

IN 1977 prior to the first visit of the MCC team to Bangladesh, some Bangla-speaking sceptics cried out loud, 'how on earth shall these Bangalee players play against the mighty Englishmen?' These are the same disbelievers, who name anything Bombay as soon as it is too hot, or prefix anything with *raam* too highlight the enormity of a *chaagol* or a pond. Twenty-eight years ago Yousuf Babu shut them up with a stylish knock of 78. The cynic had the last say, 'these were old Englishmen'.

In 1999 when we beat Pakistan lock, stock and barrel at Northampton in a World Cup match, the disparagers were again at it. They dropped tears as large as goat droppings and sobbed, 'it was a fixed match'. What a load of bull!

In 2004 when we beat India in a One-day International at Dhaka by 15 runs, our first against them, these misanthropists proclaimed that the opposition did not field a full side, and moreover it was a 'fixed match' to help Bangladesh maintain its Test status. Is it believable that a country which sitting-and-getting-up (uth-tay bosh-tay) plans to build a fence all along our border, is engineering to suck us dry by diverting major rivers, enjoying a 90:10 trade advantage and are one of the most nationalistic citizens in the world shall willingly loose a match to minnows Bangladesh for the latter's survival? That's a load of double bull!

Now, when we snatch our first Test win within five years of our enrolment in the world's top ten, there are talks from the same agnostics that this was a junior Zimbabwe side, blah blah blah, what with Heath, Flower, Flower and the whole bunch opting out. These detractors have conveniently forgotten that we had beaten the senior Zimbabwe team in Zimbabwe before their former captain led a coup of sorts. So, is it our problem that they choose to tour with an upcoming side?

In fact on January 10, Bangladesh made history by claiming its maiden Test victory at the 35th attempt in Chittagong, crushing Zimbabwe by 226 runs. Bangladesh cricketers gave a fitting reply to all the critics of its hard-earned Test status who questioned their ability.

Like at so many momentous times in history we have to fall back on the French emperor Napoleon I, who uttered 'Ability is nothing without opportunity'. Test status was an opportunity and we proved our ability.

Gaining the Test was hard and the fulfilment of a vision. The road to full membership of ICC was arduous, the hurdles got steeper as the mark of distinction got nearer. The idea crystallised into a formal application after the 1997 ICC Trophy triumph, when we pipped Kenya at the post in the last ball of a breathtaking match at Kula Lumpur.

No competition for doers

CHINTITO

U.S. clergyman, civil rights leader, and politician Jesse Jackson said, 'If I can conceive it and believe it, I can achieve it. It's not my aptitude but my attitude that will determine my altitude with a little intestinal fortitude!' Yes, we have the stomach to ascend to the top rungs of the Test ladder.

The Bangladesh side is a young bunch of lads, some teenagers. But then 'almost everything that is great has been done by youth', the former British prime minister and writer Benjamin Disraeli is quoted as saying.

Every team has a learning period; some learn quickly, others take longer. It's the mind-set that matters. It's important that we learn in every match, at every dismissal and even at the execution of a copy-book shot.

When in 1962 West Indian cricketers were planning for an upcoming tour of England, the Trinidadian prime minister, Eric Williams, convinced his team had a few lessons well under control said, 'In the 1950s we went to learn, now we go to teach'.

Now that we have achieved what several of the top Test teams took many more years longer to attain, a first Test win, there is a rush and a gush to proclaim who did how much and whose contribution was absolutely fundamental and solely responsible. The number runs in the hundreds.

There shall be many who shall now claim credit, even among the cynics, who were only the other day convinced that we were gifted the Test status. Today they may want to defend their lost case by pleading that we would not have found our way without their criticism.

Yours Truly can only quote American diplomat and politician Dwight Whitney Morrow, who in a letter to his son wrote, 'The world is divided into people who do things and people who get the credit. Try, if you can, to belong to the first class. There's far less competition'.