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SNIPPETS – VI
 (Bits & Bytes of Shared Memories)
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Here we are with Snippets–VI, which could be our last compilation, unless other old colleagues contribute snippets from their experience, or take up the work of continuing the compiling of future instalments. We remind readers once again that the funny side to police life should not be lost to society or posterity.

K.Viswanathan Nair, a rank promotee SP, a fire-brand of his times and a hard-boiled professional to the core, was unsparing in his assessment of the field work of Sub-Inspectors in Police Stations. Once, a relatively soft and mild Sub-Inspector happened to be in charge of a station covering some highly factious and aggressively feudal areas, where local chieftains held sway. Noticing that quite many villages in that beat had not at all been visited by the Sub-Inspector, KVN wrote in the inspection book : “The village roster shows many villages not visited by the Sub-Inspector. The fact, as I see it, is that he dare not visit these villages” !

Snippets from K.R.Shenai :

Snippet No 1.

1947 : Two bachelor British IP Officers enjoying their evening “bada” at the Officers Mess, Vellore :

First : Did you hear that our DIG is going to be knighted ?

Second : May be they realized that this is the only way his wife could become a lady !

Snippet 2 :

A senior DIG walking down a flight of steps missed a step and tumbled down. An Inspector accompanying him enquired with great solicitude, “Is Your Honour hurt ?”
 The DIG’s reply was “My honour is not hurt, my knee is”.

Snippet 3 :

A London cop pulls up a motorist violating a one-way rule.

Motorist : How much does it take to be let off ?

Cop : Rules are rules.

Motorist : Here then, take two pounds and forget it.

Cop : Sorry, not possible.

Motorist : Young man, don’t you know that I am joining as your Sergeant next week ?

Cop : So what ? As my Sergeant you will know that you have at least one honest and inflexible cop under you.

Snippet 4 :

Grammatical usage seen in a Delhi newspaper : Feminine for teacher : teacheress; for sweeper : sweeperess.

Snippet 5 :

An anonymous quote : “Both husband and wife are working to make both ends meet”

Snippet 6 :

K.V.Subramanian, when posted as SP Kanya Kumari District, changed from his old Austin A40 car to a new Ambassador. Driving around one day in the pothole ridden roads of Nagercoil, his wife complained of the bumpy ride. KVS reminded her that they were now enjoying the status of an Ambassador !.

Snippets from K.R.Shenai (contd) :

Snippet 7 :

This was in 1951 when Shenai succeeded NK as ASP Kurnool Subdivision. Soon after, he had to deal with a case where a young Sub-Inspector had been murdered in cold blood at the local village chavadi. With little experience in the old art of “intensive interrogation”, Shenai had two experienced DSPs to assist him and they soon honed in on the culprit, a local tribal. One afternoon in the remote Traveller’s Bungalow where they were all camping, Shenai overheard the two DSPs bargaining with a local vendor offering Rs 5 for bamboo baskets for which he was asking for Rs 10 per basket. Later on when Shenai was camping with his family in the same place and his wife wanted similar baskets, Shenai asked the local SI to get him similar baskets for Rs 5. The SI promptly clarified that the DSPs did not pay for their purchase, but bargained for that price only to comfort the basket seller with the thought that he had lost Rs 5 only and not Rs 10 per basket. !

H.Veerabhadriah of the Karnataka Cadre : Known for his high professional profile. He was Police Chief of Bangalore, when the Indian team was playing an important cricket Test. The jubilant mood of a section of the enthusiastic and expectant crowd at the match gave rise to some exuberance which had to be contained by intervention by a few policemen on the spot. The person who was doing the running commentary on the All India Radio noticed the disturbance and imperiously added in his commentary that the ‘wretched policemen’ had aggravated the situation. Veerabhadriah, who then happened to be listening to the commentary, was incensed by the uncharitable and uncalled for remark from the commentator, tarnishing the police image in a live broadcast. He immediately rang up the stadium and said he would immediately

withdraw all the policemen from the entire stadium unless the commentator apologised at once over the AIR for his comments on the police, since it had been made to appear that the police were unnecessary and unwelcome there. The commentator profusely apologised immediately in his continuing commentary over the AIR as insisted by HV, and things became normal again. The police force heard this apology over the AIR with great satisfaction and a sense of pardonable pride !

Rajaji, as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1952-54, had given general directions to the police that black flag demonstrations and similar protests by the opposition parties should not be banned on grounds of "law and order", but should be permitted at designated places where police action, if needed, could be operationally feasible and effective. CVN was SP at Salem when Rajaji visited there in 1953. The DMK had then organized a massive black flag demonstration with over a thousand persons on the announced route of the CM from the Railway Station to the Circuit House. When Rajaji boarded the car at the railway station, a nervous political leader who was near Rajaji, suggested that he could take an alternate route to the Circuit House to avoid the hot spot of the demonstration. Rajaji immediately chided him strongly, saying that it would be as foolish as abolishing the census operation to avoid knowing about the increase in population ! The CMs journey was completed on the announced route and the huge black flag demonstration was duly contained, to the relief of all.

Stories from British times : courtesy K.R.Shenai

A British Officer inspecting a Police Station found the work of the local Head Constable far from satisfactory. He immediately recorded an order placing the Head Constable under suspension till such time as his work was found satisfactory. A simple method of administering discipline, uncluttered by show cause notice procedures of the present day !

Truscott, an ASP of those days, was camping on one bank of a river which was in floods, and reported in his weekly report of having inspected a police station which was on the other bank of the river. His DIG promptly asked how he managed to cross the flood waters. The ASP first replied that he swam across, but when the DIG recalled that he did not know swimming, the ASP promptly replied that he crossed the river on horseback and that it was his horse that knew swimming !

We, the first batch of IPS Officers, had a 15 day break after 4 months training at the Central Police Training College at Mount Abu in 1948-49, which facilitated a short visit to our homes in our respective States. Before we undertook the rail journey home, we had long discussions among ourselves whether we should travel by First or Second Class. Since the journey was to be at our own cost, economics pointed to Second Class, while the strong desire to flaunt our newly acquired uniform along with the status it carried in public view, made us think of travelling First Class, wearing uniform. A strong point was also made that we should not wear uniform if we chose to travel Second Class. At that stage someone even suggested that we may go by Second Class, wearing the uniform, but without the badges of rank ! The others exclaimed that we would then be mistaken for watch and ward staff of the Railways ! When such goofy ideas started coming up, the discussion was closed as fruitless, and we all travelled quietly in simple civilian clothes in Second Class !

The uniform syndrome gripped us again, when three of us (GV, NK and CVN) arrived in Chennai, and decided to make a formal call on the IG of Police at his residence. We felt that a full ceremonial dress, with tunic and Sam Browne belt, was called for on the occasion. Dressed accordingly, we drove to the IG's bungalow in Adyar in a borrowed car and parked the car deferentially, well away from the portico. It happened that the IG (It was C.K.Vijayaraghavan, an old ICS officer, posted as IG in an unusual departure from tradition) had just then come out of the house near the portico. From the car, we marched up to him in line, with a whispered "Left .. Right .. Left Halt" by GV to keep us in step, and ending with an "up", to ensure our salutes were in perfect unison. New to the police ways, CKV was obviously puzzled by this flurry of movements and must have felt very funny when we announced our identity. He mumbled a few words of formal greeting and indicated that our call was over at the portico itself ! Following the same drill movements we marched back sullenly to our car, slowly realizing that an over-emphasis on uniform and the accompanying drill movements alone would not carry us forward in our career !