

Tale of the Unexpected

It was a beautiful scenic day on the Maidan in Kolkata. The Maidan is a five kilometre stretch of public park owned by the Indian Army. To my right I could see the glorious iridescent silhouette of the Victoria Memorial, a palace tribute to the greatest monarch in recent history. To my left was an overpowering cricket stadium, many feet high and home to the greatest cricket team of all, India.

I was visiting my family here in India. My cousin had asked if I wanted to play for his club against another club in a formal cricket match on the Maidan. I pounced on the opportunity, put on my sun cream and mosquito repellent and set off down the streets of Kolkata.

When I arrived at the pitch, I realised all the creams and repellents were needed because as we I looked into the distance it looked as though mosquitoes were riding the heat wave. The match started and my team were fielding first. We got off to a good start with bowling the first two batsmen out and catching a third, yet I had not been involved much. I looked behind to see the score, 76 – 7 on the electronic board. India's love for cricket was so great that the Indian army had set up a cricket-playing facility on the Maidan for all the children to play on. The electronic scoreboard showed how ahead India's cricket was compared to its other sports. Finally there was one batsman left and I knew he had to be out before he gained four runs. He struck safe shots for the first two balls and gained two runs in the two bowls. Luckily, on the third he gained no runs so he needed two runs on this ball. The energetic bowler launched a fast bowl at the batsman and the batsman hit it high into the humid air coming straight at me. The leather ball was spinning against the bright sun and it was hard to see. I had to catch it, coming closer by the second and before I knew it, it had hit me solidly on the forehead and I was submerged in darkness!

By the time I came round, my team was batting and I was in the pavilion. My cousin came to me, "Tomar khub chot legeche." he burred in Hindi but I was not listening. I had noticed something different about the wooden pavilion. Instead of a statue tribute to Indira Gandhi, there was a shining copper statue of British Prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli. Maybe I was just seeing things?

Soon I was feeling better so I rolled up the sleeves of my pale, white cricket shirt and got ready to bat. As I lined up for the hit I found something very familiar about the bowler but I could not place what it was.

Hit after hit I found something odd. As I looked back at the pale-green looking pavilion I noticed another peculiar thing as the same score board looked older. The grand marble Victoria Memorial had scaffolding on which was not there in the morning and Eden Gardens seemed to be much lower, I assumed that I had just not noticed these things before.

After a good innings, my team won and were chatting happily in the pavilion. I was talking to the boy who I think looked familiar. "Good match! I think I know you. What's your name?" I asked.

"Dilip, Dilip Mukerji." he answered.

"My name is Rohan. No, I do not know anyone called Dilip apart from my grandfather who you definitely aren't!!" I said in a jokey tone of voice. Then Dilip's brother came along.

"Hello" he said. "Well played, fine match. My name is Naru, Dilip's brother."

"Yeah, it was. I'm Rohan. Which team do you follow, I follow Bengal"

"We follow Madras!" the brothers exclaimed in unison. "Our favourite player is VVS Laxman, he is the best!"

"Who?" I asked puzzled. I had never heard of him.

"Look. He is in here. Have a read" said Naru enthusiastically, passing me a newspaper. I looked down at the yellow paper of the '*TIMES OF INDIA*'. As I was going to turn to the cricket section the headline caught my eye. It was '*Gandhi Celebration March*' which seemed odd as there had been no recent Gandhi related anniversary events. I then looked up at the date, '*30th October 1948*'.

"This must be worth a lot, it is almost fifty years old" I stated.

"It only cost three rupees from the newspaper market stall. I got it this morning" Dilip replied frowning. I took another look at my surroundings. It felt as though I was in a dream. Everything had been different since I had been hit

on the head. This could not be possible, or could it? I looked up to see Naru talking to Dilip.

“Where do you think Gandhi will be buried as he died yesterday?”

My jaw dropped, it all made sense. The year was no longer 2009 but the year Gandhi died, 1948. Dilip was my Grandfather and Naru was my Great Uncle. Unbelievable. I had gone back in time.



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