

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Leave it to SP

By Gautam Chatterjee

I was at a traffic checkpoint that I met Mr S. Pani, talked about so much as a 'friend in need'. I was riding my mobike but forgot to carry all the papers of the vehicle. Though I had the I-Card, licence and tax receipt, the cop manning the post said it was not enough. Just when I decided to go back 30 km to my house to get the registration book, Mr. Pani came to my rescue and smoothened the matter. The little hole it made in my pocket is not worth mentioning.

A friend of mine who could not make the acquaintance of Mr Pani in time had the mortification of seeing her grandma pass away. The family doctor couldn't be contacted to save the ailing lady as the telephones in the neighbourhood were 'dead'. But strangely enough, the telephones of 'property dealers', who had taken the trouble of cultivating Mr S. Pani were all working.

Recently my neighbour met Mr Pani at the sub-station when his light wires were burnt out. His requests to the night staff to rectify the fault produced a response only when Mr. Pani intervened. On my enquiry my neighbour said 'It was all over with the grace of Mr SEWA PANI'.

Actually, he had met Mr Pani years ago when he was dating his sweetheart at a park. Some uniformed men came and interrogated their purpose and reminded them of SITA! My friends could convince them only through Sewa Pani. Those young hearts are married to day but they never venture anymore on park outings as sindur and mangalsutras are not enough to save them.

My cousin, who was allotted a flat after he paid up the dues and is still awaiting possession, realised the clout of Sewa Pani when he found that 'dealers' had already opened up their well-furnished offices in the same DDA pocket. People say with Sewa Pani even dead men can get possession of their flats!

Realising the say of Mr Sewa Pani in our society, I approached him for an 'exclusive' interview which was granted during the 'Ramayana' telecast time, because his 'secularism' made him indifferent to the 'serial'. It went like this.

Q: Mr Sewa Pani, you are now a national figure and you are looked upon as a last resort. Will you explain your rise?

SP: Well! I had a very humble beginning. In my childhood days, I was known as 'Kharcha-Pani' amongst the Babus. In my youth I was christened as 'Chai-pani' and 'Bakshish'. Since the last decade I came to be known as 'Sewa Pani', but recently I was baptised as 'Kick-back'.

So I have reached international status now.

Q: Will you elaborate on the secret of your success?

SP: This is no miracle, only I exploit the urge of human beings. Well, people are ambitious to become rich. And, that you know, isn't everybody's cup of tea! Many aspirants look upto my techniques which are today the top-notch of our society. Then people approach me for my blessings and I nurture their inner cravings!

Q: Who were the first lot in your academy?

SP: Those who got false certificates from the authorities after Independence to prove that in pre-47 days they were jailed for participating in the freedom struggle!

Q: Lastly, will you explain your philosophy?

SP: I tell my students — whosoever takes the 'kick-back' is not a sinner because even he cannot get the work done for himself without doing Sewa Pani! Thus to survive one has to follow Darwin's 'survival of the fittest' dictum.

As the reach of the government expands to touch practically every aspect of the citizen's life, so, will the domain of Mr Sewa Pani widen. Get to know him if you are outside his circle and the hassles of living will ease a lot.