

HOLDING ON TO A HOLDALL



Finally once inside the train compartment the holdall would be rolled on to one of the reserved seats. Those days the Railways did not provide bed sheets or pillows. The Holdall was our only comfort. My thoughts and efforts of how to transport my daughter's bedding to the hostel came to an abrupt end when she pronounced that no more train journey for her and that she will be taking a flight and waved at me casually saying that she will buy her bedding locally.

Recently I came across an article on Holdall, an article long forgotten. Remember one of those canvas made that our parents carried along whenever we embarked on a train journey. My daughter had to join her college in Ranchi and she expressed her helplessness of how she was going to transport her blanket and quilt. I immediately remembered the good old Holdall. "So they still sell them in shops today". "No", pat came the answer from my husband. Then I rang up my mother an ex-army man's wife. She certainly would have hoarded one of the green looking ones. She expressed shock and said, "Who keeps them nowadays and why would you need one today?"

The Holdall was made of khaki or green canvas about 6" x 3" ft. dimension. One could put bedsheets, articles of bedding in the centre. The centre part had traps on either side that could be wrapped around. It had huge pockets at both the ends which was stuffed with pillows and shoes and any other article that did not fit in the trunk.

Then came the task of rolling up and tying the Holdall which was the most difficult task. My father always said it was a man's job and pushed everybody aside. But no sooner called everybody back as you needed many hands to hold it back from unrolling. Finally it was rolled and held in position by a leather belt with buckles. The holdall had a leather handle attached to it at one end for

lifting. We, children would try to lift it and fall all over it and it became a plaything for us. Only the coolie could get it right up.

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 **Rajeni Chandrayan**

C-502, W.Rly. Officer's Colony,
Pali Hill, Bandra (W), Mumbai