



AROUND THE WORLD IN 70 DAYS

Lt Kulvinder Singh Bali

Well, although it has been quite a while now since my course mates and I, of 65 ICC, were granted a life time opportunity of sailing on INS Tarangini as a part of its first circum-navigation voyage; the adventure and sheer excitement of the whole experience remains etched in our minds as strong as ever. Challenging the constraints of space, here are a few words about a truly wonderful and memorable experience of joining the Navy and seeing the world.

OP LOKAYAN was what this expedition had been named. It was flagged off from Kochi, by then CNS, Admiral Madhvendra Singh, on 23 Jan 2003. Ours was the first course of sea cadets to sail in two

groups on the Swan of the seas-Tarangini, from Kochi to New York via Europe and Suez. Excitement was at its peak and all cadets were looking forward to visiting some of the most exotic and beautiful places in the world. The first batch was to sail on Tarangini from Kochi to Palermo, the Capital of Sicily (Italy), visiting the ports of Djibouti, Port Said and Iraklion (Greece) enroute, while their counterparts (of which I was a part) sailed on Tir directly to Palermo where the change around took place. From what I gathered from my course mates of the first leg, they thoroughly enjoyed the voyage and picked up a lot of souvenirs from Djibouti, Egypt and Greece; leather jackets and

Egyptian art being the prize catches. The highlight of the passage was an unforgettable encounter with a storm, off Greece, wherein visibility was reduced to merely a few metres and the ship was swaying to the mercy of the Mediterranean. The sails tore apart and considerable damage was inflicted. However, the ever 'josh-type' ships company, primarily the cadets, exhibited utmost zest, enthusiasm and camaraderie in getting the ship 'shipshape'. This incident elevated the status of the 'lowest forms of Marine life' to that of courageous young Officers-in-Making.

The reunion of our course at Palermo saw us together for three days in that beautiful port. Joint shopping sprees, Pizza fests, and tourist attraction visits followed. Expeditions to Mt. Etna (an active volcano) and the beautiful countryside were organised. The fashion consciousness, beauty and style of the Italians (especially women) caught our eye. The architecture and fascinating history of this island city was extremely captivating. Everywhere we went (in our No. 3's or Muftis) we were given warm reception and proactive description about the place. Soon it was now time to say Grazie (Thank You) Palermo and to our course mates of the first batch, and head for Spanish shores - Cadiz and Canary Islands.

Our passage to Cadiz began with a bang. The sea was very rough, sea state 4-5 being the usual. Our transit through the Straits of Gibraltar was particularly memorable wherein the relative calm of the Mediterranean had a rendezvous with the turbulence of the Atlantic Ocean. Falling off our bunks while sleeping ; sliding athwartships due to rolling and one cadets food falling into another's plate were some hilarious instances in defiance to the laws of stability. Particularly hard-pressed were those little Lord Nelsons who were permanently stationed atop the Crow's Nest by our Bosun Officer for their follies like not closing up on watch in time or not doing the mandatory 3 Astro sights a day. Even the food was sent up and down in a bag using the gantline by the

MOD (Mother of the Day)

Our stay at Cadiz and Canary Islands were extremely eventful and Cadets who were off-watch were put up in plush hotels by the sea-side whilst those on watch played the role of India's ambassadors to perfection by organising guided visits onboard. We visited several historical places, Grand Canyons (Mas Palomas), Bull Fighting Arenas, Cathedrals and some pristine beaches. The people were very friendly and took pride in answering our queries about the places. The cleanliness of the streets and the fun and frolic nature of the European holiday goers were indeed eye catching.

Our next port of call was Bermuda Island in the Atlantic Ocean. The passage from Canary Islands to Bermuda lasted 21 long days. The sea was extremely calm, akin to a mirror. Calm before another storm, probably?? We finally entered the Bermuda Triangle and commenced a brief SMP, wherein we touched up the shipside and squared up all sails. The Naval Attache to Washington also paid us a visit. We were thrilled to hear that henceforth we could proceed on liberty in civil clothes and so called 'Jazz Rigs' instead of Muftis with blazers and ties. Bermuda turned out to be a very expensive place, being far away from mainland. A colony of United Kingdom, Bermuda, a very scenic place, has a multi-cultural society. We were put up in a Riviera-like resort and were amused to find that all men here wore bermudas with formal shirts, ties and leather shoes to office, thereby giving this piece of menswear its celebrated name.

The last port of call of our voyage was the city of dreams - New York. The mere thought of stepping on American soil, one of the more popular cities in the world sent our adrenaline flowing. All cadets got down to serious itinerary planning, so as to make the most of our stay in New York. We entered New York harbour, manning the masts in heavy rain and chilling temperatures. However the sight of Manhattan's Skyline and the Statue of Liberty made us feel warm.



The feeling at that moment was inexplicable. With clenched fists and teeth, we stood tall on the towering yardarms of Tarangini which was being given a warm welcome by the US ships participating in the ongoing Fleet Week. During our stay here, we played friendly basketball and tug of war matches with hulks of the US Marines, visited world famous institutions like UN Building, Empire State, Madison Square Garden, Madam Tussaud's wax Mueseum, Central Park, and Times Square etc. It was an unforgettable and enjoyable experience.

This marked the culmination of our Tarangini experience which gave young mariners like me an opportunity of a lifetime and an insight into the quality of life abroad.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lt Kulvinder Singh Bali is an alumini of National Defence Academy and was comminssioned on 01 Jan 04. Presently he is posted on INS Delhi.

CPO R Singh was a regular exponent of Yoga and not one to miss reaping the-benefits of the same in the fresh breeze of the open sea. He was often found carrying out Surya Namskar on the flight deck of Viraat precariously close to the edge. One such morning R Singh lost balance and fell over board. Luckily for him, somebody heard a scream. A helo was scrambled and he was found floating not doing much as if enjoying the whole experience. After the initial medical checkup, he was invited to the Bridge for a cup of tea with the captain. On being asked by the old man as to why he didn't do any thing after falling off, R Singh curtly replied with his trademark frown, "What do you mean I didn't do anything? I shouted MAN OVER BOARD, thrice before I hit water". It was this yelling that somebody had heard.

Contributed by Lt Gaurav Gautham

