

2205 OAKWOOD APIS 560034

13-4-12

180412

Dear Rasheesh,

The article you sent about handwritten letters, said that when writing by hand you tend to create complete sentences in your head before laying pen to paper. This also gives one time to select the most appropriate words. In the case of tapping the keys of the computer, one proceeds word by word, and the phrases are less elegant. I enjoy writing by hand, and curiously my hand-writing is improving with age. If handwriting is a sign of character (as some say) my character is moving upwards.

I enjoy very much your handwritten notes of visits to the countryside. Do send them whenever available.

Lacey & I are now almost housebound. We are making a brave mental attempt to go to Kihim for good sometime after the rains. Murad & Imela are re-doing the house so that it is useable in the monsoon. It would be idyllic to sit under the swaying casuarinas and look at the changing scene on the ocean beyond. The pleasure added by the "laugh" of the W.B. Kingfisher and the sneezing of Grey Hornbills. We shouldn't count on this until we are there. I am too weak at the moment.

The PUTTENA HALL project is trailing behind the others. Not many of my friends responded. Let us wait for the Jury's decision on 20/4. I have just finished reading ZAREER MASANIS "AND ALL IS SAID" — Memoir of a Home Divided" knowing the family made it particularly fascinating.

The other book which I enjoyed at a different level was the ANTHOLOGY of ESSAYS & PROFILES by Khushwant Singh. His uninhibitedness about everything makes the dullest subject interesting. Life has been dull as you can imagine with no riding and no birding. Reading remains the only recreation. A friend PS APPU, who stayed nearby, and with whom I had pleasant chats died last week of cancer. Appu was the former Chief Secretary of BIHAR and spoke nostalgically of the days (1960-80) when there was no corruption, & when civil servants often dominated the politicians. He himself resigned when Indira Gandhi refused to follow his advice about dismissing a "BOONDA" IAS PROBATIONER.

I have good news from the HIGH COURT today. As you may know I had been supporting (through my articles) the policy of Public/Private partnerships for restoring our LAKES. Birders including Dr S Subramanya and the ESG (Environment Services Group) were insisting that public lands should be entirely handled by Government Authorities & the self-seeking Corporates should have nothing to do with their management. Well yesterday the Court pointedly said that the OBEROIS who have taken over HEBBAL LAKE have done a good job & have not caused any ecological damage.

One bit of chur.

Well, I enjoyed writing this. I hope it will not be the reverse with you.

Yours, always

Zafar

Aasheesh Pittie

O/e

B-4 Trendset Vantage, Road No. 14, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

19 April 2012

Dear Sir,

Your wonderful letter of 13K instant was passed around the family. All of us enjoyed reading it. We love your handwriting.

I'm terribly busy these days. We are shifting our office from the old bungalow, "Prem Parvat," and all my time is spent in getting various stuff organised. Sadly, the old house will have to come down, and in its place, a gated community of villas is planned. We've teamed up with someone for this project. We've found a new place for our office, and have bought it today. So the die is cast. It is pretty close to our apartments. We plan to design it in such a way, my younger brother, and I, that our passions are incorporated into its design. He is a passionate photographer, and has always wanted a studio, and I am a bibliophile, ergo a library.

After we moved residence from the old house, to these apartments, sprawling spaces that we'd got used to, suddenly shrunk. But the books did not stop getting accumulating. Now, I will have a proper library, and my books, a sensible shelf space. I do not say, "finally," for a library, as there cannot be a limit to books. It will be a day of heartbreak if I have to wear some books for the lack of shelf space. Indeed I must count my blessings for having been able to buy and hold so many

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fabulous books.

JB 7.6, the final number for last year, was sent off to the page-maker today. We should be able to freeze it by next week. There are some exciting items in it. Fresh manuscripts pour in every other day, and authors clamour like painted plovers' chicks in a herony, for news of when their MS will be printed. I feel like a single parent trying to feed a nestful of beaks. I wish I was a babbler, and had the ready help of aunts in attending this brood!

Hyderabad has become inordinately warm this week. Today must have been a blistering 40 outdoors. I had our roof, the floor of our roof, painted white, to reflect the sun's rays. The results are dramatic. Our indoor temperatures have fallen by a good 3-4°C!

Sahel's venture, "citizensparrow.in" is quite a hit with people. They have contributed data to the website, in the thousands. We went birding one evening, a few days ago, and found a thriving colony of 50+ sparrows, just one km off the Bombay HW, within a busy locality! That evening we also witnessed the miracle of the pre-migratory roosting of wagtails and weavers, in a small marsh, fringed with cattails. The birds fanned above us in their thousands (5000+), and were sucked into the typha like smoke. It was surreal, but also exhilarating — for the moment revealed the magic around our mundane lives. All it takes to partake are eyes, ears and limbs — besides the urge to witness earth's wildness.

With love and wishes for good health to Mrs Fatehally, and yourself, I remain your
GK

876

Aasheesh Pittie

B-4 Trendset Vantage, Road No. 14, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

Shri Zafar Fatehally-

29 April 2012
Hyderabad.

Dear Sir,

I've just finished reading a simple and fascinating book on the second dimension of birdwatching — the acquired skill of birdlistening. The first dimension being, that involving the visual senses. The book seems simple, to one who's been a bird-listener all his birding life, but it's fascinating when Simon Barnes inserts bits of ruminations on the art; his angle of the entire process, e.g. "the starling sings the place it belongs to." Did you know the Mozart actually bought a starling that whistled one of his then uncompleted pieces? Mozart himself was an inveterate public whistler, and the talented sturaid had either heard, and imbibed his whistling in its repertoire, or had that of a pupil. Three years later, when the bird died, M held a funeral for it. Another composer, Messiaen, wrote three hours of bird music called Catalogue D'Ornithology! Despite the eulogising of European birds in English literature, and the yawning lack of a similar reflection in the works of multilingual India, we birders have the best of both worlds — the visual and the aural, and frankly more — a heightened sense of awareness of our surroundings and the life-forms that populate them.

Over the years, birdlistening, what an evocative, lush, word! has become second nature, akin to inspiration & expiration — literally life-giving. This I am certain of; an ear tuned to the bird has enriched my life manifold. There is no point in comparing this with the uninitiated, the unaroused, the unfortunate, too busy to spend time, to slow down, to enjoy simple pleasures. For is not

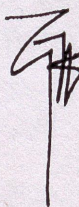
happiness the shrill shikra flapping from one treetop to another over the traffic-swarmed junction, audible to me? and I leaning out, spot it lift up at the last moment inside the leafy canopy to its pre-selected perch?! Or another shikra, perched bolt upright high up near the trunk of an ~~tree~~ avenue tree, as I'm driven to work? The simple, mango-season bell of the koel, the showered sunlight thrill of displayed orioles, the untiring percussionist coppersmith, the cherry notes of a purple sunbird, the heart-stopping timbre of a shambhegi's onomatopoeia, the school children shrieking house swifts balking in evening skies, the whispered fluty arias of the Tickell's flycatcher, the piercing frisky whistles of the dhoban, the creaky wheel call of the darzi, and the rain-drenched, wretched entreaty of the plaintive cuckoo. Yet urbanites complain the paucity of wilderness, while I do not even step out the door!

At the end of a book, or nearing the end of a book, I am gripped by the strange joy of soon having to pull down a new book, to begin a new journey. This time I zeroed in on Orwell's 1984, and Max Hastings' Winston's War. The latter one, as the subject always did, but Orwell looms large on my horizon, if for nothing else, the shameful fact that I've not yet read it.

I trust that both of you are well and strong, and that plans for Kihim are fructifying.

With love and regards,

Yours sincerely,



Aasheesh Pittie

B-4 Trendset Vantage, Road No. 14, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

17 June 2012
Hyderabad

Shri Zafar Futehally
Bangalore.

Dear Sir,

Today the BSAP had a field trip to the area known as KBR Park — Kasu Brahmanand Reddy Park. This is a 300 acre estate, between Banjara Hills and Jubilee Hills, which housed the summer palace of the erstwhile Nizam. A part of property, formerly known as "Chiran Fort" or "Palace," upon which the buildings stand, a mosque, and sundry outhouses, garages, and a private petrol station (hand-pumped fuel!) still belong to the royal family. The remaining was unceremoniously seized by the government in lieu of his snow-balling tax & outstandings. Needless to say, it is prime property, and the minions of the govt., carved out a corner for the state, which was auctioned several years ago at an astronomical bid — but is yet to be developed, as the ^{successful} bidders included Ramalinga Raju of the notorious Satyam Computers.

The remaining area is typical Deccan scrub, or was, till the FD stepped in \$ to improve the area. It is now a walker's "paradise," and is inundated by perambulating citizenry. There is also a "laughing club," who produce the most despicable curred laughter, no, cackle, I've ever heard.

Thirty-two bidders comprised our group. The majority were new-comers, some with BSAP for six-odd months, and

three or four old-timers — in that who knew birds. The outing was typical, as was the pitiable refrain about ^{the boredom of} seeing the same birds everywhere, everytime!

This is the unfortunate symptom of the remote control, the TV set, and the restless frustration that grips people and compels them to channel surf. Victims of this malady, I see them all the time, everywhere, are unwittingly compelled to treat life, and so leisure, as an activity that can be changed at the press of a button. No one has the time to stand and stare. They see the yellow and black blob in a grey-green tree, hear noise, and a name, and walk on, impatient in their eagerness for novelty, for a change of scene, for another name, another tick on their pads.

They miss the uplifted beak, the swelling throat, the ruffled crown, the synchronously vibrating tail as the male pours its fervour into its song. Light glimmers off its fresh jet. The deep caraway throat, breast and cheeks contrast beautifully. It hops around the neem, jet beaked from last night's rain, and light green contrasting foliage. Wandering the labyrinthine canopy, the vora knows only its song.

When will these people realise that life revolves around that song in a million hues, not ever aware of the existence of these hurried, remote-control automatons, stumbling over their painfully enthusiastic cries for novelty — and the only way to partake that elusive novelty is to stand still, remain silent, and absorb the pageant that surrounds them, not by impatience, not by belligerent demands, not by loud expostulations, but by the simplest of means. By merging into the surrounds, by becoming invisible, yet absorbent like a sponge. Despite trying to balance the crowd, I had several such moments of deep joy, and came away energised. Lots of love १०२१११११

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

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21-6-12

Dear Ashlesh,

First of all, I hope you don't have a
COPYRIGHT to your letter-head, as I have copied
it.

Thank you for your letter of the 17th. "Merging
into the SURROUNDS by becoming invisible" is
splendid advice. A PHD if achieved.

We have been victims of a SCAM. A month
ago I received an E mail from London, about
a Conferance on Water Resources, to be attended
by 2500 experts round the world. The
Application Form for this meet on 20 July
requested that an 300 word ABSTRACT of
the paper to be presented should be sent
immediately, and if accepted by the
Conferance Committee, the author would
be officially invited, all expenses paid

We discussed this in our BANGALORE
ENVIRONMENT TRUST meeting, and one of the

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Trustees, BALASUBRAMANIAN, former Additional
Chief Secretary decided to go. His 800 word paper
relating to Bangalore's Water Woes was immediately
accepted, and he was asked to remit some
Rs 50,000 for his hotel reservation which would
be reimbursed on arrival. The money was
sent and the rest is History. It was a
'beautifully' organised SCAM. Credit A/c EXPERIENCE!

Both of us are reasonably well, but going
out of the flat has its dangers. I have
become extremely WOBBLY on my feet.

M KRISHNAN'S latest book, BIRDS and
BIRD SONG is being launched on the 27th.

I have written a short introduction

struggling with my BIOGRAPHY. I wonder
if the effort is worthwhile or justified, but
CHANDRAS very insistent. Am also going
through Rishi Valley Home Course on BIRDS

Waiting for your Vol 7 no 6. Trust
all well at home & elsewhere

Best of health to you

Zafar

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

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260712

My dear Rasheesh

Here is some hand writing practice
There have been a spate of tributes to
Joseph George. One was rather comic —
One birdie wrote he had never met Joseph
George but judging from the contributions
of others, he feels that he^{*} had several qualities
such as humility which should be emulated!

I am glad that you encourage me to write
about myself. I am having the first serious
meeting with Editor & Publisher Shanthi Chauda
today. I go along with the thought of the
Persian proverb — "whatever is, is in the
effort, there is nothing in the achievement"

Reverting to Joseph George, how lucky
for him to have fallen, become unconscious
and go to sleep for ever. No pain in the
inter-regnum. Lateeq & I have become
very anxious about our future — a useless

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and stupid state of mind, but unavoidable

Just finished reading The Last Rhinos by ANTHONY LAWRENCE, & TIPPO SULTAN by MEADOWS TAYLOR. Hoping to read KRISHNANS Eye in the Jungle from today. I have become a very very slow reader. An advantage as a book lasts for ever. Are you giving The RAVI SANKARAN Memorial Lecture? I hope the venue is an easily accessible place from Koramangala. I would certainly like to be present, and hope my heart will not let me down. What do you think about WRONG ABOUT EXCRETA. I am relieved that RAM GUHA thought it was "CRISP and to the point"

I have no opinion about N.O.F. entering ~~the~~ the publishing field, as I have no knowledge about the problems involved. But you are very EXTENDED already - ~~What~~^{are} you not.?

At least there was some rain in Bangalore yesterday, and we hope the drought will now end

Love to the family

Zafar

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

140812

2205, Oak Wood Apartments, Koramangala IIIrd Block, 8th main, Bangalore 560 034

9-8-12

Dear Rasheesh

Here is a bit of handwriting practice before the "art" vanishes completely, overtaken by E mail. Yes I was very glad to have seen you briefly at the meeting. Thank you for finding us a seat. I, of course could not understand a word of what was going on. I came mainly to meet some old friends which I was fortunately able to do - you, the Chandolas, Rishad, and a few more. I am still puzzled about No 6 of Vol 7. Was it sent to me or is it yet to be published?

I have been reading Shashi Tharoor's PAX INDICA. It is too long, rather repetitive and tedious. Very different from his fascinating columns in the newspapers. Lt. Gen B.C. Nanda is here for a few days. He has a flat opposite us in OAKWOOD. He is as deaf as I am so conversation is scanty, and the wrong answers given to the right questions. I now begin to think that I became deaf rather early in life and that is why I am so ill-informed in comparison to the average man. Also I am lacking in curiosity, a necessity if

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you wish to acknowledge acquire knowledge
Apart from PAX INDICA I keep glancing into
Krishna's "Eye in The Jungle" and Birds & Bird-
song. Every page is a delight, even such
extraordinary expressions like "an ebulliance of
elephants" When are you going to produce
an account of what you have seen of our
world - birds and all. Are you thrilled by the
news of water on MARS? It leaves me cold.
Life is difficult with Lareeq being totally helpless
We are lucky to have servants in India - and at
such affordable rates (owing unfortunately to the
CHARIBI prevailing)

Incidentally the SCAM money relating to the
WATER RESOURCES Conference in London has been
recovered. Our CYBER police apparently performed
very creditably.

I still keep wondering about NAVEEN OC and
his stealing Rs 29,000/- inspite of being so
"proper" during a fairly long period of my
dealings with him. Very strange

Trust all well at home

Zafar

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

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27-8-12
040912

Dear Rasheesh

I am unable to connect with your computer. What has happened. Normally I type AASH... and the computer takes over. But soon after there is a reply from the postmaster that the message cannot be delivered.

I only wanted to tell you that my grandson SAMIR has just finished his course on CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP in Cambridge, and has landed a good job in BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL. He has to deal with BIG BUSINESS & ECOLOGY, a very useful occupation I think. Incidentally are you going to Japan for the IOC meeting?

Regards
Zafar

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18/10/12

My dear Rasheesh

11-10-12

I must keep up my handwriting practice so you will receive such efforts from time to time. While writing such I am finding that I now forget the spelling, and often the meaning of the most ordinary words. Old age has set in. I must tell you that we have now decided to shift to Kihim permanently. All these years we could go to Kihim only in dry weather - usually in November / December and more frequently April / May. The house and the "ghowli shopras" could not stand the furious monsoon. But the house has now been strengthened and marginally extended, and for Laeeq, ramps instead of steps have been made, so she can proceed on her wheel chair. Hope it will all work out as planned. Murad and Imela are very welcoming and filial, which makes the prospect pleasant. I plan to spend my time there watching ordinary birds ^{intently}, something I should have done all these years. This morning I

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Saw an account by our redoubtable Dr S
Subramania, on BVE Birds, about what he saw on
YELAHENKA lake. I was glad that I could recognise
all of them mentally. And I am so ignorant about
trees and shrubs. Will try to find a Forester in Kihim
who can educate me. I continue to hope that you will
drop in there one day. My son in law (Tavid, Shamas
husband) has written a very readable and informative
book: An INSIDERS VIEW. B.E. Verghese refers to it as
"Splendid, honest and courageous". I liked it very
much. It provides a very clear view of the lives —
the good & the bad of members of our STEEL FRAME
I forgot to mention that we plan to move to Kihim
in January, if the house has been completely done
by then. I see that there is a big BIODIVERSITY
MEETING going on in HYDERABAD. Perhaps you will
participate? Samir will be attending. Have you
heard of KUNIBAL Stud Farm? Created by
TIPU SULTAN & HYDER ALI. Perhaps the first stud farm
in the world. My distant cousin ZAIN MIRZA is the
Manager. I am taking along Ashish and Shanthi
Chandole on Monday for an overnight stay there
I am sure they will take some stunning pictures
of thoroughbreds on the run

Love to the family

Zafar

7c

Aasheesh Pittie

B-4 Trendset Vantage, Road No. 14, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

24 October 2012
Hyderabad

Shri Zafar Futehally
Bangalore

Dear Sir,

As always, your letters patina the day for me. Love the idea of writing for handwriting practise, and for jogging the mind to spell correctly - no spell-check here, unless one visits a dictionary, which is an added pleasure.

I am also happy that you and Mrs Futehally will relocate to Kihim. Over the years I've felt the enormous fondness you have for the place and am sure living there will further enhance the sense of place you have for that village, and the family memories it holds. I look forward to visiting you there.

As Indian BIRDS gets delayed, due to inattention on my part, the strident calls of contributors get shriller by the day. I try to assume a quiet stoicism, but the guilt of sitting upon so many papers, and people's dreams to see their work in print does mildly torment me. To how many should I explain; the shifting of the office, the illness of my son, diagnosed with IBD after 50 days of daily fevers spiking to 104 daily? I don't. I just reply that the manuscript is with referees, and we are running late. That we are not a professional lot: but I do try and bring out a professional-looking journal.

At now the boy has been diagnosed and taken off those useless broad-spectrum antibiotics, and prescribed proper drugs, and is better.

The grand opera of the CBD & COP11 meetings in Hyd is over. I was really impressed with the arrangements and the "international standards" achieved. Met a large number of friends from across India. BNHS & SACON were present. The former in full strength, with several side-events to showcase their projects, the latter, just present. SACON however put up impressive posters on the history of Indian ornithology. Presidents of both, BNHS, & WWF-I were present. Sumaira Abdulali was there for a couple of days. Dr Vijayan was there with his luxuriant beard flowing down to his belt, in sparkling white lungi and shirt, now a benign organic farmer.

I took the opportunity to distribute old issues of Indian BIRDS, and must have given away 200-300 copies. They were so attractive on the tables that people just snatched them up within an hour or two! Used the good offices of the BNHS & SACON to display them on their stands.

You will be happy to learn that I've begun serious work on IB8.1. Would like to send off copies by mid-November. This is A.O. Hume's centenary year & the Nat. Hist. Museum, London had a seminar on 23 instnat. The latest issue of Birding ASIA, the popular journal of the Oriental Bird Club, carries a fascinating biography of that titan. I'm planning to publish an ephemera or two on Hume in Indian BIRDS too.

Wish you good health, and Mrs Fatehally too. Take care of yourselves.

With love & regards,



5-11-12

My dear Rasheesh

What a pleasure it is to write by hand. And such a learning experience for me. I am forgetting the spelling of the commonest words and have to rely on my OXFORD Pocket Dictionary. I am preparing myself

to enjoy the ~~common~~ local birds of Kihim. Those which can be seen sitting in the veranda (what an interesting derivation from the Persian, "BAR AMADA", come upstairs)

I try and read up everything available on 4 to 5 species per day. It is not Salim Ali who is always the most perceptive. As an example, when reading about the

4 DOVES likely to be seen in Kihim, Spotted, Collared, Little Brown (non name stupidly changed to LAUGHING) and red turtle dove, I find MARTIN WOODCOCKS illustrations and descriptions exceptionally easy and illuminating

His book is also so conveniently bound and easy to handle. I see that the book is dedicated to Roger Holmes. I think RH sent a note or two to the NLBW.

Peter Jackson told me that Holmes was too fond of SPEED and endangered his life unnecessarily. Sure enough he died by crashing head on ^{with an oncoming car} while

negotiating a curve in Geneva. I think speeding (though supposedly the only new sensation for humans) is a stupid indulgence. I remember reading that

the
the wives of RACING tribe are all nervous wrecks.
I hope your son has recovered & that you are
comfortably settled in TRENDSET. Was your house
named PREM PARVAT? You must be missing it sorely
though FLATS are more convenient to handle, specially as
one gets older. I congratulated Sirkel Qader on his
MIGRANT WATCH, and invited him and his wife to lunch.
He wrote back to enquire whether he could bring his two
daughters along. The presence of children - unless they
are angels, is a disrupting intrusion. During the past
few months I have read a few good books,
Kuldip Nayar, Vinod Mehta, Javid Chowdhury, LC Jain
and a few others. But when I sit down to think
what I have RETAINED in my mind is very very
little. I think I should write down the essence
of the book after finishing it. Writing this should
help in preventing the loss. My book is advancing
slowly but steadily, so the Editor says. I am
still being pessimistic about it being worthwhile
After many days I was able to walk for about
1/2 hour. I have always enjoyed walking and
I hope there will be no break again. Thank
you for being with me today - for this past
1/2 hour.

My love to the Family

Zafar

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

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231112

18-11-12

My dear Aasheesh

Very glad that you have found a suitable Editorial Assistant. Strange that in a country of millions it is so difficult to locate someone who will be the sort of person you need. Someday when you are in the mood I would like to know how you time your day. When do you get up, and how do you allocate your time between pleasure, work & family. I wrote an article recently about us being WRONG ABOUT EXCRETA. There have been plenty of articles recently about the horrible caste system of BHANGIS we have created, and the toothless laws we have created to end it. Of course I agree about our SINS (as Gandhiji said) in having created this system of having only one caste of people handling this "DIRTY" and the rest of humanity keeping their hands clean. My point was that there is nothing dirty about excreta. After all it is matter which has been inside our bodies for a day or two. It becomes "DIRTY" only when it emerges. Why? Only because the rest of us, for our convenience

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have given it this meaning. If there had been no special caste created for this task and if members of each household dealt with this substance in the manner most appropriate for its circumstances all would be well. After all before the toilet flushing system was created this is the way the problem was solved. Dr MS Swaminathan in one of his articles mentioned that in China public toilets were auctioned and farmers who rightly considered human waste as a precious nitrogen fertilizer were glad to buy it for use on their land. I sent the article to a few friends for comment. RAM GOHA sent it to the HINDU on my behalf but it was refused immediately. George Verghese replied angrily "I do not agree

I was surprised to see Sumaira Abdulali as Hon Sec. of the BNHS. She is my brother's daughter Rabi's daughter. A very tough girl, beaten up and car smashed when she confronted the SAND MAFIA in Kihim. Have been reading Y D GUNDEVIAS (ICS) book on "OUTSIDE THE ARCHIVES". As the title suggests our penchant for keeping everything under WRAPS shows that we are suspicious characters. My "studies" on birds likely to be found in Kihim gives me much pleasure. So does the making of scrambled eggs for my morning breakfast.

My love to The Family

Zafar

Sri Zafar Futehally
Bangalore

8 December 2012.

Dear Sir,

I have before me yours of 5th & 18th November. Apologies for this late response. We went away for a week to Goa, about which, anon.

You write about verandah birding, and it thrills me, that word, now that I know its etymology. Sadly most verandahs in modern buildings are mere apertures to allow ventilation & light, fooling urbanites with that word. Either they are so high in high-rise apartments that no one can lean over the railing and invite a chance visitor to "come upstairs," or they are creased in grill, which denies such old-worldly invitations. The old bungalows of your younger days would have had deep verandahs, which served a veritable living rooms during day.

Woodcock's is indeed a game-changing book — a little gem that is overshadowed by heavier tomes. Disturb them to look deeper, and it gleams from beneath the pile. Its illustrations are captivating and endearing. The Holmes you refer to, as having written in NLBW, was D. A. Holmes, who wrote on *Sind birds* in 1964 & 65.

I love that fact that you continue your reading. Books are undoubtedly the greatest joy in my life. They are inanimate, yet animate me with what they have to say; and they only do so if I want them ~~to~~ to. Otherwise they are content to stand on my shelves. And if I revisit an old favourite it's words do not change, but I might interpret them differently. As they say,

you never step into the same river twice. I've read some fascinating books this year, and re-visited them two days ago & when I made a list of about 30 titles read in 2012. I too do not retain their contents, perhaps because I do not study them, but read for pleasure. But while reading, I'm completely immersed in their waters. The latest is one on otters — Otter Country — and it is a lyrical book on the state of that lutrine in the U.K.

Our annual sojourn in Goa was a week of sea-bathing, reading on the beach, and off it, relaxing doing nothing, and eating. I read two amazing books. One on Achilles, by Madeline Miller, and the other by Ondaatje — The Cat's Table. I know you don't much care for fiction, but you could recommend these to someone who does.

There were moments of pure joy, in the sighting of birds, watching their behaviour. I derived deep solace from the interplay of light on my surroundings: the backlit fuzz of grass heads shining an iridescent gold; the astonishingly breath-taking palette along the shoreline at dusk — the blues, purples, lilacs, reds, ochre, orange, amber, and the ^{endlessly} tumbling kaleidoscope ^{of colour}; the wave-tugging full moon, puffed and butter yellow with the strain of pulling away from the horizon, veering the slim fingered palm fronds with a lameness of such skillful simplicity that one is left bereft of a sense of self, for that natural beauty. It was a wonderful holiday.

With lots of love to you, and Mrs Futebally,

Trinity

Aasheesh Pittie

2nd Flr, 'BBR Forum,' Road No. 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

Shri Zafar Futehally
Bangalore

9 December 2012.

P.S. This letter might bore you to death. I won't hold it against you if you skim it and shred it.

Dear Sir,

To answer your question about how I manage time. The only law one need understand is that one never has time for anything. One has to make time. So I divided the days of the week in such a way, that I devote a day, or two, to the broad subjects that consume my time: Work, family business matters, Indian Birds, BSAP, and other items. I have seven drawers for each day, which hold papers on the subject that is to be tackled on that day. Of course, if a subject does not require the entire day, as happens often, then birding work fills the vacuum — being the most 'natural' of the subjects. Similarly if something requires immediate attention, fire-fighting, then that takes precedence over all else.

Any paper that does not require immediate attention is placed in the appropriate drawer, and taken up only on the relevant day. Sometimes it is postponed to by a week or two. Paper has that terrible habit of accumulating if not dealt with immediately. Despite a daily battle, I have to periodically spring clean.

I try and be fastidious about filing. I keep an accordion file with 31 pleated envelopes for the days of the month, into which date-centric paper goes — invitations, programme tickets, air tickets, meeting appointments, To Do items, etc. I just have to glance at the day's tab & contents and complete the task. Office files are colour-coded for easy recognition & access: mine might be green, the wife's pink, the daughter's orange, and the boy's blue. Each colour has serial numbers & keyword-type names — list on the letter and pasted outside the filing cabinet.

All books are entered in a database. All reprints of ornithological papers are serially numbered & entered in a database. The physical papers stored serially in plastic boxes. To retrieve one, I check the database, see the serial number, and pull out the paper from the box.

It all seems well organised, but it is constantly under pressure due to my own lapses — of memory, of mislaid paper, above all, by bouts of despicable procrastination.

I always carry a book with me wherever I go, in the car, to a dentist, everywhere — and read at every opportunity. I write ... that's another boring facet.

Sometimes, when I take up one work, like an issue of EB, or when I was doing the book, I forget all else but that issue — which is really bad planning at work. But that is how I am. Thank you for giving me this oppor., to go over my systems and refresh them in my mind. And yes, I walk for an hour from 0700-0800 almost daily.

Love & regards,

John