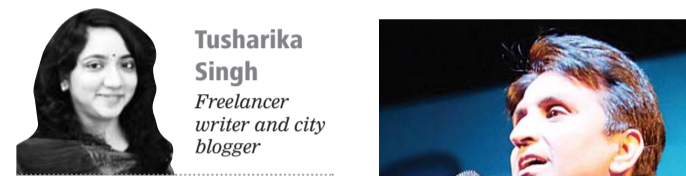


#CURTAIN RAISER

Celebrating Rajasthan's Literary Traditions

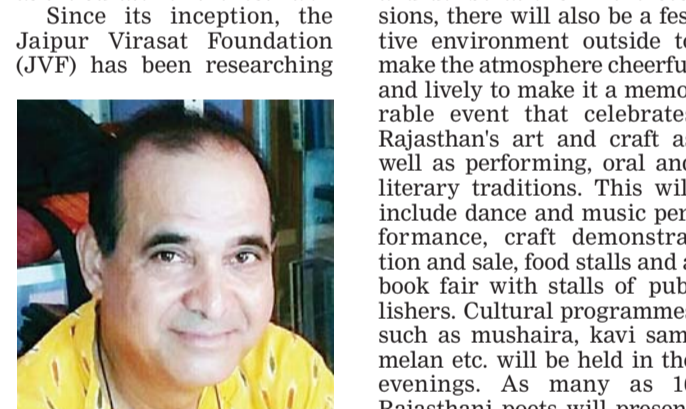
With the curation of the first-ever Rajasthan Literature Festival, scheduled to be held from 25 March to 27 March in Jodhpur, the Jaipur Virasat Foundation will give an impetus and a new energy to Rajasthani language and literature.



The first ever Rajasthan Literature Festival is all set to take place at the Zenana Mahal in the Blue City of Jodhpur from 25 March to 27 March. The festival seeks to highlight the rich tradition and history of literature in Rajasthani language in its varied dialects as well as literature in Hindi by writers from Rajasthan. Various literary and cultural activities including dialogue session, Mushaira, Rajasthani poetry recitation, dialogue session will take place at the festival.



While the festival was announced by the Government of Rajasthan in the budget of 2019, it could not take place owing to the Covid-19 pandemic and is being organized now by the Department of Art, Culture, Literature and Archaeology with Jawahar Kala Kendra as the nodal agency. Owing to its expertise in the area, the Jaipur Virasat Foundation has been engaged as the curator of the festival.



Since its inception, the Jaipur Virasat Foundation (JVF) has been researching and working in the field of the varied oral and written contributions of Rajasthani language, literature and performing arts. It has also worked towards providing a platform for a large audience to hear and access Rajasthani literature, language and oral traditions, including through the Jaipur Literature Festival that JVF initiated.



Shedding light on the festival, Rakshat Hooja, Director of Jaipur Virasat Foundation, said that the Foundation has been actively working to give a concrete shape to this idea and the Rajasthan Literature Festival is envisaged to become an annual literary kumbh for Rajasthan. Eminent writers, scholars will bring out the richness of Rajasthani prose and poetry with academics providing the background of the evolution of Rajasthani literature and language. The sessions will focus on an overview of Rajasthani and Hindi literature, moderated talk shows with current writers, authors, playwrights, poets as well as literary critics and scholars. It will include topics like journalism, translation, outreach, training and teaching and poetry recitation. The festival will witness the participation of literary geniuses such as Wasim Barelvi, Kumar Vishwas, CP Deval, Ila Arun, Ashok Rahi,

writers with a meaningful discussion on the writers who have taken Rajasthan's literature to the global stage. It will also play a big role in promoting culture, literature and tourism of the state. It is worth noting that JVF has pioneered a cross section of methodologies to ensure the longevity of socio-cultural traditions and the preservation of both, built and intangible articulations of heritage. It is known for its long-standing engagement with local communities, it is an invaluable resource for knowledge sharing, promoting indigenous arts, and has encouraged continued development of craft skills. While the first festival is being held in Jodhpur, it is proposed that the festival will take place annually in different cities of Rajasthan by rotation.



Raghuraj Sinha or Raghu Sinha, as he was affectionately called by all, was one of the most colourful personalities of Jaipur. A handsome bachelor, who was always nattily dressed, worked for the National Engineering Industries (NEI). The persona of debonaire Raghu Sinha, incorporated charm, polish, and worldliness, often combined with a carefree attitude (think of James Bond). He was 'carefree', but a person with high-wire effrontery, the kind that can't be faked. He was somewhat like Antonio, the title character in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. He was influential, powerful, wealthy but not a merchant. But like Antonio, he was kind and generous and honest to all and was loved and revered by all. Nobody knew his designation, but the Jaipurites knew him as the 'whole and sole' of the NBC. The people in Jaipur would relate him as the man who calls the shots on NBC.

Raghu Sinha, his brothers Rangi and Hari, who retired as the Chief Engineers with the Railways were all sons of Basant Behari Mathur, a top police official in the Jaipur state police. After a very successful career as the Director of Rajasthan Tourism, Rangi later served the Birlas.

My father Gyan Chand Bhandari had a close association with the family and the acquaintance with the family began when Raj Bihari Lal Mathur, the brother-in-law of the Sinha family, was posted in Kharagpur with the Bengal Nagpur Railway as an engineer. Kharagpur, 72 miles from Kolkata, was a railway town built by the Britishers, where they had set up the railways workshop which became Asia's largest steam engine and carriage workshop.

My family had a very large business in Kharagpur in West Bengal's Midnapur district, set up by my grand father Dhanrup Mal Bhandari and my father Gyan Chand Bhandari. The family had automobile, army and railway contractors, radio, cycles and money lending and finance business and even ice creams. Since Raj Bihari Mathur was from Jaipur and our family also had roots in Jaipur, so when he landed in Kharagpur to join as an engineer, my family helped Raj Bihari Lal and his wife Chana Rani settle in Kharagpur where they lived in a large colonial bungalow.

While serving in the Bengal Nagpur Railway, as South Eastern Railway was then known, Raj Bihari Lal was well liked by the



With Surendra Lala Golcha and Abhimanyu Golcha.

Raghu Sinha

He Made Bearings And Never Lost His

He was always selective with his guest list. Once advocate Bajrang Lal Sharma, who was elected from Bani park as Janta Party candidate, rocked the Vidhan Sabha by stating that all the bureaucrats were bought by the Birlas through Raghuji. He accused Raghuji that he was corrupting the officialdom of Rajasthan by free flow of Scotch and the officials oblige him by granting permissions that would benefit Birla's NBC. Raghuji was unfazed, and continued to host parties. But the bureaucrats, now hesitated. Only some bold officers would still go and enjoy Raghuji's hospitality.

#PERSONALITY

European engineers of the railways. When the railways started appointing apprentices to run their workshop, Raj Bihari called Raghuji to Kharagpur and he joined the railways as an apprentice on a salary of 37 rupees a month.

Companionship My father was friends with Raghuji and the two families would often enjoy meals together. Raj Bihari was a member of the South Institute, a recreational institute where only European and Anglo Indians were given membership. But Raj Bihari being an officer and my father being a top businessman of Kharagpur, were given membership.

My father would often drive Raghu Sinhaiji to the South Institute and they enjoyed many evenings drinking lemonade and watching western movies in the South Institute. Raghu Sinhaiji would play tennis there with European officers. He made friends with a number of European engineers and their families. He was young and handsome and was admired by the young ladies. The Institute had a bar, but Raghuji did not drink. It was the BNR lemonade with cutlets.

While serving as an apprentice, Raghuji learnt all about the steam engines and the axle boxes in the wagons. There was a Muslim fitter, who was an expert in repairing the axle boxes and bearings and Raghuji learnt the



With Maharaja Bhawani Singh.



With Bhairon Singh Shekhawat.



With CK Birla, Chairman of National Engineering Industries and another person.

art from him. He was his Guru or Ustad as he would address him.

This was in the 40s and this was the time when, the Birlas were setting up their bearing unit in Jaipur. As the railways were the principal buyers of the bearings, the Birlas were looking for someone from such a background, to join them. When Raj Bihari Lalji came to know about the Birla's unit, he spoke to the Birlas and recommended Raghuji. He was interviewed by B M Birla, and was made the incharge of the Jaipur NBC unit. He was recruited at a good salary and Raghuji returned to Jaipur, his hometown happily. He was involved with the NBC since its inception and saw the setting up of the NBC factory and soon NBC became Asia's top ball bearing manufacturing unit.

My father was close to Raghuji and after he left, the evenings were spent with Raj Bihariji and Chandra Rani ji. She was very popular in the European ladies and also the local merchant community and they would respectfully address her as Mrs. Mathur.

Often on a visit to Jaipur, my father would visit Raghuji in their old haveli in Khazane Walon Ka Rasta and later at their Bani Park's Basant Marg House. The street was named Basant Marg after Basant Bihari Mathur, the patriarch of the Sinhas. How they acquired the name Sinha, although they were Mathur, is still a mystery.

Lavish Parties Raghuji was technically very sound and knew all about bearings, but he was encouraged to do the marketing of the bearings and look after exports, and that's how he became the top salesman. He toured the world with his order book, and became the most frequent flyer of Jaipur.

In the early 50s, he started going abroad for NBC work. He would often share his experiences with this author after a set of tennis at Man House. Those were the days when Kishan Rungta used to maintain two tennis grass courts at the Man House, his residence, where there is a hall now.

At the Man House court, anybody could come and play. Amongst the regulars, there were Raghu Sinha, his brother Rangi, Surendra Golcha, Kamalakar Sharma, Subhash Periwai and often Parthasarthy Sharma.

Raghuji had great love for tennis and he would often plan his trips to Britain in such a way so that he could see Wimbledon. Raghuji would be nattily dressed as a tennis player in whites and



Raghu Sinha.

tennis shoes of brands that no other player had. He would buy tennis rackets and Slazengers were his favourites. He would bring a bagful of Slazenger tennis balls and would give some of them to Surendra 'Lala' Golcha, whom he loved like his own son. Lala Golcha's relationship with him was so strong that Raghuji would land at Sohan Sadan on Prithviraj Marg with a boxful of Swiss chocolates for Lala's children. Raghuji developed a heart ailment, and he trusted Lala to plan his treatment abroad.

The Raghu Sinha ITF tennis tournament for the veterans has a prize money of Rs two lakh and is being organised at the Jaipur Club. In the men's section, age groups are - plus 50, plus 60, plus 65 and plus 70. The women's singles are for the age groups of plus 35 and plus 45. This tennis tournament for the veterans is the fittest tribute to the man who loved the sport.

Raghuji would never even take a sip, but he would entertain his guests with the finest Scotch, wine and good food. He collected miniature liquor bottles and would buy them from various breweries and proudly displayed them. Nobody had such a vast collection of miniature liquor bottles

of various sizes and shapes. He would bring a boxful of Scotch and wine and would gift them to his close friends. V N 'Ranjit' Kak, who was the MD of the Hotel Khassa Kothi, Gokul Lal Mehta and a few other IAS and IPS were his friends. It is learned that among the beneficiaries of Raghuji, was the Chief Minister Mohan Lal Sukhadia and Mathuradas Mathur. Raghuji loved parties and he would throw lavish ones at his Sardar Patel Road House, which he built tastefully with a hint of Jaipur architecture. He would invite only select bureaucrats or police officials and the IAS officers used to feel privileged if they were invited for Raghuji's party. Scotch was served freely and often the bureaucrats would start toting with an overdose of single malt.

He was always selective with his guest list. Once advocate Bajrang Lal Sharma, who was elected from Bani Park as Janta Party candidate, rocked the Vidhan Sabha by stating that all the bureaucrats were bought by the Birlas through Raghuji. He accused Raghuji that he was corrupting the officialdom of Rajasthan by free flow of Scotch and the officials oblige him by



With foreign buyers on a visit to the NBC factory.



Raghu Sinha with brother Rangi Sinha.

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A Religious Man

Raghuji once told me, how he would travel to Egypt by catching a flight at Jodhpur, where KLM aircraft bound for Egypt from Amsterdam would land for refueling after a long haul. The aircraft during summers would land, not on an airport, but on Balsamand lake. The aircraft would slowly land on the lake water with its lower body fitted with balloons that would keep them afloat. The passengers were taken by boat from the aircraft to a specially built platform. The passengers would stay overnight at Jodhpur's Circuit House which served as a hotel for the airline passengers and take the morning flight, the next morning. The aircraft would take off from the lake and the balloons were withdrawn automatically from the underbelly of the aircraft.

Raghuji would always travel by plane and would travel to the airport in two cars. One car being sent in advance ahead of the rail-



Raghu Sinha explaining the manufacturing process of bearing to foreign buyers.



Raghu Sinha and Mala Mathur.



With nephew Sudhir Mathur and niece Mala Mathur.

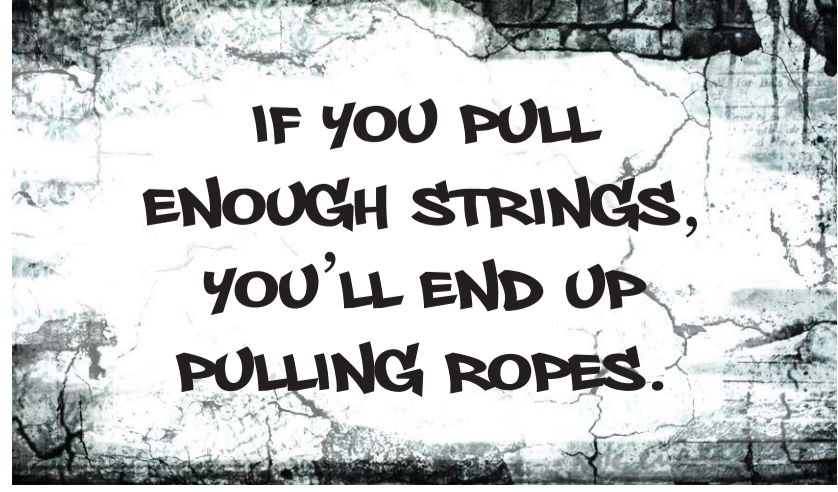


With Surendra Golcha at his daughter's wedding.

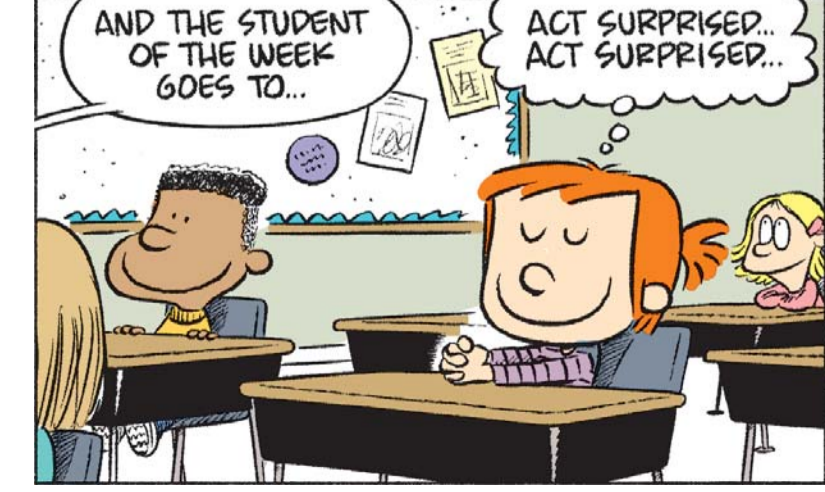


With Lala Golcha and his family.

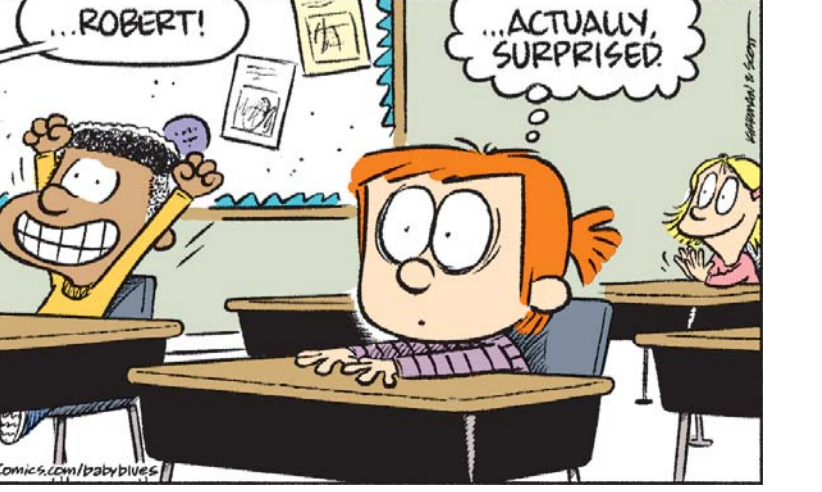
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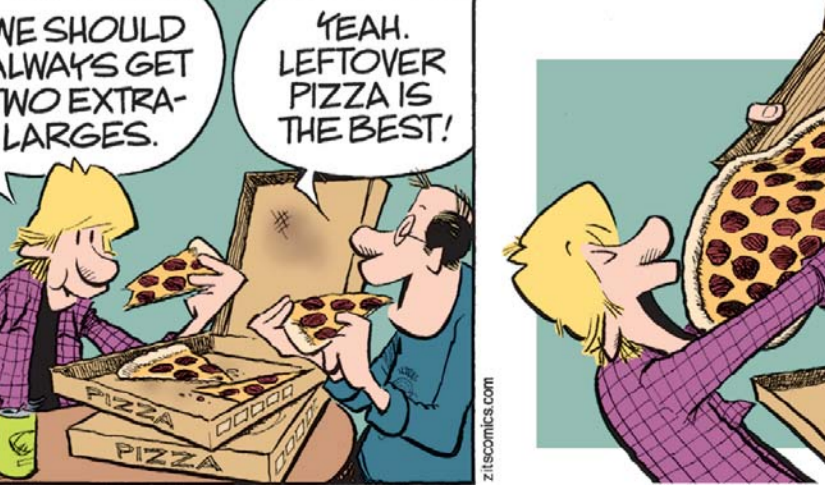
BABY BLUES



ZITS



WHAT'S LEFTOVER PIZZA?



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman