# ARBIT it happens here...

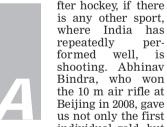


Normally, people ask me what I would do for shooting. But I am a Sports Minister, and I am for overall development of all the sports, and for this development, budgetary provisions have been made. No doubt, shooting as one single sport, has brought the state a lot of glory and we have plans to update the Shooting Range in Jaipur. Similarly, other sports would be developed through organised coaching at the district and at the divisional headquarter level. We would announce the *new sports policy* that would deal with the issue more elaborately. I, as an Industry Minister, is keen to develop the sports goods' industry, which is growing very fast. I am sure that with our policies, Rajasthan would soon become the hub of the sports goods' industry.



# **Shooting All The** Way To The Top

**Prakash** Bhandari The writer is a senior iournalist



is any other sport, where India has repeatedly per formed well, shooting. Abhinav Bindra, who won the 10 m air rifle at Beijing in 2008, gave us not only the first individual gold, but

also the first after hockey. But prior to Bindra, it was Raivavardhan Singh Rathore, who started the trend by winning the Athens Olympics silver medal in the double trap shooting, overcoming the stiff challenge from China's Wang Zheng. The gold went to the UAE royal Ahmed Al Maktoum

India has won four medals through Rathore, Bindra, Gagan Narang and Vijav Kumar. Our shooters, this time to Paris, are our best bets and the large contingent include two shooters. Anant Naruka and Maheshwari Chauhan, who will aim for a medal at the Paris Olympics. At Tokyo Olympics, Apurvi Chandela and Divyansh Panwar, from Rajasthan, were part of the Indian contingen

India has sent to Paris one of the strongest contingents, with multiple Asian Games and World Cup medal winners, who are likely to rise to the podium

But, it was Raivavardhan Singh Rathore, who started writing the success story by winning the double trap silver, and it was the only medal that India won at the 2004 Athens Games. It's 20 vears since Col Rathore brought glory to India, but this two decade long journey after Athens brought so many transformations in the life of one of the greatest sportsmen of the country. He could never have imagined that the glory earned on the shooting range would change his life and he would become a public figure. sitting in the Lok Sabha and now. as Minister of Sports and

Industries in Rajasthan. It was India's first-ever individual silver medal at the games and the first medal in shooting, a sport India was not traditionally good at. The medal was won by an army officer, who took up shooting at the age of 28, and excelled at a fast pace to clinch an Olympic Ever since his childhood, he

showed the urge to excel. Son of an army officer. Col Laxman Singh, who came from Garabdesar in Sardarshahar Tehsil of Churu district and as an army officer, he moved from place to place and Rathore studied in the Kendriva Vidyalaya and excelled in sports. His mother, a teacher who taught in various army schools, was his mentor and it was she who presented her son with an air rifle as a schoolboy. Parents wanted him to join the army as he showed leadership qualifies even as a child. The shooting was not in his mind and at the school level he excelled in cricket as an all-rounder. He would bowl medium pacer and batted with determination to excel as a cricketer. He worked hard to make it to the National Defence Academy (NDA), where the written examination is a tough competition. At the NDA, he excelled in all the sports. After graduating from the

NDA, Rathore attended the Indian Military Academy (IMA), where he was awarded the Sword o *Honour* for the best all-round Gentleman Cadet. He was also the recipient of the Sikh Regiment Gold Medal, awarded to the best sportsman of the course.

He was later commissioned in the 9th Grenadiers (Mewar) Regiment in 1990, and was promoted to captain in 1995. Like his father, he was posted in Kupwara in Kashmir. He fought the Kargil War and was promoted to Major in 2000. While serving in Jammu and Kashmir, he participated in the counter-terrorist operation. He was a tough officer and the terrorists knew him by his name, and the enemy's intelligence always warned terrorists to make sure that they don't confront Rathore. He was feared by terrorists. Once, in Kashmir, it was Pakistan's Independence Day on August 14, 1999, young officer Rathore was confronted by two terrorists, who were aiming to

shoot him down. Rathore, in a split second, opened fire on the two Kashmiri militants and 'neutralized' them by shooting them down. "It was a 'double trap.' My first hig shot came from a weapon and

not a sports gun," remembers Rathore, sitting in his plush house in Jaipur's Panchyawala. The army was building a

squad of marksmen and exposing the army personnel to sports guns and the idea was to encourage the armed forces personnel to take

**#THE GAMES** 



shooting as a sport. Rathore was the first to grab the opportunity that saw him join the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in Delhi His affair, with the shooting as a sport, had a flying start as he was a sportsman from early childhood, and played all sports at NDA and later, at IMA. Rathore won the Sword of Honour in the Indian Military Academy. He always had a passion to excel and do something that could make him look taller than others. After his induction to shooting, he learned the sport quickly and started showing promise and was ready for completion. His regiment was awarded the Army Chief's Citation and the Governor of J&K's Citation for exemplary work. He was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in 2004, and to his final rank of Colonel, five vears later. At the 2002 Manchester, Rathore won a gold medal and set a new Commonwealth Games Record of 192 targets out of 200, which still stands. He also won the Team Gold

Commonwealth Games in

Medal along with Moraad Ali Khan. Rathore, went on to successfully defend his Commonwealth Champion title by winning the gold medal at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006. He also won the silver in the Team event with Vikram Bhatnagar. He won gold medals in two World Shooting Championships, at Sydney in 2004 and Cairo in 2006.

In 2006, Rathore won a bronze medal in the World Championship in Spain an event held for the top 12 shooters of the world. He was ranked third in the world for most of 2003 and 2004, and briefly climbed to the first in early 2004 and second after the Athens Olympics. He won a silver at the World Championship in 2003 in Sydney for India, after a gap of nearly 40 years. India had not seen a victory since Karni Singh of Bikaner, who won a silver at the 1962 World Shooting Championship in Cairo. Rathore is credited with winning the Asian Clay Target gold medal. four times in a row. from 2003 to 2006. He also holds an individual bronze medal, which was at the Asiad in Doha in 2006. Between 2002 and 2006, he won 25 international medals at various championships for Double Trap. In 2011, Rathore participated in the Asian Clay Target Championship in Kuala Lumpur and won gold. His score of 194 in that tournament equals a

remarkable achievement for an army officer, who was trained to handle weapons and not a sports gun. Following his silver medal victory in Athens, his life changed. He was honoured by the Rajasthan government that hosted a reception for him and the former Chief Minister, Vasundhara Raje, honoured him in the presence of MLAs and MPs and bureaucrats. From a national hero, he was inducted in politics and the persons behind it were Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vasundhara Raje. He had many years of life as a shooter, but the politics in the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) and his subsequent ill-treatment, at the hands of the sports officials, made him disgusted. He had to make a very important decision of his life whether to guit army and sport and join politics. He gave up the glamour job of an Army

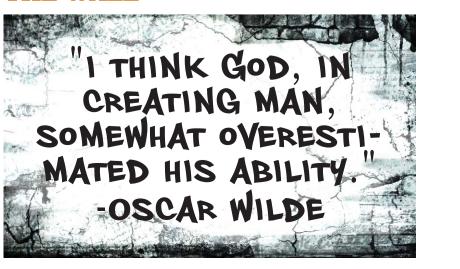
world record. Rathore's life

changed after he won the Athens

Olympic silver medal. It was a

Colonel and hung his rifle to join politics and was elected from Jaipur (Rural) to the Lok Sabha and became a Union minister of Sports. Rathore won his second Lok Sabha election from Jaipur (Rural) again and just before the Vidhan Sabha election in 2023, he was asked by the party to be active in the state politics. He was fielded from Jhotwara which was part of the assembly constituency of Jaipur (Rural) He had a thumping victory and was made a Cabinet minister in Bhajanlal Sharma's govern

THE WALL



#### **BABY BLUES**



#### The Universe We See and Feel



ust look at our Earth! It is so big that you cannot completely explore it. Now, when you look at the sky and observe that cosmos, you realize how tiny you are. But is that all? No, the things you see and feel account for less than 5 per cent of the entire Universe. What are other things that we cannot see? They are dark matter and dark energy. These forms of matter and energy are not observed but needed so that our observations come in accord with our knowledge.

### **Rathore, in an intimate interview with Arbit, talked** about his life and times. A tete-e-tete:

Arbit: You became an Olympic medal winner in double trap shooting, a sport that you took up at the age of 28. But in your childhood, you insisted your mother to buy an air rifle. You had any hunch in your boyhood that it's the sport in which you would excel one day?

**RVS:** No, I, as a child, just asked for an air rifle as I would shoot with the pellets and enjoy doing it. My mother was a teacher and taught in various army schools. She even served the Jaipur's Army School and she bought me an air rifle from her hard-earned savings. This gesture of my mother I would never forget, and later, when I was an active shooter and needed money to buy extra cartridges, I looked for some sponsor, who could buy me some cartridges. But I did not get any support. It was my mother, who asked me not to worry about the money and she shelled out Rs. 50,000 in 2003, that helped me buy cartridges and practice hard.

When I won the double trap silver, the first person whom 2 thanked, looking heavenwards was my mother and my eyes were moist when I thanked my mother. Mother is a mother. • Arbit: Tell us about your

preparation for the Athens Olympics and how you shaped yourself for the **Athens Olympics?** 

RVS: I aimed big and built a solid resume and was ranked 'NO. 3' in the world before the Athens Olympiad. Before that, I had won the gold at the Commonwealth Games and a silver in the 2003 World Championship at Sydney. I won the silver medal for India after 40 years. India had not seen a victory since Karni Singh of Bikaner, who won a Silver at the 1962 World Shooting Championship in Cairo. • Arbit: Can you recreate

the Athens story as you become the first Indian to win an Olympic medal in shooting?

RVS: I was in good touch on August day in Athens. In double trap, which has now been discontinued as an Olympic sport, one has to shoot two clay targets, released simultaneously. In less than five seconds, you have to hit two targets. It needed tremendous concentration and mindset. In the qualification round, I

shot 135 out of 150, and was placed fifth among the six finalists. I shot 46 out of 50 in the first preliminary round, but was under pressure after a poor second round, with just 43 points. But I came back strong in the third with 46 points in a very competitive field, and reached the

In the final, I finished with a total of 179 out of 200, scoring a terrific 44 under pressure. UAE's Sheikh Ahmed Al Maktoum, who had qualified with an Olympic record of 144, was already a frontrunner for the gold medal and clinched it with 45 points in the final. The real test was the silver and bronze medal battle between me and China's Wang Zheng.

If only the final scores would have been counted as per the new rules, I would have been comfortably placed on silver. But back then, it was a matter of one shot. On my last attempt. I had to hit both targets to try for a silver. I won the silver with my last shot. And I did just that, in a manner so calm and collected, that the nickname 'Chilly' got stuck with me.

I was crowned with silver glory. I may have appeared calm inside. But I was dying a thousand deaths out there



Arbit: How were the immediate feelings?

**RVS:** As I went to the podium and stood there. I remembered my mother and my wife, Maj (Dr.) Gayatri, who always stood by me. When I used to practice, at Delhi's Karni Singh Range (the long hours of practice), I would get pain in my shoulders after a grueling practice session. My wife Dr. Gavatri, an army doctor and a Major would give me pain killer shots to enable me to sleep properly. Both my mother and my wife truly deserved a few ounces of the silver medal that I won.

Arbit: Who coached you and prepared you for the **Athens Olympics?** 

**RVS:** I am indebted to Mark Russell, he added fire-power in

Veteran Australian marksman Russell Mark, had won gold at the Atlanta 1996 Olympics and a silver medal at the 2000 Games in Sydney. When I won the silver, he told media persons that I was the toughest competitor whom he has ever faced. Arbit: Post Athens, what

were your achievements and disappointments?

**RVS:** After the Athens silver, 1 won the Asian clay target gold three times in a row, up to 2006. I also won the individual bronze in Doha Asiad in 2006. After Athens, won more than 20 individual medals at various events till 2006 for Double Trap.

But, Beijing Olympics was disappointing. I shot a series of 43, 45, 43, 131 to finish 12th among 19 shooters.

I was struggling for form in the run-up to the games, and the score of 131 was just not enough in a qualifying round that saw Italian Francesco D' Aniello finish at the top of the heap, with a total of 141

I sealed the Beijing berth by winning a gold medal in the men's double trap event at the 2006 ISSF World Cup at Cairo.

I had also won gold in the individual and team events in Men's double trap at the Bangkok Asian Clav Shooting championships in 2005. I was also a member of the winning team that won a double trap team gold in the 2005 Commonwealth Shooting Championships

Though, I missed a medal in Beijing, I was honoured when I was given the task to be the flagbearer of the Indian contingent at the opening ceremony. That came as a consolation. As the Olympics are on. I remember how proud I felt holding the tricolor and leading the Indian contin-

In 2011. I participated in the Asian Clay Target Championship in Kuala Lumpur and won gold My score of 194 in that tournament equals world record. I retired from army in 2013 as a Colonel, and also decided to hang my rifle and joined the BJP in 2014 and was asked to contest the

2014 Lok Sabha elections from Jaipur (Rural). I contested, fought, and won.

• Arbit: It seems that your dreams are unending. You are an achiever. Did you ever dream that you would become a Minister for Sports, both, at the Centre and in the state? What was your contribution to sports as a minister in the Centre?

**RVS:** Yes, it was my parent's dream that I should be in the army and I was there. Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, wanted me to join politics and I did, and he made me a minister and I shall be ever indebted to him.

During my tenure as a Sports Minister, I tried to encourage sports at the school level and Khelo India school games was a big success

The primary requirement of India is to have a broad base of sports, where opportunity is available to every village, district and school. It is like a pyramid where the base should be strong. which is *Khelo India*, and the peak is the Olympic podium. which should be the target.

• Arbit: Now, as Rajasthan's Sports Minister and also Minister for Industries,

what are your plans? **RVS:** Normally, people ask me what I would do for shooting.

But I am a Sports Minister, and I am for overall development of all the sports, and for this development, budgetary provisions have been made. No doubt, shooting as one single sport, has brought the state a lot of glory and we have plans to update the Shooting Range in Jaipur. Similarly, other would be developed sports through organised coaching at the district and at the divisional headquarter level. We would announce the *new sports policy* that would deal with the issue more elaborately. I, as an Industry Minister, is keen to develop the sports goods' industry, which is growing very fast. I am sure that with our policies. Rajasthan would soon become the hub of the sports goods' industry • Arbit: Your

#### son. Manavaditya Singh, is coming up as a shooter. What are your plans to groom him

**RVS:** Yes, I am told that he is talented and it amuses me when people tell me that he is far more talented than his father. He is serious about shooting and also studies. After being a reasonable achiever as a junior, he is now in senior's grade. But, he will have to be an individual achiever and for that, he will have to work hard. He practices both, in Delhi and Jaipur, and loves to shoot at the Jaipur Range. The Jaipur Range has produced four Olympians. I only wish the son to be as lucky as his father!

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ZITS

HOW IS IT

GOING AT

WORK,

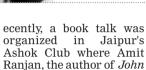
JEREMY?

## **#BOOK LAUNCH**

## The Australian Lawyer of Rani Laxmibai

The almost unknown author and lawyer, John Lang, was rediscovered in Jaipur's Ashok Club during a recent book talk





organized in Jaipur's Ashok Club where Amit Ranjan, the author of *John* Lang: Wanderer of Hindoostan, Slanderer In Hindoostanee, Lawyer for

the Rani, discussed his book with the writer and blogger, Tusharika Singh. In this book, Amit has uncovered the unknown aspects of the Australian writer, John Lang, who became famous as the lawver for Laxmibai, the queen of Jhansi. She had appointed John Lang as a lawyer to fight her case of annexation with the East India Company. This book takes you through Lang's life, his exploits, and his literary output. Amit Ranjan says that he spent near ly a decade, chasing this elusive and yet so important figure, down musty archives and dusty by-lanes, through ghostly cemeteries and ghastly bureaucratic tangles, across India and Australia.

In the course of the conversation, Ranjan talked about how John Lang was not only a lawyer but also a prolific writer, who had authored about 20 books in just 48 years of his life. Besides this, he also published a newspaper for 20 years. Amit said that John Lang was a fearless writer and lawyer, who always wrote about East India company's atrocities. However, despite all this, no one has ever written or researched or talked about him. John Lang died in 1864. In 1964, almost a 100 years later, the well-known author, Ruskin Bond, discovered his grave in Mussoorie. He started researching about him but apart from him, no other author talked or researched about him for the next forty years.

In 2002, the Australian High Commission started researching about Lang. Ranjan discovered his passion for studying Lang almost by accident. Initially, he was focused on uncovering the truth about Alice Richman, a local legend in Pune, rumoured to be a lovelorn white woman, who took her own life and now, haunts the campus. However, as he delved deeper into his research. Ranjan's curiosity led him to Lang, a



Amit Ranjan and Tusharika Singh.



against annexation under the *Mofussilite*, which openly criticized the East India Company.

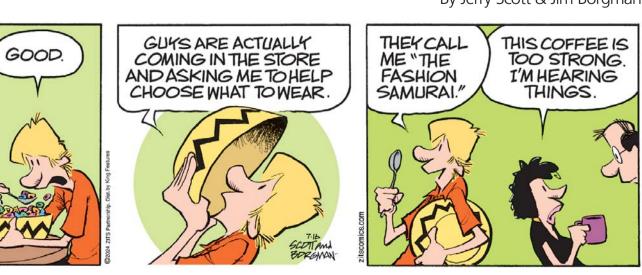
Ranjan further discussed that Lang's contributions go beyond his legal and journalistic work. Lang's meticulous historiography showcas es his sharp intellect and profound understanding, highlighting the fact that there are still many aspects of Lang's legacy that remain unacknowledged. Lang's influence extended to exposing Edgar Allan Poe's alleged 'plagiarism' by revealing that Poe's renowned poem, 'The Raven,' was

lawyer who was called upon by the actually inspired by a Persian piece. Rani of Jhansi to defend her kingdom He also played a role in shaping Rudyard Kipling's novel Kim and co-Doctrine of Lapse. Lang was also authored the famous play Our known for his critical journal, The American Cousin, which was being performed during Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Furthermore, Lang made contributions to Charles Dickens's journal Household Words, although, he never achieved the same level of fame as his contemporaries. Ranjan deliberated that he holds Lang in high regard for his sharp wit and insightful observations, often emulating Lang's style in his own writing. He fondly recalls Lang's humourous guips such as his comment about how promotions in India were often based on the deaths of senior officers from diseases like cholera or malaria rather than merit Additionally, Ranjan highlights Lang's playful prank of misidentify ing Lala Jotee Persaud's portrait as that of Nana Saheb, an error that persists in historical records to this

countries

The audience at Ashok Club.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman







Amit also talked about how when Narendra Modi. India's Prime Minister, visited Australia in 2014, he had presented a portrait of John Lang to the Australian Prime Minister as a symbol of strong and historical bond between the two

It is interesting to note that Amit Ranjan has also authored books on poetry and his poems have been published in various interna tional journals. Besides this, he will soon be publishing a book on Dara Shikoh, a *sufi* prince of the seventeenth century.