

THE NAVY'S VARIEGATED

PEACETIME ACTIVITIES

Goodwill Visits, Exercises, Rescue at Sea,
Aid to Civil Authorities, Disaster Relief, Events at Sea
Reviews of the Fleet and Adventure Activities

over a period of time, evolve hoary customs and traditions that sometimes defy logic.

Showing the Flag

While taking part in various types of exercises at sea, ships of the Indian Navy participated in goodwill cruises to Australian, New Zealand, Indonesian, Malaysian, Thai, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Burmese, Japanese and Chinese ports and Singapore in the East and East African, West Asian, Mediterranean and European ports in the West. Besides these, the other cruises undertaken were the National Defence Academy cruises and Cadets' and Midshipmen's training cruises, the main objects of which were imparting sea training to Naval Cadets and Midshipmen, exposing Cadets of the other two Services to life at sea and improving the sea-going and fighting efficiency of Naval personnel.

A word about these goodwill visits to foreign ports would not be out of place. There is a popular misconception in some quarters that these visits basically constitute a recreational outlet for the officers and men. Receptions and parties on board there undoubtedly are but, as a senior Indian Naval Officer avers,

Few realise the discipline that our Naval personnel have to impose on themselves in order to present a favourable picture of our country and its people to those in the countries visited. It is no exaggeration to say that a single such visit, making an impact as it does on a very much larger section of the country's citizens, does as much good or more as our missions could do over a much longer period, no matter how devoted and motivated these missions may be. It is simply that those citizens are enabled to see India more vividly than any number of lectures, displays or exhibitions that our missions can put up. Our naval personnel also come away from these visits richer for the experience and with a broader outlook, thus adding to the quality of the human assets of the nation. There is also an invisible benefit from such forays into foreign waters. It enables our Naval personnel to become familiar with those waters—knowledge which could turn out to be useful under certain circumstances. And where there are sizeable sections of Indian nationals in the places visited, they help to infuse a sense of pride and confidence in them. I recall an incident in Mombasa, when *Delhi* was open to visitors. An old Indian gentleman was seen sitting on a wooden grating on the upper deck. Thinking that he might perhaps be feeling unwell, an officer asked him if he could be of any help. The old gentleman said, 'No, Sir, I am just enjoying being on a little bit of India'. In 1953 IN ships *Ddhi*, *Ranjit* and *Tir* participated in the Coronation Naval Review held at Spithead, Portsmouth on June 10, which has been dealt with in detail later in this chapter. Present on board on the occasion were Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Shri G.V. Mavlankar, the then Indian High Commissioner in the UK, and Vice Admiral (later Admiral) Sir Edward Parry, the erstwhile Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Navy.

Goodwill cruises, besides providing an opportunity to the ship's company to visit foreign lands, also helped to create a favourable impression on the host country's naval personnel as well as the general public. During one such visit the Navy's training squadron comprised the *Kistna*, with Commander (later Commodore) V.J.A. Valladares in command, carrying cadets under training and the *Tir*, with Commander (later Commodore) DJL Mehta as her Commanding officer and Lieutenant Commander V.E.C. Barobaza (later Vice Admiral) as the Executive Officer,

carrying midshipmen to Muscat, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Barboza recalls,

Customarily, warships and merchant vessels visiting Muscat painted their ships' names on the bare, rocky slopes of the hills surrounding the harbour. Within a short time of our arrival, our high-spirited trainees scrambled up the hills to paint their ships' names higher than all the others.

The Sultan of Muscat's palace overlooked the harbour. Having observed the care and courtesy shown towards the citizens of his Sultanate when our ships were open to visitors, he made an impromptu decision to visit our ship, bestowing a rare honour on us. When signing our visitor's book he pointed to the surrounding name-covered hills and said, 'They are my visitor's book.'

Our first Iranian port of call was Bushire. We entered harbour in mid-afternoon and were disconcerted to find that our anchor berths were over ten kilometres from the landing place. On anchoring, the two Commanding Officers set out to call on the local Naval Officer-in-Charge. When they did not return by dusk, or even by dinner time, we grew anxious particularly since the landing place was out of sight and there were no arrangements for contacting the shore by wireless. When the Commanding Officers finally returned, nearer the midnight hour, they blithely recounted how their protocol call had smoothly, almost imperceptibly, telescoped into a tea party, followed by a dinner party, all conducted with folksy, easy-paced conviviality.

The Naval Officer-in-Charge returned the call the next day. He was a middle-aged officer, bearing all the marks of the weather-beaten seafarer. To our astonishment, he was accompanied by his chic young wife and a couple of staff officers and their ladies, all bearing posies of fresh narcissus. As she stepped on board, the stiletto heel of one of the First Lady's shoes got wedged in our wooden gangway platform - but only momentarily, for there were a dozen willing hands to extricate it. The Naval Officer-in-Charge presented our Captain with a slightly tarnished metal pen rack which the members of his party took turns in vigorously polishing on the way to our ship.

A small Iranian naval vessel anchored near us on return from a routine patrol. Her Commanding Officer, a Lieutenant, accepted our invitation to breakfast and, impressed us very favourably. His dress and deportment were faultless, his self-assurance and sound professional knowledge would have earned him high marks in any modern navy. We met a few more like him at our next port of call, Abadan, and felt that the calibre of these young officers, cast in a better professional mould than those of the older generation, presaged a good future for the navy Iran was developing.

When the first cruiser for the Indian navy, *Delhi*, was acquired, Admiral (then Commander) R.D. Katari was appointed her first Executive Officer (second-in-command). He takes a journey down memory lane and relates his experience of preparing the ship for her 'shake-down' cruise and, later, her visit to an Indian port:

Returning to our work-up programme, the most amusing item was to get the ship's band to march on to the quarterdeck with the guard and march off for the ceremony of 'colours', i.e., hoisting the Naval ensign in the morning. Our Chief Bandmaster, Pereira, was a good musician but not exactly smart with his drill. Many were the frustrations encountered by Lieutenant (later Rear Admiral) Kirpal Singh, our second Gunnery Officer, in getting Pereira and his band to

do their act smartly. In addition, Pereira could not read (except music of course) and this led to an *amusing fauxpas* when Rear Admiral Lord Mountbatten, recently returned from India, visited the ship in Portsmouth Harbour. Pereira had been given a 'memory card' with the musical scores for the various salutes all serially numbered. He was also shown the number which had to be played for Lord Mountbatten, *Garb of Old Gaul*. When, however, the guard presented arms as Mountbatten stepped on board, I heard, to my utter horror, the strains of *Rule Britannia* beautifully rendered by Pereira and his boys! At the first opportunity, I whispered an apology to the Lord's Flag Lieutenant, explaining the reason for the *fauxpas*. Much to my relief, his reply was 'Please don't worry yourself, sir, the Lord hasn't a note of music in his head!' I cannot believe that is true, but it was a great comfort at the time!

One incident in Vishakhapatnam is worth relating if only because it was provoked by a section of people who should have known better and also, hopefully, the action we took had a salutary effect on them, at least for a while. One morning on which the ship was open to visitors, the crowds on the jetty got out of hand mainly because of a totally disorderly scramble by University students. The police threw in their hand quite early in the proceedings. A group of boy scouts strove manfully for a while longer but they were fighting a losing battle. There was real danger of people, women and children among them, being pushed into the water from the edge of the jetty. We had to have recourse to playing water hoses at the people to force them back. While this was successful, it provoked a group of students, union leaders perhaps, to hurl abuses and footwear at us. It seemed prudent at that stage to haul in the brows (gangways). The most vociferous of the students, in his frenzy, tried to hold the brow back. In the process, he found himself hanging in mid-air on the end of the brow! He was duly assisted on board and asked to explain what was troubling him. He was too scared even to reply - a remarkable change from the violent, fist-shaking belligerent fighter he was a little earlier! After the crowd dispersed, we put him ashore, a much relieved man.

The following day a deputation from the University visited us with apologies and a request that the students should be given another opportunity to go around the ship. We agreed, provided they assembled outside the dockgates, entered, walked round the ship and out again in single file. They did this, and I had never before seen college students conduct themselves in such remarkable order. Nor since! An amusing postscript to this was the invitation for Captain H.N.S. Brown, *Delhi's* Commanding Officer, to address the university students. He agreed, provided slippers and tomatoes were proscribed from the premises.

It was in 1953 that three ships of the Indian Navy took part in the Coronation Review of the Royal Naval Fleet by the British Queen. Vice Admiral N. Krishnan, then a Commander, was in command of one of these three Indian Navy ships, *Tir*. He describes his experience of the Review in these words:

The highlight, of course, was our participation in Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation Review of the Fleet at Portsmouth, England in June 1953. It is a part of their tradition that the ruler of Britannia reviews the Fleet every now and then. Soon after her coronation as the Queen of England, Queen Elizabeth II decided on such a review to be held at Spithead, Portsmouth. Amassed there would be the warships of the Royal Navy and some selected merchantmen. The Commonwealth countries would also contribute their share for this pageantry by sending some units from their respective navies. Some non-commonwealth countries including, this time, surprisingly, the USSR, would also be represented.

From India, the flagship, *Delhi*, with Captain (later Admiral) A.K. Chatterji as the Commanding Officer, was the obvious choice. Her consorts from the Indian Fleet were to be the destroyer, *Ranjit*, with Commander (later Admiral) S.M. Nanda in command, and my ship, the *Tir*. (The author was then serving on board the *Delhi*).

After a brief fuelling halt at Aden and passage through the Suez Canal and further halts at Malta and Gibraltar, we made it to Portsmouth with just two days to spare before the Review. A vast armada had already gathered there with ships of various categories and sizes drawn up line upon line. The Review would be in the form of Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh passing between the columns reviewing each ship with the ship's company (crew) lining the decks and superstructure and cheering them as the Royal Yacht, *Surprise*, passed by. Having had the time to do so, all the ships assembled there were gleaming. After our long voyage, buffeted by heavy seas, which we had encountered in the Bay of Biscay, we must have looked like what the cat had brought in - but not for long. Every man-jack on board, including officers, the Captain and the Admiral, fell to with a vengeance and soon had the Indian trio outshining many of the rest.

On the morning of the Review, the Queen invited all the Commonwealth Captains to a sherry party on board the Royal Yacht. The Queen looked as though she had stepped out of a fairy tale, whilst Prince Philip was in his element with the Navy, but Princess Margaret was the eye-catcher and stunning, especially as she seemed to be in somewhat of a temper. But she was pleasant enough to us in our conversation.

All the ships on review looked spick and span. But the cynosure of all eyes was, of course, the then modern Soviet cruiser *Sverdlov*. I wonder how many people realised at that time that this ship was the first harbinger of the Soviet decision to cease to be a 'land animal' and become a major seapower and one day the Soviet Navy would become the world's largest.

The Review went off with punctilious perfection, with ship after ship 'manning ship' (a special evolution meant for honouring the reviewing authority whereby all the ship's company line up along the superstructure) and the sailors' 'hurrahs' rending the air as the Royal Yacht slowly steamed past between the lines.

On completion of the attendant ceremonies, the Indian trio sailed eastwards once more, this time to join the Mediterranean Fleet for exercises where Lord Louis Mountbatten was the Commander-in-Chief.

The visit of *Delhi* to Australia under the command of 'Vice Admiral Barboza (then a Captain) evoked considerable nostalgia in some Australians who had served on board the *Achilles* during the Battle of the River Plate and a visit to New Zealand revealed the existence of a ship's bell that had been cast ashore when an ancient Tamil ship was wrecked in a storm off the New Zealand Coast a few millennia ago. Recalls Admiral Barboza:

Perth, the capital of Western Australia, is located on the banks of the Swan River, not far from the port of Fremantle. It is a clean picturesque and uncrowded city, with a multiplicity of gardens and lawns and an air of modern planning in its layout and buildings.

Apart from the thousands who visited the ships when she was open to the public, there were several others who called, individually or in groups. One morning, a sprightly old gentleman walked onboard and requested to meet me

personally to make a presentation. On being ushered into my cabin, he unwrapped a large framed photograph of the battle-scarred British cruiser *Exeter*, taken from the quarterdeck of the cruiser *Achilles*, in the midst of the famous Battle of the River Plate, fought between the German pocket battleship, *GrafSpee*, and a British cruiser squadron during the Second World War. He explained that he had retrieved this historic action photograph from a junk heap, in the nick of time.

Our welcome at Auckland surpassed our expectation. The wharf at which we berthed was crowded with men and women, some in wheelchairs, all from the *Achilles* and River Plate Veteran's Associations, cheering and waving us alongside. It was a strong, intoxicatingly sentimental occasion. 'Emotion', said a New Zealand newspaper, 'was as thick as treacle'.

I hinted that I could take some of the veterans to sea to a point just outside the harbour, on the day of our departure. Many of them jumped at the offer and we had 95 of them on board for the short passage during which, to their immense joy and surprise, we quickly worked up to 22 knots. When they disembarked, with lingering handshakes and misty eyes, they tremulously sang *Auld Lang Syne*, to the accompaniment of my band.

When I visited the Dominion Museum at Wellington I was surprised to see, displayed prominently in a glass case, an exquisitely fashioned metal bell. On closer inspection I discovered that it was called the Tamil Bell', because it had been recovered from a ship owned by one Mookkayya Kunavakku centuries ago.

Suggestions have been made that the bell may have been recovered by the Maoris from a vessel which was wrecked between Raglan and Kashia. The curator's write-up said: 'There is no official record of the wreck having taken place in modern times and it may have come ashore about the time of Cook, or even earlier'. It went on to say that the wreck was periodically buried in the sand and, up to 1940, was exposed on three occasions. A bolt from this ship was also in the Dominion Museum and an analysis of it showed that it was composed of Muntz metal, 60 per cent copper and 40 per cent zinc, used for sheathing ships in the olden days. This could be a 'vengalan', a type of ship used in Tamil Nadu in ancient days.

There were occasions when goodwill visits were exploited by the host countries to sow the seeds of discontent in our men or to make attempts to indulge in unscrupulous activities. Admiral Katari writes about one such visit: Within weeks of my taking over as the Chief of the Naval Staff in 1958, an incident occurred which generated flutter in the dovecotes of the External Affairs Ministry, a 'Naval' incident mischievously fabricated by our good friend and neighbour, the Peoples' Republic of China. It was arranged that *Mysore* would pay a goodwill visit to China, the first such Naval visit since Independence. She was to call at Shanghai and Nanking. En route she called at Hong Kong - a call of convenience for fuelling. To enter Hong Kong, she had to pass within twelve miles of the coastline of the Chinese mainland, but well outside the then internationally accepted three-mile territorial limit. The twelve-mile limit demand by some countries was still of doubtful validity at that point in history. But, neither this fact nor the more important fact that the *Mysore* was on the point of paying a goodwill visit to their country deterred the Chinese from lodging a formal protest against an Indian warship violating their territorial waters. After some frantic exchange of visits between Shri Subimal Dutt, the Foreign Secretary, and myself, and much poring over charts, it was decided to send a suitable reply denying the charge. I naturally did not see

the reply that was sent, but I suspect it fell short of the outright rejection that was deserved. I suppose the desire to avoid unpleasantness on the eve of the forthcoming visits of the *Mysore* to Chinese ports must have weighed with the ministry. Nevertheless, the effrontery of making such a flimsy protest on the eve of receiving a goodwill visit is difficult to credit. Did we, I wonder, see it then as a sign of the estrangement that was building up in that country against India? If we did, would we have been better prepared to meet the physical aggression that country perpetrated on us in 1962? In retrospect, one cannot escape the conviction that we should have been forewarned. Even as far back as a decade ago at least one person in the Government had serious misgivings about China's bona fides in the matter of her declared friendship towards us. That was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Also as I mentioned earlier, there was reason to believe that we were aware, though indirectly, about her activities in Aksai Chin. Was our apparent inaction at that time, and subsequent to it, deliberate or were we just too helpless to do anything about it?

Not being satisfied with this perfidy, the Chinese did their best to sow, subtly and insidiously, seeds of discontent among the visiting sailors. On the very day of her arrival in Shanghai, the Chinese authorities sent cases of beer on board the *Mysore* specifically meant for the Indian sailors. They might or might not have known, though I choose to believe that they did, that our sailors were not permitted to drink on board. The Captain naturally accepted the gift and put it away, intending to issue it to the sailors on appropriate occasions like organised picnics and the like. The very next day, however, when our sailors landed on shore leave, they were met by Chinese sailors who put their arms around the shoulders of their 'Indian brethren' and wanted to know if they liked the beer. The response naturally was, 'What beer?' The Chinese patiently explained to them that they had presented cases of beer specially for the sailors and that it was surprising that their officers did not serve it to them. During the rest of the visit many more such innuendoes were dropped, all calculated to bring out the vast difference supposedly existing in the officer-man relationship between the two Navies, attempting, of course, to show the Chinese as being much more enlightened in this matter. It would have been surprising if at least some of our sailors were not contaminated by these ideas, and it took us several months to repair the damage, slight as it was, caused by such propaganda. I had no illusions that, in our Navy, the officer-man relationship and the practical leadership exercised by our officers were ideal. Indeed, I feel that they called for a great deal of overhauling and this was one of my major preoccupations during my tenure of appointment as the Chief. But I was not prepared to introduce radical changes in the prevailing pattern on the lines apparently practised elsewhere unless it was proved to me beyond doubt that such practices made for a more efficient service or a better fighting unit. This is the view I still hold, although I know that with changing social patterns some revision of attitudes is called for and I hope is taking place.

Honing the Tactical Skills

As in the rest, the operational efficiency of the Fleet, the sword-arm of the Navy, needed to be kept in proper trim by holding regular exercises, with as many units as could be made available for the purpose, and, whenever possible, with ships, aircraft and submarines of foreign navies, especially those of Commonwealth nations. The most important evolutions during the 1950s and until the middle of the 1960s were the Joint Exercises held off Trincomalee (*JET*) in which ships from the Royal Navy, Indian Navy, Pakistan Navy, Sri Lankan Navy and the

Australian Navy took part. The other important exercises were the Staff College Exercises, Antisubmarine Exercises with ships and submarines of the Royal Navy in the Bay of Bengal, Mine counter measure Exercises, Air Sea Exercises with the Indian Air Force, Gunnery Exercises off Pigeon Island near Bombay and Tactical Exercises. Ships of the Navy were also used to make the country's presence felt in our territorial waters whenever the occasion demanded such as the deployment of *Godavari*, *Gormti* and *Ganga* in December 1959, for patrolling the demarcation line between the Indian and Portuguese-controlled sea areas in the vicinity of Kolak village near Daman to indicate the extent of Indian waters to the local fishermen and to prevent Portuguese vessels from capturing Indian fishing boats.

Going full steam ahead at 20 knots during pitch-dark nights with the ships in close formation and all lights blacked out and then changing the formation using only the radar is often an extremely hazardous operation as was experienced by Admiral S.N. Kohli when he was in command of *Mysore* nearly three decades ago. He recalls:

During one of the JET exercises, one task force under the command of Rear Admiral A. Chakraverti in the *Mysore* with a screen of destroyers was steaming at night at 20 knots for a particular operation. At one stage the disposition of the circular screen was ordered to be changed and *Hogue*, a Royal Navy ship, was to move from the port side to the starboard of the *Mysore*. It was a black night and ships were darkened. I suddenly noticed on the radar scan that a ship was approaching very fast on a collision course with the *Mysore*. I ordered navigation lights

to be switched on and went hard-a-starboard. The *Hogue*, which was being conned from the plot, came straight into the *Mysore*, who was the guide. The *Hogue*, would have been cut into two if I hadn't taken avoiding action. Both bows crashed into each other with a resounding noise and tearing of steel. Both ships were brought to a standstill. The *Mysore* had a gaping hole in her forepeak (forward part of a ship's bows) and the portion of the *Hogue* forward of the bridge was stove in (crushed out of shape) and a write-off. We steamed into Trincomalee Harbour and the *Hogue* was towed there stern first. ¹

It was established at the ensuing court martial that a defect in the navigational radar on board the *Hogue* had given an incorrect picture and had led to the major collision. The Commanding Officer of the *Mysore* was, therefore, exonerated. *Hogue's* damages were beyond what are termed 'economical repairs' and the ship had to be written off but the Royal Navy transferred her entire ship's company to another ship in order to enable them to complete their sea time.

Rear Admiral K.R. Nair, who retired as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command in 1970, was witness to another collision in 1953, as a Commander, when he was the Commanding Officer of *Rana*. He recapitulates the incident in his vivid reminiscence.

The Staff College exercises off the Mangalore Coast in 1953 were marred by a collision between the cruiser *Delhi* and the "W class destroyer *Rana*.

Collisions are made in heaven-most of them anyway. It is seldom that just one rash or stupid act of a single person can be blamed. For a really good collision, errors of judgement have to coincide with varying degrees of other factors such as misunderstandings, incorrect radar pictures, signalling errors or material breakdowns, to mention just a few. There is something definitely preordained. The *Delhi-Rana* incident is an illustration.

During the exercises, in what is known as single line ahead, weaving at high speed, the 'attacking' ships *Ranjit*, *Rana* and *Delhi* closed the target when, at about 6,000 yards range, the *Delhi*, who was the Senior Officer, ordered, 'Act independently'. This was quite unexpected. When attacking in close formation it is normal for the formation to be controlled by the Senior Officer until the time torpedoes are fired. So the first in the chain of mistakes had been made. As a long-time instructor in torpedo tactics in the Antisubmarine School, I knew that the correct action for the *Rana* at that juncture would be to close rapidly to about 3,000 yards of the target, turn to port and fire torpedoes on the starboard. I ordered the torpedo tubes to be trained for such an attack. Then it occurred to me that if the *Ranjit* ahead of me turned to starboard the attack would look ragged. So I signalled M/F by light, 'Which way are you turning?' The second big mistake! Why did I not mind my business regardless of the *Ranjit's* intentions? The reply to my signal came, 'To starboard'. As it transpired subsequently, this was a signalling error. What an unlucky coincidence! However, cursing the *Ranjit* I had the torpedo tubes retrained and started to swing to starboard to conform. Just then I noticed the *Ranjit* turn to port! It was too late to emulate her and so I continued my swing to starboard and fired my salvo of torpedoes.

Just as my last torpedo was fired, I heard a 'whoosh' from astern and someone shouted, 'Sir, the *Delhi*!' Looking aft, I saw the *Delhi's* bow virtually on top of me just abaft (behind) my funnel. It was obvious that I had only a few seconds before the *Rana* would be cut in two. Going full astern on both engines and putting the helm hard to port while the *Delhi* also took emergency action, the bows swung apart. Saved! But the sterns came together with a resounding crash sending up a column of water masthead high. A highly satisfactory glancing collision which had the Staff College student officers cheering! What had happened was that the *Delhi* had not swung at all but had steered straight on and fired at the target by angling the torpedoes. The 'whoosh' I had heard was her torpedoes being fired just astern of me. This method of angling torpedoes is very unusual and to my knowledge had not been used in any exercise in the Indian Navy before. If the *Delhi* intended to use this method the other ships should have been informed earlier. This was the last mistake. Luckily for the *Rana* it was not her last day. So there you can see the fateful chain of events.

In 1955 the Indian Fleet paid a business-cum-pleasure visit to the ports of the Mediterranean flying the flag of Rear Admiral Sir St. J. J. Tyrwhitt on board the *Delhi* which was under the command of Captain (later Vice Admiral) B. A. Samson. Admiral Samson recalls the cruise with considerable nostalgia:

The first foreign cruise in 1955 was to the Mediterranean for exercises with the Mediterranean Fleet, and this was also Admiral Tyrwhitt's first experience of the Indian Navy; he had never had anything to do with Indian officers or sailors ever before. One can well imagine his sense of deep shock and despair when, soon after sailing from Bombay to Aden, our first port of call en

route to the Mediterranean, was the collision between the *Rajput* and the *Ranjit* during manoeuvres. The *Ranjit* 'warmed the bell' and hit the stern of the *Rajput* with her bows athighspeed. She was badly damaged and had to return to Bombay for repairs and, unfortunately, was unable to rejoin.

A couple of days later, first thing in the morning before the Admiral and I were on the bridge, the 22nd Destroyer Squadron (*Godavari, Gomati and Ganga*), which had been placed on the screen on the port bow for the night, was ordered by D22 (Senior Officer of the destroyer squadron) to take up station at high speed in line ahead, astern of the *Delhi* by a manoeuvre ordered by him. A good manoeuvre it was too, except that D22 had cut it rather fine and instead of bringing his ships three cables (a cable is a distance of 200 yards) astern of the *Delhi*, he found to his horror - as indeed to ours - that he had committed the 22nd Destroyer Squadron on a collision course with the *Delhi*. I was shaving in my sea cabin when the Officer of the Watch called me frantically on the voice pipe, 'Sir, sir, 22 Ds—22DS....!' I rushed up to the bridge and there on the port bow, some three cables (600 yards) away, tearing down at high speed, was the 22nd DS in line abreast, and it was clear that one of these ships would run into the side of the *Delhi*, unless D22 did something immediately - but what?

I realised there was little I could do except to order 'stop all engines, full speed astern, close all watertight doors' and waited for what seemed to be the inevitable! Fortunately, D22 did something at the very last moment. The two leading ships turned hard-a-port and just cleared the *Delhi* ahead, but the last ship realising that this manoeuvre would be disastrous, turned hard to starboard and though this may seem unbelievable, went down our port side at a distance which appeared to be no more than 6 to 10 feet!!

I believe that most of us on the bridge had stopped breathing and, looking back, *J* recollect how calm and still everything was on the bridge. Later, we heard of the hilarious chaos in the officers' bathroom on the port side aft. The scuttles (port-holes) were open and there were several officers merrily soaping themselves under the showers when, to their amazement, they suddenly saw the grey hull of a ship whiz past! All of them scrambled out as they were - wet, soapy and naked -and ran upon me deck. It is a pity a photograph of them at that moment was not taken!

Admiral Tyrwhitt - and indeed, all of us - were somewhat shaken and he probably wondered about the capability of our Fleet. He had, two days earlier, when the *Ranjit* and the *Rajput* had collided, re- marked, 'Tou cannot make an omelette without cracking eggs'; however, after the second incident, we were all agreed that if this went on, there would be very few eggs left in the basket! Perhaps this did us all a lot of good and by the time we reached Cyprus, the Fleet had settled down and had become business like and efficient Nevertheless, Admiral Tyrwhitt was still anxious how we would perform when we met up with the Mediterranean Fleet, which we did at Marmarice in Turkey. At the end of several weeks' intensive exercises, the Admiral was more than satisfied, the Indian Fleet having received many kudos from the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean.

The Joint Exercises held at Trincomalee also provided an opportunity to the Commonwealth navies to hold regattas and sports tournaments in which the Indian naval personnel generally excelled. Vice Admiral Gandhi relates his experience of the 1958 Joint Exercises:

In 1958, *Cauvery* had an extremely good whaler crew which, somehow or the other, was totally manned by Sikh sailors.

It was a champion crew, with which I had challenged all and sundry and my boys never let me down. We won the annual pulling (rowing) regatta hands down that year also.

During the Joint Exercises that year at Trincomalee, there was a British cruiser, whose name I forget now, but possibly *Gambia*, the same class as the *Mysore*, which was also present for the Exercises and flew the flag of Rear Admiral A. Chakravarti, with Captain S.M. Nanda in command and Commander Kawas Nanavati as the Commander.

Gambia challenged *Mysore* to a whaler race in Trincomalee during one of the weekends when all ships were in harbour. Nanavati knew that *Mysore's* team was not a patch on *Cauvery's*; so being a very good organiser, he asked me to transfer my crew with my boat to *Mysore* on loan. So, as far as everyone else was concerned, it was the *Mysore* team versus the *Gambia's*. On the day of the race, Commander D.R. Mehta, who was then the Commanding Officer of the Tjr, and I got into my motorboat to follow the most exciting race.

The race was duly flagged off and both boats were practically parallel throughout the race, but slowly were converging towards each other and, after about three quarters of the distance, the two boats collided. My Sikh sailors were irate because, I think, they felt that they were slightly ahead and the Britishers had purposely caused this collision. To one man, the entire boat's crew got up, used the choicest abusive language on the Britishers, got out their oars and started belabouring the British crew. When we moved alongside and, after much howling and shouting by us, the battle of oars - because by this time, even the British had started to retaliate - was stopped and both boats separated. I thereafter towed away my boat to *Cauvery*.

My sailors were still very upset and, in order to calm them down, I said, 'All right, now we shall challenge the *Gambia* to another race next Sunday, even if it means letting the cat out of the bag that it was *Cauvery's* boat.'

I am sorry to say that this time, though we kept the boats well separated, the *Gambia* won. My sailors were very sporting and invited the Britishers on board for lunch and the latter were stunned that it was only a small frigate's crew that they had to fight so hard to beat.

But there were occasions when sporting events led to considerable bitterness if victory was not accepted with grace and defeat was considered worse than an insult to the country's flag. Such was the case when the Pakistan Navy team won a hockey match against the Indian Navy team through a solitary goal which should not have been allowed and gave the impression to all present that they had avenged their defeat in the Kashmir war. Commander Hugh Gantzer, who was serving in *Delhi* at that period and has since distinguished himself as a travel writer of national repute, describes the episode, 'Every year after the monsoons, ships of the Royal Navy, the Pakistan Navy, the Royal Ceylon Navy and the Indian Navy used to meet in Trincomalee. There, under the watchful eye of a British Admiral we exercised for a week. We got to know each other's strengths and weaknesses, matched our performance against our neighbour's and those of the Royal Navy and renewed old acquaintances. Fighting men generally have a strange empathy that crosses international borders. Or rather, that is the theory. But even well-established theories erode with time.'

The exercises concluded without any mishaps or frayed tempers and all we had to look forward to was the JET hockey match. As usual we were pitted against Pakistan. And, as usual, we expected to win.

I remember that it was a sultry evening on the JET grounds: our boys and the Paks had turned out in full force. There

were a few enthusiasts from the Ceylon Navy and a scattering of Britons. But, from the very beginning, there was tension in the air. Perhaps it was the thundery weather; or it might have been something else. It certainly wasn't an exciting match. From the very beginning the Paks played a defensive game and the Royal Navy referee just stood and sweated in his white shirt and trousers leaving most of the work to his Ceylonese counterpart.

The clock moved towards halftime and no goal had been scored. We began to get bored.

And then, quite unexpectedly, one of the Paks rushed forward with the ball almost glued to his stick.

Terence Duckworth, our star player, was taken by surprise and rushed the Pak player.

The man had just crossed the half line when he saw Duckworth bearing down on him. He stopped, looked around for a team mate to pass the ball to and finding no one, took an almighty swipe that sent the ball racing down the field towards our goal.

Terence Duckworth, amused at the man's panicked reaction, turned round and called out. 'Leave it!' he yelled.

The back stepped aside, grinning, letting the ball roll past.

The ball's speed fell over the uneven field and we watched it trickle slowly towards our goal.

Gracefully, and with mock courtesy, our goalie moved out and bowed the ball in, showing his contempt for the player who had shot from outside the 'D'.

The ball, its force almost spent, rolled very, very slowly into the goal.

We filled the air with our derisive laughter but our laughter turned to abject dismay when the soccer-trained Royal Navy referee blew a shrill, sharp, goal!

Well, I need hardly describe what happened after that. The Paks went wild and their players jammed the goalmouth for the rest of the game: you couldn't have slid a greased needle between them. And we, in the stiff-upper-lip spirit of sportsmen that we were, refused to challenge the referee's obviously ignorant decision (I did say times have changed, didn't I?).

So when the match was over, we trooped back to our ships but the Paks took out a triumphant procession through the streets of Trin-comalee. And, that night, they circled our ships with their boats, and, blaring through their loudhailers, hurled the choicest Punjabi abuses at us. And from their ships, searchlights lanced out and criss-crossed us in searing contempt while more abuses thundered and boomed across Trincomalee Bay.

At about midnight the Sikh sailors in *Delhi* came in a delegation to their Captain. They wanted to lower boats and tackle the Pakistanis. I saw them approaching and I knew that they meant business.

But the moment they reached the Commanding Officer's door, it opened, and Captain (later Rear Admiral) Pritam Singh Mahindroo stood before them. He was dressed in shorts and a shirt and his hair was tied in a knot at the top of his head. A Sikh sailor who worked in my office said: They are humiliating us, sir. This is war!'

Captain Mahindroo looked at his men, listened to the yowling invective of the Pakistani sailors. And then he said: 'Dogs do not humiliate men'. He paused, smiling grimly, 'when the time comes to fight as warriors, I will lead you.' And then his lip curled in contempt, 'Tor tonight!', he said softly, let the dogs bark!'

So there was no war. And the Pakistani Commodore apologised, very shamefacedly, the next morning. We learnt later

that in every Pakistani ship, the sailors had locked their officers below decks and taken the law into their own hands.

The incident was never repeated, but JET was never the same again.

Admiral Katari too recalls the unsavoury incident:

First they took out a victory procession through the streets of Trincomalee, shouting slogans and beating drums. But more was to follow during the night when the Pak sailors went quite berserk. They took to their boats and circled our ships shouting lewd slogans and hurling filthy abuses in choicest Punjabi at every body from title Indian Prime Minister downwards. At the same time, the Pak ships took to firing rockets and Very's lights (coloured flares projected from a pistol) and shining searchlights into the sky. The Commodore of the Pakistan Squadron, a Royal Navy Officer on loan, was ashore and discreetly kept out of the picture. What the senior Pakistani Officer, Captain Akram Khan, was up to during all this nobody knew. Rumour had it that all Pak officers were forcibly confined to their cabins while the sailors ran wild. But the biggest question of all, a question which the British Admiralty should have asked but apparently did not, was what the Commander-in-Chief of the British Fleet, a Vice Admiral of the Royal Navy, was doing during all those deplorable, undisciplined goings-on. No Commander worth his salt would permit such unauthorised demonstrations in a fleet anchorage under his command. Next morning I called on Admiral Biggs and told him precisely what. I also told him that unless more discipline and decorum could be enforced, the Indian Navy would have to consider very seriously whether it would take part in any such future exercises. The astonishing thing was that it did not occur to Biggs to at least express appreciation of the restraint the Indian Fleet showed in the face of such vulgar provocation. Indeed, bom Flag Captain Mahindroo and I had to exercise considerable restraint over some very angry Indian sailors who were

all for putting out in boats and show that 'rabble where they got off'. I suppose such unreasonable and unbridled exuberance was to be expected, given the known propensity of Pakistan to score a point off India whenever possible and miss no opportunity to cause embarrassment to the latter. In the political field we had had several such instances and several more were to follow. We, who followed the profession of the sea, took a justifiable pride in the fact that the brotherhood of the sea transcended all barriers of nationality, race or colour. But the bitter hostility of Pakistan towards us was so overpowering as to flout even such a time honoured tradition. Whatever the official attitude, they did not come out of the incident with any reputation for maturity. It was merely a reflection of the malady of the nation as a whole and also of its successive leaders.

Commodore KJC Sanjana was in command of *Mysore* in 1963 when the cruiser took part in joint exercises with the other commonwealth navies. He recalls:

We sailed for Singapore to take part in joint exercises with other commonwealth navies. The Indian fleet comprised the *Vikrant* (with Captain N. Krishnan in Command, flying the flag of Rear Admiral B.A. Samson, Flag Officer Commanding the Indian Fleet), the *Mysore* and some of our destroyers, frigates, tankers and supply ships. The British Fleet, consisting of the *Victorious*, their aircraft carrier, with some destroyers, frigates and many submarines, met us at the entrance to the Malacca Strait.

The war game at sea was planned by Admiral Sir Desmond Dreyer, The Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Far Eastern Fleet and his staff. As is normal, the game was planned to be between the 'Blue' and 'Red' Forces. The Blue Force consisted of the British and Indian ships and was under the command of Rear Admiral B.A. Samson, flying his flag in the *Vikrant*. The Red Force comprised the *Mysore* (Senior Officer of the Force), acting as a missile cruiser, with two destroyers as escorts and one British submarine. The destroyers were *Diana* and *Rana*, the latter under the command of Lieutenant Commander (later Captain) M.N. Mulla who gallantly went down with his ship, *Khukri*, in the 1971 conflict with Pakistan. I got the submarine to shadow the convoy (the Blue Force) on its passage to the Malacca Strait and then on to Singapore. The time allotted for the separation of the forces was about 48 hours.

Both forces parted company that evening at about 1900 hours and the *Mysore*, with the destroyers initially set course almost due north. Within half an hour, the *Diana* was ordered to proceed to Australia to replace an Australian destroyer, accidentally sunk by *Melbourne* (a sister ship of the *Vikrant*) earlier that day. I was then left with the *Rana* and the submarine. The same moonless night, at about 2000 hours, the *Rana* reported a man overboard. I ordered her to act independently and search for the missing man. She was also ordered not to try to rejoin me thereafter. I was now 'rid' of both destroyers and fortunately so, as they would not have been able to maintain the speed I had in mind.

I sent for my Engineer Officer, Commander (later Rear Admiral) A.G. Dastidar, his Senior Engineer and other engineer officers and Engine Room Artificers. I questioned 'Dusty'⁷ on the maximum sustained speed he could conveniently give me. After some hesitation, he asked me what speed I desired. My reply was short and curt - 28 knots

for the next 24 hours or so! He readily agreed and I then warned the Engine Room Artificers manning the throttles to be extra alert and vigilant as the *Mysore* would be steaming at high speed, completely darkened and without radar cover.

By the next morning, we were almost beyond Rangoon. I then altered course to south-east with the intention of intercepting the convoy early next morning. I was receiving excellently accurate reports from my submarine, indicating the position, course and speed of the convoy. My navigator then was Lieutenant Commander (later Vice Admiral) LLS. Khurana. I apprised Inderjit about my intention to attack the convoy at about 0300 hours the following morning. With his magic touch, Inderjit worked out, almost to within 50 yards, the position where we would intercept the 'enemy' convoy. I reduced speed to 20 knots when I reckoned that we were about 30 miles away from the convoy's anticipated position.

After a brief interval, I ordered the navigatin radar to be switched on. As the picture appeared on the radar scan, we found the two carriers barely 25 to 30,000 yards away! I immediately reduced speed further to 10 knots, simultaneously putting the wheel over to port to place the *Mysore* heading in the same direction as the convoy and to give my guns a 'broadside'. By the time we achieved this, we were hardly eight to ten thousand yards away from the Blue Force! The *Mysore* was at 'action stations' since midnight and, within seconds, her projectors flashed to indicate gun-fire. Concurrently, I signalled the umpire, Admiral Jack Scatchard, popularly known in the Royal Navy as 'Blackjack', to say, 'Intend to let off the enemy lightly, using six-inch main armament in preference to missiles.'

After a short while, Admiral Scatchard signalled to the forces matboth the *Vikrant* and the *Victorious* and had badly damaged and the *Vibrant* was sinking! I immediatey ordered my navigation lights to be switched on to avoid any mishap. At the same time, I said a silent prayer for Admiral Samson and my old friend, the late Admiral N. Krishnan who were supposed to be going down with their ships.

Next day, we entered the Royal Naval Dockyard, Singapore, triumphantly displaying mock missiles on the *Mysore's* T3' turret, which were very cleverly rigged by my shipwrights.

During the debrief, Admiral Sir Desmond Dreyer presided. Some excuses were put forthby the Commanders (Air) of the *Vikrant*andthe *Victorious*. Admiral Dreyer, visibly annoyed at these excuses, said, 'Gentlemen, I amnot interested in excuses. Why could you not find the *Mysore* with all the air surveillance available to you?' There was no answer to that, because to look for a lone cruiser in that vast expanse of the Bay of Bengal was akin to looking for a needle in a haystack!

The same evening, at a cocktail party, Admiral Scatchard asked me, 'Tell me, what made you attack from the port quarter, because the Blue Force was anticipating that you would try to bring in an attack from somewhere off their bows.' I replied, 'Sir, I am a *shikari* and whenever I have to follow a wounded tiger, I particularly guard my quarters, because that is where, normally tigers bring home an attack. I have only followed the same tactics and have succeeded!' The next day, I received a photograph from 'Black Jack' congratulating me with a brief inscription on it - to Tiger from JPS!

That was the saga of the Commonwealth Joint Exercises of 1964. It did prove that a lone and independent cruiser could be a formidable force, whether armed with missiles or with conventional weapons'.

Dignitaries on Board

From time to time Indian and foreign dignitaries visit naval ships to familiarise themselves with life at sea, meet members of the naval fraternity, witness exercises and other events at sea, review the fleet or take passage on important occasions. This also provides unique opportunity to the men on board to see their haloed heroes from close quarters.

In May 1950, the first Deputy Prime Minister of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who was honoured with the nation's highest award 'Bharat Ratna' on July 12, 1991, took passage on board De//ri from Bombay to Cochin. He was accompanied by Maniben and his Secretary Shri V. Shankar and his family. Admiral Sir Edward Parry, the then Commander-in-Chief of our Navy had most reluctantly agreed to accommodate ladies on board for this was against all conventions.

Life at sea was quiet, restful and enjoyable for the Sardar who had passed through considerable tension in the wake of the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact and the East Bengal refugee crisis. The Sardar evinced considerable interest in an exercise at sea in which two destroyers and some other ships also took part. During the day the party used to identify me town on land. As the ship passed Goa, the Sardar asked the men British Commodore (later to be elevated to Admiral Sir Geoffrey Barnard) commanding the cruiser and the Indian naval squadron, to take the ship as near the coast as he could and he did. When they were just opposite Goa, he asked Barnard how long it would take to effect a landing on Goanese shores and he said, a matter of a few hours describing the guns and fortifications he would have to contend with. Sardar turned to him and said: I wish I could ask you to do it at once/ In January 1951, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru took passage on board De//ri escorted by De//ri and De//ri, from Jamnagar to Kandla. Recalls Admiral R.D. Katari who was at that time the Commanding Officer of the *Rajput*,

Almost the first task that the squadron had to undertake was to transport Prime Minister Nehru and his party from Jamnagar to Kandla Port for the foundation-stone-laying ceremony of the port. Among his party were Gopalaswamy Ayyangar (Cabinet Minister) and Mridula Sarabhai (renowned social worker). We tried to dissuade the latter from making the trip on the ground that ladies were not ordinarily taken to sea in a warship, but she was not having any of it. What was more, she would travel in the same ship as Panditji. This, of course, was out of the question as, on these destroyers, the only cabin suitable for a V.I.P. was that of the Captain. Pandit Nehru was to occupy mine and so Mridulaji had to be accommodated, in (Commander, later Admiral) S.M. Nanda's cabin in *Ranjit* and Mr Ayyangar in the third ship. The rest of the entourage was distributed in cabins below decks in the three ships. They embarked about midnight and we made the quick trip across the gulf early next morning. Soon after we anchored, the Prime Minister, Mr. Ayyangar and their immediate entourage were sent ashore in our motorboats. The three Commanding Officers, who were also invited to the function waited for the boats to return before they could land. Miss Sarabhai, who somehow seemed to have missed the message, was also

left behind and only managed to go ashore with us. When we landed, we found that the main party had already left and there was no transport available to take us to the scene of the ceremony about eight miles away, clearly there was some failure in the organization somewhere. I have seldom seen a lady so frustrated and angry as Miss Sarabhai was. But she was nothing if not resourceful. She spotted a station wagon belonging to somebody, and by dint of a combination of persuasion and bluster, commandeered it; and with a Tiop in, boys! Jumped aboard, and off we went. The ceremony was half way through when we arrived at Gandhidham and, on its conclusion, we returned to our ships to set sail for Bombay. How the contretemps was explained away and whether it satisfied Mridulaji, we were never to know/

In March 1954 Dr Rajendra Prasad took passage on board *Delhi*, the flagship, to the Andamans and was escorted by the three destroyers of the 22nd Destroyer Squadron, *Godavari*, *Gomati* and *Ganga*.

Queen Elizabeth, on board her Royal Yacht, *Gothic*, was escorted from Colombo to Aden by *Rajput* and *Ram* in April 1954 in company with some ships of the Royal Navy and Pakistan Navy.

Godavari, *Gomati* and *Ganga* also ceremonially escorted the Yugoslav President, Marshal Joseph Broz Tito's Yacht, the *Galeb*, and a few Yugoslav Navy destroyers into Bombay on December 16, 1954. The three destroyers later escorted the President's Yacht and the Yugoslav destroyers to Calcutta to embark the Marshal on his way to Burma. In January 1955, Marshal Tito, who had returned to India, embarked the *Galeb* at Cochin and was formally escorted out of Cochin Harbour by *Jumna*, *Bombay* and *Madras*. Admiral Sir Mark Pizey, the Indian Naval Chief, who accompanied the Marshal, disembarked from the *Galeb* at the fairway buoy outside Cochin Harbour and the Indian escorting ships, after firing a gun salute to the Yugoslav President, took part in a formal farewell steam-past when the Marshal took the salute.

Cauvery had the honour of carrying the President of India to the Lakshadweep Islands in February 1956 and was escorted by *Godavari* and *Ganga*.

During the visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, to India in October 1956, *Rajput* and *Ranjit* escorted the Emperor's ship to Bombay. This was followed by the visit of Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, to the Fleet at Bombay during his short tour of the country in December 1956.

Reminisces Admiral Katari who was the Fleet Commander at that time:

During my time of command of the Fleet, I had the privilege of entertaining two foreign dignitaries. The contrast in their styles and in the impact they made on us was quite remarkable. The first was Chou Enlai whom, along with his entourage, I was told to entertain to lunch on board the flagship in Bombay. It will be recalled that this was the period of (the much-made-of) fraternal relations between our two countries. Whether it was to illustrate this in action, or the pervasive friendship that any warship exudes, or the fact that Chou was naturally a gregarious person I wouldn't know, but from the moment he stepped on board, he set the tone for informality. Within a few minutes on board, he was in animated conversation in fluent English with the young officers. The official interpreter was ignored. Every so often, loud guffaws of laughter emanated from the group where Chou En-lai held the stage with

his witticisms and sallies. So much so that Mrs. Rajan Nehru, the wife of our Ambassador to China, R.K. Nehru who was accompanying the party, thought it necessary to take me aside to suggest that I did something to restrain my young officers and make them understand that they were entertaining a very important Head of Government. I reassured her that my officers could be relied upon not to exceed the bounds of propriety and decorum. I also added that they, Mr. Chou En-lai included, appeared to be enjoying themselves and suggested that it was best to leave them alone. I believe that the occasion turned out to be an outstanding success. I certainly found him to be one of the easiest of high dignitaries to entertain.

I should mention that a few weeks earlier, we had taken a Chinese military delegation headed by a General (I think his name was Yeh) for a day's exercises at sea off Cochin. They enjoyed themselves and applauded loudly every item of exercise that we carried out, even those which I thought were indifferently executed.

The other V.I.P. I had to entertain was the Russian dignitary, Marshal Zuhov. He was to be given a banquet on board the flagship in Cochin. This turned out to be as much of a strain as the earlier occasion with Chou En-lai was a pleasure, and I am clear in mind that it was not of my making. I suspect that, by the time he arrived in Cochin, he had developed a 'chip on his shoulder' because he did not receive either the official or popular reception in the same degree that had been accorded to Bulganin and Khrushchev who had visited India only a little while before. Indeed, I understood that earlier that very day, when he was moving around the town of Cochin in an open car which he insisted on having in place of the originally allocated limousine, he did not find the crowds as widely enthusiastic in their applause - as he had hoped. Whatever the reason, the moment he stepped on board, he virtually impaled me against the centre-line capstan and demanded to know why we were acquiring an aircraft carrier. Resisting the temptation to tell him that it was none of his business, I tried to explain to him the reasons which induced us to do so, but he could not, or would not, accept them. At one stage during the discussion, I looked at the Vice Admiral who was part of his entourage and was standing behind him, and asked what he thought about it. Before the poor man could reply, Zuhov chipped in with, "My staff think as I do". The discussion was obviously reaching a point of exasperation to both sides but the climax came when Zuhov made the provocative observation that we were buying the carrier at the behest of the British and to please them. That was too much to accept, and I was provoked into saying, 'Marshal Zuhov, you are a renowned military leader and one of Russia's heroes in the last war. I, therefore, consider it a great honour that you should have deigned to discuss military matters which humble me. But you must concede that I would advise my government in a manner that I feel is best for my country and not at the behest of any foreign power.' That, regrettably, brought the conversation to an abrupt halt. Zuhov inarched straight to his place at the dinner table (the dinner itself was not quite ready to be served). The meal was a near silent affair with the silence of tension. Immediately after dinner he begged to be put ashore, not even waiting to participate in the customary exchange of gifts. He left his staff to do the necessary honours.

When it -was all over, we all, including our Military Attache in Moscow, Brigadier Nanavati, sat down to

hold the inevitable post mortem. Nanavati related how the Marshal, throughout his tour, was offensively critical of everything he saw and offered advice on everything under the sun, from agriculture and animal husbandry to industrial production. Nanavati concluded by saying that he was happy that someone had the courage to let Zuhov know that he could not expect to get away with such offensive behaviour all the time.

President Tito of Yugoslavia paid another state visit to India in January 1959. He arrived at Madras on board his yacht *Galeb*, escorted by the Yugoslav destroyers *Split* and *Lovecen*, and six Indian destroyers, *Rajput*, *Ranjit*, *Ram*, *Godavari*, *Gomati* and *Ganga*.

Earl Mountbatten of Burma, the then Admiral of the Fleet of the Royal Navy, paid a visit to the Indian Fleet at Bombay and boarded *Vijayant* during his stay in India in April-May 1963.

The then Vice-President of India, Dr. Zakir Hussain, embarked *Cauvery* at Cochin on March 24, 1964 for a cruise to the Lakshadweep Islands. After the visit, he returned to Cochin and disembarked on March 29.

Rear Admiral S.G. Karmarkar takes us back to the early 1950s when the Indian Fleet, commanded by Rear Admiral G. Barnard, was on a goodwill cruise to the major ports of East Africa and he was commanding the *Delhi*:

During an East African cruise in the summer of 1951, Admiral Barnard was made an honorary member of numerous European Clubs. He declined all the memberships informing the clubs that if his Indian officers were welcomed at these institutions he would be pleased to accept their invitations; otherwise he was not interested.

At a conversation in Nairobi the name of Jomo Kenyatta came up. At my request a special first class compartment was booked in the train to bring Mr Kenyatta to Mombasa. I was pleased when the Royal Naval Gunner on board the *DDM*, an Englishman, offered to go to Mombasa Station, along with one of my Indian officers, to receive Jomo Kenyatta. This caused some consternation at the station.

Jomo Kenyatta attended our party on board and lived in my cabin for some days because no suitable hotel would accommodate him in that city.

I will always remember the look on Jomo Kenyatta's face when he boarded the flagship. He said: 'Captain, the last time I boarded a British cruiser it was as part of the chipping party (sailors removing paint from a ship's side with a blunt instrument). Thank you for all your kindness.'

Knowledge of protocol and skill in the application of diplomatic prudence are useful tools during goodwill visits, negotiations or discussions with foreigners and ceremonies abroad, ashore and afloat. But there are occasions when national prestige has to be protected with firm resolve and obsequious members of the Indian diplomatic staff adequately reprimanded they kowtow to the whims of the focal bureaucrats. Vice Admiral R.J.S. Gandhi recalls an incident at Saigon when Commander (later Commodore) D.R. Mehta politely and firmly ensured the observance of protocol and prevented any dishonour being brought to the flag that bedecked the ship's fore-castle, the tricolour

After the Joint Exercises of Trincomalee in 1958, *Tir*, with Commander (later Commodore) D.R. Mehta as her Commanding Officer and *Country* with me (as a lieutenant Commander) in command proceeded on a cruise to Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam. At Saigon, the two ships got a rousing reception and the President did us the unique honour of returning our call. The President of Vietnam at that time was Diem. As the President was due to come on board, there was a conference held in Commander Mehta's cabin in the *Tir*, where the Vietnam Protocol Officer, our Ambassador to Vietnam at that time (I think a gentleman called Mr Gupta), Commander Mehta and I were present. The Vietnamese Protocol Officer wanted to know what would be the drill onboard the ships for the President's call, and Commander Mehta explained to him that when the President arrived in the *Tir*, he would be received with a guard of honour and would then proceed to the *Cauvery*, which was alongside, witness a gunloading competition, thereafter proceed to the bridge of the *Cauvery* and then come back to the Captain's cabin in the *Tir*.

Commander Mehta then said that President Diem would sit in the armed chair in his cabin and that other persons would sit on the settee and other chairs and that he would open a bottle of champagne to drink to the President's health. When Commander Mehta mentioned that we would all be sitting down, the Vietnamese Protocol Officer was quite horrified and said that, in the presence of President Diem, everyone would have to stand. Commander Mehta stated quite firmly that it was his cabin and that President Diem would sit, adding that he, Commander Mehta, would sit on the chair next to Diem and that lieutenant Commander Gandhi, his brother officer, would sit on the other chair and, if the others wished to stand, they could do so; but the two Indian Commanding Officers would sit down.

Our Ambassador tried to persuade Commander Mehta and spoke to him in Hindi and pleaded, 'Please agree with the instructions of the Protocol Officer.' This only made Commander Mehta more firm in his resolve that the two Commanding Officers would be seated and he said to the Ambassador and the Protocol Officer in English that he could not shift his stand.

Whereupon I tried to have a compromise solution and spoke to Commander Mehta in Gujarati and said, 'All right, you sit with Diem and I will stand.' I must give Commander Mehta full marks; he turned round to me quite sharply and, once again speaking in English, said, 'No both you and I will sit. There are places for other officers also to sit, but if they wish to stand, they could stand.'

On the appointed day, President Diem arrived and everything went off like clockwork, including the fact that both Commander Mehta and I sat on either side of Diem and sipped our champagne; whilst our Ambassador, the Vietnamese Protocol Officer and others stood watching us.

I am not very sure whether this was reported by our Ambassador to the Ministry of External Affairs, but I certainly did not hear anything more about it.

Now, looking back at things which happened about 30 years ago, I am more than happy that Commander Mehta took this firm and quite correct stand.

Rescue at Sea

One of the tasks traditionally assigned to the Navy is the rescue of ships, passengers and crew in times of natural disasters, collisions, sinking, disability due to engine failure, ships running aground and providing assistance to civil authorities during strikes, riots, epidemics and other calamities. In 1952, *Tir* rendered towing assistance to a disabled Singapore vessel. In July 1958 *JSSfrw*, along with the *CochinPortTrustTugCocWn*, was sent to the assistance of *Coney*, a 10,700-ton American tanker which had been disabled due to a major electrical breakdown 300 miles south of Bombay.

The aid and assistance provided to the civil authorities during the period included air and sea search for the recovery of fisherman reported adrift off the Kerala Coast after a storm in January 1954, transporting a medical team on board *Rana* to the Lakshadweep Islands in April 1954 to combat an epidemic of dysentery which had broken out in these islands and manning the Cochin Port offices and docking organisations during a dock workers' strike in 1954. The Navy's diving teams conducted diving operations to repair submarine water pipelines at Cochin for the development of the nuclear power station at Bombay, undertook a survey of the wreck of *Galathia* in Tuticorin, carried out an inspection of the left diversion tunnel of the Bhakra Dam and clearing debris in 1957, and recovered gold worth Rs 16 lakh from the sea off Mangalore in 1958. In the same year the Navy moved *Bengal*, *Madras*, *Bombay* and *Konkan* to Calcutta for rendering assistance to the port authorities during a strike of the port workers in June 1958.

An American tanker, *National Peace*, had run aground on Kiltan Island in the Lakshadweep group on August 11, 1959. *Rana*, which was men exercising in the vicinity of Cochin, was rushed to the scene of the grounding and succeeded in rescuing the entire crew of 37 officers and sailors of the stricken tanker and bringing them to Cochin.

Dharini rushed to the aid of a merchant ship, *Wellington*, whose machinery had broken down 265 miles off Bombay on March 27, 1960 and rendered suitable assistance including transferring 120 tons of fresh water. On May 16, 1960 an American tanker, *Atlantic States* which was in distress about 85 miles off Bombay, was taken in tow by *Kistna* and brought to Bombay on May 18. A month later *Kistna*, with a medical team onboard, was rushed to the rescue of *Scamthoid* in the Arabian Sea, to render medical aid to some accident victims; the injured members of the merchant ship's crew were then transferred to the *Rana* and brought to Bombay.

On June 26, 1961 a merchant ship, *Diloronia* which was in difficulty in the Arabian Sea, was taken in tow by *Kistna* and brought to Bombay on June 28. Another merchant ship, *Maharashmi*, had an engine breakdown off Salbot, 195 miles off Bombay, on July 19, 1961. *Kistna* was immediately sailed from Bombay and, after taking the merchant ship in tow, returned to Bombay on July 21. *Konkan* was rushed to the Minicoy and Androth islands on June 18, 1961 to help fight a dysentery epidemic and rescuing a large number of visitors stranded in the islands.

A Pakistan merchant ship, *Chittagong City*, while on passage in the Arabian Sea, had an outbreak of fire on board on March 22, 1962. *Tir*, which was in the vicinity, rushed to the ship in distress, went alongside and brought the fire under control. In June 1962 *Beas* was rushed from Cochin to rescue fishermen caught in a storm off the Kerala Coast and in August 1962 *Abbey* and *Hathi* sailed from Cochin and located a missing fishing craft off Colachel.

A motor vessel, *MV Greta*, which was adrift in the Arabian Sea after losing her propellers, was towed to Bombay by *Kistna* on January 5, 1963. An Indian ship, *Indian Pioneer*, which had run aground at the entrance to Vishakhapatnam Harbour, sought naval assistance and a diving team succeeded in refloating her after locating and patching up three holes in the ship's shaft tunnel.

Four ships of the Indian Navy, *Tir*, *Cauvery*, *Subhadra* and *Savitri*, assisted by IAF maritime aircraft from Pune, carried out a thorough search for possible survivors from a United Arab Airlines Comet passenger airliner which had crashed off Madh Island on July 27, 1963. The search which commenced on July 28 was considerably hampered by severe monsoon weather but no survivor or debris of the airliner could be located till August 2 when several dead bodies were picked up and brought to Bombay. On August 4, members of the diplomatic corps and press representatives embarked on *Kirpan*, proceeded to the site of the air crash and conducted the last rites of the deceased.

Magar, in collaboration with IAF aircraft, carried out a search in the sea area off Kakinada for the recovery of 75 fishing boats and 450 fishermen, who had been reported missing after a severe cyclone, and rescued a number of *Rsherna \Rajputan* Investigator located the wreckage of a Piper Cub aircraft which had crashed at sea off the Maharashtra Coast and the body of one of the occupants of the aircraft was recovered and brought to Bombay. After a tidal wave had washed away the rail link between Man-dapam and Dhanushkodi and inundated the area in December 1961, *Magar* and *Sharda* picked up a total of 1453 persons stranded at Dhanushkodi and evacuated them to Mandapam during the period from December 24 to 29, 1964.

The NavdHeet carried out three rescue operations during 1965. *S/wnifl* rescued a motor launch belonging to the Customs department which was in distress between Porto Novo and Cuddalore on August 28; *Beas*, during her passage from Bombay to Madras, rescued the crew of the Greek ship, *Avra*, before she later sank at sea on July 11, 1965; *Dharini* and *Karwar* rescued the crew of *Mamfa* which was in distress and had beached in Kola Bay near Goa.

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In July 1960 the Indian Navy, along with the Army and the Air Force, undertook the maintenance of essential services during a Central Government employees strike; Naval personnel assisted in manning the important shore installations and *Dd/ri, iton/rt* and *Jtanastoodbyat C/Calcutta* during the strike.

In 1964, Naval personnel manned the ports and vessels at Bombay, Marmagao, Vishakhapatnam and Cochin when the port workers went on strike between May and July. During June 1964 *Investigator* was at Mangalore to assist the civil authorities in radioactive tracer studies in the dredged outer channel.

In January 1965, when the assistant harbour masters of Calcutta Port struck work, 11 officers of the Navy were deputed to assist the Port Commissioners in piloting and berthing ships in the harbour. Thus recalls Vice Admiral V.E.C. Barboza,

During the British regime, the Lighthouse on Minicoy Island in the Lakshadweep Group was manned by personnel of the Ceylon lighthouse Service, though the island itself was administered by the Collector of Malabar in British India. Post-Independence parleys between the Governments of India and Sri Lanka resulted in a decision to transfer all responsibility for the Lighthouse to India and Tir was despatched to participate in the handing-over ceremony. I remember the Sri Lankans telling me that every British merchant vessel sailing past the lighthouse had to pay a toll based on the ship's draught at the time of passing it. A notation was to be made in the ship's log, the ship's owners informed and they were to make the payment. Oddly enough, the money so earned went straight into the British Monarch's Privy Purser

Once in a while, ships in the Navy encounter developments with political overtones while carrying out their traditional tasks. Admiral Barboza recalls three such incidents that took place in 1962,

I can call to mind a few incidents during my command of the *Tirbutmy* memory is hazy about dates and some other details. During a visit to Port Blair, the Harbour Master, Commander CM. Reilly, expressed his concern about the untrammelled poaching by foreign fishing vessels in the waters around the islands and wanted to apprehend some of them. *Trishul* had earlier seen some Chinese fishing vessels in the area and had warned them not to poach in our waters. I agreed to carry out a sweep off the west coast of Great Andaman on my return passage to the mainland. If poachers were found, Reilly would send his patrol vessel, with police personnel, to apprehend them. Shortly after we began our search we came upon a group of modern trawlers with their nets out. On our approach they hoisted the Taiwanese flag and behaved as if they had a proprietary right to fish in our waters. We stood guard over them till the Harbour Master's vessel arrived to apprehend them and take them to Port Blair. I think it was the first apprehension of modern Chinese vessels found fishing in our waters. •

On another occasion, when we were in Lakshadweep waters, we picked up an SOS message from a Pakistani merchant ship *Chittagong City*. She had a fire on board and, unable to use her engines, was adrift about 300 miles to the west of Goa. I went to her rescue and, after securing alongside her, we put out the fire after about twelve hours of strenuous effort by my crew. It was a fire in the holds carrying coir; and the adjacent machinery spaces had become too hot and suffocating for the crew to operate in for even a few minutes. The ship's master, an Englishman, was the spitting image of the well-known British actor Charles Laughton. When I asked him to come on board to discuss the legal aspects of the rescue, he cried off saying that his corpulence prevented him from negotiating the Jacob's ladder (a rope ladder with wooden rungs) from his ship to mine. Later, his Pakistani Chief Officer told us that the Master had never visited the scene of the fire and had contented himself with remaining on the Bridge or in his cabin. However, he finally signed the standard documents concerning the rescue (we should have received a goodly sum of salvage money for the rescue, but none ever came our way). We paid a goodwill visit to Colombo, also in 1962. We had a few Sri Lankan cadets on board and I used the opportunity to hold meetings with the Sri Lankan Naval Headquarters and Defence Ministry to sort out some administrative problems these cadets were experiencing. Shortly after we left Colombo, a local newspaper published a report saying that the real purpose of our visit was to smuggle Rear Admiral Royce de Mel, ex-Chief of the Sri Lankan Navy, out of the country. Admiral de Mel had been sacked from his post some years earlier for alleged involvement in a local scandal (I think his government announced his removal when he was on a formal visit to India). The Press report, thoroughly unfounded of course, was embroidered with the news that the Admiral was sneaked on board the *Tir* dressed in the uniform of a ship's cook. He apparently enjoyed a reputation for being a dab hand at cooking.

Diving Assistance
in September 1959, on an urgent request made by the Government of Punjab, the Navy rushed a team of one officer and six divers to the Bhakra Dam to carry out a survey of the approaches to the tunnel where cement blocks were being dropped to seal the diversion tunnel and to salvage a 75-ton draft tube gate from the left powerplant. The task was completed by me diving team by September 30, 1959.

A diving team consisting of one officer and six divers was transported to Car Nicobar on board *Investigator* in April 1960 for carrying out a survey of coral formations near the Malacca Jetty at Car Nicobar. After the initial survey, coral reefs in the area were blasted to render approaches safe for navigation. During 1960 diving teams were also sent to the Tungabhadra and Bhakra Dams several times to survey and salvage underwater equipment, clear blocked tunnels and operate underwater machinery. In May 1960 a diving team comprising one officer and five divers was sent to Munirabad to clear an underwater obstruction in the Tungabhadra Dam in Karnataka.

During 1961 diving teams were deputed to the Bhakra, Hirakud and Rihand Dams for providing assistance in the installation of the Dams' underwater machinery. These teams also rendered assistance in underwater welding of the steel sheet piles of the main wharf in Cochin's dry dock and workshop area, recovering dead bodies of the passengers of abus which had fallen into a lake near Trichur and blocking 11 underwater pipes and clearing slucies near Pune.

Diving assistance provided to various civil authorities during 1962 included removal of an obstruction to the emergency gate of the Pykara Dam in Tamil Nadu, desilting of the gate sill and lowering of a pen-stock bulkhead gate at Hirakud, demolition of underwater obstacles in the navigable channel of the river Ganga between Buxar and Patna built by the Ganga Brahmaputra Water Transport Board and clearance of the sills of all the penstock bulkhead gates at Bhakra.

During 1963 diving assistance was provided to the Bhakra Dam Administration for underwater inspection and clearance of silt from the spillway apron, to the Hirakud Dam Authority for desilting operations and to the British tanker, *British Industry*, for underwater damage inspection.

Events at Sea

The old order atseachangeth rather slowly and yields place to the new after a considerable lapse of time. So was the case with the communication procedure used at sea during the two World Wars as exemplified in the following narration by Admiral Barboza, I joined the *Rajput* as her Executive Officer after the Staff Course - the third Executive Officer's assignment in about six years. The three Rs (*Rajput*, *Rana* and *Ranjit*) were sent to escort President Tito's yacht *Gold* for a part of its passage across the Indian Ocean *en route* to south East Asia. When, after making the rendezvous, we sped past the yacht to take up screening stations ahead of her, the President and his wife stood on an open deck and waved to us, though the weather was wet and squally and the sea lively. We asked the Captain of *Galeb* to signal changes in his course and speed so that the screening ships could adjust their positions accordingly. He complied, and we were pleasantly surprised to see that he did so employing a code used by Allied Convoy Commodores in the Second World War.

There were some minor collisions too causing excitement on board. Admiral Barboza recalls the episode of 'catted' anchors onboard the Mysore catting being a nautical term for raising the anchor to the cathead, a horizontal

beam on each side of a ship's bows, used for raising and carrying anchors.

The Mysore has had her share of mishaps as well both minor and major. While a particularly major catastrophe is described often, I would like to dwell on one minor one, especially since it has humorous overtones and relates to our sojourn in the Mediterranean. Commodore Erach Debu, then our First lieutenant and Forecastle Officer as a Lieutenant Commander, used to complain bitterly about the need for cutting the anchor. Just because Nelson cut the anchor, he would grumble, 'must we keep on doing so?' Once the cut anchor swung and damaged the *Mysore's* bows - she probably carries that scar till today and Captain Nanda was convinced that this was one Nelsonian tradition which we could dispense with.

It was Prime Minister Nehru who, after visiting the Fleet and having witnessed operations at sea, had said that a naval ship is a virtual mini-India comprising personnel from different educational, cultural, socio-economic, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds fight as one man, living together. Man-management and expertise in human relations, therefore, constitute some of the most essential attributes of Naval personnel.

Vice Admiral Krishnan had a different kind of experience in human relations when he was the Commanding Officer of *Vikramt* in 1963. He recalls:

After a week of intense flying exercises off Cochin, we anchored near the fairway buoy, for rest and maintenance and I acceded to the engineer officers' request to shut down steam.

Early next morning I was doing my *Puja*, as was my wont, when the carrier's signal communication officer rushed into my cabin and rather agitatedly said, 'Sir, our radar has picked up a largish echo which is moving too fast for a merchant ship and is heading towards us.' I asked, 'What is the range?', to which he replied, 'Twenty miles, and closing in fast'

I knew that there were none of our warships in the area at that time. Always at the back of my mind was the thought of a pre-emptive attack by Pakistan and I was not going to take any chance. I told the officer, 'Ring the alarm for action stations and I will be up in a jiffy/ By the time I got up, a silhouette of the approaching ship was partially visible and I could make out that it was the Pakistani cruiser *Bdbar*. Without steam even to raise the anchor we were a sitting duck and I had no intention that it should be so. I ordered steam to be raised with the utmost despatch and had the cable party standing by to slip the anchor; I sent for Tally-Ho (nickname for Lieutenant Commander, later Admiral, R.H. Tahiliani), the senior flier, and asked him, 'How are you for a free take-off?' He replied, 'There is a decent breeze, we are already into the wind and the Alize (Vikramt's antisubmarine aircraft) can just about do it. Have to use rockets and not bombs'. 'Go to it, I said, 'get two Alizes ready!' The cruiser was within the visual signalling distance. I suddenly remembered who the Captain was - Captain Syed Mohammad Ahsan, who was with me in England in the mid-1940s when he was awarded the DSC with me (Captain Ahsan later rose to the rank of Admiral as the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Navy and served as the Governor of East Pakistan after his retirement). I signalled a message to him which read, 'Syed, don't come closer.

We are ready for you. Krish'. The reply came, 'Krish, have Ayub on board, bound for Colombo. Thought will have a *dekk*o at my old country. Cordial greetings Syed.'and he turned away.

Vice Admiral NP. Datta was, among others, witness to the lighter side of die life at sea during his numerous appointments afloat. He remembers a Royal Navy officer who had been influenced by the Muse and had the propensity for communicating in verse, and the mammoth denizen of the deep sea which collided with one of our ships During the early 1960 he reminisces:

We showed the flag during our visits to Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia and on the way carried out intensive exercises with the RoyalNavy in the Malacca Strait. Rear Admiral B5. Soman was in command of the Indian Fleet. His opposite number was the famous and much-liked British Flag Officer, Admiral Michael Le Fenu. I had known Le Fenu since 1953 when I was Flag Lieutenant to the then Indian Navy's C-in-C and Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sir Mark Fizey, and he was Naval Assistant to the First Sea Lord, AdmiralMcgregor. Wehadspent two weeks together visitingnaval establishments and'shooting" tigers with our cameras in between. Whenever in the mood, Le Fenu often broke into verse. He was obviously happy with his Indian visit and I got a three-page letter of thanks, all in verse. When the two Fleets met at sea, he sent for me in his helicopter. When taken to the flag bridge, you can imagine my surprise when I saw him, sitting in a comer and quitely knitting away! He explained he was doing so on doctor's advice, to soothe his nerves after his recent illness! Well or ill, he was a hard taskmaster and, therefore, you can imagine our joy when, at the end of the exercises, we received a signal which ended by saying:

We in the Far Eastern Fleet say, one and all, That Soman's Fleet is on the ball.

An interesting experience during the summer exercises of 1963 was a collision with a giant whale on July 15,1963 when *Mysore* was involved in a strange encounter with this 50-foot sea-mammal which got trapped across the ship's bows with its head to port and tail to starboard. Sailors in the mess-decks became aware of its presence due to the thumping on the ship's side and crowded on the ship's forecastle to witness the strange sight. The whale was firmly held and broke free only when the engines were reversed and the way was taken off the ship.

Vice Admiral S.H. Sarma, who retired as the Flag Officer Command-ing-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command, is intensely aware of the 'brotherhood of the sea' which could bring together seafarers whose home ports are often separated by the vast expanse of the oceans and who often represent countries of different political, ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural hues. While sailing back from England as the first Commanding Officer (in the rank of Commander) of *Khukri*, an antisubmarine frigate, in 1958, Admiral Sarma had an experience of this universal brotherhood of seafarers. He describes his chance encounter with a naval officer from Salazar's Portugal, the country that had refused to grant freedom to Goa:

While taking the *Khukri* to India from England, after acceptance, we put into Gibraltar for fuel. While securing

the ship alongside our allotted berth, we observed that there was a Portuguese frigate already alongside at right angles to mine. At that time India did not have diplomatic relations with Portugal. It was with a certain amount of surprise, therefore, that I heard my Officer of the Day (the duty officer in harbour) that an officer from the Portuguese ship wished to see me. In my cabin the Portuguese officer said, 'Sir, my captain wants to know who is more important, you or him? If you are more important, he will come and see you/ He evidently meant who was more senior. I had already observed his Captain through binoculars, also a Commander like me but much older. I replied, 'Your Captain is more important, I will go and see him'. When I met him, I thanked the Portuguese commander for his courtesy - and he discoursed at length on the brotherhood of the sea which cuts across diplomatic barriers. A nice old sea-dog with whom it was good to spend a forenoon.

Commodore K. C. Sanjana who, as a Captain was the Commanding Officer of Mysore during 1963-64, relives his days onboard as the Captain of the cruiser directing operations before and during the joint exercises off Trincomalee with the other Commonwealth navies:

It was in 1963 when the *Mysore*, after a fairly good refit, sailed in the second week of July for Singapore, Bangkok, Malaysia and thence to Calcutta. On our return passage, the *Mysore* called at Colombo to show the flag. At the entrance to Colombo we met the Pakistan Navy's ship *K. T. Tyfer* and, in accordance with normal naval custom, exchanged identities and the names of respective Commanding Officers. Immediately on securing in Colombo Harbour, the *Khyber* signalled the *Mysore*, in keeping with the best of naval traditions, conveying the Commanding Officer's desire to call on me. We received the Captain of the *Khyber* - Commander (later Captain) Ameer Aslam - with due ceremonial. Immediately after stepping on board the *Mysore*, to every one's surprise, the young handsome Commander of the Pakistan navy touched my feet and said, 'Sir, you will perhaps, not remember me, but I was one of the sailors who served under you before the partition.' After that, we had a very long chat in my cabin and it was then that I realised that he was one of my communication sailors in Bombay just prior to Independence, when I was the Staff Communications Officer. We naturally talked very freely and frankly about old colleagues who lived, sailed and fought together before August 15, 1947. I then asked Aslam to tell me honestly and truthfully as to which unit of the Indian Navy the Pakistanis feared most. Without any hesitation, Aslam replied, 'Sir, it is the *Mysore*.' (It was the *Mysore* whose presence in the Arabian Sea during the 1965 Indo-Pak conflict had reduced the Pak Navy's Fleet to the state of a fleet-in-being)

Transfer by jackstay, i.e., transferring personnel and stores from one ship to another at sea by a rope strung between two ships steering a steady parallel course, had been a male preserve for centuries, for women are generally not permitted on board naval ships except during visits on ceremonial or private occasions in harbour or on 'families' day⁷ at sea. It was in 1959 that the first 'Jill' took off from the *Mysore* at sea and virtually hang-glided across the 150 feet of space over a frothing sea to the deck of *Delhi*. To recapitulate the momentous event, an *ex-Mysorean* recalls, It happened in the days when *Come September* was the top number of the pop parades! Came September 1959 and a bevy of

beautiful young damsels - all of them naval wives and lady plotters from the Tactical School, Cochin - found themselves on board the good ship *Mysore*, for what is known as 'A Day at Sea'. Amongst them was young Meena, wife of Commander W.S. Nagarkar, then the Officer-in-Charge of the Navigation and Direction School. As part of the exercises, a jackstay transfer between the *Mysore* and the *Delhi* was soon ordered. Rakesh Sharma may have been the first Indian to sojourn into outer space, with *Salyut* as his vehicle, but Meena Nagarkar, however, had decided, way back in 1959, that she would be the first Indian eve to bounce across the waves in a bosun's chair, a wooden seat suspended from ropes, used at sea for transferring men and material from ship to ship whilst they are under way. So, braving ominous forecasts from the Cassandras sur-rounding her, she set off jauntily from *the Mysore* to the *Delhi*. It was after she reached there that her travails actually began, for the Captain of the *Delhi* (none other than the swashbuckling Krishnan) refused to return his 'prize'. It took an imperious edict from Rear Admiral Ajitendu Chakraverti, the Fleet Commander, threatening dire consequences, before Meena came bobbing back to the *Mysore*. The waves of the Arabian Sea were never the same again.

It would not be out of place to recall here that it was during the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 that the landing ship, *Magar*, had been deployed for patrolling in the waters around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. No Chinese or foreign vessels were sighted by the ship but several reports kept reaching Port Blair describing a 'Chinese-looking' ship oia had been seen prowling in the waters close to the islands. The *Magar* made several attempts to apprehend the intruder but failed to do so. Finally, in an effort to get a precise description of the elusive ship, some of the islanders who had reported the sighting were brought on board the landing ship. But the moment these islanders stepped on board they realised that the sighting reports they had been making were of the *Afagor* itself for in their reckoning the landing ship was indeed 'Chinese-looking' what with its 'aquiline' bows removed and the huge flat bow-doors fitted in front, which were peculiar to all landing ships, presenting a snub-nosed visage! It was another instance of acute Sinophobia leading to hallucinatory sightings on the lines of the spectral Flying Dutchman.

Review of the Fleet

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of India, took the salute at the first Review of the Fleet by the President at Bombay on October 10, 1953. Present on the occasion were Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Defence Minister, Krishna Menon, and Admiral Sir Mark Pizey, Chief of the Naval Staff. Thirty three vessels took part in the Review and included 25 warships, seven yard craft and one merchant ship.

Ships of the Indian Navy took part in a Review of the Fleet at Bombay by his Imperial Majesty the Shah of Iran on March 6, 1956. The ships that took part in the Review included *Delhi*, *Cauvery*, *Rana*, *Ranjit*, *Shakti*, *Gomati*, *Bengal*, *Bombay*, *Madras*, *Bassein*, and *Bimlipatam* and Shore Patrol Craft No. 3110.

On April 20, 1964, Shri Y.B. Chavan, Defence Minister, took the salute at a Review of the Fleet at Bombay in lieu of the President. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, who was indisposed. A total of 52 vessels including 31 warships, nine merchant ships and 12 yard craft took part in the Review. Dr Radhakrishnan later reviewed the Fleet in February 1966.

From the sea to the mountains may sound a far cry but those from the Navy who had the opportunity to climb in the Himalayas have found the same fascination and challenge in the mountains as is experienced at high seas. Like vast oceans, mighty mountains make a man realise his insignificance in the vast universe. And it is due to this identity of spirit of adventure that seadogs have found themselves quite at home on the mountains and have braved the hazards of mountains in the same way as they would face the raging seas.

Captain *MS. Kohli* of the IN and an internationally renowned mountaineer records in his book, *Mountaineering in India*,

Although man's contact with the mountains is as old as the seas, somehow not many Indian Naval personnel have been able to venture to the Himalayas. I was perhaps the first Naval Officer selected for a major Indian expedition. It was to Saser Kangri (7,672 m) in 1956. It was a great expedition with Nandu Jayal as leader, and a band of strong instructors of Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. Although we failed on the main peak, we succeeded in climbing a satellite peak, Sakang (6,948 m). The following year Lt Cdr. Jyoti Rawat was selected for the Nanda Devi Expedition and managed to reach a formidable height to 7,470 m. The expedition failed but Jyoti proved that Naval Officers are as capable as others in tackling the high mountains. In 1958, Lt. P.P. Mehta joined Col Kumar and succeeded in reaching the top of Trisul (7,120 m).

One of the most glorious years in the history of Naval mountaineering was 1959. This year Cdr. J.T.M. Atkinson who was commanding *Kistna* submitted his plans to the Naval Headquarters for an all-naval Expedition to the 6,861 m high Nanda Kot. I happened to be then posted on his ship. The expedition was approved by the Naval Headquarters but unfortunately at the last minute John Atkinson fell ill and opted out of the expedition. Of his proposed team members, I was the only one who had done the Basic and Advance Courses and was asked to take over the leadership.

Looking back over the years, I recall with a great sense of pride climbing this difficult and challenging peak. After a gruelling effort the summit was reached by Chief Yeoman of Signals, K.P. Sharma and myself.

Besides me, there have been a few other Naval Officers who took to mountaineering. In 1961 Lt. (later Vice Admiral) *V.S. Shekhawat* and Chief Yeoman of Signals, K.P. Sharma, joined me on an expedition to Annapurna HI, K.P. Sharma also joined the expedition to Everest and Nanda Khat.

Kohli's crowning achievement was leading a team of 18 intrepid climbers to scale the Everest in 1965. Nine of them were put atop the highest peak and the story of this spectacular Indian Climb is stirringly narrated in his book, *Nine Atop Everest*. Paying her tribute to this achievement, Shrimati Indira Gandhi has recorded in her preface, 'The record of Commander Kohli's expedition will find special mention in history. It was a masterpiece of planning, organisation, teamwork, individual effort and leadership'. Shri Lai Bahadur Shastri in his tribute

has also recorded, The Indian Everest expedition has created mountaineering history by this record-breaking achievement. Climbing Everest even once is a great distinction, doing so four times in a row is a spectacular triumph'.

The indomitable spirit of adventure of personnel of the Indian Navy has also taken them to the icy continent of Antarctica. The achievements of lieutenant HR Bowers of the Royal Indian Marine who accompanied Captain Scott on his expedition to the Antarctica in 1910 have been recorded in an earlier chapter. The first Indian also to set foot in Antarctica was Lieutenant Ram Charan of the Indian Navy, a specialist in Meteorology, who accompanied an Australian expedition to the South Pole in 1960. After returning to India, Ram Charan prepared a valuable report on his expedition, but in 1961 he was tragically killed in a road accident.

Defence Services Staff College

One of the prestigious professional courses conducted for officers of the three Services is the Defence Services Staff College course (for officers of the rank of Major and its equivalent in the Navy and the Air Force) at Wellington, a picturesque hill-station in Tamil Nadu. One of the better features of the course is a series of weekly talks by renowned specialists, eminent thinkers, social workers and professionals on a variety of subjects which considerably enlarge the intellectual horizon of the student officers. One of the eminent visitors to the College in 1957 was the Prime Minister, Jawahar-lal Nehru, who was accompanied by the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Shri Kamaraj Nadar. Vice Admiral Barboza, who underwent the course in 1957, reminisces:

After -Tir, I did my Staff Course in Wellington. Prime Minister Nehru visited the college during a tour of the Nilgiris, accompanied by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Shri Kamaraj Nadar. Among other things, the Prime Minister was treated to a Student Discussion on a Second World War campaign. It appeared to have given the Prime Minister the impression that the College was teaching the students to fight the next war the way they fought the last one. When asked to address us after the discussion, he spoke extempore, displaying the wide sweep of his historical knowledge, quoting Napoleon and describing the Chinese 'Long March'. While agreeing with the need to study the past, he advocated the virtues of imagination, innovation and ingenuity in tackling the challenges of the future. He drove home his point by telling the story of a famous poet, who, when importuned by his students to divulge the secret of his success, replied; 'Master your grammar - and then forget it'

Panditji was the Chief Guest at a formal dinner at the Staff College officers' mess that evening. He attended it dressed impeccably, while Shri Kamaraj wore his customary homespun attire which bore unmistakable marks of a hard day's wear. We knew and respected the Chief Minister too much to frown on his not 'dressing for dinner', but we wished he had donned a freshly laundered change before coming to our

function. The starchy pomp and paradoxical rituals of the mess function, so devoid of any home-grown flavour, doubtless left Shri Kamaraj cold, but he had the grace to make his indifference seem benign. When the proceedings drew to a close, the Commandant rose stiffly, raised his glass to the Prime Minister and commenced a rather off-key rendering of *He's a Jolly Good Fellow*, which the rest of those assembled joined in dutifully. Kamarajji rose to his feet with the rest of us. And as the swelling chorus echoed from the rafters, he hung his head and visibly sighed.

Three years earlier, the author was also doing a course at the same institution when Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of our Constitution addressed the College. This was in 1954 and two years before Dr. Ambedkar's last act of 'revolt' when he found his peace in the Buddha and which was two months before he passed into history. Dr. Ambedkar was not in the pink of health and had to be helped to the rostrum by our British Commandant, the distinguished General Lentaigne. Dr. Ambedkar had made a quixotic statement after he resigned from Nehru's Cabinet that the Constitution should be burnt! A British Major who was also doing the same course, was emboldened to ask Dr. Ambedkar at the end of his illuminating talk, as to why he had come to such an unthinkable conclusion and so soon. Dr. Ambedkar thundered back in his powerful voice: "One makes a temple for gods to live in, but when the devil usurps it, it has to be destroyed." The meaning was clear to us all!

Dr. Ambedkar was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1990.

Oceanographic Research

In recognition of the importance of oceanographic research in the Indian Ocean, the Indian Navy took part as a major participant in the International Oceanographic Expedition in the Indian Ocean held from 1962 to 1964. The main task allocated to India within the framework of this expedition were the participation by *Kistna*, which had been specially fitted out for oceanographic research to the extent of six months in each of the three years. The facilities made available by the Indian Navy included provision of assistance for radio communication to the vessels taking part in the expedition, provision of shore facilities to oceanographic vessels within Indian ports, provision of facilities in Naval laboratories at Bombay and Cochin, making available Naval scientists for participation in research work, both ashore and afloat, and provision of training facilities for scientists required for the expedition.

Indian responsibilities, within the overall framework of the expedition, lay in the waters near the coast of India, both East and West, and intensive investigations on the continental shelf and superjacent waters. The outer limits of the area of Indian responsibility were the Arabian Sea north of the Equator with six degrees longitude as the western boundary and the Sumatra Coast along with the Andaman and Nicobar Island as the eastern boundary. Some cruises were made to the latitude of 12 degrees south and to the East Coast of Africa where some important oceanic currents originate and which have a bearing on the circulation of sea water along India's North-West Coast.

The Indian programme included observations and calculations of the energy flux between the ocean and the atmosphere. Studies were also made of the solar, sky and atmosphere radiations, air pressure, temperature and humidity

at the deck level, surface temperature of the sun, near-surface ocean currents, waves swell, tide, rainfall, evaporation profiles of wet and dry bulb thermometers and winds above the sea surface.

A total of 20 ships took part in the three-year expedition and, besides India, the other countries represented were Australia, France, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Pakistan, South Africa, Britain, the USA, the USSR, West Germany and Zanzibar. India was represented by four ships - *Kistna* which was fitted out with the requisite scientific instruments and equipment to cope with the requirements of the various tasks allocated to India, 'Research Vessel *Varuna*, the survey vessel of the Indo-Norwegian Project in Kerala, *Bangada*, a fisheries vessel, and *Conch*, a research vessel of the Kerala University. The first scientific cruise by the *Kistna* was inaugurated by Professor Humayun Kabir, Minister of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs on October 9, 1962 at Bombay. Twenty scientists were embarked on the ship which collected much valuable data on various aspects of oceanographic research.

The Kaleidoscopic Maritime Ambience

Life at sea thus is a series of experiences that constitute a multi-hued mosaic of the characteristics of maritime ambience, laughter, pathos, challenges and bravery, often interspersed with long periods of ennui and men superposed by fulfilment, glory and achievement are but different ingredients that embody the distinctive mental attitude that a sailor acquires over the years at sea. And during the process the ship, instead of being a mere weapon platform, transcends itself to the state of being a vehicle transporting the seafarer to a happier land across the mighty oceans. Robert Bridges, the poet, expresses the same thought:

And yet, O splendid ship unhailed and nameless, I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly divine
 That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage blameless,
 Thy port assured in a happier land than mine.
 But for all I have given thee, beauty enough is mine,
 And thou, aslant with trim tackle and shrouding,
 From the proud nostril curve of a prow's line
 In the offing scatterest foam, thy white sails crowding.