

BOOK THREE IN THE 'TWO-BRAIN BRIDGE' SERIES

SERENDIPITY

In Bridge

R. Jayaram



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The Sri Lankan Three Clubs

Kailash Nevatia is a grand old man, one of several grand old men, of Indian Bridge. He is an ardent lover and a great patron of the game. A regular in all major Indian tournaments where he will be in charge of computerised scoring, he carries with him a sharp brain and even sharper tongue; on several occasions, I have been the target of some non-malicious leg-pulling.

During the 46th Indian Nationals in December 2004, Kailashbabu, as he is popularly known, would religiously knock at the door of my room at 5.00 am with two cups of steaming coffee and then we would sit in the open and engage in, what else, Bridge banter. *'Take care of the morning and the afternoon takes care of itself,'* is one of my favourite quotes; with Kailashbabu around, the mornings were always well taken care off.

On one such morning, Kailashbabu asked me, "After your partner opens three clubs, what would you bid holding the following hand?"

♠ A 10 8 3
♥ A Q 4
♦ A K 10 9
♣ A K

"Wow! That is a whopping 24 HCP hand!" I said.

"Arre, yaar! I am the Chief Associate Tournament Director here and don't I know how to count high card points? You are like the cricket commentator in Indian TV. Like them, you *have* to repeat what I can see and therefore, know." This is typical Kailashbabu for you.

Serendipity in Bridge

“If I were playing in the Bridge Room of any club anywhere in the world, *with any partner*, I would check up on kings. Even if he has only one king, I would bid the grand slam in clubs. If he does not have even one king, I will sign off in six clubs.”

“What if you were playing with Prabhakar or Anil Padhye as your partner?” Although both Prabhakar and Padhye are top class Indian players, both have a congenital weakness for the weakest of weak bids. They almost always make a pre-emptive opening with a ten-top suit. Occasionally, the jack may also be present.

“I jump to five clubs, shutting my partner off.”

“You still have not asked me a fundamental question—the meaning of that three club opening—on which your reply to my first question should have depended. Find out from the Sri Lankan team who are here what their opening three clubs meant and also what the final contract was. Perhaps, you may then stumble upon something worthwhile to write about. *For a change, that is.*” Kailashbabu is off in a jiffy.

I did ask the Sri Lankans. Their opening three clubs showed “at least four clubs *and no trick-taking capacity.*” K.P. Baskaran a regular in the Sri Lankan team, converted partner’s three club opening to three no trump and received the lead of the king of spades.

♠	9 6	
♥	10 9 5	
♦	8 7 6 2	
♣	9 8 4 3	
N		
W		E
S		
♠	A 10 8 3	
♥	A Q 4	
♦	A K 10 9	
♣	A K	

Baskaran won the spade king lead in hand and immediately played another spade. Unsure of which suit to shift to, West cashed his second spade winner as well and continued with a further

spade. Dummy and East discarded a diamond and a club each on the third and fourth spades. Encouraged by that diamond discard, Baskaran cashed his diamond winners, on the second of which West discarded his last spade.

Baskaran then exited with a third diamond which East won and, rather late in the day, shifted to a club. Winning this, Baskaran cashed his fourth diamond and East was rendered helpless. Reduced to two clubs and king-jack-six in hearts, East had to find a discard. If he discarded a club, declarer would cash his club winner drawing East's last club and play a heart to end play East. If the discard was a heart, ace and another heart will do the trick as the club king is the entry to the now established third heart. Declarer made two spades, two hearts, three diamonds and two clubs and his contract.

		♠ 9 6		
		♥ 10 9 5		
		♦ 8 7 6 2		
		♣ 9 8 4 3		
♠ K Q J 7 2	N		♠ 5 4	
♥ 8 7 3 2	W E		♥ K J 6	
♦ 3	S		♦ Q J 5 4	
♣ J 6 5			♣ Q 10 7 2	
		♠ A 10 8 3		
		♥ A Q 4		
		♦ A K 10 9		
		♣ A K		

A club lead, East taking care to play low, looks like beating the contract. That is double dummy, of course. But the spade lead gave away a second trick in the suit which declarer can never get. You be the judge.

*The day is not far off in modern bidding methods, when a bid would imply the number of pips the bidder is holding in that suit, or the next higher, the next lower, or even the same coloured other suit !
We would probably call it the pip showing bid*