

Stray Memories In MBM Engineering College

Professor (Dr.) Alam Singh

Travelling from Delhi in a second class railway coach I arrived at the Jodhpur Station in the beginning of 1953 at about noon time. There were four classes of coaches, first, second, inter and third. It was a meter gauge route via Loharu, Didwana, Nagore and Merta Road and not via Ratangarh as at present. I selected New Era Hotel on the station road for stay. The room rent was Rs. 10/- or so per day. Cost of living was so cheap those days!

In the afternoon, I hired a tonga and reached the College which was located in Ugam Ji's Bungalow, besides the railway overbridge. I reported for duty to Principal V.G. Garde. He called Prof. Hari Singh Chowdhary, Prof. & Head of Civil Engineering. Prof. Hari Singh was Superintending Engineer in Irrigation Department and was on deputation to the College. I was taken aback when Principal Garde asked me to engage the overseer class for the subject of applied mechanics. He said that detailed time table would be given the next day. Somehow I went to the class and spent 55 min. period in knowing the names, hobbies, and other details of the students. That very evening I got issued a small book on applied mechanics from the library.

Next day I was asked to teach soil mechanics also to degree classes. That was the first batch of degree students. It included Shri Jagdish Gehlot, Shri Amolak Chand Sanghvi, Shri Govind Lal Mathur, Shri Prem Swarup Rajvanshi, Shri Som Chandra Rajvanshi, Shri L.B. Singh, Shri Chhail Behari Mathur and others; all have now retired as Chief Engineers or from some other high posts. The class strength was only thirty. That day, a staff party was arranged in the afternoon to welcome me and bid farewell to Shri P.C. Mathur, who was selected as Assistant Engineer in the Irrigation Department.

The boys' hostel was in the Indian Guest House, Ratanada. It was the Hathi Khana, stable for Maharaja's elephants. Ground floor had stables for elephants and first floor had big halls for the persons attending to the animals. The soil mechanics laboratory was located in one of the halls. Prof. S. Divakaran on joining was accommodated in the laboratory, his cot was kept in a corner. One day Principal Garde inspected the laboratory and was surprised to see Divakaran using the laboratory as his residence also. He said, O.K, I shall soon find place for both of you. He got allotted Q.No. 6 in the Government houses located on one side of the residency building. There was a post office, a primary school, and a cluster of small quarters meant for the clerical staff of Viceroy's representative living in the residency building. Each quarter had a chabootra (platform) about 1.5ft high and 15ft x 15ft in area. It was used by women folk or gents for chatting in evening hours. Later on Professor Rama Rao, Assistant Professor and Shri Paranjapay, Demonstrator, also joined us in the same quarter. Shri Paranjapay, was very tall and a long cot was specially prepared for him. I still have the cot with me at Jaipur.

After lunch it was usual to take something sweet. We had raisins and munakka. Rama Rao ruled out, no munakka, it has seeds, only raisins. Both were very cheap, Rs 2/- or Rs 3/- per seen (about 900 gms.). We had heartful of raisins. Our cook Ram Gopal, about 60 years old, was an

orthodox cook. He would prepare food wearing dhoti only, would never touch porcelain cups and plates with bare hands, but only after covering hands with his dhoti.

The College later shifted to the present campus, the Devali house. Timings were from 8 A.M. to 12 noon and then 2 to 5 P.M., with a two hours lunch break. There was a strict dress code for students, white shirt with white trousers in classes except for workshop and survey work where khakis were used. During winter, blue college blazer with MBM tie, specially manufactured, were used. The college prayer was always held, at 10 min to 8 AM every morning. The entrance gates to the College campus were closed during the prayer. One had to stand wherever he might be during the prayer.

Professor Hari Singh returned to his parent department. Professor R.M. Advani joined as Professor of Civil Engineering and Professor S.C. Goyal as professor of Structural Engineering. Bicycle was the royal conveyance for all the staff, except Principal Garde, who had a black fiat, at that time considered a privileged car.

Now some incidents which I cannot forget. Principal Garde asked me to show the degree students the Jawai Dam which was under construction. After seeing the dam, the students requested for a visit to Mount Abu also. I was also very eager to go there. We reached there in the evening and took accommodation in the Raghunathji dharmashala. I with Shri Bhoopal went to the bus stand to purchase the bus ticket for return journey next day. While returning from the bus I was shocked to hear that an engineering student got injured and was being carried on a cot to the government hospital. Stone quarrying by blasting was being done near the dharmshala. Our students stood in a verandah to watch it. They were asked not to stand there. They were still there. One of the students took out his camera to take a snap shot of blasting. A sharp, flying chip of stone cut his nose. It was he who was taken to hospital. I was nervous. Anyhow, we all returned to Jodhpur next day, leaving another student to look after injured one in the hospital.

They returned after a few days, Prof. Goswami of Electrical Engineering was asked by Principal Garde to enquire the matter. The students defended me by submitting that they prevailed on me to go to Mount Abu. Principal Garde called me and admonished me to be a responsible teacher in future, and to do only that which was to be done and nothing more.

Our college annual day was an event worth watching. Once the function was to be held at about 5 PM. Justice Modi was the Chief Guest. The instructions were to receive the guests only upto 5 PM. Nobody would stand to receive the late comers. Justice Modi was late. Dr. B.M. Rai, the retired D.M.H.O. was the senior most person in the audience. He was requested to chair the function. When Justice Modi arrived he sat in the last row. On being noticed he was brought to the dias. Dr. B.M. Rai vacated the chair, saying the right person has arrived, I was a square peg inside a round hole. Having been from the Thompson College (University of Roorkee) during the British regime, Principal Garde was very very punctual in his life. It is said that if he had to chair a function, he would send his driver to go and see the time to reach the place. He would be there just 5 min. before the function.

It was the annual sports meet. We had invited Maharaja Gaj Singh to preside. Gaj Singh and his step brother Hukam Singh arrived for the function. They were kids. Prof. G.C. Mishra, President games, offered them rubber balloons and tophies. While declaring the sports meet open, Thakur Jaikrath Singh, Controller, Household, stood and said "being commanded by the Maharaja I declare the sports meet open" and he unfurled the flag.

A sad incident. I was the Dean. Our students were returning at midnight after rowdyism at the railway station. Shri Hukam Singh probably drunk, drove slowly through the crowd of students. They were enraged, dragged Shri Hukam Singh out of his vehicle and beat him mercilessly and returned to the hostels not knowing the identity of person. It was a hell for the students. One evening Shri Hukam Singh picked up one student in his jeep, took him to a remote place and crushed his jaws with his hand wearing a steel panja. The students then realized what had happened. They could not dare move out of the hostel. I requested advocate Shri Roshan Lal Maheshwari, a member of syndicate, and one more person to accompany to the Rajmata. We went there. I apologized on behalf of the students and thus got relief from the terror of Shri Hukam Singh.

Now Something about my colleagues. Prof. M.L. Mathur's sweet smile will never be forgotten. He always gave an enchanting smile and then talk.

Prof. M. L. Mathur, Prof. Kanti Swarup (electrical), S. Divakaran, Pratap Mowli and I would cycle to Sojati Gate every Saturday evening, for a change, to see some people walking or going on a cycle or tonga leisurely. The dinner was off. In front of Bata Shoes Company, there was the famous Jagdish Hotel, where milk boiled in a big Kadhai with a thick layer of malai was served. M.L. Mathur, Kanti Swarup and I always ordered for one glass (it was a Punjabi glass of about 600 ml capacity) of milk. For cooling the hot milk, it was kept in two utensils and was dropped from one to the other from a height of about one yard. Divakaran and Mowli used to say that you take one yard of milk. They were content to have only 200 ml. milk. We also indulged in mawa ki kachori and mirchee bada. I did not have any diet inhibitions those days.

Shri V.S. Srinivasan (Mechanical) and Shri Theophilus (Electrical) required some operations. I took them to the M.G. Hospital. The doctor asked for the guardian who had to sign some declaration before the operation. Pointing towards me they said he was our guardian and I signed the papers. Srinivasan later on shifted to Malviya Regional Eng. College, Jaipur, became Principal and later Vice-chancellor at Jodhpur. He was the third Engineer Vice Chancellor in Jodhpur, the first being Prof. S.C. Goyal and the second Prof. M.L. Mathur.

Prof. K. Narsimhachary with his team comprising Prof. Damodar Sharma, Vijaikishen Vyas, P.C. Tak, Gurjar and Vaswani, imparted the best possible training in field survey work. The triangulation camp of 15 days duration was held in Mount Abu for the third year students and the plane table camp of about 10 days duration for second year students of Nathdwara. I also attended each camp for 4-5 days. The Vice- Chancellor also visited the camps at Mt. Abu. Spiritual discourses of Poojya Sri Swami Ishwaranandji Giri were also organised at Mt. Abu. The Swami Ji was a graduate engineer from Guindy Engg. College of Madras. His disciple Shri Som Giri ji was formerly a lecturer in mechanical engineering at Jodhpur. Damodar Sharma, our rover leader, always maintained a youthful appearance. He also had training in mountaineering and was a great source of inspiration to the students. I appreciate him for maintaining the survey camp activities after the retirement of Prof. K.N. Chary.

Prof. M.L. Ohri, highly religious, would have become a discipline of Shri Swamiji, but Swamiji asked him to get married and fulfil (grihastha) responsibilities. Prof. Brij Kishore Purohit's laughter is worth mentioning. When he laughed sitting in his ground floor office, the whole civil block, vibrated in resonance.

Divakran and I lived like brothers and still maintain the same relation. Prof. Jagdish Chandra, Addressed by students as J.C. Sir, was very meticulous in every work. All his personal library books had covers and were numbered. He had a good collection of latest fashion ties. I never purchased any tie, as he was ever ready to present me one whenever I needed. He remained single for long, but betrayed me and joined the married club. Prof. R.M. Advani was a kind hearted Professor. Prof. Goyal was ever kind and considerate to us. We enjoyed sweets at his residence during diwali ki rama-shama and holi ki rama-shama. Thus, in short, we all were like a well-knit family and I would never forget my stay at Jodhpur.

The College alumni were selected in State services, Central Engineering and administrative services. Many migrated to foreign countries and are making mark there. They have made the college worth remembering. I would expect the present students and the would be students to glorify the name of the college and wish that one day it may become the Indian Institute of Technology of Western India.

When I came to Jodhpur I was less than 25 years in age and now I am past 75 years. My stay at Jodhpur had been like a sweet dream which I shall always remember. I am full of gratitude to Principal V.G. Garde, who had been my teacher at Roorkee, for inducting me into teaching profession.

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