

## MR. BAHL

### Hindustan Times 2006

The courier boy delivered the letter and I noticed that there were letters for every single resident of our small block. I was tempted to throw the letter in the garbage as one is wont to do with “personalized” letters informing me about the latest plan for weight reduction in a newly opened center in the neighborhood. However, on opening, the letter turned out to be one of the most hilarious things I had read in a long time- it was an open letter to all the residents from my neighbour.

My neighbour, Mr. B ( the resemblance to the other famous Mr. B is not off the mark!) has taken it upon himself to act as a nucleus of revolt against the Residents Welfare Association! The letter detailed all the injustices suffered by him due to the arbitrary ways of the Association and extolled the residents to “contact him” in case they had any “probelams”.

The disillusionment started when of our neighbour wanted to have a “jaagran” in the colony park opposite his house. Fully aware that the colony rules forbid the use of this particular park for such functions, he went ahead and got the tents erected late at night! Presented with a fait accompli, the Association after much arguments relented and the jagran was held. Round One to Mr. B.

Then came the issue of digging a borewell on the roadside in front of his house. The association got the digging stopped but my neighbour being resourceful, got the local MLA and MP to call up the police and so a borewell was installed on public land! The association was clearly upset about this, but beyond innocuous resolutions, could not do a thing.

Mr. B is clearly very resourceful- it seems that before the big IT boom in Gurgaon, he was a small time spare parts dealer in West Delhi, living in a refugee colony. Then Gurgaon became like its counterpart San Jose in the Silicon Valley, San Gurgaon and Mr. B’s properties in “the IT/BPO destination” became hugely valuable. The house next to ours was bought and remodeled into West Delhi Gothic, of course in contravention of all bylaws. But old habits die hard- just like they used to in the small by-lanes of the refugee colony, the whole family brings out chairs and sits on the roadside to have their tea and chat! Or better still, the road is blocked for occasions like “felicitating the newly elected NSUI candidates in DUSU elections!”

With all this happening, living in the colony was like watching a riveting soap opera where one was curious to find out everyday what the next move has been from either side- the Association trying its best to use legal means to stop the “angry young Mr. B” while Mr. B being totally shameless about doing what he thought was his birthright. But the highpoint of this hilarious Mahabharat came when Mr. B went and bought a cute St. Bernard. The dog would be tied outside his house and whenever any Association member would pass, Mr. B would make it a point to call out the dog’s name- and guess what? He had named the dog after the Association President!