

# The Cha Cha The Twist And The Free Coffee

By the time my generation reached college, we started visiting restaurants to listen to the music, and there were some good bands playing jazz. Of course, we could not afford to eat anything and had to make do with a coffee or a cold drink. As we wanted to spend the maximum time possible in the restaurant, and there were free coffee refills, this was not an issue. However, if one did not like coffee, bottles of coke were ordered and drunk with a paper straw, pinched in the middle, to reduce the flow of the cola to make it last for at least an hour.

**● LALIT NIRULA**

In 1958, we had opened the first modern fully air conditioned 3-star hotel in India at L-Block, above the restaurant complex. By the late 50s, my family had seen the trend and in 1960, shut down the cafe-ria and brasserie and opened two speciality restaurants without any live music. One was for Indian food and was called Gufa, with the interiors done by a close family friend, the artist, M.R. Acharekar, who had won Filmfare's best art director award three times. He got his team of set designers from Bombay to do the work, and the restaurant was unique in its presentation. Created like the Ajanta Ellora caves, the entire service was silver and the waiters were dressed in white and red with high pugdees. The restaurant had three different chefs, one for vegetarian cuisine, one for meat, chicken and fish curries, and one for tandoori dishes.

I had by then started working part-time in the restaurants and was present in the office when the meat chef was being interviewed. He was a burly Sikh who had worked with the Maharaja of Patiala and when asked what his food was like, his reply was that it was of such good quality that our customers would taste it in their burps 24 hours later! He was hired but his rich food was toned down substantially to meet the digestive requirements of mere mortals.

The second restaurant was called 'La Boheme' and was designed by Luc Durant, a Swiss architect based in Delhi. La Boheme was avant garde and set a trend in food, concept and design. It had a wood beamed ceiling with the beams set at different heights. Lute fabric runners in black and white ran over

and under these beams and lights in cylindrical lampshades with a switch, hung low over every table. Specializing in Austro-Hungarian cuisine, La Boheme served continental food. It was the first restaurant to serve a large variety of coffee and boasted of the second espresso machine in India, a chrome beauty by Gaggia. Heading the kitchen was the Hungarian Mrs. Messenger, a professional chef, who made the best apple strudel I have ever eaten.

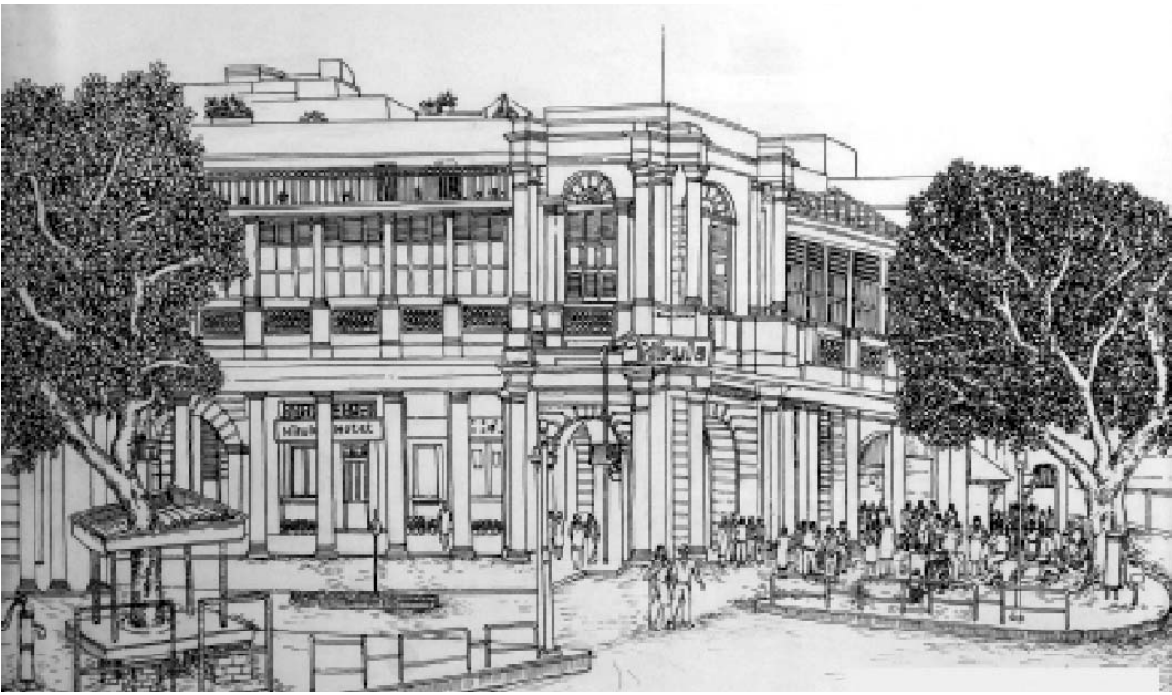
The restaurant was a novel concept and became popular with artists and writers, and the regular business and shopping crowd who visited CP. It also became a favourite haunt of young couples as at that time, there was a dearth of places for the young to hang out. After a few months, we had to remove the light switches from the lamps that hung on top of the tables, so that the lights were always on, particularly in the quiet corners that had become very popular with them! In the 50s and '60s, Sunday noon saw the col-

## #GROWING UP IN CP

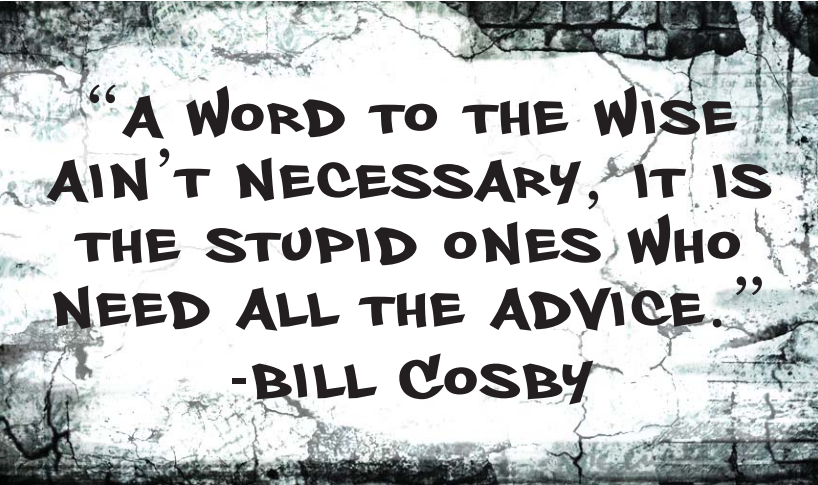


lege going trendsetters at jam sessions hosted by restaurants. These sessions served two purposes; first, the crowd got to hang out and meet new people and second, the dancing was considered quite trendy. These were times that saw the birth of the chacha cha and the twist.

Most of the corporate offices in Delhi in the '50s and '60s were located either at CP or Asaf Ali Road. It was the done thing among the managerial class, the shop owners and the local politicians to go to a restaurant for a mid-morning and early evening break. In the early 1960s, a very popular large India Coffee House



## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



## Knowing about National Eyewear Day

June 6 is National Eyewear Day! Spectacles have been around for about seven centuries, but early versions were only worn by monks and scholars. In fact, the first pair of eyeglasses consisted of two magnifying glasses that were set into bone with a hinge on the nose. The day reminds everyone to get yearly comprehensive routine eye exam. Today is a good day to remind us to keep our prescriptions updated to prevent serious eye problems. In addition, the day is also a reminder to protect our eyes from harmful UV rays with a pair of sunglasses.



# Oh Yes, We Have A Navy! And What A Navy!!

When India drove out the Portuguese from Goa, Daman and Diu in 1961, there was an exclamation, “Oh, India has a Navy!” Ten years later, in 1971, Indian Navy pulverised the Pakistan Navy and faced the great US 7th Fleet entering Indian waters without blinking.



Naval operations during '71 war.



Meeting on the sidelines of US President Donald Trump's taking charge ceremony at Washington DC, US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, Indian External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, Japanese Foreign Minister, Takeshi Iwaya, and Australian Foreign Minister, Penny Wong, pledging the group's commitment to a 'free and open Indo-Pacific where the rule of law, democratic values, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are upheld and defended,' was interpreted in media as a message to China, which has been flexing its muscles in the Indo-Pacific region.

Though Quad has not configured or performed as a security alliance, the navies of its member countries and other countries, have been engaged with Indian Navy in many exercises conducted annually or fairly frequently in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific regions, and thereby established a security presence in that extended theatre.

It is thanks to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that the concept of Indo-Pacific became popular and accepted. Addressing the Indian Parliament in August 2007, when he came to the aspect of security of the sea lanes, linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans, he referred to the 'confluence' of these two Oceans being 'the dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity' in the 'broader Asia.' In the academic discourse relating to such maritime security issue in the Indo-Pacific, the first articulation was carried by a paper published in January 2007 by the Manohar Parrikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (MPID-SA), New Delhi as a result of its earlier consultation with the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA). From 2010 onwards, the term Indo-Pacific acquired prominence within the Indian government and, since about 2011 onwards, the term began to be used frequently by strategic analysts and high-level government/military leadership in Australia, Japan and the United States to denote said region. However, a formal/official documented articulation of the term first appeared in Australia's Defence White Paper 2013. It is also 'symbiotically linked' with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, an informal grouping of like-minded democracies in the region, comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, which came about following the 26 December 2004's Tsunami.

The Indian Ocean connects to the Pacific Ocean through the Strait of Malacca. This narrow waterway lies between the Malay Peninsula

## #OCEONOMICS



and the Indonesian island of Sumatra, linking the Andaman Sea (part of the Indian Ocean) to the South China Sea (part of the Pacific Ocean). Thus, the Indian Ocean's maritime security and trade routes are critical to the overall stability of the Indo-Pacific region. It is here that the Indian Navy has played a very major and effective role since the end of the colonial era, by sailing in the extensive Indian Ocean region literally as a silent service, which, for some decades after India's freedom from British rule, was never acknowledged by the major powers and even by New Delhi. When India drove out the Portuguese from Goa, Daman and Diu in 1961, there was an exclamation, “Oh, India has a Navy!” Ten years later, when in 1971, Indian Navy pulverised the Pakistan Navy and faced the great US 7th Fleet entering Indian waters without blinking, so to speak, there was some silent acknowledgement. Thereafter, it increasingly got approached by many countries for training their personnel and/or exercising together.

Several countries, including the United States, Japan, Australia, India, China, France, South Korea, Indonesia, and most of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, have significant interest in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific region due to its strategic importance for trade, security, and access to resources. With India's geostrategic location and its security, it is imperative for it to play a pivotal role as a major maritime power in the area. The India Navy has developed an extensive outreach in the IOR.

In 1995, Indian Navy, as part of India's Look East policy, began a multilateral maritime exercise codenamed *Milan* (meaning meeting/unification/confluence). The biennial event features professional exercises and seminars, social events and sporting fixtures between participating nations. The navies of Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand participated in the inaugural edition. The 12th edition of Ex Milan, held in February 2024 at Visakhapatnam, in southern India, involved the largest-ever participation, featuring the navies

over 50 countries and nearly 20 ships from friendly nations. Exercise Malabar, a bilateral one between India and the US, initiated in 1992, gained further traction as a significant maritime engagement and was joined by Japan and Australia. In October 2024, the 28th edition of this exercise was conducted by Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command in two distinct phases, both at harbour and on the high seas. This high-tempo event featured destroyers, frigates, corvettes and fleet support ships along with long-range maritime patrol aircraft, jet aircraft, integral helicopters and submarine assets. The drills included live weapon firing, complex surface, anti-air and anti-submarine warfare drills and joint manoeuvres. The exercise is alternately conducted in the Indian and Pacific Oceans each year.

India-France strategic cooperation began in 1987 with plans for making submarines for India, and in 2001, a bilateral exercise, code-named *Varuna*, began and evolved significantly over the years. The conduct of the 22nd edition of *Varuna*, hosted by France in September 2024 in the Mediterranean Sea, displayed India's outreach and commitment towards sustained operations far away from the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) also.

In 2019, France instituted a mega maritime exercise *La Perouse*, which began with participation of navies of France, Australia, Japan, and the US. India joined this exercise for the first time in its second edition in 2021, a year after India-France strategic cooperation became more significant. Since 2020, France joined the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), an international organization that works on issues related to the Indian Ocean. From 16 to 24 January 2025, the French Carrier Strike Group (CSG), led by the aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle, conducted the 6th edition of the multinational exercise *La Perouse 25*, in which nine nations, France, India, US, UK, Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore participated. This exercise was held in the straits between

the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, Malacca, Sunda and Lombok, which are all mainstays of global maritime trade. The aim was strengthening maritime safety, developing interoperability and the ability to act collectively. They were also trained in the use of IORIS, a communication and coordination system, dedicated to the exchange of information documents in order to effectively and collectively face a maritime crisis in a synchronized manner.

India's relationship with erstwhile USSR, which amounted to decades of purchase of over 70% of main arms and equipment for Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, ended with its breakup in 1991. While India's military cooperation with Russia began in 1997, the Russian navy had no presence in the Indian Ocean till 2001, when a contingent of naval ships, including anti-submarine warfare vessels and a tanker, docked at Mumbai. The first India-Russia bilateral naval exercise *Indra* (combo of India and Russia) was conducted both on the Western and Eastern seaboard in May and June 2003.

Immediately after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Indonesia requested for assistance from India, which responded by sending naval ships with relief supplies, launching 'Operation Gambhir' to deliver aid, and was one of the first countries to provide support following the disaster. In 2018, the two nations adopted the 'Shared Vision of India-Indonesia on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific' and welcomed the ratification of the agreement concerning Cooperation in the field of Defence to further deepen military ties. While for over two decades, the biannual India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol had been on, further progress was made with conduct of periodic bilateral exercises, Army (Ex Garuda Shakti) and Navy (Ex Samudra Shakti) and regular participation in each other's multilateral exercises: Milan, Komodo, Tarang Shakti and Super Garuda Shield as well as cadet exchanges between the Naval Academies and the National Defence University/ Academy. One country, which has considered Indian Navy and Coast Guard very

professional and effective, is Japan. Even after May 1998, when India-Japan relations nosedived because of India's second peaceful nuclear test, maritime cooperation between the two nations continued uninterrupted. In 2012, Indian Navy and Japan Maritime Self Defence Force began the bilateral Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX), the last edition of which was held in 2024 at Yokosuka, Japan.

India and Vietnam have been conducting joint maritime exercises, primarily through the 'VINBAX' military exercise, for several years, with the most recent iteration being 'VINBAX-23,' which took place in Hanoi, Vietnam, marking an 11-day joint military training exercise, amidst concerns about China's activities in the South China Sea, signifying a growing partnership between the two nations in recent times. In 2021, the two navies exercised in the South China Sea.

While India and Singapore have a long history of friendship and extensive cooperation across a wide range of areas, the relations between both were elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Singapore in September 2024. India and Singapore have several structured defence interactions, spanning from political leadership down to staff levels of all three-armed forces. There are bilateral exercises for all three services, viz, Army, Exercise Simex and Air Force, Joint Military Training, 4th edition of Singapore-India-Thailand Maritime Exercise (SITIME) was hosted by India in November 2024. Singapore co-hosted the inaugural ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise in Singapore in 2023. Singapore participated in all editions of biennial Exercise Milan since its inception in 1985.

In May 2019, the Indian Navy, for the first time, conducted joint exercises with the U.S., Japanese, and Philippine navies in the South China Sea. In 2020, Indian Navy held military exercises in the South China Sea with the navies of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Australia and with Indonesia in August 2021. In May 2023, India for the first time sent warships to participate in a two-day joint exercise with the navies of seven ASEAN states in the South China Sea. India's significantly increased military sales and assistance to the Philippines and Vietnam in January 2022, gifted a fully operational light missile frigate to Vietnam in June 2023 and delivered 100 BrahMos supersonic anti-ship missiles to the Philippines in April 2024.

While India has not been assertive enough in dealing with Chinese People's Liberation Army along the 3488 kms long land border, its many maritime exercises and other strategic cooperation mentioned here have not only infuriated China, but also acted as a counter.