

## Epilogue

It's not a stretch to say India engulfed me. Every Peace Corps Volunteer enters a unique situation, the details of which set the stage for an outcome. Mine favorably exceeded by far any preconceived expectations. Foremost with my situation, I think, was that I lived at the fish farm with my cook Habbu, the watchman Baboot Singh, and other workers. Consequently, I was constantly immersed in Hindi conversation. My worksite was in a beautiful area, and the farm provided me with the resources to engage in serious fish culture, continuing the efforts begun by the volunteer stationed there before me. The support and friendship I received from my co-worker, K.N. Shrivastava, contributed immensely to my efforts and day-to-day disposition. And from the start I found India, despite its profound problems, fascinating. I suppose this began in Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Training.

Nearly five decades have passed since my time in India and, of course, much has changed. Using Google Earth, I have seen substantial development in and around what was my hometown. The road that Bhagora Fish Farm is on has been transformed from a one-lane primitive road to a two-lane national highway. The Barai River now has a little dam that facilitates more water for the pump that I installed to supply the farm, and the pond layout has changed. Most significantly, the Sindh River, downstream from where Habbu, Subdal, Man Singh and I fished, has been dammed to create a large reservoir for agricultural irrigation and power generation. Nationwide changes have included, unfortunately, increased tragic incidents of religious and caste conflict and violence, dangerous conflicts with Pakistan and China, the rise of Hindu Nationalism with its challenge to the secular foundation of India's nationhood, and the growth of corruption throughout society. Industrial and agricultural water and air pollution are out of control, and the introduction of plastic packaging is such that many cows die from ingesting it.

I've always wanted to return to search for some of the India that was so dear to me and to find some of my friends still alive and well. I corresponded with Mr.

Shrivastava for many years. I consider him one of the best friends I've ever had, but unfortunately, a gap in correspondence and his posting higher in the fisheries department at other locations caused us to lose track of each other. Finally, in 2015, out of the blue, his grandson, Prateek, found me on LinkedIn, and I learned my good friend had passed away. But through a series of events— Prateek getting his masters in computer science at Arizona State, and his mom Ragni, and dad Pappu, visiting him in the U.S. in 2019—we had a warm reunion at my daughter Sarah's home in New Jersey. Of the Shrivastava children, Pappu, a high school student when I was in India, was the closest to me. He had often added some to Mr. Shrivastava's letters to me.

I always regretted not being able to check up on my faithful cook and servant Habbu and find out some way to contribute to his wellbeing from afar. I did discover he had relocated to Rajasthan. He sent me a letter six months after I left India. Here it is for you to see. He had an English speaker translate and pen it, paid seven rupees for air mail, and enclosed a bidi in the envelope, which I thought very touching. I was surprised that he had enquired of the police in Shivpuri about my stolen radio. I guess he thought it was still his duty to follow through. I was glad to send him all the items he asked for in the letter but wished I could find some way to safely send him some money. I never found out if he received the stuff I sent.

Mr. Habib Khan.  
From: Habib Khan.  
Village - SHAHABAD, Hostel Shahabad  
Dist - Kota Rajasthan 10-6-74  
Respected Sir, India. 19-6-74  
Nisha LAUREN C. Watson  
BORAN PATSON, SAHAB.  
Remember Sir.

We are well here and hope that you & your family will be quite well there. You had promised me that you will send photos of my family, and will post me letter but since that time I am waiting for your letter & photos. The Police of Shiv Puri has not found out your stolen Radio.

Now you are requested that you send me the following things earliest,

Pappu remember you very much.

1. Photos of my family.
2. Strong Thread for fish hunting about 1000 Feet. & Hooks.

Books are with me as Mr Pishor P. O. did not come to me.

Now a days I am working to prepare DARI here.

Tell my remembrance to your father mother, sisters & brothers.

Please reply urgent

Yours faithfully,

Mr. HABIB Khan.