

Roger Federer: An Icon

This year cable connection has created lot of problems for the ITians may be for watching cricket, tennis or any serial like “Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi” (just kidding). Everybody (at least in our hostel) discussed at great length about cable connection but individually or in a group no body was ready to take on the responsibility in materializing it. Only recently it has been connected in our hostel after lot of hard work and determination from one of my batch mates who wasted his total day in collecting (rather begging) money from different branches of our hostel.

For watching India Pakistan ball out (in the group match) we went to DG hostel where the TV room was jam packed. Initially my friend and I got afraid by seeing an array of bikes kept in a haphazard manner in the alley (we thought some mishap has occurred). In the end our hard work was fruitful, as India posted a sweet little victory over Pakistan.

This was nothing when compared to the secret nocturnal errands made by me along with some of my friends for watching US open grand finale (it was between Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic). It started at around 3.00 am and on the same day we had an exam. Even then the match was worth watching, not for the quality of the game (that Federer normally displays) & sportsmanship that both players executed but for the greatness that god has bestowed Roger Federer with. How do you describe god. “An imaginary mythological version of a human being having extraordinary powers and can perform virtually any miracle possible in the mortal and the immortal world”. But Federer is the only god who is real and performs all his miracles and tricks in front of the total world. As in science ideal conditions never exists but Federer is an ideal man who not only survives but also dominates the non-ideal conditions.

Being a Federer fan I watch him regularly. In early part of his career, his aggressive attitude used to show a bit on the court, but now with success at every grand slam Federer has become more humble & modest. He is naturally a very simple man whose mental toughness is unfathomable. Adding to that, his repertoire of shot making provides him the real cutting edge. His game is altogether at a different level where very few players have succeeded in sustaining it (may be Nadal).

There is no doubt about the talent of Djokovic (he has already proved it in Montreal where he defeated Federer), but he lost points when it was most needed. At the crunch situations Federer would shift gears and steal the crucial points, whereas Djokovic at the same time became more nervous, shaky and vulnerable leading to his final nemesis.

Many of my friends say Federer sips a bit fun from the game. I totally don't disagree with them because except for the French Open the results are invariably one sided. He finishes the match within 3 sets. In previous eras every champion faced a consistent rival. The rivalry between Pete Sampras and Andrew Agassi, Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe is well known, but imagine a tennis world without Roger Federer, it would have been damn boring.

I have little doubt that Federer would surpass Pete Sampras (14 grand slams) one day (possibly next year) given that, he is free from any injury and is at his best. Barring French open, Roger has ruled the roost in all the three grand slams. I hope he wins French open one day. As many would say I am hoping against hope but being a true fan of FEDEX I want him to be the invincible emperor of tennis.

Alas!! Like all legends he will fall one day but I hope those days are not in the near vicinity. Touchwood!!

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Banaras: The Mystical Kashi

“It is surprising how millions how to purify themselves...s in a city as polluted as this” said Diana L Eck in her famous ‘Benaras – city of lights’. It you have ever given the human soul and its inter-cosmic transportation mechanism a moment's thought you can but agree to this. What with the Ganges more polluted than ever, the temples playing host to a wide spectrum of animals besides human beings and spirituality ‘packaged’ and ‘commercialized’, both sanctity and tranquility seems to have taken the backseat. But we are students and most of us won't even know the defining parameters of kashi / Benaras/ Varanasi in the four of five years that we live here.

Benaras as a city exists in multiple dimensions – with overlapping cultures, time zones and religious sentiments. But it is also a paradox in itself and that's perhaps where the charm of Benaras lies. We keep hearing how this city is thousands of years old. It is indeed as old as it claims to be but the fact is that there is not a single stone, brick or building that you will find here that is older than four or five hundred years. The reason simply being that this city has withstood all conceivable forces of demonic destruction- from marching invaders to periodic floods; and each had called for fresh reconstruction. But the good thing is that every new structure was built in the place of the old so that the city has survived intact- more like the old soul in a new body.

For a city that has boasted of being a centre of learning for millennia, Varanasi has a promiscuously high rate of illiteracy- if you have any doubt just quiz a random mess worker or a *rickshaw-wala*. Generations of Buddhas have preached peace and the dhamma here; but it is now a centre of deep seated criminal activity. But let us not hastily conclude that Benaras and whatever it has stood for has miserably failed. In fact it turns out; this rebelliousness has always been a part of its character. Maybe that's why despite the dust, filth, animals let loose and human deterioration, the city has continued to charm millions of people from all around the world and within. While for most foreign tourists a visit to India is not complete without a tour of Benaras, for most Indians their lives are incomplete without a rendezvous with the city of lights.

By Vineeth Venugopal

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