

The Laws and Spirit of the Mankad

Why is there such a controversy around a form of run out that the laws of the game permit?

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA

The story so far: Two weeks ago, Rajasthan Royals' Jos Buttler was run out by Kings XI Punjab bowler R. Ashwin in an IPL game in Jaipur. Buttler wandered out of his crease at the non-striker's end before Ashwin had delivered the ball. The India off-spinner proceeded to take the balls off, in a hugely controversial form of dismissal colloquially known as the 'Mankad.' The name is derived from the great Indian all-rounder Vinoo Mankad, who famously ran out Australia's Bill Brown in this fashion in the Sydney Test in 1947.

What do Laws of Cricket say?

The provision to run the non-striker out is clearly laid out in the Laws of Cricket. The 'Mankad' is a thoroughly fair, legal act, as even

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Don Bradman, who was captain of that Australian team in 1947, insisted back then. Law 41.16, which pertains to the "Non-striker leaving his/her ground early," states: "If the non-striker is out of his/her ground at any time from the moment the ball comes into play until the instant when the bowler would normally have been expected to release the ball, the non-striker is liable to be run out."

The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the custodian of the Laws, has tweaked the Mankad rule and changed its wording over the years. In the 2017 Code, "Bowler attempting to run out non-striker before delivery" was replaced with "Non-striker leaving their ground early" in order to put the "onus on the non-striker to remain in their ground." To emphasise this point further, on April 1 this year, the MCC slightly rephrased Law 41.16 again, replacing "the bowler is permitted to run [the non-striker] out" with "the non-striker is liable to be run out."

Also changed in 2017 was an important aspect of the law. Previously, the bowler was only

permitted to run out a non-striker backing up before entering his delivery stride. "This meant that as the bowler's back foot landed, the non-striker could move down the wicket a considerable way before the bowler actually delivered the ball. This was considered unfair," notes the International Cricket Council Match Officials' Almanac 2017-18 (the ICC's interpretation of the Laws).

The new playing condition permitted the bowler to run the batsman out "at any point before he releases the ball provided he has not completed his delivery swing."

Why, then, is it frowned upon?

It is cricketing convention that a bowler at least warns a batsman who has backed up too far before attempting to run him out (if not refuse to consider this form of dismissal altogether) – although there is nothing in the Laws to this effect. In a World Cup match in Lahore in 1987, Courtney Walsh chose not to run out Saleem Jaffar in this way in the last over, when West Indies needed a wicket to win and lost the match. Bowlers have traditionally shied away from this mode of dismissal; the Mankad is taboo and anyone attempting it invites extraordinary criticism. Batsmen should not be Mankaded, it has been said, when they are not backing up out of the crease intentionally. But it is difficult to establish intent; and at any rate, a yard gained at one end is a yard gained at another. A run has been shortened, intentional or not. Part of the problem is that the Mankad seems to occur outside the natural structure of the game – the contest between bat and ball. That a batsman may be dismissed even before the bowler has delivered the ball perhaps creates the sense that the Mankad is a dishonest or underhand tactic. The bowler ought to, the argument goes, use bowling skills to defeat the batsman. It has also been suggested that the ball does not feel in play when the Mankad takes place. But the Laws make it quite clear that (20.5) "the ball ceases to be dead – that is, it comes into play – when the bowler starts his/her run-up or, if there is no run-up, starts his/her bowling action." The most vociferous argument against the Mankad, though, is that it goes against the 'Spirit of Cricket.' In 2000, the Laws included, for the first time, a Preamble on the Spirit.

Anatomy of a run out

Breaking down R. Ashwin's dismissal of Jos Buttler at the non-striker's end



1 Ashwin is about to enter his delivery stride. Buttler's foot and bat are behind the line; he doesn't appear to be looking at the bowler



2 Ashwin's back foot has landed, his front foot hasn't. Buttler's bat is behind the line; he still doesn't appear to be looking at the bowler



3 Ashwin's front foot has landed, his bowling arm has dropped. Buttler's bat is just behind the line; he still isn't looking at the bowler



4 Ashwin's arm has dropped lower, his back foot has lifted. Buttler has left the crease, there's nothing behind the line



5 Ashwin has stopped; he is looking at Buttler, who is out of his crease



6 Ashwin has moved to run the batsman out. Buttler has advanced further down the track



7 The run out is completed

■ In real time, there is just one second between Ashwin's back foot landing and the balls lighting up – between Image 2 and Image 7

"Cricket is a game that owes much of its unique appeal to the fact that it should be played not only within its Laws but also within the Spirit of the Game. Any action which is seen to abuse this Spirit causes injury to the game itself," it says. But this spirit is applied arbitrarily and

conveniently and, it could be argued, more harshly to bowlers than to batsmen. A batsman who leaves his crease early is not deemed in contravention of the spirit but a bowler who seeks to dismiss him is seen as taking unfair advantage. This bias perhaps has

its roots in the origins of the game in England, and the distinction between amateur upper-class 'gentlemen,' typically batsmen, and professional working-class 'players,' largely bowlers. "The early professionals were usually hired by gentlemen to play for their

teams or by the MCC as practice bowlers, the first of these being taken on in 1825. From the outset amateurs tended to be batsmen while professionals were bowlers, and their relationship, effectively that of masters and men, was defined partly through accommodation, partly through struggle," writes Stephen Wagg, in a chapter on English county cricket in *Amateurs and Professionals in Post-war British Sport*. In the case of the Mankad, it would appear that tradition is being conflated with morality. It is not as if the bowler is exploiting a loophole in the Laws. Should cricketers be expected to follow such convention – with no logical basis – rather than effect a dismissal that is explicitly fair under the Laws?

Was Buttler's dismissal legal?

As per Law 41.16, the bowler can run the non-striker out till the instant when he would "normally have been expected to release the ball." It has been argued that Ashwin delayed his action to allow Buttler to leave his ground and the Englishman would have been in his crease had Ashwin delivered the ball as usual. This delay has been seen as a calculated trick on Ashwin's part and not "instinctive," as he put it. But what is "normal"? The ICC Match Officials' Almanac, which umpires follow, interprets it physically: "The normal point of ball release should be interpreted as the moment when the delivery arm is at its highest point." Ashwin's arm does not go up at all, leave alone reach the highest point. By that yardstick, the dismissal is a legal one. The MCC initially reserved its judgment on whether Ashwin deliberately delayed his action, instead pointing out that it was "understandable" how the TV umpire opted to give Buttler out. A day later, however, Fraser Stewart, the MCC's laws manager, felt the act was not within the Spirit of Cricket. "We think that Buttler was in his ground as Ashwin got into a position when the non-striker could reasonably have expected the ball to have been delivered," he said. Ashwin's lower body does appear to get into delivery stride even as his arms drop. But could the non-striker have reasonably expected anything about the ball's release when he wasn't watching the bowler and the ball?

What next?

The stigma around the Mankad has to be broken down: neither should the non-striker's attempt to leave his ground early nor the bowler's attempt to run him out be seen as deceitful. The batsman's act – whether intentional or mindless – should simply be seen as a risk in the pursuit of a run. This would render irrelevant any ethical debate on the Mankad. The Laws could be clearer on what a "normal" point of ball release is. But it would be a challenge to find a better, enforceable definition for it. If more bowlers saw they were being exploited and treated the Mankad as a legitimate form of dismissal, more non-strikers would stay in their crease and watch bowlers till they released the ball.

Challenging electoral bonds

Have anonymous cash donations reduced with the scheme? Are there pitfalls in the system?

TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN

The story so far: The Supreme Court on Friday adjourned to April 10 the hearing of a number of petitions challenging the legality of the Electoral Bond Scheme. The Election Commission of India, in an affidavit filed in the court, said the electoral bonds had made political funding opaque and would have "serious repercussions on transparency of political funding" owing to its anonymous nature.

What is the Electoral Bond Scheme?

The scheme was launched last year by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in an attempt to "cleanse the system of political funding in the country." A donor may buy an electoral bond at specified banks and branches using electronic modes of payment and after having completed the KYC (know your customer) requirements. The political party will have to deposit the encashed money in a bank account it has informed the Election Commission about.

Where are they available?

The electoral bonds are available at specified branches of the State Bank of India (SBI) for 10 days each in the months designated by the government from time to time. The bonds may be bought for any value, in multiples of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1 lakh, ₹10 lakh or ₹1 crore.



What was the system earlier?

The rules for declaring sources of funding for political parties are outlined in Section 29C of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Prior to 2017, the Act said all registered parties had to declare all donations made to them of over ₹2,000. The problem, according to political analysts and watchdog bodies, was that large donations were anonymous.

What is the controversy?

The bone of contention over the electoral bond scheme is that while the government has consistently said the scheme will increase

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transparency in electoral funding, it has ignored the reservations of several political parties and even the Election Commission.

The argument put forth by the Election Commission is that it allows political parties not to disclose the source of these bonds. The parties do not have to disclose where their money comes from, as long as the mode of funding is through electoral bonds. This provision, to exempt parties from declaring the sources of the electoral bonds they receive, was done through an amendment to the Representation of the People Act by the Finance Act, 2017.

The Election Commission also criticised several other changes made by the government. For example, it said the amendments introduced by the government in the Income Tax Act also facilitated anonymous donations by saying that parties did not have to disclose the names, address or PAN of donors of less than ₹20,000. The bulk of the donations to parties have been coming in sums smaller than that amount, the Election Commission

said. Another amendment that has been criticised is the one to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), which the Election Commission said will allow political parties to receive funding from foreign companies with a majority stake in Indian companies.

Are people using these bonds?

Data revealed through the Right to Information replies by the State Bank of India show that large sums have been bought through electoral bonds. The State Bank of India issued a whopping ₹1,716 crore in electoral bonds in just two months of 2019, the data show.

The RTI replies say electoral bonds worth ₹495.6 crore were sold in Mumbai in 2019, which is the largest share (28.9%) of the total amount sold.

Observers are alarmed that the bulk of anonymous electoral bonds sold seem to be going to the Bharatiya Janata Party. A separate RTI reply by the SBI has shown that the bank had sold ₹222 crore worth of electoral bonds in March 2018, the only month in financial year 2017-18 when these bonds were sold.

Given that, at the time, the bonds could only be sold by the SBI, and the fact that a review of the BJP's audit report for 2017-18 showed that it had received ₹210 crore worth of donations that year from electoral bonds, the party received 94.6% of all the electoral bonds sold in 2017-18.

NaMo TV's case

What are the issues over a channel dedicated to the PM?

ANURADHA RAMAN

The story so far: On March 31, NaMo TV made its debut on Direct to Home (DTH) platforms, raising several questions about its identity, ownership and content. Opposition parties asked the Election Commission to take action as the channel was launched after the model code of conduct came into effect ahead of the Lok Sabha election. The Election Commission has sought an explanation from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

Why is it problematic?

As the identity and ownership of the entity is shrouded in mystery, it violates broadcasting norms and regulations governing the ownership of content providers. These norms fall under the categories of uplinking and downlinking policies that came into force in 2005 and that have been amended since. These policies lay the groundwork for channels that wish to uplink content through satellites and later downlink them to television-viewing homes. In this regard, there are channels that uplink from outside the country, such as the BBC and CNN, and downlink in India,



for which permission is sought and licences are given by a clutch of government ministries that include the Ministries of Home and Information and Broadcasting. NaMo TV falls in a grey area.

What does that mean?

Well, DTH platforms claim that NaMo is a Value Added Service (VAS) that every DTH operator offers to its subscriber. For example, TATA Sky could offer a series of

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cooking shows or fitness programmes as add-on services to viewers for subscription. The number of VAS channels on offer varies from one DTH operator to another with as many as 35 VAS services made available.

Can VAS be live?

For want of specific guidelines, VAS can be live. Channels like Astha have often shown their Guru's spiritual discourses live. NaMo TV goes live with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rallies.

Is VAS paid for?

Technically, the DTH operator is paid by those who wish to show their content on the DTH platform. The carriage fee for content on DTH platforms for VAS is between ₹1 lakh and ₹2 lakh and is negotiable.

Why is the Oppn. upset?

As it is the platform of the ruling party's leader, it gives an unfair advantage to the BJP. Traditionally, time is allotted for propaganda/advertising on government channels: All India Radio and Doordarshan. There are other issues. If NaMo TV is the BJP mouthpiece, it will have to declare it as an election expenditure to the Election Commission.

Those elusive GIRLS OF MY LIFE

The magic touch that the girl children can bring to your life is incomparable

RISHI KANNA

The enormity of marriage functions and the gaggle of exotically dressed attendees can sometimes be stifling. I wove as my colleague and his spouse as I was looking for some familiar faces in the maddening marriage crowd. After exchanging pleasantries, the young lady bent toward my younger son who was draping my legs, and brushed his cheeks. "Hi, kiddo. When did you come? Have you bunked school today? Where is your *anna* [brother]?" She rattled off a stream of questions, interspersed with her own trademark exclamations, winks and guffaws.

Not unexpectedly, my otherwise charming son just gave a sheepish smile to most of her questions, with few acknowledging gestures and frequently looking at me coyly seeking release from the embarrassment. I egged him to answer her in loud and clear sentences but in vain. Finally, she joined a

group of other women enjoying the pleasant scenes unveiling in front of them.

The moment she left, my reticent son asked me, "Did I speak nicely, appa?" I hugged him tightly as if I could show the extent of my love in the tightness.

At the same time, my colleague's 10-year-old daughter happened to pass across us. With eyes staring wide, she turned to us and enquired, "Hi uncle, how are you?" followed by 10 other seemingly unrelated questions even before we could answer her first question.

The charming girl with a twinkle in her eyes continued to mesmerise me for the next few minutes with her garrulous nature. With exuberance in her hammy gestures and innocence in her speech, it seemed as if girl children are a different species altogether. No wonder every other day there are innumerable posts in social media raving about girl children as angels, leaving parents with shy sons and cran-



ILLUSTRATION:
J.A. PREMKUMAR

ky brats with a heartburn.

The kindness and sensitivity in the actions of girl children are unmistakable and brings a world of calmness in an otherwise chaotic world. They add colour to our life. Look at the psychedelic selection of colours, perplexing patterns and dizzy designs available in the sartorial choices of those little angels. It reduces the standard grey-and-blue shades of boys' attire as minnows in a world of giants.

There is no competition at all. More than the charm and allure they bring with them; the extreme prolixity of the girl children is what excites them into stardom in our minds. Their brain can concoct dozens of information in a fraction of a second and come out with the most ingenious set of questions, descriptions and comments about anything they see.

Let me divulge that, the day I knew we are going to be

parents, I wished our first child was an angel, as loquacious, as responsible, as whimsical and as energetic as my wife. But the wish remains a wish. It appeared that god had turned a deaf ear to our wishes, but I wonder were those wishes drowned in the miscarriages we had. Though we have got two adorable sons, they are as cagey, as carefree, as dreary and as mute as I am.

There is a saying that when god could not let angels on to Earth, he created girl children. The amount of love and peace infused by them into the society is phenomenal. As the human race keeps moving away from the other animal species, it seems only men carry those savagery and violent territorial animalistic tendencies, while most women and children bear the aftermath of such mindless acts.

It is sad that the dislike for girl children still prevails in

many sections of even well-lettered societies, leading to a dwindling sex ratio. Brazen acts of identifying the child's gender, infanticide and a patriarchal mindset of suppressing the exuberance of girl children keeping them in shackles are regrettable menaces. I am sure that if such a parochial person speaks to a girl child for a few minutes, he will get smitten by those expressive wide eyes, continuous chattering, the high-spirited attitude, ravishing innocence and the ever-caring nature of a girl child.

While my life has been coloured beautifully by many women including my mother, sister, wife, nieces and friends, the enticing little girl angel has remained elusive. I only wish that the dream becomes true through my princes, with a vibrant and zestful daughter-in-law or a granddaughter.

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The art of doing nothing

Mindfulness that release from the daily grind brings

VIBHU KAPOOR

It's Sunday evening and I sit in my living room, watching the IPL match because I know that's the easiest item my brain can process at that point after a strenuous day. As I sip a cup of tea and gather my thoughts around how my next week may progress, the electricity in our apartment goes off. "Ah, it's the rain! Everytime the clouds roar we have a power outage," my wife groans, coming out of the bedroom, trying to break her shackles of weekend laziness. She proposes that sitting in the balcony is a rather good idea as it is pleasant outside. For the lack of a better option, I nod and follow her (or if I should say so, after five years of marriage there always is only one option to go for).

As we gaze through the distance ahead, we appreciate the unobstructed view our balcony is still able to offer us (and we quickly thank each other for our mutual decision to choose an apartment in a high-rise building).

As my wandering mind continues to ponder over my upcoming meetings at the workplace, my desire to go for a 10,000-km run in less than 60 minutes, my ranking in the cricket fantasy league, my next weekend culinary trials and so on, I realise that the sun is setting, behind the most distant building my bare eyes can see.



excitedly count the number of two-wheelers and cars on the distant highway, visible to us for a short span through those recesses between buildings. I remember thinking that I could do it all night without ever getting bored.

As my mind oscillates between these thoughts, I hear the hoot of the local train. I feel like I am hearing it after a long time, although we have a train passing by our apartment often. I realise how my ever-wandering mind has kept me from observing things happening around me. I am starting to enjoy this time away from my gadgets as I watch another train pass by on the opposite track. I laugh out at a distant sight of a child wobbling along on his bicycle as he attempts to master the ride.

It is almost getting dark now and I try to catch the last glimpses of this vast land that I know will soon be inhabited by newer and larger structures that will obstruct my view. I thank the electricity agency for giving me the unexpected me-time as I engage in this forgotten 'art of doing nothing'. As we decide to head inside for dinner, the playlist on my wife's phone moves to the song 'Bare Necessities' from the 1967 classic, *Jungle Book*. I gently smile as I get off my chair, appreciating the song title even more now.

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Of a certain power, and my first wrist-watch

A prudent little lady's piggy bank helps make a timely choice, with a little help from mother

RANJANI RAO

When I was eleven, I was summoned to the tenth-grade classroom by the school principal, a stern-looking nun who taught mathematics, in a sleepy suburb of what was then Bombay. Surprised and even scared, unsure about what wrong I had possibly done, I gingerly ventured into the room where senior girl students much taller than me and with their hair combed into two tight braids sat without expression. Sister Irene asked me to go to the blackboard and solve a simple math problem involving fractions. I finished the task and turned towards her still unsmiling face.

"Even a sixth-grade girl is able to solve the problem. And look at you. You have the board exams coming up and don't know how to solve this," Sister Irene reprimanded her silent audience and dismissed me with a flick of her wrist. I stood outside the class for a while, confused over what had transpired, unaware that this would be the day I understood my super power (not in math, in case you are wondering).

Right from pre-school, I loved to learn, and learnt things quickly. Alphabets, numbers, multiplication tables and poems. Memorisation came easily and homework was a daily duel that I won by completing it quickly so I could go down and play. I wasn't good at art. I spent two years learning Bharatanatyam but couldn't keep up. Track and field did not hold my interest. Basketball was the only team sport I ever participated in, more as a way to hang out with my friends than from any natural inclination towards the game. But I was good at studies, plain and simple.

And I went through my school years honing my ability to listen and learn, developing the knack to crack those examinations by understanding question patterns and teacher expectations. Doing well in exams was my super power. Not being a dancer nor an artist and certainly not a sportsman. I was just a girl who did well in school - and was amply rewarded for it.

My parents and my extended family appreciated my academic performance by giving me token gifts: cho-



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R KUMAR

colate bars, a treat at the local *vada pav* shop, and sometimes, cash. This I saved along with my pocket money, first in a piggy bank and later in an envelope that I hid under my book pile. At some point I handed over the tattered but bulging envelope along with the associated responsibility for safekeeping to my mother. By the time I finished high school in the mid-1980s, I had accumulated the princely sum of Rs. 500, a surprise fact that my mother pointed out one summer afternoon.

Doordarshan had started displaying advertisements a

few years earlier and one of the most aspirational items that appealed to my teenage sentiments was the HMT watch. There were various models, with round and square dials, with black and white backgrounds, in gold and silver configurations, with metallic or leather straps, for men and women. I decided to convert my hard-won treasure of cash into a 'ladies' watch.

My mother and I took the train to Santa Cruz one afternoon, to check out the collection at the nearest HMT showroom. I could barely contain my excitement at the

prospect of owning a shiny new watch. The air-conditioned showroom was a magical palace full of shimmering objects that everyone could covet but not all could afford. I felt almost like Cinderella, a misfit who had ventured into this palace of wonder by mistake.

My mother drew my attention to the section that had women's watches, and the salesperson pulled out a few trays with rows of watches. They all looked wonderful. How could I choose? My ever-practical mother made the selection process easier by announcing that our budget was Rs. 500. Thus the offerings shrunk to a handful.

I was at once dismayed by the meagre pickings but pleased that I did not have to be paralysed by a mountain of choice. I picked up each watch and held it against my bony wrist. I lifted up my hand, tilted it this way and that, walked out into the sunshine to see how it looked in natural light. Did a circular dial look better, or was it a rectangular one?

The one I liked best had a square gold dial with a cream-coloured face and golden arms that fit perfectly on

my wrist. The metallic strap put the total price out of my range but even with a simple leather strap, the total price was Rs. 550. I went back to look at others that would fit within my means but I couldn't find anything that called out to me.

Heartbroken, I told my mother we should just leave. I couldn't afford the one I liked and the others weren't good enough.

"Don't be silly," she said. "Let's buy the square gold watch. I will pay the extra 50 rupees."

I couldn't believe my ears. By paying the difference, my mother was giving me the best gift of all, the ability to own my first watch, an HMT watch, that day. I hugged her with sheer joy and kept looking at the box. I held it tightly in my hands the entire way home.

I wore that watch every single day for the next ten years. Even after I could afford more expensive brands, this watch, with its frayed leather strap and tarnished edges, remained my favourite, for it was proof of my super power.

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The stare case

RAVINDRA ANAND

Her name means "civility". Born and raised in the U.S. in an immigrant Indian family, she has impeccable manners. In India to attend a cousin's wedding, she says "Thank you" as a waiter offers her a glass of water. Her Indian cousins are surprised at this "formality". She is surprised at their surprise. But ruder shocks await her. Wherever she goes, people stare at her; total strangers stop to give her a once over.

Unused to such ocular hostility and confused about how to react, she tries her open society reaction - she smiles back. To her astonishment, the staring species skulks back, trying to merge into the crowd as if caught in a guilty act. Her mom was brought up in India, so she consults her, "Mom, when somebody stares at you, is it all right to smile?" The mother is caught between concern for her safety and fear of putting her off India. She replies diplomatically, "One should avoid it because it may be misunderstood." Unknown to her, mom is reliving her college days in India, so full of stare-cases.

The moment she would



step out of her home to walk to the bus stop, the usual hanger-ons at the paan shop will give her the benefit of undivided attention. And she had been coached by her mother to look straight ahead. It felt as if she had made a narrow tunnel for herself in the open road. She felt so closed in. And it did not stop there. In college, in bookshops - wherever a girl went she had to learn to live with restricted vision and a lurking feeling of eyes staring at her. So she just hopes her daughter doesn't notice it too much.

Meanwhile, the intrigued daughter is asking a few girls she has befriended. By the time she gets the full measure of the problem, she is aghast. From her fresh perspective pops up a simple question: "Why don't you have a law against it?"

Well, why don't we?

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An yesteryear tale: so far yet so near they lived their lives

How Jayarama Iyer in the North Pole and Visalakshi in the South Pole still somehow remained aligned

M.R. ANAND

Mrs. Visalakshi was around 65 and her husband Mr. Jayarama Iyer was 72. They stayed with their only daughter Mrs. Janaki and her seven children. One of the grandchildren, Bala, was in my class. What puzzled me about Bala's grandparents was they never spoke to each other. Whenever they had anything to tell each other they did so via the grandchildren.

This bothered me. I saw quarrels between my parents. My grandparents too quarrelled often. They would remain aloof from each other for some time and eventually rejoin. What might have happened between Mrs. Visalakshi and Mr. Jayarama Iyer to keep them apart, poles apart, this long?

One day I asked my mother about it. First she told me, "You are too small a boy to

poke your nose into elderly people's lives. Confine yourself to matters suitable for your age." But after a while she thawed and told me what she knew about Bala's grandparents. This is their story.

Visalakshi and Jayarama Iyer were married when they were both in their early twenties. Both belonged to orthodox families. Things went on nicely for the couple till Visalakshi, their only daughter, was three. At that point of their life something happened, and Jayarama Iyer and Visalakshi stopped speaking to each other.

But as would have happened these days, Jayarama Iyer and Visalakshi did not think of a legal separation or a divorce. They continued to live under one roof. He took very good care of his daughter, who he was very fond of. The communication between the couple was through their tiny daughter.



"Tell your mother I will not be home before 10," Jayarama Iyer would tell his daughter. "Ask him to bring Oval [time] and sugar when he returns from college," Visalakshi would reply. The family bus cruised along the life-road like this, the driver Jayarama Iyer and the conductor Visalakshi communicating through their only passenger, daughter Janaki.

Janaki grew up. She went to school, came of age and

the time came for her to be married. Even during the ceremony of the marriage of their only daughter they did not speak to each other. Five grandsons and three granddaughters were born and a number of ceremonies were observed in connection with these grandchildren. Jayarama Iyer and Visalakshi stuck to their vow of not speaking to each other.

A number of relatives and friends over time tried to

break the ice between these couples, but in vain. On one occasion my mother asked Mrs. Janaki how she could bear to see her parents remaining without speaking to each other adamantly for years and years. "They are like this since I was a child. I tried my best to unravel the mystery but in vain. I hated to be the lone child of my parents. I longed to have a brother or sister. But all my efforts to bring about reconciliation between them failed," replied Mrs. Janaki.

I think it was in 1969 that Jayarama Iyer got very ill. He refused to take food, and drank only water for days. A staunch devotee of Lord Vishnu, he kept chanting the *Vishnu Sahasranamam*. But Visalakshi was emotion-less.

Jayarama Iyer died in the early hours of an Ekadasi day, as he had desired all his life. Visalakshi died ten years later. During the years she

outlived her husband, she was pressed a number of times to reveal the reason behind their tiff. She refused to divulge the 60-year secret.

These days how couples quarrel and go in for separation without thinking about the price their children have to pay for the extreme steps taken by their parents. Thousands of children are torn between estranged parents. When viewed against what is happening these days, Visalakshi and Jayarama Iyer were angels.

They had some very serious and irreconcilable difference between them but still chose to live together, that too without talking to each other for 45 years for the sake of their daughter.

So many interesting things go unnoticed in this world just because they take place in the life of ordinary people.

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Transcending boundaries

Revisiting and revising elements of the subcontinent's contemporary history
ILSA ABDUL RAZZAK

From India, in awe

'Chuddies' have made an entry into the Oxford English Dictionary
P.M. WARRIER

End of the attestation routine

No more having to run around to get documents attested is a great convenience
SRIPATHI SRIHARSHA

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