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SNIPPETS – IX
(BITS & BYTES OF SHARED MEMORIES)

BY

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It has been nice that Padam Rosha has maintained the momentum in taking us onwards from Snippets- VIII with a fresh crop of stories. Padam has himself confessed to have been bitten the writing bug To quote him, “All these years I never knew that there was a story-teller lying bound and gagged, inside me, till both of you connived to give him a voice. Now all the time there are about half a dozen stories pushing me, nagging me, wanting to be told. I cant tell you how much I enjoy narrating these stories”

We have attempted to add to the levity of Snippets by reproducing some choice cartoons that came our way from friends - one from Punch, that classic humour magazine of UK, and the other from R.K.Laxman’s hilarious commentary on the contemporary Indian scene.

And once again we hope the bug that bit Padam will bite other readers to also join in soon to contribute and ensure the continuance of the Snippets series.

CVN writes -----

L.P.Singh, the awesome Home Secretary/GOI in the 60s and 70s, had a razor sharp intellect and a focused eye to notice the crucial points in lengthy notes coming up to him in office files. Once a review note came up to him indicating the performance rating of officers of DIG rank in all the Central police units. Among other things the note mentioned it as a satisfactory feature that over 70 officers out of a total of around 100 officers had got the grading ' More than average ' in their latest annual assessment report.

Against these numbers in the note LP wrote on the margin ' Is this mathematically possible ? ' Below the note he further queried: " If a large majority of the DIGs are rated ' Above average ', then where is the 'Average' ? The grading norms appear irrational ! “ With this query the file went down but did not come back from the Secretariat which remained confounded by the Maths query raised by LP !

Rosha writes

While I was at the National Police Academy, Hyderabad, I used to call the IPS trainees individually, for a long chat, in order to get better acquainted with them, and to know more about their background.

SKS(name withheld) came from a scheduled caste family living in a village in District Hoshiarpur in Punjab. He was smart, articulate, with a very pleasant air about him.

What intrigued me was that in his bio-data he had written "Medical Practitioner" as his profession before joining the IPS, but had graduated with humanities in college. After we settled down over a cup of tea, he told me this story.

Soon after his schooling, he saw an advertisement in a local paper by some high-sounding institution in Himachal Pradesh, which offered a book on medical practice, alongwith a certificate in the applicant's name, to the effect that he was a Registered Medical Practitioner, all for Rupees thirty. So SKS got this certificate, duly framed it and set up practice.. It seems he was gifted with a healing touch. He learnt as he went along and said he was able to administer injections, anti-biotics etc. all to good effect. His patients got well and his practice prospered. By the time he was selected for the IPS he said he was earning as much as two thousand rupees every month.

I asked him why he gave up this lucrative practice to join the IPS. He said it was at the insistence of his parents and other relatives who felt that having him in the police would greatly improve their status and help them in their day to day lives. He was allocated to the UP cadre.

The other day I was reading "Behenji", the fascinating life story of Mayawati recently written by Ajoy Bose.. It is mentioned therein that each time Mayawati was sworn in as Chief Minister of UP, SKS was among the officers inducted to the CM's Secretariat on the very first day.

Rosha writes

It was a freezing cold winter morning in Srinagar in January 1976. It had been snowing the whole night and everything was blanketed in white. The temperature would have been around 4 or 5 celsius. I had to meet Sheikh Abdullah, the Chief Minister, and I remember going to his residence very comfortably clad in an overcoat, gloves and a woollen cap.

Waiting in the lawns outside the CM's residence, I saw Dharendra Swami with a white muslin dhoti wrapped round his waist and thrown over one shoulder - arms and torso absolutely bare. He made a striking figure, standing tall and erect in the snow, with jet-black flowing locks and piercing eyes. You may recall that by that time Dharendra Swami was fairly well known as the yoga teacher of Mrs Gandhi. He also gave yoga lessons on

the TV everyday His book Yogasana Vijnana, published in 1970, was proclaimed as the best book ever on the practice of yoga. We started talking and I asked him how old would he be. He replied that as a yogi, he was not allowed to disclose two things, firstly his age and secondly, his place of birth.

Later, in summer that year, Swamiji invited the Governor, Chief Minister and a few officials to spend the day at his ashram at Mantalai. This is a very picturesque place at 7000 ft just off the Jammu –Sirinagar highway., a little beyond the well-known Sudh Mahadev temple where a huge Trishul, said to have been wielded by Lord Shiva, is kept. You keep going along a ridge and at the end , with sheer slopes all around ,was the ashram. Everything was calculated to impress. There was a swimming pool, a pack of pedigreed Alsatians and a couple of Mercedes cars. The water supply came from a rivulet over a thousand feet below. Swamiji;s residence was in the shape of a 3-storeyed tower with luxurious fittings and furnishing. Five star caterers had come all the way from Delhi to feed us. On top of everything Swamiji was certainly not modest about this display of opulence. I remember that Begum Abdullah asked my wife, in a very soft aside, whether austerity was not the way of life associated with yogis ? There were some conjectures among the guests about Swamiji;s age and our guesses varied from 45 to 80.

Years later, on the 7th of June 1994, Dhirendra Swami flew to Mantalai in his personal aircraft which he was piloting himself. It was here that he crashed into one of the mountains nearby and died.

NK writes

On a long road journey from Madurai to Tiruchendur in the year 1985, the car by which we were travelling started giving trouble. As we passed through Koilpatti we stopped on the road outside the local Police Station to get help. A Head Constable who was standing there immediately recognized me as the SP of that District over 20 years ago. On his suggestion we proceeded to the Traveller’s Bungalow to wait there while the car was taken to a nearby motor mechanic’s shop for remedial attention.

After about half an hour, we found a large group of police officers headed by the local DSP trooping into the TB to greet me. The DSP’s face was familiar but I couldn’t readily place him. He then introduced himself saying, “Sir I am Parthaasarathy, the local DSP, and when I was a Probationary Sub-Inspector in Tirunelveli Taluk Station in 1962, you placed under suspension”.

I was quite touched that he should call on me now, and said it was nice of him to call on me without any feeling of rancour. He then said “How can I ever forget you for what you did for me subsequently ?” The memories of what happened then suddenly came back vividly and I set out the facts below.

On that fateful morning, while he was travelling on his motorcycle on a main road Parthasarathy was irritated by a bus that would not take to a side to let him pass. Overtaking the bus and bringing it to a halt, he then pulled out the driver from his seat and gave him a sound slap and sent him on his way with a warning to show more respect for the police in future. Greatly disturbed by this, the driver drove the bus back to the bus terminus and spread the word around, resulting in a flash strike by all the buses that were there. On hearing of all these developments, I immediately issued orders placing Parthasarathy under suspension.

A little later however, I sent my Special Branch Inspector to the bus terminus to assemble all the striking bus drivers and address them thus : “We now have an SP who will not tolerate any police high-handedness and he has already placed the offending SI under suspension and the Si will soon be diismisssed from service. So please be assured that justice will be done, and please resume the bs services.. But I would also like to tell you that the offending SI is a raw youngster on his first post, and he is sure to lose his job, unless all of you indicate that you are satisfied with the action already taken and that it need not be pursued any further”

The drivers felt satisfied with the Inspector’s appeal and resumed services, indicating that they were not for an end to the young SI’s career. On this, I reinstated Parthasarathy. But more importantly, I made it a point to spend a couple of hours every day for a few weeks at Tirunelveli Police Station personally teaching Parthasarathy the fundamentals of police work with emphasis on public relations..... |||

CVN writes :

O.L.Burrel was a British officer of the IP who chose to remain in service in India after Independence, and worked as a DIG in the then Madras police. He was known for his unconventional approach to men and matters in his domain. Once in 1952 while inspecting the District police office at Mangalore in South Canara he noticed that a clerk had raised some very unreasonable and delaying queries on a requisition received from a police station for some stores. Burrel straightaway asked that clerk to stand up on a bench near the main table and remain standing there till the inspection was over ! It was a strange sight for CVN who, as HQrs ASP, was present during the DIG’s inspection.

CVN writes -----

V.G.Manoharan, who had a distinguished career in the Armed Police wing as also the Civil Police branch of Tamil Nadu police and retired as a DIG in the 1980s, had closely interacted with CVN in different assignments. On one occasio when their conversation covered different types of officers in the force, VGM came up with a clinical and telling categorisation of officers. One type of officer is ‘ Easy to serve but difficult to please ‘.

The other type ' Difficult to serve but easy to please ' .

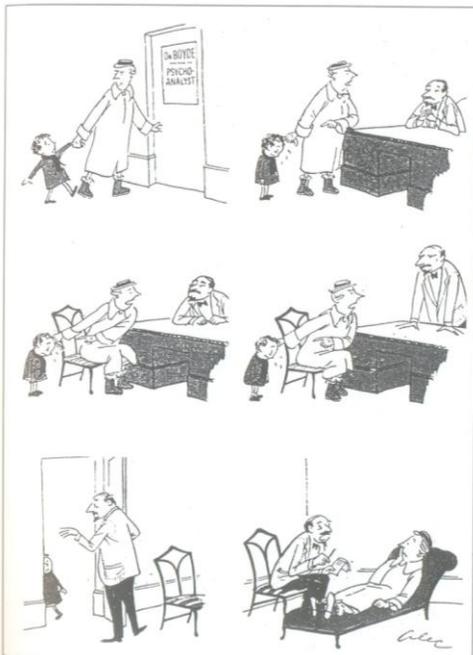
The first type is professionally knowledgeable and efficient, precise in his instructions to subordinates, takes up responsibility but sets high standards for the subordinates' performance. It is easy to serve under such an officer because of his known and steady workstyle and his readiness to be by your side in tough situations. But it is difficult to please him because his standards are high !

The second type is the goody-goody type, equivocal in his directions to subordinates and unwilling to take up responsibility. It will be difficult to serve under him since you can never be sure where you stand vis-à-vis his role in a situation ; but it is easy to please him by providing him with drink, food and company of his liking !

VGM said he always liked working under the first type of officers. CVN complimented VGM by saying that VGM himself belongs to the first type !

TWO CARTOONS

From "Punch"



From "Times of India"



'Of course I have a car. But I don't have a road to drive it on!'

R.K. Laxman in
'The Times of India'