Kichhu Katha -2 (Jun 21 – July 1, 2008 and Nov 6-15, 2010)

In Kicchu Katha, I described my views on some characteristics of two countries, viz, Rwanda and Algeria, where people usually do not pay visits as tourist, or do not find opportunity to visit. The present write-up, namely, Kichhu Katha -2, on the other hand, deals with my visits to two prime cities in Brazil, a country where people would love to go. Specially, to a Bengali (Banga santan) from Calcutta, so called fanatic of football, **Brazil means football**, Brazil means "Pele", "Pele" means Brazil; and during the World Cup, Brazil means India, if not Calcutta, i.e., such a special feeling with the name.

Note that Brazil is the **largest nation of South America**, and the only one that was almost entirely defined by the Portuguese Empire. Two main cities that I had visited in Brazil in two different occasions are Rio de Janeiro (in short, Rio) and São Paulo. Both visits were in connection with an Indo-Brazil collaborative research program. The visit to Rio was in June 2008, while that of São Paulo was in Nov 2010. While Sao Paulo is Brazil's vibrant financial center (Alpha global city), Rio, on the other hand, has more touristic attraction. Let me describe some of their features, as I noticed, one by one.

Visit to Rio de Janeiro: The main purpose was to attend an Indo-Brazilian joint workshop, during June 24-25, 2008, organized by the Brazilian Academy of Science (BAS), to chalk out a collaborative research program and identify the areas of collaboration between India and Brazil in the broad area of Computational and Modelling Techniques. This was co-ordinated by Prof. N. Balakrishnan of IISc from Indian side and Prof. Prof Virgílio A.F. Almeida from Brazil. The necessary funds to meet the expenditure of Indian delegation and other meets in India, as per the agreement, were approved by the DST, GoI.

As a member of the delegation, I had to deliver a 45-minute talk at the Workshop on the national achievements and future plans in the area of "***Soft computing***". Other members of the Indian delegation included Prof. Gautam Baruah, IIT Gauhati, Prof. PP Chakraborty, IIT Kharagur, Prof. Krithi Ramamritham, IIT Bombay and Dr. P. Anandan. By the way (BTW), at that time **I was the Director of Indian Statistical Institute (ISI).**

When I got the invitation, I was so excited, because my earlier attempt to attend the 2007 TWAS annual meeting in Rio did not materialize for my neck-spondylitis that cropped up suddenly around that period. And Late President of India, Bharat Ratna Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the then Chairman, ISI Governing Council, advised me not to travel such a long distance with that health problem.

My itinerary was as follows: Kolkata-Delhi-Paris-Rio Janeiro-Paris-Delhi-Kolkata. Domestic flights were by Jet Airways, while the international ones by Air France.

On our return journey, I took a stop-over at Paris for two days to visit INSEAD at Fontainebleau, France. One of the world's most elite business schools, INSEAD, is also famous for IT (Information Technology) Management. I was having a collaborative project, through my Institute (ISI), with Prof. Soumitra Dutta, the then Dean of INSEAD. Since I was passing by Paris that gave me an opportunity to visit INSEAD as a by-product; thereby **making the overall trip more fruitful academically.**

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DELHI   ARRIVAL TIME: 1935

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DELHI      AF 0147 L        22JUN 0040  LLIPIA       22JUN 22JUN 2PC
PARIS CDG                   ARRIVAL TIME: 0605       Duration: 8:55 hrs


PARIS CDG   AF 0444 L       22JUN 1015  LLIPIA       22JUN 22JUN 2PC
RIO JANEIRO GIG             ARRIVAL TIME: 1655       Duration: 11:40 hrs


RIO JANEIRO GIG AF 0443 H   27JUN 1620  HKEEIA        27JUN 27JUN 2PC
PARIS CDG                   ARRIVAL TIME: 0755        Duration: 10:35 hrs


PARIS CDG       AF 0148 H   30JUN 1025  HKEEIA       30JUN 30JUN 2PC
DELHI                       ARRIVAL TIME: 2215       Duration: 8:10 hrs


DELHI        9W 0922 L      01JUL 0920  HKEEIA       01JUL 01JUL 28K
KOLKATA NETAJI              ARRIVAL TIME: 1130
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While going, I met Balakrishnan (Balki, in short) and Gautam at the Paris Charles de Gaule airport in the morning, as they arrived by different flights. In the flight (AF 0444) I was given a window seat almost at the back of the plane. Two girls were seating next to me, speaking in different language. The flight time was about 11 and a half hours covering almost the whole day. While landing at Rio airport in the afternoon, the birds-eye view of the city with sea beaches was fantastic. Every passenger around me was watching through windows to enjoy. Just for curiosity I asked the lady next to me who was also looking through my window – do you speak English? Is there any meaning of the name Rio de Janeiro? Automatic reply came, **"River of January".** The way she replied, as if this is a very simple question, and the answer is known to everybody, and how come that this man (!) does not know ☺ Really, I liked the English translated name from Portuguese. Lovely name ☺ Lovely look, too.

Note: As per Google search, Rio is named for a river that does not exist now. According to tradition, the spot, now called Rio de Janeiro, was first visited in January 1502 by Portuguese explorers, who believed the bay they encountered (now called Guanabara Bay) was the mouth of a river.

The flight landed smoothly. However, collecting the luggage before immigration took quite long time, because my trolley bag came at last on the belt. It was marked "X" with a white chalk. (This happened, somehow, quite often to me, either luggage lost/ misallocated, or arrived at last. The reason is still unknown to me ☺) Because of the "X"-mark, the bag was inspected specially by some custom officers after opening it thoroughly. May be, it was the policy of random checking or scrutinizing! Or, may be that, in the worst possibility, the bag appeared to belong to a smuggler or criminal or someone of similar category ☺**.**

It may be mentioned that the said delay in receiving my bag did not annoy me much, because it could have been even worse ☺**.** Now, I am quite accustomed with this, and always get ready for such an odd situation in every trip with check-in baggage, even in domestic travel. Moreover, now a days, I get sometimes even surprised if the luggage does not get mislocated ☺.

Although my luggage got misplaced several times (starting from 1981 by Air France), every time I got it back within a few days, be in USA, Europe or India, i.e., it never got lost.

Note: However, the biggest "mystery" in this context in my long travel history was in Amsterdam, Holland during my first time visit there in late 1981 or early 1982. After submitting my PhD thesis,

three of us of Imperial College (Dr. Sukanta Biswas, Dr. Abhijit Chakraborty, the then research scholars in EE and ME respectively, and me) made a short trip to Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg. Sukanta and Abhijit were British citizen of Indian origin. They are younger than me, and very nice ("khub-i bhalo chhele"). I used to call them jokingly **"Bangrej"** (Bangali + Engrej) ☺. I took a Be-Ne-Lux visa, used to be there at that time for visiting these three countries together. Abhijit drove his car (Italian made Alpha Romeo), we crossed English Channel along with our car by an overnight ferry, and landed at Hook of Holland (sea port) in the next morning. After visiting here and there during day time, we parked our car in late evening at some tourist spot in Amsterdam, as finding a convenient parking place was not easy, even at that time, in a metro city of tourist attraction. Then we went to find the YMCA youth hostel where our accommodation was booked for night stay. It was a cheaper accommodation in a three-layer bunks in a dormitory. There was a restriction in time, perhaps 11PM, before which one needs to get into the hostel. Otherwise, stay out ☺ We thought after seeing around the city in night and finishing the dinner we would bring our car and park in the vicinity of the hostel. But, somehow (**?**) it was quite late by the time we finished all. So, we entered the hostel directly without bringing the car. We slept with what we were wearing the whole day. After getting up in the morning, Abhijit and Sukanta went together to bring the car back, and I was waiting in the hostel. After they came back, I was told that - whatever garments/ bag that I had inside and in trunk (dickey) of the car were almost all missing, but their items were there intact inside the dickey. **Isn't surprising? Till today, that is a fallacy to me** ☺

I had (a) a woolen gray color formal over-coat purchased in 1981, on Christmas sale at a price of about 70 pounds, from the famous Selfridges, located in Oxford Street towards the Hyde Park Corner, London, (b) an ordinary casual relatively older brown jacket (anorak) that I purchased from Wales in 1979 at about 10 pounds, and (c) some garments of Marks & Spencer. BTW, I was very fond of buying from Marks & Spencer. The over-coat and the anorak were kept inside the car, while the other garments were in the dickey packed in an Indian kits bag. The bag was borrowed from Dr. Dilip Saha, my room-mate at Lillian Pension Hall, which is located next to Paddington underground station, London. All my clothes, except the anorak, were stolen (or missing). That anorak and the **garments of Sukanta and Abhijit were not stolen.**

As a result, I had to spend the next few days with the same set of cloths, including a woolen formal (half) jacket, which I was wearing before the incident. That jacket which was bought from Barton, a popular jacket shop located around the crossing of Oxford Street and Totten Ham Court Road, London. Luckily, my camera (Pentax MX) was with me, so the remaining part of the trip did not get totally spoiled ☺. However, **I was really shocked about the happening, and even today it is still a mystery, because it is unbelievable what those two Bangrej said (?)**

Let us now come back to Rio story ☺.

We were received outside the airport and then brought to the following Hotel on Av. Atlantica where accommodation was arranged. The hotel is located right on the world famous **Copacabana beach**. By the time we reached the hotel, we were all tired, and the outside became dark, too.

LEME OTHON PALACE
Av. Atlântica, 656 - Leme
Tel. (+55 21) 2122-5900
http://www.othonhotels.com

One may note that, being in the southern hemisphere, weather in Brazil is almost opposite to ours. Relation between the two countries is: hot-cold, cold-hot, not so hot-not so cold ☺

Let me also remind that Brazil is a country with colorful (or multi-color) people, e.g., white, black, gray, and yellow (Japanese). So, all of them are not like "Pele" or of his color ☺

Next day, in the morning I had little walk on the side footpath of Copacabana beach. It was a lovely experience. The beach is very clean with its colorful surroundings and unique characteristics. It is different in many respects from ours in India. **I will describe those with photos in the later part of the write-up.**

After breakfast, we three (Balki, Gautam and me) took a day trip to visit Rio and its adjacent places by hiring a car. It was little raining and cold too. Spots visited mainly include: Sugarloaf Mountain, Christ the Redeemer statue, football stadium, and some special corners of the city.

First we went to visit Sugarloaf Mountain. This is known worldwide for its cableway and panoramic views of the city and beyond. By the time we reached the spot at a smaller peak for a cable ride to Sugarloaf Mountain, it started raining with cloudy weather. **We were welcomed with a strange look by a local leader** from a tree (Fig. 1) with Brazilian colourful dolls (Fig. 2) ☺ Note that the destination point on the Sugarloaf Mountain is at higher altitude. So, while going there, the cable car travels upward like a ramp. In the return ride downward, the weather was luckily little better with no rain. So, I could take some reasonably-good camera shots of the city and beaches from the cable car and hill. The sceneries combining the sea, boats, hills, forests and buildings were really beautiful. Figs. 3-9 are some such example pictures.

Fig. 1: Surprise look at Indian strangers: Welcoming to Sugarloaf Mountain ☺

Figs. 2 (a & b): Typical Brazilian colourful clay dolls

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Figs. 3-9: Panoramic views on the way to and from Sugarloaf Mountain. 3: Sugarloaf Mountain from distance, 4-7: Typical sceneries, 8: Balki and me with the background view of the "Christ the Redeemer" in Corcovado mountain, and 9: "Christ the Redeemer" on the peak from distance

Note: Sugarloaf Mountain is basically a peak situated in Rio, at the mouth of Guanabara Bay on a peninsula that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean. Rising 396m above the harbor, its name is said to refer to its resemblance to the traditional shape of concentrated refined loaf sugar. This mountain is one of several monolithic granite and quartz mountains that rise straight from the water's edge around Rio (*obtained by Google search*).

While driving to our next destination to see the Redeemer statue at Corcovado Mountain, we **met the Father of our Nation** (Mahatma Gandhi, DoB: Oct 2, 1869), "Bapu-ji", standing as usual at his innocent/ helpless style with a "lathi" (stick) in a park adjacent to the main road (Fig. 10). Arreh! dadu, tumi ekahne-o? Baah, dariye dariye samudrer haoa khachho aar colourful jinish dekhcho! No tension. Go and see in your country, what is happening there after independence? If possible, also visit Calcutta, the city of Joy. Your famous statue there in Mayo road crossing became a popular place for political or nonpolitical "dharna", protest, demonstration, "obosthan dharmaghat" etc. Sob-e tomar murti-r padadeshe ☺ Michhil (protest rally) korbe, tar-o starting point ba ending point tumi-i. ☺ All complains are only to you, or keeping you as a witness! Whereas here, no complain, you are in peace, Bapu ☺

Note: Fig. 11 shows such an example of political "dharna" on Oct 4, 2020 at the Gandhi statue in Mayo Road crossing of Calcutta. Further, this "dharna" was in protest to a rally – from Birla Planetarium to the **same Gandhi statue** in Calcutta - organized by the State ruling party a day back

on Oct 3, 2020 against the Central Government for an incident in another state of India. Incidentally, these two events took place when I was writing this article. (So, they are cited just as examples in the aforesaid context **involving Gandhi statue**, and no other intension against any party or so.)

Fig. 10: Mahatma Gandhi statue at Rio de Janeiro

Fig. 11: গাঁধী মূর্তির পাদদেশে বিক্ষোভ (Demonstration in Mayo road, Calcutta at Gandhi Statue), *Photo from Anandabazar Patrika, Kolkata, October 5, 2020*

As seen in Figs. 10 and 11, the said Gandhi statue of our Calcutta has much better look and finish than that of Rio. Ours is also superior to many others that I had seen across our country and abroad. However, in the context of Pattern Recognition and Machine Learning, **his features for identification are highly robust.** For example, whatever be the size and shape of his hands, ears, eyes, etc. in the statue, if it looks like an old man, standing with a long "lathi" (stick) as support, and wearing only a "dhuti" (cloth) extended up to knee or so, with no shirt or top, i.e., naked upper body (khali gaye), then it means Bapu-ji with a good recognition score ☺

We had enough discussion on Bapu. Meanwhile we reached the base (foot) of the Corcovado Mountain. While going up the mountain, at the right side we noticed a densely populated residential area with closely packed housing units. We were told that it is a slum area (Fig. 12). Drinking water supply lines, as provided to them by the local administrative authority, were visible on the slant surface of the hill. One must admit that, **compared to our slums in India, their look as well as quality is much better, and no way comparable** ☺

Fig. 12: A slum in Rio on Corcovado Mountain

When we reached the **statue of Christ the Redeemer at the top of the Corcovado Mountain**, the weather was cloudy. Still, the views from there were fantastic. These include the Rio football stadium, some sports complex, the Sugarloaf Mountain and a lake, among others. Figs. 13-22 show some such views including the statue of the Christ. This statue is a cultural icon of both Rio de Janeiro and Brazil, and is listed as **one of the New Seven Wonders of the World**. The details of its creation are mentioned in the next Note after Fig. 21.

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Figs. 13-18: Views from the top of the Corcovado Mountain

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Figs. 19-20: Christ the Redeemer Statue (front & back side view)

Note that in front of the statue there is a balcony/viewing gallery (Fig. 16). It is a nice place for having the complete front view of the statue and also for panoramic sceneries. This viewing gallery, as expected, always gets crowded with visitors. The **size of the statue is so giant** that it was not possible with my camera to take its full front size photo covering top to bottom as well as the stretched hands together, even from the furthest point of the gallery.

Fig. 21: At the bottom (Padodeshe ☺) of the statue

Note: Christ the Redeemer is an Art Deco statue of Jesus Christ in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was created by French sculptor Paul Landowski and built by Brazilian engineer Heitor da Silva Costa, in collaboration with French engineer Albert Caquot.

Romanian sculptor Gheorghe Leonida fashioned the face. Constructed between 1922 and 1931, the statue is 30 metres high, excluding its 8-metre pedestal. The arms stretch 28 metres wide. The statue weighs 635 metric tons, and is located at the peak of the 700-metre Corcovado Mountain in the Tijuca Forest National Park overlooking the city of Rio de Janeiro. This statue is a symbol of Christianity across the world and has become a cultural icon of both Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. It is listed as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. It is made of reinforced concrete and soapstone (*courtesy of Google search*).

Fig. 22: Christ the Redeemer from the bottom of the Corcovado Mountain

Fig. 23: "Good bye & visit again" from a Local leader of Tijuca Forest National Park

While coming down the hill, we met some colourful local leaders of the Tijuca Forest National Park in our right side. When I pointed my camera to them for a quick click, interestingly one of them stood on the yellow fence (railing) and got ready with a nice camera pose (Fig. 23). **This was unbelievable** ☺. It appeared that (s)he gladly wanted me taking her(his) photo.

It may be mentioned that the national animal of Brazil is the magnificent jaguar. However, Brazil is probably best known for its incredible diversity of monkeys. This diversity means both in look and colour, among other characteristics. We have noticed various colourful monkeys in the mountain areas. Figs. 1 and 25 are just two such examples.

In our country we have plenty of monkeys ("bandar") which are mostly visible in hilly areas besides some other places. They are of the same colour, not so pleasant. Their naughty and particularly unpredictable behaviour is termed as "Bandramo". When one uses this word as an adjective referring to someone's activity, it is not taken in good sense, rather considered as an abusive language (slang). The use of this word is very common in our Bengal. We had also learnt from school days that a "bandor" can no way be gentle ☺. And this was practically found to be true. Accordingly, everybody usually gets scared, to an extent, of Bandor whenever they see nearby, and protects (hides) their belongings, particularly food, from their snatching. Even when I tried to take photos in my camera in India, it was not so easy.

Achchha! amader desher bandor gulo bandar-er moton-i hoy keno? **Jemon dekhte, temon byabhohar** ☺

In contrary, Brazilian monkeys were disciplined, not unruly like ours, as appeared to me during the trip. They are of different colours and looks, and **overall cute!** Interestingly, one may note that okhaner manush gulo-o jemon colourful (e.g., white, black, gray and yellow), bandor gulo-o temni colourful. (**People there are colourful as well as the monkeys**) ☺

Our next spot to visit was the Rio football (soccer) stadium. Without seeing a football stadium in Brazil, the trip can no way be complete. We were not allowed to enter inside the ground. However, we spent some time to see around inside the complex. As a token of respect, footprints of several renowned football players were preserved by engraving them on the floor at some place around the entrance. This was really worthy of seeing. Figs. 24 and 25 show such prints of **Pele** (Brazil) and **Eusebeo** (Portugal), as examples.

It would be interesting to mention an incident in this context. In one of those days during our stay in Rio, we heard in the evening TV news that our great **"Pele" got robbed** at some place in Brazil. We were really surprised! How can it be possible to him, and that too in his own country? However, in the next day, we came to know that the guy who robbed was caught, and he confessed that he did it as because he could not recognize Pele, the Great son of the land ☺

Because of the said incident, one of our members of the delegation team also got a call from his home in India enquiring about this, and to know if we were safe in Rio. Probably, they heard the news through an international TV channel.

Figs. 24 and 25: Footprints in Rio Stadium

Figs. 26 and 27: Wall paints in Rio Stadium of some special moments in football matches

One may see in Fig. 27 that the famous jersey (uniform) of Brazil soccer team has three colors, **viz, green, blue and yellow**, as in their National Flag (Fig. 28), with the number in **white**. This resemblance is very unique. Meanings of these colors are explained in the following Note.

Fig. 28: The National Flag of Brazil

Note: Brazil is the largest country in South Africa. It has a unique history and unique national identity. And so is Brazil's national flag (Fig. 28) which is really exceptional in its **green, blue and yellow** colors. The green color symbolizes the forests, the yellow represents gold, and the blue globe and stars symbolize the night sky filled with stars and constellations; all these characterize the country's states. The starry sky has 27 **white** five-pointed stars and a curved white equatorial band with their national slogan motto "*Ordem e Progresso*" (meaning **"order and progress"** in English) inscribed across it. 27 stars, represent the Brazilian states and the Federal District. (*Photo in Fig. 28 taken from Internet*)

We returned to our hotel (Leme Othon Palace) in the evening. Next two days (June 24 and 25, 2008) we were busy with the Indo-Brazilian Joint workshop at the Brazilian Academy of Science. From morning to evening, we had only talking - listening - talking – listening … by Indian members and Brazilian members, alternatively one after another ☺. At the end of the lectures on 25ᵗʰ, we chalked out some initial programs with the respective collaborative partners for future plan. Our official dinner was at the Real Astoria Restaurant on 25ᵗʰ night.

Fig. 29: Brazilian Academy of Science

Fig. 30: Group photo of the members of both countries

Fig. 31: Outside the Real Astoria Restaurant

In the forenoon of next day (26th June), I paid a visit to the Department of Electrical Engineering, Graduate School of Engineering, PEE/COPPE/UFRJ, (Programa de Engenharia Eletrica, COPPE, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) on an invitation from Prof. Amit Bhaya , a faculty there and one of the members of the Brazilian collaborative team. I delivered a talk to students and faculty. Fig. 32 shows the entrance of the campus of COPPE, UFRJ.

Fig. 32: Campus of the COPPE of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Note: Alberto Luiz Coimbra Institute for Graduate Studies and Research in Engineering (Portuguese: *Instituto Alberto Luiz Coimbra de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Engenharia*) is often referred to as **Coppe** due to its original name (Coordenação dos Programas de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa de Engenharia). It is a research and learning center in the Center of Technology (CT) of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (**UFRJ**). The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro or University of Brazil (Portuguese: *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro*, UFRJ or *Universidade do Brasil*) is a public university in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. UFRJ is the largest federal university in the country and is one of the Brazilian centers of excellence in teaching and research.

While discussing with some faculty members there, I just felt like enquiring about one of my Brazillian colleagues, named, Ivonice, in the Electrical Engineering Dept. of Imperial College, London, where I studied about four years (Sept 1979 - May 1983), if anyone by any chance had known her, as I could recall that she was from Rio. Surprisingly, I was told that she worked here in the UFRJ after her return from Imperial College, and she had superannuated. Had I visited this department a year back, I could have met her.

Note: Who is Ivonice? She is a Brazilian EE, soft spoken, and little elder than me, I guess. She used to seat in the room, next to mine. My working desk was in Room no. 1105 on the 11th floor of the EE Dept. Our thesis advisors were also different. She used to wear colourful "Gagras" (long Skirts). Sometimes, chule chhoto chhoto saru binuni-te choto choto rangeen puti lagano ☺ All these looked her very uncommon, sometimes funny too, in those days in 1980', but definitely not now ☺. She loved talking. Basically, golpo korte bhalo bashe. Sometimes, I had to give a false excuse to avoid her. Her husband was a white, while her complexion was "tamate" (copper color) ☺. In fact, when she introduced me to her husband for the first time, I got surprised too. Though I was curious to know, I was hesitant to ask her. She had two sons, as I could recollect. They were also white. She invited me and another Indian Bengali student (Siddheswar Ray) once for dinner to her university apartment and treated with Brazilian food along with her family members.

Fig. 33: Earthen clay made Brazilian flower vase

Her behaviour and actions were more like an Indian "Didi" ☺. She had strong desire in knowing about our country and family life back home, among others. Whenever she washed her cups/dishes in our lab basin, she used to also clean my (yellow) tea cup willingly if it looked shabby or stained. She behaved so nicely with me, may be, as because we were both from third world countries, or there is some kind of more resemblance of Brazilians with Indians, e.g., in terms of livelihood or temperament or something else, as compared to other nationalities around, such as Chinese, black Africans, and Arabians ☺ Overall, she was a nice lady and a good colleague. **It would have loved to meet her in Rio, her native place, after so long.**

Enough of Ivonice ☺ Let us now go for lunch.

We had lunch together in a group in a sea food restaurant. The main dish that we had was a popular meal there, I was told. I forgot the name. It looked like whitish over-boiled rice (**Bangali-r Jao bhat**) mixed with small prawns, as I can describe at most ☺

After lunch, Dr. Bhaya took me to a mall to see around. As usual, I bought some earthen clay made Brazilian souvenirs (flower vase and wall plate as In Figs. 33 and 34). In one of those days I also had some Brazilian stone made decorating trees from a shop near our hotel, as well as famous Brazilian Coffee from the city.

Fig. 34: Earthen clay made Brazilian wall plate

We returned to our hotel in late afternoon. Then, I spent some time seeing around the Copacabana beach with my camera. Almost every day I visited the beach in the morning and/or afternoon whenever got an opportunity, as our hotel was just on the beach. The beauty of the Copacabana beach is evident from the pictures in Figs. 35-51, taken at different times of a day from morning to evening. Some of its salient characteristics, as I could see, include:

- It is a fine-granule sand beach, relatively much smoother than our, say, Puri beach (Orissa), Marina beach (Madras), Kovalam beach (Trivandrum) or Myanmar beach (Goa).
- It is a very clean beach with colourful surrounding, and its use is multi-fold apart from having fun in the beautiful Atlantic sea.
- It has a series of football goal posts (rectangular structure that is placed at each end of the playing field), erected almost permanently one after another, to play/practice football in the beach. So, one can realize **why Brazil is a Brand name in Football** ☺
- It provides a sleeping place to homeless people at night, and their bed roles are kept there itself in a corner during day time. It is also a common place to young couples for romance.
- It has attractive sand sculptures, regularly built as in our Puri beach.
- A wide beautiful footpath adjacent to the beach has further enhanced its beauty and utility.

Figs. 35-38: Typical morning scenery in Avenue Atlantic and the Beach footpath

Fig. 39: Still alive in Copacabana

Fig. 40: Morning in Copacabana: Full of energy and enjoyment in South Atlantic

Figs. 41-42: Sand sculptures

Figs. 43-44: Views from our hotel. Practicing volleyball in weekends (44)

Figs. 45-46: Beach soccer in weekends

Figs. 47-48: Afternoon in Copacabana: Children playing with South Atlantic

Figs. 49-50: Copacabana around Sunset

Fig. 51: Christ the Redeemer on Corcovado Mountain from Copacabana around Sunset

All these scenery (Fig. 35-51) of Copacabana beach at different times of a day together signify what may only be described in simple words as the **"Picturesque Paradise of Rio"**.

It is now clear why Copacabana beach is so world famous. One can also find its basic differences with ours in India!

In this context some stray thoughts came to my mind as follows: We have so many beaches in our country for its location in the globe with Bay of Bengal in the East, Indian Ocean in the South and Arabian Sea in the West. Most of them are beautiful too, and they have lots of touristic attractions. However, do we take so much care of them? **Are they clean enough like Copacabana?** Do we maintain them properly? What are their uses other than, say, taking bath, making fun and noise in a crowd, hawking here and there, littering with rubbish, doing nuisance activities, and sometimes using as a toilet ☺. Why couldn't we use a part of some beaches, wherever possible, say, for sports activity, particularly when Indians love sports and do take active part in international competitions? Is it because of our attitude, or monetary problem, or both, or something else (unknown)?

Copacabana's story would remain incomplete without the mention of **Copacabana Palace** (Fig. 52), a famous hotel in South America. It is located at Av. Atlântica, 1702 facing Copacabana beach, like our hotel Leme Othon Palace at Av. Atlântica, 656. Copacabana palace is one of Copacabana's most iconic landmarks.

Fig. 52: Copacabana Palace in Rio

Note: Copacabana Palace was designed by French architect Joseph Gire. It was built in a style that follows the line and model of the great beach hotels of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and opened on August 13, 1923. Copacabana Palace, with almost a century of existence, continues to be one of the most important hotel complexes in Rio, and in Brazil, with 243 rooms (116 apartments and 127 suites), divided between the main and the annex buildings, in an area of 12,000 square meters. This Palace is known throughout Brazil for the international celebrities who stay at this hotel when visiting the city Rio. The hotel is also known for hosting some of the most popular social events in Brazil. Copacabana Palace has been voted several times as the best hotel in South America, including in 2009, when it won the World Travel Award, one of the most important tourism awards in the world. (*Collected by Google search*)

In conclusion, our almost five-day visit to Rio was fantastic and memorable. The trip was significant to me both academically and culturally. For those who love to travel as tourist, Rio is one of the must cities to be visited, in my opinion. **In one sentence to describe Rio de Janeiro, it is a very colourful, lively and romantic city; here people are colourful, monkey are colourful, beaches are colourful, scenery is colourful, and so is their Carnival festival** ☺. Fig. 53 shows a colourful Carnival costume, as an example.

Next day (June 27, 2008) afternoon, I left Rio for Paris with sweet memories. Balki and I travelled together up to Paris in the same flight. Others took different flights at different times.

We reached Charles de Gaule airport of Paris in the morning of 28th June. I was received there by a driver from INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France, and was then taken to a hotel for check-in. It was about 50 minutes' drive from the airport to the hotel. Fontainebleau is a town located about 55.5km southeast of the center of Paris. I had been to Fontainebleau before a couple of times in connection to my visits to INSEAD. Like several other small towns in Europe, e.g., Pompeo in Italy, Groningen in Netherlands, Plock in Poland and Norwich in England, Fontainebleau in France is cute.

Note: Fontainebleau is known for the opulent **Palace of Fontainebleau** (or, **Château de Fontainebleau,** in French). Built by French royalty, with parts dating back to the 1100s, this palace houses Marie Antoinette's Turkish boudoir, the Napoleon Museum and a lavish theater. Its formal gardens feature ornamental lakes and sculptures. Surrounding the town and the palace is Fontainebleau forest.

The luxurious **Fontainebleau Palace** is one of the largest French royal châteaux (palaces). The medieval castle and subsequent palace served as a residence for the French monarchs from Louis VII to Napoleon III. Francis I and Napoleon were the monarchs who had the most influence on the Palace as it stands today. **It became a national museum in 1927** and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981. (*Obtained by Google search*)

Fontainebleau museum (also called, **Fontainebleau Château museum**) is entirely devoted to Napoleon Bonaparte with the objective of presenting a view of the Emperor and his family. It may be mentioned that, as a result of a donation of many objects by Prince Napoleon and Princess Marie-Clotilde, the state Napoleonic collections were redistributed in 1979 within all State museums. And this Fontainebleau museum, entirely devoted to Napoleon Bonaparte, was then created. This

museum is located within the walking distance from INSEAD. Fig. 54 shows the famous Napoleon Bonaparte Place on the way to museum from INSEAD.

Students and teachers/professors with valid identity documents (IDs) do not need to pay the entrance fee to visit the museum and the big beautiful garden behind. However, this provision was mentioned in small letters at some corner point of the ticket counter. Therefore, unless you, being a genuine teacher or student, knew this rule, or could locate its mention at the counter, you would very likely miss this opportunity, and would be paying a good amount of Euro to enter. I was advised by Prof. Soumitra Dutta, my host at INSEAD, to carry an ID card explicitly mentioning the word "Professor" as my identity. If, instead of "Professor", the card mentions just "Dr." or "Scientist", as was in some of my cards, then it may not serve the purpose. This is simply because, the officers there in the museum who would be checking the genuineness of the said category usually check some valid words like Professor and Teacher in the Id. card, although we know that a doctorate or a scientist could be a professor/teacher too.

One may note in this context that the entrance fee to a good museum in Europe continent, excluding the United Kingdom (UK), usually is not a small amount. To the contrary, consider the city London, UK where several famous museums, e.g., British museum, Science museum, Natural history museums, National Portrait Gallery are free to visit. **London is unique in this respect.** (This was in practice at least during 1979-83 when I was living there, and also afterwards).

Fig. 54: Place Napoleon Bonaparte in Fontainebleau

Note: We all know that the United Kingdom (UK) is a part of Europe continent, although it is separated from the main land Europe by the English Channel. Interestingly, for some reason, **the word "Continent" to a British usually means the main land Europe**. That is what I had noticed during my four-year stay in England. Initially, it really confused me when some English/British colleague at Imperial college or in the hostel used to tell me, say, "last week I was in the Continent ….", or "I would be travelling tonight to continent ….". I used to think - what it actually means, he had always been (or would always be) in the same Continent, whether in the mainland or in British Isles across the English Channel ☺. **May be, the very English Channel and the internationally spoken English language have created a (virtual) mental barrier** between British and the non-English speaking Europeans ☺.

Let us consider a global picture in this context. Usually whites are claimed to be superior in the world. Within them there is a broad division whether American white or European white. Among European whites, again there exists a boundary between English-speaking or not. Further, within non-English speaking Europeans, if s(he) is from West or East. Similarly, within English speaking British, whether from England, or from Scotland, Wales or Ireland; and even within England, if s(he is from South or North. All these divisions are practically made just to show one's supremacy over others. This kind of discrimination exists more or less in every community/ country, including ours. **Basically, we all love to be discriminated claiming our superiority to others ☺.**

Let us now return to museum visit ☺. Figs. 55 shows the luxurious Fontainebleau Palace. Figs. 56-62, which are self-explanatory, describe in a nutshell the museum and the garden behind.

Fig. 55: Fontainebleau Palace

Figs. 56 and 57: Fontainebleau Chateau Museum: Front and back views with garden

Figs. 58-59: Example snapshots of chandeliers, paintings and pots inside the museum

Figs. 60-61: Example snapshots of sculptures inside the museum

Figs. 60-61: Example snapshots of sculptures inside the museum

Fig. 62: A view of the garden behind the museum

Fig. 63: Fontainebleau forest surrounding the town and the palace

Fontainebleau museum is not so big like Louvre in Paris, and not at all comparable, too. However, it is a very nice place to spend some good time seeing the displays inside as well as looking around the backside garden which was full of sculptures, ornamental lakes and fountains. I have visited this museum a few times whenever I went to INSEAD. **Fontainebleau is all together a nice town, perfectly fit for spending weekends.**

Note that June is a summer time in Europe, and the Sun sets quite late; thereby giving enough time with sunlight, say, upto about 8PM, to see around comfortably.

Before visiting the museum in the afternoon on 29th June 2008, I had an invitation on that day for lunch at Soumitra's bungalow with his Spanish wife Dr. Lourdes Casanova (Figs. 64 and 65). It was indeed a delicious lunch mostly with continental dishes. (Tobe, banga santan-der priyo "Bhat o machh-er jhol" noy ☺).

Fig. 64: Soumitra's bungalow at Fontainebleau

Note: Prof. Soumitra Dutta, the then Dean of INSEAD, is an IIT-Delhi EE graduate. I met him first in UC, Berkeley when I was visiting Prof Lotfi Zadeh in 1986 as a Fulbright Post-Doc Fellow, and Soumitra was there a Master's student in CS. A decent, dynamic and helpful boy, Soumitra was brought up in India, but outside West Bengal. His accent speaks so. Since then (1986) we were in soft touch. In fact, it was mostly for his initiative that we had the ISI-INSEAD collaborative project. Several years back, he moved from INSEAD to Cornell University, New York as a Professor of Management and the Founding Dean of the SC Johnson College of Business. He is known for being the architect of the Global Innovation Index, which has now become the global standard among innovation indices. Recently, Soumtra and Lourdes have **contributed an endowed Chair in Artificial**

Intelligence at IIT-Delhi, named after Soumitra Dutta, to promote excellence & leadership, and interaction between the industry and academia in the area of Artificial Intelligence.

Fig. 65: Lourdes and Soumitra with their pet

Before and after the lunch we had chats, as usual. Lourdes loves chatting. Spanish people, as I had seen, are usually warm. I once asked her jokingly why did you get married to an Indian leaving behind any Spanish or any other European nationals. So far I could recollect, she said something like this - one of her elder sisters (?) got divorced after marrying an European or American. So, her mother said, **Indian husbands are good,** and the marriage would be unlikely to break. That statement made me feel good, but at the same time surprised too. (Kathata shune ami khusi hoyechhi, abar ekto ghabre-o gechhi ☺) Ki bolchhen uni? How could it be possible, while we usually see in our country - wives mostly complain about their husbands, no matter whether the marriage was arranged or by their own choice? ☺ Mone mone bhabchhilam - she should better be hired as a campaigner to tell this to our women in India ☺. (Lourdes-ke amamder desher meyeder-ke ei kathata shekanor janny niye gele kemon hoi?)

Next day (June 30, 2008), I left for the airport in the early morning for Air France flight AF 0148 to Delhi. Had the night stay in our ISI-Delhi Guest House on 30th, and returned to Calcutta on July 1 around noon by the Jet Air flight 9W 0922. Back to home after ten days with sweet memories.

That's all about my trip to Rio de Janeiro (and Fontainebleau as a by-product).

Rath dekha o kala becha dui-i holo ☺

Oooooooooooooooo **After about two years and four months** ooooooooooooooooO

As stated at the beginning, the purpose of vising Rio de Janeiro was to attend an Indo-Brazilian joint workshop during June 24-25, 2008, organized by the Brazilian Academy of Science (BAS). The objective was to chalk out a collaborative research program and identify the areas of collaboration between India and Brazil in the broad area of Computational and Modelling Techniques.

Therefore no relaxation after return to Calcutta. We had to arrange a reciprocal visit for the Brazilian team to India. Collaboration-er naam-e sudhu ki tumi-i ghurbe, orao ghurte ashebe? ☺ Accrodingly, we organized a joint workshop at Bangalore.

After that, we formulated several collaborative research programs among different groups in India and Brazil. My collaborator was Professor Roberto M. Cesar-Jr., Institute of Mathematics and Statistics, University of São Paulo (USP). The title of the project that we mutually finalized was: "Statistical, Structural and Soft Computing based Techniques for Pattern Recognition: Theory, Algorithms and Applications to Bioinformatics. Research teams were accordingly formed in both sides.

Research grants were received from the DST, GoI. As usual, research scholars were appointed, and machines were purchased too. Sob-i holo niyom maphik. No problem. Kono samashya-i nei. Kintu ashol samoshya holo, paper (research) berote samoy lagchhe ☺ Karon, ota to poisa dilei automatic beroi na ☺

Meanwhile, as per the agreement of collaboration, there had been several visits from both sides. **My turn to visit São Paulo came in Nov 2010.** By that time, I retired from the post of Director of ISI after completing my 5-year tenure on July 31, 2010. So, I had more time to put in research.

Visit to São Paulo: To make my presence in São Paulo academically more beneficial to them, my collaborator Professor Roberto M. Cesar-Jr arranged my trip to visit his lab at the USP in early November, coinciding with an international conference that they were organizing then, and inviting me as an invited speaker to attend the same. The name of the conference was: CIARP 2010: 15th Iberoamerican Congress on Pattern Recognition, Nov 8-11, 2010. My invited tutorial talk (of 3-hour duration) at the CIARP 2010 was scheduled on 8th November.

Besides the Lab visit and discussion with students/ researchers at the USP, and the conference talk, I was also invited to give a seminar at the Federal University of ABC (UFABC) on November 12th. My host there was Prof. David Martins. BTW, UFABC is about 3 hour drive from the USP campus. And I liked the name "University of ABC". Isn't the name cute? ☺**.**

My itinerary was as follows: Kolkata - Bombay - Johannesburg – São Paulo - Johannesburg – Bombay - Kolkata. Domestic flights were by Jet Airways, while the international ones by South African Airways.

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-------------------------------------------------------------------------------
9W 616   06NOV   CCUBOM   1805 2050 6NOV
SA 285    07NOV   BOMJNB   0235 0805   07NOV (Duration: 9:00 hrs)
SA 222    07NOV   JNBGRU    1010 1630   07NOV (Duration: 10:20 hrs)
SA 223    13NOV   GRUJNB    1830 0725   14NOV (Duration: 8:55 hrs)
SA 284    14NOV   JNBBOM   1150 0035   15NOV (Duration: 9:15 hrs)
9W 201   15NOV   BOMCCU   0635 0915   15NOV
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------
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International tickets and the domestic tickets were separate with different PNR numbers; thereby making the total price much less than of that of the same PNR. The name of the airport at Johannesburg is O.R. Tambo International airport, while of that of São Paulo is Guarulhos International Airport (GRU).

I chose to travel via Johannesburg instead of Paris, as the former airport did not require a transit visa to change the flight, unlike the latter. Otherwise, I would have preferred to travel by Air France via Paris.

Note: White (Sada)-der airport-e Indian passport dekhlei oder matha ghure jai, sob samay sandeho kore; bhabe ei bod-hoi era ekhane-i theke jabe. So, to prevent from those happenings, they started a stricter policy that you (non-whites) need to have a visa (called Transit visa) even to use this airport just to change your flight to another country. **Obviously, obtaining the transit visa means additional cost and hassle on the top of that of the main visa.** I first experienced this inconvenience from Germany in January 1991 when I was making a trip with my wife and kids (little Bantoo o Puttoo) to India from NASA, Clear Lake, Houston, Texas, USA by Pan Am (Pan American Airways) during the Gulf war. Suddenly there was a TV announcement just two days before our departure that we would need a Germany visa to have a change of flight at the Frankfurt airport. Besh! "pori ki mori", next day morning we all four together had to run with a taxi to Houston down town (about 1 hr drive from Clear Lake) to get Germany transit visas. Half a day got simply lost with lots of worries. For several years, it was applicable only for passing by German airports.

Later on, France also followed their neighbour and started this game for Indians, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and so on **….. .** I remember, I had to travel to Warsaw, Poland a couple of times by Austrian Airlines (via Viena) just to bypass Paris airport to avoid having any additional (transit) visa. Afterwards, several European countries including our famous Great Britain have adopted this rule. This policy, in turn, enables them **to earn more money as well as to discourage implicitly travelling through those lands**. As you know, Frankfurt, Paris and London are the main port cities to take trans-Atlantic transfer via Europe from our ends.

That was the reason for which I deliberately chose to travel via Johannesburg by South African Airways, instead of Paris by Air France, though the latter is known to be a more prestigious airline. In fact, I had travelled by South African Airways a few times while visiting some South American and African counties. The flights were okay. The meal quality was not as good as in e.g., Air France, Lufthansa or Cathay Pacific. However, the ticket price was relatively lower ☺

The flight time from Mumbai to Johannesburg was 9 hours to cover a distance of approximately 6960 km, while that of Johannesburg to São Paulo was 10 hrs and 20 mins for a distance of 7425 km across the South Atlantic Ocean. In the return journey (since traveling from west to east), these figures get reduced to 9:15 hrs and 8:55 hrs respectively. Time differences of India with South Africa and Brazil are 3:30 hrs and 8:30 hrs respectively.

Johannesburg O.R. Tambo International airport was very crowded. Char dike chhoto o boro and roga o mota mishiye shudhu moha-kalua ar moha kalua, majhe modhye kichhu white ar amar moton kalua ☺. Moha kaluas usually speak loud (like Indians), and are humorous. As a result, unlike a European airport, the ambience noise level in Johannesburg airport was quite high. The transit time for the next connected flight SA 222 was not enough to see around. However, during the return journey I had some time for that.

Interestingly, when the flight was rounding at a lower altitude before landing at O.R. Tambo International airport, I suddenly noticed a tall Minar (tower) with a football (black and white) on the top. Nearby a stadium was visible too. Then, suddenly it reminded me about the **Football World Cup that South Africa hosted j**ust a few months back during the middle of the year.

One may note that South Africa hosted 19th FIFA World Cup during 11 June to 11 July 2010. It is the first African nation to host the world cup. The matches were played in 10 stadiums in nine host cities around the country with the opening and final played at the Soccer City stadium in South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg.

Our flight SA 222 landed in time at Guarulhos International Airport (GRU), São Paulo in the afternoon of 7th Nov 2010. I was received by Dr. Ronaldo Fumio Hashimoto. Dr. Hashimoto (a Japanese) was a member of the Roberto's research team associated with the collaborative project. BTW, unlike the Rio trip in 2008, as described before, this time I received my luggage without any hassle ☺. The name of the hotel where I was put in with other delegates of the conference was Mercure, São Paulo - Pinheiros Hotel (Fig. 66).

Fig. 66: Hotel Mercure, São Paulo - Pinheiros

São Paulo is a municipality located in the Southeast region of Brazil. Portuguese word **"São Paulo" means "Saint Paul"** in English**.** São Paulo is Brazil's vibrant financial center and is an Alpha global city. It is the most populous city in Brazil with numerous cultural institutions and a rich architectural tradition. On the other hand, Rio de Janeiro is a huge seaside city in Brazil with high

touristic attractions, and the second-most populous municipality in Brazil. Several roads in São Paulo city are hilly (up and down) as compared to those in Rio. Since I visited Rio two years back and enjoyed a lot, it was always a bad tendency to compare São Paulo with Rio ☺.

São Paulo lies about 350 km southwest of Rio de Janeiro and about 50 km inland from its Atlantic Ocean port of Santos. The city's name derives from its having been founded by Jesuit missionaries on January 25, 1554, the anniversary of the conversion of St. Paul. (*Obtained from Google search*)

Fig. 67: View of the city from my hotel room

During Nov 8-11, 2010, I was busy with different events of the conference CIARP 2010: 15th Iberoamerican Congress on Pattern Recognition at the University of São Paulo. My three-hour tutorial talk was in the afternoon of 8th November. We also had some sightseeing programs in those days, as arranged from the conference. Banquet was on 10th.

As usual, like other conferences, those four days of CIARP 2010 were full of talks, tea/drink/ snack breaks, lunch breaks, paper award meetings and, of course, some academic gossip ("adda") whenever found convenient ☺. Figs. 68-70 are some example snaps outside the lecture halls, while Figs. 71-80 include those of sight-seeing around the city of São Paulo (e.g., a national park and a famous Cathedral), and the banquet dinner on 11th Nov.

Fig. 68: A university banner at the conference

For lunch we went to the university cafeteria. Usually, how do we pay, everywhere? We pick up items, e.g., bread, drink, main dish, rice, fruit or dessert, and then pay the total amount item wise. **Interestingly, in that cafeteria, you need to pay by their total weight.** That is, you put all the items, which you picked up, together on a weighing scale at the end, and then pay as per the total weight. Obviously, if you pick up, say, green watermelon, then you pay more and eat less, as the watermelon is usually heavy and the entire part is not eatable ☺ **My first time experience.**

Figs. 69: Registration desk: Prof. Roberto M. Cesar-Jr (L) and Dr. Ronaldo F. Hashimoto (R)

Figs. 70: Outside the conference lecture hall(s) during a drink break

Figs. 71-72: Inside a National Park in São Paulo

Fig. 73: A tree often seen in the campus of São Paulo University (*Looks like our Chalta* ☺)

Fig. 74: Banquet Dinner

Figs. 75 (a & b): Serving Brazilian steak and sausage ("Garu-r mangsho") in Banquet Dinner. Very tasty.

Note: Ei mangsho kintu amader Rajabazar Science College-er pashe jholano mangsho noi ☺ So, don't confuse.

Fig. 76: Catedral de Se de São Paulo

Note: This cathedral has a Renaissance-style dome. In spite of having that, it still holds the title of being one of the largest Neo-Gothic cathedral in the world. It has a capacity of more than 8000, and is the largest church in Sao Paulo.

Fig. 77: Inside view of the Catedral de Se de São Paulo

Fig. 78: A painting inside the Catedral de Se de São Paulo

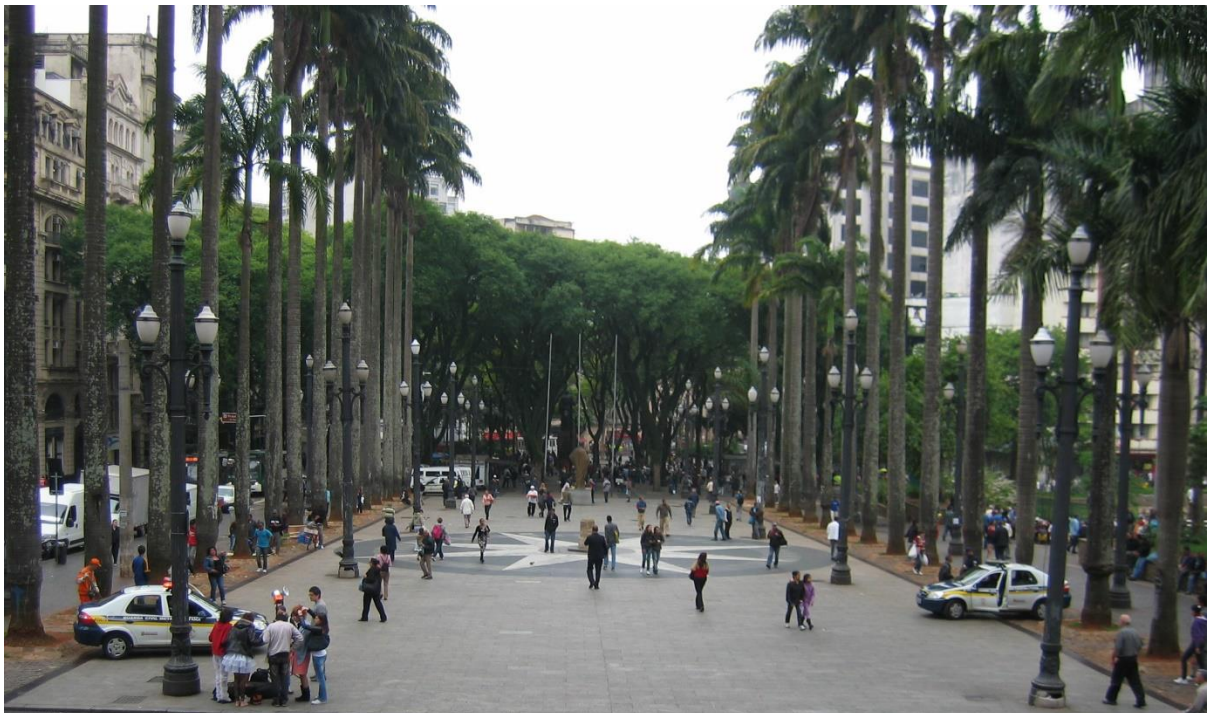Fig. 79: Backside view of the Catedral de Se de São Paulo

Fig. 80: View while exiting from the Catedral de Se de São Paulo

Fig. 81: A popular super market in São Paulo

On 12th morning, I had a talk at the UFABC (Federal University of ABC) which is about 3 hour drive from São Paulo. Dr. Hashimoto and a scholar/research staff accompanied me to show the market places on 12th evening and also on 13th morning. Fig. 81 shows a popular casual super market. It is casual in the sense that the shops were not decorated/ sophisticated enough, as we see in other supermarkets elsewhere. They looked very ordinary. The place is usually crowded, as the day-to-day living items are conveniently available and the prices are relatively cheaper. Several people spend time there, too, for eating, meeting and chatting.

As mentioned before, Brazilian handicrafts are fantastic and have wide range of varieties. Their colourful dolls are particularly very unique (viz, Figs. 2 and 82), and quite expensive too ☺.

I was told that Brazil is also famous for leather shoe. In fact, they made me buy two pairs of nice shoes, one very formal and the other little casual (pseudo-formal), but more comfortable. The former one goes better with suits, so is rarely used. The latter, on the other hand, is fine with almost all casual formal dresses, and therefore is more used. Further, it is made of Brazilian calf's leather (**"bachhur-er chamra"),** as explained by the shop keeper, and is very light. Satyi-i khub bhalo juto, khub halka. Since it is a semi-formal shoe, I always prefer to carry only this pair so as to travel light, especially for short trips, be in India or abroad. **Ek-pair juto nilei chole jabe for all purposes,** e.g., formal meeting/ dinner, hotel lounge-e adda, evening walk and sight seeing ☺

Shopping malls were decorated well in advance for Christmas celebration (Figs. 83 and 84). Usually, we see red and white colors in Christmas decoration. **Interestingly, it was blue and white** that prominently dominated, though the Santa Clause was, as usual, in red and white.

Fig. 82: Brazilian colourful dolls

Fig. 83: Christmas decoration-1

Fig. 84: Christmas decoration-2

Dekhle hobe? Kharcha achhe ☺

Note: Chhoto thekei shunechhi, rong manei nil-lal, lal-nil… In fact, Red (Lal) goes well with Blue (Nil), e.g., Blue jene trouser and red T-shirt, and blue suit and red tie. Toktoke-lal o Sada combination looks very bright. Blue and white (Nil-Sada) is also a nice combination and very common. Our College uniform (Vivekanad Centenary College, Rahara Ramkrishna Mission) during 1966-69 was white trouser with light blue shirt. Argentina flag has the same combination too, and looks very decent. Note that, it is the shade of the blue color that matters a lot to the overall look. BTW, now a days, nil-sada of different shades are also seen all around in our West Bengal.

Enough discussion on Nil-Sada ☺ Let us come back to hotel for pack up for tomorrow.

Before leaving São Paulo for Johannesburg, let me mention **another interesting incidence:** My younger son, at the time, was a fan of an Argentina's football player (I forgot the name). He wanted me to bring a jersey of that player for him. When I went to some shop to buy that, Hashimoto and the scholar both said, no, no, …, professor. Argentina is our rival team in football. How come you would buy their jersey from Brazil? They were so emotional that ultimately I could not buy ☺**.** This is like our East Bengal (EB) vs. Mohanbagan (MB). **Just imagine a situation of praising a MB-hero player in a family of hard core EB supporters. You would really be in thick soup** ☺ ☺

On 13th afternoon, Dr. Hashimoto accompanied me to São Paulo airport to see off. He had always been with me during those days since 7th Nov, and was very helpful. It may be mentioned that **Japanese are usually nice**. Kharap manush khub ekta dekhini ☺. Hashi khushi. Soft spoken. I have very pleasant experience about them and their country, too. **Chhoto desh (island), kintu chhoto lok noi ☺.** In one of those days during the conference, I was telling Dr. Hashimoto and some of his colleagues about the "best things" in the world. For example, English education, American salary, Chinese food, and Japanese wife ☺ And he liked it so much that he reminded me jokingly a few times about this during our trips together. On the other hand, as I could remember, when I told the same "goppo" (story) to a Japanese professor about 20 years back in Tokyo during dinner in one of my visits to Japan, he laughed loud and said, Japanese wives! No, no, …, no more the best ☺. **Ekhon aar 'best' noi.** Similarly, there are some "worst things" in the world, too. But NOT to be quoted here ☺

Note: Why Japanese are so good in fuzzy logic? Because their facial expressions are more or less flat (fuzzy) ☺. For example, when they are angry or happy, it does not usually get reflected in their facial appearance; it remains always almost flat, unlike Indians. What happens, in the contrary, with Indians, particularly our Banga-santans? Rege gele ba khushi hole, amader mukhe immediately expressed hoi, it is never flat or fuzzy ☺ Of course some exceptions are always there in both sides! Note that, Chinese are also similar to Japanese ☺

After an overnight journey, our SA 223 flight reached Johannesburg O.R. Tambo International airport in the morning of 14th Nov. We had a weighting time of about 3 hours before the next flight to Bombay; thereby giving some opportunity to look around this important airport. Figs. 85 and 86 are two example shops of handcrafts in the airport selling cloth-made dolls and wooden giraffes, among other items. It may be mentioned that South African handicrafts are also famous, like Brazilians. **Their arts and products made with small colourful beads are unique**. Wooden handicrafts are very special of the country, too. I have several of them at home, once purchased from Durban while attending the TWAS 11th General Conference and 20th General Meeting in October 2009. Nelson Mandela's model (Fig. 86) means South Africa, just like our Mahatma Gandhi signifies India.

Figs. 85-86: Typical South African handicraft shops in Johannesburg airport

As I mentioned before, South Africa hosted the 2010 football world cup just a few months back in June-July 2010. We, who watched football games in TVs, have seen the use of **"Vuvuzela"** by the supporters/ fans in the stadium to cheer their respective favourite teams or plyaers by blowing it loudly, i.e., making sound as fun, instead of just clapping. Usually, African blacks love sound ☺**.** This picture was also apparent in several shops in the airport who were selling Vuvuzelas.

Fig. 87: Vuvuzela

I wanted to buy one, decorated with colourful beads, as a souvenir. I asked the bulky (mota-sota) lady (moha-kalua) who was dealing with me to blow it as a demonstration. She said, just wait, I cannot blow loudly at this age, let me call some young lady. Tarpor, ekjon kom boyos-er meye elen, ebong ektana phu dilen, **bapre bap, ki jore awaz berolo** ☺. I said, okay, okay, I would take it (Fig. 87). This kind of entertainment is possible only by the moha-kaluas, as they know how to enjoy the life with minimum availability, unlike our Indians. Note that the white hanging string is also made of beads.

In the next two connected flights, I had to keep the vuvuzela cautiously in the upper luggage cabin, and it reached our home safely in the forenoon of Nov 15, 2010.

"Khel khatom, poisa hajom"

Bhagyish, ekto adhtu α, β, γ shikhechhilam, o kichhu research paper chhapate perechhilam. Tai eto sundar sundar jaiga gulo dekhbar sujog pelam, without trouble & spending from own pocket ☺.

Sankar K. Pal
November 10, 2020