

Why can't we KISS?

We bureaucrats can hardly be accused of being simple. What is *sara!* to us is usually anything but simple or straight. Little surprise, then, if 'Sara! Form' turns out to be another oxymoron. While every organization worth the name is vying with each other for achieving brutal simplicity, we do not seem to be making much headway towards giving an easy and affordable life to the citizens. In our enthusiasm to be perfect and omniscient, we often go overboard and end up making everybody's life more complicated, stressful and intolerable. Ignoring the immediate purpose at hand and losing every sense of proportion, we seek information that is oftentimes not only unnecessary but also can tantamount to encroaching upon personal privacy. It is therefore a tribute to the collective wisdom of the citizenry that such vicious statements got a quick burial.

That brings us to a more pertinent point. We bureaucrats, too, are citizens, first and last, and therefore subject to the same set of rules, regulations and procedures we draft. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Therefore, we should have no difficulty in imagining the adverse effect our prescription can have on our own lives. We would therefore be expected to exercise lot of caution when it comes to matters concerning the masses. Many successful organizations spend enough time and energy on carrying out testing and retesting of their forms, questionnaires and statements until they become meaningful to their clientele. Simplicity at all costs is their motto. Considering the common criticism that our government resolutions and circulars are verbose and ambiguous, far from being simple and comprehensible, and often drive the intended beneficiaries to middlemen and touts, should we not follow the advice to KISS (keep it simple, stupid)? ■

Rameshchandra Kanade

Utterly Disgusting

JB D'Souza

I am not sure that being the near-senior-most surviving IAS officer in this State entitles me to express a sense of disgust at the antics of corrupt IAS officers. Now we have the edifying tale of a resort to hiding like a common criminal from arrest for misdeeds. The story of an Additional Chief Secretary's dodges to escape arrest show how low our colleagues have fallen. Will he also develop chest pain, as his erstwhile Minister has just done? Are you, and *HARMONY*, going to paper this over, and purvey only soft news of postings and promotions and births, or will you deal with the serious problems confronting our service, which have earned so much contempt from the people we are supposed to serve?

Why not publish this letter, if you feel unequal to making your own comment? ■

[We consider conscience-keepers like Mr D'Souza to be an integral part of our *HARMONY* and always expect them to speak their mind. Need we therefore say more? : Editor] ■

Retirements Galore

Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust Chairman Ravi Bhushan Budhiraja (1968) and Aurangabad Divisional Commissioner Krishna S Bhoge (1982) retired on superannuation on 31 May. On the same day Principal Secretary (Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection) A. Ramakrishnan (1975) proceeded on voluntary retirement taking a cue from his batch-mate and Managing Director of MS Textile Corporation Sudha Bhave, who preferred voluntary retirement from 30 April. Though retired from active government service, they are going to be active in the areas of public interest. We wish all of them a happy and healthy life and very successful post-retirement adventures and assignments. ■

Staying Fresh

The Japanese have always loved fresh fish. But the waters close to Japan have not held many fish for decades. So to feed the Japanese population, fishing boats got bigger and went farther.

The farther the fishermen went, the longer it took them to bring in the fish. If the return trip took more than a few days, the fish were not fresh, and the Japanese did not like the taste.

Therefore fishing companies installed freezers on their boats. Freezers allowed the boats to go farther and stay longer.

However, the Japanese could taste the difference between the fresh and the frozen and they did not like frozen fish. The frozen fish brought a lower price.

So fishing companies installed fish tanks. They would catch the fish and stuff them in the tanks, fin to fin. After a little thrashing around, the fish stopped moving. They were tired and dull but alive.

But the Japanese could still taste the difference. Since the fish did not move for days, they lost their fresh-fish taste. The Japanese preferred the lively taste of fresh fish, not sluggish fish.

Finally the fishing companies decided to add a small shark to each tank. Lo and behold! The fish remained fresh. The shark ate a few fish, but most of the fish remained in a very lively state. They were challenged, but oddly enough, in the presence of a challenging environment they thrived and remained fresh.

So, do not avoid challenges; jump into them. Enjoy the game. Even if the challenges are too large or numerous, don't give up. Failing is not an option. Instead find more determination, more knowledge and more help.

If you have met your goals, set some bigger goals. Once you meet your personal or family needs, move onto goals for your group, the society, even mankind. Don't create success and lie in it. Put a shark in your tank and see how far you can go! ■ (Source: Friend)

I am reminded of my days in the Raj Bhavan in the mid-seventies when I was secretary to Governor Ali Yavar Jung. One evening when I was working on a file concerning Bombay University, a cabinet minister came to my office. I received him

hanged if they belonged to some other community. After that the minister had nothing to say and left in a hurry," the Governor concluded.

Two days later I got a note from the Governor asking me to convey instruction to the Home Secretary to ensure that the guilty be hanged without any further delay.

And surely, the orders were duly carried out. ■

[Mr DK Jain (1961), a fire-brand officer of yesteryears, has tonnes of experiences to share with *Harmony* readers.] ■

A strange request

FORMER CIVIL SERVANT DK JAIN RECOUNTS

and offered him a cup of tea, which he declined. He told me that he wanted an appointment with the Governor for 5 to 7 minutes to discuss an important matter. I told him most politely that engagements were looked after by ADC SS Puri. But he wouldn't listen. He insisted that I should speak to the Governor and get an appointment for him. I wondered why the minister had not asked his PA to ring up the ADC instead.

Later I spoke to the Governor about the minister's request for an appointment. The Governor was curious. I told him I was ignorant about the minister's object in calling upon the Governor.

A few days later Puri told me that the Governor had agreed to meet the minister. Exactly after 7 minutes Puri walked into the Governor's office and announced that the next visitor was ready. The interview was over and the minister came out in the porch. His face did not reveal how the meeting had gone. He did not even respond to the ADC's salute.

Curious, one day I asked His Excellency why the minister had called on. I could see anger on his face, as he said, "Oh, he had cheek to come and request for pardon to three young boys sentenced to death penalty by the Court for murdering some persons. When I asked him if there were any extenuating circumstances for his request, the minister said that the boys belonged to a particular community and that fact was justification for pardon by me.

"I told the minister that it was strange that convicts belonging to a particular community should be pardoned but

The complex, which should be ready in 18-20 months, will comprise high-rise apartment towers overlooking the 8 acres central park. Apartments will range from 3 to 4 bedrooms, and all of them will have a servant room. The super built-up area ranges from 1,700 sq ft, 2,500 sq ft and 3,000+ sq.ft. There are even some pent-houses of 3,600 sq ft (with terrace gardens). The proposed common facilities are a Club House, with a fully equipped gymnasium and health club and spa, yoga and meditation centre, card rooms library, indoor games, restaurant and bar, billiard, table tennis, squash courts, international-size swimming pool and children's pool, tennis court, jogging and walking tracks, etc. There will also be a medical and first

aid centre, a physiotherapy facility and beauty parlour for both men and women. Parking will be provided in the basement so that the complex is not crowded and walking spaces are not encroached upon. A great deal of attention is being paid to make the complex completely secure. The price fixed is Rs 2,450 per sq ft

Mrs Hemi Surendra Singh, wife of ex-Cabinet Secretary, is the President of the Welfare Society. Her contact No. is 9810020922. The society's

email address is:

srishtiwelfare@yahoo.co.in and srishtiwelfare@gmail.com and office phone no. is 011-24604200/ 24604201.

So, I look forward to seeing some of you in Delhi, sometime in the future. ■

[You may contact *Mrs Deepika Mago* at deepika_mago@hotmail.com; or on 09899513431]. ■

All Men Are Islands

Former Chief Secretary BB Paymaster (1934) reflects on human nature

No man can be an island, so I thought,
But long experience, painfully bought,
Has shown that this is quite untrue.

The human condition is a solitary one,
For alone we come into the world, and we die alone.

It is useless to pretend that love and friendship can
Mitigate the essential loneliness of man,
For even these can change and die.

You say they shall endure? That is merely your heart's outcry
To enable you to exist in this harsh world
Till the story of your days is told. ■

Wish to settle in Delhi?

By DEEPIKA MAGO

We moved to Delhi in 2004 and since then I have been attending the IAS Wives' Association meetings here. A few months back the IAS wives were given an offer to own a new house in Delhi. I am extending the same to all of you.

Srishti Welfare Society was formed by a few enterprising IAS / IFS / IPS / IRS officers' wives to provide the members with a housing complex that will be safe, secure, a pleasurable experience and with 100 per cent power back-up, medical facilities and all the amenities of a modern housing complex. The location is very close to the Shipra Mall, about 4 km from the Akshardham Temple and opposite sector 63, NOIDA.

BI Nagrale bereaved

Mr Ishwar Nagrale, father of Secretary Tribal Development Bhaidas Nagrale, died on 3 May 2006. He was 87. A source of inspiration to his family, Mr Nagrale was person of high thinking and simple living. We pray to God to rest his soul in peace. ■

By and large, people still think that the IAS officers are persons endowed with strong and positive personality traits. They also believe that these officers are gifted and intelligent, studious and analytical, talented and creative, dynamic and active, quick and decisive, thorough and detail conscious, persistent and schedule-oriented, orderly and organized, neat and tidy. They vouch that IAS officers can deal with any given situation expertly and adapt themselves to any circumstances within no time, quickly identify problems and find practical solutions. They confirm that these civil servants are focused and goal oriented, competent and steady, have very rich administrative capability and exude confidence.

Most IAS officers who make it to the post of Chief Secretary, no doubt, have all these qualities in great



abundance. But those who are also warm and friendly, enthusiastic and ever cheerful, pleasant and enjoyable, stoic and self-controlled, sincere at heart, and charm and inspire others to work and set high standards and see the whole picture and delegate and stimulate activity and love people as dearly as they love their own family members and have compassion and concern for all they meet, are born leaders and true Past Masters. One such retired civil servant is **ARUN LAXMAN BONGIRWAR** (1966), who became the twenty-fifth Chief Secretary to the Government of Maharashtra during 1999-01, served as the Chairman of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, and is presently working as Chairman of the Tariff Authority for Major Ports.

While many of us joined the IAS because it was and continues to be the best service, for Mr Bongirwar it was like following a family profession; two generations before him were wedded to the government service. His father was in the IAS. And therefore, there was no confusion in his mind. After doing MSc (Maths) (First Class First), his goal was the competitive exam.

Like most of us, Mr Bongirwar served on the traditional posts. But he spent nearly 14 long years in the Revenue Department, from Supto Collector to Divisional Commissioner to Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue). Collector of two Districts, Divisional Commissioner of three Revenue Divisions, Secretary / Principal Secretary to two Chief Ministers, he had no difficulty in wearing the heavy mantle of Chief Secretary.

Apart from being a die-hard bureaucrat Mr Bongirwar is a person with many facets. Gregarious and never dull, nor dispirited even for a moment, he enlivens every gathering by his smiling presence. Surrounded by innumerable families, relatives and friends, he is always by their side, in the joyous as well as sorrowful moments, as their friend, philosopher and guide. Mad keen on the government service, he has got his both daughters and one sister married to IAS officers.

Lover of Hindi films, Marathi plays and cards, he rarely misses an invitation to play a game of Rummy and almost always wins hands down and is quick to collect cards, shuffle and distribute them even while others are still rummaging through their cards. Very swift and multi-tasking, with mind as agile as a computer, he is ever ready with solutions to problems that would baffle many others. It was

erstwhile Osmanabad District in the late 70s. Then I worked as Collector of Nagpur for two years and a half. All these were major postings. In 1982 I got the super-time scale and was posted as Municipal Commissioner of Pune. There I had to perform the unpleasant task of setting aside many orders issued against the development rules. Among many other works there, I started and successfully completed resettlement of slum-dwellers on *Parvati* at Bibwewadi-Dhankawadi. As if in recognition of my work, the Corporation unanimously passed resolution to continue me for the fourth year.

RK: *You successfully worked as Secretary to Chief Ministers in different governments. How did you make it possible?*

The Man Who's No Island

therefore imperative for *Harmony* Editor Rameshchandra Kanade to interview this illustrious and distinguished civil servant. Excerpts: **RK:** *How do you look back at your career spanning over about 40 years?*

ALB: I can say that I am happy about my career in the IAS. The service provided me many opportunities to serve the Government and people. Basically I am very comfortable in the company of people. I enjoy working with them and for them. I have always believed in team building and working together. I have enjoyed leading from the front and encouraging my colleagues and subordinates. My doors were always open to them and they too felt free to approach me any time. My educational background also must have helped me a great deal. Having studied maths, I valued precision. They say I also have good memory. I was lucky to have got long and stable innings in the field and was therefore able to interact with people at all levels and study their problems from close quarters. I believed in being pro-active and taking quick decisions. I took care to work as objectively and as dispassionately as possible and avoided getting perturbed or ruffled. And God has always been kind to me.

RK: *Which was your first major posting?*

ALB: I was JMD/MD of MSSIDC for about five years. I was made Collector of the

ALB: I was first selected by late Shri Sudhakarrao Naik to be his Secretary when he became Chief Minister of the Congress government in 1991. I continued in that capacity throughout his period up to December 1993. I was again selected by Shri Manohar Joshi in 1995 to be his Secretary soon after he became Chief Minister of the Shiv Sena-BJP Government. Thus I served two Chief Ministers belonging to different parties and ideologies. With both, I worked most diligently and impartially and thought only about the State's welfare. I was able to streamline procedures and quicken the decision-making. I coordinated with all concerned departments and helped them solve their problems. Many projects including the flyovers in Mumbai and the Mumbai-Pune Express Highway saw the light of day during this period. I am thankful to these Chief Ministers that they liked my work and gave me the freedom to advise them frankly and fearlessly.

RK: *You were made Chief Secretary by Shri Narayan Rane. What do you say about his stint as Chief Minister?*

ALB: My elevation as Chief Secretary came to me as a total surprise. I was Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Manohar Joshi, and in early 1999, Shri Narayan Rane became the Chief Minister.

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Is there any civil servant alive who does not know Hari from his Mussoorie days? In fact, anyone who has entered the portals of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration prior to 31 March 1990 can never commit the sin of forgetting Hari and his Canteen. Both are truly legendary.

In 1971, when I was first at Mussoorie, Hari was a young man. Soon after I arrived at the Academy there was a knock at my door, and I found this dapper little gentleman outside, introducing himself and inviting me to visit his shop near the main entrance.

Hari's was approached via a small footpath along the slope opposite the main entrance. The place stocked all sorts of stationery, embossed with the service emblem, service ties, socks, handkerchiefs, book and, of course, chocolates. It was Hari who introduced me to the Cadbury 5 Star bar, priced at Rs 2.50, and quite a luxury, considering that we carried home a basic salary of Rs 400 then, and that around Rs 300 out of this was deducted at source towards messing charges. It was also *Hari's* that provided me with embossed envelopes and letter pads which I used for sending letters to family and friends.

The main attraction at *Hari's*, however, was the *pakor*as and piping hot *parathas* that Mrs Hari prepared for us in her own kitchen and served with her home made *achar*. Fridays were dry lunch days at the Academy, when we were treated to a couple of tasteless cutlets and some very bland boiled veggies. It was on Fridays that there was a general exodus to *Hari's* at 1 p.m. for Mrs Hari's offerings of *aloo* and *gobhi parathas*.

The best part of *Hari's* services was that you did not have to shell out the cash immediately. But on the 2nd of every month Hari came round faithfully and most of us restored our credit with him. Some did not; and as Supernumerary Assistant Collectors these probationers received polite letters from him, stating that he had immediate family commitments and could they please remit the requisite

amount to him as soon as possible. I suspect that these letters chased some of my batch mates well into their SDOships.

As time passed Hari became an integral and inseparable part of one's memories associated with the Academy. He became part of the nostalgia.

Imagine my surprise, therefore, when one day recently my PA informed me that there was a gentleman on the phone who would identify himself only as Hari from Mussoorie. I was delighted. An invitation

ADDL CS CHITKALA ZUTSHI CRONICLES

Legendary Hari



to dinner followed and I spent a happy evening with Mr Hari and his family, swapping reminiscences and anecdotes. Mrs Hari's *parathas* were as yummy as ever, served now by her daughter-in-law and two charming grandchildren. Hari's daughter-in-law showed me the family's collection of Ganesh idols in brass, copper, terra cotton and glass.

Mr Hari is compiling a book on his 40 years of experience with the Academy and the legions of probationers who passed through its portals.

Mr Hari was associated with the Academy since long before it shifted to Mussoorie in 1959. It was in 1948 that he and his father set up their tuck shop in room number 44 of Metcalfe House when the first regular batch of the Indian Administrative Service reported there for training. Their trade name was Hind Traders, but they were popularly known as Hari's Canteen. Since they were new to this sort of retailing, they started in a small way, assessing the probationers' requirements

and initially providing them with stationery, toiletries, cigarettes, bidis and coca cola. If a probationer wanted something which they did not have, Hari would invariably get it by the evening. Hari also hired out transistor radios to the probationers for their evenings' entertainment.

In 1952, Hari's father bought a '39 model Opel and started giving driving lessons to the probationers, with the permission of the management. Father and son taught the probationers driving as well as motor mechanics. Mr Kazi Muktiyar Ahmed (UP-'52) was their first student. They installed the dual system of control in their

Opel after a 1953 topper crashed the car into the wall of Metcalfe House during a practice session.

Mr AN Jha was Director and Mr RK Trivedi his Deputy Director when the Academy moved to Mussoorie in 1959. Mr Trivedi persuaded and Hari agreed to shift and set up his tuck shop in the room, which later became the billiards room. Then he was allotted space that later became the dispensary.

Mrs Hari joined Hari in 1960 and in 1962 they finally moved to the cottage on the hillside that we all knew so well. The IAS monogram on jackets was introduced in 1961 when Mr AN Jha asked for one. Director Pimputkar, on his visit to Japan, was so impressed with the lapel cards used by the Japanese to identify each other that he got them replicated at the Academy, with Hari to supply them. The service tie was introduced in 1962 and the first tie was presented to Mr SS Khera, ICS, the then Cabinet Secretary. IAS buttons and the Indian Forest Service tie followed, all provided by Hari.

Hari also rendered another sterling service. When prospective fathers-in-law turned up at the Academy, they invariably trooped up to *Hari's*, and it was Hari who gave the clean chit (or, character certificate?) to the would-be bridegrooms.

As the evening draws to a close, I discover that Hari had spent his earliest years in Mumbai and attended St Teresa's Convent in Santa Cruz,

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Who is not enamoured of flying? Right from Icarus, man has attempted to imitate the birds. Flying is a passion that has struck man in all ages, and I am no exception. Believe me I too have been flying planes, as a pilot, for more than 20 years, not in the real sky but in virtual skies made available by the computer software industry through their Flight Simulators.

The first Flight Simulator I used was from Psion. It could be run on a Sinclair ZX+ computer which was very popular in the early 80s. Since then I have used all new versions of the Microsoft Flight Simulator and tried to enjoy and master the Pilot's skills.

The latest Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004 runs on a computer with Windows platform. It has been perfected to such an extent that one can get all the thrill of flying without spending a paisa and without any fear of crashing the plane and losing one's life. It gives you a wide choice of planes ranging from Piper to Cessna to Bombardier to Boeing 707 and Boeing 747. However, I prefer Cessna since it is available more easily. It gives its user the cockpit view and also enable him to see the outside world from the eyes of the pilot. The controls of the aircraft are true to life. In addition to the usual controls for the rudder, ailerons, flaps and the compass the virtual aircrafts have modern geographical information systems and wireless communication systems for speaking to the Air Traffic Controls as in real life. One has a choice of taking off from any airport of the world, travelling in the chosen direction land at

the destination airport. The virtual airports are replicas of the actual airports with complete details of the buildings and runways. The graphics are life like and flying on the simulator gives real life feeling. For

take less than one hour, and one can see the beautiful landscape with hills, valleys, rivers, highways and the sea exactly in the same way as in an actual flight. I also enjoy hovering over Seattle, where my daughter and son-in-law work in the Microsoft Corporation. Flying in a Piper, which affords a leisurely view of the scenery below on account of the slow flying speed, I can see from above the beautiful lawns and buildings of the Microsoft. I enjoy the cockpit view and also the spot view in which I get to watch the plane from a point outside it as I am watching it from a plane flying near it or behind it.



Get set and go on this

No Flight of Fancy

with Additional Chief Secretary (Personnel) Navin Kumar



example, if you are flying low over Las Vegas you will be able to see not only each building but also read the signboards fixed to them. It is surmised by experts that the terrorists who attacked the twin towers in New York had thoroughly practised the attack on the Microsoft Flight Simulator.

My favourite flights in this virtual world have been from London to Paris, and from Mumbai to Pune. These flights

In July 2003 I was in Florida in connection with a workshop on HIV/AIDS organised at the University

South Florida, Tampa. At one dinner, Professor Sinnet of the university, who was in charge of the programme started talking about his hobbies. He told me that flying was his hobby and that he owned a plane. I disclosed to him that I too am a flyer, albeit in a virtual world of Flight Simulators. He looked impressed and said that he would take me to the air-

port the next day and let me fly his plane. I thought he was joking, under the influence of drinks, which he had partaken of, in sufficient measure.

I was pleasantly surprised to find Professor Sinnet at my hotel the next morning to pick me up for the airport in his sports car. Within minutes we were racing towards the airport. From his car phone he spoke to the airport authorities and obtained clearance for my entry to

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PRD: Dear Gopal: Your suggestion to exchange service stories opens the floodgates of nostalgia. During my probationary days in the erstwhile Chanda district, I was doing my training in the Collectorate and was attached to the section dealing with grant of arms licence. All the papers going up to the Collector and coming down from him were routed through me. There was this case of a 19-year-old student asking for a gun licence on the ground that a tiger was seen in the vicinity of his homestead and that he was the only able-bodied male in the house. The spot reports confirmed that there was indeed a tiger seen around that area and the applicant was the only able-bodied male in his family. The licence clerk dutifully brought out all these in his note. He also noted that the applicant was a student. This last point somehow touched a raw chord in the Collector's nerves. "Why should a student ask for a gun licence?" the Collector fulminated in bold, angular strokes of pen across the file. "He should concentrate more on his studies." The reply to the applicant was classic: "Dear Sir: With reference to your application dated regarding the grant of an Arms Licence, I am directed to inform you that it has been rejected. I am further directed to inform you that you should concentrate more on your studies. Kindly report compliance expeditiously."

VSG: Dear Bhomboo: That was terrific. I had my collectorate training as a Supy in Amravati. One of the tasks was to study local Acts, Codes, etc. My RDC had asked me to submit a concise summary of my acquaintance with the Acts. So, I used to write it and get it typed from some clerk for submission. Once I wrote a note on the Tenancy Act. Being an urbanite, the concept of tenancy was still unclear to me. Anyway, the clerk handed over the typed summary to me. He had torn out my manuscript, as it was not required any more. I saw that one of the sentences was typed as: "The Tenancy Act provides special protection to windows and mirrors." I was flummoxed, but could not remember what I had written. After rack-

ing my brains all day I discovered that the "windows and mirrors" were in fact "windows and minors"!

PRD: Dear Gopal: This one is about the time when I was Collector of Nagpur. I had just taken over and was still trying to learn the ropes. I got a file containing a piteous plea from the Bhosale Raje of Nagpur for sanctioning an amount of Rs 10,000 for Satyanarayan Puja. The deal-

**Former Bureaucrats PR Dasgupta, VS Gopalakrishnan
Exchange stories, drawing**

Vignettes from the Service

ing clerk made a studious scrutiny of the items of expenditure and recommended that Rs 8,000 could be sanctioned. Being a cautious man, he concluded his note with, "However, for orders." All this was fine, but I was bemused by the fact that the file was marked to "Hon. COW". So, I asked him who the 'cow' was. Surprised, he said, "You, your Honour." Then he very kindly explained, "Since Lord Dalhousie's time the Collector of Nagpur has been the Court of Wards for the Bhosale Estate." I have since been chewing the cud.

VSG: Hon. Ex-COW!!! That was great! Here is this one from my side. That was the time of a short attachment with the Tahsildar's office in Amravati. I had finished the day, and before leaving I was told that the Tahsildar had gone away but had left me a note, as assignment for the next day. The note said, "Familiarisation with LILA and SITA." To say the least, I was baffled and started conjuring up fantasies. Silly, it turned out to be the *Land Improvements Loans Act* and the *Suppression of Immoral Traffic in women Act*.

VSG: Hi Bhomboo! Have u forsaken me?

PRD: Hi Gopal: No question of forsaking you. It was just laziness. Now, let me relate to you one of my Delhi stories. This is a second-hand story, but the person who told it to me swore that it was God's own truth. In the late 60s, a deal was signed between India and Yugoslavia to supply a large number of Railway Wagons to Yugoslavia by India over a period of five years. The deal was lucrative and nobody objected to a penalty clause tucked in fine print in an obscure corner in the contract.

And when disaster struck, the Engineering Industry, and more particularly the Wagon Industry, went through a period of terrible slump. The wagons could not be manufactured and delivered to Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavs, after waiting for some time invoked the stringent penalty clause. The Government realised, with a shock that not only a few companies but also the Government was looking at the financial ruin. It was decided to rush a high-powered delegation to Yugoslavia to salvage the situation. R. Thirumalai (1948 IAS topper), aka

Abou Ben Adhem, led the delegation. The talks went on in a desultory fashion for the first two days, and the Yugoslavs were at their frostiest best throughout. Every one realised that the talks were going to fail and there was total gloom in the Indian camp. On the third day when the talks were about to end in a stalemate, a remarkable development took place. Indian negotiator Thirumalai, a strict vegetarian, always used to carry some fruits in his overcoat pocket to take care of his requirements in a country, which had very dim understanding about vegetarian food. That day also he was carrying a fairly large number of apples. During one of his animated interventions he realised that a few of them had slipped out of his pocket and were rolling under the table. So, he gently slid to one side and started looking for them under the table. In the process a few more slipped out of his pocket. So he slid down further to get them and almost went under the table. The baffled Yugoslav Leader of the Delegation, out of sheer sense of reciprocity, also slid under the table. There they looked at each other under the table, and with a knowing smile, gathered back all the apples. And the ice was broken. When they came up together, an understanding was reached and the Yugoslavs agreed to substantially reduce the penalty and accept a delayed delivery. Apples have never played a more significant role, barring when they fell before Newton. ■

[VSG (1962) and PRD (1963) can be contacted, for more stories, on: 022-24936429; 080-30616596, respectively]. ■

The Man Who's No Island

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I was shifted to Revenue Department. But within months he selected me as Chief Secretary. That surprised me. I found him very determined and resolute and quick in decision-making. He knew exactly what he wanted to do and set about doing from day one. But his period was curtailed by early ordering of general elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assembly. His party lost the elections.

RK: *Your next CM was Vilasrao Deshmukh. How was your experience with him?*

ALB: I had known Vilasraoji since my days as Collector of the erstwhile Osmanabad, which had included Latur. Later as Divisional Commissioner of Aurangabad Division I had frequent interactions with him and always found him to be pleasant, receptive, thoughtful and quick in understanding. He always came across as a person wanting to do a lot for the State. In October 1999 he became the new Chief Minister. It was very gracious of him that, in keeping with the best traditions of the State, he continued me as the Chief Secretary. I remained on that post up to January 2001.

RK: *What are your views about today's bureaucracy?*

ALB: I think we have one of the best bureaucracies in the country. Our officers are competent and pro-people. They are sincere and hardworking. They always first think of the State's interests. I must say that my success was because of my colleagues and subordinates. They rose to every difficult occasion and gave their best. Today's problems are more complex and complicated and there are no easy solutions. The expectations and aspirations of people are growing manifold. Therefore, administrators have to put in much more effort. Fortunately, the newcomers are well qualified and groomed in the best institutes. They are certainly as good as those in the corporate world. With human touch and by adoption of the latest technologies I am sure they will be able to meet the growing challenges. ■

[Mr AL Bongirwar (1966) can be contacted on 022-23792001, 56564860, 9869449781]. ■

The Da Vinci Code as I see it

By LALHMINGLIANA SAIAMI

As a church-going Christian, how should I react to the portrayal of Jesus Christ by Dan Brown in his bestseller *The Da Vinci Code*?

I read the book last July at Kolkata when I was visiting my son Ramdinsanga and his family. As a novelist myself, I found the book to be absorbing. The writer depicts the Louvre Museum of Paris, the 17th century church Sain-Sulpice and other scenes so vividly that I felt I was there, following the action. But I find the end to be a let down.

Jesus is portrayed as being married to Mary Magdalene, a faithful follower in the Bible, and having a daughter by her, and descendents up to this day, which is a well guarded secret to be revealed when the time comes, and which a controversial organization, *Opus Dei*, of the Roman Catholic church is seeking to destroy. The secret is in the safe custody of an ancient secret organization, *Priory of Sion*.

The story unfolds with the killing of Jacques Sauniere, the curator of Louvre Museum where he is waiting for Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor of symbolism. Sauniere left behind some cryptic signs, which his own granddaughter, Sophie Neveu, a cryptologist of the Paris Police and Langdon investigate. The trail leads them to an astounding discovery that Sophie Neveu herself is a descendent of Jesus and Mary, which ending downgrades the much talked about book as another clever fiction but not well finished.

In the 'Fact' page of the book, the author claims, "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, document, and secret rituals in the novel are accurate." But an article in the May 06 issue of the *Reader's Digest*:

SP Mondkar passes away

Mr SP Mondkar (1963), passed away in Mumbai at his residence in Buena Vista. He was 87. Among the first few Deputy Collectors from Bombay Division who made it to the IAS, he was known to be an upright, honest and sincere officer. He retired as Joint Secretary in Mantralaya. He is survived by his wife and two daughters. May God rest his soul in peace. ■



The Da Vinci Code: The Fact and The Fiction, written by Stephane Calmeyn has shown that several of the 'Facts' in the book are not so. For example, it is claimed that the existence of the secret organization, The Priory of Sion, can be dated to the year 1099, but it was actually created in 1959, and thus the claim that Sir Isaac Newton and Leonardo Da Vinci were its members is false,

which discredits the already ridiculous fiction of the book.

Do I have to say more? As for me, the fiction that Jesus married Mary Magdalene was not new to me when I read the book. I had seen the movie *The Last Temptation of Christ* some 15 years ago. It passed harmlessly. *The Da Vinci Code* and the movie too will pass, without doing any harm to the Christianity. So I am not offended, but I am glad I am not of Dan Brown's ilk to ridicule other religions. ■

[Mr Lalhmingliana (1965) lives at Chaltlang (Thlanual Veng), Aizawl. He writes in Mizo papers on social and government issues. He can be contacted on: 0389-2341862; 09436365143]. ■

Promoted

The following officers of the 1990 have been promoted to the super-time scale of the IAS. So congratulations to: BA Gagarani, Anoop Kumar, Meeta Rajiv Lochan, Anil Diggikar, and SK Biswas. ■

Officers of the 1993 batch have been given the selection grade. Congratulations to them too. ■

Legendary Hari

Continued from P 4

at the pre-primary level. This was my school too until 1961.

As we wish each other good night, a full moon shines out of the sky and it is almost like being a probationer again back at Charleville in 1971. ■

[Mrs Chitkala Zutshi (1971), ACS & Resident Commissioner, Delhi, continues to enthral our readers with her accounts of treks and the people she meets. She can be contacted on: 011-23388075; 9322406177]. ■

Books: Dear Mr Kanade,

I write to you on behalf of India Today Book Club. India Today Book Club is part of Living Media Group, India's largest media group with interests in print, television, Internet and book publishing. India Today Book Club (ITBC) is first of its kind in the subcontinent and also India's only and biggest book club. It presently has approximately 20,000 members.

ITBC provides high-quality books to book lovers at attractive discounted prices, from across the world ITBC publishes a monthly catalogue with a listing of 300 + books, which is distributed free to all its members. We want to reach out to the IAS Officers in Maharashtra who would be posted in remote towns and villages where there would be no ready access to a book store from where they can pick up books to read. Please mention about it in your newsletter and request the IAS officers to contact me (Anshuman Agrawal) at anshuman.agrawal@intoday.com. ■

No Flight of Fancy

Continued from P 4

where private planes were parked. On reaching the airport and after completing some formalities we were sitting in his 4-seater Moony. He presented me with the Moony Cap which I have preserved as a souvenir. He proceeded to explain the obligatory checks for take off. Soon he sat in the pilot's seat and I in the co-pilot's to his right. He started the engine and spoke to the ATC and took clearance for take off. Then he taxied the plane and brought it to the main runway.

And then I was taken aback as he said that the plane was mine and I could take off. I had not expected that he would give me so much liberty with his plane. I was feeling nervous but I did not want to show that I was scared. My prestige as a pilot of virtual skies was at stake as Professor Sinnet seemed to want to test that. But thanks to the long hours of practice on the Simulator the controls in the plane appeared familiar and I maintained an outward air of cool confidence.

Finally when I pushed the throttle forward slowly he kept his right hand on my left hand

as a safety measure to stop me if I made any mistake. The plane raced and took off smoothly. When we reached 1,000 feet he removed his hand from my left hand and complimented me for a good take off. He said that I had really practiced well on the simulator and that the plane was entirely mine for the next half an hour. On his advice and under his constant watch I took the plane to 5,000 feet above the sea level. He then told me to make a

without a license. It was a thrilling and exciting experience for me for which I thanked Professor Sinnet profusely.

I would recommend to the readers who may want to enjoy the thrill of piloting a plane that they try their hand on the Microsoft Flight Simulator, 2004. With Internet we have already created a virtual world with no national boundaries. Let us hope and pray that this would be realized in not too distant a future for the real world. ■

[Mr Navin Kumar (1969), as our readers know well, is a person with a number of incredible hobbies and interests. Ever in search of new ideas, he has no problem with time. He can be contacted on: 9819334333]. ■

Who's gone where?

■ *N Arumugam* (1983): MD, Maharashtra State Cotton Growers' Marketing Federation. ■ *SK Sharma* (1984): Chairman & MD, Maharashtra State Warehousing Corporation, Pune. ■ *Sanjay Kumar* (1984): Divisional Commissioner, Aurangabad. ■ *V Giriraj* (1985): Secretary (Agriculture). ■ *Shyamlal Goyal* (1985): MD, Maharashtra State Farming Corporation, Pune. ■ *RA Rajeev* (1987): Additional Municipal Commissioner, BMC. ■ *Apurva Chandra* (1988): Director, Social Welfare, Pune. ■ *SVR Srinivas* (1991): JMD, MSRDC. ■ *SG Kinkar* (1991): Director, Textile, Nagpur. ■ *BS Munde* (1991): Additional Divisional Commissioner, Nasik. ■ *Manisha Patankar-Mhaikar* (1992): Director General, I & PR. ■ *Mbind Mhaikar* (1992): Joint Commissioner, MMRDA. ■ *Rajgopal Deorai* (1992): Commissioner (Sugar), Pune. ■ *Abha Shukla* (1993): Additional Divisional Commissioner, Nagpur. ■ *Mahesh Zagadei* (1993): Director, MEDA, Pune. ■ *Santosh Kumar* (1994): Joint Commissioner, Sales Tax. ■ *Mary Kerkattai* (1994): Additional Municipal Commissioner, PMC. ■ *Vikas Rastogi* (1995): Collector, Ratnagiri. ■ *NK Deshmukh* (1996): Collector, Dhule. ■ *RR Chavan* (1997): Collector, Sangli. ■ *SP Kadu-Patil* (1998): CEO, Satara ZP. ■ *SR Hazare* (1998): CEO, Thane ZP. ■ *TK Bagul* (1998): CEO, Gadchiroli ZP. ■

MONSOON

Former Additional Chief Secretary S. Habeebullah takes a view of the coming monsoon

A beauty of Oriental, romantic, heart-alluring and cute, was crooning on the shore with tambourine and flute, the ocean became impetuous and its upheavals sharp, when she commenced whirling to the strains of harp. the slight odour of the earth mingled with her musk, on sensing the waves were dazed and wonder-struck, the breath of ocean to listen song and see her dance, in multitude scrambled towards the beach in trance.

In lust to reach coast the smoke winged towards sky, to achieve the wish from changing form did not shy, soaring higher the smoke chilled and became cloud, like free man's thought captured and put into bound.

Breeze fondling with mercurial ocean's countenance, meandered unsteadily like a reveller in exuberance, conveyed the warmth of the vanquished heart's sighs, and moistures of tears of the inflamed rufescent eyes. ■

[You may perhaps like to talk to Mr Habeebullah on 022-26715583]. ■

circle in the sky with a radius of about 2 miles. I did it perfectly with the help of the magnetic direction indicator compass, which is on the dashboard. Then he wanted to check my navigational skills. He told me to fly at 200 feet above a ship, which was to the north west of us at about 4 miles. I did this also with perfect ease and with good accuracy. He was impressed and I too was quite happy that my practice over the simulator had not only been enjoyable but also quite useful. After flying for about 20 minutes he asked me to approach the airport at a steady descent from a distance about 10 miles. I lowered the flaps and reduced the speed, making the plane descend smoothly, and at about 50 feet from the ground he took the controls and executed the touch down himself as that is the most delicate operation and cannot be left to a person

■ RNI No. MAHENG/2004/13546 ■ Vol VI, Issue 6 ■ Printed, published and edited by Rameshchandra Kanade (1978), Principal Secretary & Chief Protocol Officer, Government of Maharashtra, on behalf of the IAS Officers' Association, Maharashtra Branch. ■ Published from Suruchi, 10th Floor, Near YB Chavan Centre, General Jagannath Bhosale Marg, Mumbai 400021, and printed at the Government Central Press, Charni Road, Mumbai 400004. ■ Phones: 022-22024438; 22834329; 98200 25277. ■ Email: harmony@iasmah.org; kanade.r@gmail.com ■

One of the most difficult things to give away is kindness; it is usually returned.