

## A small town boy, who made it big

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Soon after India won the inaugural T20 World Cup in 2007, a hoarding went up outside Ranchi airport. It said, 'welcome to the city of world cup winning captain'. Mahendra Singh Dhoni belongs to Ranchi, a city that was not known as a cricketing destination till this boy with long golden locks from the HEC Colony

broke onto the national scene. His locks and helicopter shots mesmerised no less than Pakistan's martial law administrator Parvez Musharraf, who once famously said that he would not 'cede even an inch' to make India happy.

Musharraf's appreciation of Dhoni, however, left millions living east of the Wagah border proud. By December 30, 2014 when Mahendra Singh Dhoni decided to retire, Ranchi had become a cricketing pilgrimage, next only to the vintage Eden Gardens of Kolkata in East Zone. He used his resources and network to get the better of no less than Tatas, who controlled cricket in undivided Bihar and then Jharkhand from their industrial capital at Jamshedpur.

The English language media has hailed Dhoni's decision to retire without a fuss as a representation of his enigmatic personality. If the small town boy from a lower middle class family decided to remain aloof from the glamour and glitz that courted him, considering that he held the second most important job in the country, the decision was not meant to be an enigmatic one. It only showcased his temperament to remain focused on the work at hand. He built his dream home in Ranchi, drove his Hummer and superbikes on the roads of the town he loved and married a middle-class girl after an "unnoticed by media" courtship at another small town, Dehradun, away from the metropolitan pizazz. No wonder, under him, a bunch of 'aam cricketers' blossomed into Team India.

Boys from Meerut, Kanpur and Ghaziabad, away from the known cricketing Meccas of Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru made their way into the team. True to his roots, he did not forget to honour his mentor Saurav Ganguly. Dhoni invited the Prince of Kolkata to lead the team in the last session of his last test. Only an enigmatic Dhoni could have done it. Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the small town boy who took Indian Cricket to magnificent heights in every form of game, will remain a legend. -- *Sidharth Mishra*