

bharatayatra

Sutradaar

Connaught Chaiwalla –
from – *Shtories and Shtuff*



Why did the chicken cross
the road?

Vagrant Birder: Bird pix
from my bird table at Pune

Silathoranam *The entrance of gods*

This natural stone-arch exists on the Palakonda hills, above Tirumala, and above the Sri Venkateswara temple on the plateau. The stone-arch is one of the three natural stone-arches in existence elsewhere in the world. Its supposed to be a wonder, in its own way and is really a great sight to see, as one walks up from behind the temple.



Local researchers from the Sri Venkateswara University have discovered marine fossils inside the stone-arch, and these are almost similar to mica deposits. They are not mica, but are equally glossy and shiny. It is said that the Palakonda hills were at one time under the Sea of Tethys and rose up after the meeting of the continents.

The story has it that Lord Venkateswara entered the Tirumala area through the Stone-arch, and it was here that he was first found, within a snake-mound. The story goes that this stone-arch is the entrance of gods from the heavens to earth. One may discount it a local mythology and dismiss it. But, if you are here, just after dawn, on a good summer day, and sit facing the stone-arch, the early morning rays of the sun strike the fossils within it, and the entire arch glows, and shines in the manner of light coming out of a prism. For a brief, brief moment, in that glow of thousands of diamonds, if you shut out all your so-called rational thought, you can see the entrance of Gods from the heavens to earth.

Turn around, at that moment, from the stone-arch, and look the other side, and you will see the Sri Venkateswara Temple below, on the Tirumala plateau. What else could a God do, after entering through the Silathoranam? It looks so very appropriate that he had no other options, but to walk down, and take up residence at the temple, and provide his blessings to the millions of people who visit him daily.

bharatasutras

PDF e-edition from Bharat
Bhushan for limited private
circulation only.

bharatayatra - my journey
September 2010 (2)
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Salad and chutneys to go with a traditional Maharashtrian Thali, near Pune

Connaught Chaiwalla – *from Shtories and Shtuff*



The tea-vendor at Connaught Place, New Delhi. The most profitable enterprise built on pure personal effort.

From my blog – <http://shtories-shtuff.blogspot.com> – This article is about the tea-vendor at Connaught Place, New Delhi. - The place is famous for its coffee clubs and tea houses. Most political and corporate strategies used to be discussed and finalised at these coffee clubs and tea houses at one time. But the best tea to be had at Connaught Place is from the 'kettlewala' who goes around the parking lot. Always smiling, and always present. In the heat of the Capital's summer, or in the biting cold in the winter. He is always around. He knows all the vehicles and all the drivers. Most drivers call him by his first name, while he also waves in recognition to some drivers. Caught up with modern times, he now serves tea in a plastic cup and has gone along with inflation and his cup now costs five rupees. I remember having tea from his brethren at Connaught Place in 1987 for one rupee and was served in a clay pot that could be smashed near the dustbin.



The best appam in New Delhi, at Hotel Saravana Bhavan at Connaught Place

The amazing aspect of Connaught Place is that you get Chai of all sorts... - The mendicant Connaught Chaiwalla, the Tea House bone china tea-bag 'dip dip wali' tea, the udupi hotel tea at Hotel Saravana Bhavan and other similar ones, the tea from the very terrible tea machines (I hate them for destroying the diversity of India), and the hidden side-lane daaba imports in the middle lanes of Connaught. There are daaba imports from Punjab-Haryana imitations who vend makki-ki-roti and sarson-ka-saag, and will sell you a grimy glass of 'daaba wala' chai.

So, what would you prefer? The Tea Bags? Its usually now termed as the 'dip dip wali' 'chai'. The tragic aspect of this development of the 21st Century is that even the chaiwallahs in long-distance trains and railway platform canteens are now turning to the 'dip dip wali' 'chai'. I hope that this virus does not spread to the innumerable dirty-in-their-own-unique-way daabas that are all over the country of ours.

The sight of that daaba chai maker, in his own significant manner of allowing months of grime to rest on his body, swing off the cup of tea is enough to make anyone feel that he is going to get a good cup of tea.

Why did the chicken cross the road?



I could not believe my luck. There was this Chicken, and it was actually crossing the road... at Bhimashankar.

There used to be this conundrum... Everyone would ask each other – “Why did the chicken cross the road?” and there would be many trite and silly answers, and it would lead to other similar unnecessary and wierd questions. But, those were the days, when you did not have to be intelligent, to avoid answering the question.

Have you ever wondered about stuff, just without trying to find out the answers? True, there is always the question – Which came first? The chicken, or the egg? The seed, or the tree? And, there are never any answers.

I came upon a more relevant discussion, and it was quite interesting. The question was – “What do we mean by maya?” The discussion was in a *Satsang* by Swami Sukhobodhananda, and it is also found in his book – “Enhancing Life – The Art of Inner Awakening.” There are other questions – Who is the Creator? What is the object that was created? And, what is maya? The *Quran* (3.185) says that “the life of this world is but comfort of illusion.” While thoughts of maya last, doubt, avarice, and attachment are found, until illusion is lifted.

A delightful story illustrates this situation – “A king had 17 elephants. Then the king died. He had three sons. According to his will, the first son was entitled to one-half of the number of elephants, the second to one-third, and the third to one-ninth. As 17 is an odd number, there were unable to find a solution to the challenge.”

“Fortunately for them, a wise man was passing through their country. The young men described their predicament and asked for his help. The wise man asked them not to worry and set about solving the problem immediately. He added his elephant to the 17 elephants; they were now 18. He separated 9 elephants or one-half of 18, and gave them to the first son. The second son was given six elephants or one-third of 18. Lastly, the third son was given two elephants, two being one-ninth of 18.”

“The total number of elephants given away was 17 (9+6+2). The eighteenth elephant left was that of the wise man who took his elephant back and left, with everybody happy and satisfied. The last elephant is like maya. It came to solve a problem, and having solved it, it removes itself from the scene, leaving no trace of its previous presence.”

There are other examples. “When and where can I experience enlightenment?” asked the student. The master replied, “Right here, and right now.” The student was puzzled. “You do not see,” said the master. “Not seeing what?” asked the student. The master replied, “You don’t see what is near you. In order to see, you must be awake, but you are asleep. So, wake up. Open your eyes.” That’s why the chicken crossed the road... to allow you to see.

My grandparents – *He said, she said... “That’s life”*

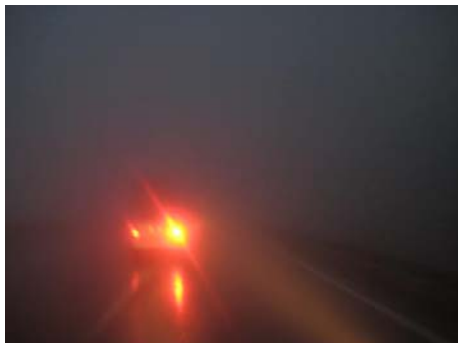
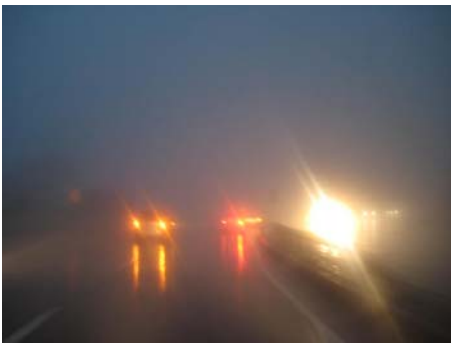


My maternal grandfather, Muniswamy Naidu, and my maternal grandmother, Hymavathi. He had started a school in Nungambakkam, in Chennai, at 4, Ramanaickam Street. It was the ‘Raja Rajeswari High School’ and was well attended in the 60s. He was the Headmaster, and teacher, and along with him, my mother, her brothers and sisters, sisters-in-law and the neighbours were the other teachers. Everyone knew each other. He had a writing desk in his office, and would carry it with him to the classrooms. I have the writing desk with me, and have used it through my school, college and research days. As long as I have his writing desk with me, I feel, I cannot escape from the strong links to education or teaching. The institution folded up after my grandfather passed away. He taught me Chess, and would always say, “*That’s life*”... whenever he would beat me, or he would allow me to win.

Naushad & Mohammad Rafi – *the best of all*



The nostalgia of Hindi film songs from the 60s and 70s cannot be beaten. I found this rare photograph of Naushad and Rafi on the Net and thought it was extremely typical and representative of the camaraderie that they must have shared in those days. Look at Rafi, in impeccable white, good shoes, and the brilliant smile. He must have enjoyed his work tremendously. One can see the respect and affection of Naushad for Rafi and his efforts. Great photograph.



Night driving during a rainstorm from Lonavala, returning to Pune on the Expressway.

Vagrant birder



House sparrows congregate at my Bird Table at YASHADA, Pune. With just a wee bit of effort, they recover.



Grey Tit – at the Bird Table. This one is a fledgling of 2010.

bharataayana

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Naushad & Mohammad Rafi pix is sourced from the NET.

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