



The ceasefire brought in a row of opinions and criticism from factions across the country. Experts like Brahma Chellaney condemned India's move to accept a ceasefire with Pakistan, describing it as a rehash of previous strategic missteps. He maintained that despite holding a dominant military position, India relinquished its tactical leverage without guaranteeing long-term gains. Opposition parties were also concerned by the remarks of U.S. President Trump to mediate on the Kashmir dispute at a 'neutral site', which goes against the bilateralism promised in the Simla Agreement, in settling any such dispute. There were questions on the credits taken by the U.S. president for the ceasefire, while given the scale and precision of operations undertaken by India, it is clear that India and Pakistan are not equals, neither in combat nor in resolve, and cannot be hyphenated.

However, ex-Army Chief General Naravane held that "Although war will be forced upon us by unwise people, we should not cheer for it", implying that war is a grave situation, and should be the last resort, while diplomacy should be our first choice. It should also be noted that while Pakistan has nothing to lose, India is on its course for development, being the fourth largest economy of the world, and we have the example of the Russia-Ukraine War continuing for more than three years, draining the material and human resources of the two countries, and attracting the third-party countries to seek geopolitical gains. Therefore, much of the optimism from the ceasefire springs from the success of Operation Sindoor in ensuring a resolute and timely response, inflicting precise punishment on terrorists and their sponsors in a short period, while all other matters can be dealt with diplomatically in the future.

Also, the ceasefire concluded with a strong setting of the narrative by the Indian side for its war on terrorism, demonstrating its capabilities in long-range precision strikes by the usage of the BrahMos missile for the first time. India's air defence shield, comprising the S-400, Akash, and SAMAR-1, the long, medium, and close-range missiles, intercepted every single drone and missile attack by Pakistan. The precision and capability demonstrated by the indigenous Akash and Samar-1 missiles, pitch India's place in the defence export market. In a 23-minute operation, Indian Rafale fighter jets, armed with SCALP precision-guided missiles and HAMMER bombs, executed targeted strikes by neutralizing or circumventing Pakistan's air defence system, exposing Pakistan's strategic vulnerability.

Therefore, we can say that Pakistan's bid for a ceasefire was not an act of peace rather an acknowledgement of what lay ahead and what India had signalled. India has agreed to this ceasefire on its own terms, from a position of undeniable power, with the Indus Water Treaty remaining in abeyance, along with the other diplomatic and economic measures taken by India after the Pahalgam attack before the conduct of Operation Sindoor, intact.

It has been made clear that the ceasefire is just a suspension of the retaliatory action against the Pahalgam attack, and the Operation Sindoor will be a working national policy of India against terrorism, activating as and when required by constant monitoring of the actions and attitude adopted by Pakistan ahead. The Prime Minister of India addressed the nation after the final ceasefire, signalling a clear and unalterable stand that India will be embarking on post-Operation Sindoor. The three key tenets are-

- Any act of terror against India will be considered as an act of war against India, and India will take strict action against every place from where the roots of terrorism emerge.
- India will unequivocally reject any form of nuclear blackmailing. The nation will respond with appropriate, pinpointed, and resolute military action against terrorist bases proliferating behind the tag of a nuclear-weapon country.
- India does not distinguish between terrorists and the states sponsoring such terrorism and will make sure that such states pay the appropriate price for sponsoring such terrorists. This has set a new paradigm in approaching terror attacks.

While the earlier stance remains intact that terror and trade, and terror and talks, cannot go together, and likewise, water and blood will not flow together; the Prime Minister, in his address, also made it clear that Kashmir is an integral part of India, and any dialogue with Pakistan will be carried out only on the issues of terrorism and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The ceasefire highlighted India's resolve in the fact that this is not an era of war, but certainly not an era of terrorism. India categorically made it clear that terrorism breeding in Pakistan is a slow poison, intoxicating the very soil it breeds on, until the abilities of the state become completely defunct. Pakistan should cooperate with India in defeating terrorism, or risk its own destruction. Therefore, Operation Sindoor has made sure that the ceasefire at the LoC remains a truce in transition contingent upon the situation between the two countries.

To conclude, all the big terrorist attacks happened in the world in the last many decades, have their roots connected to these terrorist hideouts struck by India and the world must stand in unity with India in its efforts against all forms of terrorism as only zero tolerance against terrorism is a guarantee for a better world.

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## **From Khilafat to Knife-in-the-Back: Turkey's Betrayal of India**

**By Dr. Santhosh Mathew**

The author is Professor at Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences Pondicherry Central University.

India has always extended a hand of friendship across continents, across faiths, across ideologies. From standing by the Ottoman Empire during the Khilafat Movement to cooperating with modern Turkey in trade, technology, education and cultural exchanges, India believed in long-term goodwill. But today, it finds itself betrayed by a country it once supported during its most critical moment in history. Turkey, under the authoritarian leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has chosen to side with Pakistan not just diplomatically, but militarily, feeding New Delhi's enemies with deadly drones and rhetoric, revealing Ankara's dangerous ambitions to become the ideological capital of a pan-Islamist world order — even at the cost of peace in South Asia.

The most recent Indo-Pak tensions, especially after Pakistan's proxy aggressions in Kashmir and elsewhere, have seen Turkey abandon any pretence of neutrality. Turkish-made drones, notably the Bayraktar TB2 — manufactured by Baykar Technologies, whose CEO Selçuk Bayraktar is none other than Erdoğan's son-in-law — are now in Pakistan's hands. These drones are not for humanitarian use or border surveillance. They are war machines, tested in Libya, Syria, and Armenia, and now weaponized against Indian interests. It is no coincidence that the Pakistani military, flush with Chinese and now Turkish support, is emboldened in its provocative acts across the LoC. India is no longer watching silently. Turkish firms operating in India are now facing a quiet but firm rollback. The government is reportedly targeting those firms that have indirect connections with the Turkish ruling family. One such firm, closely linked to the Baykar CEO, had ongoing collaborations with Indian industries. But post the revelations about Ankara's defence dealings with Islamabad, New Delhi is beginning to sever ties. This is not just about foreign policy; this is about national security.

The diplomatic frost has started touching academia as well. Several Indian universities, including Jamia Millia Islamia and Jawaharlal Nehru University, have now either cancelled or stalled their memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with Turkish educational institutions.

What began as cultural and academic exchanges have now turned into cautionary tales of misplaced trust. It is becoming increasingly clear that Turkish academia, like many other arms of the state, is influenced — if not controlled — by the ideological machinery of Erdoğan's administration. India cannot afford to keep its windows open to propaganda disguised as intellectual cooperation. This betrayal stings more because of the historical goodwill India extended to Turkey. During the 1920s, when the Ottoman Caliphate was being dismantled by Western colonial powers, Indian Muslims — and Indian leaders — came forward in solidarity. The Khilafat Movement was supported not just by Indian Muslims, but also by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Indian freedom fighters, fighting their own war against the British Raj, paused to lend moral and political support to a foreign empire, simply on the basis of civilizational and religious empathy. And yet, a century later, the Turkish state pays back with hostility, aligning itself not with the world's largest democracy, but with a failed terror-sponsoring regime in Islamabad.

The hypocrisy is complete when one looks at Erdoğan's own domestic policies. Once hailed as a reformer, Erdoğan has now dismantled Turkish secularism, jailing dissidents, muzzling the media, and openly promoting an Islamist agenda. The conversion of the Hagia Sophia, a UNESCO world heritage site, from a museum back into a mosque was not merely a religious act — it was a political message to the world. It marked the triumph of a neo-Ottoman, pan-Islamist narrative over Turkey's secular past. Erdoğan is no longer content being the president of Turkey; he aspires to be the caliph of the Islamic world. And for that, he sees India — a pluralistic, secular, majority-Hindu nation — as an ideological rival. Turkey has repeatedly raised the Kashmir issue in the United Nations and other global forums, parroting Pakistan's false narratives. It has criticized India's internal matters, including the abrogation of Article 370 and the Citizenship Amendment Act, conveniently ignoring its own suppression of Kurdish identity, Armenian history, and democratic freedoms. Turkey's silence on China's atrocities against Uighur Muslims further exposes the selective outrage of its leadership. It has become clear that Erdoğan's Turkey is not defending Muslims; it is defending authoritarian alliances and petrodollar loyalties.

The Indian business community is also waking up. Traders in several states have begun quietly boycotting Turkish goods — from dry fruits and confectionery to Turkish apples and marble. India does not need Turkish imports when it has friendlier and more reliable partners elsewhere. When Indian soldiers face Turkish drones in Kashmir, how can Indian citizens in good conscience buy Turkish dates for Ramadan? This is not a call for jingoism, but for economic nationalism. A sovereign nation must ensure that its economy does not empower those who want to destabilize it. India is neither against Islam nor against Muslims. It remains home to the second-largest Muslim population in the world. But India cannot and will not tolerate foreign governments using religion as a tool of geopolitics against it. Turkey's ambitions to become the new head of the Islamic Ummah come with the price tag of instability and ideological confrontation. Erdoğan has found common cause with Pakistan, Qatar, and certain radical outfits, hoping to revive a caliphate that the modern world has long buried.

Turkey's betrayal is not just strategic, it is civilizational. It is a deliberate choice to side with India's enemies and undermine a century-old bond. India must now recalibrate its foreign policy with clarity and strength. We have friends in West Asia — the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt — who have shown greater pragmatism and respect. India must deepen ties with them while sending a clear message to Ankara: betrayal has consequences. In the years to come, Indian policymakers, industrialists, students, and common citizens must remember that partnerships must be rooted in mutual respect and shared values. Turkey under Erdoğan has lost both. And until it regains them, India must look elsewhere — not back at a friendship that has been stabbed from behind. The road from Khilafat to today's crisis is a painful reminder that not all historic bonds endure — especially when one side uses them as tools of manipulation. For now, the sun sets on India-Turkey ties. Whether it rises again will depend on when, or if, Turkey chooses principles over politics.

# China's Trade Game is Finally Facing a Global Reckoning

**By Gp. Capt. Praveer Purohit (Retd)**

The author is a former IAF officer. He writes on strategic affairs, international relations, and India's geopolitical interests.

Speaking at the India Global Forum in Mumbai recently, Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal candidly admitted that the ongoing global trade war is a direct result of China's unfair practices. He added that the world had turned a blind eye to these malpractices for too long. What the minister left unsaid was just as clear: the chickens have come home to roost.

China's reaction was predictable. The Global Times accused India of being an American lackey. Quoting Chinese academics, the outlet claimed that India was "shifting all the blame onto China" in an attempt to curry favour with Washington and benefit from the competition between the U.S. and China. These remarks were aimed more at shaping a narrative than countering the substance of Goyal's argument.

Prior to its entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001, China was not the trade behemoth that it is today. WTO membership gave Beijing access to global markets, and China leveraged its low-cost manufacturing base to flood the world with cheap goods. The Chinese economy and GDP grew spectacularly, funding an unprecedented military modernization that allowed it to coerce, intimidate and commit aggression against many Asian countries. India, despite advocating accommodation and strategic cooperation, was never spared. China remained consistently indifferent to Indian interests, stymied India's rise and actively worked to confine New Delhi to the subcontinent. Until the Ladakh crisis in 2020, China enjoyed largely unfettered access to the Indian market.

To understand the reasons for the global pushback against China, it is essential to grasp the fundamentals of the Chinese trade playbook. A discriminatory policy enforced by China required foreign businesses and manufacturers to surrender their Intellectual Property (IP) as a condition to enter Chinese market. A combination of high tariffs, mandatory requirements to include domestic content in manufacturing/sourcing, non-tariff barriers, outright theft of IP, cheating, and rigging policies that favour Chinese enterprises are the ingredients of the predatory Chinese trade practices. Cheap (and often forced) labour in China and the massive subsidies to Chinese State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) further tilted the scales against foreign competition. A study in the U.S. revealed that between 1999 and 2011, one million job losses in manufacturing out of a total 2.4 million job losses in the U.S. were due to competition from China. Meanwhile, currency manipulation by China kept its exports cheap, and WTO mechanisms proved toothless in checking such violations. Discontent in the West grew. Eventually, President Trump called out China openly—something even his critics couldn't ignore.

India too was a silent victim of this rigged system. Chinese companies dumped low-grade goods into our markets, while India's exports faced regulatory hurdles, opaque standards, and selective restrictions. From pharma to IT and agriculture, Indian firms struggled to enter China. Cartelisation of Chinese traders blocked market access, and recently, Beijing even restricted the export of critical minerals to India. Foreign companies considering relocation from China were dissuaded—especially if India was the destination.

But we must also own part of the blame. India didn't step up its manufacturing game or build competitive capacities. Traders and consumers alike grew comfortable with cheap Chinese goods. The result: a ballooning trade deficit. Between 2020 and 2024, India's cumulative trade deficit with China reached a staggering USD 383 billion.

That's nearly 80% of China's official 2024 defence budget of USD 481 billion. In other words, India's trade deficit in the period helped arm the military that now threatens our borders.

The tide, however, is turning. The U.S. has imposed a punishing 104% reciprocal tariff on China, sending a strong signal. Tariffs on several countries, including India, have been paused for 90 days as Washington recalibrates. Meanwhile, New Delhi is negotiating trade deals with several partners—including the U.S.—in what could be a defining phase for India's trade diplomacy. Minister Goyal's frank remarks are laudable and a necessary first step, but identifying the problem isn't enough. India must now act decisively. That means doubling down on innovation, making Indian products more competitive, and investing in a future-ready workforce. We must also move beyond reactive trade policy. China has shown that it only respects leverage—not sentiment. India should actively coordinate with like-minded powers—the U.S., European Union, Japan, and others—to build pressure and punish China for consistently violating the rules-based global trade order. Despite concerns voiced in the past, Beijing chose to ignore them and treated its biggest trading partners, including India with disdain. It would be a fatal mistake to let China go off the hook.

As the fog of trade war thickens, India finds itself at crossroads—but also with a rare opportunity. By speaking with clarity and acting with purpose, New Delhi can help reshape the contours of global commerce. Hoping for reform under Xi Jinping is wishful thinking. To quote the late U.S. Senator John McCain: “Hope is not a strategy.” It's time we stop hoping China will change—and start changing the way we deal with China.

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## Why is Life Always Up the Slope?

**By Maj Gen K Eswaran**

The Author was Commissioned in Corp of EME. He is a specialist in armoured fighting vehicles. He has served as Commandant of EME School Vadodara.

When we were in school, we felt that once the board exams are over, life is going to be great in college. No more worries about studies or the botheration by the parents and we would get a lot of freedom and friends. But when you join the college, you have some added responsibilities. There is no spoon feeding anymore. You got to pull up your own self. Life becomes hard. Sometimes you feel, ‘oh school was so cool’, and so on.

Later, when you join the Academy, NDA /IMA/ OTA, you jump term to term with the hope that things will improve. Yes, the old issue ceases, but new ones crop up. You think that once Academy days are over and you get commissioned, it would be all rosy and a cakewalk. You can have a BALL. You are wrong again!!

You land up in a unit where you are the junior most. You have got to do all the running around. It would appear that the whole unit is running only because of you. You suddenly react ‘oh my God, the Academy days were so much better, we did not have to worry about anything at all’.

Anyway, you carry on and hope that life would be great when you get married. It would be all love and romance, all year around. You finally fall in love and get married or get married and fall in love (which is more often than not). Life appears to be a breeze, so cool, for a year or so. Then the challenges of a married life catch on. You have the freedom, but you are not free. You have to put your ‘vehicle of life’ in higher gear sometimes. You have much more responsibilities. Yes, you are happier, but life is still up the slope. Now you have two people to look after.

Life carries on and then you have children. Just when you thought there is no time between your office work and family life, your son or daughter create more work for you.

You are enjoying every bit of your children, their smile, their talk, their walk, their love, but now your vehicle of life is in much higher gear, really 4 by 4. Every day is a struggle, a challenge. But you remind yourself, 'when the going gets tough, the toughs get going', and you keep on going. More so because there is no other way out! There is only one way to go and that is to go forward. There are no retakes in real life!

Then suddenly you remember that there is one person who can certainly help you and you can bank upon him. You remember God. Yes, God. You tend to become religious, a devotee, because you realise that in this mayhem of office, family, wife, children, friends, relatives, if things are going on smoothly, it has to be some divine intervention.

You console yourself that, when the children grow up, things would be better and you would be able to relax and really enjoy life. But sorry to say dear friend, you are wrong yet again.

One day, children go to college. The house is empty. You have become a senior person in the Army. Ironically this is the time when the Army also gives bigger houses, so you feel more empty. You get into the 'empty nest syndrome'. You are all the time worried about your children, 'whether they are fine in the college or Academy', 'hope there is not much ragging', 'whether they had their food', 'hope they have not got injured', 'Are they happy?' etc. You now feel that it was better that your children were at home. At least you could do something about it. Now it becomes tougher for you, as you worry about various issues, but you can't do anything about it.

In the Army, as you are a senior person now, you have certain perks and privileges. But you are also facing all the brunt of the seniors and higher headquarters. The juniors below you are all having a ball. (It is a different matter that when you were a junior and struggling to keep pace, you felt that your boss was having a ball.)

Now that you are the boss, well settled, children have got their own things to do, you are back as newly wedded couple, only husband and wife, but much older. So Nice. Appears romantic, but it may not be so. You really don't know what to do with the newfound freedom -- big house, empty space, lot of time. It becomes difficult to pass time. It is yet another kind of struggle. Please try to understand. Your wife at is at home, she may get into some kind of depression and she does not miss a chance to express it. So you have to absorb that also.

Then one day your retirement arrives. Now you feel, aha, finally the day has come when you are really going to start relaxing and have a ball, play golf, no worries at all. You shall have all the time.

**Really!! Are you sure?? Let us see.**

Finally, you retire. All are happy. Everyone says goodbye, sings praises about you. 'You did this, you did that, Army would not be the same without you, we will all miss you, blah blah blah'.

Yes, you feel very nice and start wondering, 'why am I leaving then? Why don't I continue?'. But unfortunately, your PPO has been released, so you cannot go back now. It would be better to pack up.

You retire; you come home to a dream house. Try to settle down for a happy life ever after. The 'ever after' lasts only for a couple of days. The husband and wife are seeing each other, 24 by 7. They really get fed up, so they start finding faults in each other. Earlier they used to see the glass half full and now they start seeing the other half. You can imagine what happens next. Another kind of struggle.

Now you are worried about keeping yourself busy. Being suddenly out of work you have withdrawal symptoms. You need to keep yourself busy and you look for some job. Then there are some issues in the neighbourhood. People are not very friendly. There are colony issues. Your children are to be married. What about that? New set of worries.

Once your children are married you start worrying about the grandchildren. Hope they are safe at school; hope they eat well.... And so on and on....

**Oh my God! ...      Enough is enough....      Let us put a full stop here !!....**

But the point to note is that life is always up the slope.

Your vehicle will always be in 4 by 4 gear. All wheel Drive!!

Now you may ask, 'when can I put my vehicle in neutral gear and take it easy? Really Cool'.

Yes, I have an answer for that too. But you can do that only once!

when you are heading for 'swarg vatika'. 'Ram Naam Satya Hai'. Last day of life.

Till then my friend, life is in gears. Up the slope. You better enjoy it!

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## **Indian Navy Stood Tall in Operation Sindoor**

**By Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd)**

The Author is former chief of naval staff.

*The Indian maritime services deployed a powerful task force within hours of the Pahalgam terror attack.*

OPERATION Sindoor has served as a compelling demonstration of India's growing military capabilities in several key areas. The technical means to acquire intelligence of targets deep inside the opponent's territory; to strike them with long-range missiles with pinpoint accuracy — all the while maintaining a multi-layered, impervious air defence of its own assets. This capacity for waging "non-contact warfare", using guided weapons and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) without ground troops or air forces crossing borders, marks a paradigm shift in warfare.

In this context, maritime power has, historically, specialised in employing strategies that aim to achieve political objectives through their presence and "non-contact" force projection rather than by engaging in direct combat. Decades ago, Admiral Sergey Gorshkov (Commander-in-Chief, Soviet Navy, 1956-85) had described the perennial utility of naval power: "Demonstrative actions by the fleet, in many cases, have made it possible to achieve political ends without resorting to armed action, merely by application of pressure and threat of military operations."

The Indian Navy's (IN) 2015 maritime strategy offers, in detail, various options for potential force projection. These include maritime strikes with carrier-borne aircraft or long-range weapons like the ship-launched BrahMos, or the ship/submarine-launched Klub land-attack missiles. In order to apply "strategic leverage, including economic and psychological pressure", the strategy also envisages disruption/denial of the adversary's use of the sea for military purposes and maritime trade.

The IN, while drawing up its contingency plans for Operation Sindoor in coordination with sister services, would have taken note of Pakistan's maritime vulnerabilities stemming from its geography, relatively limited naval capabilities and economic dependence on key coastal infrastructure.

Pakistan's 1,000-km-long coastline, stretching mostly across the troubled province of Balochistan, hosts just a handful of ports. Of these, only Karachi, Port Qasim and Gwadar handle merchant ship traffic, while Ormara is a naval base and the rest are fishing harbours. Pakistan's economy, already strained, relies heavily on maritime trade, mostly through Karachi and Port Qasim. Disruption of shipping traffic to and from these ports, even temporarily, can cause a significant impact on Pakistan's economy, industry and military operations, apart from affecting public wellbeing and morale.

As far as naval strength goes, the IN is a diverse and substantial force organised into two fleets, each fielding an aircraft carrier and a cohort of missile-armed destroyers and frigates as well as fleet support vessels.

India's submarine force of nuclear and diesel-powered submarines is strategically deployed on both seaboard. The Pakistan Navy (PN) is relatively smaller and lacks many of these key assets.

While the IN aspires to play the role of a blue-water navy, with power-projection capabilities across the Indian Ocean and beyond, the PN's focus is primarily on coastal defence and maintaining credible maritime deterrence against India through a strategy of "sea denial". Although the past few decades have seen both navies growing in size and capabilities, the IN has managed to retain its significant edge.

In the 1971 war, India's maritime power had played a key role in the outcome of the operations in both theatres of war. In the west, it had undertaken two attacks with ship-launched surface-to-surface missiles, inflicting attrition on the PN and heavy damage to the Karachi port, bringing its operations to a halt. In the eastern theatre, the IN's carrier-borne aircraft had ranged far and wide over East Pakistan and inflicted heavy damage on ports, shipping and riverine traffic. The trauma of this conflict has lingered in the Pakistani psyche, and PN units did not venture forth during Operation Sindoor.

Today, a major advantage accrues to the IN from its comprehensive capability for "maritime domain awareness". This is a dynamic framework that receives inputs from satellites, aircraft, UAVs, ships and coastal radars to compile a real-time operational picture of all activities at sea in the region. The availability of "situational awareness" on a 24x7 basis in all three dimensions enables the IN to keep track of the adversary's moves and respond with alacrity to any suspicious activity. The PN lacks a similar facility.

"Naval compellence" has, historically, been a useful instrument of state policy to influence the behaviour of others and force an adversary to do something he does not want to do, or to stop him from doing something that he intends to do. This is achieved by the deployment of coercive sea-based forces, which may or may not involve actual violence.

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## **India is Proud of:**

### **Abdul Kareem – The Man Who Planted a Forest**



In Kasargod district of Kerala, there lives a man in flesh and blood who actually did this - a man who bought 32 acres of barren land and planted a forest

Abdul Kareem, 70, of Parappa, Kasargod, Kerala had a liking to ‘Kavu’, the sacred forests of Kerala, right from his childhood. He would frequently visit his wife’s house in Puliyankulam village and it was during such visits that he noticed the barren hillside land nearby. In 1977, as if on an impulse, he bought five acres of the land for Rs 3750. The people nearby and even his family were not able to comprehend his action, and he became a laughingstock in the locality. The property had only a single well that remained almost dry throughout the year. Since it could not provide enough to water the saplings that he planted, he would carry water in cans from outside sources on his two-wheeler. This continued for three years, at the end of which, nature started responding to his unrelenting efforts and the trees actually started growing.

The change was now to be seen – birds came in flocks and helped Kareem by bringing seeds of umpteen varieties and started setting their nests in this New Haven. Soon other forms of life also appeared. The ecosystem was developing at a good pace. In the meanwhile, Kareem bought another 27 acres of land and planted trees all over the place with the new-found vigour, motivated by the fruits of his efforts.

One notable feature of Kareem’s Forest (that is what the Department of Tourism, Kerala Government, calls this place) which makes it a forest in the true sense is that Kareem never tried to interfere in its natural development once it started sustaining itself, rather he gamely prevented anything and everything that would interfere with the natural growth of his forest. He has never weeded the forest; neither does he sweep away the fallen leaves. There is no effort for intervention of any kind.

The forest has brought about amazing changes to the surroundings. The once dry well in the plot is now brimming with pure, fresh water. The underground water table in an area of about 10 kilometres has risen, it is said. The temperature inside the forest is markedly cooler than outside. Kareem has been living inside the forest since 1986, keeping constant vigil on his creation, which is dearer to him than anything. Visitors are allowed inside, even to stay as paying guests for a few days, provided they comply with Kareem’s regulations. Plastic is banned inside the forest; so is the use of automobiles. Wild partying, loud noises – all are a strict no-no.

Kareem has resisted various offers to commercialize the forest and to turn it into a theme park. Recognition has come from various corners, including the Sahara Parivar award, Limca Books Person of the year and so on. Visitors have come from many foreign countries. Still, one sincerely doubts whether this gem of a man has received the deserving attention from his homeland. However, for those who know him, the man who was once a laughingstock, has now grown colossal in stature, along with his creation – one that generations will cherish.

To honour Kareem, the Govt of Kerala in 2005 decided to add a chapter on Kareem and his forest for the Class 6 Malayalam textbook. Recently, the CBSE has also decided to include Kareem’s Forest as a chapter in the Class 4.

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