

646, Vastunirman, Gandhinagar - 382022.

28th February, 1995.

154  
8/3  
95

Dear Zafar bhai,

Since my meeting you and others at Coimbatore, I have been considerably disturbed. I have written a letter - a very personal one to Vijayan expressing some of my sentiments. Frankly, I do not really know how to put my feelings in a more objective manner. Birds have been a strongly motivating factor in my life and while I want to see something very meaningful emerging, I find that we seem not to rise above personalities. While everyone were glorifying the memory of "the Grand Old Man" at Coimbatore, a strong antipathy towards the BNHS came painfully through. There would have been no "Grand Old Man" had the Society not existed. Our friendship would not have been there without BNHS and a good many of those at the meeting at Coimbatore owe everything to the Society. Before we consider an Ornithological Society or an Ornithological Council, we must clearly define our personal attitudes and also accept that forming any other all India power center is detrimental to the cause of birds. We all must strengthen the BNHS - SACON axis. This would be logical and would yield maximum advantages. At the same time we keep our informal Newsletter going. Surely, yourself, myself, J.C. Daniel, Vijayan,

Prakash and others can pressurise the Society and operate as honest brokers between the Society — a members' organisation and SACON the scientific institution for birds — conceivably, we could have the Prater Centre for Mammalogy, and a Satapau or Bhatar Centre for Botany initiated through the Society.

I seem to be diverging from the OSI-OCI problem. This I am not because you are aware my great reservation in setting up new organisations. I see no reason why the Aligarh University cannot bring out a "PLOCEUS" or a "PETRONIA" like the MS University is the "PAVO". On the other hand, will SACON not be expected to produce a journal? Why should we not strengthen the BNHS journal which is growing slimmer and slimmer and more and more depressingly scientific. But are we all not the reason for this? Why can we not work towards the production of a magnificent journal like that of the Audubon Society?

My suggestion is very simple. Let the Scientists have an OSI-OCI or whatever with the HQ at SACON which has Government backing. Let the birdwatchers under the aegis of the Bird-Watchers' Field Club of India have a letter "s" inserted to read Bird-Watchers' Field Clubs<sup>s</sup> of India developing as a loose federation with our HQ at the Hembill House. We could have, for instance, ten clubs in Gujarat

and that, in fact, is what we have decided to do in Gujarat — I shall be a kingpin for no other reason than that I have institutional back up support of CEE. Similarly, Parasharia will have our fullest backing to get scientists (ornithologists) together at the Agricultural University Anand from where he will hopefully liaise with the Biosciences Departments of Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad, Baroda and Surat. Perhaps, the scientists will all agree to have "PAVO" as their common journal.

Talking of "PAVO" I would like to think back to when I received a letter from Hyderabad advising me of the formation of the bird club for Andhra and asking me for my advice. Ashwesh will remember my urging him to be very regional and to send publications to you for inclusion in an all India Newsletter. In a large country like ours this is the only sensible way to operate.

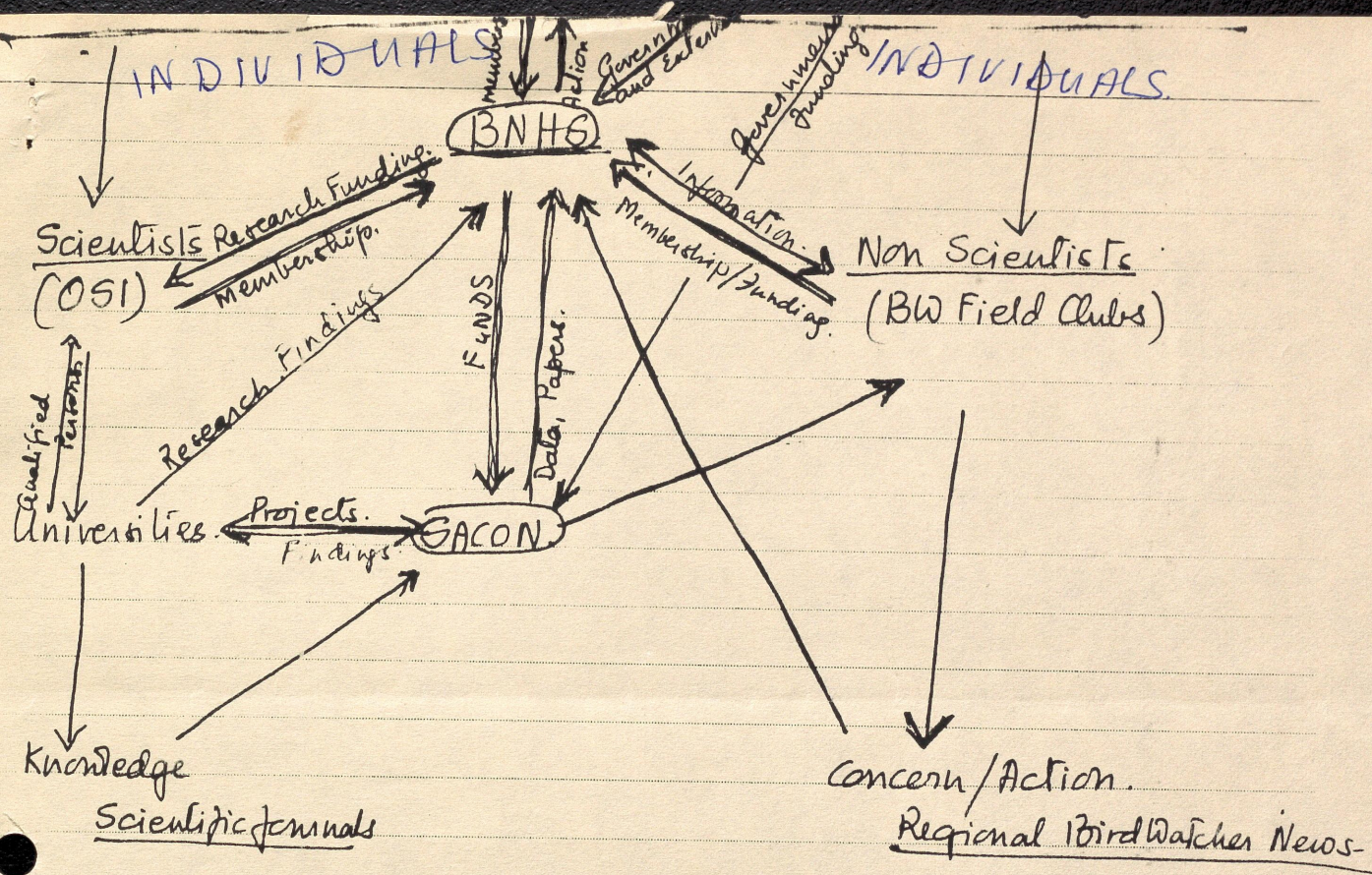
About Shimnagar, Gharwal being too remote, I cannot go along with that being a reason for forming a new organisation. Gharwal is as remote say to me as Bangalore or Coimbatore are. We should then centre our organisation in Delhi. It is the individual who matters, if we all cannot support Asha, or if she cannot compel everyone to support her, I wonder whether any other will and I am happy you have

firmly declined to resign as president of OSI. We just cannot have the few of us being buffeted around. While I may not be happy with things, I must keep the cause in focus. Daniel, Vijayan and Hussain know my views. They know, and you know how hard I tried to make sense out of the BNHS-WWF-1 dichotomy. India cannot afford too many all India organisations and yet, we can most certainly have thousands of little groups.

To summarise; let us not have an OCI. If Gharwal is too esoteric, let us bring the centre to Aligarh or Anand and the OSI should remain. Perhaps, OSI HQ should be at SACON. For me this is a non issue since I am going to advise friends in Gujarat to come together — the Scientists (ornithologists) forming a scientific group and operate through OSI with Parasarya heading the group and the non Scientists (birdwatchers) forming groups all over Gujarat and contacting myself — not as a boss — and through me, the Bird-Watchers Field Club. Every individual will be advised to join BNHS or WWF-1 or both.

Zafarbhai, I spent my 65th birthday in the Gulf of Kachchh in contemplation. I have come to the conclusion that we must come together as individuals, stop trying to become centres of power. I attach a rather crude diagram which hopefully will express my concept.

Yours Sincerely,  
Anuman.



BNHS should route all funding for research through SACON.  
BLI <sup>(ICBP)</sup> should pass all funds through BNHS.  
SACON should apportion grants for research to Universities.  
BNHS should crystallise concerns and influence society at large.

16, Vastunirman,  
 Pandhingar. 382022.

K. Arunima

Aashis,

Enclosures for your interest. Proof  
my letter to Kumar. Thanks.

Kallman

PS. You might like to reproduce this <sup>esp</sup> interchange  
between two aging birdmen. Might get the  
younger ones (yourself included) thinking.  
No affront if you do not consider it important/  
interesting enough). HK.

646, Vasturman, Gandhinagar - 382022.

Wednesday, 18th July, 2001.

Dear Kumar,

Thanks for your letter of 12th July just to hand. Where you surprised at the hullabaloo your comments about Salim Ali raised? Salim Ali was not my friend and if he told you that I was a friend, it is something I am indeed most flattered about. SA was an alter ego <sup>(as indeed HFA and several others were)</sup> and some one I started off with respect to end up with love. He could be acidic, but what deep love and concern he showed! Can there be anyone who wrote so well — invariably? He belonged to a generation where every moderately educated person was or could aspire to be an expert in any field. Humayun, Dharmakumar-sinhji, Maharaja Krishnakumar-sinhji, and a host of others were of that halcyon period. They were, in their own way pioneers and you and I have been fortunate in having lived close to them. Believe me, they had their vanities and it is these which made them human. What an ideal situation would have prevailed(!) had they worked in close harmony? Your comments regarding SA's Taxonomic credentials are well taken, but Kumar, can one deny the labour of love that went into the various bird books he wrote? In any case, you could have used your language skills so as to have stated facts without sounding as though you had a chip on your shoulder.

As I wrote in my response to the "hullabaloo" in PITA that you write well, and so, continue writing in your style. It does no harm, it can at best get people looking beyond icons, at worse you will receive abuses which, like Humayun, you should be prepared to absorb. Both SA

and HA would have achieved far, far more had they been more associated with younger people and not cared for being labelled. They were so very wonderful with children. It is amazing how many of the younger birders like Rishad Naoroji and Sanjoy Monga adore Humayun. Have you, for instance, ever realised your loss by not actively getting involved with young enthusiasts? What is, for instance, your contribution to the lives of some outstanding birders in Bangalore? Can you imagine how high you would fly if you spent time with the young idealists who are striving to safeguard the pelicanry of Kokla Belur?

Why should we advise Zafar? He has done an admirable job. At best we can write pieces for the NLB. He has achieved a lot and I should know since both he and I were unable to tell the sound of a squirrel from that of a bird to the vast amusement of his (then) school boy son!

Of course Humayun was unhappy with BNHS affairs. Who should not know better than I having spent hours telling him he was a fool to be concerned? He had done his bit, the younger lot should take on. And, yes, he liked me for my openness and there were moments when he turned to me for approval having kept quiet and not called some one an ass! I repeatedly told him that had he spent more time leading youngsters in the field writing pieces for ordinary people, he would have had the recognition which he deserved. Am I happy with the

Society? Does it really matter? It is easy to advise, finally those keeping the place going have to be left to their devices.

You are not writing for the journal! But should you write on condition? You write so well, so write. If you have to contradict what has been said earlier, certainly do so, but without pointing to the author as an imbecile.

Simply suggest that there possibly could be another explanation for laughing Thrushes in the Nilgiris. If individuals dislike what you say, it is their privilege. I certainly am not too impressed with the Satpura Hypothesis but then that is why I am eagerly awaiting for your oriental version of the submerged Atlantis (who knows it could shift the Golden Bazaar from legend to possible reality).

My advise is that "we senior Birders" should prepare to combat our gouts (spelling?), rheumatisms, heart burns and failing systems. The only thing you can "learn" from me is to be grateful for friendships, and to admire our younger generation even though, at times, they may prove to be bumptious asses. You might rally the young enthusiasts to plant Ficus mysorensis and F. benghalensis for the pelicans\* to nest on. I am organising the planting and care of a sacred grove of 5000 F. religiosa to celebrate the 5000th birthday of Lord Krishna.

Yours sincerely,

Arjunan

Dr. Kumar Ghopade,  
1861, Bethel Street,  
Kalyana Nagar,  
Bangalore 560043.

\* Who really cares whether they are a subspecies, a variety or a full species. Their ext.  
no.

inclusion is what matters.

Arashis,

Enclosures for your interest. Post  
my letter to Kumar. Thanks.

Kulman

PS. You might like to reproduce this <sup>ex</sup> interchange  
between two aging birdmen. Might get the  
younger ones (yourself included) thinking.  
No affront if you do not consider it important/  
interesting enough). HK.

1861 Bethel Street  
Kalyana Nagar  
Bangalore 560 043

12 July 2001

Mr Lavkumar Khacher  
646 Vastuniman  
Gandhi Nagar 382 022

Dear Lavkumar,

After your Post Card of 27-10-99, in response to my long letter of 9-10-99, we have not been in touch. The hullabaloo about my letter No. 43 in PIPTA of April this year about Salim Ali, using one of your own quotations, is unfortunate. I would appreciate receiving your comments on this misinterpreted statement about Salim Ali. I had spent a wonderful 6 days with him at his flat in Bandra (Bombay) discussing Ornithology. He told me that you were another close friend who had spent time with him in the flat. Abdul Ali's opinions about Birds & Bird Watchers, your confusion about scientists Vs Amateurs and my not writing in the JBNBS, etc, can only be sorted out and discussed in person. When can this happen? Sooner will be definitely better than later.

I am now very busy with ~~the~~ inaugurating my eco-tourism venture, one of which is as a Business Associate of M/s Jungle Lodges & Resorts, offering a ORNITHOLIDAY KARNATAKA package begining later this month. Also about the BNBS Committee and their current IBCN coloboration with Birdlife International? Humayun was very unhappy with BNBS executives and the way its now going. Zafar stands alone now and methins we senior Birders should advise him on its future course and persons responsible for its future.

Finally, is there any chance of you helping me with a few missing numbers of the NEWSLETTER which I need to complete my own Bibliography of it? I can send you the relevant issue numbers if you need them. Do keep in touch with me regularly on our birds, bird-men (women) as you are one other remaining senior who I would like to learn from.

Kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

*Kumar*  
Kumar

KG:sg

Lack of Taxonomic interest and expertise. Just before  
Humayun Abdul Ali ....

P.S.

Excuse the mistakes, new typist!

To:

Shri Rishad Navroji

c/o BTHS.

Hinglaj Braug, Jaskhilla, HP 175103.

5th June 2001.

Dear Rishad,

Thanks for being so considerate as to phone me about Humayun's demise. I have lost a personal friend.

This letter is being sent through the Society since I do not have your or Akbar's fax. May I request you to pass on the accompanying picture to Rafuben at Humayun's Pali Hill home?

J.C. Daniel will know how to get this across to you.

Next time you happen this way, unhesitatingly come and play at my place. You will love it.

Humayun's passing is the end of an era of great amateurs. It places a greater responsibility on those of us who knew the age when Natural History was part of a gentleman's way of life. Fortunately, the time of amateurs is not over with you, Ashish and other non-scientists around. So, do not fall out of a tree wide and crack your valuable skull.

Yours.

Lakshman