

A VIEW FROM

WITHIN

(Memoirs of a Bureaucrat)



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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Preface

1. Childhood and Education
2. BITS Pilani and Back
3. First Posting at Jalore
4. Freeing an Antyodaya Family from Clutches of Influential Persons
5. Taking A Risk for The Public Cause
6. Juniors Adapt to The Way of Seniors
7. Averting a Suicide
8. Sahariya Women Refuse To Sit on Chairs in Front of Collector
9. Collector's Morning Walk Makes Headlines
10. Protecting a Good Officer
11. Janata Mein Rosh, Netaon Ko Rahat
12. Small Actions, Big Relief
13. Fond Farewell as Collector, Dungarpur
14. Revaluation—Means to Pass in Exam
15. Trust Begets Trust
16. Compassion Brings Goodwill for The Administration
17. Humans Smarter than Machines?
18. Mid-Day Meal: A Source of Scandal

19. Tourism—A Milch Cow for Politicians and Bureaucrats
20. TV Channel Tries To Blackmail
21. Attempts To Bribe
22. Puncturing The Ego of High and Mighty
23. Hitting The Selfish Interests
24. Haj House On The Disputed Land
25. Confrontation With The Labour Minister
26. Manager's Transfer Gets The MD Transferred Out
27. Illegal Construction Continues.....
28. Spineless Minister
29. Squandering Public Money
30. MP Gets Furious
31. Remaining Firm
32. Foreign Trip Cancelled at Last Minute
33. Panchayati Raj—Buy The People, Far The People, off The People
34. Corrupt DEO Gets Support From Minister
35. Minister Reaches Airport at The Last Minute
36. Politics Delays Shifting of CHC To New Building
37. Katha Vachak, Who Went On To Become Chief Minister
38. Seven Transfers In Five Years
39. Protocol Duty Creates An Embarrassing Situation
40. All Ministers Are Not The Same
41. Encounter With Powerful Finance Secretary
42. Who Owns The Mines?
43. Senior Bureaucrat Comes In Firing Line of Labour Department

44. Judge Has His Way Without Issuing Orders
45. Police—Magistracy Coordination or Conflict?
46. Land Conversion—A Big Racket
47. Successor's Keeness To Take Over
48. Collector Made To Pay for Articles Taken Away From Collector's Residence
49. Free Shopping By SP On Diwali
50. Arrogance—An Essential Attribute for Senior Bureaucrats?
51. Collector Refuses To Cooperate If Jaya Bachchan Does Not Come To His Residence
52. Unbecoming Behaviour of Principal Secretary, Rural Development
53. Arrogance of A Lady officer
54. Misuse of Govt Facilities
55. Bureaucrats' Ego
56. Rift Over Room
57. Record Profit In RIICO
58. Punishment Turns Into Blessing
59. Some Achievements As Commissioner, Labour and Employment
60. My First Task In First District—Pulse Polio Campaign
61. First Vagad Festival
62. Turning Around The Department
63. Van Jan Shakti—Fusion of Manpower and Forest Power
64. Assembly Elections In Bharatpur Division
65. Administrator As An Agent of Social Change
66. Handling A Ticklish Law and Order Situation

67. Panchana Dam Becomes Flash Point for Gurjar-Meena Dispute

68. Attempt To Implicate Me In False Case

69. M.L. Mehta—My Role Model in Administration

70. Life After Retirement

Postings

Appreciations and Blessings

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Born on 9th November, 1953 in a simple middle-class family, father being a popular, renowned Mathematics teacher in a small-town Udaipur. My father was a self-made man who came to Udaipur at the age of 13 yrs from a small village Bathera about 30 kms from Udaipur. He studied, played football, cooked his own food and took tuitions of children, a year or two junior to him to support himself financially in his own studies. He was born in 1913 and did his graduation in 1936 from Agra University with Mathematics, English and Sanskrit as his optional subjects. Though he did his M.A in Sanskrit but joined the Maharana Bhupal Inter College Udaipur, as Mathematics teacher. He went on to complete his B.T (Bachelor of Teaching) from Agra and Diploma in Library Science from Benaras Hindu University in 1956. After serving for almost seven years as Mathematics teacher, he joined as Librarian in M.B. College where he served till his retirement in 1973. We lived on rent in an old big house where about 10–12 families lived. Since I was born ten years after my elder sister's birth, I grew up as a pampered child. My father was a keen sportsman who played for the Mewar cricket team and later played tennis for a number of years. My mother was a simple, pious, religious lady who was barely literate when she got married. However her interest in current affairs was remarkable.

I started going to nursery class at an age of three and a half with my sister. After a year, I shifted to a local Jain school in class 2 where I got a supplementary in Mathematics as my teacher differed with my father on the method of counting numbers. Provoked by this unreasonable behavior of my teacher, he took me out of the school and got me admitted to class 4 in Nav Bharat High School, run by a Sindhi refugee family. Here, I

continued till class 10. When I reached class 10 after topping class 9, my father was told by the headmaster that I could not appear in class 10 board exam as my age was short by two years and two months as I had to be 15 yrs on 1st October in the year of exam. This meant I had to study in the same class for three more years. This was unthinkable as I had first rank in my school in class 9. My headmaster was considerate and gave two options viz., to either drop for a year and get age raised by a year and two months or second, to get age raised by two years and two months. My father chose the first option. Finding it difficult to repeat the 9th class in the same school, I was admitted in Vidya Bhawan, a well-known school. There, I continued till Diwali but came back to Navbharat School. Next year, I appeared in regular 10th Board exam and secured highest marks in Udaipur. Thus, I dropped for one year and became older by one year and two months in record. So, instead of completing my 10th at the age of 12 and a half, I did so at an actual age of 13 and a half and the recorded age of 14 and a half.

BITS PILANI AND BACK

In 1967, after completing my 10th, I took admission in Pre-University class (equivalent to higher secondary). Those days, admission to most of the Engineering colleges were based on marks obtained in higher secondary. I applied for admission to all three engineering colleges of Rajasthan viz., BITS (Birla Institute of Technology and Science) Pilani, MREC (Malviya Regional Engineering College), Jaipur and Jodhpur Engineering College. I got admission in all three but I opted for BITS Pilani, as it was considered to be the best. Here I could not continue for more than 15 days due to very severe ragging and home sickness. I was only 14 and a half when I joined BITS and could not withstand the physical torture of ragging. I returned to M.B. College, Udaipur to continue my B.Sc. and then M.Sc. What an irony! Today, students take all sorts of coaching and drop for a year or two to get admitted to Institutions like BITS, Pilani. Incidentally, I got first position in B.Sc. and was awarded a Gold medal.

Even after completing M.Sc. in Physics, I still remained under age for appearing at IAS exam (the eligibility was adjudged on 1st August of the examination year where as my date of birth was entered as 15th Sept). I could not apply for lecturer ship as the eligibility there was adjudged on 1st July. I had no option but to join M.Sc. Mathematics in July, 1973. I was one of the very few persons who did two M.Sc.s. in Physics and Mathematics.

Fortunately, I was eligible to appear at RAS (Rajasthan Administrative Service) exam, where one had to be 21 yrs on 1st January of the following year. I took this exam in Dec, 1973. It so happened that in 20 days, I took

13 papers, nine of RAS and 4 of first Semester of M.Sc. Mathematics. After clearing the written examination, I had my interview on 7th May, 1974. I got selected in RAS with 11th position and subsequently joined the training institute on 23rd September, 1974. I became the youngest officer to join RAS. Later on, I also became the youngest officer to be elevated to the IAS in Rajasthan. On the whole, I served for 20 years in RAS and 18 years in IAS. As I was placed in the 1988 batch of IAS, it became 24 yrs in IAS and 14 years in RAS.

FIRST POSTING AT JALORE

After completion of training on 15th April, 1975, I was posted at Jalore where I joined on 25th April, 1975. As Authorized Officer (ceiling), my job was to decide land ceiling cases and to acquire land declared as surplus. For ten months i.e., till February, 1976, I decided hundreds of cases through which approx. 25000 *bighas* of agricultural land was vested in the government. For four months till 30th June, 1976, I organized over 100 allotment camps at different places at 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. every day. Leaving home at 7 a.m. every day and chairing the meetings of allotment committee having local Pradhan, Sarpanch, MLA, BDO etc. as its members, was a hectic but a very enriching experience. It provided me an opportunity to understand local village dynamics, besides allotment of land to hundreds of poor landless persons, particularly to those belonging to SC and ST. Out of my entire tenure of 14 months, 12 months were under emergency imposed by government of India on 25th June, 1976. Jalore is a district in western Rajasthan having a lot of small fiefdoms (*thikana*). These ex *thikanedars* had huge land chunks much above the ceiling limit prescribed under the Rajasthan Land Ceiling Act, 1973. 12 out of 16 officers of our batch were posted as Authorized Officer (Ceiling) of which 8 were posted in Sriganganagar district, the most irrigated district of the state. All these posts were created with our postings and were abolished with our transfers. The posts of AO (Ceiling) were created only for deciding ceiling cases on a war footing. Starting the career with such specialized post made it easy for me to understand and appreciate the court work as a presiding officer. This experience proved useful when I had postings as ACM (Assistant Collector and Magistrate) and SDM. Incidentally, during my career, I had an opportunity to work on all five

levels of district administration viz., ACM, SDM, ADM, Collector and Divisional Commissioner.

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