



CONTROL 'Z'

Lt Cdr Sandeep Marathe

The Radio Operators onboard INS Sultan and INS Bangalore, on a presence mission off African Coast, were frantically trying to find clutterless tuning, for their HF sets. The OTC had relaxed the routine allowing the crew to catch up with the most important sporting event of the year, the Cricket World Cup Final at Karachi where the home team was at the crease. Millions back home were glued to their television screens, listening to the introductory lines of Harsha Bhogle, "Owing to a wonderful spell by Mohammad Sami and Harbhajan Singh, India has managed to wind up the batting line of the guests within a manageable total. With the current form of

Indian opening pair, both Shahid Afridi and Virender Sehwag, it won't be long before we see India repeating the feat of 1983 "

No, I am not day dreaming, this may become a reality... may be hundreds of years in the future. A look into the modern history of the world and the transition from Kingdoms to democratic Nations will make us realise that nations are formed by the cultural closeness, acceptance within communities and just the strong commitment of the common people. Come to think of it, this landmass, now referred to as the Indian subcontinent was hosting more than a hundred Kings and Knights, each ruling a piece of

territory and fighting for more. Then came the British, conquered some, cajoled the rest and slowly colonised the entire subcontinent. It won't be grossly incorrect if we thank the British for their role in uniting this landmass under one 'Crown' and starting the process of Nation Building. And yet, when the British eventually left, they left it in the same chaos as they had seen, when they first arrived here. Not only did they return the land back to the rulers who had ruled them 200 years ago, but also divided the landmass called India in three separate parts on the basis of religion. What followed over the next sixty years is for all of us to see and it is certainly not a very happy situation.

The history that we read in the school textbooks is 'just one point of view' and may not be an entirely correct picture. The contribution of great leaders who led the common people to stand up, be united and see through an extremely painstaking fight for a common cause is unquestionable. The British eventually left. However, the events that led to the partition of the country and the subsequent fall out till date, is not the sole doing of the British. A glance at the history of India, written by neutral historians gives us a fair idea of the political imbalance building up over a period of time and the sequence of events leading to Aug 1947. Conflicts of personalities, political aspirations and shortsighted ambitions of Indian- leadership allowed the British to 'Divide and Rule'. It is a curse that the Indian population is living with even today. If our leaders had the vision and power to lead millions of people to a common goal, they also had the power to get the British out of this land without any preconditions or trade offs.

The idea of partition first came into somebody's mind only when his interests were overlooked and ambitions clipped to give way for somebody else's. It is evident that most of the common population, as also the working level leaders, were completely against the partition. It wasn't even

the British rulers who floated the idea of dividing the country; they just fuelled the political rift to their advantage. The signatories to the document of partition included not only the British rulers, but also the leaders who are portrayed today as harbingers of independence in their respective countries. If there were men who could execute a fast unto death to put a stop to the violence that followed, the same could have been done to hold the country together. Today we are proud to call ourselves a secular nation, where the tolerance of society has accepted the positives and negatives of all religions, casts and communities and bound the nation as a whole, under one Tri Colour. The spirit was same even a hundred years ago. However, if the country's land that we call ours today was divided on the basis of religion, the basic foundation itself comes under question.

What was done 60 years back can neither be forgotten nor can it be altered. My heart though finds it hard to believe that it is impossible to get back to the geography and integrity of pre-independence era. If a set of few men could create three nations out of one, there must be another set to make one nation out of many. Examples are not hard to find. It was just the strong commitment of common people which broke the wall between East and West Germany. The world stood up in appreciation when North and South Korea paraded a common team for 2004 Olympics. Regional associations being formed in Asia, Europe, South America, the Caribbean Islands and many other places are nothing but a start of the process of reunion. The same commitment and nothing else, is required to get the 1947 chapter undone from India's History.

It is just one idea which readers may strike off as foolish or may be far fetched. But if one can imagine the state of Nation in its full glory, set from the Hindukush to the Sunderbans, it would be worth having a dream like this. Imagine a nation where productive population of over a billion will be tending



to a huge area of fertile land; off-shore assets with immense natural resources; world renowned brain power coupled with rich blend of art and cultural heritage; a host of tourist destinations; among the world's best Cricket and Hockey teams... the list is endless. With a united India, sensitive issues of Kashmir and Siachen shall stand resolved without further discussion. In the absence of regional instability, India's hold over this strategic position in the maritime context will be unquestionable. With the seas under surveillance by the Aircraft Carrier supported by Agostas and ATVs, Airspace dominated by F-16s and Su-30s and the land borders defended by one of the most spirited Armies, India's Military dominance in the region will aptly complement its economic growth. With a united India, we may not be a super power of the future but certainly, a well-respected nation of today whose opinion counts.

Executing this concept is not as easy as just dreaming it. The resistance is bound to start from the first person to read this article. There will be resistance within the countries as also from the world powers who may not like to see us standing united. There will be petty politics and conflict of interests and personalities at each level. There will be questions raised about modalities on ground. Terrorism in its present form is again a virus in the society, which is difficult to tackle at one go. It haunts even the most powerful nations of the world, today and may continue to haunt a united India. But, let's face it, neither was Galileo believed when he said that the earth was not flat nor was Vasco da Gama trusted by his own crew until he reached the Golden shores. It took more than 30 years and a million lives for the

powers in early 20th century to thrust the idea of dividing the land into three pieces down the throats of a billion plus population. It took as much time and lives to create the present chaos in Kashmir, once known as the heaven on earth. And it may take as many years or even more to make this idea of reunion and coexistence work on ground. All it would take is powerful leadership, acceptance of ideas, wilful implementation and an extremely strong sense of commitment.

Both India and Pakistan are giving their best shot at implementing various Confidence Building Measures. These are aimed at nothing but bringing the population closer, reducing the hatred created by years of propoganda and eventually shake hands as brothers and not just friends. Today, artists are performing together, making movies together, building bridges, roads and businesses together. Tomorrow we may field sports teams together at international arenas and may even share research oriented defence projects. The day is not far when INS Sultan and Bangalore will fly the same ensign and patrol together to protect the interests of this great nation and the Indian Ocean, Pseudo boundaries over land and seas will just dissolve and we will arrive at a discussion table to decide on a united Flag and National Anthem.

This has to happen, sooner or later, if India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in their present form wish to become a peaceful, prosperous and progressive society. How I wish, this could be as simple as highlighting the pages of history covering the events of partition and just pressing the **Control 'Z'** button (undo) on my Keyboard.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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