

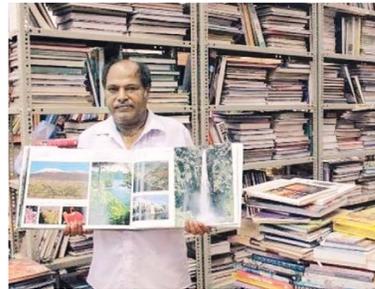


National Science Day, observed every year on February 28, celebrates the remarkable contributions of scientists and innovators in shaping our world. Commemorating the discovery of the Raman Effect by Sir C.V. Raman, this day inspires curiosity, critical thinking, and a passion for research across generations. Schools, universities, and scientific institutions organize exhibitions, lectures, and workshops to promote awareness about the role of science in everyday life. It is a reminder of the power of knowledge, experimentation, and discovery in driving progress, solving challenges, and building a brighter, more informed future for society.

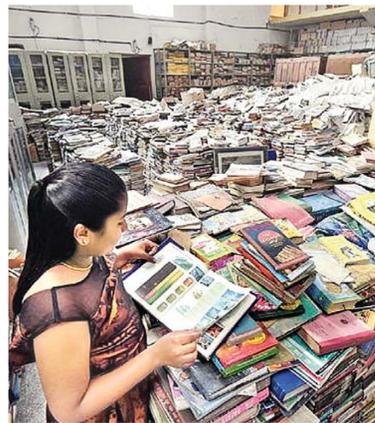
#PADMASHRI

Books Over Rest

No entry fee. No ID cards. No questions asked. Just shelves of knowledge, open to anyone who walks in, students, researchers, writers, civil service aspirants, even judges



Anke Gowda.



Every night, Anke Gowda chose books over rest. Once a bus conductor, later a timekeeper at the Padma Shri Cooperative Sugar Factory, Gowda spent nearly 30 years working while quietly building a dream.

After long days as a bus conductor, he'd search for what others had left behind, old textbooks, torn novels, discarded dictionaries. Over decades, that quiet habit grew into Pustak Mane, the world's largest free-access library with 2M+ books in 20 languages, rare manuscripts, documents from the Mysore dynasty, and newspapers dating back to the 1800s.

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"Books are my breath. It is my duty to preserve them for the next generation," Gowda says. Nearly 80% of his salary, his retirement pension of 40-45 lakh, and even his house and plots in Mysuru, all of it went into building the library.

Today, at 75, he doesn't just run the library, he lives inside it with his wife. Because for him, books were never a hobby. They were a responsibility. This Republic Day,



The armchair in the garden today

My Great-Grandfather's Armchair

My son looks at it with admiration. He believes that such a family heirloom never goes into retirement. It will always add to the glory of its past. He will sit on it when I am gone and so will Kabir, his grandson. There will be a space of honour for it in the years to come. It will never look incongruous amongst the present-day utilitarian furniture. The weight of its memories will give it the honoured place of a time machine.

As I sit on this chair, I often wonder who all sat on it? What did this chair witness in the last century and more. I can imagine my great grandfather, the Dewan of Jaipur, seated in his Baitakh Khana (sitting room). I imagine he looked quite elegant in the traditional white kurta dhoti while he sat there wearing embroidered Nagra shoes. He also liked to wear black leather locally made chappals with a curl on the tip when he went walking in the garden.



Dr Goutam Sen
CTVS Surgeon
Traveller
Story teller

have been having a wry neck for the last month. My son, an orthopedician, has told me that this is the result of bad posture. I tend to read in bed. A few pillows randomly placed behind my shoulder and head are what I use. I admit that while it is comfortable way to sprawl and read books, newspapers and Kindle, it does end up with quite a bit of stiffness in the neck.

So, I decided to be a good boy and use my Great Grand Father's Arm Chair. It is the only family heirloom I had been able to scrounge from my ancestral home when things had become bad and the property was being sold in bits and pieces. As to why that happened is another story for another day.

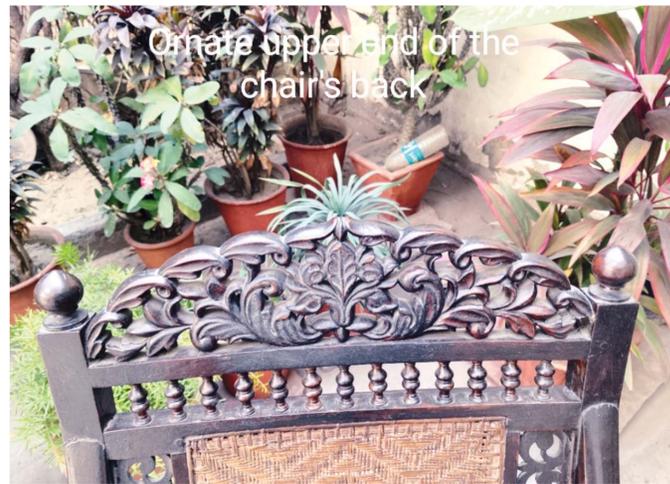
The arm chair was a part of the rest of the furniture and it had no special significance. By itself, it has become one of the cherished items in my home. It is in my bedroom and I love to look at it even when nobody

is sitting on it. By the present-day standards, it is ornate. It is made of teak wood with finely woven Burma cane for the seat and the back. The amazing thing is that even after more than 100 years, the cane has neither split nor gives any indication of doing so. The legs are finely tooled with multiple rings and intermittent globes which are not only elegant but also strong. The back is sloped at a comfortable 30 degree angle and the top part is an intricate wood carving with curls and fenestrations. The upper edge climbs from the sides to a central point giving a suggestion of it being throne like. At least it indicates that it was not a common chair but meant for someone eminent in the family.

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The chair would be placed differently according to his mood. If he was contemplating, it would face the long window through which the garden could be seen. While he sat

#STEPPING IN



Ornate upper end of the chair's back

thinking about matters grave and mundane, he would also appreciate the green well-trimmed lawn surrounded with colourful flower beds on the edge. He would observe the gardener trimming the bigger bougainvillea along the wall while the Bhishti (Water man) with his full-sized buffalo skin water bag was giving small quotas of water to the parched plants.

I do not know whether he could see the butterflies and bees flitting

and the family crest etched on it. My great grandmother would put in the ten cigarettes he would smoke every day in it. The cigarettes used to come in sealed tins in packs of fifty from England. The cigarette case would be placed on an octagonal side table with a velvet embroidered table cloth on it. Beside the case, there would be silver Ronson lighter. The lighter was never removed from there. While going to office, he would carry the



Velvet covered octagonal side table with books

The tales of Balabuksh whispering in the ears of the Maharaja were well known. How one Thakur was trying to get into the good books of the ruler by backbiting another? I now wonder what the arm chair thinks now. She has been the silent confidante of many generations of men used to having to think out the lives of too many people. Encasing the contemplation in its arms with care and supporting with unobtrusive comfort.

thin black ebonite holder and matchbox in his pocket.

He loved books, although he found little spare time to read. There was always a consignment on the side table of books in Bengali and English ordered from Calcutta. As time passed, the chair had been passed on to the next generation. His eldest son, Abinash Chandra, my grandfather, too, was the Dewan of Jaipur and a very busy man. I wonder whether he had the leisure to sit on the arm chair. He did sit there once in a while when his ten children would be around clamouring for his attention. Or did he have the time for them? Once in a while, an elder of the family would visit and he would be offered straight chair while grandfather sat in the arm chair to listen to him.

What else did the arm chair see? Many momentous events had taken place there.

Who was sitting on the chair when my great grandmother was given the honour of wearing the golden anklet by the king?

Who was there when discussions were made on which prince was to be adopted as Madho Singhji had no son of his. Man Singh II was a controversial selection. It needed negotiation at the state level as well as the British Resident.

Who would come and tell my grandfather about the intrigues of

the court. The tales of Balabuksh whispering in the ears of the Maharaja were well known. How one Thakur was trying to get into the good books of the ruler by backbiting another? I now wonder what the arm chair thinks now. She has been the silent confidante of many generations of men used to having to think out the lives of too many people. Encasing the contemplation in its arms with care and supporting with unobtrusive comfort. Without complaint of mis or over-use, ready each day to do what no one else can do as well. Yes, it has been ignored, for long enough. It has passed through a period of inattention.

Now it lies in a simple middle class home. Does it feel that there is loss of prestige? Does it feel it has done its bit and now glows in retirement?

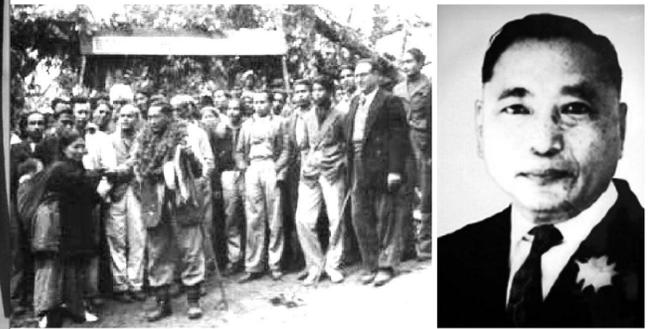
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#THE BRAVE

History in Minutes

The Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing Who Saved Tawang from China



Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing is a name central to the history of India's northeastern borders. Few know about his pivotal role in integrating Tawang, a region of Arunachal Pradesh, into the Indian Union, a feat he accomplished in 1951 without firing a single shot.

The Brave Journey to Tawang

In 1951, Tawang was still under Tibetan rule, and the situation was precarious. After China's invasion of Tibet in 1950, India's position in the region was uncertain. The Chinese were advancing towards the east, with the capital of Tibet, Lhasa, eventually falling to China.

Amid these tensions, Major Bob Khathing, a brave soldier from the Naga tribe of Manipur, undertook a mission to secure Tawang. At the time, there was no road access to the region, and Khathing had to navigate through the difficult terrain of Arunachal Pradesh to reach Tawang with three platoons of Assam Rifles.

Had Major Khathing not reached Tawang, it is widely believed that the Chinese would have taken control of the region, solidifying their presence before India could act.

Diplomacy Over Force

What sets Major Khathing's efforts apart is that he didn't rely on military might alone. Once in Tawang, he embraced the role of a soldier-negotiator. Using diplomacy and dialogue, he won over local village elders, monks from the Tawang Monastery, and the common people. These meetings were instrumental in winning the local population's support for India.

The people of Tawang, under Tibetan feudal rule, found Khathing's offer of joining a democratic India far more appealing. As a result, Tawang acceded to the Indian Union, and Khathing became the first person to hoist the Indian flag in the region. He also brought Bum La under Indian control, further solidifying India's hold on the strate-



gically significant region.

A Legacy of Peace and Valor

Major Khathing's peaceful integration of Tawang remains one of the most remarkable stories of post-independence India. In recognition of his contributions, Khathing Point in Bomdila was named after him, and in 2023, a Museum of Valor was inaugurated in Tawang in his honor.

The Memorial and Continued Legacy

Major Khathing passed away in 1990, but his legacy lives on. Each year, the Major Bob Khathing Memorial Event is held to honour his contributions, with the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh delivering the memorial address. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu also attended the Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing Museum of Valor opening in Tawang.

A Hero of World War II

Before his crucial role in Tawang, Khathing was already a decorated World War II hero. He fought as part of the V-Force, a special guerrilla unit set up by General Archibald Wavell, to disrupt Japanese forces in Southeast Asia. Khathing's bravery was legendary; he would often ambush smaller Japanese patrols himself and direct RAF bombers to strike larger Japanese formations.

One of his most heroic acts involved ordering the bombing of his own house after the discover-

ing that it had been occupied by Japanese soldiers. By doing so, he ensured that none of the enemy forces escaped. For his extraordinary valor, he was awarded the Military Cross, the Order of the British Empire (MBE), and the Padma Shri.

A Life of Service Beyond the Military

After World War II, Khathing left the army at the suggestion of the Maharaja of Manipur and entered civil service. He became the Minister of Hill Administration in Manipur and served as an MHA in the state's first assembly election. He also held the position of Assistant Commandant of the 2 Assam Rifles and was appointed Assistant Political Officer for NEFA (North-Eastern Frontier Agency), where he played a crucial role in integrating Tawang.

Later, he became the Chief Secretary of Nagaland and in 1972, was appointed as India's first tribal ambassador to Myanmar. Khathing also played an instrumental role in the Shillong Accord, which led to the formation of Nagaland as a state.

The Memorial and Continued Legacy

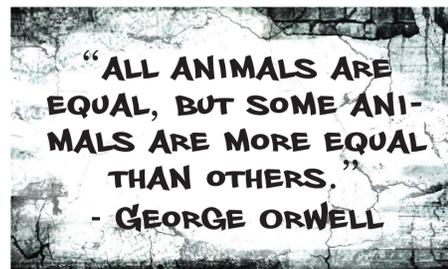
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Khathing's journey from a World War II hero to a statesman who helped integrate Tawang and other northeastern regions into India remains an inspiring story of bravery, diplomacy, and dedication to his country.

Major Bob Khathing may have passed on, but his contributions to India's northeastern frontier and his efforts in integrating Tawang will never be forgotten. He truly remains one of India's unsung heroes, whose courage and diplomacy helped shape the nation's borders and ensure peace in the region.



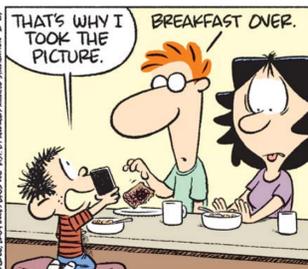
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman