

LOVE IN A HOT CLIMATE^{*}

Anil Menon[†]

Where do I begin? At the beginning, says Mr. Carroll. Yes, Mr. Carroll, if this were an essay about The Cow, certainly, I could begin at the beginning. ‘The Cow,’ I would say, ‘is a Four-Legged Beast. Two legs move him forwards, and two legs move him afterwards.’ So on and so forth. But this story is not about a Cow. Time Machines peep in their heads. So does a Great Cogitator, an intractable Midget, Fiduciary Matters, the inestimable Poornima and an intractable Impediment. Then there is the overcast of the umbra casting Conundrum. All these items must be fitted in somehow, higgledy-piggledy, grunting and squealing, back to front and side to side. It is not so simple, Mr. Carroll!

Ergo, the first casualty: Truth! *aff*. Fanny Hill: “Sir, I can be true, or I can be entertaining, but not both.” Verily. Some things have been goosed, pinched, twiddled and stretched. Reality be damned, it is *your* two rupees worth of Enjoyment that I am worried about only.

Ergo, second casualty: Grammar! Down the oubliette, I say, with Grammar. Damn it, feller, dangle this, don’t dangle that, ‘may I have some more commas, please, Sir?’ What the Old Nick is all this talk about spilled infinities and what not? True story: I was reared by Ursuline nuns; it was either that or the wolves. Regular, doughty old penguin brigade with a chip on their rounded shoulders ‘cause I was a boy (hypocrites! Baby Jesus!). And all day long: colon this, semi-colon that, conjugal this, conjugal that; Damn, I am thinking, some inferior Freudian explanation here for Mother Superior, old chap. Not to mention the intoxicating effect of such gab on young impressionables!

Prescriptum having been disposed of forthwith, here we are, orb to orb, friendly like, across the Void Of Text. ‘So who are you fella?’ I catch with my ears.

I, one Mr. Purushottam Deshpande, 25 years old, gentleman, entrepreneur, proprietor, autodidact, author, scout and inamorata of the inestimable Poornima. At your service, Reader!

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Some further background intimations of my Character: I was born an Only Child, and to boot, an Orphan. Subsequently, I was much booted about. Still, after all the scars are rubbed and pinched, and all 'buts' kicked in the same, it was *la dolce vita*; certainly, I didn't know a better life. Also, caste-wise: a Brahmin, or in this hot climate, hooray! whew! free drinks for all!

Enough with this flashback. Some buses seat forwards, and others, againstwards; I, Reader, am strictly (no excuses) a forwards sort of bus.

The bus is currently parked at the New Delhi Talkies; the year: 1955. At close proximity is the inestimable Poornima.

Poornima: My Lebanon! Eyes like fishpools in Heshbon. Hair as a flock of goats. Lips, a thread of scarlet. Two breasts like two young roes that are twins. In short, to see her is to read the Song of Solomon. She's kindly obliged some perusal, but here's the rub! I am a cover-to-cover sort of feller.

At present, I am gazing unremittingly at her and ditto conversely.

"O Poornima!"

"O Purushottam!"

At long last, she tore her eyes from mine and reached into the deep cool vale betwixt her silk wrapped ivory towers. She produced a much-folded piece of paper and offered it to me.

I caressed the paper as I unfolded it. Oh, were I where it had been. Myrrh and frankincense, Reader, makes nonsense of common sense.

"Read, beloved," says she, huskily.

I perused the handwriting:

"Suitable match sought for a surprisingly pretty, fair, domesticated, accomplished Gowd Saraswat Brahmin girl, 20/160cm, B.A, B.ED., Teacheress from a respectable family. Father in close proximity to the Minister Of Finance. Smokers, drinkers, please excuse."

"What? It can't be!"

"My father's handiwork, beloved. God proposes, my father disposes. We are doomed."

My bowels constricted. My eyes swam in pools of despair.

"Damn, damn, double damn doubled!" I expostulated.

She would soon be on the Market; lock, stock and barrel. If the parent unit was busy polishing the signage, then Purushottam and Poornima would soon be Purushottam sans Poornima. No, the Conundrum had to be Solved and Solved soon! Devouring Time, Sonnet XIX et cetera.

"Your progenitor, dearest," says I, utterly bitterly, "is an Impediment."

“We must not sit down and be made conveniences of,” says she. By golly, her vim was invigorating.

“Perish the thought!” says I, feelingly. “Am I not like Mother India, rich in possibility but poor in presentuality?”

“Your gifted tongue alone qualifies you, dearest.”

“Am I not rich in Forecast but poor in Fact?”

“The nail has been truly hammered, beloved.”

“In short, it jingles down to the matter of my negative Net Worth, does it not? The dog that does not bark, eh? The jingle that is not heard? Eh? Eh?”

As the Conundrum exposed itself – naked, throbbing and purple – she broke down.

“I can’t live without you,” Poornima burst out, collapsing into my muscular arms. “I’ll kill myself, I will. I will.”

“Collar those tears, my Full Moon,” begged I, vastly gratified. “Be rest assured that the cogitator” — I tapped the noggin — “will overturn every stone.”

“I am your garden, lord,” says she, humbly, and dam’ if the old sentimental orb was not breached!

I flipped the signage on its posterior. On perusal, it looked like a memo from one Shri. Milton Friedman to the Honorable Shri. C. D. Deshmukh, Minister of Finance.

“...the key is to realize that it is a Time Machine, a recent idea. One aspect is that five percent per annum rate of increase in real national income, seems entirely feasible. . . what is called capital investment is only part of the total expenditure on increasing the productivity of an economy. . . A steady expansion in the money stock (allowing for seasonal influences) at a rate of something like four to six percent per year. . . This Time machine will produce all the prosperity an Investor might consider his reasonable due. What is needed are Entrepreneurs to exploit this opportunity.”

Time Machines? I eyed the Memo again. Damn! There is no Limit to the Western Genius. First, that Relativity feller. Then, robots (goodbye, Mr. Marx!). Nonce, Time Machines! What next? Now we’d NEVER catch up; not if the fellers had gotten Time on a leash and carrot! It was the old story of Achilles and the wide-awake Hare all over again. If only the Ursulines had set me straight on Logarithms! These cogitations darkened the Atmosphere, but then I deduced that the lights had blinked out because the talkie had started.

I continued to cogitate on the Conundrum. Assassination was Out. The lady’s tender sentiments and all that muzak. Diplomacy was Out; it assumes Gentlemen, and the Impediment was Anything Butt. That left Guile; the cat’s

ass of Valor.

Tap. Tap.

“Hey,” says someone, tapping my head.

I ignored the tap. Sir, I abhor taps. Especially in that general vicinity.

Tap. Tap. This is Intolerable.

I turned, swiveling and glaring daggers. A diminutive but beefy gentleman with the general aspect of bronze; well developed musculature and Kaiser moustache to boot. I amended my gaze.

“Pray, my good man,” says I. “Please explain your need?”

“Your head is too big, fellow. Either shift or detach said item.”

I am astounded at the man’s *extermis temeritus*.

“Sir,” says I, widening my nostrils and smiling horribly. “Your vertical inadequacy is equally offensive to me. Wait till the intermission, if you please, and I will relieve *your* discomfort. However, I will not insist on *quid pro quo*. The flaw in your design, no doubt, offends you as much as it does me.”

The murmur of our fellow theatre-goers, excited by the daylight robbery of their two rupees worth of Enjoyment, sufficed to silence the quarrelsome midget.

“I don’t like your tone, fellow,” says he, with equally widened nostrils. “But very well, intermission, then.”

I swiveled my head back and slid a glance at Poornima. She was pre-occupied before and post-occupied now. I let her continue to be occupied. I grimly retraced the exchange of a few minutes ago. I flexed my musculature. No doubt, in a fair fight, I could thrash the midget. But would the villain fight fair? Bitterness gargled like the ocean, choking my throat. What could I possibly do about my allegedly oversized egg? If a really oversized noggin had to be pointed out, why, it should be the one sitting calmly on the shoulders of that Time Machine feller. I, quite contrary, am a Man of Action. A different species altogether. Never shall the twain mate. I considered the matter at rest, but insurrection in the rank and file!

“What’s this hue and cry?” I queried the cellular.

“What if?”

“What if, what?”

“What if the twain *did* meet?”

“By god’s golly, fellers, let me do the Caesar around here. About march!”

But the proposal was on the table and nothing-to-do till said item con-

sidered and disposed of forthwith. Hmmm. Royce & Rolls. Square & Compass. Friedman & Deshpande. Why not? Blackballed Jupiter! the masses had glasses after all.

Purushottam Deshpande, Proprietor, Indian Time Machines was born, Reader, in that climactic moment. I rubbed my hands in my gleeful heart and waited with crossed legs for the Intermission.

At last. Intermission. Lights flooded the bowels of the hall.

I turned to my beloved, slapping my thigh.

“You will yet be the Mother of my Children, O Poornima!”

“What do you mean, dearest?” says she, casting her eyes in my direction.

“I have, as promised, cogitated on our Conundrum. Consider it solved!”

“What do you propose? Have you decided to work?”

“Sort of.”

“A wise sage has said, dearest, that some things are All or Nothing.”

I shrugged away the Sage. Can has no time for Kant.

“Advice is the vice of the wise. I, contrary-wise, am of the ‘Blunder and Eureka!’ school myself. In short, behold an Entrepreneur!”

“What is the item under consideration? I hear the jam market is in a slump.”

I laughed. There’s the fem species for you! Jam.

“Dear, dear, munchkin. I intend to. . . MASS PRODUCE TIME!!”

Silence.

“Time?” asks she, doubtfully.

“Yes. Time machines. No more scraping seconds together.”

“Yes, I see. But this Time machine, does it exist?”

I exhibited the memo. She bit her lip as she perused it, and I couldn’t decide whether it was better to be the lip or the tooth.

“How does this Wondrous Machine work, dearest?”

“Oh. I’m sure it uses Logarithms. We leave those details, my dear, to the Great Cogitator. This white gentleman— and he surely is both— is in search of a partner; to wit, a Man of Action. He is a Great Cogitator, come down from Sinai, and in his hands is Soap. But who’ll convince the dirty buggers to Wash? Me! That’s who! Marketing. Segmentation. Target and Conquer. The Impediment wants Jingle. By Golly, I’ll jingle him deaf.”

“So important a man is likely to have many petitioners,” says Poornima.

Tap. Tap.

“Petitioners, yes. But Men of Action? A Roosevelt? A Carnegie? A Ford?” I thundered. “I am not a man of small parts, as you know, my dear Poornima.”

She blushed, the crimson blood galloping to her fair cheeks.

“Verily,” says she, aside.

“In my capacity as the ex-editor of *India Tomorrow*, I will approach him incognito. We will talk, we will laugh, we will have tea, and then we will talk some more. Then at an auspicious juncture, I will offer my hair-raising proposal. I will prepare the Business Plan this very evening. Against his mighty Cogitation, and my equally mighty Action, the Impediment shall fall as cow droppings.”

“O Purushottam!”

“O Poornima!”

I could have deflowered her then and there. We threw our eyes at each other, breathing heavily.

Tap. Tap.

“Well, fellow, are you shifting or shall I hand you your head?”

Intolerable. The plot device was now a plot hindrance.

“By George!” I swore, and struck the first blow.

##

I slept but sleep wouldn't come. I tossed and turned, bugged by the ceaseless neighing of my cogitations. Round and round they raced in my Coliseum. “Ave Caesar,” the idiots would roar, “morituri te salutant.” Then it was off for the next round. After four hours of Ben-Hur, I threw in the sweaty towel wrapped around my allegedly large head. “Cogito Ergo Sum and be Damned,” I shrieked. I needed Rest but the masses were bent upon Worrying what if, and why not, and so what, and but this.

I was out of it. See if I cared. If the Mind was bent upon giving the Body the yes-yes and more-more, who was I, a humble renter, to be the squeaky wheel?

All this I recount, Bosom Reader, to give you a good view of my end. I was half awake and half asleep, a House Divided, and (thank you, Mr. Lincoln), a House Divided can't stand. It was thusly that I arrived at the Ministry of Finance: Gruntled and disgruntled, gusted and disgusted.

Eight annas for the Chowkidar, one Rupee for the clerk's In-File assistant to open my file, two Rupees for the clerk to overlook my file, (Damn, this was

getting expensive), one Rupee for the clerk's Out-File assistant to get rid of my file altogether, and eight annas to a miscellaneous rogue who had the ballsy wherewithal to try the oldest tail-tweaker of all: ask and ye shall receive. All in all, I was down in the oubliette for five Rupees just to cross a hall. Spend money to make money, say the Wall Street fellers, but that's dam' hard for us Main Street chaps.

In one corner of the room sat one Mr. Lagoo. Pigeon-chested personal assistant to the assistant deputy of the personal secretary of the Minister Of Finance. In short, the inestimable Poornima's male parent. I had managed to duck his gaze thus far, but success is a bitch goddess, and who knew when she'd turn.

The last thing yours humbly wanted was for him to throw his eyes in my direction. As I cogitated on the consequences, I sweated. The sweating created its own sweaty consequences.

I see him sniffing. Damn, damn, double damn doubled.

"Duck," screams the Mind. Recall, however, that I am a House Divided. "Duck! Damn You," screams the Mind, rattling the bars. No use. The Body is snoozing. Le Mouron Rouge is now, Reader, Le Moron Rouge. It is all over. Goodbye, Mr. Deshpande, it was a good life.

"You!" roars the Impediment. "Deshpande! Come here."

I perambulate accordingly.

"Namaste, Sir!" says I, showing all the chinamen.

"Explain!"

"An appointment, O Parent Unit."

"With whom, scoundrel?"

Really, the man was intractable. "The Great Cogitator, your Munificence. I am here in strict official capacity. I would have given advance intimation, my dear Sir, but if you recall, the last time I was seen in your vicinity, there were certain odds offered against my continued existence and what not. But what the Hades, Sir; let us shake like gentlemen and begin anew. 'Brave New World, That has such people in't' and et cetera. What do you say, Sir?"

"Deshpande, I—"

Through the corner of my eye I see a white feller, balding, perambulating corridor-wards. That, says I, must be the Great Cogitator. Frankly, I expected more vertical adequacy, but Hades! who was I to quarrel with Nature? You know, in these moments, House Divided or not, it all comes together. One Nation Under God. Body and Mind shook hands, let bygones be bygones et cetera.

“Excuse me, excuse me, Sir” I hollered. “Mr. Friedman, Sir.”

“Deshpande!”

I ignored him and cast my voice again in the perambulator’s direction.

“Mr. Friedman! Mr. Friedman!”

“Deshpande!” hollered the Impediment.

Allah be praised. The white gentleman was not deaf. He stopped, and as the clouds of Deep Thought parted, smiled hesitantly.

“Mr. Deshpande? Of *India Tomorrow*? Ah, yes. My nine am. Come along.”

I bowed to my future father-in-law. “A few minutes with my Friend, O Protector of Poornima, if you please.”

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‘As above, so below’ say the Rosicrucians. Be that as it may. The Outside was not, however, as the Inside. Inside was cool, AC’ed to Canada-buffalo comfort, and outfitted with the very best. My ass was grass, as the yanks say.

“How did you hear of me, Mr. Deshpande?”

I winked at him. “Usual channels, Sir.”

“Yes. Which are?”

“Oh, I am well oiled, Sir.” I winked again.

“I see. Inside sources, eh? Frankly, I was puzzled by the request for an interview. I’m hardly a celebrity and I can’t imagine my thoughts on developmental economics being riveting reading. And that too, developmental economics from a monetarist viewpoint!”

“Sir, the whole world knows you are a Great Cogitator!”

For some reason, this amused the white gentleman enormously. I laughed along; oh, I can match you Move for Move, my wily Cogitator.

“Oh, come now. You’re surely pulling my leg.”

I continued to smile. Naturally, he had to test me.

“Rest assured I am a Man of Action, Sir.”

“Well, good! This country needs a few. Mr. Deshpande, I suppose we’d better get started. Shoot.”

I was ready.

“What, Sir, in fifteen words or less, is the Operating Principle of the Time Machine?”

He stared at me blankly. Damn! These Great Cogitators are all the same. They can tell you how to spin a galaxy but can't spell their names. I consulted the memo.

"Sir, apropos your comment to the Honorable Shri. Deshmukh: 'Time machines will produce all the prosperity an Investor might consider his reasonable due—'

His face cleared. "Ah, I see. That was a private memo! I'll have to speak to Lagoo about it. You *are* well connected, aren't you? I'm still getting used to the way things are done around here. Anyway, my point was that a five per cent per annum rate is perfectly reasonable. It sounds a bit over-optimistic, but it isn't really. I was referring to the post-Keynesian idea of thinking of monetarist policies as worth and value propagators. Mind you, in general, I am dead set against the Keynes approach to Economics. The Keynes approach is a disaster, never mind what my good friend, Mr. Galbraith might think. It is a pity your—"

I was getting a bit tired of smiling. Yes, yes, jolly old chap, we all know our Marshallian Scissors, but what was the Principle? Fifteen words or less, remember?

"— in particular, the current budget plan for 1955, from what Mr. Deshmukh has told me, will lay even greater stress on the two industrial extremes; heavy industries on the one hand, and handicrafts on the other. It may be good politics to invest in these extremes (and I disagree), but it makes for really poor economics. One the one end, you have too little labor and capital intensive investment, on the other you have the exact opposite. And as I outlined, logarithmic risk returns—"

So it *was* the Logarithmic Principle.

"—Thank you," says I, smiling.

"Uh, sure. Sorry, I'll try to be more succinct."

"Yes, Sir. Ready?"

"For what?"

"No. 2, Sir?"

"Uh, sure."

"Well, do we need Petrol or Atoms, Sir? I'm thinking housewives hate Radioactivity, there's just no talking to them once they hear that word. So Petrol is preferable, if you don't mind. Is that feasible?"

Silence. A certain Expression slithered across his face. Damn, these Americans are inscrutable fellows! Play cards with one hand on their pistols, if you know what I mean.

“Er, I’m not sure I understand. Your natural resources are NOT the problem. In fact, I have a section in my memo explaining why private industry should not be coddled to move in certain directions. Look at Japan. Very few resources, but they’ve begun to have an export surplus! Perhaps I’d better focus on the monetarist aspects— This is getting a little vague. Did you read my comments on deficit financing?”

What was all this Economics gab, man? Damn, this Cogitator was a money-grubber. Then, cogitating at the speed of light, I caught up with light. Oh-ho! By Jove, so *you* want to control the purse strings? Well, talking the talk is not good enough, my good fellow. You couldn’t walk a day in Bombay without putting the feet in shit.

“Yes,” says I, smiling. “We can discuss that later. Leave the financing to me, Sir. I have ‘friends’ if you know what I mean.”

I tapped the side of my nose.

Silence. He stared at me.

“What the hell are you talking about? Who are you, exactly?”

“I am Purushottam Deshpande, Sir.”

“Let me see your press papers if you don’t mind, Mr. Deshpande?”

Hardball, eh? I spread my hands.

“All right, gotcha!” I expostulated, grinning. “I am not really a journalist, Sir. Specifically, I am an ex-journalist. More specifically, I was an ex-assistant to an ex-journalist. He quit, and I sort of inherited his job, if you know what I mean.”

“I think you’d better leave.”

The fellow looked upset. “Henry Ford,” I prayed, “I need you Nonce.”

“Sir,” says I, “I know I came under cover of darkness. Let me explain why I am your man—”

“Excuse me, Mr. Deshpande, ‘man’ for what? Are you looking for a job? If so, you are wasting your time. I’m leaving in a couple of weeks.”

Couple of weeks! Impossible!

“What about your Machine? Have you found a partner, then?”

“Mr. Deshpande, I swear –” his eyes were sloshing about. “*What machine?*”

“The Time Machine! What else?”

“Time machine?”

Was there an echo? “Yes! it is an open secret, you know. You have invented

the Time Machine, and I am asking, humbly asking, if I could make a profit for you.”

“Mr. Deshpande, I don’t know what to say. What gave you the impression I have invented a Time Machine.”

Damn it, don’t be coy, man. Still, what was one more Tango around the dance floor. I handed over the page. He read it silently.

“I see,” says he, and burst out laughing. He laughed so hard, *I* split a stitch.

“Excuse me, Mr. Friedman. Excuse me, but I do have some decency.”

He rubbed his eyes. “Of course, you do,” says he, and laughed again, shaking like a tickled baby. Really, this was getting Aggravating.

He inspected the other side of the memo. He found that even funnier. Boy, the feller was a leaky laugh bag! I supposed it came with all the overheating from cogitation. Got to relieve the stress et cetera.

“My dear Mr. Deshpande, do excuse me—”

“Purushottam, Sir. So, shall we spit and shake on it?”

“No, we don’t. We can’t. There is no Time Machine. I am an economist, not an inventor. No, wait, let me finish. I came to this country to advise your government on financial matters. As for money being a time machine, I meant it as a metaphor, nothing more. It is *as if* money were a time machine, because it can transfer wealth and spending power across time. I was just trying, Mr. Deshpande, to make some technical points about balancing liquidity with investment.”

Damn, damn, double damn doubled.

“So it was just a metaphor?” says I, forlornly.

“Indeed.”

“Too much metaphorical Tea drowns the Dormouse of Comprehension, Sir.”

More of the tee-hee and the ha-ha. I looked at him askance. I knew how to deal with Abderites.

“Yes, I suppose it does. Now, tell me, why are you so keen on starting a business? Why not stick with being an ex-journalist?”

I spilled the whole kit and caboodle. ‘No Quid no Quo’ was the law of the land, I explained. God’s golly, was I tired of Micawbering and making the buffalo squeak! The Conundrum peeped its head in, and naturally, introductions had to be made. The Cogitator raised his hand.

“Mr. Deshpande— excuse me— let me get this straight. This is all about a girl? And that too the daughter of Mr. Lagoo? I am in the middle of a

thwarted love story?”

“Exactly like the midget, Sir.”

“Pardon? No, don’t tell me.”

We gazed at each other. The white gentleman was grinning. I grinned back. “What’s so funny, old chap?” thought I.

“Must say I didn’t expect my day to begin quite like this. Let me ask you something, Mr. Deshpande. Do you want to make Money, or do you want to spend it?”

“In the Book of Life, you’ll find me indexed under ‘Tree; giving’” says I, feelingly.

“I see. Well, there are four ways, Mr. Deshpande, to spend money. You can spend your money on yourself. Your money on others. Other people’s money on yourself. And of course, the government’s approach. Now, replace money with Time and you’ll have your solution to the Conundrum, as you call it.”

“I have often been accused of wasting other people’s time.”

He thumped the table. “Exactly. As I thought. You have a natural genius for it. There you go, Mr. Deshpande.”

“Go where?”

“To your career.”

“Spell it out, man!”

“Mr. Deshpande, you are an entertaining fellow, and that is what you should be. An entertainer. Write! Be an ex-journalist. Sing! Dance! I don’t know. Find your own unique way of spending other people’s time. Or join the government and do it the easy way. What do you think?”

Inspiration reached down and grabbed me by the nitty-gritty. Eureka!

“May I inquire if the person I am addressing has been entertained by the advisee?”

“What? Oh. I suppose.”

“Then how about a small leg-up to said worthy, my dear Sir? For the sake of your namesake and my future first-born. He adds his tiny voice to my yearning!”

I confided my Inspiration, and he grinned like a sailor on shore-leave.

“Sure,” says he. “we can have some tea and play at being, how did you out it? yes, ‘bosom friends.’ I think I know what you are up to.” He reached for the intercom. “Mr. Lagoo? please join– ”

So we had tea. And biscuits. The Impediment sat in the corner, slurping his frightened tea and oscillating his eyes. The camaraderie between Milton and yours humbly was palpable. He painted me in such glowing colors to Mr. Lagoo that I was a virtual Aurora Borealis. Overcome by emotion, I nominated the same. “You are equally well endowed, if not more,” says I. And my child, when forthcoming, would be his, I insisted. After all, we were all related vis-a-vis the One True Monkey. The jolly old Egg laughed a bit more than the scene called for, but otherwise, it was a *tour de farce*.

Can you blame the poor ex-Impediment for wringing my hands of all moisture and apologizing for past misconduct? He had had no intimation of my reach and grasp (apparently, the damn Ursulines had spread all kinds of rumors). There is nothing-to-do but to go to his house for dinner. Disembowel me or agree, says he! I took the high road and invited him to canter along likewise, and we let bygones be bygones; spit and shake, as the Yanks say.

##

So here we are in the fullness of Time. The inestimable Poornima currently houses a small Child Unit; by definition, one Milton Deshpande, and hopefully, a virile male issue.

Damn it, Reader, I’m casting about for an End, and it is as oleaginous as the Beginning.

“End on a moral,” advises well-wishers. “A moral, for a time-spender of this sort, is a must!” Thusly:

Moral! Dare to count your Eggs before they hatch because Fortuna, bless her bosom, does not favor Chickens.

Or how about this:

Moral! All’s well that ends well, sayeth the Bard.

So be it.

— The End —

Notes:

In 1955, Milton Friedman was invited by the Indian Government to advise the Ministry of Finance on economic planning (which, as Galbraith pointed out, is like asking the Pope to recommend a good contraceptive). During his visit to Delhi, he produced a report. It was ignored at the time, but is now considered something of a classic statement on the post-Independence Indian economy.

I must confess that there is no mention of any time machine in Friedman's original report; indeed, in Prof. Gary Dymski's paper, *Money as a 'Time Machine' in the New Financial World*, the metaphor is credited to the economist Paul Davidson.

As regards Purushottam: there is a certain character type peculiar to post-colonial nations. He (and it *is* a 'he') haunts government offices, he is forever on the verge of success, he is congenitally optimistic, his entire life is a circus of circumstances, and he can often be spotted holding forth at tea stalls. The Indian novelist, G. V. Desani, reified this character in his magnum opus, *All About H. Hatterr*.

Desani aficionados will find Purushottam's liberties with the English language rather familiar. Here is how H. Hatterr describes it:

"I write rigmarole English, straining your goodly godly tongue, maybe: but friend, I forsook my Form, School and Head, while you stuck to yours, learning reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic."

Purushottam's English is Desani-lite. It is not really "Indian English" (Anurag Mathur's *The Inscrutable Americans* has some great examples of this variant).

I have no doubt that Dr. Friedman encountered a Purushottam or two during his trip to India. That's just the way Karma works. Again, H. Hatterr:

"As to *Truth*, the great generalization is, '*Dam*' mysterious! *Mum's the word!*' As to *Life*, the locus classicus, '*contrast*'!"

This story is dedicated to G. V. Desani.