



**CREATE HOPE
in the WORLD**

*Happy
New Year*

District: 3011 Club ID: 15238

Rotary



R. I. President: Gordon R. McNally

District Governor: Jeetender Gupta

ROTARY CLUB OF DELHI SOUTH NEWSLETTER "ASHOKA" December, 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE CLUB



Dear Friends,

Wish you and your family a very happy 2024. May the new year bring renewed joy, super health and happiness all around you and your near and dear ones.

First six months of the year have seen plenty of action and probably a good time to take stock of some of the highlights.

Basic Education & Literacy: We continued supporting Sankalp, provided scholarships to hundreds of deserving girls so they can continue with their education, handed over the books to class 1 & 2 students and adopted MCD primary school in Najafgarh. As the first few interventions at primary school, we replaced all the broken slides so the children could play, painted the outer walls to make the school more vibrant, donated television for digital lab and donated 81 plants to make the place green.

**Community Economic
Development: Project**

Nari Shakti has completed the first two batches of students. 31 students enrolled for the programs and 29 of them completed while 2 dropped out. Out of 29 students, 22 have been placed in jobs thus taking the first major step towards financial independence. Registration for 3rd batch has started with 11 students already enrolling for the program as on the date. We are supporting the sewing teacher Meenakshi who trains over 40 students over 3 shifts in sewing. We also donated a high end Juki sewing machine to upgrade the skills of students. Skill Development Centre is under construction at Arya Samaj Vasant Vihar and the same will be ready in January 2024. We had multiple events at Mother Teresa home for the needy children.

Disease prevention & Treatment: Club donated record \$5600 towards global polio fund which can be used to completely eradicate polio from the face of earth. Club organized a blood donation camp together with PWC wherein over 60 units of blood was donated. Your President, a senior citizen too, donated the blood. Cervical cancer camp was organized at Nai Disha with support from Rotary Cancer Foundation and Max BLK and 33 girls were provided 2nd dose thus making them fully vaccinated. First dose was provided to 20 girls from other schools. 2nd Cervical cancer vaccination camp was held at BVN where 230 girls were administered 1st dose. This was the largest camp thus far in Delhi. Camp was organized after extensive sharing of information about cervical cancer, benefits of vaccination, enrollment of parents and teachers in the program and eventually vaccinating 230 girls at school campus. Club members particularly spend time one on one with girls who were nervous about vaccination thus providing much needed comfort.

Environment: Club did the tree plantation

drive at Buddha Park wherein 500 trees were planted. In addition, 81 plants were donated to the newly adopted school - MCD primary school Najafgarh to enhance greenery at the campus.

Peace Building & Conflict Prevention: Speaker Amitabh Kant spoke to the members of the club on the importance of G20 in India and impact on India and of India on global affairs. Gen Syed Ata Hasnain spoke about the Israel -Palestine conflict and the way forward. The talks were very inspiring and sparked rich discussion.

CSR Supported projects: Infrastructure at Shroff Charitable Eye hospital was completed and required machines were delivered to the hospital. These machines will enable additional 6000 cataract surgeries which is much needed with the aging population.

The month of December was another exciting month starting with co-sponsorship of ISculpt event at IIS organized by Dr Neeraj Gupta. Several club members joined the event and appreciated the work of renowned artists. Members enjoyed the speaker session by Gen Syed Ata Hasnain who articulated various scenarios in the current ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. He also shared inspiring stories from the recent tunnel rescue operations. It was great to see the bonding amongst member families over the Christmas and New Year party at Claridge's. Members showed up in full strength at BVN to support and encourage the girls at BVN who were taking cervical cancer vaccination. We will soon begin the blanket distribution for needy and members generously contributed to donate blankets this cold winter season. We will also commence a career guidance program for underprivileged girls.

**Pramod Agarwal
President, 2023-24**

From the desk of the
EDITOR



Every year that passes by has its milestones-either memorable or forgettable. It's a common thread that runs in the life of institutions, societies, conglomerates, nations. It's a time of annual stocktaking of a year gone by, a time to reveal plans of the future. At Rotary we are uniquely positioned, since the calendar year is a constituent of two halves of two Rotary years. The Rotary founding fathers in their wisdom decided on the Rotary year beginning July 1. The grapevine reveals that initially it was the international convention which set the beginning of the Rotary fiscal and administrative year. This happened successively in two consecutive years in August 1910 and 1911. However, it was at the BOD meeting in August 1912, when it was decided to audit the finances of Rotary International. This necessitated fixing June 30 as the Rotary fiscal year and clubs around the world have since lived with this writ. The year 2022-23 ending June 30, was a healthy harvest of accolades and trophies for many achievements across several avenues of service, under the redoubtable leadership of PP Lalit Sawhney. Six months of Rotary year 2023-24 have witnessed a yeoman effort by President Pramod Agarwal who is defining the year with some extraordinary initiatives. The calendar year 2023 for RCDS finished on a high and on a happy note with performance and recognition across various avenues. The momentum of 2023, combined with the zeal of the President promises to yield a healthy dividend in the new year as well.

The club members celebrated Xmas at the Claridges, a 2 in 1 affair- preceded by a scintillating talk by Lt General Syed Ata Hasnain (R), one of the most celebrated military experts and a seasoned tactical strategist on December 16. It was followed by the annual Xmas and New Year's revelry and amongst the usual array of spirits, the much touted Malt whiskey occupying a pride of place, was the cynosure of the discerning palettes !! Photos of the event printed elsewhere in this issue reveal a pictorial kaleidoscope of wholesome fun that the members revelled in. Expectedly it was hailed as a thoroughly enjoyable evening, a befitting finale to a memorable year.

The Yuletide ecclesiastical festival, or Christmas as a more familiar term, is celebrated as the birth of Christ on December 25. Though there's no precise record, the credit is given to Sextus Julius Africanus the Roman historian for establishing the date two and more millenniums ago and which has remained firm, sacrosanct and unchallenged. White Christmas is redolent of purity and piety and which is associated with the pristine white snow and the hallowed images of Jesus Christ. Christmas and the legend of Santa Claus are intertwined in a holy bond of folklore and the reality of the birth of the son of God. Santa Claus is the quintessential Good Samaritan spreading good will, happiness and joy at Christmas whose legendary reindeer hauled

sledge, stockings full of gifts descending through fire chimneys, fired many a child's happy dreams. Even today gifts are spread around fire places, though the childhood innocence is not a guarantee of their gullibility, as the myth of Santa and his reindeer driven sledge is increasingly being seen askance. Historical folklore suggests that Santa Claus in fact, was the mythical clone of a monk named Saint Nicholas or affectionately called Nicks, who lived in a small Roman town and spread cheer by distributing gifts to children on Christmas. Whatever be the truth, billions of children have grown up experiencing and dreaming the delightful and delusional world of joy and happiness, which the images of Santa Claus flying in from the Northern Hemisphere with sackful of gifts is evocative of. Arrival of Christmas and the festive spirit lifts even the most jaded of moods. The Christian world in particular, and countless other countries influenced by Christianity in general, come alive to a celebratory mood of happiness, joy, colourfully decorated high streets singing of carols, and a midnight mass to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It's the spiritual beauty of such happy inclusive festivals which spread joy, peace and much merriment.

It's sad and unfortunate that the holy land today, is in the throes of unprecedented violence, where even little babies are being mercilessly slaughtered for no other reason than the faith to which they

are born. We still live in a brutal and barbaric world in which the merciless and ruthless instinct predisposes reason, breeding maniac hatred and violence. Bethlehem which has historically been home to the scenes of nativity, and is central to the celebrations of Christmas, has been postponed in favour of the traditional prayers this year. The scenes of nativity depicting the birth of Christ, the manger, the star of Bethlehem which guides the wise men to the birth of Christ and which have been replayed for centuries, have unfortunately become a victim of the present ongoing strife and have been abandoned this year. It is however, a poignant moment to see the child Christ, representing the brutalised infants of Gaza and Israel, being depicted under rubble and stones at Bethlehem. Christmas of 2023 will forever be remembered for brutality, strife, destruction and violence. Annus horribilis . We hope never again!!

Christmas is the trigger to a long week of celebrations - the Boxing Day on the 26 th, followed by new year eve and the traditional New Year's brunch, where after a regime of detoxification takes over to begin the cleansing process of an overworked digestive tract. Nature has designed a perfect punishment plan for hedonistic overindulgence . The weight which upped in a week takes four or more painful weeks to plateau out. Gourmandising has its painful consequences!!

A narrative of such a long festive season would be incomplete without salivating on the traditional and celebratory fare. Whilst, turkey at thanksgiving is common place, traditionally the pride of place at Christmas is the roast ham and for a change from the traditional a duck or a goose cooked in orange juice has no parallel. Of course different regions and communities have regional variations depending on their culture, traditions, tastes and availability of the exotic. For instance Gravlax, a salt cured salmon with herbs, assumes the pride of place on a Scandinavian table. I recall my Syrian Christian friend from Kerala, serving a melange of non-vegetarian cuisine of spicy mince, kingfish, stews and appams and a few other accompaniments suffused with dry coconut. It was a Christmas meal, reminiscent of traditions tweaked bit by bit by successive generations . New ingredients, new styles, different techniques, textures and fusion of different cultures have all refined and elevated the tastes and presentation of the traditional dishes. The celebrated Indian Michelin star chef Vikas Khanna's 'twist of taste', where the tastes of two cuisines are merged, will aptly

recall to mind the process of evolution of the traditional.

Fast reverse sixty years, the mores of dress have witnessed genealogical changes. Tuxedo, black tie, cummerbund, white sharkskin or a black double breasted coat, black trousers with satin stripes, patent leather shoes completed the sartorial picture. It was then, but now and for lack of a better expression, it's an unconventional world where quirker the dress, greater the style quotient!! I guess it's a reactive generation, which espouses a degree of infidelity about conventions and mores of the traditional styles.

If you sit back and reflect, such festivals have been elevated to opportunities of great value and of low hanging fruits, by marketing professionals positioning their wares attractively. Print to television to cinema these all are the tools exploited to the hilt to ensnare the consumer interest. Valentine till a few decades ago was an alien event of little interest, till the marketers smelt an opportunity and added billions to the GDP. Red roses are cultivated and finely timed for harvest on Valentine Eve at phenomenal markups to enmesh many a heart at the altar of Eros, the Greek God of romance. To assess its potential, imagine its reach even into the Mofussil corners of the country spreading the fragrance of love albeit surreptitiously. February sees the spread of love and red is its ambassadorial colour!! ' If red be the colour, let it splash love, love and more love.....'with apologies to Shakespeare for his famous ditty of Twelfth Night, 'if music be the food of love, play on'!!

Christmas brings alive many old traditions but the one that's on top of the heap is the legend of the mistletoe. It's a plant symbolic of love, and mistletoe wreaths and branches which are traditionally hung in kitchens or hallways and kissing under them represents romance, vitality and fertility. It's a tradition shrouded in mystery though it's believed that the ancient Greeks had started this practice. Whatever or wherever be it's beginning, it is a tradition still thriving and practiced with much enthusiastic energy!!

We sign off with hopes of a world at peace with itself in the New Year and with the strife and suffering of 2023 a distant and an unpleasant memory. God bless us all as we embrace 2024 with hopes and prayers of abundance, peace and prosperity.

Cheers.

Inderjeet Singh
Editor

SPEAKER MEETING AND CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR PARTY

16th December, 2023

Gen. Syed Ata Hasnain speaking on the Israel - Hamas Conflict and the Future



We had an excellent speaker on the evening of our Christmas & New Year Dinner. This was Lt. Gen. Syed Ata Hasnain, and it was his 3rd visit to our Club. Gen. Hasnain had also been in the news recently, as the co-ordinator of the National Disaster Management Authority's Rescue of 41 Tunnel workers in Uttarakhand.

We got a detailed education on Middle East / West Asia Geo-politics, starting with the geography of Egypt, Gulf and Israel, and Palestinian history, and geo-strategic importance of Middle East. And, how the conflicts here exercise a pull on all big powers. He also spoke of the shaping of West Asia, creation of Israel, the Egypt-Israel conflict, the clash of ideologies in West Asia and major conflicts, Muslim Brotherhood, and the Abraham Accords to stabilise West Asia.

He then came to the Hamas strike on 7th October, and the tunnels set up by Hamas. How this upset the appellation of developing Israel-Saudi friendship, Israel's Response

strategy, and the Israeli Ground Offensive in Gaza. And, how the Hamas-Israel conflict inflames the Arab world, matters of military interest, and India seeking balanced relationships between the warring parties.

This interesting talk was followed by many questions by our members, including terrorism in Kashmir. We need to thank Ambassador Anil Wadhwa for inviting Gen. Hasnain and giving us this extremely educational session on this current subject.

If this was not enough, this was followed by the Christmas and New Year Party for the year. We had a very large no. of participants for the evening, and an extremely well decorated venue, both inside the Viceroy Hall and outside. And, to top it all we had an amazing mouth-watering menu for the New Year Dinner. All in all, an excellent evening.

Lalit Sawhney







ISCUPT

RCDS were part sponsors of an exhibition of sculptures appropriately titled Isculpt on view at the India International Centre. It received rave reviews from several of our members who visited the exhibition.





DELHI ARTS SOCIETY
PRESIDENT
NEERAJ GUPTA

AND
INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
INVITE YOU TO

iSculpt

FOR KESHAV MALIK
AT 100 YEARS

CURATOR **UMA NAIR**

SCULPTURES BY
MODERN MASTERS

AND MONOCHROMES BY
MANOJ ARORA

AT **GANDHI KING PLAZA**
AND **IIC QUADRANGLE GARDEN**

PREVIEW
7TH DECEMBER
5.00PM TO 7.00PM

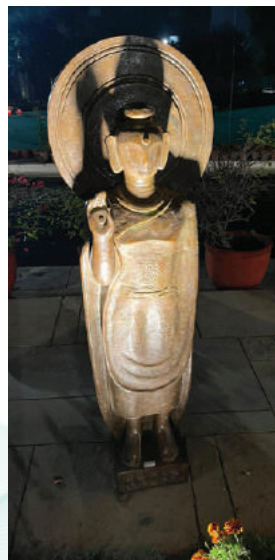
DATES
7TH TO 21ST DECEMBER
11.00AM TO 7.00PM

Amar Nath Sehgal, Ankon Mitra, Arun Pandit, Bhola Ram, Biman Das, Dhananjay Singh, G. Reghu, Harsha Durugodda, Himmat Shah, Rini Dhupal, Muzaffar Ali, Neeraj Gupta, Nimesh Pillu, NS Rana, Parmod Mann, Phaneendra Nath Chaturvedi, Rajesh Ram, Ram Kumar Manna, Rini Dhupal, S D Hariprasad, Satish Gujral, Satish Gupta, Sonis Sareen, Vipul Kumar, Manoj Arora







CERVICAL CANCER VACCINATION

4th November, 2023



Your club in collaboration with the Interact Club of BVN and the Cancer Foundation of India and supported by Max-BLK hospital organised Delhi's largest ever single day cervical cancer vaccination camp was held on December 23, 2023. The camp was a huge success and we were able to vaccinate 230 girls in one single day!!

The planning for the grand event started off months back with an awareness webinar being organised for adolescent girls of BVN and their parents on 14 September 2023, with Dr Vaneeta Kapur, Mrs Vandana Bhalla, Dr Ashima Golia (a gynecologist parent of BVN) and Naman Agarwal participating in the discussion. This was followed by a few more rounds of awareness initiatives and talks which our Interactors effectively held with their peers and convinced them to sign up for taking the vaccine. The parents were given a choice to choose from either Gardasil or Cervavac as per their preference.

The D day was 23 December 2023 when team RCDS led by President Pramod our AG Rtn Vandana Bhalla and

supported by Director New Generations Naman, IPP Lalit Sawhney, Secretary Sarvpreet Singh, PP Tridibes Basu, PP Pradeep Bahri, PP Som and Rajni Dua, Rtn Amar Goyal, Rtn Shailen and Kaval Verma, Rtn Pankaj and Aarti Poddar were present to support and help with this noble cause. Rtn Dr Neeraj Bhalla was omnipresent through the event with meticulous planning to ensure the presence of doctors and paramedical staff, ambulance and complete on ground support. Rtn Ajay Narain, Secretary General of the Cancer Foundation who was present at the camp complimented team RCDS for successfully organizing such a large camp.

Principal Minakshi Kushawa was profusely thanked the team of Rotary Club. The success of the camp can be measured by the fact that 230 girls were immunized without any significant incident and the Education Directorate and few other schools approaching us to host these camps at their premises.

Naman Agarwal



Rotary Delhi South

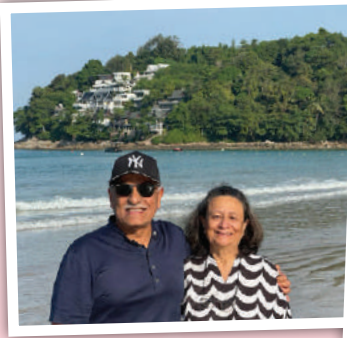
Cervical Cancer Vaccination Drive

TODAY
9:30 AM - 2:00 PM
BIRLA VIDYA NIKETAN
Pushp Vihar, New Delhi

Our Partners
Max BLK
Rotary Cancer Foundation

...and they lived happily thereafter!!

by popular request we are creating a theatre of the newlyweds then, and happily ensconced now with each other



In December seven of our members tied the nuptial knot, and as is evident all have thrived in the Holy Alliance of matrimony. Their demeanour in private and public is a testimony that all is well and tickety boo !! We wish them long years of happiness and good health. One amongst the seven, contrived to meet his future wife by employing youthful deception of riding piggy on his friend's acquiescence to introduce him to his future wife. It was done furtively to escape the parental presence but it was not to be!! The central episode to this developing interest was the cup that cheers and he sipped through the cup of Earl Grey tea certainly not his favourite brew- in fact his much abhorred choice!! Can you guess who the lucky groom is?

A NEW YEAR'S KICK IN THE A..E BY SAGAT

Photo Source: wikipedia



On the 16th Dec 1971 evening the Pakistan Army surrendered and by the next evening we had assembled all of them into Dacca cantonment but allowed them to keep their personal weapons for their own protection against the Mukti Bahini who wanted their blood. But Sagat brought them to order and put Major Shafiullah a very capable Mukti Bahini Commander to bring all Mukti Bahini elements under control which was achieved by the 17th evening. Shafiullah was later appointed by Mujib as the first Army Chief of Bangladesh. Restoring complete law and order by 17th Dec was reported by nearly all Indian and foreign press reporters except a few led by Claire Hollingsworth who was a rabid India baiter even though supposedly a friend of Indira Gandhi. She continued to file false reports and HQ Eastern Command responding to them asked Sagat for explanations, Sagat got fed up of offering explanations and asked Aurora to come and see things for himself which he did and found everything in order. But Sagat was very peeved and gave expression to his feelings at a press conference. Claire Hollingsworth however continued to file highly exaggerated and blatantly false reports. Sagat had known Clare from his days in Sikkim in 1967 during the clashes with the Chinese at Nathu La and Cho La and their relations had never been cordial since then.

Things came to a head on 29 December, during a press conference given by our Division Commander Maj Gen Ben Gonzalves GOC 57 Mountain Division, the division that had led the march to Dacca. A foreign reporter in a dispatch from Dacca wrote: "I watched her during an Indian Army Press conference by a major general, who was listing the alleged atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army, including rape. Clare had been in too many wars to give much credence in second and third-hand rape stories, so she got up and said

loud and clear, "As far as I am concerned, general rape is a nonstarter." And that was that, the news conference was over." When Sagat heard of this insult to one of his division commanders, he was rightly furious and decided to expel Clare from Bangladesh but New Delhi rescinded his expulsion order. Sagat being Sagat had his own way of dealing with such issues, and what he did next added another six inches to his already 6ft 2inch height in the estimation of all the officers and men of IV CORPS.

31 Dec 71 at the New Year's Eve party at the Dacca Intercontinental Hotel. The party was attended by several army and air force officers including my friend "Doc" Sridharan, one of the helicopter pilots who had ferried us across the Meghna. I was standing next to General Sagat who towered over all of us, when he suddenly asked me to hold his glass of whiskey and strode towards the entry door of the hall, where I spotted Claire Hollingsworth entering. Sagat walking up to her, placed both his hands on her shoulders, turned her around and pushing her out of the door, placed his foot long foot on her ample behind her sent her sprawling on the hotel corridor floor. Sagat returned and reclaimed his glass from my hand and all this without batting an eyelid or a word. Claire never wrote a word about it and returned to Calcutta the next day and [we were] happy never to see her again. We were all fed up of her arrogant and abrasive ways. It cost Sagat his well deserved promotions but I am sure that to himself Sagat would have said, "I don't care a damn" -the last words said by Clark Gable in his role as Rhett Butler in the famous novel and movie of the American Civil War, 'Gone with the Wind.'

I have always admired Sagat Singh..... what a man and what a commander...never got his due...

Courtesy: **Inderjeet Singh**

AN ANECDOTE BY A JOURNALIST (AN INTERESTING ASIDE ON FM SAM MANECKSHAW)

Photo Source: wikipedia



An encounter with a driver who drove one of India's most-loved soldiers, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, for 22 years.

It has been 9 years that Field Marshal S H F J 'Sam' Manekshaw' passed away

But in Wellington, the quaintly beautiful cantonment town in the Nilgiris, where the field marshal retired to, his memories live on.

Each year when I go for my annual lecture to the student officers at the Defence Services Staff College located in Wellington not very far from Coonoor and Ooty, at least one anecdote about Sam Bahadur the Legend gets added to my stock. In 2012 I garnered more than my usual quota because I came twice in close succession!

Nothing prepared me for my trip this time though! As I came out of Coimbatore airport, an LO (Liaison Officer) in his crisp Madras Regiment uniform was as usual standing with the customary placard to receive me.

As we walked to the black Ambassador staff car, shining in the bright 30 degree sun, a tall man, his hair neatly combed and parted, wearing the chauffeur's khaki uniform, greeted me: "Good Morning Sir! I am Kennedy!"

I wished him back distractedly since I was busy looking at messages on the mobile after a two-hour long flight.

As we started our drive to Wellington, Kennedy asked: "Shall I put the AC on Sir?"

After replying the affirmative, just to be polite, I tossed a remark: "Have we met before, Kennedy?"

He said: "No Sir, but I have seen you on TV and last year I also saw you at the function in the field marshal's honour!"

Impressed and flattered at the same time, I ventured to ask Kennedy how well he knew the field marshal. "Sir I drove him and Madam around for 22 years!"

My mind snapped back to attention from the numbness that a long flight induces.

Here was a variation of a situation that I encounter almost every fortnight: the talkative taxi driver who wants to impress you with his knowledge and wisdom. But this was different.

Here was a man who saw the field marshal closely for over two decades!

You would be foolish to let go of this opportunity Nitin, I told myself.

The planned short nap be damned. The inquisitive reporter in me was now wide awake!

So what is your most significant memory of the field marshal, I shot off the first question, my pen poised over the small notebook I fortunately still carry in my shirt pocket!

"Oh, so many of them Sir," Kennedy replied. I wanted to immediately ask a counter-question: Which one is most precious, but years of training as a print reporter made me hold back.

After a minute or two, Kennedy, who was perhaps trying to recall his memories, said: "Whenever I went to his house with the staff car from the college (Defence Services Staff College), the first thing he would tell Solai (the field marshal's batman), Kennedy ko chai pilao, bread mein jam lagao, butter lagao! Each time, without fail, the field marshal would make me eat the bread-butter and drink tea," an emotional Kennedy remembered.

"The field marshal had cows at home. The household made its own cheese," he added.

And how often did you go, was my next question.

"Definitely once a fortnight. He was very particular to use the staff car only for official purposes," Kennedy revealed.

Now there was no stopping Kennedy.



"Very often Madam (the field marshal's wife, Silloo) would drive him to the market in her Maruti 800. He would purchase the essentials from the market himself -- vegetables, meat -- he loved doing that," Kennedy recalled.

"You know something Sir, he bought the plot of land in 1960 when he was commandant of the Staff College, but even as a major general, he did not have enough money. He told me once 'Kennedy, I had to take out money from my provident fund to buy this land'."

As we left behind the plains of Mettupalayam and started the gentle climb up the Nilgiris, Kennedy was in full flow.

"The field marshal never said it openly, but Madam and other family members often made it clear that they were never happy with the way the government treated him after retirement. They gave him the baton, 5 stars and nothing else," Kennedy said. "Not even a dedicated car," an angry Kennedy recalled.

Now this was interesting and a little disconcerting. Was this man sharing what he had heard and saw or was he making it up mixing facts with gossip and innuendo?

Yes, one knew about the cold shoulder the field marshal got from successive governments, but would he, even if he was unhappy, give that impression to anyone, leave alone his chauffeur?

I wasn't sure, so just to change the subject, I asked him is Kennedy your real name?

"Real name Hridayraj Sir, but I was born in November 1963, the same month President Kennedy was killed. My father -- we are Christians, by the way Sir -- thought Kennedy was a good man, so he gave me the name Kennedy. Everyone knows me as Kennedy around here Sir."

"What else do you remember?"

"He was a pucca soldier, Sir. He would never eat his breakfast without getting fully dressed. Also, he always used to deliver the last lecture for the staff

course."

"Many senior officers, including chiefs from Delhi and elsewhere, would meet the field marshal whenever they came to Wellington. Often I would take them to the house. You know something Sir, I have driven more than 500 three star officers in my 27 years of service. I have been a driver to so many chiefs -- General Rodrigues, General Sundarji (after his retirement Sundarji settled in Wellington), General Malik, General JJ, General VK, General Kapoor..." Kennedy was unstoppable now.

We were nearing Coonoor.

"Tell me more about Sam, the father and husband," I gently prodded him.

"Oh for him, madam's word was final. The field marshal was a loving father and grandfather. One of his grandsons looked exactly like him. Long nose, tall and fair. I never saw him scold any one. And he was always kind to people like us. When madam passed away, he was a broken man. We knew he wouldn't last long without his biggest strength," Kennedy said, clearly choking.

"You know Sir, President Kalam was the one who gave him more dignity than any one else. I drove the President to the hospital where the field marshal was admitted," Kennedy recalled.

Kennedy was extremely angry at how the government treated the field marshal in death. "No chief came for his burial. Defence Minister Antony sent his junior minister. Is this the way we treat our heroes Sir?" he asked.

I had no answer.

As we neared the Staff College, I asked Kennedy to share some photographs of his with the field marshal.

And sure enough, later that evening, he came with the photographs.

Over the next two days Kennedy drove me to the college, to the market and to dinners, coming up with one anecdote or the other about the legend.

As he dropped me back to Coimbatore airport on Saturday evening, I couldn't help but envy him for having had the privilege of seeing the legendary soldier so up close.

Kennedy has a decade more to serve, but nothing will be as exciting for him as his years with Field Marshal Manekshaw.

Courtesy: **Inderjeet Singh**

THE FIELD MARSHALL'S DRIVER

There is this story about Field Marshall Sam Maneckshaw's driver when he was army chief. Well I suppose the army chief must have had more than one dedicated driver for his official duties. Military drivers are also authorised leave of absence. This man was from Haryana and his name Shyam Singh.

One day General Maneckshaw came out laughing from a conference in the north block. The driver who was standing at rigid attention opened the door for him. It was the month of April and it was a fine mellow day with a balmy sun.

"Tumhe pata hai Shyam Singh, you know Shyam Singh the defence minister today changed my name. He called me Shyam. He said "Shyam Maan bhi jao."

Sam Maneckshaw was referring to the plea by Babu Jag Jivan Ram to invade East Pakistan in April on Mrs Gandhi's insistence and Sam had prophesied 100% defeat if we went inside East Pakistan in April 71.

"Waise there is not much difference in Shyam and Sam. Just the letter H and Y." chuckled the future field marshal.

After the war was over and just when General Maneckshaw was about to retire, he noticed Shyam Singh had become tense and his uneasiness was smeared on his face which the General easily read.

"What's the matter Shyam Singh, your face these days looks like your family's buffalo has stopped giving milk?"

"Nahi sahab wo baat nahi hai - No sir that's not the matter and the dour man would clamp shut."

The days passed and Sam Maneckshaw's date of retirement came closer and closer. One day the driver said,

"Sahab, I have one favour to ask of you and only you can help me."

"Yes, shoot Shyam Singh."

"Sahab I want to go on retirement. Please help me obtain release from army service."

"But what's the matter, do you have some, Zameen kaa muqqadma or some family problems. You should try to serve your full length of service." said the chief.

"Nahi sahab. That's not the matter. It's something else that I cannot disclose before I get my release from service."

Maneckshaw appreciated the man's candour and did what he has to do. So the driver's release date and papers came. And then he asked his driver again,

"Ab to khush ho. Tell me now why have you left service early."

The driver stood at attention and said,

"Sahab aap ki gaadi chalane ke baad me kissi aur ki gaadi nahi chala sakta. Sir after being your driver I cannot drive anyone else in my life time."

The field Marshall laughed and said,

"Tum bahut bada bewakoof hai - You are a big fool."

But now that his driver's papers had come through nothing could be done. The driver was an obstinate Haryanvi. A breed of men who never retracted once they made up their mind. The issue kept roaming in the mind of the chief. One day he asked his driver,

"What will you do after retirement.?"

"Sir I will do something or the other. I will find a job." replied the driver.

"How much agricultural land do you have.?"

"None sir, I am from a poor family."

The future field Marshall was quite taken aback. This penniless poor man had just kicked his job because he couldn't drive another man after he had been driver to him. The day his driver was leaving Sam gave him an envelope.

"Shyam Singh open it only once you reach your home."

"Ji sahab." The driver saluted and left.

When he reached his home he forgot all about the envelope and got busy with life and finding some job. He got a job of driving some freight truck. Then one day his wife said to him.

"I was putting away your army uniform in the sandook and this envelope was in your shirt pocket."

"Oh this, I had forgotten all about it. I did not open it because I can't read or write much. Sahib must have written a DO letter of appreciation for me as is the practise with senior officers."

"Fir bhi, please open it and have it read by the school masterji and tell me what it says." said the wife.

So the soldier and his wife went to the village school and requested the headmaster to translate the contents of the letter.

The headmaster put on his glasses and tore open the envelope and his eyes stayed transfixed on the sheet of paper.

"Why are you staring at the page like this masterji?" asked Shyam Singh.

"You have any idea what this letter is?"

"No sir I haven't."

"This is a transfer deed. The Haryana Government had given a war jagir of 25 acres of land to General Sam Maneckshaw in Haryana after the 1971 war victory. He has gifted his war jagir to you. You are the owner of 25 acres of agricultural land now."

Then the wife whacked her husband angrily.

"You fool I was about to burn this envelope to light the choolha. Thank God I asked you what was in it first."

Courtesy: **Brig BK Chibber**

SNIPPETS HISTORICAL AND INTERESTING...



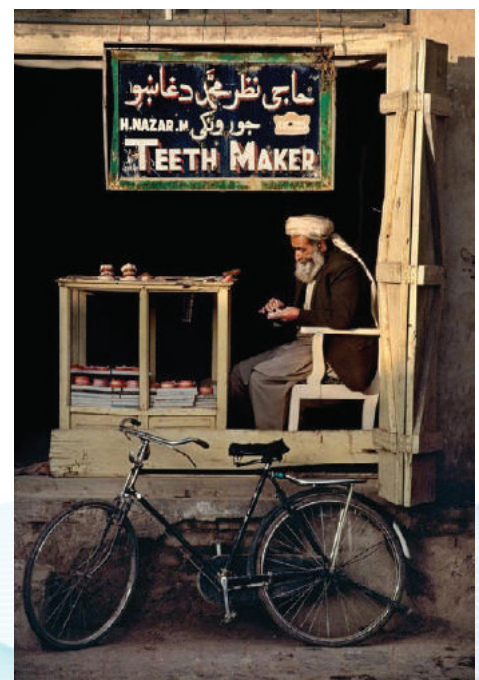
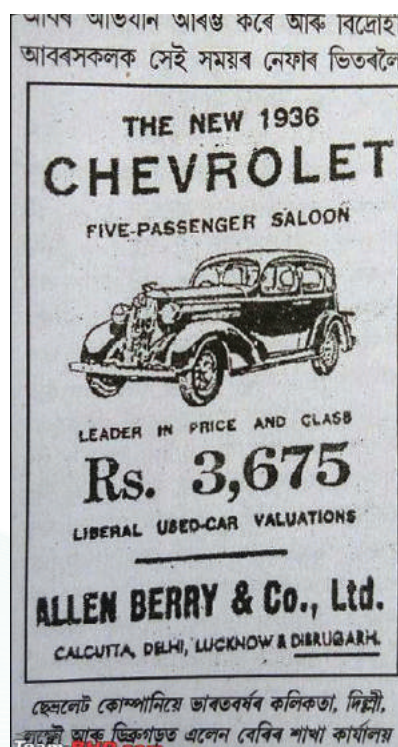
"Sharing here: a picture of the MANEKSHAW family. Don't miss SAM in the centre wearing the coat. His brother is holding his dog. Don't also miss the tacit bonding and the look of zealous pride so characteristic of the Parsees of old. I am very proud to share that I belong to this wonderful, close-knit family, related to them through my grandfather, Savakshaw, the slim, impish-looking man, sitting upright on the far right, also my personal hero. So, when I was a boy, my grandfather Savakshaw would take me to the Manekshaw bungalow on Warden Road, for a scrumptious Sunday breakfast. And Sam - when he was there - would hoist me onto his shoulders and exclaim, "Savakshaw, give me this boy; I will make a soldier out of him!" And I would quiver, because by then I had already discovered the magic of books and wanted to be a writer, a full-time dreamer and storyteller."

Murzban Shroff



In the late 1800s early 1900s, It was tradition that on the 31st of December, the wife would kneel in front of her husband and apologise for everything she got wrong during the course of the year.

This tradition needs reviving.



Courtesy: Inderjeet Singh

THE WILD BEASTS OF BOMBAY SOME OLD NEWSPAPER STORIES, BOMBAY

The following clips are taken from the book 'Glimpses of Old Bombay and Western India' (published 1900).

1822, February 9th. - A tiger on Malabar Hill, came down and quenched his thirst at Gwallior Tank, and ran off over the hill between the Hermitage and Prospect Lodge. Prints of its feet were distinctly visible this morning.

1828, At Colaba Ferry a huge shark was observed at proximity to some bathers.

1830, January 13th. - A large hyena is prowling about Malabar Hill on the western side between Mr Nicol's residence and Vaocluse, "as good sport as a Mazagon tiger" - Bombay Gazette.

1839, June 25th, - Lieutenant Montague, at Colaba, returning from mess, put his foot in a hole, received a slight wound which in twenty-five minutes carried him off. Some jurors thought it was from the bite of a serpent.

1842, September 15th, - A man bitten by a snake on the Esplanade.

1849, A finback whale died on shore at Colaba, 60 foot long, 30 to 40 feet round the thickest part. All along the road from the Fort to Colaba was a perfect fair. The stench was felt from the town side of the causeway where it lay at the back of Colaba church. Jawbone taken away. - (Gentleman's Gazette).

1850, October 9th, - A tiger at Bandoop leaped upon the mail-cart and upset it, and the gharry-wallah was little injured. I saw jackals several times in the gardens of Colaba Observatory. - Dr. Buist. On this, Mr Charles Chambers F.R.S., observes (1893), "I found a jackal in my bedroom in Colaba Observatory about 15 years ago".

A jackal was killed in the new High Court Buildings shortly after they were completed.

1858, March 3rd, - Some officers of the P & O steamer 'Aden' observed a tiger swimming from Mainland to Mazagon. A boat was lowered and the crew armed with ship's muskets. When they came up to it the brute was boarding a buggalow, and was being kept off by the lascars by handspikes. Weight, 353 pounds. Length, tip to tail 8ft, 9".

1858, May 26th - A young Portugese this day shot a tiger at Mahim, and on the 27th inst. brought the carcass to the Chief Magistrate for the reward.

1859, Today Mr Forjett with a fowling piece-shot a tiger within a few hundred yards of the fashionable drive on the Esplanade, and on the beach of Back Bay near Sonapore. Mr Forjett promised the hide to Dr Birdwood for the museum. (Bombay Gazette).

Feb 6th, On this day, Sunday evening, the wife of Mr Pratt, uncovenanted assistant in the General Department Secretariat, walking along the fields with her husband, trod on a snake and died two hours afterwards.

Feb 15th, A tiger was snooping around the nooks of Kalbadevie, but disappeared.

Nov. 12th, Dr Turner, at his residence, was bitten by a venomous snake on the calf of the leg. His leg swelled to an imense size. Friend of his made an incision, sucked the wound, and is now recovering.

Nov. 16th, A cobra, 4ft in length, killed in Secretariat compound, Apollo Street.

Dec. 5th, A hyena shot while devouring a bullock not far from the Byculla Club House.

1862, Nov. 26th, Hyenas quite a common at night, prowling about the Byculla flats.

1863, Jan 25th, Tiger at Mahim, near railway station. Two natives killed it. Shot.

RCDS - SANKALP LITERACY CENTRES

DECEMBER 2023

RCDS - Sankalp currently runs three educational centres for 450 such children in South Delhi. These children go to school in the morning and are provided remedial coaching post school. These are those children who get no support in teaching and learning at home. The Centre currently runs 4 batches of 15-20 children each. The batches run for 4 hours every-day. Each batch is taught for 1 hour each 5 days in a week. One day in the week is devoted to co-curricular activities.

Currently, the following initiatives (all free of cost to the beneficiaries) are being undertaken in the 3 Centres:

- Vidhyaa Danam through Urban Learning Centres
- Learning Support Program
- Comprehensive assessment
- Computer Literacy
- English Program
- Skill Training
- Ann Danam (thrice a week healthy snacks)
- Celebration of birthdays
- Celebration of special days and festivals
- Training & capacity building
- Strengthening community linkages.
- Quarterly educational tours
- Documentation of each child's work and progress
- Regular monitoring.
- Bi annual PTMs.

Another notable feature of the Centres is that they celebrate specific days in each month. The month of December raised awareness on the following days among the children:

World AIDS Day

World AIDS Day, designated on 1 December every year since 1988, is an international day dedicated to raising awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection and mourning those who've died of the disease. Let Communities Lead is the theme of World AIDS Day 2023. The world can end AIDS, with communities leading the way.

International Day of persons with Disabilities

International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is observed every year on 3 December. The theme of this day is to promote inclusive development through accessible and equitable world. The day is about promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities at every level of society and development, and to raise awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of

political, social, economic, and cultural life. Children were told to be sensitive and understanding towards the needs of the disabled.

Indian Navy Day

Navy Day in India is celebrated on 4 December every year to recognize the achievements and role of the Indian Navy to the country. It is mainly celebrated to acknowledge role of Indian Navy and commemorate its achievements in the 1971 War. Children were made aware of the role and importance of Indian Navy.

Human Rights Day

Human Rights Day is observed by the international community every year on 10 December. It commemorates the day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out a broad range of fundamental rights and freedoms to which all of us are entitled. It guarantees the rights of every individual everywhere, without distinction based on nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status.

National Mathematics Day

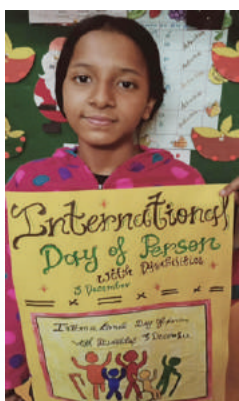
National Mathematics Day is celebrated on 22nd December every year, on the birth anniversary of one of the greatest Indian mathematicians, Srinivasa Ramanujan. The theme for International Day of Mathematics 2023 is "Mathematics for Everyone," Children did various math related activities like bingo, the Countdown numbers game, guess the weight, etc.

Science Experiment

In continuation of the innovative experiment series, this month's experiment was on Electrolysis of Water. These experiments are surely developing analytical skills in children.

Others

- Visit was made by Prof. Venita Kaul from NCERT to our Centres on 19th. She interacted with children and discussed various aspects on quality education with teachers.
- Volunteers from U&I organization celebrated Christmas with children of Koolie camp on 23rd December
- Besides, Christmas was celebrated across all centres on 24th December. Children had fun with Santa and enjoyed various games.



DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD

When Einstein gave lectures at U.S. universities, the recurring question that students asked him most was: - Do you believe in God?

And he always answered: - I believe in the God of Spinoza.

Baruch de Spinoza was a Dutch philosopher considered one of the great rationalists of 17th century philosophy, along with Descartes.

(Spinoza) : God would say: Stop praying.

What I want you to do is go out into the world and enjoy your life. I want you to sing, have fun and enjoy everything I've made for you.

Stop going into those dark, cold temples that you built yourself and saying they are my house. My house is in the mountains, in the woods, rivers, lakes, beaches. That's where I live and there I express my love for you.

Stop blaming me for your miserable life; I never told you there was anything wrong with you or that you were a sinner, or that your sexuality was a bad thing. Sex is a gift I have given you and with which you can express your love, your ecstasy, your joy. So don't blame me for everything they made you believe.

Stop reading alleged sacred scriptures that have nothing to do with me. If you can't read me in a sunrise, in a landscape, in the look of your friends, in your son's eyes... you will find me in no book! Stop asking me "will you tell me how to do my job?" Stop being so scared of me. I do not judge you or criticize you, nor get angry, or bothered. I am pure love.

Stop asking for forgiveness, there's nothing to forgive. If I made you... I filled you with passions, limitations, pleasures, feelings, needs, inconsistencies... free will. How can I blame you if you respond to something I put in you? How can I punish you for being the way you are, if I'm the one who made you? Do you think I could create a place to burn all my children who behave badly for the rest of eternity? What kind of god would do that?

Respect your peers and don't do what you don't want for yourself. All I ask is that you pay attention in your life, that alertness is your guide.

My beloved, this life is not a test, not a step on the way, not a rehearsal, nor a prelude to paradise. This life is the only thing here and now and it is all you need.

I have set you absolutely free, no prizes or punishments, no sins or virtues, no one carries a marker, no one keeps a record. You are absolutely free to create in your life. Heaven or hell.

I can't tell you if there's anything after this life but I can give you a tip. Live as if there is not. As if this is your only chance to enjoy, to love, to exist.

So, if there's nothing after, then you will have enjoyed the opportunity I gave you. And if there is, rest assured that I won't ask if you behaved right or wrong, I'll ask. Did you like it? Did you have fun? What did you enjoy the most? What did you learn?...

Stop believing in me; believing is assuming, guessing, imagining. I don't want you to believe in me, I want you to believe in you. I want you to feel me in you when you kiss your beloved, when you tuck in your little girl, when you caress your dog, when you bathe in the sea.

Stop praising me, what kind of egomaniac God do you think I am?

I'm bored being praised. I'm tired of being thanked. Feeling grateful? Prove it by taking care of yourself, your health, your relationships, the world. Express your joy! That's the way to praise me.

Stop complicating things and repeating as a parakeet what you've been taught about me. What do you need more miracles for? So many explanations?

The only thing for sure is that you are here, that you are alive, that this world is full of wonders.

- Spinoza

JANUARY



Bhasin, Suneel	05-Jan
Kapoor, Deepak	07-Jan
Malhotra, Manoj	08-Jan
Kumar Sanjay	10-Jan
Brara, Dolly	11-Jan
Bhatia Simi	14-Jan
Anuradha	23-Jan
Agarwal Ashima	24-Jan
Seoni Rajeev	27-Jan



HAPPY Anniversary

Gour Vivek Narayan	Rashmi Datt	03-Jan
Agarwal, Anil K	Kiran	22-Jan
Gujral, Rajiv	Geeta	24-Jan