!

Global warming is a real, man-made problem — but it is just one of many challenges facing humanity. We shouldn't base our policy decisions on Hollywood movies or on scare scenarios but on the facts. A global poll by the UN of nearly 10 million people found that climate change was the lowest priority of all 16 challenges considered. At the very top, unsurprisingly, are issues such as better education, better healthcare and access to nutritious food. We need to address climate change effectively — but we should remember that there are many other issues that people want fixed more urgently. And these issues cost much less and

benefit much more - by my calculations, a range of policies that target contraception, children's education, nutrition, agri research, addressing extreme diseases like malaria, and such will cost in total US\$ 78bn. Together with the US\$84bn for green energy R&D, the total comes to US\$ 162bn (though there is still the question of what the relative contributions will be - developed vs. developing, rich vs. poor countries, etc.). And the total benefit to humanity from achieving this total list of policies will be around US\$ 42 trillion - which is the same as increasing the average income in the world by 50 per cent, and the benefits would mostly help the world's poorest.

Of course, we also can spend 10 times as much on the Paris Agreement and generate about a thousand times fewer benefits from slightly reduced temperatures.

John Doerr:

Bjorn, I must interject here because many of the "facts" you've outlined are false and have been shown to be so. I am a different sort of economist - a pragmatic one, who combines the macro models and assumptions with on-the-ground reality - having been an engineer and venture capitalist.

Let me start by acknowledging that you're correct in saying that the world should be spending far more on green innovation to develop technologies to help us to tackle climate breakdown, and also in making populations, particularly in poor countries, more resilient to our changing climate, and also address health, education, nutrition and other issues in parallel. As you know, my analyses and views have been about recognizing the trends relating to GHG emission, global warming, and rapidly unpredictable climate changes, and espousing that decision-making and policies need to improve, and acknowledge that a portfolio of

solutions, with ongoing measurement and adjustments is needed. We cannot bet our planet on hopes of a sudden breakthrough discovery of a magical new energy source that will be both zero-carbon and cheaper than fossil fuels - innovations take years and scale to deliver outcomes.

My biggest concern with your statements is that you continue to overestimate the costs of addressing climate change, and downplay the risks and costs of climate change. As an example, you've cited the International Energy Agency (IEA) in stating that "new renewable energy sources like solar and wind cost \$141 billion annually in subsidies globally, and matter little in the global energy supply". However, you fail to include in your analyses and writings that subsidies for fossil fuels are at a much larger scale - the IEA stated that "artificially low prices for fossil fuels for end-users around the world involved subsidies totalling just over \$300 billion in 2017". No subsidies are productive if continued beyond the point of suitable incentives - as economists, policy makers, and investors agree, even the most effective innovations take many years and a certain amount of subsidy is sometimes needed.

Even if you build the climate estimates on top of the existing oil subsidies etc., the World Bank and IEA estimates suggest that around \$1 trillion per year is needed by 2025 to fight climate change and other challenges (this is underfunded this far due to folks like you that confuse others by falsifying information and interpretations), and \$2-2.8 trillion by 2030, for emerging markets and developing countries other than China - for both development and climate-related needs! I agree that climate change and economic development activities cannot be separated, hence I agree with this approach. I also want to clarify that these

annual investments are not expected to go beyond 2030 for a few more years (at a lower magnitude) - the costs to 2021 will be nowhere near what you have stated!

When it comes to estimating the risks of climate change, you continue to downplay the estimates and cite what is convenient to you. As you know, the DICE and RICE models (Nordhaus) have been shown to have been correct as a concept, but incorrect in their computations. The Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) recently reran the DICE model (I have the references and model access if you'd like to ask me) using updated climate and economic information and found that the economically optimal climate goal was less than 2.0 °C of global warming — and not the 3.5 °C that Nordhaus had originally calculated - which broadly supports the Paris Agreement goal of holding global warming to "well below 2.0 °C" (even if not everything in the Paris Agreement was fully detailed and planned - lack of planning is my main disagreement with the Paris Accord, IPCC, and UN). There were fundamentally two reasons for the DICE models not being accurate. First, the social discount rates chosen in the model were incorrect (underestimated), and second, the linear extrapolation economic models that you cited and used do not acknowledge the complexity and understandings of the climate system that are now available and modeled. Your statement that 3.75 is optimal temperature increase for earth is neither scientific, nor credible - the last time the Earth was more than 2C warmer than pre-industrial times was during the Pliocene epoch, three million years ago, when the polar ice caps were much smaller and global sea level was 10 to 20 meters higher than today, and modern humans are not suited to a prehistoric climate!

I will acknowledge one of your statements, that "alarmism" by environmentalists is not helping. Since the elevated levels of greenhouse gasses we create over the next few decades are expected to have consequences not for our generation or even the next one but perhaps 2-3 generations later into the 22nd century, fully realized until the next century and beyond, many folks who don't have the facts (including many well known politicians) deal with this complexity by wrongly warning of imminent catastrophe, as do politicians and under informed folks on the other side of the argument. Let's work together to address the information gaps.

Anil Khurana:

Let me interject this time, since Bjorn and John made some pretty lengthy and opposing arguments - which quite sounded like closing arguments. I will say that my own analyses, conversations, and readings lead me to vote full heartedly with John. However, I'd like to give the floor to Bill for the last couple of minutes before we conclude our panel discussion.

William McDonough:

I am a simple architect and engineer, one who has made the case for a circular economy and a cradle-to-cradle approach, not based on the exact calculations of climate change timelines and economic investments, but on the basis of a larger systemic view. The linear "take, make, dispose" model and mindset that dominates our current industrial processes perpetuates resource depletion, pollution, and waste, contributing to climate change and other environmental crises.

I understand that many of you in the audience are from Indian Railways. Many of you may have heard of my suggestion in the US of using railway and

highway rights of way to build linear solar farms or linear windfarms in the Great Plains. I believe the same is true in India - the space next to the railroad tracks and the sides of the various new national highways can be used in the same way. I am sure there will be difficulties on the ground, but you can start and begin addressing challenges along the way.

The concept of "cradle to cradle" design offers a paradigm shift, presenting an opportunity to create a regenerative and restorative approach to production and consumption. Our design approach to things needs to change - thinking sustainability and recycling are good concepts, but use too low a bar - while you need to focus on doing less bad, you really ought to be focusing as well on doing much more good.

We have become too used to just meeting regulatory requirements. True, regulation is a signal from society that its interests need to be attended to because business is not taking the right approach. But business is quick, efficient, creative and fundamentally honest. Regulations are slow, serious, and reserve the right to kill. If society says 'we don't want cadmium in our rivers,' then the people making that textile and dyeing it red with cadmium and polluting the river with carcinogens and mutagens, will have to listen, maybe initially through regulations to cause them to redesign! Society and business can work together to find carrots big enough to use as sticks to impress consumers, bosses, investors, and others - impress the CFO and CEO and Board with opportunities so big they cannot afford to miss them.

The true cost of climate change and environmental degradation extends beyond short-term economic measurements. It encompasses the health and well-being of ecosystems, species, and future generations. As stewards of this planet, we have a moral obligation to protect and regenerate our natural systems rather than exploiting them for short-term gains.

Furthermore, the pursuit of sustainable solutions should not be seen as a hindrance to economic growth. On the contrary, it presents a tremendous opportunity for innovation, job creation, and market expansion. By incorporating circular economy principles, we can reduce waste, increase resource efficiency, and enhance product durability, resulting in a win-win scenario for both businesses and the environment. Who said that GDP is the only measure of human progress? It ought to be a mix of economic goals and the overall well being of the planet - let us collaborate and innovate, considering both the short-term and long-term consequences of our actions, to ensure a positive and lasting impact on our planet and its inhabitants. I am not a big fan of the politics of Prime Minister Modi of India, but I do agree with one of the statements he made as part of India's G20 Presidency "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", which translates to "One Earth, One Family, One Future"!

Anil Khurana:

Thanks, John, Bjorn, Bill, for joining us in today's discussion. I hope these discussions and debates will trigger clarity and needed actions for the well being of our planet.

The Perils of a Transfer

Prithwish Halder 2k14

It has been quite some time that I had the privilege of penning down a few words in a creation where once I was a part of, an integral part as yours truly acted as the 'Chief Ed SAM' for the Autumn and Club Day issue of 2018 (my final year as a Special Class Railway Apprentice). So, by far it is almost a gap of 5 long years after which yours truly will be presenting a small article or rather a combination of anecdotes which I have faced in the duration of my working post career i.e. 2020 March till Date.

When I graduated, little did I know of what awaits me outside the bold and beautiful red walls of my campus; was the real world (as in the lingual) with its fair share of challenges.

The constant search of a Young officer who has his first posting in the mid of an event such as the Covid pandemic, is to arrange a safe and okay-ish comfortable residence over his/her head. You may recall that what I am referring to isn't an event much back in time but rather something which was unfolding just 3 and a half years ago before our very eyes.

Amidst all that what some unlucky ones' stumble upon are badly managed "Officers Rest houses", that too in some old rickety town of India with no facility of drinking water, cooling system and even a guard. But we must not digress from the central theme of my article, because we are not on a rant "*jo mila badia mila, isse zyada kya hi milta*".

Well as I rolled on into days then months into my working life slowly making myself comfortable

with the newer surroundings, finding acceptance into this new place. The only escort I shall have is the blessing of a decently built Railway official quarter where I shall spend my days in comfort. The saga of getting all minor works in your residence is another story of calling, applying, irritating the someone who is liable for action and Boom! Just as you see yourself getting all warmed up, comes the dreaded **Transfer Order**.

You may argue that it doesn't always need to be that dreadful and I agree to it cent percent as has been my experience..... a change of 4 workplaces in almost 3 and a half years of working, well honestly it has been a boom in terms of technical and personality growth which I have encountered in my early days as an Officer of the Indian Railways. People say the best is yet to come (I really look forward to the best part)!

Adding dimension to the transfer saga is that after getting married the perils of the shifting of bases becomes even more exhausting. As I sit in somewhat solitude with the moon striking 1 past midnight, there lies a big and daunting task which I need to accomplish.

My gaze shifts to the corridor (or rather I am made aware of) where I see 4-5 cardboard boxes screaming the name of the so called 'Packer and Mover' who were not so effective as the amount they charged, waiting for their master to unveil what's inside and put them back on place.

But wait as my better half suggests "where is this place actually"? Absolutely correct if you look at it closely. We are in a new setup, a new arrangement with new hopes and aspirations. The rooms still look fresh from the 2 coats of paint dabbed on them as per our whims, the shelves still empty.

But all of this can take a backseat for a bachelor, but hell no for a married person.

The better half as commonly named, somewhat justifying the tag, prefers to live in a more dignified way. The curtains need to be put up without the creases, even better if we purchase new ones that could match the aesthetic of the newly painted rooms. Where do we put up the laundry is another daunting task which needs immediate redressal. The Kitchen is the DON as you may say cause the mood the DON sets will be the driving factor of your mental and physical health combined, so new house help especially the Cook is of utmost importance as most of us are just too lazy or fancy to cook ourselves (well I love experimenting with cuisine videos across Instagram which creates a new challenge towards the cook help who needs to walk the talk they presented while applying for the role).

Setting up your Electronics with ease of charging points so that the scroll may be sustained while rolling on your mattress after a tiring day at work. Also, another mystery which rolled up in front of my eyes while switching bases is how I got hold of some things which were so lost that even my mind had lost all track of existence of anything like that and how new important things get misplaced, no matter how careful or meticulous you have been.

Barring all things, the thing that could perturb you the most is the change of workplace.

Cultural differences of the great Circus of Indian Railways lie from one establishment to another. The experience of a being in a workshop is quite different from what is fondly called 'Open-Line' that becomes all the very special if you are in an

independent charge. Presently I am experiencing an environment of Divisional level working that too as a Branch officer in SS. Change of office space, change of your trusted warriors and OS who have trained and worked under your style, new faces need to be appointed, trusted and let free to extract whatever juice one must offer.

A new Boss ...need I say anymore.

As said by probably some wise man/woman "Pain and no gain doesn't interest a lot of participants". Often these transfers are coated with the sweet taste of Promotional avenues which all are eagerly waiting for, the smile that pops up once you see your name gleaming in the WhatsApp forward you receive within a flash second of it being online, flooded by the congratulatory messages coming your way and the excitement it brings of a newer responsibility, new place and off-course New hope.

Now, as I wrap up my thoughts after missing the deadline of article submission by a week. I ponder and look back to almost a decade that sits behind me, a journey I myself chose to be a part of and for sure it has made some impactful change into my life.

I look forward to more transfers ahead as I progress through my career, my constants tagging along me as I switch across this vast and diverse nation by holding the rails of the 'Bhartiya Rail'.

P.S: The above story is not a work of fiction, its inspired to say the least. Also, minor updates as most of the boxes have been opened, shelves finding their occupants, life back on track. Today I say with a whole heart "Thank you SAM".

IRMS Arrives

S.K.Luthra '75

The first batch of IRMS – Indian Railway Management Service - has been selected.

The Civil Services Exam 2022 results came in recently and the list of 950 included 91 for IRMS & 3 for the IRPFS. It is now expected that the Civil Services Exam will now provide not just half its cadre, but all of IR's burra sahibs.

The last SCA batch joined as probationers in 2019, at that time there was a sense of glum satisfaction amongst SCRA baiters within IR at having finally nailed the scheme after years of effort. Little did they realize that a similar fate awaited them. The last batch of Engineering Services probationers joined in 2021, and the last batch of Railway Civil Service probationers also joined at the same time, including some who are actually from the waitlist of the previous year.

So, the oldest railway services - the IRSE, IRSME, and IRTS - finally become history. So do the younger ones like IRAS, IRSSE, IRSEE, IRSS & IRPS. Ironically, the two which survive are the ones most peripheral to IR's sustenance – the RPF (called the IRPFS) & the other IRMS, the Medical Service.

After toying with the idea of having a separate UPSC exam for the IRMS – called the Indian Railways Management Services Exam (IRMSE – sounding so very similar to our very own IRSME), after the prelims screening of the Civil Services exam, and actually having notified it, the non-engineering Railway Services block – who thought that the status of their successors would get somewhat lowered if the recruitment happened

from an exam different from the Civil Services Exam - probably seems to have had the last word, and the Rail Ministry reverted back to its original idea of using the Civil Services Exam only.

From what we understand (although still unsubstantiated), these IRMS probationers will have their Orientation & Centralised training managed out of the IR Institute of Transport Management, at Lucknow (where the IRTS presently have their training) with a session at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration along with the other Civil Service probationers.

Not much is understood about where they would do the rest of their trainings, especially the engineering side – there are indications that they will do their multi-disciplinary trainings in two parts and batches at the other centralised training institutes like IRIMEE, Jamalpur and IRICEN, Pune. The actual curriculum – including for the all-important Field trainings – still remains unknown.

Also unclear is whether, and when, and how, these IRMS probationers get specialisations allotted to them, because that would determine what place they determine for themselves within the IR set-up. It was always thought that a probationers' first posting shaped his character – not just my 1st boss (Mr. TN Perti '63 at Jabalpur Division), even my Steam Loco Shed Loco Foreman (Basant Kumar), created many of my attitudes and outlook towards my work.

Who would be mentoring these young minds? Who will their role models be? I don't know, but I do hope somebody on IR has this figured out. Or is working on it.

I heard that there appears to be a thinking of allotting them specialisations at the midway stage of probation, although how these would be

decided and whether this would bind them totally to that department/specialisation is not very clear.

NAIR Vadodara appears to be out of consideration for them, as that campus now largely houses the Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya, the new Central University in the erstwhile Staff College campus which is now running its regular under-graduate and post-graduate courses in Transportation & Logistics.

The big question troubling everyone is not whether, but by how much will the Engineering functions of the IR be compromised by these decisions?

Many of us had actually been advocating creation of a General Management Cadre on IR drawn and culled out from amongst the best in the various organised services at the end of 10 or 15 or 20 years of specialised working inside of their departments - bringing a diversity of exposure into a unified Management team.

But now a different species has been created. The IRMS would have had no, or limited opportunity of absorbing the cultural ethos of a service or department, and evolving out into a general manager out of that experience. His experiences and exposures will be different – whether homogenous for all recruits or diverse like the earlier cadres, is not known. So much will depend on whether at all, how and when they would get an opportunity to specialise in one of the railway specialisations before they move on to higher positions?

When the decision on the mode of IRMS recruitment was still being discussed, an argument was strongly put forth by the advocates

for Civil Service Exam recruitment (which has now finally seen the light of day) that since the majority of the Civil Service recruits were anyway engineers, so there would be enough engineers available to handle the technical complexities of IR. In fact, a recent news report does indicate that the percentage of successful candidates in the Civil Services exam with an engineering background has surged from 46 per cent in 2011 to 65 per cent in 2020.

However, averages do not give comfort. The exact profile of the 91 candidates opted for IRMS within the list of 950 successful civil service aspirants is not yet known. Whether any or all of them are engineers is a matter of chance. In any case, most of them would not have qualified on the strength of their core engineering subjects, but on the back of the popular “scoring” electives like sociology, political science, or anthropology – as anyone familiar with the Civil Services exam format would know. It would be worthwhile collating the data of these 91 IRMS pioneers, and analysing the same. I shall keep that for my next essay – hoping it will be possible to get that information.

Till then, like the civil engineers, signal engineers and electrical engineers of yore, we the mechanical engineers also keep our fingers crossed, and a prayer on our lips, and hope that miraculously, something better than what existed will come out of this new creature.

Let’s welcome the IRMS.

P.S. Last heard, the batch has already joined at LBS Academy in Mussoorie along with other Civil Service probationers.

Motherhood and Snakes

Archana Mittal '92

"It's a baby girl!", the doctor said. My heart skipped a beat. How will I take care of her? That was the first thought that occurred to me. I don't know why I thought that taking care of a baby boy would be less daunting than taking care of a baby girl. But I did think that... I guess it was a reflection of all that we had seen and heard over the years.

It was surprising how quickly the imagined fears dissipated and how our lives seamlessly integrated into one another's, with our little fur ball of joy at the center of our universe. Rajaji and I agreed that she was indeed God's greatest gift to us and named her Aashka (which means blessing).

We brought her home after four days and got engrossed in her daily care routine. Life became a complete pallet of feelings; at one end of the spectrum, there was joy, laughter, love, compassion and so much learning. At the other end, there was worry, insecurity, tiredness, impatience, overwhelm. All-in-all, there never was a dull moment.

Friends started visiting us to meet Aashka. We reveled when someone called her peaches-and-cream complexioned or complimented us on what a cute and healthy baby she was. Visits from friends also reminded us of life as we knew it before the baby. We looked forward to such visits; they were very welcome.

One of these visits happened to be from Madhav and his wife, with their three-month old daughter. Their daughter was such a pretty girl, with long curly eye-lashes and pouty lips- one would fall in love with her at first glance.

I distinctly remember the day when Madhav and his

family came to visit us. I was in my room with Aashka when the bell rang. The bungalow peon opened the door and came to inform me that Madhav and his family were seated in the living room. I picked up baby Aashka and went to the living room to greet them. But what do I see when I reach there??

Madhav and his wife were standing away from the sofa, pointing towards a corner behind the sofa and calling out 'snake...snake...!'. I was aghast. We had never seen a snake in the last two years since we started staying in the house. In fact, I had never seen a snake outside a zoo so far. To imagine one was there right now in my house was...scary!

Panic-stricken, I shot a barrage of questions "How big is it? What colour is it? Is it poisonous? Is it King Cobra?" It was unreasonable of me to expect them to answer all these questions. But Madhav was patient and answered that the snake was brownish and neither too big nor too small. I gulped and held baby Aashka tightly, while she looked at the guests with her curious big eyes.

I went around and switched on all lights as I had heard that snakes prefer dark areas. The lights should keep it confined to the sofa area. My bungalow peon also quickly covered the gaps under doors leading out of the living room with mops to prevent the entry of the snake into any of the other rooms, in case it darted out from under the sofa. Simultaneously I called my maid and her husband who lived in the outhouse.

The maid was a not-so-intelligent but good-natured woman. To my pleasant surprise and perhaps a bit of shame, I found her to be quite courageous. She ran into the house with a lathi in her hand and enquired about the whereabouts of the snake. She seemed to be on a mission. We pointed in the direction of the sofa. The sofa was of low height and it wasn't easy to see underneath it. She sprawled on all fours to have a better view. I noticed her lying sprawled on the floor and despite the tension in the air, couldn't help

finding it funny. But then scary thoughts popped into my head - What if the snake slithered out suddenly? What if it slithered past her? I think I climbed up on a chair, to the utter delight of little Aashka. Meanwhile, my maid stayed in the position like a soldier in a trench. After surveying the ground under the sofa from all angles, she announced, "Illa, madam". (Illa in Kannada means No). She couldn't spot any snake.

But, what did that mean? Had the snake escaped? Surely, that was not possible. We were all standing around. We would have seen it if it had come out. Seeing the look of disbelief on my face, she repeated "Illa" a few more times.

A few theories sprang to mind. We could see that a portion of the black cloth covering the bottom of the sofa was coming off. What if the snake was crouching in a corner on the bottom of the sofa itself? Who knew what other openings were there which were accessible to a snake. We decided that the sofa should be taken out of the house and left outside for the night. I don't remember who actually went about doing it, but finally the sofa found itself outside our front door. With the sofa removed, we observed that there were a few holes in the wall behind the sofa. These were sealed with dough.

By the time we were finished with all these activities, it was 10 pm. The guests had already left. We had done all that we could do and hoped that we were out of danger. Still, that night was one of the most stressful nights of my life. The thoughts about the possibility of the snake slipping out unnoticed in one of the rooms kept on popping in my head and pestering me. I remembered my mother telling me that when I was a year and a half old and we lived in Haridwar, I saw a snake and told her that there was a "chuhon ki line" going from one end of the room to the other. Little baby Aashka just kept making gurgling sounds. While it was nice to see her unconcerned and generally happy about everything, I kept on imagining the worst of things and didn't get

even a wink of sleep that night. We kept all lights on throughout the house and I kept on looking at my baby, keeping a watch on her.

The long night somehow passed. In the morning, we called a sapera. He played his nagin music and tried all his antics, but no snake came out of the sofa which was outside all night. Perhaps the snake had left in the night? What if it was still in the house- the thought kept coming back to me persistently. We used the skills of the sapera inside the house too. No snake made an appearance. Finally, the sofa was patted with great force all over several times and placed in its original position in the living room.

We continued to talk about the incident and worry about the what-if scenarios for a couple of days. Finally, life caught up with us and we got busy with taking care of the baby, work and other worldly commitments and time passed. Occasionally I would wonder about the mystery of the missing snake.

Three years later, a contract was awarded by the administration to replace the S&T wiring in all the houses of the colony. Work was started in our house too. While this work was ongoing, one day, one of the workers took out a coiled "something" from under a chute covering a S&T wire in the living room. I gasped, it was a snake! It was the same brown, not-too-big not-too-small snake, as described by Madhav, from three years ago! It had stiffened into a semi-circular shape. "The snake died of suffocation, with no way out", the worker said. I felt a pang of sadness. I didn't want to imagine what the snake would've felt like inside the chute. On that day, while I tried to protect my own baby from the snake, what pain would the snake's mother have felt?

But then, I found out something. Whether snakes lay eggs or give birth to live young babies, mamma snakes abandon their babies and do not ever return to protect or take care of them. Phew. I heaved a sigh of relief.

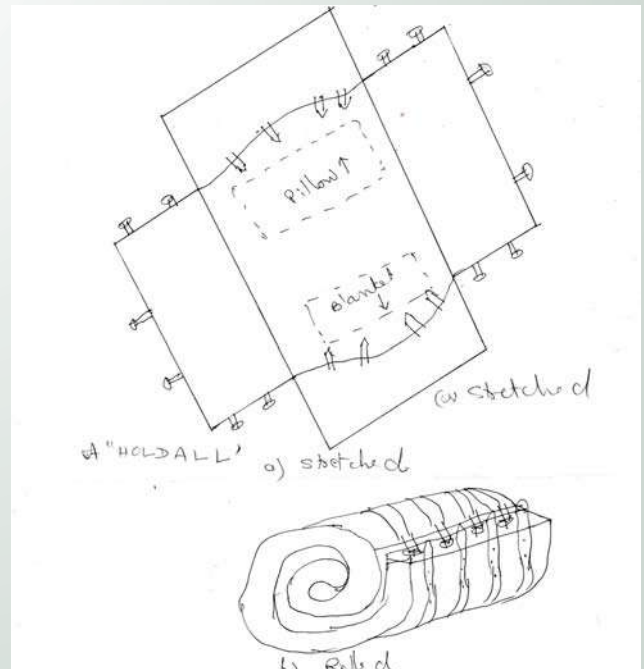
Evolution of Luggage

S. Manikutty '64

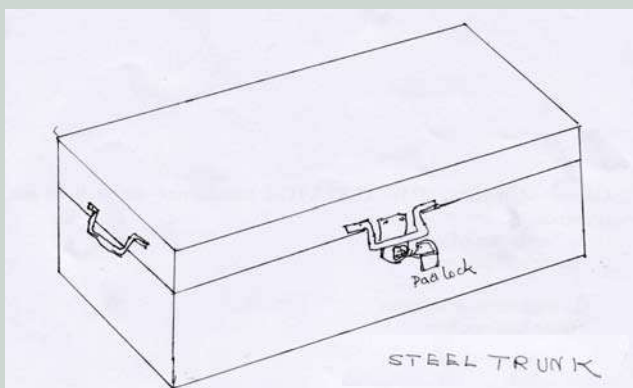
The first time I went out of home to study was when I got admission for M.Sc. Physics at the Union Christian College, Alwaye (now Aluva), Kerala. It was also the first time I got my first piece of luggage that I could call my own: a maroon-colored leather suitcase, not large (perhaps 18" diagonal) that could be easily carried by hand. This accompanied me in my journeys to Aluva and back, including home visits during term breaks, and could accommodate a good number of things, including books to be read at home.

When I got selected for Jamalpur, it was the first time I was travelling outside Kerala and Tamil Nadu except for a short trip to Delhi for the UPSC interview, and my existing suitcase was far from sufficient. I had to carry all those items I had mentioned in an earlier article: such as 6 pairs of khaki trousers and shirts, shirts for evening wear, trousers, T shirts and a host of other things needed for someone on the way to becoming a Class I gazetted officer of the Mechanical Engineering Department of the Superior Establishment, as it was called, though what this meant I really never understood, perhaps it meant the gazetted service, of the Indian Railways. My father promptly procured me a steel "trunk". A pretty large sturdy thing, and with a large tare

weight of perhaps four or five kilos, that would serve me for the next twenty years, first as a travel aid and then as a storage device at home. Today's younger generation may never have seen this thing called a steel trunk, unless they had visited the attics of their ancestral houses, and hence I am attaching a sketch of what it looked like.



Along with the steel trunk was another item called the "holdall", and I am certain none in the younger generation of today would have seen one. This was something of a sleeping bag, but quite one (see the enclosed sketch). It was a six foot and perhaps two feet wide canvas sheet with big pocket like spaces at each end, meant to accommodate a pillow on one side and blankets on the other. Into this was tucked a relatively thin bed (you could actually insert a thick, comfortable one also, but then rolling it would be difficult), on which one could sleep. Then there would be two flaps on either side, that could be folded and strapped to one another and to the head and leg



pockets by means of straps and buckles. You could insert many things into the head and leg pockets, such as under linen, towels, and books, and the whole thing could be strapped and rolled, and finally secured by means of straps and buckles. It was certainly a very convenient thing if you had to travel with a bedding, which was needed in those days, and could hold many things (hence the name of “holdall”, I guess). Once you get into the train, you could spread it out on your berth, take out the magazines, books, towel etc. and it then served as a bed throughout your journey. On arrival at the destination, you could just fold the straps, roll it and secure it; there was no danger of any of the contents falling out during transit.

These items of baggage needed the assistance of a porter (called coolies in some areas), those noble souls wearing a red shirt with an arm band displaying their licence numbers. Many of these guys could carry some 100 kilos of luggage, two or even three items on the lead, one bag on the left shoulder, and one on the right, and could negotiate the overbridges. The railways had fixed the rates for the luggage but no porter would accept those rates, and each time you had to negotiate. The rates demanded by the porters were reasonable in the north, seeming almost ridiculous when compared with those charged in the south, especially Chennai Central whose porters were infamous for their demands with some complementary gaalis as well. Kerala had a wonderful system: that you could lift your own luggage, and still pay the porters their charges. It did not matter that when you alighted from the train, no porter appeared and offered to carry your luggage; they would appear just when you were loading your own luggage into an auto or taxi and demand their dues! Such were the benefits of the rule of the proletariat.

If you had a steel trunk and a holdall, you had to lift them and put them on the head of the porter, no mean feat for a thin skeleton of a guy like me. At transit stations such as Chennai Central and Howrah, I would then proceed to the “cloak room”, where one could deposit the luggage, get a receipt and were free to go wherever your legs would take you; in Chennai it was my uncle’s house and in Howrah, the Chowringee and the Park Street. On return to the station to catch your onward train, you would go to the cloak room, get your luggage, call for the porter, put the items on his train and proceed to your compartment in the train.

Then came the invention of the light weight moulded plastic suitcases that could be carried by yourself, at least over short distances, thus eliminating the need for a porter (who has thus far been an important person in the luggage ecosystem). The usual pillow could be replaced by an air pillow, and thus you could make short overnight journeys (as needed in your probation period for travels within your allotted Railway). It could not accommodate heavy blankets, certainly not a rajai (but these were not needed in the South) but travel in the North during winters still needed rajais, and hence holdalls were still needed. In my time, the peon always accompanied the officers in their travels on duty (of course, not during your probation!), and would carry the luggage (usually one piece) and even the brief case in really short trips. They would attend to all your comforts, including spreading the bed, getting tea or coffee as needed, check your reservations etc. and an important component of their motivation was to make some TA/DA. I don’t know whether one still gets peons in Railways.

The material used in suitcases also changed, and largely replaced the plastic by the flexible

materials we see today, so much lighter in weight, and quite strong, of course with wheels and the pull-out-in mechanism. With a much higher payload to tare ratios, travelling became a breeze.

The remarkable thing about these new items of luggage made of moulded plastic was their longevity. Except occasional repair of locks, handles and zippers, nothing else was needed. I still have a suitcase that I got in London, courtesy British Airways who spoilt my luggage and gave a replacement, delivering the new one in my hotel. I still use it in my domestic as well as foreign trips. Not in ship shape but more than enough to transport your luggage, which is your main objective.

The suitcases, in due course, acquired that new fitment, hailed as the greatest invention during human history, namely, the wheel. Now much heavier luggage could be lugged over much longer distances, such as what you would have to do if your compartment was right in front of the train. One could just pull them along with a pull cord, literally a child's play, as seen in some of the advertisements at that time. Soon the slide-in-out mechanism emerged, so that it became much more convenient to pull the suitcases easily. Alas, what was a blessing for travellers sounded a death knell for the porters. The most recent invention seems to have been four wheels with a 360 degree rotation, making it even easier to manoeuvre the suitcases. The introduction of AC coaches eliminated the need also for the blankets to be carried, so that travel became more light weight. Still there are porters, to be sure, to handle those people who travel with a pile of luggage for whatever reason, but they are much fewer in number now.

One different item of luggage we used to carry around was our two wheelers: scooters or

motorcycles, especially in our earlier years of service. These could be carried free as an additional item, but over longer journeys as was the case during our first year of probation, it was better to pack them with jute gunnies, unless you would not mind them being delivered full of scratches. It was also mandatory to empty them of petrol at the time of booking, though a small quantity was usually allowed, that could be useful to start the vehicle and take it to the nearest petrol pump. Usually there were also some guys hanging around the delivery of the luggage office with petrol bottles to help you out, if needed. It was quite a hassle, taking the two wheelers around, but well worth it if the stay was for more than a day. A night movie could be conveniently included in your itinerary.

In the old days, the Railways used to display a sign, "Less luggage, more comfort, make travel a pleasure", though travel was hardly a pleasure in the best circumstances. But I believed in the opposite, maximizing my luggage so that the stay at the destination, instead of the travel, became a pleasure. The modern luggage allows to pack so much more of items you may need, and some that may not quite be needed, and still travel around so easily, without help from the porters.

Now I am largely done with my travelling, and can only speculate on how things would turn out in future. Of course, travel itself may get reduced, and get replaced by video meetings. Long distance travel over rail may get reduced, at least to some people, who may prefer to fly, needing much less luggage. But beyond that, I cannot see much progress. The future for luggage seems to be fairly secure.

Can any of the readers see revolutionary changes on luggage and modes of travel?

No Heading

Aastha Sneha 2k9

The winter was unforgiving. My toes were frost bitten on most nights; the sleeping bag was not enough in the icy winds of the mountains. The tents had fire heaters, but the wood was a precious resource. We slept huddled together inside the tents, all the trainees. The superiors obviously got to stay in the nearby villages. We didn't complain; we knew we had to go through the hardships, we had to become stronger. The cause needed us to be strong. And in any case, who was even listening to us complain!

The days were calmer, although the winds decided to wreak havoc upon us every now and then. Up here in the mountains, in the wilderness, with no habitation in sight for miles, the nature reigns supreme.

There was one thing stronger than the forces of nature though – our will to continue.

It was a pleasant morning of early spring, when the sunrays were filtering through the upper storey windows at my home. On the other side of these mountains, was my village. I remember the day as if it was just yesterday. I was woken by the sounds of Ammi shouting, telling me and my brother to wake up, while she hurried through making breakfast. I smiled to myself; Ammi had this habit of being hyperactive in the morning. "All of you would be late!", she declared every morning. Abba had learnt better and did not bother. His leisurely cup of kahwa went on forever, as he listened to the radio and read the

newspaper. Abba was the compounder at the local clinic. He and the doctor saab had been running the clinic for over 30 years. Everyone in the village knew them.

Abba was tending to our sheep outside, while Afaq and I fought over pieces of butter naan.

That was when we heard the first shots.

The sounds pierced through the easy morning. Birds fluttered from trees; the sheep became restless. Abba frowned. Ammi froze in her kitchen. I felt my hear racing. Something suddenly did not feel right. There was an uneasy quiet in the street outside.

The next few hours went by in a blur. We saw armed forces spilling over the street. They seemed to emerge from everywhere, some of them were on our rooftop as well. I distinctly remember noticing how there was a blur of olive greens, sprinkled with khakis, filling my home. Maybe my 14-year-old brain did not want to notice the guns pointing at Abba, and the handcuffs around his wrist. Perhaps I was too young to understand why Afaq was pinned down by heavy black boots. I remember I was worried he would be too hurt to study for his matric exams coming up. My reverie was broken by Ammi's screams. She was struggling to break free from the grip of one of the olive green-ed men, while another one took her bangles and earrings off. She was looking out of the door, shouting at Abba who was being whisked away. Before I could register a pair of strong hands pulling me down, I hear the shots again. This time the sound was much closer. This time the sound was much more fearsome. This time the sound was followed by a thud right outside the gates of my home. My 14-year-old brain probably knew what it was, but did not want

to know. There was a moment's silence which seemed like a lifetime. And then Ammi screamed. As Afaq was being whisked outside, I somehow knew there would be another shot. I almost knew there would be another thud. I was half expecting his lifeless body to lie next to Abba's, right outside the gates of my home. What I was not expecting was Ammi to be dragged upstairs into the bedroom. But before I could express my surprise, it all went dark and noiseless.

I had woken up in a bed in the familiar clinic of Malik kaka. Abba had been the compounder here ever since I could remember, but this time, I knew he wasn't around. What I did not know was that even Malik kaka was not around. After days and nights of high fever and delirium, I was released from the clinic. But where would I go? That is when the full realisation of what had happened dawned upon me. The sheer loneliness suddenly hit me, and I saw that I was shivering uncontrollably. It could have been the unforgiving gust of wind too, unexpected in the pleasant spring. I wanted to go home, get in bed, inside my own blanket, waiting for Ammi to call out for hot kahwa.

Tears streamed down my cheek, hot, stinging my eyes. I felt a blanket draped around me, as an unfamiliar man held me by my shoulder and turned me towards the road leading outside the village. I was too weak to protest. Any why would I? what else was left to lose?

I crossed over to the other side of the mountain that spring morning 6 years ago, and have not returned since then. I met others who had nothing left to lose, who were as lonely as I was. I found my second home in the large group of around 40 boys, living in what could be called similar to a hostel. Except that we were being educated for a mission

bigger than a college degree. Any addition to our numbers was used to be sad, depressing. I found myself praying for our numbers to never grow, but my prayers went unheeded.

It was a couple of years ago that some of us were chosen by our supreme commander to be a part of an important mission. It felt proud to be among the chosen few, probably the only positive emotion I had felt in a long time. We were taken to the rugged terrains of the cold, tree-less mountains for a special training session. I could recall the blur of olive greens every time we were in the makeshift shooting range. The shots were similar, but I felt much more in control now. I knew what I had to do. I knew I needed the sound of these shots to make me forget the sickening sound of the thud outside the gates of my home.

Our mission was to make those sit up and take notice, who were responsible for breaking our lives apart. We had planned to hit where it would hurt the most – the centre of money. I must admit I had come to realise the power of money during my training days in the mountains. The superior commanders were often seen coming in helicopters, sheltered from the ravages of the weather, their meals being hot, their clothes clean. They talked of big plans with big purchases from foreign countries I had only heard about. They were too important to talk to us. They had too much money to bother talking to us.

We were told there was a particular city where the country made the most of its money. The city was known to never sleep in its quest to make more and more money. Its people were said to be in constant pursuit of dreams and riches. We were taken to this maximum city, and shown around, identifying the areas where our mission would be

carried out. The 12 of us were to plant bombs at 12 different locations in the city, so that they went off at the same time. Only noise of this magnitude was supposed to make them aware of our existence, and our misery. I knew this was dangerous, that I may never return to the mountains after this. I could be caught in the explosion, or worse, arrested. I knew what had to be done in the latter case. We were trained well.

The day of the mission arrived. In the fresh shirt and trousers, I could pass off for one of the many professionals milling about in the city. I looked at myself in the mirror. I was suddenly aware of the fact that I had not seen myself in the mirror in years, had not felt myself smile in ages. My eyes looked cold, dead. Who was staring back at me in the mirror? Certainly not the 14 year old who had fought with Afaq for butter naan.

I had my own suitcase to drop at my designated spot. I had my earphone plugged in, I was connected to my brothers-in-arms, and to my commanders. I boarded one of the ever-present trains, jostling with the crowd going to another day of work. I saw a child who seemed to be around

5 years old. I was suddenly reminded of my neighbour's annoying kid in the village. His father bought him a toffee from a seller, who looked about the same age as my Abbu was. I found myself face to face with the toffee seller, who got a phone call from his daughter who asked him to bring notebooks for her when he returned home. As I got off the train, the crowd almost pushed me down. A man caught hold of my arm and pulled me back up, and for a moment I thought I had seen

Afaq. He had his own younger brother by his side. While I waited at the railway station for the next instructions, I saw a man open a tiffin box and spread it out on a newspaper. The smell of hot homecooked food suddenly seized hold of my entire senses. I could almost smell my Ammi's special Friday dinners. I jolted back to reality with the sound of commands being blurted out into my earphones. I stepped outside the railway station, and walked towards a street filled with jewellery shops. There were some houses on the way. I saw a woman shouting at her sons, as she ambled about cleaning her house. Her husband sat outside, sipping tea and listening to the radio. The radio played an oddly familiar station. Her sons fought over pieces of butter roti. There were goats tied outside the house. There was a small clinic nearby. I felt a strange sensation; I felt my mouth curve into a smile. But why were my eyes stinging with tears?

It was just then I was told to keep my suitcase and start the detonator.

My commanders caught hold of me by the next evening. I knew I could not hide from them. They were too powerful, they had money. As they tied me to a chair in the dark room, I could again recall the blur of olive greens. They kept asking me why I did not plant the bomb. I had nothing to say; I had nothing to lose. I could only recall the woman with the broom, the kids with the butter naan, the man with the tea, the goats and the sheep, the clinic, the smell of home food, the street, the village, the spring sunlight.

They say I am a traitor. Maybe I am. All I know is that I did what I had to do.

Victory Over Evil

Jayanthi Mallya w/o Gajanan Mallya '79

*The Rising Sun ushering in a New day
Calm and cool breeze bringing freshness all the way
The colours of joy and happiness in the air
Filling energy and zeal in our strides
Marking the beginning of festivities*

*It is the day of welcoming ' Goddess Shakthi'
The Mother of Universe in diverse forms
Presiding in her Divine Abode
Decked up in colourful attire
Garlands of fragrant flowers adorning her
Looking Majestic, oozing serenity
Showering benign grace on one and all
Divinity spreading light everywhere
The 'Aura' that is so mesmerizing
Making me feel humble at 'THY' feet
Each day being very auspicious
Offerings and Oblations pouring in galore
Let 'Ego' be the offering at HER feet
And be blessed with humility in entirety
The day marking the 'Victory over Evil'
Let our prayers purify our lives
Let HER destroy evil tendencies in us
And let it be a New beginning in life
A life of Purity and Humility sans Ego if any.*



Plavi Voz

R. Ramnath '84

How and why I visited Serbia and travelled to Belgrade is a long interesting story for another time.

While in Belgrade I visited Belgrade Railway Station and the Blue Train – Plavi Voz.

Belgrade's Old Railway Station Building is a large stately building, close to the Suva river, but is no longer functional. The Old Railway Station Building was constructed by the Orient Railway Company between 1882 and 1884. The Railway Station functioning since 1885 stopped functioning in 2018. The station through which once passed the legendary Orient Express carrying the rich and famous between Paris and Constantinople, connecting the Occident with the Orient is an impressive building.

The building was under renovation and so we could not go in. It was being converted to some museum.

There is a decrepit steam locomotive standing on the left side of the station building, fenced off and un-approachable. I was told that it is the steam locomotive which used to haul Marshal Tito's Blue Train across Yugoslavia. Apparently, it is parked at the very spot it stopped after bringing Marshal Tito's body to Belgrade from Ljubljana on May 5 1980.

While visiting Belgrade Railway Station, nearby, I came across the Serbian Railway Museum. On a whim, I went in but was told that it being a Saturday, it is closed.

I came back to my hotel room and did a bit of internet research on the Railway Museum in Belgrade. While researching, I found that visits to see Marshal Josef Broz Tito's famous Blue Train , Plavi voz, could be arranged. Not expecting anything to come of it, I sent an email requesting for a visit. To my surprise I received a response agreeing to host a visit.

On the appointed date, we took a taxi first to Topcider Railway Station to buy the tickets to visit Plavi voz. The taxi driver was friendly and waited, while I bought the tickets. The ticket costs 300 Serbian Dinar per head.



The Belgrade Station Building. Functioning between 1885 and 2018. There is an interesting statue in front of the station building.

SAM CLUB DAY 2023

The Plavi voz is parked at the Topcider Railway Carriage Depot, about a kilometre ahead.

Although the taxi driver was waiting, the Railwayman in me could not resist taking the photo of this electric loco waiting to haul a train.

An Electric Locomotive of the Serbian Railways at Topcider Railway Station

At the Railway Carriage Depot, Ms Vesna was waiting and took us around the train. She answered all our questions patiently during the visit.

The Blue Train, Plavi voz, was important because Marshal Tito used the train to travel around Yugoslavia. Marshal Tito apparently disliked flying and used the train for all his travels.

Marshal Tito died on the train while visiting Ljubljana, which was then a part of Yugoslavia but is now the capital of Slovenia.

Famous personalities who travelled by this train include Jawaharlal Nehru, Sukarno, Haile Selassie, François Mitterrand, Yasser Arafat, Muammar Gaddafi, Nicolae Causecu and Queen Elizabeth II.

The train was plush and luxurious. It was luxuriously decked out in mahogany, walnut and pear wood.

The train, I was told can be hired out for luxurious private travel.

I will let the photos do the rest of the talking.



An Electric Locomotive of the Serbian Railways at Topcider Railway Station

SAM CLUB DAY 2023

Dining Table with monogrammed cutlery



The conference room on the Plavi Voz



SAM CLUB DAY 2023

Marshal Tito's bedroom



Marshal Tito's toilet



Marshal Tito's office



The lounge adjacent to the Conference Room



The kitchen and galley





A photo showing Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi on the Plavi Voz

Effing the Ineffable

V. S. Mathur '87

ineffable

/ɪn'ɛfəbəl/

adjective

formal

: too great, powerful, beautiful, etc., to be described or expressed

effing

/effing/

verb

informal/ scatological

: converting to valueless

: euphemism for the F word

(apparently allowed even in profanity and obscenity punishing parts of the world)

Ever felt the incredible lightness of being?

Ever wandered lonely as a cloud?

Ever pursued happiness?

Ever embraced the simple joy of a dandelion clock?

Maybe you did, and for a fraction of a second peace and contentment filled your body and soul.

Ineffable joy.

...

...

But in this world, joy is short-lasting. We are always at odds with others, all of us striving in a complex adaptive system where only the few enjoy. The rest are caught in the daily struggle, facing a weird world that confounds and bemuses.

Too abstract? Let me explain with an example.

All MBA students have heard of the apocryphal story from the Retail Giant Corporation That Must Not Be Named, which doubled their sales: two words that changed the way the whole world washes hair, and two words that will resonate evermore in the minds of management and marketing students worldwide. Those words, of course, were “*and repeat.*”

Tacked on to the end of the instructions printed on the shampoo bottles, they instructed the user not just to “Apply, Rinse” but redo the process at least once.

Like the 2x2 matrix, which created the desirable top quadrant, and allowed people to call each other ‘dogs’ and ‘stars’. Or like the Hype Curve, where you could consign shoddy products to the Trough of Discontent and never allow them to escape to the real world, it was an Idea That Left Its Mark.

The supremacy of outrageous gumption over logical thinking was established, and since then salespeople have searched ever deeper in the Sludge of Bad Ideas that litters the corporate wasteland. ‘Premium pricing’ of goods (I call it HPJ - Highly Priced Junk). Using the exchange rate to calculate prices in local currency without considering Purchasing Power Parity, the list is endless. Except these ideas haven’t come under the purview of “Planned Obsolescence” - they keep recurring and returning to pain us.

But there is only so much idiocy in the world. To come up with a long term, robust and foolproof product idea, you engage us engineers!

Engineers translate concepts into physical entities, take the idea out of the Metaverse into the Mehtaverse (apologies to all those named Mehta who have turned completely virtual and have no presence in the physical world), turn the cartoonish “Boink” on the head that heals quickly, into a truncheon that hurts.

2x sales? — PffT! That’s nothing! How about triggering repeat purchases before the consumer has started using the product? How about a simple mechanism to force repurchase?

How about a scheme so diabolical that everyone’s breath is taken away?

The engineer says “Hold my beer, Satyabeer!”

So, let me build out the project plan for you:

Step 1: FEM analysis of existing containers. To identify the reason the centre of gravity is low. And raise it. Making the box less stable.

Step 2: Shave the walls! Make the container walls thinner until the structure is not only the shell, but needs support from the label stuck onto it. Some of the integrity is from the contained product itself. All of these factors add to the surprise ending.

Step 3: Material engineers worked hard to create the ultimate splittable plastic for the body of the container. Hit, touch, or even look at it, and the plastic will split lengthwise.

Step 4: Further material modification to create the ultra-shatterphilic cap. A good source of microplastics granules, there is just no way to fix the cap if it disintegrates.

Step 5: style the container to have a svelte and slim profile, nearly unidimensional. Looks cool, aids destabilisation.

At this point, Robert is your father’s brother!

So image the scene. (unless you’re livestreaming your life, in which case, just seek the starting point of your bath and view the recording)

You have just bought the ‘Latest, Greatest’, **‘NEW’, ‘BETTER THAN EVER’, ‘Our Best Yet’** bottle of shampoo, with its promises to fix your tresses (and distresses). In the shower, you open the bottle for the first time, and enjoy the heavenly intoxicating smell (with a styrene-based perfume to give you an instant high).

As you squeeze it, the bottle slips, does a somersault in the air (high CG, no), and lands cap downwards onto the floor.

The other engineering miracles kick in:

-The cap atomises as it impacts the floor

-The container splits its sides, and ROFLs (Rolls on the floor laughing)

Shampoo everywhere except on your head.

So grubby scalped, you emerge and leave for the supermarket to buy another bottle ...

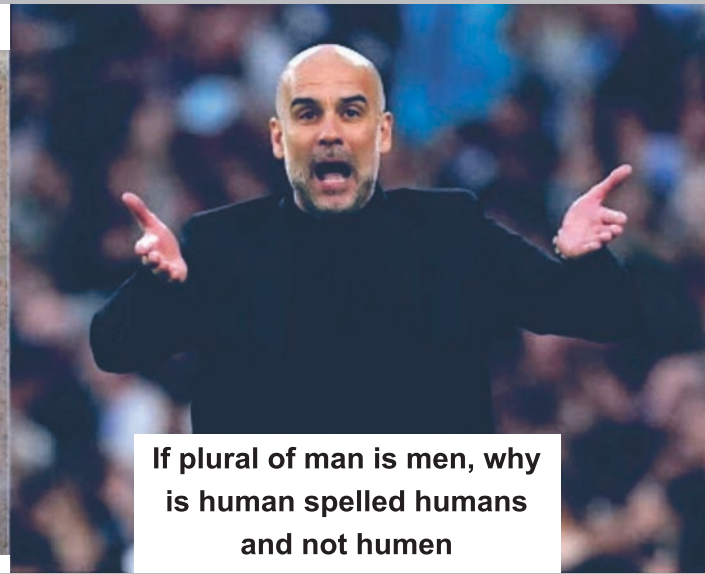
“and repeat!”

And this, my friends, is called the “Spill and Refill.” Almost infinite extra sales with close to infinitesimal product usage and no bad reviews on ecommerce sites!

One foot, two feet, one moose, two...?

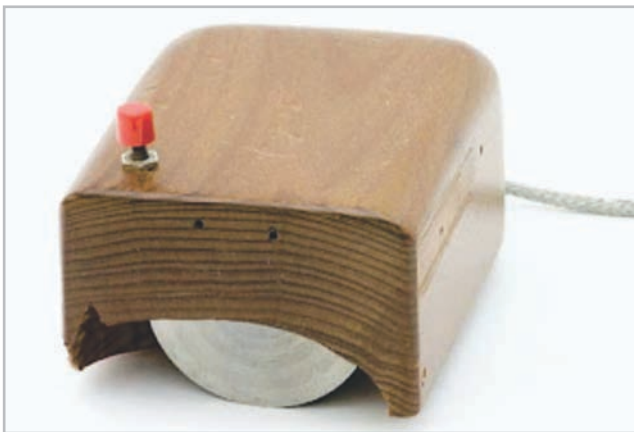
Anupama Mani w/o S Mani '75

I always wondered what the plural of "Men" is.



**If plural of man is men, why
is human spelled humans
and not humen**

As a child, one of my wishes was to learn languages. The unfortunate part is that I do not possess any special talent in this direction. Add to that my work-shy attitude and no wonder, it has remained what it was- a mere wish. Yet because I work in English and Hindi, I am sometimes forced to add to whatever little I know of them.



First computer mouse invented by Douglas Engelbart

It was on one such occasion recently that I had to look for the plural of a word- the computer mouse: is it mouse, mouses or mice?

After a lot of time spent sliding the singular mouse to look for answers, what did I learn?

Although https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2006-02-15-0602150192_story.html wrote

In the first 15 years or so of its mainstream life, the computer mouse has had an uncertain plural, word watchers say. But in the current issue of English Today, linguist Alan Kaye argues that "computer mouses" is starting to win out...

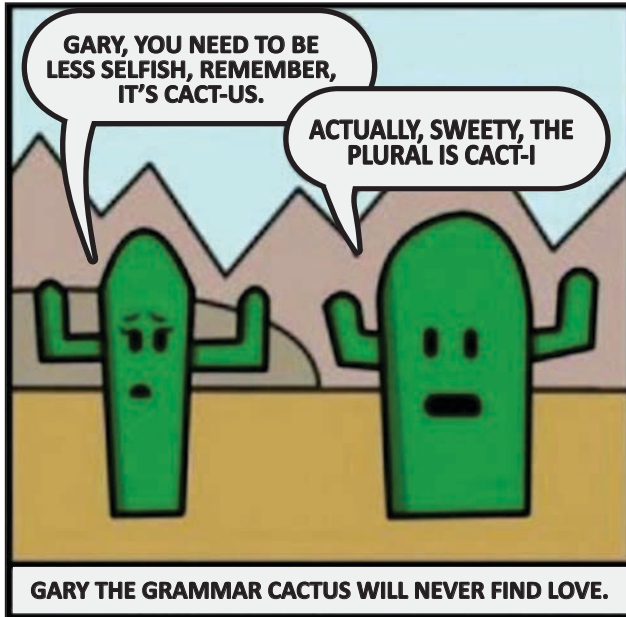
Yet Wikipedia, at places, mentions the plural as 'mice'.

For me, the matter is still pending a decision. But in the process, I read so much about the mouse that had it not been for my poor retaining power, I would easily have written at least a three-post series on these choohe (mice). My fear, however, was that it would not be fair to you all so soon after my long Tawang series.

Meanwhile, one of the things which caught my attention was that like so many other factors,

plurals in English language also have the power to flummox people. And blessed with wavering levels of concentration, I started reading about them.

The common understanding is that adding an 's' makes the word plural, e.g., two dogs (a dog), or 'es' two buses (one bus). How do you decide which of the two to follow?



The third rule says change the last letter 'y' to 'ies' e.g., in story-stories, berry-berries, but not in storey which is storeys.

Yet the change from one hoof/knife/wife to two hooves/knives/wives is due to pronunciation. An 'f' coming in a word is easier to pronounce as v.

How do you explain children (one child), feet (one foot) and men (one man)? They are derived from or influenced by German and slowly mutated to their modern plurals, say the linguists.

Invariable nouns, however, do not change form when mentioned in plural, e.g., cattle, news, sheep.

We know quantitative nouns e.g., hundred, thousand, lakh, crore get an 's' in the end only when they are used to begin a sentence, e.g.,



Thousands of devotees visited the gurudwara on Gurburab.

This is English and there are always exceptions to rules. Nouns ending with an 's' stay as they are, even for plural. Examples? *Economics is (not 'are') easier than linguistics.*

Collective nouns like crowd, government, mob, team, society, committee are considered as singular. *The society does not allow this.*

If this is not confusing, let me take the opposite case of nouns where, based on how they are being used, the word is treated as a plural.

One aircraft is being repaired. Two aircraft are being repaired.

People may say that there are five or even eight rules to change singular nouns to plural ones. But this has already gone beyond that number. Would you now side with the supporters of conspiracy theory who say the whole system of deciding plurals is to make English tough for the non-English?

It is not just English. Has anyone tried learning the cases in German or Italian? I am grateful to Neeru Sehgal, an older schoolmate/friend, who spent a whole Sunday morning explaining to me the



A draft of the Fellowship was rejected by Tolkien's Editor, who cited the reason being that the plural for Dwarf, was Dwarfs, not Dwarves according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Dwarves was not a word that existed. Tolkien responded, very accurately "I wrote the Oxford English Dictionary, don't correct me."

lakaar and *vibhakti* in Sanskrit, driving out the fear of the language from my mind.

Meanwhile, even if MSWord underlines them in red, Reader's Digest tells us the following plurals are the correct ones.

Singular - plural

Beef - beaves

Opus - opera

Sphinx - sphinges

Biceps - Bicepses

Cul de sac - Culs de sac

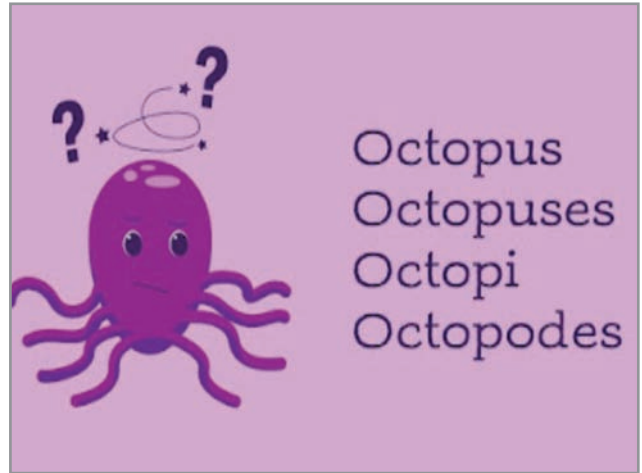
Niece/nephew - niblings (becomes gender-neutral)

Attorney general - attorneys general like mothers in law, directors general

Lasagna - lasagne

Prius – prii. (Toyota officially announced this new word after a 2011 vote of more than 1.8 million people.)

Spaghetti – spaghetti



The plural of octopus, however, is... octopuses, not octopi. 'Octopi' is the word plural in Latin; but octopus is a Greek word. The Greek plural of octopus would be Octopodes. But according to linguists, when a word is added to the English lexicon, it also gets an English inflection. Hence, octopus become 'octopuses'. I trust RD.

Going through lists of plurals, I found a poem written by an unknown author, the relevant part of which I am sharing with you.

The English lesson

We'll begin with box, and the plural is boxes;

But the plural of ox should be oxen, not oxes.

*Then one fowl is goose, but two
are called geese,*

Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.

You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,

Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.

If the plural of man is always called men,

Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?

The cow in the plural may be cows or kine,

But the plural of vow is vows, not vine.

I speak of my foot and show you my feet,

If I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?

If one is a tooth, and a whole set are teeth,



*Why shouldn't the plural of booth
be called beeth?*

*If the singular is this and the plural is these,
Why shouldn't the plural of kiss be named kesse?*

Then one may be that, and three may be those,

Yet the plural of hat would never be hose;

We speak of a brother, and also of brethren,

But though we say mother,

we never say methren.

The masculine pronouns are he, his and him,

But imagine the feminine she, shis, and shim!

So our English, I think, you all will agree,

Is the craziest language you ever did see.

A dreadful language? Why, man alive,

I'd learned to talk it when I was five,

And yet to write it, the more I tried,

I hadn't learned it at fifty-five!



There is also a version II of the poem.

*Now if mouse in the plural should be, and is,
mice, Then house in the plural, of course, should
be hice, And grouse should be grice and spouse
should be spice And by the same token
should blouse become blice.*

And consider the goose with its plural of geese;

*Then a double caboose should be called a
cabese, And noose should be neese and moose
should be meese And if mama's papoose
should be twins, it's papeese.*

*Then if one thing is that, while some more is
called those, Then more than one hat, I assume,
would be hose, And gnat would be gnose and
pat would be pose, And likewise the plural of
rat would be rose.*

I am sure you knew most of these, a couple you would pick up and the rest, naah, may never be used in this lifetime. So why worry? Enjoy the weekend!

FYI: The plural of fudge is ... fudge. So, no matter how much you eat, it only counts as one. You're welcome.

Club Day '2023 at Lucknow

Covid fears are now a thing of the past. No more can it cast a hideous shadow on our spirit of fun and frolic. And perhaps that was the reason why Club Day 2023 was celebrated at Lucknow with even more gusto as compared to the past couple of years.

Attendees this year spanned from '56 Batch to '14 Batch - a spread of more than 50 years. The senior-most Batch was represented by Mrs/Mr. Rajanish and Mrs/Mr. HN Lal, while the sole flag bearer of 2014 Batch was Mr. Suman Saurabh (notice that there is no 'Mrs' added with his name – hope he will remedy this situation someday soon!).

As usual, the celebrations started with drinks and snacks accompanied by a lot of back slapping among batchmates. This was followed by number of games and group activities. Mrs Shachi Rao '64, Mrs. Mamta Mishra,'75, Dr. Mrs. Sangeeta Sagar,'81, Mrs. Shalini Sinha,'81, Dr. Mrs. Anjana Khare,'86, Mrs. Kavita Thaplyal, '89 and Mrs. Arshiya Siddiqui,'99 stole the show in various dancing games. And soon the mood was set for some vigorous and energetic leg-shaking by the whole party, barring a few who preferred swigging drinks to joining the general 'hullad' on the dance floor.

Mrs. Manika Rajanish '56 was entrusted with the responsibility of cutting the ceremonial cake. Mr Rajanish '56 delivered a message exhorting us to keep the Gymkhana spirit alive and to keep on celebrating this great day with similar gusto in future also!

The party continued with lots of games interspersed with some vigorous, bone-shaking dancing. It appeared that the fun and games would extend well into the next day, but the delicious dinner came in the way!

During this Club Day, Lucknow SAMs had to bid farewell to Mr./Mrs. Gopal Kumar, '82 who were moving away to the NCR after superannuation. Mrs and Mr Rajnish'56 presented a special parting gift on behalf of Lucknow SAMs and SIMIs to Gopal Kumar '82 and his better half Dimpy celebrating their last Club day at Lucknow.

It was well past midnight when everybody left for home with a fervent wish that the Gymkhana spirit lived on forever.

Following SAMs and SIMIs attended the Club Day 2023 at Lucknow.

SAM (S/Sri)	Simi (Smt)	Batch
Rajanish	Manika	56
A.K. Rao	Shachi	64
Pratap Srivastava	-	65
Praveen Kumar	Rita	67
Rakesh Mishra	Manjula	72
KK Bajpayee		73
A K Singh	Anuradha	75
R N Misra	Mamta	75
S Mani	Anupama	75
Amitabh Sinha	Shalini	81
Jitendra Singh	Sangita Sagar	81
Gopal Kumar	Dimpy	82
Vivek Khare	Anjana	86
Manish Thaplyal	Kavita	89
Amit Srivastava	Dipali	92
Neeraj Srivastava	Ritu	93
A N Siddiqui	Arshiya	99
Suman Saurabh		14



*Sitting (L to R) - A.N. Siddiqui '99, R.N. Mishra '75, Pratap Srivastava '65, Rakesh Misra '72, Suman Saurabh '14
 Standing(L to R) - Arshiya, Mamta Mishra, Reena, Manjula Mishra, Jitendra Singh '81*



Arshiya, Kavita, Anupama, Anuradha, Mamta Mishra, Manjula Mishra, Sangita Sagar, Rita, Shachi Rao, Manika, Dipali, Dimpy, Ritu (face missing)



L to R - Kavita Thaplial, Arshiya, Anjana Khare, Shalini Sinha, Manika, Rajanish '56, AK Rao '64 (in background)



L to R - Dimpy, Shalini Sinha, Anjana Khare, Shachi Rao, Sangita, A.K.Rao '64



Gopal Kumar '82, Dimpy, Jitendra Singh '81



L to R - A.N. Siddiqui '99, Suman Saurabh '14, Amitabh Sinha '81, Vivek Khare '86, Neeraj Srivastava '93, Jitendra Singh '81, A.K.Rao '64, Gopal Kumar '82 ,Dimpy, Kavita, Sangita Sagar, Anjana, Arshiya, Shalini Sinha, Ritu



First Row Sitting (L to R) - Amit Srivastava '92, Vivek Khare '86, Arshiya, Dipali, Anjana, Kavita, Manish Thapliyal '89, Rita, Neeraj Srivastava '93, Suman Saurabh '14

Second Row (L to R) - Shalini Sinha, Anupama, Anuradha, Sudhanshu Mani '75, Mamta Mishra, R.N. Mishra '75, Rajanish '56, Manika, Rita, Manjula, Praveen Kumar '67



Third Row (L to R) - A.N.Siddiqui '99, Amitabh Sinha '81, Pratap Srivastava '64, A.K.Rao '64, Shachi Rao, Sangita Sagar, Dimpy, Gopal Kumar '82, Jitendra Singh '81

Fourth Row (L to R) - A.K.Singh '75, Rakesh Misra '72



Rita, Shachi Rao, Rajnish '56, Manish Thapliyal '89, Manika, Rakesh Mishra '72, Manjula, Mamta Mishra



Dimpy, Rajanish '56, Manika, Reena, Praveen Kumar '67



AK Singh '75, Rakesh Mishr '72, RN Mishra '75, (), AN Siddiqui '99, Jitendra Singh '81, Gopal Kumar '82, Amitabh Sinha '81, Sudhanshu Mani '75

How I made myself useful in my first year at Jamalpur, and earned the short leave

Deepak Sapra '92

When I came to Jamalpur and joined as a special class apprentice of the 1992 batch, I had a very impressive bunch of faculty and teachers at IRIMEE.

Mr. Godbole '63 batch was the Director, Mr. Maheep Kapur '65 was the second in command.

Mr. BC Bhattacharya ,75 batch and Mr. AK Singh, 75 batch were the other senior faculty members.

We had several other faculty members, viz. Mr. Shubhranshu, Mr. Gangal and Mr. Pravesh Mathur, all three from the 1980 batch.

A few years later, Mr. AK Tewari of the 78 batch joined followed by Mr. Arjun Mundiya of the same batch.

Midway through our SCRA stint, Mr. AK Jain'67 joined as Director, followed by Mr. Pradeep Kumar'68.

Towards the end of our tenure, My Jyoti Kumar'71 joined in as well.

To us, the 1992 batch, Mr. Godbole and Mr. Kapur were stern, fatherly figures, especially so in our first year.

They were not people one would generally approach for casual conversations. Our batch kept its distance from them, not venturing anywhere near, until really really imperative.

I was scared of going to Mr. Kapur because of his no-nonsense approach. I was, on the other hand, a gold medallist in a nonsense approach and therefore, in total contrast to Mr. Kapur's outlook.

I had a (well earned) reputation for running off to Calcutta on every weekend. I used to scoot off on

Friday evenings (without permission, most of the time). I would be back before the new week began on Monday by the 3071 Howrah-Jamalpur Express.

However, in case leave was needed, it was a different story altogether.

Mr. Kapoor was the sanctioning authority for leave and it was very hard to get leave sanctioned from him.

One of my illustrious Batchmate, (now living in the UK) had made a famous statement that it took unprecedented guts to ask Mr. Kapoor for five day leave (in Hindi – *"5 din ki chutti maangne ke liye bhi Aukaat chahiye"*).

While Mr. Kapoor was the sanctioning authority for leave, Mr. Shubhranshu was the sanctioning authority for 'short leave'.

'Short leave' meant leave for less than three hours. This would not be deducted from one's leave account and could be availed for myriad reasons.

My primary reason for availing short leave was the arrival time of the 3071 Howrah Jamalpur express on Monday mornings. The train would usually arrive around 8:45 AM to 9 AM whereas IRIMEE sessions would start at 7:30 AM. I would apply for short leave to take care of (what I believed was) this minor discrepancy.

While Mr. Shubhranshu was quite generous in grant of these leaves in the initial months, my continuous applications for the same increased his reluctance over time.

In a few months, my reputation for being a short leave guzzler became well established. The first to

know was Mr. Gangal, as he and Mr Shubhranshu used to share the same office. Next was Mr. Mathur, who used to be with the two of them most of the time.

Over time, all faculty knew about it.

Despite these reputation challenges, life was moving on.

Until one (not so fine) Monday morning.

On that fateful Monday, Mr. Shubhranshu blew his top when I asked for 4 hours of short leave. That Monday, the Howrah-Jamalpur train was very late, and arrived at Jamalpur at 11:30 AM.

I reached out to him for short leave from 730 to 11:30 AM.

He told me, in crystal clear terms, that no more than one short leave a month would be granted by him thereafter. That too for a maximum of three hours.

He started holding me accountable for this and would often ask me whether I availed any short leave.

My world came crashing down.

This meant that I could no longer use the Howrah Jamalpur express to return on Monday mornings.

Additionally, a new dimension got added in my mind.

I used to be afraid of Mr Kapoor earlier. Now, I became 'very' afraid of Mr Shubhranshu.

"Darr ke aage jeet hai" (beyond fear, is victory) was the tagline of a soft drink those days.

I got inspired by the tagline and changed strategy from the coming week.

Now, instead of the 3071 Howrah Jamalpur Express at 10 PM on Sunday night from Howrah, I would take the 3005 Howrah-Amritsar Punjab Mail on Sunday night. The departure time was 7:10 PM from Howrah station. I would get down at

Kiul Junction at 2:45 AM and from Kiul cross the station tunnel, walk across the bridge to Lakhisarai, and from Lakhisarai take a trekker to Munger. The trekkers would not start until day-break which would be around 5 AM and would take about two hours to get to Munger. From Munger, I would take another trekker around 7 AM to Jamalpur. I used to get down at Jamalpur Station. From the Jamalpur station I would walk over to the other side via the over bridge to land on workshop Road, and then enter IRIMEE from the IRIMEE gate.

this way, I would make it to IRIMEE by about 7:25 AM on Monday morning and would avoid going to Mr Shubhranshu for short leave.

While this was good, it was not optimal. I was losing 3 hours at Calcutta, I was anxious all night as I had to get down at Kiul at 2.45 AM, I put in two alarms on two different alarm clocks - one for 2 AM and one for 2.20 AM. I had to be at the peak of my 'awakened' state at 2.45 at Kiul as the scheduled train stoppage was for only two minutes.

Plus, I was enduring rough and often, risky, trekker rides. The tunnel and the bridge, which I walked through, was also not safe, and statistics showed that there used to be one murder a month in the vicinity of that tunnel.

I had to find a better way of addressing this situation. There had to be a more elegant solution.

Is there a way people would themselves grant me short leave instead of me asking for it ?

The inflexion point came when I realised that people at both IRIMEE and Gymkhana would have things that they would want to be done at Calcutta. These could be things that I could take up.

And so it began.

I started taking up sundry work for Calcutta from

SAM CLUB DAY 2023

faculty as well as from SCAs.

Once, I got some PVC sheets from Liluah workshop in the IRIMEE training car, RE-797. I would get the Club day cake from Nahoum's on many occasions. I got the new baize for the billiards table at Jamalpur Gymkhana. I got the foreign currency demand drafts for the Engineering council examination from the foreign banking branch of State Bank of India at Calcutta.

At Gymkhana, there used to be a list that was circulated every week for things to be done from Calcutta. The columns in the list were- Serial No., Name, Task, Money given, Signature.

The usual items in the list were tennis racquets, squash balls, wrist bands, billiards cues, books,

certain kinds of magazines (!), audio cassettes, LPs, floppy disks, photography reels, cameras, Levi's jeans. Sometimes, people would ask me to book train tickets from the computerised reservation terminals at Calcutta for non-Calcutta PRS tickets.

These kind of activities gave me the legitimacy to arrive at Jamalpur by the 3071 Howrah Jamalpur express and not worry about short leave.

In this way, I managed to create a win-win and go home to Calcutta 26 times in my first year and in the process, set a world record.

Are you inspired ?

You can always Reach out for more such inspiring stories

