

LOVE THY

LEADER

In March- April 2010, Tuhin wrote a controversial 4-part series of columns called "Love Thy Leader" for Times Life, 709. Each column dwelt upon a romance, involving a key political figure. The column disputed existing notions and sought to provide a differential perspective about facts that have often remained clouded in history. While the first column delved into the power play in the Sarkozy-Bruni romance, the second questioned the veracity of the Akbar-Jodha hyphenation; the third probed the possible political implications of the Nehru-Edwina romance, while the last one dwelt upon the bond between Hitler and Eva Braun, which still remains shrouded in mystery.

Love in the public eye!



In this, the first of a four-part series on romances involving a key political leader, Tuhin A Sinha probes the power play in the Sarkozy-Bruni romance

WHEN reports surfaced last fortnight of Carla Bruni and Nicolas Sarkozy, both having affairs — she with singer Benjamin Biolay; he with his stylish ecology minister, Chantal Jouanno, few found it amusing. After all, if one couldn't decipher reasons that brought the two together (other than perhaps a shared aversion for monogamy), there needn't have been reasons to make them drift apart. However, the conscious indiscretion that the Sarkozy-Bruni romance epitomises makes it the most bohemian one ever that involved a politician of his stature.

Consider this: Barely 10 months ago the couple flirted brazenly during a video interview, making it the first time that a French president and his first lady were filmed sharing such private moments in the Elysee Palace. In the interview, the 41-year-old Mrs Bruni-Sarkozy continually stroked her 54-year-old husband's hand and even patted his bottom.

The diminutive president, in turn, tried to look as much a President as he could, as he perched on the edge of an armchair, with his feet swinging above the ground.

After the intimate indulgence, the wife whispered "Bon courage, chou chou", which means "Be brave, my little darling".

In August last year, the couple took off on a three-week vacation at French first lady's family mansion in Cap Negre, on the Mediterranean coast. Here, the couple seemed just as wildly in love, indulging in a passionate lip-lock in the sea. Besides, of course Mrs Bruni was her generous best, allowing myriad shots of her in multiple poses in her skimpy black bikini.

In November last year, there were reports of the couple planning a child together. All seemed

"AFTER ALL, WHO WOULDN'T BE FLATTERED WHEN THE PRESIDENT OF YOUR COUNTRY GETS OBSESSED WITH YOU?"



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hunky dory till the most recent reports that suggest that the couple is headed towards a split.

Now if you consider certain other aspects, you might understand, why despite its extravagant assortment of sex, power and glamour, the Sarkozy-Bruni saga deserves to be taken with a pinch of salt. Sarkozy and Bruni first met at a dinner on November 14, 2007 thrown by Jacques Séguéla, the PR adviser to the president. It instantly sparked a courtship that was unusually fast and furious. One believes that Sarkozy's trait of not taking 'no' for an answer was perhaps instrumental in expediting the romance. In that sense, for Sarkozy who was only recently divorced then, possessing the prized, super gorgeous Bruni was a conquest.

For Bruni, whose ex-lovers included the who's who of Europe (including former French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius), Sarkozy only provided the prospect of retaining power. After all, who wouldn't be flattered when the President of your country gets obsessed with you?

The alacrity though, with which the couple got married, after less than three months of a breezy courtship should put all our matrimonial sites to shame. The psychological factors that could have prompted this sudden marriage between two mature and much explored individuals is something that Milan Kundera might be able to explain better.

That Carla Bruni is a rebel is no secret. Barely weeks after her marriage, Bruni is reported to have said she is easily "bored with monogamy" and that "love lasts a long time, but burning desire — two to three weeks."

Sarkozy perhaps feels much the same. However, the limitations that the present power equation between the couple impose on him, restrain him from being that candid.

And that only leads us to another possibility which really doesn't seem implausible here: Did Sarkozy circulate his own indiscretions in an attempt not to appear the underprivileged/deprived partner?

About the other more obvious likelihood is that the couple has come to terms with each other's infidelities so

long as it doesn't upset the more impor-

tant factors that need them to be seen together.

For Sarkozy, who is 12 years older than Bruni and four inches shorter than her, it's a crucial phase. In the power equation of this romance, he needs Bruni more than she needs him right now. After all, the image of a more robust married life will help him at

the hustings slated for 2012.

Till then Nicholas Sarkozy might as

well put up with some of Bruni's short-lived burning desires, as she might want to describe them and quietly hum the melancholic "dil to bachcha hai



Was it really romance for Jodha-Akbar?

ship in the Hindu way in her palace and continued to remain a devotee of Lord Krishna, Akbar's fondness for Jodha only made him more accepting of Hindu rituals. That Jahangir, Akbar's successor, too is appreciated as

Continuing his series on political romances, from contemporary France last week, Tuhin A Sinha travels into history and tries to probe the veracity of the Akbar-Jodhabai romance

If you took the Jodhabai-Akbar romance as depicted in the movie at face value, you might be in for some re-thinking, post reading this article. For the romance, if it may be called so, wasn't half as utopian. Neither was Jodhabai during her lifetime known as Jodha. Post her marriage to Akbar, she was Mariam uz-Zamani.

Akbar's marriage with the daughter of Raja Bhar-mal of Amber (modern day Jaipur) was quite unequivocally a device used for po-

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litical acquisition. Hira Kunwari (Jodha's maiden name) was married to Akbar on January 20, 1562, at Sambhar near Jaipur. She was Akbar's third wife. It will be interesting to note here that there is little clarity on the total number of wives that Akbar eventually had.

The fact that other Rajput kingdoms, subsequently, also established similar matrimonial alliances with Akbar, cannot be disproved. The law of Hindu succession has always been patrilineal, so the threat to lineage, in marrying their princesses for political gain, was pretty inconsequential.

History does not corroborate any instance of Akbar's romance with Jodhabai in the real sense. Yet, there

seems to be near unanimity over Jodhabai being referred to as Akbar's favourite queen.

What then could have possibly led to

Jodha being given this preference?

Jodha, it is said, was extremely gorgeous and dignified. But apart from her personality attributes, she gave Akbar what his other queens could not — an heir. Akbar's first queen was the childless Ruqaiyya Begum, and his second wife was Salima Sultan, the widow of his most trusted general, Bairam Khan.

A sense of desperation seemed to mark Akbar's



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prayers at the *dargah* of the Shaikh Salim Chishti, which later led to the birth of his first surviving child Jahangir. Was Akbar's affection for Jodhabai thus familial and borne out of a sense of gratitude?

Subsequently, Jodha is said to have enjoyed increased clout over political matters. She was Akbar's only queen who could issue *farman* (official decree), which was normally the exclusive privilege of the emperor. Jodha used her influence to build gardens, wells, and mosques around the country.

It is also accepted that Jodha had the permission to wor-

a liberal leader, perhaps only shows the indirect influence that Jodha might have made politically.

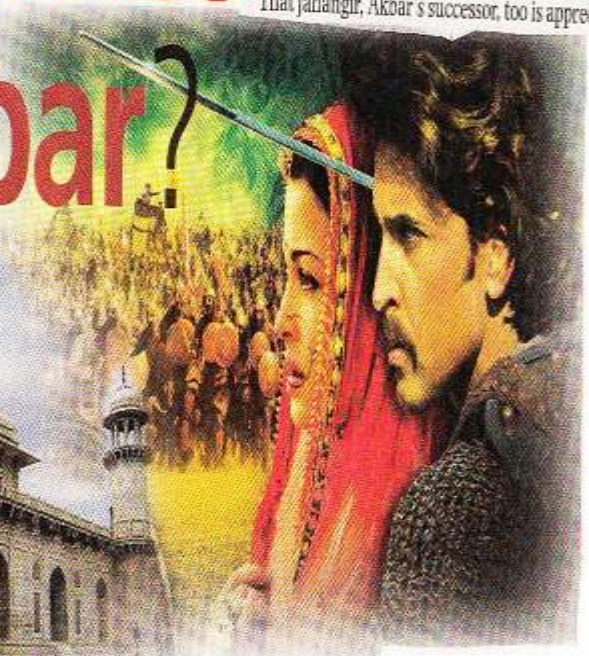
Having dwelt upon Jodha's preferred status in Akbar's life, Akbar's subsequent marriages cannot be wished away. And this is where the soft romance between Akbar and Jodha gets mired in irony.

In all likelihood, Jodha, in the limited way that she could, gave Akbar a sense of belonging that his other women did not. In all probability, she reduced Akbar's

personal detachment and made him discover a side of his that had got dwarfed by his political ambitions.

Jodha's tomb, which is situated just about a kilometre away from that of Akbar, lies in obscure abandonment, so much so that it is only natural for the less curious to give it a miss. Not unexpectedly, just like her tomb is but a shadow of Akbar's, so might have been her being when she lived. More tellingly the ASI slab at the entrance of the tomb informs that the tomb is that of Mariam Zamani, a princess of Amber who married Akbar and later gave birth to Jahangir.

So was the Akbar-Jodha hyphenation indeed romance or was it another instance of virtue having been made



Love, longing & politics!



This week, Tuhin A. Sinha delves into the eternal Nehru-Edwina romance, the political impact of which will always remain a matter of intense conjecture

THAT India's first Prime Minister and the wife of the last British Viceroy had something going between them is no secret. The book, *India Remembered*, written by Edwina Mountbatten's daughter, Pamela Mountbatten only corroborates this love story, besides providing us with some rare insights. Pamela writes that the 'reported romance' between Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, and Lady Edwina Mountbatten, blossomed during a 1947 trip to Mashobra, a hill station, as part of a joint outing of family and friends.

Nehru wrote a letter to Edwina a decade later, wherein he described that trip to Mashobra as the defining moment in their relationship, a moment when he realised, "that there was a deeper attachment between us, that some uncontrollable force, of which I was dimly aware, drew us to one another."

According to Pamela, the affair was not physical. Catherine Clement, author of *Edwina and Nehru: A Novel*, on the other hand, in an interview to *Times of India*, had maintained, "Edwina in her letters to Lord Mountbatten has written that her relationship with Nehru was mostly platonic. Mostly, but not always." While it has always been debated whether the relationship was platonic or otherwise, its sheer intensity should render the query inconsequential.

A love triangle as illustrious as this, involving the PM of a newly independent nation, the wife of the Viceroy of the departing colonial power and with the Viceroy himself sandwiched in between, cannot be entirely devoid of political implications. What is unusual though is Lord Louis Mountbatten's co-operation in facilitating the romance.

In a letter that Edwina's daughter Pamela quotes in her book, her father once wrote to her sister Patricia, "She (meaning Edwina) and Jawahar Lal are so sweet together. They really dote on each other. Pammy and I are doing everything

we can to be tactful and helpful." In the book, Pamela writes, "There existed a happy threesome based on some firm understanding on all sides."

This 'understanding' it seemed transcended emotions of hurt, envy and possible betrayal. Or perhaps Lord Mountbatten loved his wife so much that he could do anything to see her happy.

Nehru, it is believed, wrote to Edwina almost every night from 1948-60. What is surprising though is his indiscretion. Nehru apparently, at times, did not refrain from giving vent to his frustrations in handling some of his recalcitrant colleagues. In her will, Edwina had left behind a suitcase full of Nehru's letters — to her husband.

For Nehru to confide to this extent in someone whom he had met only twice in a year, as Pamela recalls, only vouches for the eternity of their bond.

It will be interesting here to note that Nehru perhaps always had an unfulfilled personal life. The differences in lifestyle between him and his wife Kamala in the early years of their marriage and Kamala's frequent illnesses later on, till she died prematurely in 1936, had left a void in him.

It can be inferred that in Edwina, Nehru found a confidant/bosom pal/soulmate whom he could trust implicitly or maybe Edwina carried that semblance of a truly progressive, liberated, yet sensitive female companion that Nehru had always craved for. The other notable common factors that perhaps acted as catalysts between them were shared forlornness and that both were diehard romantics. It needs to be noted here, that by Pamela's own admission, this was not the first time that Edwina had found love outside marriage.

However, what continues to intrigue people even today are the political implications that this romance may have had.

Nehru's acquiescence to Mountbatten's unreasonable proposal of referring the Kashmir issue to the United Nations Security

Council on 1 January 1948, when the Indian forces were capable of flushing out the Pakistani invaders from the whole of Kashmir, goes down as one of his 'historical blunders' (read errors of judgment).

The following excerpt taken from an interview that Pamela Mountbatten gave Karan Thapar, on his show, *Devil's Advocate*, only adds to the speculation on this score.

Karan Thapar: Many people in India believe that the decision Jawaharlal Nehru took to refer Kashmir to the United Nations was taken under your father's advice. Could that have been an area where your mother's influence would have been particularly useful?

Lady Pamela: I think it could have been. Because Pandit ji being a Kashmiri, of course, inevitably the emotional side comes in from one's own country, doesn't it? And my father just in dry conversation mightn't have been able to get his view point over, but with my mother translating it for Pandit ji and making, you know, appealing to his heart, more than his mind, that he should really behave like this. I think probably that did happen.

However, if one looks at the other side of the coin, Lord Mountbatten did exercise his influence to ensure that Kashmir became a part of India in the first place. In the same book, Pamela writes of a trip that the Viceroy made to Kashmir in 1947, "to convince the Maharaja (Hari Singh) to accept the plan (of accession to India) and save Nehru the humiliation."

Lord Mountbatten's proximity to Nehru notwithstanding, his duality over Kashmir could well have been part of a larger British ploy to keep the newborn nations at loggerheads.

Whether or not any of Nehru's personal affectations had in some way influenced his error of judgment on Kashmir, to which he belonged, will remain a matter of intense conjecture for generations to come.

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**"PLATONIC OR NOT?
THE SHEER INTENSITY
OF THE RELATIONSHIP
SHOULD RENDER
THE QUERY
INCONSEQUENTIAL"**

Did Hitler love Eva Braun?



In this concluding part of the series, Tuhin A Sinha unravels the enigma that shrouds the Adolf Hitler-Eva Braun romance, which had disaster written all over it

ADOLF Hitler's romances followed an intriguing pattern — they carried a similar demonic streak in them that characterised his politics.

All three women known to enter his life attempted suicide, which in turn cast serious aspersions over his psychological and sexual traits. However, if there is one relationship of Hitler's that still evokes interest, it is that with Eva Braun, 23 years younger than him. Braun was Hitler's mistress for 12 years and wife for 40 hours.

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Braun met Hitler in Munich when she was 17. She was working as an assistant and model for his personal photographer and began seeing him more often two years later. Much of Eva Braun's viewpoint on their romance and her life with Hitler comes across on the site evabraun.dk.

According to the site, in 1931, Eva wrote a letter to Hitler: "Dear Mr Hitler, I would like to thank you for the pleasant evening at the theater. It was unforgettable... I count the hours until the moment when we shall meet again..." Braun soon agreed to follow Hitler



to his mountain retreat in the Alps. Their attraction was immediate, and over the objection of her lower-middle-class Bavarian parents, she became his mistress."

Their relationship, post that is of the kind that would redefine the word 'enigma', Hitler wouldn't publicly embrace her, nor privately disown her. He provided her an opulent life, replete with all material



comforts, yet deprived her of the one thing she treasured most — his company. According to Hitler's chauffeur Erich Kempka, Braun spent most of her time waiting for Hitler.

Hitler kept Braun away from the public eye. His high-handedness towards her is said to have made his staff refer to Braun as "the girl in a gilded cage". Braun, for her part, only became rebellious, keeping up habits which Hitler detested, such as smoking and nude sunbathing.

"WHAT MUST HAVE STARTED OFF AS AN INFATUATION EVENTUALLY STOOD THE TEST OF TIME"

In a tender moment though, Hitler is said to have confided his feelings for Braun in his personal valet, Heinz Linge. "Braun is too young to be the wife of one in my position. But she is the only girl for me. So we live as we do..."

So, did Hitler love Eva Braun?

Well, so it seems. Hitler's definition of love, though, was significantly different

death, just as she had stood by him for so many years in life. Braun fulfilled his wish as she always had. On 30th April, 1945, Hitler and Braun committed suicide just when they were on the verge of being captured by the Soviet troops. The world discovered after their deaths that Hitler and Braun were man and wife. Hitler's acquiescence to marry Braun — something she always want-

ed — barely 40 hours before their death was his compensation/redemption for all that Braun had borne for him.

Had it not been for unconditional love, Braun would probably have realised the futility of craving for the moment of glory that simply wasn't. Hitler's narcissism did not spare his idea of love.

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