

# VOL 1 ISSUE 3 September 2020 An Initiative By MVI



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# EDITOR'S NOTE Colonel Vinay B Dalvi Vol.1 • Issue 3 • September 2020

Dear Readers,

In this September 2020 issue of 'Victory India', we have lined up 23 articles grouped into four sections. The first section of 'Selection, Training & Leadership' cover story focuses on 'Revival of PT & Sports in the Armed forces'. It also has essays and interviews on the need to refine our selection for officers and training for all ranks for optimum combat readiness. We have special coverage of our notable national adventure awardee, Col Sarfraz Singh, and exclusive coverage of Army Sports Institute, Pune that won the coveted 'Best Centre of Excellence for Sports Award' in the country.

This section is dedicated to the tireless efforts of the PT Corps and their contribution to the fighting spirit of the Indian Army! Going through these articles brought back to my memory a quote by Rudyard Kipling which every member of this elite corps has undoubtedly read during their time in the APTC, "Nations have passed away and left no traces, and history gives the naked cause of it – One single simple reason in all cases; They fell because their peoples were not fit." This I believe is the bone-chilling truth, and one worth pondering over.

The second section comprises articles that commemorate the 21 years anniversary of the Kargil War. These bring vivid and painful memories of those who lost their near and dear ones. The less publicised silent role of the Indian Navy in the Kargil war are included, besides some valuable lessons drawn by a veteran that remain valid even after 21 years.

The third section has current issues faced by the country due to our four months old military confrontation in eastern Ladakh wherein China refuses to complete the proposed disengagement in Pangong, Tso, and Gogra and de-escalate the military buildup in the DBO sector. The articles in this section by our renowned military experts and analysts collectively give the reader a holistic picture of the ongoing confrontation and all the options and possibilities available to India to thwart the evil designs of our belligerent neighbour that for the last seven decades has been unilaterally shifting the LAC with impunity and total disregard to Indian sentiments.

The highly professional reviews and analysis in this section merit serious consideration by our concerned military and political authorities.

The fourth and final section has some interesting pieces narrating a personal journey of an airman to a policeman, tribute to a visionary admiral, the IAF's first night time heliborne operation, and a rare piece of military humour on the Army's feared endurance test.

I thank our readers and contributors for their continued support resulting in this third edition.

We shall continue to strive in our collective endeavour to spread rich, current professional knowledge concerning the armed forces and matters relating to defence and security of India with the sole aim of enabling and facilitating—Victory India!

Col. Vinay B Dalvi, ex-Maratha LI, ex-APTC,

Editor-in-Chief Victory India.

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# The Revival Of PT And Sports In The Armed **Forces**

"The APTC Officer shortfall must be made up with a selection of high quality, dedicated and committed officers that would be an asset to the Corps and the Army. Quality of officers must be given overriding priority rather than just filling vacancies." -Maj Gen VK Madhok-

by Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

The importance of 'physical fitness' in the Armed Forces, especially the Army, is of immense significance to all ranks. From the lowest level of a soldier to the highest rank of a General, all are expected to be physically fit and mentally sound to withstand and survive a tough, hazardous and challenging military life during their onerous service to the nation in the most inhospitable terrain and harsh climatic conditions prevailing in their operational areas, adjoining our lengthy international borders and vast frontier territory of our country-mainly in our northern, eastern and western sectors—where the bulk of our fighting forces are deployed. Physical fitness is equally important in the Navy and Air Force as the chances of a physically fit person falling sick is comparatively less than the one who is not.

Besides this, the 'on-parade status' also greatly improves with the higher physical fitness levels. For a fighter pilot, physical fitness is a vital aspect not only to maintain his flying status but for his very survival in all eventualities. In the Navy, the sailors and submariners are required to

maintain high fitness levels for long offshore periods of operations and training at sea. Hence, even if there is no regular organised PT or sports activity in the Air Force, the fliers or navigators maintain their own fitness levels with individual physical workouts, games, or runs to maintain their optimum levels as demanded by their specific task or job.

Although the quality and adequacy of weapons, ammunition, and equipment, besides administrative support and backing, are significant and consequential factors, it is mainly the 'man behind the gun or machine' and the 'quality of his officer leadership' at the vital or key operational levels that become the most crucial and decisive factors for securing victory over the adversary in any level of military operations of any campaign. Hence, the 'quality' of the man and his military leader, especially the officer, at all levels of the Army is of paramount importance and merits the highest priority to enable and ensure that this critical 'winning edge' remains in our favour.

In light of the above, it is relevant and pertinent to review or audit, how we select, nurture, train, and groom our soldiers and officers concerning their physical fitness factor. The prevailing culture or norms must be analysed to bring out shortcomings if any, in our processes of selection and training. Suggesting the suitable remedial measures to address these must be to raise the overall physical fitness levels of both the officers and the soldiers and facilitate an improvement at the cutting edge, especially at the decisive unit/sub-unit levels.

The role of sports or recreational activities in military training, particularly in the Army, is indispensable as the same is a complementary physical activity which develops or enhances the physical fitness of the participants besides inculcating or promoting the positive soldierly traits of team spirit, sportsmanship, cooperation; will to win and the killer instinct. Individual games or sports promote mainly individual skills, abilities, and aptitudes with the gainer being the concerned individual only.

However, team events especially troop games like football; hockey, basketball, and volleyball promote team spirit and leadership qualities which are so essential for the young officer leaders, particularly in units and sub-units. It was for this reason that in the past/yesteryears, in all sports competitions from the Services/Army level right down to the unit level, it was mandatory to field at least one officer player per team who became the captain of his team, even if his skill or standard was not up to the mark as the rest of the team.

Discontinuation of this policy killed the sports and games at the grassroots unit/sub-unit levels and the officers stopped playing games, and the earlier and healthy interaction and mingling with the troops declined with serious negative implications in terms of the development of positive leadership traits in the young officers. This resulted in the destruction of the culture of healthy sports and games in the units and thus widened the gap between the officers and men therein.

#### Conduct of Physical Training and Sports

The effective and efficient conduct of physical training and sports activities largely depends on the possession of theoretical and practical knowledge of these subjects besides a vast experience as a player, coach, manager, or official in different sports disciplines.

Hence, if the physical training and sports activities from the Services/Army level down to the unit level were befittingly and effectively conducted in the past, there was a system, policy, and procedure in place to enable and facilitate the same, with many positive gains being made in the grooming of young military officers, at the critical unit level.

#### Role of APTC and AIPT

The Army Physical Training Corps (APTC) is a corps fed from all Arms and Services and has Physical and Recreational Training Instructors (P&RT Instructors) of the rank of NCOs and JCOs only. The Unit/Regimental Instructors are called Unit PT Instructors (UPTIs). The officers of the APTC are SL Cadre officers called 'Masterat-Arms' and include SL commissioned officers from the ranks and regular commissioned officers permanently transferred into the APTC from all Arms and Services.

The Army Institute of Physical Training (AIPT), Pune, or the erstwhile Army School of Physical Training (ASPT), Pune is the mother institution of Physical Training and Recreational Training, including Sports and Games. Established on 1 July 1946, the APTC Depot has been co-located with the ASPT/AIPT which has been at the Sholapur Road campus, Pune, since the early 1950s when the NDA/JSW was shifted to Khadakwasla, Pune and are 30 km apart, located at the eastern and western ends of

The basic PT Course for the UPTIs at AIPT/ASPT is the Assistant Instructors Basic Course (AIBC) with the Advance Refresher Course (ARC) and Basic Gymnastics Course (BGC) being the mandatory courses for transfer



Endurance'; a critical fitness factor, developed in cadets through X-country runs

into the APTC with a minimum service of 5 years in the rank of direct Havaldar.

Officers being granted SL Commission through the ranks have to be qualified in the courses applicable for the APTC NCOs unless they are from the APTC. After transfer, they undergo the Officers Physical Training Course (OPTC) which is a mandatory course for the regular cadre officers transferred into the APTC.

Besides the basic physical training proficiency, all the Officers, JCOs and NCOs are also imparted the basic knowledge of all the allied subjects of PT and all disciplines of Sports and Games of the Army, as they are primarily responsible for conducting these important training activities for the recruits in all the regimental training institutions (with the assistance of the UPTIs) and officer training academies like the NDA, IMA and OTA. Hence, besides just PT, the APTC is responsible for the uniform conduct of all the sports and games through its AIPT/ ASPT qualified PT instructors.

#### Officer Physical Training Course (OPTC)

After the raising of the ASPT and creation of the APTC, till the late 1950s, the 'Basic Officer PT Course' was mandatory for all officers, and those who excelled and had aptitude and proficiency in this field attended the 'Advance Officer PT Course'. However, since the late 1950s/early 1960s, the PT course conducted for the Officers was the Officers Physical Training Course (OPTC), with six courses of 30-40 officers being held every training year, till the late 1990's.

Sadly, thereafter the OPTC courses were drastically reduced and a stage reached when only one token course was held. With this low priority for PT and Sports in the training of officers, for almost 15-20 years, there were no/ very few OPTC-qualified officers in the units, regimental training centers, and even military academies, adversely affecting the effective training of recruits and cadets.

How the units have conducted or presently conduct PT and Sports without the AIPT/ASPT-trained/qualified officers is anybody's guess as we mostly find the unit PT, Sports, and Games fields empty! Due to this low priority for the past 15-20 years, several suitable, talented, and willing young officers were deprived of attending the OPTC at AIPT, Pune. Consequently, the majority of units of the Indian Army have remained without OPTC qualified officers as their unit PT and Sports Officer.

This also deprived the APTC of suitable, willing, and talented officers of joining the APTC as a career resulting in an overall deficiency of officer state of 30-40% (Present state is authorized 68 and held 42). Unless the officers are trained in this vital field of PT and Sports, the culture of fitness and sports can never be promoted or cultivated at the grass-roots level in the units. With the damage already done, there exists a lot of scopes to revive the shortcomings that have crept into the system primarily at the grassroots level in the units.

If the officers could not be spared on some grounds, surely some young selected officers with interest, aptitude, and proficiency could have been identified from the military academies itself or by all the Arms and Services and sent for the OPTC purely voluntarily. This would have at least provided their recruit centers and even academies of qualified officers and enabled benefits to recruits and cadets.

This can easily be planned and executed now with positive long-term gains for improving the fitness of all ranks and improving the officer-men relationship through healthy, vigorous, and highly recreational sports and games.

#### Knowledge of PT, Sports, and Games and their Allied Subjects

With the long discontinuation (or just token existence) of the OPTC for the past 15-20 years for the Army officers at the AIPT/ASPT, the knowledge of these basic subjects amongst the officer cadre is very shallow or missing due to which the units have considerably suffered on this account both in PT and in Sports and Games as most units do not have any worthy, qualified or knowledgeable officers in this field.

The military academies and recruit training centers too would be finding it difficult to conduct these activities effectively and efficiently as there are very few OPTCqualified officers. Besides this grave shortcoming, it is also pertinent to highlight that in our military academies including the NDA, IMA, and OTA, no theoretical and technical knowledge of these subjects is imparted as the focus is mainly on sports participation and passing of the mandatory PT tests.

Hence, there is an imperative need to correct this anomaly by training young officers in all the concerned subjects, initially in the military academies and subsequently the OPTC courses, with an allotment of more officer vacancies to the units of all Arms and Services. This will provide more units with OPTC-qualified officers and facilitate the revival of a sports culture at the grass-roots level and enable the conduct of all PT and sports activities effectively and efficiently.



Obstacle Training develops strength, endurance and agility to overcome fearful odds during combat

#### **Command PT Schools**

Since the existence of the ASPT and APTC, all the senior Army Commands have had an exclusive Command PT School—Southern at Pune, Central at Lucknow, Western at Shimla, Eastern at Barrackpore and Northern at Udhampur. These were run within the resources of the respective Commands and managed by either a separate OC PT School or Supervising Officer Physical & Recreational Training (SOP&RT).

These schools served several purposes like running preparatory courses for all AIBC Courses and other Basic Courses at the ASPT for the vacancies allotted to the Commands for all soldiers, besides providing useful knowledge and pre-course training to all ranks who attended courses at the ASPT.

This facilitated a uniform pre-course training to soldiers from different units or regiments, especially when their units were located in the field or operational areas where

there were no such facilities or equipment. The schools also provided a base to the SOP&RT/Command Sports Officer with a minimal PT staff for the conduct of physical training and sports activities in the station; especially the staff of the Command HQs located nearby.

Due to manpower constraints, all these Command PT schools were shut down with a consequent loss of these facilities and led to a general decline in the interest and culture for PT and Sports in the Commands. Coupled with the change of the Army Sports Policy from inter-unit competitions to Inter-Regimental Centre competitions, the focus of sports in the Army shifted from the huge base and grass-roots level of Units to just a few Regimental Centres, thus killing the potential talent in the units (nurseries) besides destroying the culture of sports and games therein.

Over time, the post of SOP&RT (Command Sports & PT Officer) in all the Commands became redundant and now is basically responsible for the allotment of Sports Activity Grants (SAG) through the DGMT, Army HQ. Hence, presently there are no effective Command PT & Sports Officers and the culture of PT and Sports has been totally destroyed. Hence, there is an inescapable need to revive all these shortcomings that have crept into the system and adversely affected our past healthy traditions and way of life.

#### Technicalities of Physical Education

The problem is that everybody is a so-called expert in PT or Sports. Having been through a regimen of PT and some military training, including some of these basic subjects in the academies, one does gain a little basic knowledge which he believes to be sufficient to navigate in this field. This is a fallacy that needs to be realized—and the sooner the better—as this field is as technical as any other field. There is a multitude of dimensions to this and one needs to have some knowledge of subjects such as Health, Fitness, Nutrition, Sports Medicine, Yoga, Martial Arts, etc. including:

- Knowledge of human physiology, muscle types, muscle behavior, skeletal structure, cardio-vascular system, respiratory and circulatory systems
- · Nutrition balance and its optimal absorption into the human system
- Mind-body coupling
- Workouts, regeneration of tissues through rest and recuperation, the systematic build-up of physical prowess, balance of strength, stamina, endurance, flexibility, and
- Excellence in sports and games
- General medicine and Sports medicine

It is humanly impossible to be an expert in all the fields and yet, a military commander who is better aware and knowledgeable of even some of these subjects can ensure better health and fitness of those in his charge, and optimize his resources for all eventualities.

One way of enabling or facilitating this is to provide some of this knowledge and understanding in the form of physical education culture in the academy. Availability of high caliber or proficient sports coaches in few sports disciplines, sports medicine specialists for teaching, and educating the officer cadets, can be a way forward.

Provision of Coaches and Sports Medicine specialists from within the Services will be the best long-term option and hiring or employing civil coaches can be a temporary option. These options can greatly enhance or supplement the basic knowledge of PT and Sports already being taught by the PT instructors in the Academies.

#### **Shortage of APTC Officers**

Although the present authorized strength of the APTC officers has been 68, the posted strength has been fluctuating between 35-42, resulting in a long-standing deficiency of 35-40%. This shortage for many years has been on account of a low priority for PT and Sports in the Army



It is the APTC which oversees physically preparing future officers trg at the PCTC's

and has adversely affected effective and efficient conduct of physical and recreational training (including sports and games) in the military training academies and regimental training centers.

The largest strength of officers is with the AIPT/ASPT, followed by the Army HQ (MT-8/ASCB), NDA, IMA, OTA, and Regimental Training Centres (of all Arms and Services). Discontinuation and low priority for the OPTC courses at the AIPT/ASPT for the last 15-20 years have resulted in the unavailability of willing and qualified highgrade officers for transfer into the APTC.

Every Military Academy and Regimental Centre always demands capable and proficient officers of the APTC as PTO/APTO. Where will these officers come from and how will they come, is the big question? Hence, there is a need to enable and facilitate this by improving the culture for PT, Sports, and Games in the Army, with a holistic approach to the problem.

If there is a will there are many ways and means to fulfill this will! A few years back the Indian Army had a supremely fit officer as their COAS, who understood the vital importance of fitness and sanctioned 15 officers from regular cadre/other cadres into the APTC when the corps strength was around 35. However, after a few years due to the retirement of a few officers, the strength has come down to 42 out of authorised strength of 68.

#### APTC JCO and NCO Instructors

The APTC presently has an adequate number of instructors (JCOs 112, NCOs 385) who are mainly posted to the ASPT/AIPT, military academies, NSG, regimental centers, military schools, etc and render valuable service. However, for many years now, there has been a great demand for the enhancement of their theoretical and practical knowledge of sports, games, sports medicine, and other allied subjects. Traditionally, the focus of the APTC/ ASPT has been mainly on PT and Gymnastics, especially in the practical/performance aspect.

This must be seriously reviewed as there is little utility of the higher 'Instructors Physical Efficiency Tests' (IPET) beyond the First Class, as in later service, other than just the demonstration or PT display or Gymnastics participation, these tests (basically 13 tests of Special Class) are of little use. A meaningful comparison with other professional armies will prove this point and enable us to modify our needs as per the actual requirements of the trainees and for overall better and beneficial conduct of training and imparting education in this field.

#### Conclusion

The importance of physical fitness and sports in the Armed Forces, especially the Army, is of paramount importance. The befitting conduct of physical training at all levels in the Army is a professional necessity. All ranks must be kept physically fit at all times with regular PT sessions and healthy sports or recreational activities. Necessary facilities for these activities must be provided and a favourable environment created to enable and facili-

Ample or adequate knowledge of PT, Sports, and their allied subjects including Sports Medicine must be imparted to all officer cadets in all military academies. Maximum OPTC course vacancies must be made available for Army officers of all Arms and Services to revive and boost the PT and Sports activities at the critical unit grass-roots level.

The current Army Sports Policy must be reviewed and the focus shifted to the unit level to nurture and cultivate the healthy sports culture of yesteryear's. All the Commands must have a PT and Sports School with an effective SOP&RT for supervising and conducting all such activities therein as per the earlier charter of duties and the allotment of SAG funds delegated to some other suitable authority.

#### Critical Issues That Need Attention

- Majority of Army units do not have OPTC qualified PTOs.
- Reduction of OPTC courses from 6 to 2 during the past 15-20 years has drastically reduced the strength of qualified Unit PTOs in the Army.
- 35-40% deficiency of APTC Officers has deprived Recruit Training Centres of APTC PTOs and Command HQs of Supervising Officers Physical & Recreational Training (SOP&RT) in GS Training Branch.
- Presently the DGMT is the Col Comdt of APTC. AIPT, Pune is under ARTRAC. Earlier both were under the DGMT.
- Technical knowledge of PT, Sports & Allied subjects of all ranks including Officers has been very poor in the Army as theory subjects are not taught in recruit



'Flying Angel' test after developing Speed, Agility, Coordination and Control for Vaulting Horse Training

training centres and officer training academies like NDA, IMA & OTA.

#### The Way Forward

- Need for realistic vision for conduct of PT & Sports in the Army.
- Need for 'more professional' career management of APTC officers including grant of SL APTC commission from ranks, transfer from Regular Cadre and postings on ERE/deputation.
- · Creation of high quality broad base of OPTC qualified officers for Army through vacancies to all Arms & Services to select talented and proficient officers in PT & Sports.
- OPTC courses are to be made attractive and given the weightage of other professional courses to improve the quality of officers attending OPTC and consequently



'Burma Bridge'; one of the essential obstacles for all Field Obstacle Training of

improve the PT & Sports standards in units, centres and academies.

• Enhance professional technical knowledge of PT, Sports & Allied subjects with introduction of theory periods as part of training in recruit training centers and academies.

#### The Last Word

The true present state of affairs of the Army with regard to conduct of PT & Sports for recruits, cadets and combatants has been revealed through an objective and holistic analysis supported with adequate input from the environment comprising both serving officers and veterans upto 1st course JSW/NDA.

This present state has not been reached overnight. It is the cumulative effect of many years of oversight or change in priorities. Rather than retrospect how and why it happened and blame some of our predecessors it would be prudent to now take stock of the situation and start a process of reconciliation, review and reform with a holistic approach, road map and realistic vision for the future.

The concerned Army hierarchy must honestly and truthfully debate, discuss and deliberate all the intricate issues highlighted in this article with all those responsible for planning, coordinating and training of recruits, cadets and combatants and reach an understanding or consensus to start a process of improving the overall fitness and health of all ranks, ultimately dovetailed to enhance their performance in their respective fields.



### **Extracts from Military Professionals**



#### Lt Gen Bhopinder Singh, ex DGMT & Col Comdt APTC, ex Lt Gov Andaman & Nicobar **Islands**

"In the profession of arms and the calling of soldiers, combat readiness and efficacy is determined not just by the training rigour that is physical, mental and emotional – but also, cultural, psychological and 'auto-instinctive' that can only be best borne and harnessed by specialist Institutions like the Army Institute of Physical Training (AIPT) and such like establishments that propagate not just the extremities of physical prowess and sports, but so much more, in the making of a complete fighting machine of an individual 'soldier'.

The warriors code and ethos necessitates that he/she must always put the combat mission above all, never accept defeat or quit and above all, leave no comrade behind in any circumstance – the nobility of these standards and drilling can be seamlessly instilled in a combatant through the means of sporting/physical excellence that proximate the finest tenets of a 'combat unit', where everyone pushes themselves to their physical and mental limits, for the 'unit/team goals'.

Even morally, soldiers who excel in sports know the importance of playing by the rules and abiding by the dignity of conduct, this invaluable lesson is

a very important collateral benefit that accrues to a professional warrior in training. This is not a luxury but a necessity of chiseling an ordinary human into one that is capable of doing extraordinary actions, routinely.

Practically, specialist requirements within an institution of excellence like AIPT requires nothing short of specialists, and not time serving generalists - therefore it is worthy to consider a dedicated cadre of APTC professionals who are at the cutting edge of scientific knowhow and advancement in the said field. This will also relieve the stress borne of manpower shortages in the combat units that are usually falling short of boots-on-ground, especially in combat commitments.

Similarly the 'train-the-trainer' approach of the super-specialist cadre & institutions can have a cascading impact in the health of the entirety of the Indian Army, without necessarily compromising on the 'field strength' – this super specialization would also instill a sense of pride, élan and preference in those who seek to join the APTC, in a permanent capacity."

#### Maj Gen VK Madhok, 1st Course JSW/NDA, Infantry

"Having attended both the Basic & Advance Officers PT course at erstwhile ASPT, I would largely attribute my present fitness state at 90 yrs age to what I learnt during these Officer PT courses.

The OPTC Course must be restored to its original place. Maximum YOs of all arms & services must be trained to attain and enhance their technical knowledge of PT & sports and implement the same in the training curriculum of all ranks in their respective units as the Unit PT & Sports Officers.

Without OPTC qualified officers even the basic knowledge of the concerned subjects, as laid down in military (PT) pamphlets issued by DGMT & ARTRAC cannot be implemented. Heads of All Arms & Services must take this vital aspect of training seriously and demand OPTC vacancies to have qualified officers in their recruit training centres and units.

The APTC Officer shortfall must be made up with a selection of high quality, dedicated and committed officers that would be an asset to the Corps and the Army. Quality of officers must be given overriding priority rather than just filling vacancies.

It will be the quality of the officers that are sent for OPTC courses and those transferred to APTC that will make the critical difference to the Corps and Army. High professionalism and commitment for APTC & AIPT, Pune coupled with able and effective management of officer cadre can change the present status quo. DGMT & Army Cdr ARTRAC should coordinate their efforts and with support of MS & AG to start a process of transformation in the Army with foresight & vision."

#### Lt Gen Ashok Joshi, ex DGMT & Col Comdt APTC

"For the Army, 'hardihood' is as important as physical fitness. Physical fitness, if it were to end only in 'athletic' excellence, would not suffice for the Army. In the hands of the immature, hardihood training can easily turn into an exercise in sadism or masochism. Care needs to be taken that this does not happen.

Hardihood training is best imparted by setting an example, and gradually, until it is internalized by the individual, and becomes a matter of pride. Hardihood should be more prized than athleticism. This training too needs to be carried out gradually so that injuries are avoided. Hardihood training also calls for a scientific approach and experimentation."

#### Lt Gen Harbhajan Singh, ex SOC-in-C, 1st Course JSW/NDA

"What is the definition of physical fitness in the present day and future context? Do we need the same physical fitness for an officer manning a ration stand or posted in an Ordnance Depot or repairing vehicles in a field formation as compared to one doing hand to hand fighting with the Chinese at Galwan?

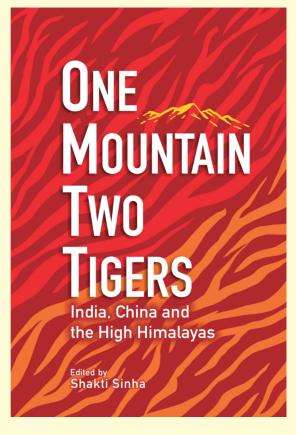
Even in the Infantry, the physical standard for Commandos is much higher than the regular Infantry. So, we do distinguish as regards Physical fitness even among officers in Infantry, depending on the role and give special training where needed.

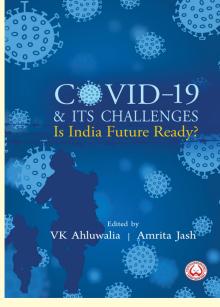
Should Corps of Signals officers be spending more time on doing BPET or mastering Electronic and cyber warfare? Once we decide on these four aspects, we can perhaps rework the definition of Physical fitness.

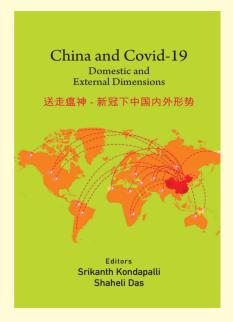
Maybe we can have mandatory PT courses for Fighting arms and optional courses for support services with somewhat lower standards? It is all a question of time to be spent on various subjects or activities based on very simple analysis: 'Must' do, 'Should' do and 'Could' do!

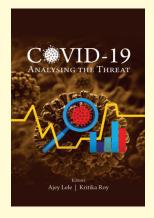
PT in quite a few units is a farce! Units do not have PT equipment; physical culture is lacking. There is a dire need to improve things at unit level. After all, the Army comprises units, which is the basic brick on which the edifice of the Army stands! An objective and meaningful debate is called for to discuss with 'an open mind', keeping in view future warfare needs."

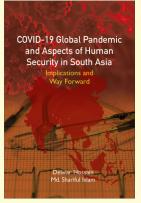
# New Titles FROM PENTAGON

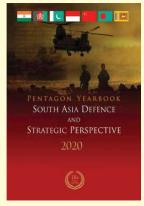


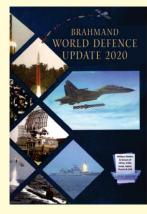


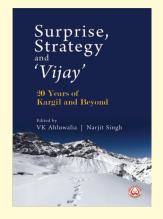


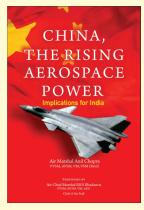


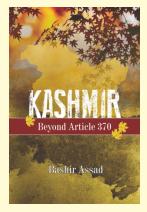


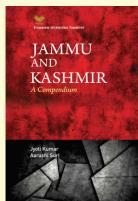


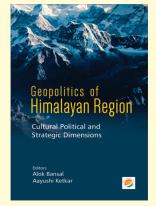


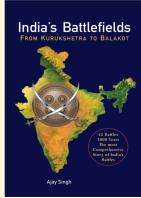














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### Fit To The Corps

A deep-dive into the history, role, and challenges of the Army Physical Training Corps and Army Institute of Physical Training

by Aritra Banerjee, edited by Osaid Butt

The Army Physical Training Corps (APTC) and its mother institution—the Army Institute of Physical Training (AIPT) were raised over 74 years ago on 1 July 1946 with the aim of fulfilling four core aspects of physical training in the Indian Army.

#### **Everything PT Corps**

The four areas of APTC's/AIPT's concentration are: Physical Training (PT), the training and conduct of Sports and Games, Excellence in Sports, and Combat Fitness. For the aspect of Combat Readiness in frontline soldiers, the emphasis is on endurance training, traversing obstacle courses, martial skills such as unarmed combat (UAC), swimming, confidence jumps and combat sports such as boxing for both— officer cadets and recruits. These are coupled with their Battle Efficiency Tests (BPET), Physical Proficiency Tests (PPT), and Instructors Physical Efficiency Tests (IPET).

All these collectively better prepares trainees for the rigours of combat. This state of physical preparedness is required to be maintained in units for all combatants of all arms and services based on the role and task

assigned to their units and the specific job profile of the combatants.

Meanwhile, in the pursuit of achieving excellence in sports at both, the national and international level, the periodic Army Sports Policies issued through the Director General Military Training (DGMT) are supposed to cater for identifying, creating, nurturing, promoting, training and participation of talent from the grass root level at units and recruit/regimental training centres and upwards from the Brigade all the way to Command, Army, Services and the National level.

In the words of Lieutenant General Bhopinder Singh, a former DGMT and Lieutenant Governor of Andaman and Nicobar islands, "Given that AIPT as the nodal and specialist institution can sift individual cases of extreme and potential excellence from overall generic standards—its role in picking talent and harnessing the same towards competitive sports standards, has been exemplary. It is seldom acknowledged that the role of honour from the institute in churning sports personnel, especially in shooting, boxing, gymnastics, wrestling,



"We join the Armed Forces to serve and given our operating conditions, need to be physically fit. This is something personal and can best be established by introducing periodic fitness standards for all our soldiers to qualify in."

Gen. SF Rodrigues, ex COAS, ex VCOAS, ex VCOAS, ex DGMT



and athletics is higher than any private or governmental institution in the country."

#### 'Fit' the Requirements

"We have an elaborate and suitably funded organization and any analysis has to validate the parameters of our policy and where it needs modification or amplification," explained former Army Chief and DGMT General Sunith Francis Rodrigues, to this correspondent. He continued, "We join the Armed Forces to serve and given our operating conditions, need to be physically fit. This is something personal and can best be established by introducing periodic fitness standards for all our soldiers to qualify in."

Lt Gen. Bhopinder Singh outlined the role of the PT corps in an interview with this correspondent, saying, "As the foremost Military Corps and institution to define, nurture and implement those exacting standards of the Indian Army's 'physicality' – its role in ensuring the 'kinetic' ability of its combatants is palpable, incalculable and often, invisible." He added,

"Given the domain of 'physicality', its collateral extension and refinement to excellence in sports is both logical and desirable. Sports and soldiering are positively interlinked as sports not only leads to even higher standards of physicality but also channelises aggression, focus, inculcates a competitive 'winning' culture, builds cohesion, enhances esprit de corps and above all, a sense of belonging and pride in a unit, regiment, corps or service. "

He further stated, "It is empirically proven that those soldiers who have excelled in sports at any level tend to exhibit a higher level of courage under fire, confidence, and hunger for success in a battlefield."

#### **Corps Contributions**

The APTC and AIPT have been responsible for building the very foundation of physical fitness for recruits and officer cadets at various regimental recruit training centres and officer training academies. They are also responsible for imparting physical fitness amongst the rank and file of the Army. Every aspect of physical

training is carried out by the APTC and the officers/instructors trained under it. The corps has been a pioneer for sports in India since its inception.

Post 1982, 9th Asian Games, both, the Army, and the Services, got a boost for the development of their sports infrastructure at their premier training institutions and sports nodal centres. This enabled the improvement of sports and fitness standards, and resultant laurels achieved by the armed forces.

The conduct of the World Military Games (WMG), with teams from over 100 militaries of the world, at Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Mumbai during Oct 2007 were international-level events conducted mainly by the APTC fraternity and their AIPT trained staff were laudable achievements.

Speaking about APTC's contribution in the World Military Games, former DGMT and (present) Centre for Land and Warfare Studies (CLAWS) Director Lt Gen (Dr) Vijay Kumar Ahluwalia narrated, "APTC, AIPT and equivalent organisations of the Air Force and the Navy joined the effort with a great sense of commitment and



Soldier training for gymnastics on the trampoline

enthusiasm. The conduct of the WMG at Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Mumbai during October 2007 was an International level event, with participation by over 100 militaries of the world.

It must be said to the credit of the APTC officers and other ranks that they planned, trained themselves, acquired the requisite additional skills in certain new events being conducted, and positioned themselves to conduct the event in a flawless manner."

Another notable contribution of the corps was the overall review of the PT system of training, Physical Efficiency Tests (PET) applicable for all Army personnel across all age groups. This review of PT and PET was carried out under the directions of the then DGMT during the late 80s and early 90s. After several trials, the New PT System and PET were implemented in the Army in 1992 and applicable till date.

Another positive development was at the behest of the Army Training Command (ARTRAC), Shimla between 2011-13.



AIPT & APTC Depot, Pune

This was the review of PT in the Army with recommended methodology for attaining and maintaining fitness of all ranks including formulation of a PT Doctrine. This was successfully followed up by AIPT, Pune, under directions of HQ ARTRAC by incorporating the same in the review and revision of existing PT pamphlets and issue of two comprehensive volumes of PT & Allied subjects and PT Doctrine to all concerned units, formations and training centres through HQ ARTRAC.

#### Lack of Courses: The Course Reality

The shortage of APTC-trained PT instructors at the unit level have been identified as a core problem area according to several individual studies including a recent, 2018-19 Higher Command Course (HCC) award winning dissertation on this subject, highlighting the dwindling number of Officer Physical Training Courses (OPTC) that have adversely affected training at unit level.

Incidentally, till the late 1950s, the 'Basic Officers PT Course' was mandatory for all officers.

Overtime and with changing priorities, the number of OPTCs run in a year and their overall strength at AIPT, Pune, got drastically reduced. Presently, every year, the AIPT conducts the AIBC course for approximately 900 other ranks spread over 4 courses of 10 weeks each and 2 OPTC courses for total 60 officers.

Going by the data presented in the studies, and validated by the 'Victory India Campaign' studies and research, amply and elaborately articulated by numerous authors and respondents in these books, the OPTC courses saw a sharp drop from 6, eight week courses, consisting of a total strength of 45 officers per course till the late 1990s being discontinued at one time and later revived to only 2 six-week courses of 30 officers each till present (Sep 2020).

When asked about the shortage of OPTC courses available per year, Lt Gen (Dr) Ahluwalia opined, "One must objectively look at the contours of our operational scenario. India faces many external and internal threats to its security, due to its geo-strategic location, size,

demographic profile, and the prevalent politico-social-economic conditions."

The CLAWS director spoke about India's complex external and internal security threats calling for the commitment of troop numbers, saying "Operational requirements must always be given the highest priority.

"On the other hand, lack of professionally qualified PT instructors is a major reason for the deteriorating physical fitness standards in the army. The physical fitness and its related advantages for better combat effectiveness cannot be overlooked. A correct balance would have to be drawn to train, especially the other ranks, to ensure that units' and regimental centres' requirements of trained PT instructors is met adequately."

He added, "Without increasing the APTC cadre, one option that merits consideration is that we could increase the cadre strength by drawing minimum essential persons from the army so that at least 2-4 PT NCOs are trained per battalion and equivalent units, by organising additional courses for the men in particular.

Due to prolonged peace tenures and remaining in the same environment, sometimes it becomes a counter-productive exercise. On balance, APTC Corps is an excellent organisation, with motivated and professionally competent staff."

Lt Gen Bhopinder Singh said, "The onus is on APTC to recognize, adapt and continue contributing to the 'inner health' of the Indian Army, albeit, recognizing the 'new normal' of operation existence. This will necessitate the optimal use of technology, science-based shorter/capsule courses and even adaptation of new teaching concepts like 'train the trainer' that has the logic of cascading skills or embedding APTC personnel in units/regions that work like 'nodal' set-ups,"

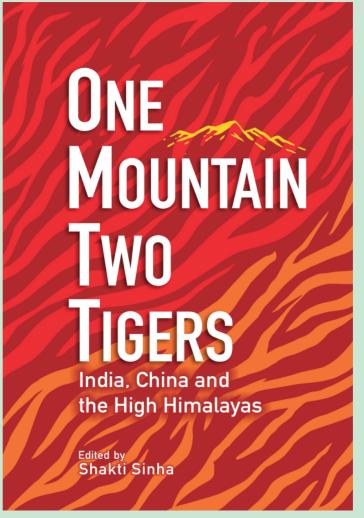
#### **Today & Tomorrow**

Speaking about the future of the APTC, Lt Gen Bhopinder Singh said, "The future of APTC has to morph from a generic institution of excellence to a cutting-edge institution of super specialization like Research & Referral Hospital in the Indian Military Medical domain. A leaner-meaner and more assertive footprint of the same can come if 'specialist/permanent cadre' is dedicatedly created for APTC – not only does it instill pride, specialization but also aspiration for joinees e.g. Special Forces."

He concluded, "The underlying role and contribution of APTC in inculcating and institutionalizing the 'can do' spirit of the Indian Army makes it invaluable. The increasingly asymmetric nature of combat tests the physical, mental and even emotional quotient of a combatant."



# Inside China's Mind.



he May-June standoff in Ladakh between the Indian Army and the Chinese PLA caught not just India, but the world by surprise as everyone's attention was on tackling the Covid-19 pandemic.

Why did China choose this moment to become an aggressor militarily? What are the lingering disputes between these Asian giants, who would soon become the top two economies in the world?

Is India's claim to Aksai Chin based only on the security needs of colonial India? Or did Indian control over these areas go back in history? What has been the historical links with these areas with the Indian mainland?

What is the geostrategic importance of Ladakh?

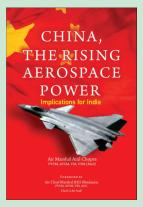
Did internal tensions within the Chinese Communist Party cause relations with India to break down?

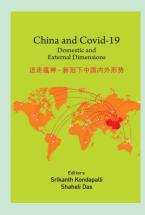
Has India internalised the lessons of 1962, and how is it placed militarily in Ladakh?

Has India fundamentally misunderstood China?

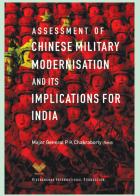
Did the Wuhan Spirit and the Chennai Connect serve any purpose? Are there other critical dimensions to the India-China relations where the latter may be at a disadvantage? This book addresses these, and many such questions in detail.

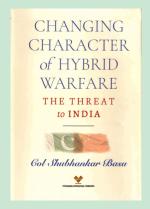
#### Of Related Interest













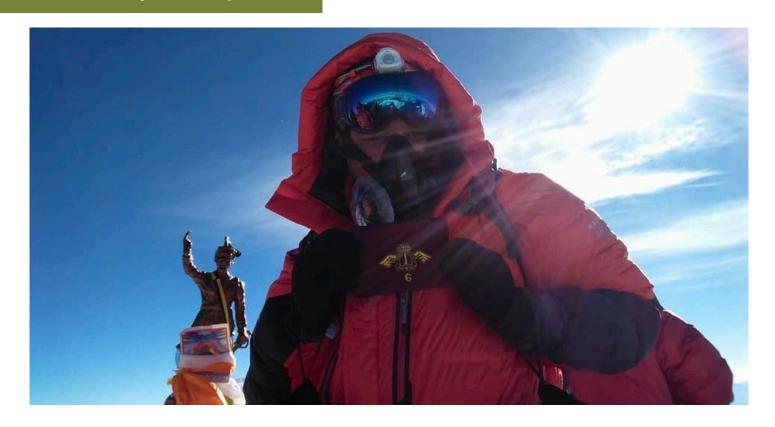
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# In Conversation With 'Tenzing Norgay' Awardee Colonel Sarfraz Singh

"I am elated to have been conferred with India's highest National Adventure Award. It will now be a proud moment for 6 PARA to display an Arjuna Award and two Tenzing Norgay Awards in the Officers Mess. The rich traditions and the working ethos of the Paltan sets us apart from the rest."

#### by Aritra Banerjee, edited by Osaid Butt

Colonel Sarfraz Singh, an officer of the elite 6 PARA, Director National Institute Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS,) is a seasoned mountaineer who recently received the prestigious 'Tenzing Norgay' award under the category of Land Adventure. This award is the highest recognition in the field of adventure sports in the nation. This highly accomplished paratrooper has climbed several difficult peaks including Mt. Everest, Mt. Trishul, Mt. Nun, Mt. Aconcagua, Mt. Gorichen, Mt. Harmukh and Kangto-6.

He is amongst a handful of elite mountaineers to have climbed every peak he has led as a team leader. He has also led a High

Altitude Mountain Terrain Biking expedition and has cycled all the way from India to Singapore covering more than 4000 km. Col. Safaraz Singh, son of the legendary Hockey Champion Balbir Singh, is also professionally qualified in scuba diving, rafting, skydiving, and Mountain Terrain Biking (MTB).

Col. Sarfaraz spoke exclusively to Mission Victory India's Aritra Banerjee about his recent achievement...

#### Q: What piqued your interest towards adventure sports, and what keeps you going?

**Ans:** I belong to a family which has an immensely rich sporting

tradition. My grandfather played hockey with the legendary Major Dhyan Chand and my father is a Hockey Olympic and Asian Gold Medalist. I belong to the elite Parachute Regiment where adventure activities are encouraged, and I commanded 6 PARA which had legendary mountaineers like Col. Balwant Sandhu (Arjuna Awardee). Even the present Subedar Major of the unit is an Everester.

#### Q: How is the physical and mental preparation process of these diverse adventure events like?

**Ans:** If a person is physically fit and has mastered the basic mountaineering skills, one does not have



Living a life less ordinary; Another height reached!

to bother much about the physical preparation. It can be developed with ease by following a strict training schedule. Mental toughness, which some call grit, resilience, self-confidence, or determination, needs to be continuously developed over a period to get the job done. Remember: Your strongest muscle and your worst enemy is your mind; train it well.

#### Q: How does it feel to continue the 6 Para tradition of being conferred the Tenzing Norgay award?

Ans: I am elated to have been conferred with India's highest National Adventure Award. It will now be a proud moment for 6 PARA to display an Arjuna Award and two Tenzing Norgay Awards in the Officers Mess —the first for

lifetime achievement and the second in the land adventure category. Our rich traditions and the working ethos of the Paltan sets us apart from the rest.

#### Q: Do you believe adventure sports can help officers deal with the rigours of the job better?

**Ans:** Most of the adventure activities are strongly associated with our professional job. It will not only assist the young officers in enhancing their fitness levels but also in honing their decision-making skills under adverse conditions. They'll be in a better position to undertake special operations like Cliff Chop Assault, Skiing Patrolling, Small Team Insertion Extraction (STIE), casting, long duration surveillance

and rescue operations in snow bound and flood affected areas.

#### Q: What is one stand-out expedition memory?

Ans: It was a moment of joy and satisfaction which I experienced at 6:20 am on 20 May 2018 while standing on the summit of Mount Everest (8848 M).

#### Q: What is next on your adventure sports resume?

Ans: I have a huge ambitious bucket list which I hope to complete by 2025. At present my focus is to climb the highest unclimbed peak of Eastern Himalayas, Mount Kangto (7060 M). 🜇



## Crisis In The Cradle: Response

"The stock of the Services Officers' Corps comes from the same pool as the rest of our countrymen and would therefore reflect their attributes. How do we then find and mould the officers who are paragons of virtues, and role model citizens?"

#### by Rear Admiral Vineet Bakhshi (Retd)

#### **Our Legacy**

Whilst we have had a glorious history, our immediate past since independence has had its fair share of the pangs of a new nation, struggling to come to terms with its penury and potential. The stock of the Services Officers' Corps comes from the same pool as the rest of our countrymen and would therefore reflect their attributes. How do we then find and mould the officers who are paragons of virtues and role model citizens? It is quite possible that the metamorphosis for the better or for the worse is brought about by the customs and traditions of our Institutions. In fact, this is the underlying deduction of the aforesaid essay. Let us therefore examine some additional issues

#### Political environment

The transformation of our society and polity, its continuous descent into darkness and resurrection, is palpable by the constant focus on the efforts in politics to stay in or to acquire political power. Whilst it reflects the churning of our democratic processes, the uncivil discourse, undermining of the law and a lack of concern for the fellow citizen, takes its toll in the making of the young mind. Let us look at two issues which directly or indirectly affect the quality of our intake, education, and duties and obligations of our citizens.

#### **Education**

About 65% of India's children are educated in Government schools. The Right to Education Act was enacted in 2009, with the laudable view to ensure

that all children get a school education up to the 8th standard. The quality of teachers and infrastructure was defined. The ASER report 2018 brings out the grave deficiencies that continue to exist, both by way of learning outcomes and facilities in government schools, almost a decade after the RTE Act was enunciated.

There are states where close to 50% schools do not have provision for drinking water or toilets for girls. In the RTE Act, the Government seems to have tacitly acknowledged its inability to meet its statutory obligations, by providing that the private non-minority schools would be required to take in 25% of the intake from the economically weaker section of society, despite their own schools being undersubscribed to.

So, what is the quality of the student that the country can expect at the end of the education process? One who is discerning and learned, or one who has half formed minds and ideas, driven by the images on the social media and by the local politician? Without having quality school education present in our country, how are we to have quality national institutions?

Therefore, what sort of background of children should the induction into our Academies be from? Can we trust the quality of cadets who make it through the selection system, having been 'coached' on preparation and SSB methods? Is it possible to induct cadets into the tenth standard, whilst the young minds are still relatively virtuous and easier to mould?

The Government has enunciated a New Education Policy 2020, which is quite visionary. It remains to be to how it would pan out. As of now the existing system and RTE Act 2009 is applicable.

#### **Fundamental Duties**

Let's examine another aspect of the milieu that the citizens are brought up in. The Preamble to the Constitution of India resolves to secure for its citizens, Justice, Liberty, Equality and promotion of Fraternity. The original constitution did not have the fundamental duties and obligations expected of its citizens in its body or reference in the Preamble. These were added in 1976 by the 42nd Amendment and further amended by the 86th Amendment.

The duties are not enforceable. In such a setting, we have had generations of our citizens focusing on their rights but being apathetic and callous of their duties and obligations. This is manifested in a distinct lack of civic behaviour and a glaring disrespect for the law. The young cadets too come from the same environs, observing the focus on 'rights', an ability of citizens to bypass the law, but no idea or understanding of their duties and obligations.

It's within the portals of our academies, and the ethos of our Services, that Duty and Rights being two sides of the same coin, and that often duty

has primacy over rights, is sought to be instilled. Perhaps the rest of the country could follow the model, through necessary legislative changes, or is that Utopian idealism and an unreasonable expectation?

#### **Faculty**

That academics cannot be taught by inadequate, untrained, and temporary staff is a no brainer. The erstwhile Naval Engineering College had through an arrangement with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), professors who were DRDO scientists. It provided the student officers in the college, outstanding education, and a ready influx of faculty due to retirements or departures. There were service officers of the Engineering and Electrical branches on faculty, but they were principally for professional subjects.

The officers from the Education branch were not quite qualified for a degree level college and did not often find a billet. A proposal had been mooted about 15 years ago to run the academic curriculum at the new Naval Academy (NAVAC) by Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay IIT(B), who would provide the faculty from IIT(B), and a degree in Engineering from IIT(B). The genesis were the problems related to the faculty for the NDA, possibly manifesting at NAVAC, and was developed after a study of the system at the Australian Defence Force Academy. A provision had been made to upgrade the Academy to post-graduate work with a view to foster research, build academic excellence and attract faculty talent. Whilst the Academic Council of IIT (B) had accepted the unusual proposal, considering it as a service to the nation, it was Service Headquarters, which for some reason, did not see merit in it!

The question of excellence and recognition in academic standards will always remain, unless quality faculty is cultivated, provided, and sustained. A person on faculty requires growth potential, and association with a top of the line University or Institution could resolve the problems related to quality, continuity, and excellence.

#### Infrastructure Maintenance

Maintenance of Buildings and Roads, and of Electrical and Mechanical installations has always been a vexed issue. We do see extremes, both highly satisfactory maintenance as well as crumbling infrastructure in service. Having experienced, and managed both these firsthand, I felt it to be a function of the availability of funds, quality of planning and the attributes of the executive. I have seen Garrison Engineers produce outstanding results, and obdurate individuals, lying down on the job to loaf.

It was therefore quite evident, that there are no systemic lacunae, just one of application. Institutions like our Training Academies indeed deserve the best by way of support staff, highest quality of roll on plans and adequate funds, for what the young trainee observes, becomes the norm for the future. If India is looking towards becoming a power to reckon with, assuredly we can have the budget to look after our infrastructure.

#### Leadership development

Children imbibe observed behaviour, and this goes to shape their adult life. My experience in the school that I help run is that troubled children come mostly from insecure homes, homes where there is a communication deficit, there are no quality role models to emulate and they are low on self-esteem. This is further exacerbated by a deficiency of reading habits, and a flood of negativity in today's social media. Children are an empty slate, and their minds are moulded by their environment. The instilling of self-esteem and self-belief have been the two main factors which have helped to mould children into good citizens. A perceptible change is observed in the students who are in the tenth and those who are in the twelfth, with the former more amenable to discipline, suggesting that it would be easier to mould a younger mind.

Much has been written about leaders and leadership styles. For the military, a leader has a fine blend of strength of character, humility, integrity, an ability to achieve the required outcomes,

dedication to the state and the team. the power to motivate and adapt, the ability to listen and high levels of empathy.

The military leader is required to build his team and mentor future leaders. He is seen to be professionally competent, high on emotional intelligence and aware of the light beyond his own shadow. How then do we identify and build these attributes? Many of these traits are developed through observational learning.

#### Cadets' selection

Our intake to the NDA is from a shrunken pool, with institutions like the Rashtriya Indian Military College, Sainik Schools, Military Schools and lately, the Kendriya Vidhyalyas, and public schools of the three-Armed Forces, providing a fair number. Out there in our vast hinterland is a huge talent pool. The number of students exiting 12th class is around six million every year, about half of them males.

The question is, can we locate the right talent? The school knows the antecedents of a student, and it may therefore be worthwhile to get a recommendation from the school Principal and class teacher, on the suitability of the individual to protect the nation their lives.

During my tenure as CO INS Shivaji, I had observed that the 10+2 Naval Engineering Course cadets were of an exceptional calibre, and despite, their small numbers, limited resources and facilities, matched up to the NDA in activities such as basketball and Camp Torna. An analysis suggested that higher intellect levels were a major contributory factor, as the entry into the scheme had reached 85%+ in physics, chemistry and mathematics as cut off. In a nutshell, intelligence matters. We could therefore consider a minimum 80% marks in 10+2 Board Exams or being in the top 10 percentile, as a pre-requisite for entry to the NDA.

The other alternative is to consider the formation of an NDA Junior Wing, with the induction being after the tenth standard. A proviso of keeping a minimum of 80% in Board exams

would provide for a higher intellect. The measure would prepare the young cadets in terms of their physical fitness, culture conditioning and service orientation, by the time he reaches the NDA. In the Junior Wing, emphasis would be on academic excellence, building up physical fitness and developing communication skills.

#### Conclusion

The Academy does have issues, some of which are derivatives of the society that we live in and some a consequence of the circumstances and proceedings at the institution. However, some measures would assist in improving the training outcomes. The response is concluded with five recommendations.

#### **Academic Faculty**

Without adequate quality faculty, the learning outcomes will always be suspect. In the absence of suitable growth potential in a singular academy it may be difficult to attract and retain talent. Quality faculty will be the key to providing the vital inputs to a cadet. In the past, it was required of the cadet to be physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

A fourth dimension needs to be added, to be technologically sound. Consideration can be given to run the academic content by a suitable university. The academic content of the suggested Junior Wing could be run as we do an Armed Forces Public School.

#### Infrastructure

Infrastructure upkeep is essential for the impact it has on the young trainee. It is quite achievable, given the funds, planning and highly motivated executives. These are well within the ambit of the Service Headquarters and could be met with attention to the requirements.

#### Developing leadership attributes

The formative years develop the individual's leadership skills through a process of observational learning. Whilst academic and physical development does take place through a system of reinforced learning, it is through observation and impact of the environment which has the greatest impact on the development of leadership skills. It therefore becomes even more imperative that the officers and senior cadets in the academy follow an exemplary code of conduct.

#### **Selection of Cadets**

There is immense potential and desire in our youth to serve in the Armed Forces. It remains a question of matching the supply to our demand. A method of talent spotting and promotion from the hinterland and across the length and breadth of the country can be adopted in which intellect, physical fitness and character are the principal virtues. The selection to the NDA can be made contingent to getting 80% in 10+2 Boards and favourable recommendations from the Principal and Class Teacher.

#### Junior Wing

The objective is to induct a more malleable cadet. The induction after the tenth is recommended to be in a separate Wing, where emphasis is on academics, physical conditioning, and development of communication skills. This would help to mitigate the issues of trying to cope with the concurrent demands of developing sinews and a degree level course at the Academy.



#### Rear Admiral Vineet Bakhshi

RAdm Bakhshi, an alumni of the National Defence Academy (NDA), served as Commanding Officer Indian Naval Ship (INS) Shivaji, Director General Naval Projects (Mumbai) and Chairman and Managing Director of Goa Shipyard Ltd. He can be reached at vineet.bakhshi@gmail.com

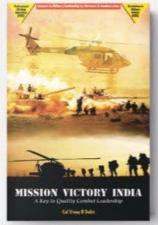
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# **Looking Beyond Relegations: Responses** From Veterans & Serving Officers

Responses by serving officers, and veterans on Journalist Aritra Banerjee's story, 'Looking Beyond Relegations' calling for the need to incorporate mandatory physical tests at the SSBs.

#### by Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

Aritra Banerjee's story on the need for mandatory Physical Efficiency Tests (PET) at the Services Selection Board (SSB), with views and opinions by former Commandants (including former Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash), Training Staff, SSB assessors and President have received overwhelming positive responses in favor of incorporation of, mandatory tests at our SSBs.

A few responses from experienced professionals in the field are given below as ample proof and justification for the 25-years-old proposal relentlessly pursued by our military training academies, especially NDA, IMA, and OTA.

#### Col RK Sinha, ex AAD, ex Dy **President SSB**

The sick and physically weak cannot be good military leaders. There must

be a very fine balance of, 'Brain & Brawn', so as to be able to carry military duties. Therefore, the selection of would-be officers in the Armed forces has also to be looking into both these aspects.

My two decades of experience says that we are laying more emphasis on the intellectual part. My 5 years of association with Selection Centre (East)and also 15 years of experience in coaching the candidates strongly makes me believe that, if the fellow is a bit weak in physicals, the Academies will train him/her to be strong. In the bargain, we are losing out on those, who cannot speak convent English.

#### The reason, why this is happening are:

 The interviewer can only hear, and the psychologist can only read what the candidate is speaking or writing, respectively. The only person, who can judge the physical part of the candidate, is the GTO. The GTO can be sidelined in the selection process, because if two say yes, the third has little or no say unless he vetoes him. The GTO also feels that the candidate is only physically weak & the Academy will take care of it.

- · There is no tool with the GTO to test the strength and stamina of the candidate. He can generally test the physical courage and agility of the candidate, during individual tasks.
- of • The bias Interviewer Psychologist: We are enamored with the Academic Excellence of the candidates. The 90% score, with good English, scores over 65% of marks, even though he may have



I feel that what the author is suggesting is very true and not only do the tests require an overhaul at selection level but I feel they require an overall revision of physical tests which are conducted even post commissioning.

represented the school in a couple of games. But then, when this 90% type of people enter NDA, IMA, or OTA, they find it difficult with the physical standards of the Academies.

This is because, when they had reached class IX, they were told that sports are not going to get them a seat in a good engineering or a medical college. Even cracking the NDA math's paper, needs a very high standard of mathematics. Therefore, to get through Armed forces written & SSB, you got to be a high academic achiever.

Many of these high achievers, never entered a football or a hockey ground, leave aside a boxing ring, or ran x - country race (barring the military schoolboys). Overall, the SSB pays extraordinarily little attention to the physical standards, because of, Structural Fault.

#### Suggested Remedy

- Let 1.6 Km running, 10 pull-ups & 15 pushups (or, whatever the Academy Board recommends), be part of 1st screening. Those who fail should be sent back.
- The balance should undergo a group discussion on a very general topic to test their power of expression, General Awareness, Cooperation, Adaptability, and Initiative & Confidence. The group in no case should be larger than 10 to 12 and min 10 min be given to each group.
- Both the activities could end by 11:45 on the screening day and the second screening would leave us with limited number of candidates, to be put through for the rest of 3.5 days.

What will we achieve by

Implementing this?

- We will have physically fit boys and girls going for the second screening.
- The second screening will give a candidate adequate time to express. The present screening test PPDT is an only intellectual test of the capability to write a good story and to get into a group discussion. This

successful SSB Coaching Academy at Pune.

In all these years I have realised that there has been a perceptible decline in the physical fitness in both the genders. They know that in the entire 5 days of SSB, there is only one test of 3 minutes, where they would be subjected to an individual obstacle test.

The most amazing part that I found was that whether you did 7 obstacles or 14 obstacles (one is permitted to repeat obstacles, within the specified period), out of 10, it didn't have a material difference.

Not that one is advocating that physical fitness should be the main criteria of selection of an officer; nevertheless, men do not accept a physically weak commander as their leader. It has



YO traversing obstacle course during Commando Course, Belgaum

being the only screening, the time is also being spent on those who are low on fitness.

· The assessors will now have a smaller lot to assess their caliber for the balance of 3.5 days.

#### Drawing from More than Two Decades Worth of Experience:

I have been associated with SSB selection process since 1999 when I got posted as the Deputy President of 19 SSB. I also had the great privilege of being the Senior instructor twice, at AEC center Panchmarhi and once for Army Air Defence looking after the Army jawans going for ACC entry. For the past 12 years, I am running a

entered the head of most of the commanders that it is the machine that counts and not the man behind the machine.

#### Serving YO, Inf, Dec 19 IMA Commission

"After reading the news story I feel that what the author is suggesting is very true and not only do the tests require an overhaul at selection level but I feel they require an overall revision of physical tests which are conducted even post commissioning.

The current set of tests concentrates more on strength analysis. Keeping in mind the unforgiving terrain conditions in which our military serves the tests should focus on endurance



It is time that the CDS thumps the table at the MOD and ensures that DIPR/DRDO accept the recommendations of all Training Establishments.



capabilities of an individual. I agree with the suggestion of a retired Brigadier in Mr. Banerjee's story, in Mr. Banerjee's story after Patnaik wherein he says that tests for TES/ NDA entries can be moderated as training period is longer "

#### Serving Capt, Engrs

"Quoting from my experience, after clearing my SSB, I faced a lot of problems in the initial period at the academy as I had never, ever done even a single 'sit up'. After joining the academy and before commissioning I was required to do 40 sit ups. Although this is an exceedingly small example, the overall tough and hard training schedule teaches and trains you to meet all the qualifying physical standards and more before are commissioned.

But, if we are already made aware and sensitized to these tests, we will surely start preparing and conditioning ourselves for them not only before joining the academies but even before the SSBs. This will surely result in having fewer physical problems during our initial tough and trying period and result in our smoother and faster adjustment to the academy training routine.

Also, the injuries presently being sustained during training due to above reasons will reduce drastically if physical tests are introduced at SSBs as candidates will prepare themselves physically and will have some basic level of fitness resulting in enhanced level of fitness during training and also reduced wastage rate "

#### Maj Gen CD Sawant, ex GOC Inf Div, Comdt MLIRC

The news story is professionally researched and commented upon.

I strongly feel that SSBs should also conduct same tests that are meant for screening of Army recruits. The officers are required to command and lead the men; hence it is perfectly justifiable that the officer candidates should also undergo the same/similar tests. I do not recommend 2 mile run as civilians are not used to it. The existing PPT with slightly lower standards should be adequate. It is time that the CDS thumps the table at the MOD and ensures that DIPR/DRDO accept the recommendations of all Training Establishments.

#### Col CM Chavan, ex AAD

The recent relegation of 13 lady cadets at OTA has stirred up a hornet's nest related to physical fitness. It has been a contemptuous issue for quite long that no physical fitness levels are tested during SSB (other than obstacle course), resulting in cadets sustaining injuries and not able to cope up with the physical standards at the academies. It is more surprising that while recruiting jawans, there is a physical fitness test but not for officers.

As has been brought out in the article that DIPR had conducted a survey of ten NDA courses (serial 96 to 106) which had an overall wastage rate of 18 percent despite it being an exclusively; a basic training institute. The reasons are non-structured and non-scientific training under the garb of squadron esprit-de-corps and sport competitions. However, there is no denying the fact that a physically fit cadet can better endure the training at the academies.

The DIPR despite having conducted the survey still does not recommend the physical fitness test at SSB and has ignored the recommendations by the Army. Despite all three academies recommending for physical fitness test at SSB the DG Recruiting, AG and DIPR have maintained status quo.

As has been brought out the candidates coming from feeder institutes like Sainik Schools, RIMC or any such institutes fare much better. I have

been coaching candidates for SSB with Col R K Sinha (Retd) and have had similar experience. Most of the candidates are very low on physical levels of standard and we do our best to guide them to come up to the expected levels of physical standards.

We advocate that they should slowly build stamina to run 5 kms in at least 27 to 28 minutes and should be able to do ten pull ups and chin ups. We also stress on building up mental stamina (by developing never to give up attitude) coupled with physical stamina as well. Compulsory NCC training in schools and colleges would do wonders to the candidates.

It is therefore essential that there should be physical fitness test conducted at SSB on the first day, as the physical screening test at academies on joining is a farce as no one is sent back. The academies on their part should review their training standards and switch over to 70:30 ratio of academics to physical training.

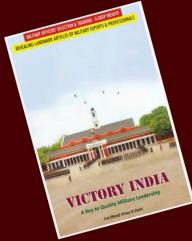
The physical training should be more scientifically designed and should be gradual. The minimum expected standards of physical fitness for both men and women should be intimated to all candidates aspiring for SSB so that they are physically fit. This will help in overcoming the relegations and wastage rate in academies.

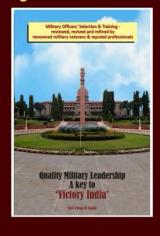
#### Cdr Ravindra Pathak, ex Sqn Cdr NDA

It is my view that basic physical standards as tested at SSB are inadequate and need a more rigorous testing in line with the recruitment process of jawans. Also, these standards need to be achieved before any testing commences at the SSB so that time is saved in not doing psychological testing of physically unfit candidates. There is also a need to test the ability to with stand pressure at SSB level itself.

If this is done a lot of relegations and withdrawals at NDA due physical inability to achieve standards and as a result of collateral damage due to physical unfitness due injuries can be avoided. 🜇

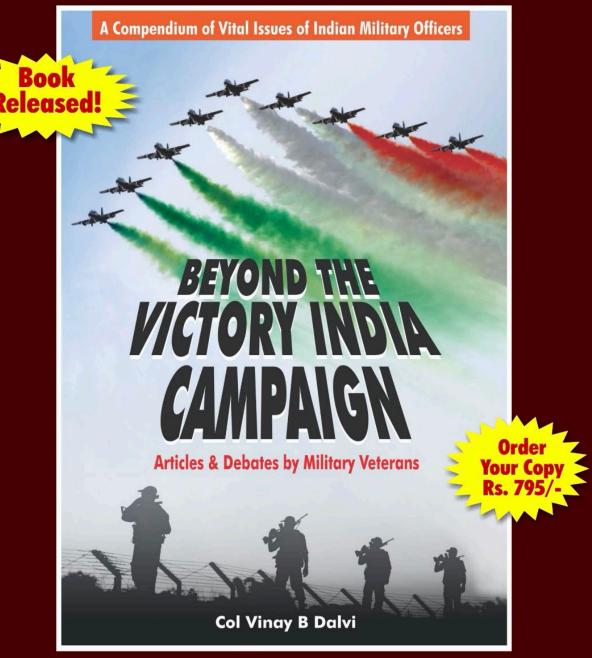
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# Former Int'l Athlete & Special Forces Doctor 'Maj. Poonia' Speaks About 'Fitbharat'

In an exclusive interview, former Special Forces Doctor, renowned International athlete and now Politician, Major Surendra Poonia (VSM) speaks about his landmark 'FitBharat' campaign.

#### by Staff Correspondent

Following the announcement that the Indian Prime Minister: Narendra Modi made about the Fit India campaign, former Special Forces officer, doctor, and renowned international athlete, Major Surendra Poonia, VSM, moved by the prime minister's initiative, has decided to use his decade's worth of combined military, sporting, and medical experience to promote a spirit of fitness throughout the country; Launching his six month old flagship initiative: FitBharat.

Speaking exclusively to 'The Victory India Magazine', the renowned Para Special Forces Officer, who has previously served in the exalted President's Bodyguard, proudly said, "Being a Special Forces veteran and a medical professional, I believe it is my soldierly duty to continue to serve the country by promoting an environment of health and fitness." Major Poonia, a devoted soldier, is on a mission to counter the country's most significant national threat: the silent killer, or rather known as: Lifestyle diseases.

The root cause(s) of these disorders have been linked with a lack of regular exercise which is incessantly coupled by today's sleep-deprived corporate culture. Being a former military man, the Ex-Special Forces Major came to the conversation armed to the teeth, with facts, and how. The officer explained that "Lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, poor nutrition and improper sleep cycles are some of the leading causes of health-related ailments in India." Elaborating on this, he said, "7.1 per cent of the adult population in India are suffering from diabetes. There were an estimated 69.1 million cases of diabetes in India in

the year 2015, and it has exceeded to around 70 million as of 2019!

By 2030, almost 100 million of my fellow countrymen will suffer from diabetes." The former Special Forces Commando says this with fiery conviction! Speaking about widespread obesity, Major Poonia says, "Obesity has become one of the leading health epidemics in the 21st century with morbid obesity affecting approximately five per cent of the national population! This means over 6.8 million Indians suffer from morbid obesity. Being a sportsman, it truly pains me to have to acknowledge that over 13.5 crore Indians are morbidly obese!" According to several research papers shared by Major Poonia to 'Victory India', it has been ascertained that obesity in the country has doubled in the past ten years.

Going by the research presented by the retired officer, it has been found that the urban population and states with higher income groups have a susceptible higher rate of obesity. While conversing with 'Victory India', Major Poonia shared his observations, splitting the anatomy of the leading causes of obesity and its implications on productivity, self-esteem, mental health, and youth development. The former military medical professional spoke extensively about the surge of junk food, appealing advertisements promoting unhealthy food choices, mobile games such as PUBG and Fortnite, and their adverse effects on the lifestyles of our youth.

"These mobile games have confined the youth in their rooms and have trapped them in a vicious cycle of unhealthy life choices", he declared, enraged! "A lack of importance given to sports and fitness in educational institutions is disheartening and a cause of grave concern," says Major Poonia with a sense of genuine concern.

During one of 'Victory India's' in-depth conversations with the former Special Forces doctor, he stressed on the vital role that educational institutions must play whilst promoting a spirit of fitness amongst the young school-going students. Major Poonia cited his discontent towards the syllabus of physical education in Indian schools. He says "Even physical education is taught through textbooks and is evaluated through written exams! How is this physical fitness?", the commando asks rhetorically.

"This neglect," he says, "results in a generation of academically burdened youth with no outlet to vent their burdens." Furthermore, they "lose out on so many benefits of taking part in sporting endeavours such as problem solving, teamwork, purpose, camaraderie, overcoming obstacles. This criminal neglect at an early stage follows them throughout their lives!" says the commando with great passion. Touching more on this, he said, "The lack of fitness being imbibed in young children at an early age haunts them when they become working professionals.

The increasingly exploitative corporate work environment has resulted in significant health problems." Putting out another chilling statistic, the former president's bodyguard says, "63 per cent corporate professionals are overweight. This leads to heart conditions leading to death as aforementioned. It results in "lowered productivity, leading to stalled career progression, ultimately making an employee feel dejected and stressed."

This "stress," the officer says, "results in poor sleep patterns, improper nutrition and host of mood swings affecting one's mental and spiritual well-being. It is an interconnected vicious cycle." Major Poonia reinforces passionately, the need for regular and sustained exercise whilst eating healthier. "Being an athlete and a soldier serving in the elite special forces, I was fortunate to be in an environment where fitness was prioritised...Soldiering is a high stress a high-risk job, however, what I experienced was that the rigorous fitness regimen we were subjected to, significantly alleviated the stress which came from such a hazardous profession!"

Drawing from his personal observations, the Special Forces doctor empathises with the plight of corporate professionals, further stating, "Corporate professionals play a crucial part in our nation-building process. They are the ones who provide us with essential services, design the software's and infrastructure required to make our lives easier, and put our country on the world stage. They work tirelessly in the pursuit of nation-building, yet do not get the time or encouragement to give time to their own health!"

Answering questions cited by 'Victory India' on what FitBharat hopes to achieve, the ex-commando "FitBharat, aims to imbibe a sense of physical fitness not only to our youth who are our future but even working professionals who are building our nation's present." Major Poonia stressed on the benefits of exercise in relation to increased productivity at the workplace. "Focusing on personal health will undoubtedly help in enhanced mood and energy levels, resulting in better workplace productivity." Efficient productivity, he says, "leads to superior output resulting in higher national growth!"

The former army man further cited, "I believe that if we are physically fit as individuals, we can grow as a community, for me, fitness itself is a major national service!". Ending the conversation on a positive note, Major Poonia maintains an optimistic mindset towards the success of FitBharat. He speaks about the gradual but increasing trend towards health and fitness in the country, and how more-and-more people are "indeed putting efforts towards their well-being."

When asked upon how he aims to promote the message of FitBharat to his target audience, he replied saying, "We have already started with the Soldierathon, which is a marathon organised once a year, and it has received a great nationwide response. Going on further we aim to tie up with several sporting brands to highlight youth inspiring messages, to promote our young guns to take the first step. We shall also partner with sports regulatory bodies and organise inter-college and university sporting events."

He stresses on the reach of social media platforms and portals like 'Victory India' to further the message, saying, "In today's day and age, social media and youth-based websites are a potent tool, through which we can advocate fitness, give health and nutrition advice to bridge the knowledge gap!" FitBharat intends to come out with hashtag-based challenges, hence creating a supportive online community dedicated to one another's growth! Speaking about his roadmap for the long run, the fit commando said, "Over time, we shall work with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, to develop state of the art sporting facilities in schools and educational institutions to inculcate sports and fitness at a much younger age."

Major Poonia, being a battle-hardened commando, is hopeful but remains a pragmatist by acknowledging the challenges for the road ahead. "See it will not happen overnight, it is not simple to change attitudes and I recognise it will take time and a lot of effort however I am satisfied beyond any doubt that we shall succeed, there is now a tremendous internal drive towards fitness, and this is something that will continue to increase and can be channelised for the betterment of society and the nation at large!"



# **Army Sports Institute: Earning Laurels For** The Nation

ASI was raised as part of the Indian Army's 'Mission Olympics' program on 1 July 2001 with an aim to train the vast reservoir of talent in the Army to win medals in the Olympics in seven disciplines: Archery, Athletics, Boxing, Diving, Fencing, Weightlifting and Wrestling.

#### by Aritra Banerjee, edited by Osaid Butt

The Army Sports Institute (ASI), Pune was recently awarded with the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar 2020 ' by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India for its unparalleled commitment and contribution in the domain of sports, on the occasion of National Sports Day.

Speaking about the 'Mission Olympics' program, an ASI official said, "The program's proposal envisaged raising and establishing a suitably organized and structured Institute /Node. While Sports four sports Nodes were single discipline ,co-located at training institutes/static HQ's like Infantry School Mhow for Shooting, CME Pune for Rowing, HQ MG & G Area Mumbai for Yachting, RVC Centre & College, Meerut for Equestrian sport. The same

entailed upgrading of facilities to international standards. For establishing a multi-disciplinary high performance centre, the Army Sports Institute was hence raised as new 'Cat-A' establishment to give the necessary thrust to the envisaged program."

This was an all-inclusive process, involving Government sanction of its Peace Establishment, construction and development of sports infrastructure, command and control channel, identification, and selection of suitable persons to staff the appointments and more.

"Consequent concerted efforts resulted in creation of state-of-the-art facilities comparable to middle-level international standards at Army Sports Institute for five disciplines viz.

Athletics, Archery, Boxing, Diving, Weightlifting and Sports Sciences Faculty," said the official. "These were inaugurated by the then COAS on 25 September 2005. Subsequently in April 2007, Wrestling was also included as a discipline and was inaugurated by GOC-in-C, Southern Comd. Fencing was added in 2008 and with that ASI now has seven disciplines.

"The establishment of the ASI with respect to cost of infrastructure and equipment has amounted to approx. Rs. 50 crore and Rs. 30 crores. The provision of international standard sports facilities at this node/institute has improved the performance of sportsmen at national and international events like Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, World Championships and the Olympics."

#### Latest Updates from ASI

- The National Archery Camp on behalf of IA (men and women) commenced at ASI on 25 Aug 2020. A total of 22 Campers including elite men and women archers, coaches, and sp staff have been nominated to attend the same.
- · Construction of a 300 bedded hostel has been sanctioned by MoYAS at ASI.
- Development of Sports Science Faculty and projects for purchase of technical equipment and strength & conditioning gymnasium are under progress.
- 31 Junior Sportsmen of ASI are in the Junior Target Olympic Podium Scheme, which has been announced recently by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- Sub Manish Kaushik (Boxing) has been awarded the Arjuna Award 2020 on the occasion National Sports Day.

The institute draws its sportsmen from the Army as well as from young raw and proven talent in 'Boys Sports Companies' (8-14 years age). These sportsmen are supported by a team of Foreign & Indian coaches, physical conditioners, and specialists in Sports Medicine, Physiology, Psychology, Biomechanics, Statistics and Nutrition.

Speaking about the competitive spirit of its athletes, the official said, "ASI is a homogenous institute and along with the support of Army, SAI and MoYAS we take each competition as a challenge and train hard to excel in them. Our aim is to win medals in the true sportsman spirit. We hope to do well at the Tokyo Olympics since we have strong probables like Amit Panghal (Boxing), Neeraj Chopra (Javelin, Athletics), Deepak Punia (Wrestling) and Tarundeep Rai (Archery)."

"The graph is getting better and we wish to maintain the same in the years to come. The preparations for 2022,



Sub Tarundeep Rai, Vsm, Arjuna Awardee, Padma Shri (Archery)



Sub Ravinder Khatri (Wrestling)

2024, and future events are in good stead. We will positively deliver.

Since raising the institute has enabled participation of 20 sportsmen in Olympics and 12 sportsmen have already qualified for the Tokyo 2021 Olympics with more yet to qualify. The Institute has won six (6) Youth Olympic Medals, nineteen (19) medals in Asian Games, and eighteen medals (18) in Commonwealth Games.

Khelo India Talent (KIT). ASI has been identified as one of the accredited academies to promote sports as part of MoYAS long term vision plan of securing a podium finish in 2024 and 2028 Olympics. The institute trains athletes in six sports disciplines (Archery, Athletics, Boxing, Fencing, Wrestling and Weightlifting) and is the most premier non SAI academy amongst 49 KIT academies. A total of 101 KIT are presently undergoing training at ASI. The academy in a short span of three yrs has had participation in all three editions of Khelo India school games securing over 125 medals in total, all without participation of female athletes and team events.

In the past three years, the sportsmen trained at ASI have won 450 International and 1118 National medals with several firsts and records. In the last three editions of Khelo India, the sportsmen have won 125 medals in five disciplines.

Speaking about how the institute is striving towards excellence, the official responded saying, "All training

establishments are doing their best with the singular aim of winning medals for the country, but ASI has the roots of being an Army set up. Army officers, coaches, conditioners, and support staff are all synchronized to the set goals. It is the discipline which the army teaches which differentiates it from other sporting establishments."

"The training program and daily routine activities have a focused approach with set objectives. Each discipline and Sports Science Faculty have their short/middle and long-term goals chalked out which have been arrived at after discussion with the sportsmen, coaches and the Officers in charge," further added the official.

When asked about how being conferred with the award will change the dynamics in terms of the priority accorded to the ASI, the official answered, "ASI has been identified and awarded the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar 2020. This award has been conferred on ASI for the first time since its raising and was long overdue. It is an honor for the Institute to be awarded the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar for Identification and Nurturing the Budding and Young Talent. This only motivates the sportsmen and the Team at ASI to further excel and achieve higher goals set for future national and international competitions. The contribution of Army Headquarters (Mission Olympic Wing), MoYAS, SAI and other stakeholders only lifts the morale and momentum to do better."



# Review, Refine & Reform: India's 74-Year-**Old Military System**

by Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

Recently an Army War College (AWC) study by a student officer for his dissertation for the Higher Command Course, 2018/19, on 'Review of the Army Physical Training System in the Officer Training Academies' won the Best Dissertation Award. This study has proved to be extremely useful and will surely benefit the Army in refining and redefining their training systems.

This AWC award winning dissertation is a fine example of a path breaking study in an uncharted and less traversed field. The study highlights the inescapable need to encourage and enable such studies in the Armed forces with a view to objectively review, refine and reform our seven decades old system for selection and training of our military manpower, especially the officer cadre. This would facilitate us to catchup with and keep pace with several changes that have taken place with

passage of time to meet current and future challenges.

In a letter of Apr 2018 sent by me to the three Chiefs of the Services and also Heads of all officer training institutions/academies, 20 relevant subjects were suggested for reviews, studies and dissertations for officer students and instructors.

30 books were also recommended to pursue and facilitate the studies. The relevant contents of this letter are reproduced below for information and awareness of all concerned with the hope that it will draw some interest for prospective studies and research for dissertations during various courses at institutions like DSSC, AWC, CDM, AFMC & AIPT.

Relevant Extracts of Letter (Also Chapter 2 of book 'Mission Victory India'-2020)

Subjects for Dissertations, Projects & Studies for Select Officer Training Institutions-NDC, AWC, CDM, DSSC, CME, MCEME, MCTE, AFMC, AIPT & Inf, Arty, Armour **Schools of Training** 

The u/m twenty (20) subjects and thirty (30) reference books are recommended for dissertations, projects and studies for students and instructional staff at our prestigious officer training institutions. 'Team Victory India' (comprising over 60 military veterans & academicians) consider these subjects to be important and relevant for our present and future generation of officers. The subjects from serial 1 to 12 pertain to our Victory India Campaign books, while serial 13 to 20 pertain to other important subjects. Additional Subjects and Books have also been added based on recommendations of Senior Veterans.

> Recommended Subjects (Selection & Training)

- Introduction of mandatory physical tests at SSBs for improving fitness and health of officer trainees and reduction of wastage rates at military academies.
- · Need for coordinated academic and military training of cadets for better academic and intellectual growth?
- Review and revision of existing SSB selection system and enhanced coordination with military academies for producing qualitatively better military officers?
- Introduction of Physical Education and Sports Medicine for cadets, recruits, and combatants for improving physical efficiency of soldiers and officers.
- Revival and Prioritisation of Officers Physical Training Course (OPTC) at AIPT to produce a greater number of effective young PT& Sports officers at unit level and recruit training centres.
- Increase of Officers Physical Training Courses (OPTC) at AIPT Pune for producing more trained PT & Sports Officers at unit level and transfer of suitable officers into APTC.
- Blue Ribbon Commission for providing oversight on Defence Forces Entry/Selection/Training/ Utilisation.
- Reformatting the SSB selection system...Need, what ails SSB, what needs doing and attendant timelines.
- Why should DRDO train the SSB selection staff? Why should DIPR be under\DRDO? Does HQ IDS provide a viable alternative? Examine.
- Is Ragging acceptable or a violation of military human rights of trainees? Opinions and Recommendations.
- Introduction Basic Physical Education Theory Subjects for Cadets, Recruits and Combatants will make our PT Methodology more scientific as per directions of United Commanders Conference (UCC) decision.

• Introduction of Basic Sports/Fitness Medicine Theory subjects to cadets and young officers will improve their fitness levels and reduce wastage rate in context of UCC decision.

#### Other Relevant Subjects

- Strategies for managing combat stress
- Competency building to physical and mental health
- · Combat stress behavior and psychiatric disorders
- The role of the Armed Forces in national integration
- · Role of the Armed Forces in creating a caste - less society based solely on competence
- · Leadership challenges in an environment in which followers are more educated than leaders.
- Is our higher educational training focused on future wars or are we still stuck in the old groove?
- Does our senior leadership have the intellectual competence to deliver in a futuristic social and battlefield environment?

#### Additional Subjects Recommended by Senior Veterans

- All round wellness for Combat Soldiers (that includes physical, mental, emotional, and psychological well-being).
- Importance of nutrition and right diet for physical endurance, repair of injured tissues and well-being of frontline soldiers
- Enhancing India's Strategic Culture
- Harnessing the Power Information for Greater Strategic Achievement of the Nation
- · What is the ideal Force structure required by India (all the 3 services) to fight and win a two-front war?

- How to build a counter Cyber Warfare capability
- How to nurture Human Resource to fight a futuristic AI driven warfare.
- Professional military education for senior military leadership in the complex global environment and the changing character of war

#### **Reference Books** Recommended

- On the Psychology of Military Incompetence by Norman F. Dixon.
- Profligate Governance-Implications for National Security by Gp Capt T P Srivastava (MVI)
- The Himalayan Blunder by Brig JP Dalvi.
- India China War 1962- By Maxwell.
- Four Decades in Olive Greens by Maj Gen Anil Sengar (MVI).
- Battlefields of the early 21st century by Maj Gen VK Madhok (MVI).
- Space: Profiles of the Future and Re powering National Security by Maj Gen VK Madhok (MVI)
- Restructuring National Security by Lt Gen Ashok Joshi (MVI).
- · Role Model: A key to character development (2010) by Col Vinay B Dalvi (MVI)
- Sun Tzu -The Art of War (Pocketbook) (2012) by Col Vinay B Dalvi (MVI).
- Victory India -a key to quality military leadership (2013) by Col Vinay B Dalvi & Team Victory India (MVI)
- Quality Military Leadership: A key to Victory India (2014) by Col Vinay B Dalvi & Team Victory India (MVI)
- A Campaign called Victory India (2016) by Col Vinay B Dalvi & Team Victory India (MVI).
- Beyond the Victory India Campaign (2018) by Col Vinay B Dalvi & Team Victory India (MVI)



Former PM Manmohan Singh laying the foundation stone for INDU in 2013; File photo

- 15 Demystifying Leadership by Lt Gen KB Kala.
- Battalion Command Dare to Lead by Maj Gen Anil Sengar (MVI).
- Crises in Command: Mismanagement in the Army by Richard A. Gabriel and Paul Savage.
- Future Shock by Alvin Toffler
- Third Wave by Alvin Toffler
- War & Anti War by Alvin Toffler
- South Asia Defense and Strategic Perspective 2018 by Dr. Vijay Sakhuja
- Defence Reforms by Brig Gurmeet Kanwal
- Hybrid Warfare Vikrant Deshpande
- India's National Defence by Gen Gautam Banerjee (MVI)
- Military Thinking of Ancient India by Prof Shekhar Adhikari
- Syrian Jihad by Charles Lister
- Baluchistan, the British and the great game by TA Heathcote
- Rooks and R Knights Chandrasekhar
- China transitioned under Xi Jinping
- nside Al Qaeda and the Taliban by Syed Shahzad.

#### Additional Reference Books Recommended by Senior **Veterans**

- Surprise, Strategy and Vijay: 20 years of Kargil & Beyond by Lt Gen (Dr) VK Ahluwalia
- CLAWS Book of 2019 by Maj Gen Anil Sengar
- Inside Al Qaeda and the Taliban by Syed Shahzad.
- Four Decades in Olive Greens by Maj Gen Anil Sengar (MVI)
- Pride, Passion and Perspectives by Maj Gen Anil Sengar (MVI)
- The Be...Know...Do of Generalship by Maj Gen Anil Sengar (MVI)
- Blood on My Hands: Confessions of Staged Encounters by Kishalay Bhattacharya
- Kargil: A Soldier's Diary Harinder Baweja
- Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years by AS Dulat
- India's Wars by Arjun Subramaniam
- Special Operations Case Studies: Lessons for India by Lt Gen PC Katoch
- · The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of the Partition by Narendra Singh Sarila

#### **Extract of Message from** late TN Seshan, ex CEC, ex **Cabinet & Defence Secretary** (Relevant to vital importance of defence studies) extracted from his Message in the book 'A Campaign called Victory India '(2016)

"I am incredibly pleased to learn of a Campaign called Victory India, which has taken shape over five years (2010-15). I have come across the other two books that have emerged from this campaign, and this third one also serves as a useful compilation of the views on the Selection and Training of the officers of the Armed Forces.

The effort is commendable in that the experience and insights of those who have demitted office is being captured for the benefit of those presently holding the important responsibilities and for posterity.

Though it is focused largely on selection and training, and that too only of the officers, it carries immense value for the Armed Forces and the nation. There are not many studies of this kind and this is a good compilation of the diverse views of the persons who have held responsible positions in the relevant areas.

This subject, though critical, is prone to neglect because of the intangibility of the outcomes in the near horizon. But one cannot underestimate the impact the subject can have on the future of the Armed Forces and the Nation. I urge the leadership to pay due, farsighted, and statesmanlike attention to this all-important dimension of security.

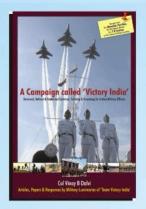
The best of nations anywhere in the world have always thrived when credible wisdom was combined with prudent might in their running. I am happy that this campaign represents a willful effort at incorporating learning and wisdom into one critical dimension of the military organisation that is prone to neglect in the larger context.

I wish 'Team Victory India' the absolute best in this nation-building effort. May the nation enjoy the fruits which the campaign seeks!"

# A Campaign called 'Victory India'

#### Compendium on Selection, Training and Grooming for Indian Military Officers

Books authored by Col Vinay B Dalvi & Published by Pentagon Press



#### A Campaign called 'Victory India'

"A trail blazing collection of over 30 well researched articles, military papers, news stories and letters by over 30 authors, analysts, scholars and professional respondents. The collective contributions of several military luminaries have comprehensively reviewed, refined and redefined the existing selection systems and training and & grooming methodologies of young military officers with the sole aim and objective of enhancing the quality of Indian military leadership at all levels.

The book title - 'A Campaign called Victory India' highlights the critical importance of military officer leadership and the imminent need to strengthen this vital link with the man behind the gun to lead India's military might and country on the path of Victory India!''

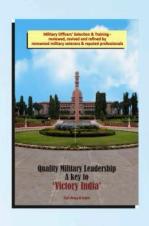
"Man behind the machine; remains a truism in spite of warfare being inundated by high technology. This book stresses on the officers who lead the soldiers, sailors and airmen and the critical need to comprehensively re-look and renew the selection and training of young officers. With over six decades of our independence and experience of wars fought, both on Indian and foreign soil, the recommendations of our military experts must be examined with urgency and acted upon"

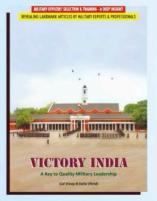
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#### Victory India - A Key to Quality Military Leadership

First Edition - January 2013

A bold and trail blazing exposé of 65 years old selection & training system of the Indian Armed Forces Officer Cadre. This book is a clarion call for serious introspection of all our processes; involving identification, selection and training of our dynamic youth to mould them into inspiring and effective Quality Military Leaders!

- · A Campaign, A Crusade, A Commitment, An Inspiration...
- A campaign for inducting quality candidates as potential officer leaders in the Indian Armed Forces
- A crusade for a holistic review of the selection system catering to the elite officer cadre
- A commitment to objectively introspect on improving the training at our military academies
- An Inspiration to enlightened students of leadership in other spheres of life for similar initiatives
- An Informatory for candidates, guardians, selectors and mentors on military selection and training

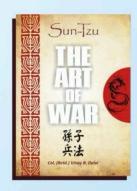
#### Sun-Tzu-The Art of War

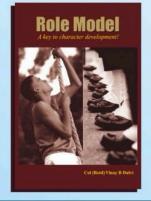
First Edition - April 2012

Sun Tzu wrote 'The Art of War' in China 2500 years ago. It is the earliest known treatise on the subject of war which has never been surpassed in comprehensiveness and depth of understanding.

Even today this book is considered to be the most concentrated essence of wisdom on war and also the source of all Chinese strategic and tactical doctrines.

This ancient and timeless wisdom of Sun Tzu is deceptively simple to understand but powerful in content and bring out the most sound military lessons. Every thought is simple, brief and meaningful with a profound and overwhelming power in its application. The quotes also offer excellent resources to corporate executives for formulation of winning strategies.





#### **Role Model - A Key to Character Development!**

First Edition - March 2010

Second Edition - August 2010

The 'Role Model" is - A key to 'character development' of selected, daring and dashing young men who have chosen the Armed Forces as a career and lifestyle.

A soul searching review and introspection of present 'training concepts and methodology' of physical and recreational training with meaningful and beneficial recommendations.

A beacon for suitable and budding youngsters seeking 'information and guidance' to join the elite officer cadre of the Indian Armed Forces.



# Kargil Hero Capt Akhilesh Saxena On A **Successful Corporate Transition**

From being a highly decorated Kargil War hero to a distinguished senior corporate professional, Captain Akhilesh Saxena shares his insights of how to transition from the 'War-room to the Boardroom.'

## by Staff Correspondent

An officer in every sense of the word, Captain Akhilesh Saxena led from the front. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA) and the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Captain Saxena quickly saw action in Kashmir and served alongside military legends such as Captain Vikram Batra (Param Vir Chakra) and Captain. Vijayant Thapar (Vir Chakra) during the Kargil war, where he served as an artillery officer attached to 2 Rajputana Rifles and Jammu Kashmir Rifles.

He showed extraordinary leadership abilities and grit when he was tasked to direct artillery fire on the treacherous Tololing peak, which proved to be the turning point of the conflict. After sustaining grievous injuries rendering him medically unfit for combat operations, he

left the army to pursue a career in the Civvy Street. Like a soldier he marched on clearing his management exams and securing a seat in five of the top management institutions in the country, graduating with a gold medal from FMS, Delhi, all the while undergoing treatment for his injuries at an Army R&R Facility.

Today Captain Akhilesh Saxena has a successful corporate life, he is currently the Vice President and head of Global Service Delivery and Customer Operations, a profile in which he has received many awards and accolades. He has had numerous media appearances and is a motivational speaker, avid runner and was recognised during the Republic Day parade as a distinguished veteran beyond uniform. For this issue of Fauji magazine Captain Saxena will the answering commonly asked questions from serving personnel and SSC officers nearing the end of their service in uniform.

#### Tell us about your journey in both the army and in, corporate so far?

I got commissioned in 1995 and served both in CI ops and Kargil war. During the Kargil war, I took part in three attacks on the enemy. We got critical victory on Tololing with synchronization between Infantry and Artillery, which has changed the course of Kargil war. In my final assault, I was hit by enemy shelling and bullets and got severely injured, but we finally achieved victory. Due to permanent severe injuries, I moved on from the army to join a full-time MBA course at



Prepare for your transition in advance. Do a realistic assessment of your skills and competencies against job profile, identify gaps and work on them and do some industry specific or domainspecific small duration courses to build your domain knowledge. Finally, be flexible and adopt a new culture as you make the transition.

the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) and was a gold medalist of the class in 2004.

Subsequently, joined Wipro and was awarded prestigious "Super Boss" award, which is given to the best manager, at Wipro twice in a row. Post that joined Bharti Airtel and received various top recognition for my work. In my quest of excellence, I have successfully completed certification like PMP, Six Sigma master black belt, Tata business excellence Model (Gold medal) etc. was given highest global Award 'Proclub' at Tata Communication three times. Also identified as Potential top talent based on consistently "best in class" performance and potential to take a top management position. Was sent to Michigan University for Tata Executive leadership course.

I was heading Global business processes and Transformational initiative at Tata Communications and recently took over a new global profile as Vice President - Global Service Delivery and customer operations for Tata Communications.

Having spent the better part of your youth in uniform training for a particular environment, how did you adapt to the change? What were the initial challenges and culture shock?

I have decided to prepare for the change in a structured way, through full-time MBA from FMS, Delhi. This has helped me in adapting to change quickly. Army works on hierarchy, but corporate is more knowledge-based. However, all officers

can overcome these initial challenges with the right attitude.

Given the different skill sets required in the military and in the corporate world, how did you go about preparing yourself for the Civvy Street? What courses did you do? What made you select those courses? How did you prepare for them?

Leadership principles remain the same both in corporate and civil. However, you need domain knowledge also as you are entering in a new sector/field. So, we need to get operational skills from that sector also.

What parallels do you draw from both military and civil? What learnings from your time in the military were you able to apply in, corporate? What did you realise, were not suitable in the new environment?

As I have written earlier, leadership principles remain the same both in corporate and civil. The lessons learnt in the army are of vast use in organisational management. Analysing and improving business processes is not unlike the strategic planning required in a battle. It's crucial to be familiar with the environment in which one is operating,



The decorated war hero giving an interview at a corporate event

I wanted to join corporate only after acquiring right skill set, so decided to go for full-time MBA and also successfully completed many other courses which have helped me in acquiring the skills required for success in the corporate world.

How is corporate life different from the military? Does the command and control model work in corporate, or does it become a bad habit?

as much in military operations as in business - understanding obstacles, opportunities, planning for eventualities and contingencies.

The environment of a battleground is like the market environment for a corporate entity; the enemy in a war is not unlike the competitor in business. Rock outcrops present obstacles but also offer shelter from enemy fire. There are mines along the way as well as chance factors. I apply many lessons from my army experience.



We defence personnel assume that we will be able to handle anything from day one without preparing for this in advance. We need to get operational as well as domain knowledge before we make this transition. There is a vast difference in culture, and we need to adopt it fast.



Firing the INSAS 5.56 Two decades later

Leaders in the Armed Forces live and work alongside the jawans in every action, especially in the field. Generally, officers are placed in the centre of a troop for better communication and organisation, but in crucial actions, especially suicide missions as at Kargil, officers move to the front," he says. There's pragmatism in this as it serves as a motivational tool, but the underlying ethic is that leaders lead from the front.

One of the principals with the army is leading by example and having synchronicity in action. In capturing a peak or any post, we 'fire and move', so that some troops fire at the enemy while others move forward. Without harmonization in such coordinated activities, many lives can be - and are - lost, people wounded severely, and materials mislaid. There's a valuable lesson in this for civilian and corporate life."

One of the most significant achievements of my life is a success in bringing together the many strands of my life, learnings from my family, experience in the Indian Army and my current stint in the corporate sector: Having done all that, I have a sense that I can do well in anything! No one can take that faith from me.

#### What are the most commonly faced problems in corporate by defence personnel regardless of their choice of service or arms?

Most important is planning for transition. We defence personnel assume that we will be able to handle anything from day one without preparing for this in advance. We need to get operational as well as domain knowledge before we make this transition. There is a vast difference in culture, and we need to adopt it fast.

Enlighten the rest of the forces community on how you went from being an artillery officer and leading attacks in the Kargil war in your early twenties to becoming an FMS, Delhi gold medallist in your thirties?

Every success requires passion, determination, planning and execution. I think any defence personnel will be able to do this if one plans correctly for transition.

A lot of short service commissioned officers retire in their mid-thirties which is during the prime of one's career and family pressures, what specific advice would you like to give to them?

Most of the defence officers do carry a lot of leadership experience, determination, discipline and right focus. However, they need to plan their transition based on their strength, sector/field they wish to join. We need to flexible in attitude and ready to adopt a new culture.

#### What is your mantra for success in the corporate arena?

Understand the business goals of the company and don't be just limited to your own KRA/ functional objectives. Like in the army, collaboration and teamwork play an essential part. Keep acquiring new skills/competencies as technologies and business models are changing very fast.

#### Is there anything else you would like to tell your brothers in uniform?

Prepare for your transition in advance. Do a realistic assessment of your skills and competencies against job profile, identify gaps and work on them and do some industry specific or domain-specific small duration courses to build your domain knowledge. Last but not least, be flexible and adopt a new culture as you make the transition from defence to corporate. I will be happy to guide you or support you if anyone of you requires it.



## The Skeletons Of Kargil, Revisited

"Too many careerists have been promoted as Generals since the 1971 war and today it is a cabal of careerists swarming higher echelons...our sleeping Generals are very good at committing tactical blunders."

## by Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha (Retd)

Vikram Sood has quoted RN Kao in the context of General VP Malik's observation in his book Kargil: From Surprise to Victory in which Gen. Malik had written that intelligence agencies had failed to detect Kargil intrusion by Pakistan.

Gen. Malik had pointed towards the deficiencies in collecting, collating, interpreting, and assessing the capabilities of Indian Intelligence agencies. This had been contested by Vikram Sood and even former R&AW Chief AS Dulat in his book Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years.

According to Sood, this was a clumsy attempt to pass on the blame for the General's acts of omission and commission. Intelligence agencies had been passing on the intel about the buildup in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) to all the agencies concerned.

In fact, an article published in Newsweek after the Kargil fiasco had stated that the Pakistan Army's drive to purchase high-altitude and Extreme Cold-weather Clothing (ECC) was on the radar of the Indian intelligence agencies since June. Even then former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, when asked after the Kargil conflict stated that there was no intelligence failure. Therefore, this negates Gen. Malik's allegations.

In fact, Vikram Sood contends that it was military intelligence and the top Generals who had refused to accept warnings from civil intelligence agencies. He brings out a real reason for the Kargil intrusion.

It is a known fact that prior to 1982, forward posts in the Kargil-Dras region were occupied by the Border Security Force (BSF). Even during extreme winters at heights above 4,200 meters, BSF never withdrew its troops.

However, once the Army took over the responsibility in 1982, it introduced the practice of withdrawing in the winter. This fact was very well known to the Pakistan Army. There is a lot of truth in this, as I would narrate from personal experience in the Keran sector of Kashmir.

Vikram Sood further states that the policy of withdrawing troops in winters continued even when in April 1998, there was a report of some 350 'irregulars' having infiltrated from the Pakistan side of Kargil.

This practice of withdrawing troops in the winters had become a routine with the Indian Army and a practice with the Pakistan Army to quietly



The practice of withdrawing troops in the winters had become a routine with the Indian Army and a practice with the Pakistan Army to quietly occupy some of these tactically important posts. But the Army maintained stone silence on such losses and the nation never came to know.

occupy some of these tactically important posts. But the Generals and Army maintained stone silence on such losses and the nation never came to know. In the Keran sector of Kupwara of North Kashmir, there is a Pakistani post called 'Guthur Forward' by India but 'Ramzan' in Pakistani lexicon.

This post was once an Indian outpost on the Line of Control (LoC) but it was lost to Pakistan in the winters of 1990. The same is true of 'Lunda Forward' in the 'Gurez-Dawar' sector. Pakistan has been quietly nibbling at some of the Indian posts on the LoC in the winters, but the Generals suppressed this information.

One is reminded of the Kayian Bowl (Nagaon sector) incident of May 1972, when the lie of a Commander led to two of the finest infantry battalions (4 Mahar and 9 Sikh) being butchered. He also tricked his boss and got him sacked. But he himself rose to be a Lieutenant General and occupied the coveted post of QMG at Army HQ.

The point I am making is that too many careerists have been promoted as Generals since the 1971 War and today, it is a cabal of careerists swarming higher echelons. If only Pakistan had not been so greedy to grab the entire Kargil-Drass area in 1999 and slowly eaten a few posts, the Indian Army would have silently ignored this. Perhaps, Pakistani Generals are worse than their Indian counterparts.

#### Top Brass Sleeping on the Job

Anyway, our sleeping Generals are exceptionally good at committing tactical blunders. When the going is good, they would hog the credit. If things go wrong, they shamelessly blame subordinates. This is what happened post the Kargil fiasco when the Kargil Brigade Commander was made the 'scapegoat'.

Take the case of the construction of the Upper Neelam Valley Road (UNVR) by Pakistan in the mid-90s. Today, the UNVR is a lifeline for Pakistani troops deployed opposite Kargil. But in the early 1990s, it was not so. It is

with LNVR. It must be acknowledged that before UNVR was constructed, Pakistan largely depended on LNVR for logistic support to troops in the Gulati-Kotli area.

LNVR takes off from Muzaffarabad in PoK and runs along the Neelam River (called Kishan Ganga on the Indian side). It was easily choked and blocked by small arms fire. The Indian Army not only allowed the road construction but also high embankment on the road. It was a tactical blunder by sleeping Generals to allow this.

In magnitude, this was equal to dismantling of the Technical Support Division (TSD) at the Army HQ in 2012-13, which had made a big success in Counter Insurgency and Counter Terror (CICT) operations in the Kashmir Valley (would be discussed under detail in Part Two).



Former R&AW ChiefVikram Sood at an ORF Conclave

a 22 km shunt, taking off from Chak (Athmuqam) in the Neelam Valley to the village of Dakhan Kot, where it rejoins the Lower Neelam Valley Road (LNVR).

This shunt was constructed when the Indian artillery guns, suddenly and rather mysteriously, fell silent. What is shocking is the fact that interdiction was stopped during the heydays of militancy. Why did it happen? The answer lay with the Generals of the time, who commanded 15 Corps, Northern Command HQ, and also, the AHQ.

The UNVR was constructed by Pakistan, some 4-5 km away, westwards from LNVR, to avoid the Indian posts' small arms fire interfering Suffice to say that it was falsely accused of eavesdropping on politicians and therefore dismantled.

Indian Generals were sleeping, while Pakistan was fully entrenched in Kargil in April-May 1999. The snow had melted in April 1999. There was no hurry to occupy the posts but shepherds of Kargil started moving around. They broke the news of Pakistan's intrusion, while the Indian Generals were busy in other extra-curricular activities.

In the first week of May 1999 Gen. VP Malik was planning to visit Poland, that's when the news of Kargil infiltration had started pouring in. A journalist had questioned Gen. Malik on this visit, while Kargil was flaring up.



What did the Indian Army do post the Kargil fiasco? First thing it did was to liberally give gallantry awards, to hide the incompetence of the Generals.



He retorted, "I am Chief of the Army. It is a formation-level event. For such small things you mean, I cannot go to the bathroom," or words to that effect. As later events turned out, he had grossly misjudged the situation.

What about commanders at the HQ Northern Command? It was perhaps in a deeper slumber. Surprisingly, Lt Gen. Padmanabhan was shifted from Northern Command to Southern Command at a crucial time when the snow had begun to melt. His successor Lt Gen. HM Khanna had no time to grasp the situation when the issue of militants' intrusion had caught the eye of the nation.

As his sleeping staff had briefed him, he boasted of throwing out the intruders in the next 48 hours. But when he realised the gravity by the end of May 1999, he rushed to Pune to consult Gen. Padmanabhan.

It seems after the 'Lahore Bus Yatra' held by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihar Vajpayee on 20 February 1999, not only the Generals but also the entire Indian Army officer corps was in a holiday mood as if India had found a 'mantra' for lasting peace. It was more evident in Srinagar, Kargil, Leh, and Kupwara.

At Leh and Srinagar, Garden and Flower competitions were organised in May 1999. Besides May Queen beauty pageants that were held in the officer messes of Kargil and Leh. At Kupwara, as late as 26 June 1999, the Husband's night function was held. At the same time, at Srinagar Badami Bagh Cantonment, there was a Golf tournament going on, while body bags were arriving from Kargil and Dras. George Fernandez, the Defence Minister at the time, had seen this and fumed with anger.

Over and above all this, the Indian Security Forces in the Kashmir Valley were involved in winning the hearts and minds of the people through Operations 'Sangam', 'Sadbhavna' and 'Maitreyi'. There was everything else other than a professional job by the

Therefore, it was silly to think as to why Kargil did happen? The question should be: Why should not have Pakistan done this, when it found everybody was in a holiday mood and sleeping across the LoC? It is a different matter that they goofed it up.

#### Scapegoats and a Post Fiasco Award Frenzy

What did the Army do post the Kargil fiasco? First thing it did was to liberally give gallantry awards, so as to hide the incompetence of the Generals. Some 265 awards were given, which included 4 PVC and 9 MVC and 53 VrC —- which was a record for "Half -a - War". No previous war had fished out so many gallantry awards. The dead cannot speak and award winners had silence written all over their faces.

The whole blame for Kargil was shifted to the Kargil Brigade Commander and he was sacked. None of the higher-ups were touched. The General Officer Commanding (GOC) the infantry division was asked to simply go

The Corps Commander at Srinagar got a coveted appointment of Quarter Master General (QMG) at AHQ. He went home honourably. Kargil Inquiry, at both, the national level and in-house, cleared everyone else. The climax was as happy as the ending frame of a Bollywood movie.

Then, strangely, the AHQ issued a 'strategy paper' called 'Important Issues and the Case of Brigadier Surinder Singh.' The gist of it was published in The Tribune of 15 September 1999 and Kashmir Times on 16 September 1999.

The two main points of the strategy paper were: first, that the Media was trying to make Brig. Surinder Singh a hero and painting Gen. VP Malik as a villain, and second, directly blaming the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for not properly assessing R&AW reports.

What was the point? It was a sure admission that the intelligence was there with the Army, but it failed to properly interpret it. The sickening part was that a General was blaming his subordinate, Brig. Surinder Singh, who was four rungs down the ladder. What a shame? (!)

Hereafter, the story becomes more interesting. I will deal with it in the following two parts of this three-part series. We have had not only sleeping giants but also pliable and scheming grandmasters on our rolls...



#### Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha

Col Rajinder Kushwaha is an ex-NDA, commissioned into the 3 Bihar Regiment in June 1971 and was the Commanding Officer of the same unit in insurgency environs in Assam in 1990-93. Has vast experience in CI Ops from North East to Punjab and J&K. A prolific writer-cum-critic on defence and security matters, he has authored the book, 'Kashmir: A Different Perspective'. His second book on Assam was released in April 2018. Held prestigious appointments in the army including as an instructor at a premier army institute, Col GS, Col Adm of an Infantry Division and Col "Q" works at a Command HQ. He can be contacted on email: rajee749@yahoo.com

Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'



## Vijayant At Kargil: A Father's Memory Of His Son

"The disastrous situation in Kargil was restored by the unmatched courage and dedication of the young officers and men. With time facts tend to get distorted, hence, there was need for writing a book."

## by Staff Correspondent

"Dearest Papa, Mama, and Granny, By the time you get this letter, I'll be observing you all from the sky enjoying the hospitality of the Apsaras. I have no regrets, in fact even if I become a human again, I'll join the army and fight for my nation," read the final letter written by 22-year-old Captain Vijayant Thapar, right before he led his men into battle during Operation Vijay of the Kargil War.

The young officer, from the battle-tested 2 Raj Rif, was tasked to assault area Knoll in the Drass sector by commanding the leading platoon of Alfa company into the battle of Tololing, which is known today as the turning point of the war. During the advance, Capt. Thapar's platoon was bombarded by a barrage of enemy artillery, devastating his troops' position with deadly accuracy.

Despite the unit sustaining significant casualties, and many of his men suffering from shell shock, the gallant officer took stock of the situation; evacuating the casualties, rallying his shell shocked and inspiring them by personally leading the assault from the northern face against the enemy's Medium Machine Gun (MMG) fire.

Like a man possessed, he ferociously charged at the enemy, firing from the hip whilst lobbing grenades at fortified and well-entrenched enemy positions. During this act of incredible valour, the daredevil officer sustained grievous injuries, taking shots to the stomach and his hand. Capt. Thapar's injuries did not deter the officer in him; he continued to advance, ordering his troops to follow him into the inferno of battle.

Witnessing the sheer audacity and daredevilry of a young officer who was barely out of the training academy proving his mettle in a trial by fire, his band of brothers from 2 Raj Rif charged ferociously up the hill towards superior enemy positions.

The fervour and raw courage on display by the men of 2 Raj Rif, unnerved the well-entrenched enemy to abandon their tactically superior positions, effectively enabling 2 Raj Rif to capture the objective. The victory, however, did not come without a cost, Capt. Thapar breathed his last, giving up his life in service of the nation against foreign enemies, which posthumously earned him the Vir Chakra.

It has been two decades since the dreaded conflict which claimed the lives of Capt. Thapar and over 500 other soldiers from the Indian Army



The drafts were corrected numerous times and each time our wounds opened up again and we had to relive our pains, our failings. Each day we were left questioning ourselves about what more we could have done.





Capt. Thapar's parents sitting next to a picture of their son

who fought in the barren and unforgiving heights of Kargil. Today, his father Colonel Thapar, a retired army officer from the Armoured Corps lives a quiet life, reading, writing, and managing the petrol pump constructed in memory of his son.

The 20th anniversary of the conflict brought back vivid memories of his son prompting him to pen down his thoughts, writing a book describing his son as he knew him.

Speaking about what inspired him to write a book about his son, Col. Thapar said, "The disastrous situation in Kargil was restored by the unmatched courage and dedication of the young officers and men. With time facts tend to get distorted, hence, there was need for writing a book chronicling their heroic exploits."

The book has been authored by Col. Thapar after conducting extensive research. He had traveled to the former battlegrounds of Kargil over twenty times and to Knoll sixteen times. Col. Thapar has been to 2 Raj Rif many times and met all the Jawans and JCOs who fought in the brutal military conflicts.

The book has been co-authored by Neha Dwivedi, who lost her father in the same war. "It is a book written from the heart and is aimed at all those who love India, particularly the youth who will bear the torch."

"My son Vijyant was a tenacious and heroic young officer who fell in the battle. Just 22-years-old, was a highly motivated, patriotic officer, for whom the nation came first, always and every time. My son put his country above all, his paltan next and himself nowhere except in the lead of the objective.

The stories of such valour and dedication need to be told and retold. My son was a fourth-generation army officer and the military ethos ran in his blood," said the former army officer and father of the gallant Capt. Vijayant Thapar about his son.

When asked about the emotional struggle he faced while writing about his son, Col. Thapar said, "The main challenge for Neha and I while writing this book was to relive our pain once again. The editors wanted more details of our life's most painful moments.

The drafts were corrected numerous times and each time our wounds opened up again and we had to relive our pains, our failings. Each day we were left questioning ourselves about what more we could have done."



# Operation Talwar: The Indian Navy's Silent Role In India's Kargil Victory

"Over the last twenty-one years this war has been studied for various reasons - on managing localized conflict, on information operations, on the many dimensions of conventional conflict between two nuclear power states. Perhaps, it is also worth studying for the role that maritime forces can play in contributing to Air-Land campaigns and managing continental conflicts and whether strategic advantages at sea can be used to offset any disadvantages or constraints on land. As security analyst Iskandar Rehman in his essay in the book 'The Rise of Indian Navy' perspicaciously says "The idea that the Indian Navy can be highly effective as a game changing flanking force is one which has gained credence since the Navy's 'silent Kargil victory'."

## by Commodore Srikant B Kesnur and Commander Digvijaysinh Sodha

On 26 July this year we celebrated the twenty first anniversary of our glorious victory in the Kargil War. As is well known, this conflict, the most televised war in our history, was fought in the icy heights of Kargil in Kashmir from May to Jul 1999. This war included three independent yet joint operations by the Armed Forces - Operation Vijay by Army, Operation Safed Sagar by the Air Force and Operation Talwar by the Navy. While the contributions of the Army and the Air Force have been well documented

and the extraordinary courage of many of their personnel justly celebrated, the actions by the Navy remain largely unknown, characteristic of the Navy's reputation as a silent service. The Navy day, this year, offers the opportunity to reflect on the situation at sea as it obtained during this conflict.

Enough has been written about the misadventure by Pakistan but it is in the nature of human affairs that foolhardy endeavours often result in an

escalating spiral of violence with recklessness replacing restraint. Restraint in war is wrought by an active combination of political, diplomatic, and military means. While our Political, Diplomatic and Bureaucratic apex played their part admirably in coercive diplomacy, the Indian Armed Forces, in a well planned joint operation, were able to ensure that Pakistan would remain pinned down and not be able to expand the conflict. The Indian Navy essayed a crucial role in this regard.



By keeping Pakistan in a continued state of anxiety and alarm about our intention, by forcing her to spread her assets thin and by conjoining with the other two services where required, one may affirm that the Navy's role in the Kargil war was silent, understated but significant.

The tri-service joint plan by the Indian Military Leadership at the time included the use of all the elements of military power. It planned to use the Air Force to target the entrenched positions of the infiltrators on the high ridges in the region and the Army artillery to not allow the intruders any rest. Meanwhile the Navy - unencumbered by the constraint of not crossing the Line of Control - deployed proactively in full strength to signal that any expansion of conflict would result in the full might of our military being brought to bear upon Pakistan. The plan was a departure from the strategic restraint that India has generally shown against the sub-conventional provocations by Pakistan. In a recently published memoir called "A Prime Minister to Remember - Memories of a Military Chief", Admiral Sushil Kumar, the Navy Chief at that time recollects that 'by early June 1999 the task forces of the Indian Navy's Western fleet had swiftly deployed and seized the initiative in the North Arabian Sea'.

The Naval plan, christened Operation Talwar, was a demonstration of intent and capability. All elements of the naval force were pressed into action to, first, ascertain the positions of the Pakistan Navy assets and, second, to ensure that own high value assets in the sea, Bombay High, as well as in the coastal areas, especially in Gujarat, were well protected. The idea was to provide no opportunity to Pakistan to claim success and to ensure that if Pakistan dared to think of expanding the battle from the limited Kargil sector, the Navy would open another front in the South. The operation involved the largest ever deployment of combatant ships in the Arabian Sea. The Western Fleet, which by itself was enough to tackle the Pakistan Navy, was additionally augmented by assets from the Eastern Fleet. As

India progressively involved its naval aviation, submarine, amphibious and Coast Guard assets and conducted high tempo operations including Electronic Warfare exercises, the signal was clear. Further, when the Pakistani authorities started brandishing the 'N word', India responded by moving ships closer to Pakistan coast, a clear indication that we would not yield to the nuclear blackmail.

the Persian Gulf along the Makaran coast. Elsewhere in his book, Sushil Kumar brings out that Pakistan Navy Headquarters 'signaled their warships to remain in harbour'.

The escort operations revealed that blockade of Karachi and interruption of oil supply from the Persian Gulf were serious vulnerabilities for Pakistan requiring an operational and strategic pause. This, in turn, gave the Army and Air Force the time and leeway to press home their advantage and turn the initial setback into a memorable victory. It has been chronicled that Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif indicated after the conflict that had the Indian Navy blockaded Karachi, Pakistan had fuel supplies only for six days of conventional combat. Rear Admiral SY Shrikhande, a retired Navy officer and eminent strategic analyst,



The Indian Navy in Action: File photo

This large scale deployment in the Northern Arabian Sea – at one point about 30 ships were reported in the Pakistan media as being at the doorstep of Karachi - was close enough for Pakistan to notice and feel the presence, with the possibility of their supplies being choked. This forced her Navy to shift her assets from Karachi, fearing an Indian Naval strike on the harbour. The late Vice Admiral GM Hiranandani, a naval historian, writing about the war in his book 'Transition to Guardianship' states that Pakistan Naval Headquarters directed their ships to 'keep well clear of the Indian Navy'. Pakistan's weakness was further demonstrated when it started escorting its oil tankers from

who was part of the Operation as the Commander of INS Delhi in a recent article on the subject opines that 'when seen in an aggregated sense, bold deployment and demonstrated readiness with adequate signaling of resolve had considerable effect on the Kargil conflict'.

This war also involved very astute use of information warfare by the Indian Armed Forces. This was the first time that daily joint media briefings were undertaken by Senior Officers from all the three services in New Delhi. The aim was to undertake messaging, for Indian citizens, for neutral observers and most of all for the antagonist, about the intent and the



Former Navy Chief Adm Sushil Kumar with erstwhile PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee: File photo



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preparedness of the Indian Armed Forces. Newspaper articles, photographs and television became important tools of information war. For example, photographs of fully armed and ready Eastern Fleet ships in Kochi on their way to the Western theatre were reproduced in international media and taken note of in the concerned circles

There were other places too where the Navy chipped in. The Navy's squadron of aircraft operated along the Line of Control in support of land forces; specialist Hydrography teams were conjoined with the Army's Artillery batteries to pinpoint locations and Navy's Special Forces operated in tandem with their counterparts of other services. The Navy also intercepted and arrested a North Korean ship that was carrying missile components to Pakistan and aiding their war effort.

By keeping Pakistan in a continued state of anxiety and alarm about our intention, by forcing her to spread her assets thin and by conjoining with the other two services where required, one may affirm that the Navy's role in the Kargil war was silent, understated but significant. As Sushil Kumar states 'the overwhelming superiority of our navy had a sobering effect on Pakistan'. Both national and international media took note

of these developments. While Jane's International Weekly headlined that 'Indian Navy muscle hastened end to border fight' the Hindustan Times reported that "Alert navy helped pin down Pakistan to Kargil'. Admiral Sushil Kumar's book also brings out the visionary role played by Prime Minster AB Vajpayee and others in the political apex which percolated down to all echelons whereby all the three services and other agencies operated in a cohesive and coordinated manner during the crisis. The Admiral highlights that the instinctive understanding of the Maritime issues displayed by the then Prime Minister, the Raksha Mantri George Fernandes and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh resulted in clear and unambiguous Rules Of Engagement (ROE) for the Forces at Sea from the precautionary stage onwards.

Over the last twenty years this war has been studied for various reasons - on managing localized conflict, on information operations, on the many dimensions of conventional conflict between two nuclear power states. Perhaps, it is also worth studying for the role that maritime forces can play in contributing to Air-Land campaigns and managing continental conflicts and whether strategic advantages at sea can be used to offset any disadvantages or constraints on land. As security analyst Iskandar Rehman in his essay in the book 'The Rise of Indian Navy' (Ed Harsh Pant) perspicaciously says "The idea that the Indian Navy can be highly effective as a game changing flanking force is one which has gained credence since the Navy's 'silent Kargil victory'. 🜇



## Commodore Srikant B Kesnur and Commander Digvijaysinh Sodha

Cmde Srikant Kesnur and Cdr Digvijaysinh Sodha are both serving Naval officers with interests in Maritime and Naval History. Cmde Kesnur is the Director, Maritime Warfare Centre (MWC), Mumbai and is a distinguished academic and is an authority on military-media relations.

Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'



## Strategic Leadership In Changing Times Of Covid-19

"Without a doubt, armed forces must continue to be relevant as tool of CNP even in the COVID-19 scenario and not resort to gimmicks to retain their relevance. The Armed Forces must consistently redefine roles and activities by determining how to best accomplish their purpose."

## by Colonel Harshvardhan Singh

Journey of Life as we knew it came to a grinding halt on 22 March 2020 with Janta Curfew followed by Lock Down 1.0 commencing on 24 March 2020. It was that day and today; we have evolved a new lexicon and also a new way of living, the realization that COVID-19 is here to stay and might as well start living with it is not an epiphany but a rude grueling realization. While Corona Warriors have taken the lead and the armed forces honouring them with a spectacle and a million rolled up eyes, it made one think and also triggered a thought if our strategic leaders were leading change, managing change or leading growth in this new paradigm. All three prima facie would seem quite similar and I could be accused of playing semantics in a soup of words. If Indian Army wants to emerge stronger

and better from this quagmire with meaningful and sustainable change to our systems, it will need to focus on a collaborative approach within the organization.

This is because the problem is not only how to acquire new concepts and skills to operate in a COVID-19 environment, but also how to unlearn things those are no longer serving the organization well. Status quo, you know, that is Latin for the mess we're in. said Ronald Reagan. It seems that in the past an organization could experience change within and in the operating environment and then return to a period of relative stability. This provided breathing room for thoughtfully planning and getting ready for the next change. However, the present metamorphosis in the operating environment of the armed forces is occurring almost continually, and there are certainly no signs that this metastasis will attenuate in the present volatile and ambiguous geo-strategic scenario. All this change runs counter to our need to be comfortable and in a predictable environment. Our quest for "status quo" pushes us to seek the management of what is rather than seeking leadership for what could be. However, it is very difficult to make changes when an organization is satisfied with the status quo. It is innate inertia, getting it going in any direction will make it easier to accommodate the necessary change to move it in the right direction.

The only person who likes change is a baby with a wet diaper said Mark Twain certainly; it would be difficult

to find any thinking person who believes that this change is not a change but a passing shower and we will relapse into our comfort zone sooner than later. The important issue for leaders in the armed forces would be to cope with the changes that confront them daily as they attempt to keep the organization adaptive, resilient, and viable. The true leader must be able to embrace this change and use it in ways that benefit the growth and sustainability of the organization. Leaders play a critical role during the organization's attempt to embrace change and challenge the status quo. During this intervening period between stasis and evolution which we are presently in, the organization is in a flux, which manifests in various levels of confusion, fear, loss of direction, reduced energy, and lack of clarity about direction and expectations. It can be a period of high emotion, with officers and troops ruing for what is lost, and initially unable to look towards the future with clarity. Turbulent times like this need the leader to focus on two things. First, the feelings and confusion of organization must be acknowledged and validated. Second, the leader must work with led to begin creating a new vision of the altered structures and help them to understand the direction of the future in a collaborative process.

It is important to empathize but avoid focusing on the permeating feelings of despondence in this situation. A strong focus on a new vision may result in the perception that the leader doesn't value us and the predicament we are in and values the organization alone. An effective leader knows how to incorporate the reality of change into the organization's attempt to move successfully into the future. In the face of all this change, leaders need to remind themselves that the human condition is all about being comfortable in a predictable life environment. Unfortunately, change is unpredictable and often uncomfortable. We as individuals and the Indian Army of which we are a part tend to keep doing those things we are familiar with, while at the same time hoping that our situation will improve significantly. In response to the present confusion, many do nothing, often afraid of making the wrong choices. Leaders are at

their best when they are calling on others to join them as they willingly face the adventure of confronting rapidly changing conditions and not presenting the organization and its human resource with a Hobson's choice of 'my way or the highway'.

Change Management and Change Leadership are two options available for us as an organization but we must realize that these two terms are not interchangeable; management is to keep the change under effective control by standard TTPs and the goal of this effort is to minimize the turbulence and mitigate the impact of the change. Change management is a structured approach for ensuring that changes are thoroughly and smoothly absorbed. Change leadership, on the other hand, concerns the driving forces, visions and processes that lead to

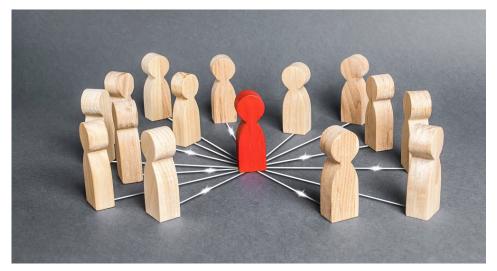
and the sand syndrome. Frequently, a challenging vision can stimulate movement, especially if the people in the organization are empowered to move forward. However, as good as change leadership can be in getting things moving, it also has the potential to get things a little bit out of control and topple the apple cart rather than upsetting it. It is impossible to ensure that everything happens in an expected or desired way at a time that is wanted. Leaders and managers tend to have different views of what change means. Managers linked to the status quo would envision change as a threat and of nuisance value. Management usually aims at just maintaining consistency and order. Leaders, on the other hand must look forward to change as an opportunity to grow, to gain an advantage, and to attain excellence. For leaders, COVID-19 must



Graphical representation

the transformation of the organization. Change leadership is concerned with internalizing the change process for the evolution of a better, smarter and more efficient organization. Change management tends to be more associated; at least, when it works well, with smaller changes rather than a major transformation and COVID-19 is by no stretch of imagination a minor occurrence. Change leadership is also more about the urgency for getting everyone in the organization to want to make something happen. It is too easy to get comfortable with the status quo and to resist change, a typical ostrich be seen as a change that ushers something new, exciting, and challenging for the organization as a whole and is not aggrandized virtue of self-worth.

Far too often, the leaders of an organization may have been thinking for a while about the need for a particular change, but the present pandemic has taken them by surprise. Indeed, this is an unnerving test of leadership; combine that with the short tenures of many current senior leaders, and it's quite possible that many of today's leaders are even more unprepared for such a challenge. It's only natural:



Graphical representation

senior leaders, always under intense pressure may default to looking at damage the corona virus is causing or could cause. There's good reason to be concerned, especially since the bottom-line toll has already been so large. Subordinates don't want to know how much the virus is costing; but they would still want to feel they're in the same boat as their leader. People need to know that even though the leader is there to lead the organization, he is also a human being-someone that cares for them and understands what they are going through. Very little effort may be made to make the process inclusive; in understanding or agreeing with this need for change, how it would affect each individual personally and professionally, and how it will be implemented. The more that everyone is involved in looking at the options related to needed change and in suggesting ways to do things differently, the easier it will be to build the case for initiating the change.

The staff in the present case does not have the initial responsibility to drive change in our organization. However, transformative change is not likely to occur if the staff is not on board to embracing this change. According to Ken Blanchard, the best way to initiate, implement, and sustain change is to increase the level of influence and involvement from the people being asked to change. Leading from the front doesn't mean being isolated, however, for many leaders, one of the hardest things to do is to rely on the opinions of staff and the environment. But that's exactly what they need to do in times of crisis, especially

when the cause of the crisis is outside of their area of expertise. Leaders must listen to the environment; people need to feel that the approach to change will include their strong input and ongoing involvement. As this process unfolds, the change leaders will need to ensure that concerns are brought forth and resolved along the way. Resistance increases the more that people sense that they cannot influence what is happening to them. Effective leaders need to chaperone people in understanding change and the benefits that would accrue to the organization. Increasingly the leadership's role is to interpret, communicate, and enable rather to instruct and impose, which inadvertently solicits a 'digging in the heels' response.

Leaders will have to be agile, in changing not only strategies and operational design but also their own leadership styles. In fact, it is likely to be the case that different leadership styles will be needed as the year progresses through different stages. Right now, for instance, an affiliative and participative style of leadership, where decisions are made through consensus and based on relationships, may be best. At this point, leaders should know that they need to communicate with all stakeholders during a crisis. Leaders will have to communicate with alacrity and clearly to be ahead of potential issues rather than having to counter misinformation. And with a viral outbreak such as this, different layers and silos of the organizations will need to communicate differently—operations and operational logistics will have different

concerns than those of Ordnance and Supplies, for instance. Communication by leader should be tailored for each constituency based on their unique concerns but within a pervasive singularity of thought and direction.

Leaders in higher echelons suffer from the Rapunzel in the Stone Tower effect and struggled with engagement and interactions. That task is even tougher now as the coronavirus has employees not operating in their usual domains or, worse, temporarily not working. The challenges of social distancing and restrictions on large congregations make interaction with the lower rungs more remote and distant. Soliciting feedback about what would be most helpful to them as life returns to normal will ensure that leaders and staff focus on the actions that will have the greatest impact. There are three keys to effective communication, listen to the troops, act on the feedback they provide and importantly, communicate "We hear you, and here's what we've done based on your feedback." Best leaders must turn this tragedy that hurts their organizations into a sense of shared purpose and community that betters it in the long term.

Later, assuming the virus runs its course, "here's what we need to do to make up for lost time" approach may be in order. Leaders must become cheerleaders, encouraging people to "stay the course" and continue to meet the challenges. As long as the virus remains a threat, the focus should be on keeping personnel and their families safe and free from contagion. Making people feel secure and taken care of will then help leaders get them focused on preserving operations as best as possible as the outbreak spreads. The responsibility for leading change is with the flag rank officers and their staff; they must direct the change in a way that units and subunits can cope with. American John P. Kotter is a Harvard Business School professor and leading thinker and author on organizational change management. Kotter's highly regarded books Leading Change (1995) and the follow-up The Heart of Change (2002) describe a helpful model for understanding and leading change. Each stage acknowledges a key principle identified by Kotter relating to



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people's response and approach to change, in which people see, feel and then change. His eight step change model can be summarized as under:-

- Inspire resolve; enthuse people to move and to make the desired outcomes real and relevant.
- Build the team; get the right people in right place with emotional commitment and balance competence, authority and responsibility. Avoid yes men with sycophancy as their mantra.
- Create a persuasive vision; get the team to establish a simple vision and strategy; focus on aspects necessary to drive quality and efficiency.
- · Communicate; Involve as many people as possible, talk with people rather than talking to them. Declutter and exploit technology for you rather than against.
- Facilitate the process; enable constructive feedback and provide support, make the process feel as organization owned and organization driven rather than a directive from the hierarchy.
- One Step at a Time; Set aims that are easy to achieve in bite-size chunks. The numbers of initiatives should be manageable. The current stages should be finished before starting new ones.
- Persevere; Foster and encourage determination and persistence to achieve ongoing change.
- Make change stick; Reinforce the value of successful change. The desired change should be intertwined into the organization's culture.

For these reasons, an effective strategy needs to be in sync with how the organization functions and the actions of its leadership. Our leaders must learn the importance of role modeling that "walks the talk" as a requirement for leading change. For today's skeptical social media driven armed force rhetoric without action quickly disintegrates into empty slogans and propaganda. All of this discourse about change ultimately involves dealing with the culture of the organization and not its organizational climate. Culture can be defined as the predominating attitudes, beliefs, and behavior patterns that characterize an organization's functioning. Unless the desired change is embedded in the organization's culture, it is not likely to be sustainable over time. If the desired change runs counter to the existing organizational culture, clearly that culture must be altered to support the new initiative.

If the armed forces hope to become and remain the sharp tip of the arrow, their culture must be "rigorous". This means that it must consistently apply exacting standards at all times throughout the organization, top down. An organizational culture that accepts mediocrity cannot attain excellence. Therefore, change in the culture is often required to move from complacence to rigorous performance. Without a doubt, armed forces must

continue to be relevant as tool of CNP even in the COVID-19 scenario and not resort to gimmicks to retain their relevance. Armed Forces must consistently redefine roles and activities by determining how to best accomplish their purpose. What leaders need from the led is the ability to commit to a course of action and, at the same time, to stay flexible enough to quickly alter behavior and attitude. As a result, this allows the organization the opportunity to help ensure its future success and contribution to national power.

It is worth noting that during and post COVID-19 scenario, learning how to learn, learning how to innovate, and learning how to change would be key. The notion of "change" is arguably the most powerful because it focuses on results and implies proactive movement forward. Resilient leaders must start by anticipating what success looks like at the end of the recovery phase; how the Armed Forces will thrive for the long term - then guide their staff to execute an outcome-based set of dashes to get there with agility. Regressive planning will help leaders create more aggressive and creative plans. Having the leadership team envision a successful endstate is emotionally enabling, freeing it from the constraints of the present. It also discourages incremental thinking, which hampers creativity. Largescale organizational change usually triggers emotional reactions, including denial, negativity, reluctant choice, tentative acceptance, or resistance to commitment. Leadership can either facilitate this emotional process or ignore it. Clearly, the latter course places the transformation effort at peril. 🌇



## Colonel Harshvardhan Singh

An ex-NDA & a prolific writer, the author has held several prestigious appointments and has served extensively in the Counter Insurgency Grid, Line of Actual Control (LAC), Indian Military Academy (IMA), Defence Services Staff College (DSSC) and served as part of the United Nations Peace Keeping Forces. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'



## Handling Insurgencies: A Lingering Issue

"The issue needs to be viewed even more seriously considering the brain of the Maoists ideology is in Beijing, they are receiving focused support from both China, Pakistan's ISI-proxies and the anti-national cabal within India, with overground elements of Maoists cloaked as intellectuals, social-activists and even journalists. Clearly a more focused approach is required."

## by Lieutenant General PC Katoch (Retd)

Insurgencies are generally believed to be having lives of about 50 years but somehow they have tended to linger on in India. There are many reasons for this, one being that the use of force is believed by some as the remedy whereas the problem is socio-political-economic and even lack of access to law and justice. In case security forces (SF) use excessive force and make widespread indiscriminate arrests in response to casualties inflicted by insurgents on the SF, it has negative effect, as do long imprisonments without prosecution and sometimes even without an FIR. There have been instances where insurgent leaders apprehended by security forces have been set free on political behest, much to the chagrin of security forces who feel that the hierarchical aim is to let the insurgency linger on because of

politics, votes and money. All these have emerged in media from time to time, particularly with reference to the Maoists belt.

Successive Union Home Ministers have been saying that the Maoist insurgency will be over in two-three years but that is hardly likely. Same goes for resolution of the Naga insurgency in the northeast that manifests astride the India-Myanmar border. But a major factor for continuing insurgencies in India is the support they receive from China and Pakistan in terms of weaponry, money, media and propaganda. For example, the server of the Indian Maoists propaganda machinery is hosted in China. Both China and Pakistan also have urban links in India that are used to further their national interests; these include political

parties, scholars, media, educational institutions, NGOs and drug cartels, in addition to lawmakers and other persons under blackmail having used hawala. Given the fabric of insurgencies in India, why would China and Pakistan not exploit this readymade asymmetric battlefield?

On August 10, 2020, the Chhattisgarh state government announced its decision to provide urban forest land under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, to the tribal and other traditional forest-dwellers for household purposes, which is a first in the country. In fact, 11 tribal families under the Jagdalpur Municipal Corporation (JMC) were provided land entitlement on August 10 by handing over



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pattas to the beneficiaries. A press release of by the state government read, - "For providing rights of urban forestlands, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 and the guidelines of the Central government issued in 2015 were followed by the state government. On a pilot basis, 11 tribal families were given pattas for urban forestland for household purposes. There are about 4,500 tribals and other traditional forest-dwellers, who have applied for the rights over urban forest lands ... The process of recognizing their forest rights have been initiated. Soon, other eligible families will be handed over similar land rights."

Above is good beginning but the pilot project for 11 out of some 4,500 tribals has been undertaken 14 years after the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 and 5 years after Central Government guidelines of 2015 which indicates our lackadaisical approach to tackle even basic causes of insurgencies. Forest land is a major issue with Maoists. In June 2018 some 10,000 Maoists (some armed) protested in Bastar against allotment of an iron ore mine to National Mineral Development Corporation in Balladila Hills which has strong Maoist influence. In July 2019, hundreds of tribals and other forest dwelling communities protested in Dahanu, Palghar District of Maharashtra against proposed amendments to the Indian Forest Act, like: reducing powers of Gram Sabhas vis-à-vis Forest Settlement Officers; Centre/States given right to lease out reserved forest land and; practice of shifting cultivation to be restricted. Tribals view these amendments as aprecursor to creating privately owned forests, divesting them of legally guaranteed rights over forest land and resources under the Constitutionand also violating Forest Rights Act, 2006.

On March 7, 2020, Maoists issued a statement against the Union Government's Hindutva agenda, extending support to minorities. This was a major shift in Maoists strategy to widen their sympathizer-base to include minorities and all those who are opposed to the CAA, NRC, NPR and such like issues. The issue needs to be viewed even more seriously considering the brain of the Maoists ideology is in Beijing, they are receiving focused support from both China, Pakistan's ISI-proxies and the anti-national cabal within India, with overground elements of Maoists cloaked as

Framework Agreement to suit his interpretation. NSCN (IM) released the 2015 Framework Agreement in a press conference and demanded removal of Ravi as a government interlocutor for further talks over a final peace agreement. In a speech on August 14, 2020, NSCN-IM chief Thuingaleng Munivahsaid that the sovereignty of Nagas was recognized in the 2015 Framework Agreement and that Nagas will co-exist but not merge with India. He also said that they were not asking the Government of India for a Naga national flag and a separate constitution as "recognize them or not, we have our own flag and constitution."

Muivah cited the 2015 agreement saying "Inclusive peaceful co-existence of the two entities sharing sovereign power", adding that inclusive means all Naga in different administrative units and political camps are



North-east insurgents: File photo

intellectuals, social-activists and even journalists. Clearly a more focused approach is required. Even operations by security forces in the Maoists belt need to be centralized under the DG CRPF rather than leaving it to DG Police of individual states. Ironically, Maoists close links with organizations like Popular Front of India is treated like routine.

In the northeast, having resumed the peace talks on August 11, 2020, the NSCN (IM) has accused Nagaland Governor RN Ravi (government interlocutor in the peace talks) of deleting a keyword from the original 2015

to be included in the agreement and co-existence, and shared-sovereignty applies to two entities, not one entity. According to Ravi, all important agreements on the peace deal were settled in October 2019 and only some minor outstanding issues are left to be sorted out. But NSCN (IM) says the Framework Agreement shared with Naga tribal leaders is different from the one signed in 2015 – doctored by Ravi which changes the interpretation. The original copy was also not shared with the seven Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) but brought later to the negotiating table.



In case security forces (SF) use excessive force and make widespread indiscriminate arrests in response to casualties inflicted by insurgents on the SF, it has negative effect, as do long imprisonments without prosecution and sometimes even without an FIR.

The Framework Agreement was signed on August 3, 2015 amidst much fanfare in New Delhi in presence of Prime Minister Narendra During the signing cere-Modi. Thuigaleng Muivah, General Secretary NSCN (IM) stated, "Beginning from now the challenges will be great so also the responsibilities. The obligations to meet the needs of the people shall be paramount for both the parties to make this historic Endeavour more meaningful. Let me also assure you that Nagas can still come closer if their rights are respected. On behalf of the Naga people allow me to assure you once again that Nagascan be trustworthy and take into your confidence for any policy in the Northeast and beyond the frontiers". The pact was not made public then perhaps to deny opposition protests and hoping that NSCN (IM) will eventually agree coming under the Indian constitution.

Would it have been prudent to make the Framework Agreement public in 2015 clarifying that this was just a framework agreement rather than portraying a sterling political achievement and then systematically work to iron out all loose ends. When Ravi claims that all important agreements on the peace deal were settled in October 2019, this certainly was an important issue to be sorted out with the NSCN (IM), which apparently was hoped covered by the 'new' text as NSCN (IM) claims. But even if the NSCN (IM) had signed the final peace deal and noticed it later, they could have still reneged on it. The NSCN (K) too had broken the peace accord with Government of India after 13 years, perhaps on behest of Chinese intelligence.

Is the current stance of NSCN (IM) to retain supremacy over all Nagas to whom it has been promising the best

deal is the question or is there something more to it? Was this issue discussed by Ravi last year which the organization is reneging now? Bringing the NSCN (IM) around is the challenge for the government, which may take time depending on the acumen used. Importantly, the China factor should not be ignored, coping with which would need full application of the Chanakya Niti, not just dialogue. China has been supporting Naga and other insurgencies in India but has established and armed proxies in Myanmar to keep the Myanmar government in check and for attacking India. This has remained unchecked because India continues to remain in the defensive mode at the sub-conventional level against both China and

It has largely gone unnoticed that the atheist regime of China has addsurreptitiously added religion non-military weaponry to its strategy of 'Unrestricted Warfare". Targeting the Christian population of Nagas, China has created a cult called 'Church of Almighty God' or 'Eastern Lightening' and the New Testament has been by a Chinese version of

Bible called 'The Word Appears in the Flesh'. The cult established in China by Zhao Weishan in 1991is reportedly involved in kidnappings, murders and infiltrating church organizations at home and abroad. The Chinese media denounces which is subterfuge because without the blessings of the Communist Party of China, it couldn't have survived. They say Jesus has resurrected as a Chinese woman who the cult worships as Almighty God. The cult has already recruited 300-400 Naga youth from Nagaland and added them to whatsapp groups for indoctrination and brainwashing.

Finally, corruption and maladministration too contribute to insurgency. But, if officials in-charge of acting against corruption become self-serving, what is the message to insurgents? Take the case of Nagaland Government asking the Supreme Court for removal of Lokayukta Uma Nath Singh, a retired chief justice of Meghalaya, for chauvinistic behaviour, unjust, excessive and arbitrary demands, and seeking to take up arbitration work in the 'Synery Ispat Pvt Ltd vsBarabara Elizabeth Simoes' case in spite of rules that strictly prohibit a Lokayukta from taking up any other work under the Lokayukta Act. Notably he was appointed he was appointed the first Lokayukta of Nagaland in February 2019, fulfilling a longstanding demand of civil society groups like ACAUT (Against Corruption and Unabated Taxation) to address alleged rampant corruption within the state machinery.



## Lieutenant General Prakash Katoch



Lt. Gen Katoch is a renowned special forces officer, with an unparalleled service record. He participated in the 1971 Indo-Pak War. He has served as Defence Attaché in Japan and Republic of Korea. An MSc in Defence Studies, he is an alumnus of the DSSC, SC, HC and NDC. He had also held the Field Marshal KM Cariappa Chair of Excellence for the year 2011-2012. He has been a prolific writer with his articles published in leading Defence magazines like FORCE, Indian Defence Review, The Week, Force,

and Fauji India among many others. He is also the author of Special Operations Cases Studies: Lessons for India and India's Special Forces: History and Future of India's Special Forces. The author can be reached Email: prakashkatoch7@ gmail.com. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'



# **India Must Counter The Bidirectional Psychological Warfare**

"Of late, India has been experiencing a psychologically driven Chinese war strategy at various occasions. For instance, during the 2017 Doklam standoff, and with a much renewed vigour in the recent military standoffs in Sikkim and at multiple points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh. Thus, 'Winning without Fighting' has become a characteristic feature of China's warfare strategy which is commonly called psychological warfare"

## by Lt Gen (Dr.) VK Ahluwalia (Retd)

What further adds to India's dilemma is Pakistan's obsession with 'anti-India' ideology compounded with acts of terrorism. It has made continuous attempts to internationalise the Kashmir issue especially by trying to influence the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Similarly, on 14 August, on the eve of its Independence Day, Pakistan awarded its highest civilian honour - 'Nishan-e-Pakistan' - to the Kashmiri Separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani - yet again an act to defy India. In addition, the same day, Major General Babar Iftikhar, Director General of Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) remarked,

"Whether it be Rafale or S-400, Pakistan Army is fully prepared and ready to thwart any Indian aggression"- a way to attack India's cognitive capacities.

These reverberations highlight the sinister designs of the prevailing Sino-Pakistan nexus against India. Wherein, the design is all too visible in both physical and psychological operations (psyops) cum propaganda. Psyops is a powerful tool to change the social, political, psychological, and security landscape by its influence operations.

> Perceptions can lead to Strategic Blunders

It remains undisputed that the nature and scope of psywar is all-encompassing and remains unrestricted in time and space - making the battlefields omnipresent. The potential of information cum psywar transcends beyond imagination. What makes psywar lucrative is its cost- effective non-lethal method to influence the target segment- without any set norms of universally accepted laws, rules, and customs.

With the onstage of information and communication technology (ICT), it has significantly evolved into a potent non-kinetic weapon of the 21st century, which can also invariably mould and manipulate the perceptions of the



What makes psywar lucrative is its cost-effective non-lethal method to influence the target segment- without any set norms of universally accepted laws, rules, and customs.



target audience - both at home and abroad. As Sean McFate, in his book, 'The New Rules of War' rightly suggests, "...if you twist your enemy's perception of reality, you can manipulate him into strategic blunders that can be exploited for victory".

Due to radical changes in the geo-politico-economic-strategic-technological environment, the warfare has continued to evolve from clear territorial wars to uncertain, ambiguous, and irregular wars. In these wars, information, psychological and cyber threats have emerged as the most potent tools of future wars.

William Lind looked at shattering the enemy's psychological cohesion to act. He propagated that focus should not be on physical destruction. Psyops cum propaganda has the capability to influence public opinion and organise anti-government protests; and mislead adversaries, delay decision making and degrade their will to fight.

Therefore, information cum psywar is not confined to military forces in contact battle alone, but is conducted at three distinct levels: strategic, operational, and tactical. At the strategic level, psyops exploit the adversary's weaknesses on political, economic, social, religious, informational, and military domains.

This is well-witnessed in the ways our adversaries, both with robust psywar organisations, have been manipulating and exploiting India's multiple domains by usage of: fake news, distorted narratives, morphed images, doctored videos, cartographic aggression, blocking information systems, creating social dissonance and communal disharmony. China, in particular, has been busy in projecting a superior status in economy and GDP, military strength, technology and others.

#### China's Hyper-active Psywar Strategy

In 2010, China revised and adopted a 'Three Warfare Strategy': public opinion warfare, psywar, and legal warfare- mainly witnessed in its assertive designs against Taiwan, other claimants in the South China Sea, and India. In strengthening its claims, China shapes the public opinion by playing a 'victim' card which then justifies its use of force or a military action against

While at another instance, it reported China's Type 15 lightweight main battle tank can effectively operate in plateau regions, it would be extremely difficult for India's heavier tanks (T-72/90s) to operate. It did not mention that the Indian Army's relatively heavier tanks like the T-72 and T-90 are better protected, with automatic fire control systems, and are heavily armed with 125 mm smoothbore gun to engage the Type 15 at longer ranges. Also, these tanks and BMPs complement each other to manoeuvre effectively in mountainous terrain of Eastern Ladakh.

Furthermore, while slamming the Rafale against the Chinese J20 fighter aircrafts, Global Times highlighted the extraordinary capabilities of its fighter jets and helicopters to operate in all terrains, altitudes, and weather



The Indian Navy's elite Marcos Commandos in action

the opponent. Complementing it with a fiery information cum psywar campaign, it aims to influence the population and forces on both sides, and gain a psychological advantage.

To note, customised narratives remain central to changing and shaping the perception of the targeted segments. For instance, as exemplified by China's state-owned newspaper Global Times, continuous warning to India of consequences of resistance to the Chinese activities. It also reported that since the Doklam standoff, the Chinese military has expanded its arsenal with weapons that would be advantageous in high-altitude conflicts, if they arise.

conditions. It further added the effective precision engagements by artillery at high altitude targets at longer ranges. On 16 August, it reiterated that India's major power dreams have been wrecked by "attacking China". Global Times may note that Rafale is equipped with a wide range of lethal weapon systems and avionics and can perform multiple roles to achieve the ultimate - air supremacy.

Cartographic aggression is also a form of hybrid cum psywar, which indulges in intentional misrepresentation of boundaries on maps to lay claim to additional territories in continental and maritime domains. Repeated publication of such incorrect maps by our



It appears that India has largely been reacting and responding to the psyops of China and Pakistan mostly through rebuttals. Rather, to thwart the 'nexus', India and the Army need to develop a robust and an integrated comprehensive strategy-pivoted on pro-activity.



Rafale fighter jet taking off the runway

adversaries forms a larger part of the psywar, to not only influence perceptions to their advantage but also facilitate legal claims later.

#### Pakistan's Psywar Strategy

Jammu & Kashmir has been the epicentre of Pakistan's raison d'être against India compounded by the aim to destabilise India, decelerate its growth trajectory and hinder its global power ambitions. In doing so, Pakistan seeks to, as its 2020 Green Book notes, "take the war into non-kinetic domains: Information / Cyber Warfare; and Electronic Warfare (EW) Spectrum". Pakistan's such a call is catalysed by India's actions on 5 August 2019 - perceived as 'Black Day' by Pakistan.

Despite its own domestic fragilities, Pakistan remains unhindered in applying psyops against India by using the 'religious card,' highlighting oppression against Muslims to maintain its political legitimacy and aims to draw concessions from the world at large and the OIC in particular.

Furthermore, Pakistan is engaged in practices, such as: organising visit of foreign media and United Nations Military Observers to LoC; ISPR issues statements in support of Kashmiris and their struggle; release of special editions of Kashmiris struggle against the "Indian occupation"; instituting of special fund to support Kashmiris' struggle; initiation of special supplements to suggest indigenous insurgency, and composition of songs that depict resilience of the Kashmiris.

Adding further, Pakistani agencies are also actively engaged in forging 'Chinese psywar campaign' against India. A few social media accounts with Chinese characters that tweeted about the border violence were traced back to Pakistan.

#### India's Response Architecture

In a holistic assessment of the contours of psywar campaigns, it appears that India has largely been reacting and responding to the psyops of China and Pakistan mostly through rebuttals. Rather, to thwart the 'nexus', India and the Army need to develop a robust and an integrated comprehensive strategy - pivoted on pro-activity. It must also include media strategy wherein there is an urgent need to bring out proactive/preemptive strong narratives. The query is: What more should comprise the Psywar Strategy?

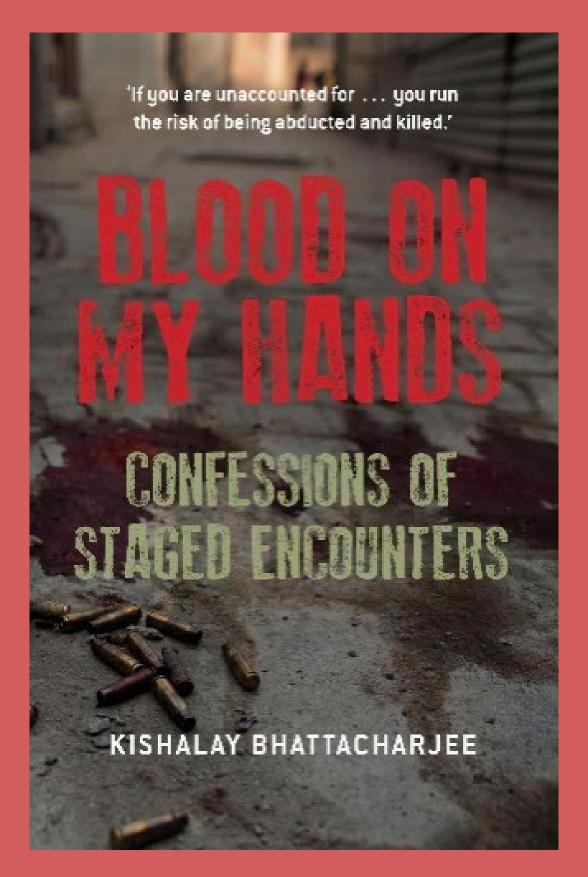
Psywar strategy is distinctly directed against four well defined segments: forces on conventional battlefield, leadership, population on both sides, and global community. Undoubtedly, the strategy would require: an unambiguous psyops objective in consonance with the national interests, identification and analysis of intended target segments, an effective method of dissemination of psyops material, appropriate language, priority of interests of the targeted audience and others.

To co-ordinate, the proposed apex level organisation should comprise domain experts in the field of psychology, sociology, language, and law; the armed forces, political scientists, foreign affairs, media and social media specialists. However, the psywar planning should be centralised at the apex level, addressing politico - socio economic – informational - military threats, at all levels of manifestation. Furthermore, India needs to enhance its public diplomacy, strategic communications, public information and relations, and influence operations - to effectively counter the adversary's bidirectional psywar strategy.



#### Lieutenant General (Dr) VK Ahluwalia

Lieutenant General (Dr) VK Ahluwalia is presently the Director of the Indian Army's Think Tank, Center for Land and Warfare Studies (CLAWS). He is a renowned author and strategic expert. He has held some of the Indian Army's highest appointments, including a tenure as Corps Commander, Ladakh and Army Commander, Central Command during his four decades in uniform. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'



**Publisher: Harper Collins** 

Synopsis: This anonymous confession by an army officer splits wide open the anatomy of staged encounters in India's northeast, and explains how awards and citations are linked to a body count. Speaking to investigative journalist and conflict specialist Kishalay Bhattacharjee, the confessor tells of the toll this brutality has taken on him. An essay by Bhattacharjee and a postscript that analyses the hidden policy of extra-judicial killings and how it threatens India's democracy contextualize this searing confession. An explosive document on institutionalized human rights abuse.



## **Undissuasive Leadership, Undeterred China!**

Clausewitz said that 'war is politics by other means. Mao said, 'war is politics with bloodshed and politics is war without bloodshed'. Both never mentioned bureaucracies in-between! In authoritarian regimes like China and Pakistan, there is politico military fusion. The bureaucracy merely executes or is executed. However, in India a unique troika of political, military, and bureaucratic leadership manages military affairs. This flawed leadership structure is costing India dearly.

## by Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd)

In 1971 India was a poor country with strong Armed Forces. . Pakistan halved created Bangladesh and cocked a snook at USA. Seventh Fleet threatening to intervene in Pakistan's favour was taken in stride. In 2020 India is a rich country. Despite having large, internationally respected, well trained, and battle-hardened Armed Forces our territorial integrity is at stake. Our ill-equipped forces have not been able to dissuade either China from unilaterally altering status quo at the LAC or Pakistan from interfering in our internal affairs with impunity for decades. Our dissuasive ability is obviously low. Leveraging China out entails great cost and risk in case dialogue fails. This situation should never have arisen.

When it is 'business as usual' territorial integrity of the nation seems like 'cry wolf'. When the Chinese are at our doorstep, it is easily understood the territorial integrity of the nation is the responsibility of the politico-military leadership. The bureaucracy executes their mandates to defend the nation. This is true of any democracy but ours. Clausewitz said that 'war is politics by other means. Mao said, 'war is politics with bloodshed and politics is war without bloodshed'. Both never mentioned bureaucracies in-between!

authoritarian regimes like China and Pakistan, there is politico military fusion. The bureaucracy merely executes or is executed. However, in India a unique troika of political, military, and bureaucratic leadership manages military affairs. This flawed leadership structure is costing India dearly.

India is facing huge Disruption in Military Affairs. This disruption has ideological and technological components. The Pakistani ideology of radical Islam and the hard core communist Chinese ideology have disrupted military affairs at one level. Disruptive technologies applied differentially by each of them have disrupted military



The Military leadership has not been able to get the best out of the existing system. Sitting aloof and expecting others to come up with goods will not work. They must acquire skills and capabilities to ingest disruptive technologies, head projects in DRDO, operate factories and run the MOD system on their terms.

affairs at another level. China and Pakistan have repeatedly demonstrated convergence of ideology and technology into synthesised disruptions. Collusive multidomain warfare through massive asymmetrical aggression - in J&K, hinterland, along the LOC and LAC has been the norm. Our conventional capability devoid of ideology and weakened by perennial shortcomings has been side-lined without answers. India's leadership troika needs rethinking. Why have we landed here?

#### Political Leadership

Elected political representatives are responsible to defend the nation. They must ensure that the politico-military institutions, work concertedly to defend the nation. When such concert happened between Indira Gandhi and Sam Bahadur in 1971, India had its greatest strategic victory. Will it happen in the present juncture? Our PM and RM showed unprecedented courage to make their stands on the frontlines. It is encouraging. However, the jury is still out. We have had two defence ministers (George Fernandez and Manohar Parrikar) who had hands on control over the military apparatus. They made a difference. The rest simply abdicated and outsourced their responsibility to the bureaucracy. As a result, Indian military has weakened.

On 06 Dec 2019 I wrote – 'India is entrapped in a strange 'Stability Instability' predicament. The Political hierarchy believes that our nuclear, space and missile programs will provide us with security and 'Stability'. However, there is an increasing 'Instability' due to our inability to equip our Armed Forces optimally'. I never expected

to be proven so fast. Our political leadership has largely stayed away from the nuts and bolts of building military capability. Whether it is lack of knowledge or awe, our parliamentary leaders have kept military matters at arm's length. When they have reached out it is often to dip their hand in the till.

India cannot spend on its military when it cannot feed its poor. A strong economy offsets a strong military. Economic power is primary and military power secondary. These lopsided notions resulted in our armed forces being poorly funded, ill equipped, and underprepared. Economic rise and decline are transients. Military necessity of defending nations is constant. In a toxic and predatory nuclear neighbourhood Indian military demands will continually grow. In the 60s and 70s we realised this and funded our military adequately despite other hardships. Somehow our leadership lost it thereafter. When Prime Ministers keep postponing scheduled meetings with Service Chiefs due to other pressing economic and diplomatic matters - it is back to 1962

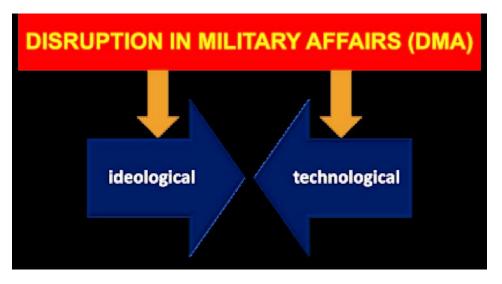
 like diplomacy trying to supplant military capability. A cancerous paradigm.

1971 was not won on India's geopolitical capability alone. The Indo-USSR pact just prior to the war tipped the balance. Thereafter, our pursuit of strategic independence and non-alignment without attendant capability development hit an air pocket. George Fernandes, as a defence minister, identified China not as an adversary or threat but categorically as the 'Enemy No 1'. Yet successive political leaderships chose to appease China and tolerate Pakistan without building own capability or entering balancing relationships / alliances / pacts. The result is evident.

Since independence, our political leadership has allowed India's publicly funded, defence industrial and research complex to grow into self-serving silos. Treating these as sacred cows despite calcified underperformance has cost us dearly. It is indeed ludicrous to even contemplate politically motivated strikes and unions in these sectors. However, we have witnessed them. Politically we have not been able to make these institutions either perform or reform them. Thank god we are now thinking of Corporatisation of OFB.

#### Bureaucratic Leadership

The intelligent bureaucrat was to be the conduit between earthy politicians and sophisticated military brass. Utopian. The canny bureaucrat kept them apart and usurped power. In this process civilian control over the military was subverted. Political control was converted



into bureaucratic control. Military affairs have been piloted as per bureaucratic discretion through a created 'System' often ignoring operational expediency. It enables the bureaucratic leadership to remain facelessness. This 'Systemic' anonymity enables lack of accountability or fixing responsibility when the chips are down.

The bureaucratic leadership is risk averse and goes by the book. The emphasis, therefore, has been on book strengthening. Hence changing procurement procedures has been a higher priority than capability enhancement. Two-bit foreigners talk of 'a moribund, process bound, bureaucratic defence acquisition system which constantly under delivers on outcomes. It is personally frustrating when our best and brightest which form the IAS fail to deliver for India. My personal experience is that when they are committed to a cause and are driven by the politico-military necessity they deliver outstanding and stupendous results. Why not normally?

The military is a very specialised and niche field. It needs knowledge beyond the ordinary to synthesise varied fields to achieve desired outcomes. It demands domain knowledge which the bureaucratic leadership do not have. Further, institutional knowledge is ignored at the altar of expediency. When leadership operates from lack of knowledge it invariably takes wrong decisions. If that leadership persists with its ignorance in a multidomain scenario, disaster is round the corner. That is our experience.

Britishers invented the art of divide and rule. Our bureaucratic steel frame, a descendant of the empire, learnt this art well. The propagation and maintenance of mutually exclusive military silos is an artistic outcome. As a result, our vast defence research and industrial complex capable of powering our military is heavily underperforming. In China, all state-owned enterprises were called 'Rust Buckets' at the turn of the century. Today they are powering China to superpower status and dominating every field of Chinese activity. Our

publicly funded defence establishment spearheaded by the bureaucracy needs considerable introspection. Consistent resistance to reform or perform has weakened India's defence capability.

Very distressingly those who are supposed to support the military; especially those in the field of research, production and quality assurance think they know better than the military and have been giving it prescriptions; fully supported by bureaucratic processes. It has denuded national capability to defend itself. The manifestation of this 'know-all' thought process has surfaced at Finger 4 on Pangong Tso.

Military Leadership

Indian military leadership needs a geopolitical vision and awareness is outrightly dangerous for the fabric of the nation.

The military leadership has been unable to tune in with the political masters professionally. Whenever this tuning has happened positively the outcomes have been favourable. In most cases this has not happened. Their inability to convey to the nation and its leaders the dangers of confronting enemies with grave deficiencies is consistent. The inability to assert itself with or bypass the proxy bureaucratic leadership has compounded issues.

India's military leadership is wracked by interservice dissonance. The joint service ethos to think for the common good of the nation was plainly missing. Hopefully the CDS will rectify it.





of the domestic political landscape while remaining apolitical. It is the last bastion of the nation and needs to keep politics at arm's length. What we have witnessed is that Armed Forces leadership exhibiting political aspirations of individual nature leading to political compromises. This trend There are also serious intra service divisions. The Army sets the best example of divisions within – General Cadre / Non-General Cadre, Command / Staff, Combat Arms/Combat Support Arms/ Services.... Armour/ Artillery/ Infantry.... Rajput/Gorkha/Guards etc. A fractured, Brahmanical and mandalised system ensures that

The Military leadership has not been able to get the best out of the existing system. Sitting aloof and expecting others to come up with goods will not work. They must acquire skills and capabilities to ingest disruptive technologies, head projects in DRDO, operate factories and run the MOD system on their terms. Only then can they demand structural reform. They often hit a roadblock on one issue – lack of knowledge.



Can India tackle the dragon militarily

the cream is denied to the nation. The worst have a fair chance of becoming top leaders. Structures which make incompetents into Generals puts national security at stake. There are equivalent issues with other Services. This core issue will not be rectified from within. It needs outside intervention.

Our Armed Forces are manpower intensive. Sure, you need boots on the ground. These boots need enhancement with ISR, Firepower, Mobility and Protection. Most importantly they need offensive orientation. Our massive defensive capability has not deterred China. That is proven. The answer to offensive capability does not lie in raising another manpower intensive Mountain Strike Corps. It lies in reassessing threats, restructuring forces, rebalancing them and reforming mindsets. It lies in reducing mass and increasing velocity. Kinetic Energy then increases by a square of the increased veloc-Leadership in Multidomain

Ops needs a different approach. It also needs the Government to help the Armed Forces in shedding the bulk or financing it.

The Military leadership has not been able to get the best out of the existing system. Sitting aloof and expecting others to come up with goods will not work. They must acquire skills and capabilities to ingest disruptive technologies, head projects in DRDO, operate factories and run the MOD system on

their terms. Only then can they demand structural reform. They often hit a roadblock on one issue - lack of knowledge. If you do not know what you want how to do you expect others to give it to you? The military must roll up its sleeves and get its hands dirty on the floor. There is no other choice.

#### Conclusion

The current military, bureaucratic and political leaders might feel indignant at my bluntness. The FM says the current situation is the gravest since 1962. It could not have developed if the leadership were ok. The flurry of emergency imports, delegating additional financial powers, sanctioning new schemes, and invoking fast track procedures whenever the enemy is at the gates further vindicates my arguments.

However, let us think positively. If a suboptimal system can stymie Chinese aggression in its tracks what can a rebalanced and synergised leadership achieve? Good leadership is the fundamental to any progress. In any case a thriving Military, Industrial and Research system are our tickets to strategic independence, guaranteed territorial integrity, kickstarting our economy and improving social factors. This crisis presents an opportunity to permanently turn tables. I am sure the current leadership realises this. I am confident that they will grab this historic chance. When that is done – watch out China. Otherwise. Get ready for more Salami Slicing. 🌇



#### Lieutenant General PR Shankar

Lt Gen PR Shankar was India's Director General (DG) Artillery. He is highly decorated and qualified with vast operational experience. He is now a Professor in the Aerospace Dept of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras. You can reach him on Twitter: @palepurshankar, Email ID: pravishankar3@ gmail.com.

Views expressed are the authors own, and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'MVI.'



# **Revitalising Manpower & Training In The Indian Army**

As India's military today faces imminent conflict on two fronts, the question that hangs in suspense is, 'How good is our training? Will we be able to pull off a victory despite fearful odds?'

## by Pankaj Bhagwati

1 October 331 BC, 47000 Macedonian soldiers under Alexander decisively defeated the Persian Army twice its size in Guagamela. In August of 216 BCE, an allied army of 50,000 men under Hannibal of Carthage, annihilated the Roman Army of 80,000 in Cannae. Closer home, Babur's Army of 15,000 routed Ibrahim Lodhi's 100,000 strong force on 21 April 1526 in Panipat. European military supremacy in India was established during the Battle of Adayar River in September 1740, when 700 French soldiers under Paradis defeated a Mughal Army of 10,000. Later, a mere 3000 soldiers under Robert Clive defeated Siraj-ud-Daula's massive army of more than 50,000 on 23 Jun 1757, in Plassey.

This superiority paved the way for subjugation of the subcontinent by a miniscule proportion of troops. In February 1942 85000 Commonwealth troops surrendered to a force 36000 Japanese in Singapore. Each of these examples is one of victory in conventional battles under overwhelming odds. The two factors universally responsible for these victories were audacious, intelligent Generalship and superior training standards of the victors. As India, today faces imminent conflict on two fronts, the question that hangs in suspense is, 'How good is our training? Will we be able to pull off a victory despite fearful odds?' In answer to that question, this article outlines the lacuna in our training process & suggests a conceptual change to overcome its weaknesses.

### Conceptual Mismatch

Training Philosophy & Complications: The Indian Army training philosophy is based on the 'System's Approach to

Training', whereby the soldier is visualised as a part of the larger system and carries out continuity training progressing through a graded process to achieve learning & enabling objectives that eventually allow fulfilment of mission objectives of the sub-unit/ unit that he is a part of. Though at the conceptual level this system may seem to be well suited, environmental realities and functional problems corrupt this process and blunt its efficacy. It will not be out-of-place to highlight a few of these problems.

· Environmental Knowledge and expertise in deriving individual level & collective objectives lending themselves to mission-oriented goals is scant and deficient. This majorly impedes the structuring of the training process.



Despite being medically unfit, many soldiers are retained in fighting units, denuding their combat strength. This not only severely impacts training, but also paralyses the fighting capability of the unit, effectively making it unfit for war."



- · Greater focus on non-core activities such as maintaining guest-rooms, running welfare facilities such as shops & school busses, unplanned detailment of personnel on temporary duties, upkeep of a multitude of infrastructure such as memorials, golf-courses and messes, etc, deprives availability of manpower with the units reducing PT parades & other training activities to a mere sham.
- · Unavailability of essential training facilities such as firing ranges (most of which have been de-notified by the government without creating an alternative), training areas and equipment have led to a steady deterioration in essential individual skills of the soldier. As individual capacity forms the bedrock on which the edifice of further training is built up, this deterioration is alarming and will manifest cataclysmically in eventuality of conflict.
- Training and management of manpower are interlinked. It is common practice that due to deficiency of available manpower, the strength of companies/ squadrons/ batteries undergoing sub-unit training carried out bi-annually are generally made up by combining those of other sub-units defeating the very purpose of collective training.
- Despite being medically unfit, many soldiers are retained in fighting units, denuding their combat strength. This not only severely impacts training, but also paralyses the fighting capability of the unit, effectively making it unfit for war.
- The constant deficiency of officers has resulted in officers tenanting multiple appointments. The lack of permanency results in poor planning for training. Talent is not

- identified and nurtured. Personnel are detailed on courses depending on availability, for which they may possess little aptitude or interest resulting in wastage of time and resources. This rotation of appointments enormously impacts training.
- It is also a reality that subunit structures have lost formality. No section or tactical detachments within the battalions/ regiments are today

Inter-Arms Knowledge: The Army, broadly divided into three essential verticals - the Fighting Arms, the Supporting Arms and the Logistic Services prosecutes operations jointly. The Fighting Arms require a much higher intensity of physical fitness & psychomotor skills whereas the logistic services rely a great deal on domain expertise (which builds up through experience). But as they all have to fight jointly, the knowledge & experience of either is essential. Officers joining the services, undergo attachment period with the fighting arms for precisely this purpose.

Physical Fitness Versus Expertise: Today, the Army retires a soldier after a service of about 18 years to keep the force young and fit. However, levels of fitness required differs from the kind of unit that one serves in. Fitness



Indian Army deployed in the Valley; File photo

intact or permanent. Low Medical Categories, prolonged duration of outstation temporary duties and pooling of manpower by formation HQs have destroyed the homogeneity of fighting entities. They no longer train together and therefore will not be able to fight together in war.

A Need to Evolve: Clearly, not only does the Army require to change its training philosophy, but also needs to improve its manpower management. Therefore, is it possible to evolve a system that addresses both these complementary issues simultaneously?

### A Framework for Change

levels required in Infantry is vastly different from that in the Ordnance. Vis-à-vis physical fitness, duration of service is more important in logistic branches. The longer a person serves in the services, such as Ordnance, EME, ASC, etc, the more he gains in expertise.

On the other hand, in Infantry, a soldier beyond the age of 40 is likely to become a liability as he will physically be unable to keep pace with his younger colleagues. Similarly, a person who becomes physically handicapped in course of his duties in artillery may not be able to perform satisfactorily in his parent arm, but would have no problems performing the duties of a



Personnel who are unable to clear validation criteria for any arm/service (including mental aptitude tests) for more than two years will become liable to be discharged from service.

clerk in the Ordnance Corps. Hence, the Army desperately needs a formalised policy economise its manpower & enable migration of soldiers as per their physical & medical condition into other units/establishments.

Validation of Individual's Fitness: Two aspects determine the soldier's individual prowess of fighting battles, namely his physical capacity and his mental aptitude. Only after this prowess has been maximised at the individual level, can this soldier be incorporated for collective training - where he learns to fight as a part of the team. Presently, post basic training, the responsibility to ensure the fighting fitness of every individual is also that of the Commanding Officer, substantially increasing his workload. It would be more pragmatic to place the onus of individual fitness & professional skill on the individual - validated each year by an independent agency?

Summarising the above issues, the framework for change should be able to resolve the following questions:-

- How can we ensure that every fighting entity is maintained to its authorised strength without dilutions caused due to medical categories?
- · How can we ensure that every soldier maintains optimal training standards for his specialised task?
- How can we ensure that every soldier (including officers) after joining can continue to be gainfully employed as per their capabilities within the organisation?

#### **Conceptual Shift**

Sometimes seemingly intractable and complex problems have the simplest of solutions. A fit and well-trained individual is the bedrock of the Army on

whose edifice the foundations stand. In order to ensure that at the individual level, every soldier is fit and capable, he/she needs to undergo annual validation.

Concept of Validation Centre: Akin to the concept where soldiers of the Parachute Regiment undergo yearly validation jumps to maintain their currency, validation centres should be conceptually expanded and formalised for all arms & services. A validation centre should be a location where the training standards & fitness of a

validation centres in the country/command zone. Fully autonomous, independent, manned by Veteran Officers & soldiers these centres will report directly to the Vice Chief of Army Staff and be able to provide the true picture of the standards of training in the Army and identify deficiencies.

This which will act as a trigger to refine focus. Every individual (Officer, JCO or Jawan) as per his present unit & employment would be made to undergo a skill proficiency test (such as firing, driving etc), a service & rank specific cognitive aptitude test (in form of a computer adaptive test), a physical test and a medical test. Individuals will also be allowed to upgrade their standards which would enable them to qualify for promotions.

Formalise Service Specific Validation Criteria: The first step towards establishing validation centres will be to



Indian Infantry Soldiers during a training exercise: File photo

soldier (including medical) are validated annually. Every officer and Jawan up to the rank of a Lt Col must undergo yearly validation. Centres should be scaled at 3/4 for every Command Zone and contain infrastructure to validate Medical, Physical, Military Skill and Cognitive capacity of soldiers.

Beyond the Rank of a Lt Colonel (for Officers) & Subedar Major for JCOs, validation should be restricted to Medical & Physical tests only. For a few days every year (as per their choice), individual officers and jawans will be required to mandatorily validate their standards from any of the

meticulously and scientifically formulate the physical and skill criteria required for each fighting arm, supporting arm and services for Officers, JCO/NCOs & Jawan. For example, an Infantry Rifleman of a section, between 20-30 years of age should be medically SHAPE-1. Physically he should be able to run 10 Kms in 50 minutes with a backpack weight of 10 Kgs. He should be a Marksman with his rifle.

He should be able to dismantle and assemble his rifle in 45 seconds blindfolded. He should also be able to fire a pistol, a Rocket Launcher, and a Light Machine Gun. He also should be able to use a night vision device, a GPS, operate a Radio Set and navigate from point A to B using a Map. He should also be able to apply a field dressing and administer intravenous injections/ saline solution. (Criteria for a crew of the Medium Machine Gun, or a sniper or an individual in the ATGM Platoon will all be different). To be a part of a detachment/ service, the individual will have to pass his validation criteria specific to his employment.

Dovetailing Manpower Management with Physical & Training Standards: In a departure from the normal precedence it is suggested that all officers and soldiers should be selected only for the Fighting/Support Arms. If the Army is an organisation meant to fight, then all recruitment should be carried out only for the Fighting and Support Arms. Direct recruitment by Logistic Services (and that too based on universal physical standards) must be discontinued. After basic training the following procedure should be followed: -

- Retention in Units: Retention of Officers & Soldiers in their respective fighting/ support arm will be based on his/her ability to clear service & rank specific validation tests annually. A failure to do so will lead to a punitive monetary deduction in pay and he/she will be given a year to clear the same. Inability to do so in the second year will make them eligible to move to a service for which he/ she is able to qualify during the validation.
- Entry into Services: All entries into the Services (logistic arms) will be carried out from the Fighting/Support Arms based on the following:-
- (i) Voluntary Change of Service after 4-5 years and vacancy available.
- (ii) In case of a medical category or inability to pass training validation for two years in the Fighting/ Support Arms, an individual may be allowed to change into a logistic service for which he/she qualifies.

- Lengths of Military Service: Lengths of service in the Fighting Arms should remain statuesque (18 Years) for Jawans (officers generally move out of fighting units by 17-18 years of service). After 18 years Jawans should be allowed an option to migrate into Logistic Services (where domain expertise is not a criteria), or seek discharge. Migration of officers into the logistic services should not be permitted beyond 10 years of service. Age stipulations should be applicable only for fighting and supporting arms and not for logistic services. Personnel in the logistic services should be allowed to serve until they reach the retirement age of their civil counterparts.
- Financial Compensation: In order to compensate for the high physical requirements, strain and reduced service length, the entry level basic pay grade of the Fighting/Supporting Arms must be between 15-25 percent above the basic pay of Logistic Branches.
- Unfit Personnel: Personnel who are unable to clear validation criteria for any arm/service (including mental aptitude tests) for more than two years will become liable to be discharged from service.

#### What will be Achieved?

This process is simple to implement and transparent. It is also effect-based by targeting the responsibility of maintaining training and physical standards on the individual. It allows meritocracy and professional progression by permitting clearance of higher validation standards and therefore keeps the individual motivated. It subsumes within its construct the need for holding periodic individual level tests such as PART-B & D for officers and JLPT for JCOs. Monetary penalties and incentives allow optimisation of manpower potential.

Migration into the logistic arms also provides ample scope for gaining domain expertise and allows for longer service tenures (at par with civilian counterparts), thus eliminating a major source of disenchantment within the military community. Financially it will majorly reduce the pension liability of the Army.

The greatest gain will be in achieving the paramount need is to maintain operational efficiency of the Army. All fighting entities will always be manned in full strength without the present personnel deficiencies that afflict them. Individuals will remain optimally trained and the best talent pools can be retained within the organisation. It will also add a great deal of objectivity towards selecting personnel for promotions and pave the path towards all-rounded personalities up the hierarchical chain.



#### Pankaj Bhagwati

During his service in the Indian Army Pankaj Bhagwati has served in Counter Insurgency Operations both in Jammu & Kashmir & North East India. Highlights of his service include participation in Operation Vijay in 1999, rendering service as an aviator for eight years, as a Staff Officer in UNIFIL during the Israeli Hezbollah Conflict of 2006, commanding a battalion in Kargil, a tenure in Information Warfare & as an instructor in Army War College.

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## Steeling The Political Resolve

"Now, with China knocking at our doors, we are trying to conclude defence deals with the use of emergency funds. Defence preparedness is not achieved by 'crisis management'. It is the relentless pursuit of capacity building over a period; a minimum timeline is a decade to achieve marginal capacity building. Don't the foreign policymakers understand that their diplomatic power stems from economic and military power?"

## by Lieutenant General PG Kamath (Retd)

Most political leaders have a habit of carrying non-performers with them. Rarely has anyone been sacked. A streak of ruthlessness is missing in our leaders to sack their favourites and appoint new faces. It is always safe to hear those who always please and play safe. You know the saying 'Better a known devil than an unknown one'. Just, to remind the readers, the biography of Manohar Parrikar entitled 'An Extraordinary Life' in which he attributes the delay in granting OROP to the then Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley.

Even when the Chairman of Exservicemen Movement met him after the 2014 elections and requested him to fulfil the election promise of granting OROP; he had said "You see General, all the assurances that politicians give during elections are not meant to be executed." The first strategic blunder by Modi 1.0 was to make Arun Jaitley both the defence and finance minister. Please note that the two important portfolios were given to a man who had lost his elections. Because Amritsar has a number of veterans and serving community, he had expected to win against Capt Amarinder Singh.

However, the latter was such a darling of the veterans for his years and years of unstinted support for their cause; Jaitley rightly lost by more than a lakh of votes. Then, he wreaked his vengeance against the Armed Forces. PM, Modi always wanted the soldiers to get their dues, however, Jaitley would not allow it putting one spoke after another. I had written on the issue in my previous articles and my view has been vindicated by no less a person than Parrikar in his biography. Now, saintly ones; please don't pontificate me that the person is dead, and why flog a dead horse? More condescending ones will keep telling that the dead person cannot defend himself, or some such absurd arguments. Firstly, the people who cause harm to a cause are accountable even after they are dead.

If not; we should not speak ill about Hitler; isn't it? He is dead and gone and the poor chap had only murdered



Sadly, we hero-worship so many of our leader that we lose the ability to see their faults and learn lessons from them. Typical of our ethos; we still want to hide the 'Henderson Brook's Report' analysing 1962 debacle.

a measly 6.5 million Jews and we should not castigate him; as he is dead and gone? However, independent India is made of different stuff and goes about eulogising its oppressors; like naming Aurangzeb Road to keep alive the memories of the bigot. Fortunately, some wisdom has dawned after seven decades of independence to change it. However, the Bhaktiyarpur has remained as such to pay our glowing tributes to Bakhtiyar destroying Nalanda Khalji for University. God; save our country!

Coming back to Arun Jaitley; I still do not know; why he was not sacked when he was not implementing the PM's decision of granting OROP? Manohar Parrikar was then made the Raksha Mantri. As Sushant Singh Rajput was hounded by Bollywood Mafia; Manohar Parrikar was not allowed to function as Jaitley as the finance minister was not cooperating with him. Despite severe constraints, Parrikar excelled in his functioning and enabled 'Surgical Strikes' a completely different nostrum than what the Congress Regime could ever think of in their wildest dreams.

At last, due to lack of support from Jaitley and ilk, he requested the PM and moved out of Delhi. Jaitley, as the Finance Minister continued to rule the roost and ensured a truncated OROP to the Armed Forces. He also emaciated the defence budget that had an adverse bearing on our fighting capability, and still, he was not sacked. The nation is paying the price for his antipathy to the defence forces to this

Sitharaman on assuming the defence portfolio brought no succour to the Armed Forces. She supported Arun Jaitley when he slashed the Defence Budget to pre 1962 days in the percentage of GDP. Just; look at this person to whom the defence of the country has been vested with; who raised no alarm, no signs of dissatisfaction; no body language to show her displeasure or dismay: On the contrary, she is ebullient that the budget is compatible with the spending ability of her lethargic ministry? Her statement would have no doubt brought smiles to Pakistan Army Chief and Chairman of Central Military Commission of China. Thereafter, she

Now, let us look at the evolution of our foreign policy; it was initially propped on our two facile principles of 'Non-Alignment and Non-Violence'; both of which are spineless concepts in the realm of current international geopolitics. Again, even after Nehru was proved grossly wrong with the annexation of Tibet by China, the mandarins of the South Block kept on pandering to the theory that diplomacy will obviate and neutralise any external threat arrayed against India. Even the debacle in 1962 did not mend our diplomats; instead of being silenced became more vocal in their ability to make up for our inadequacy in war preparedness with diplomatic platitudes? The Foreign

Secretaries continued to assuage the leadership that there would not be any major wars to be fought by India;



Late finance minister Arun Jaitley; File Photo

continues to trash the Armed Forces in her new avatar as the finance minister with measly budget allocations.

Now, with China knocking at our doors, we are trying to conclude defence deals with the use of emergency funds. Defence preparedness is not achieved by 'crisis management'. It is the relentless pursuit of capacity building over a period; a minimum timeline is a decade to achieve marginal capacity building. Don't the foreign policymakers understand that their diplomatic power stems from economic and military power?

as they diplomats would take care of it. How hollow and pretentious?

A case in point; in 1965 war against Pakistan, China had come to the help of Pakistan and had mobilised its forces against us and had warned us to vacate Nathula and Jelepla. We succumbed and the Indian army was asked to withdraw from these passes. The Indian Army withdrew from Jelepla and the Chinese promptly occupied it and it is with them to this day. However, Gen Sagat Singh, then GOC of East Sikkim Division refused to vacate Nathula; fortunately, the



I simply do not trust our MEA: They have an embedded deep state that involuntarily makes them buckle down to China. After seven decades of prostrating before the Chinese, when the time has come for them to stand erect; they hit the ground with lesser speed than previously; in case you call it an improvement; I will not hold you back. If not; how do you explain the conduct of Indian Ambassador to China meeting a 'Maj Gen' in Headquarters of PLA?





PM Modi and former Defence Minster with the former Tri-Service Chief's: File photo

pass is held by us. What happened to our diplomacy, then? Other than succumbing to threats? India took another four and a half decades to realise the possibility of a two-front war and St Anthony put it formally in a two-line letter to the Armed Forces in 2008; prodigious indeed!

Let us look at the absurd decision by PM Vajpayee not to cross the LOC to evict Pakistan's NLI, who had crossed it and sat on heights interdicting the strategic national highway at Kargil? The enforced frontal attacks took a heavy toll on our forces. Need to know; who advised the then PM? Any idea? Was it Brijesh Mishra as the NSA or Jaswant Singh the foreign minister? Also, look at the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, who accepted the decision? Sadly, we hero-worship so many of our leader that we lose the ability to see their faults and learn lessons from them. Typical

of our ethos; we still want to hide the 'Henderson Brook's Report' analysing 1962 debacle. Please read my articles: 'Mohandas Gandhi; Unravelled' and 'Nehru's Freefall in History: The Nadir is Yet to Come'. In both the above articles we see even great personalities are not infallible. They continue to be great in spite of their follies.

Next, I simply do not trust our Ministry of External Affairs: They have an embedded deep state that involuntarily makes them buckle down to China. After seven decades of prostrating before the Chinese, when the time has come for them to stand erect; they hit the ground with lesser speed than previously; in case you call it an improvement; I will not hold you back. If not; how do you explain the conduct of Indian Ambassador to China meeting a 'Maj Gen' in Headquarters of PLA? I can understand had the Defence Attaché met him. Why was the ambassador meeting him? Is it true that a more senior officer in the hierarchy was not ready to meet him? If that is true; just see; what clout, we have in China? Who told him to meet him? Was it on instructions from the Foreign minister? Did he meet him on his own initiative?

What does it indicate to the outside world, our failing political resolve? I only hope; my conjecture is proved wrong and I am trolled for a much elaborate and audacious plan which is incubating that will unfold in days to come? I would love to be proved grossly wrong and tender my unqualified apologies in advance. However, please ensure that China does not get away again with its current incursions at Depsang, PP 17A and Fingers 5-8. If we let it happen, then each year we will have to yield further. The 'So far and No further' approach has carried on for the last 70 years. Each time we have reconciled to his creeping invasion; the time has now come to put an end to it. 🜇



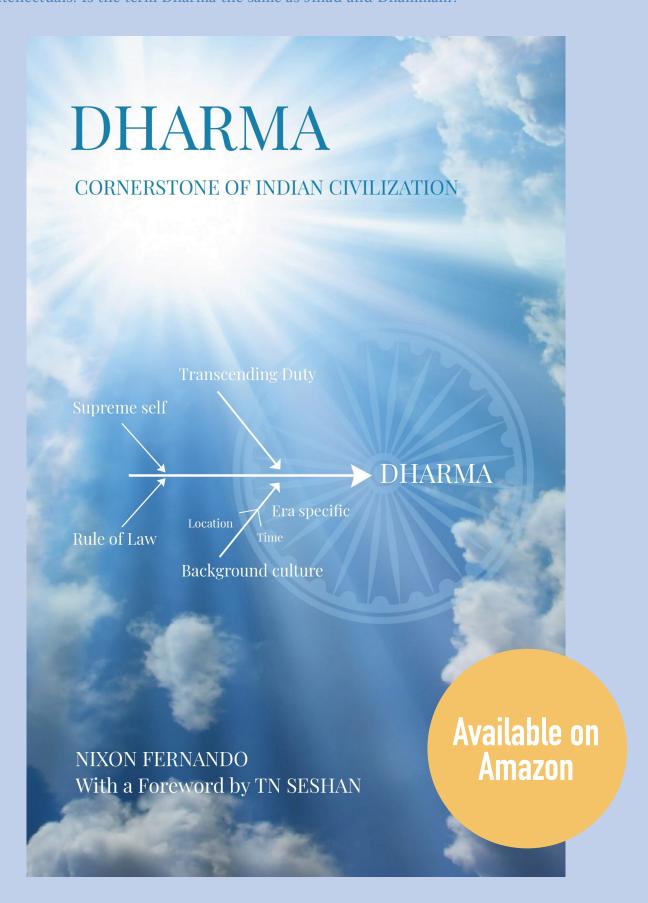
### Lieutenant General PG Kamath (Retd)

Lt. Gen Kamath is a highly distinguished general who has held some of the most prestigious appointments in the Indian Army.

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#### UNDERSTANDING DHARMA FROM A SCIENTIFIC AND SECULAR PERSPECTIVE

The book explores a term that has motivated warriors for thousands of years in the Indian Subcontinent. Why is it not in use today? Will a secular return to this value unfold the promise that the Indian civilization has for the world? A critical analysis of the greatest motivator known to the ancient Indian Intellectuals. Is the term Dharma the same as Jihad and Dhammam?





## Can India Take On China Militarily?

"This lack of strategic vision and military reality with the politico-military leadership of the country, continues even today. While Indian soldiers showed their mettle, again on 15 June 2020 at Galwan River incident, but it exposed the intelligence failure and lack of military preparedness. How is it possible that a host of intelligence agencies could not gauge Chinese military intentions? It is a lame excuse that China had converted a routine military exercise into an aggressive posture. Time and again, India has failed on this count."

## by Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha (Retd)

The Indian media was going hungho the other day, over Indian Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat's threat that India could take military action to throw out the Chinese from Pangong Tso lake area, if diplomatic efforts fail to restore May 3, 2020 situation. Is this threat backed up by realistic assessment? There are no doubts on the valour of Indian soldiers. But is he rightfully equipped with matching arms and equipment?

India's defence-Industrial Base is no match for China. In fact, it is non existing. In a short war, India might acquit itself well. But in a prolonged war of say even 6-8 weeks, India

would get hammered badly. Would China allow you to get away with gains in a short war? Are you capable of fighting a protracted war with China? A recent news is that China again tried to pin-prick India on the southern banks of Pangong Tso lake on the night of 29/30 August 2020. Can you cope with such prolonged pin- pricks on a larger scope? There is a long way for India to fight a "Sustained War." What if Pakistan fishes in our troubled waters with China? It would take minimum 15-20 years for India to be Atmanirbhar (Self Reliant) in defence needs.

Such a statement by CDS could be a good optics for uninitiated on military affairs but it could be a phony boast for well-informed people. To strategic watchers, it seems to be a repetition of Nehru's mistake. As history tells, Nehru, on an official visit to Sri Lanka in October 1962, had roared from Colombo, to Indian Army, "Evict the Chinese". This was a bogey call by a man who had kept the Indian Army starved of weapons and funds for 15 years and what was the result? A worst military disgrace was suffered by India, not because of lack of valour of Indian soldiers but lack of practical wisdom of Indian political leadership.

lack of strategic vision This and military reality with the



The question which arises is what has gone wrong with India since 1947? Why are we not at par with China, if not better? How is India seen as a weakling? Well! China took the lead when visionary leader, Deng Xiaoping, came to power in 1979. At the same time, India remained entangled in political wrangling's for the next two decades between 1979 to 1999.

politico-military leadership of the country, continues even today. While Indian soldiers showed their mettle, again on 15 June 2020 at Galwan River incident, but it exposed the intelligence failure and lack of military preparedness.

How is it possible that a host of intelligence agencies could not gauge Chinese military intentions? It is a lame excuse that China had converted a routine military exercise into an aggressive posture. Time and again, India has failed on this count. The 1999 Kargil War cannot be easily forgotten. The fact is that Indian intelligence agencies, military intelligence agencies included, were more occupied with internal politics of the country than keeping a watch on India's adversaries.

The same is true of Indian military capabilities. India spends around 3% of GDP (around \$65 billion) annually, on its Defence, while China, whose GDP is almost five times bigger than India (\$14 trillion of China vs \$ 3 Trillion of India) spends 3.4% of GDP. Even Pakistan, an economically bankrupt nation spends 5-6% of its GDP on Defence. In 2019, China's Defence budget was \$261 billion—five times of Indian Defence expenditure. So how can India be at Par with China in terms of Military capabilities to get a decisive result in its favour?

In a recent survey by Global Times, a Chinese Government mouthpiece, an article was published on 27 August 2020. It claimed that India was unable to threaten China militarily and economically. It was a reality check for General Bipin Rawat.

The Global Times article quotes Xie Chao, an assistant professor of Indian studies at Tsinghua University. He asserted that India had become independent from British colonization in 1947, and the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. According to him, at that time, India

China, if not better? How is India seen as a weakling? Well! China took the lead when visionary leader, Deng Xiaoping, came to power in 1979. At the same time, India remained entangled in political wranglings for the next two decades between 1979 to 1999.

While China was focused on growth and development, India indulged in internal political fights. Deng Xiao Peng of China was a visionary. He knew that China had to bid for its time so he followed the principle of 'Tao Guang ; Yang Hui', which meant "keep a low profile and bide your time, while also getting something accomplished." This is what China has done in the past but today 'Xi Jinping's China has turned it on



Indian troops during the 1962 war

was more developed than China in terms of infrastructure and economy. However, in the year 2020, China was way ahead of India in terms of infrastructure, urbanization, modernization, education, people's livelihood, science and technology, military, and economy. He concludes that in view of this, most Chinese exhibit a strong sense of superiority and confidence when looking at India.

The question which arises is what has gone wrong with India since 1947? Why are we not at par with

So, while China on the quiet, made progress by leaps and bounds on economic and military fronts, India, as usual, indulged in internal bickering of political overlords. It continues to do so even today. The feudal lords and princelings, of the beginning of the second millennium era, have been reborn as regional and dynastic political outfits in India of the 21st Century. The history of 11th and 12th Century AD is again being repeated in 2020.

Is it a correct assumption that India was a victim of excessive democracy,

freedom, and liberty, when over 500 million were starving? This liberty and democracy have made rich excessively rich and poor outrightly poor. Could China achieve the same degree of development if it were a democratic country?

Copycat aping of western democratic system was not suited to India, when it was overflowing with poverty, illiteracy, and communal sentiments in 1947 and issues like 'Reservation', Articles 370 and 35A furthered the chasm of pre-existing divisions. The lack of experience in governance of the political leader at the gems of affairs of the nation divided the country on caste, geography, and religious lines, instead of integrating it. Furthermore, lack of strategic wisdom, created problems on the borders, which troubles the nation even after 74 years.

These provisions created a political society, which was more concerned about its 'Rights and Privileges' but had no idea of 'Responsibilities and Accountabilities.' Wrong system education widened the cleavages, which led to 'Two steps forward and one and a half step backwards' system of growth. Even after 1991, economic liberalisation, the progress was made at Hindu rate of Growth.'

Thus, while Chinese system Leap frogged its growth, India crawled towards it. Military and economic gap had widened. Is it, then, a correct surmise that it was a lack of strategic vision of the Indian political leadership to correctly visualise national security matrix? Or was it an effect of Indian civilisation's moralistic hangover of peace and harmony, which blinded its practical wisdom? It could be both combined in a proper mix to attenuate the problem of ideal growth and development. Mao Dze Dung had correctly visualised that power leads to economic growth. He had also held a view that power flows out of the barrel of the gun. In contrast, India believed in theories and phrases of peace and harmony. Nehru was alleged to have told his Chief of Army, General Roy



Chinese premiers Xi Jinping's expansionist policies; Graphical representation

Butcher in 1948 that India had no enemy so, why waste funds on the army?

India continues to live in its make-believe world. Getting Five Rafale aircrafts from France does not make India Military equivalent to China. A lot must be done before parity can be achieved. Need of the hour is to adopt Deng Xio Peng's maxim of 'Tao Guang; Yang Hui.' It is therefore advisable that India's military motor mouths must learn to shut up. One of the surprising findings of the Chinese survey was that when the Chinese people were asked as to how long would India take to surpass China in terms of

comprehensive national strength? 54% of surveyed respondents believe "India will never surpass China" and 10.4 of them said, "It will be possible in 100 years."

One can dismiss it as a mere boast by Chinese centric survey but there is some truth that India has a long way to go. First requisite is to make India internally strong and then bide your time to make progress on the quiet. Maybe India needs to switch over to a Presidential form of Government to neutralise the political ills of horse trading in a 'Westminster Abbey' type of democracy.



### Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha

Col Rajinder Kushwaha is an ex-NDA, commissioned into the 3 Bihar Regiment in June 1971 and was the Commanding Officer of the same unit in insurgency environs in Assam in 1990-93. Has vast experience in CI Ops from North East to Punjab and J&K. A prolific writer-cum-critic on defence and security matters, he has authored the book, 'Kashmir: A Different Perspective'. His second book on Assam was released in April 2018. Held prestigious appointments in the army including as an instructor at a premier army institute, Col GS, Col Adm of an Infantry Division and Col "Q" works at a Command HQ. He can be contacted on email: rajee749@yahoo.com. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'



## **BPET: A Fauji Trauma**

All dressed up at 5:00 am and your wife walks out, is it already 5:45? You seem to be over excited and enthusiastic to run. You try and ignore such heartless people. Hope the Subedar Major has been smart enough to reduce the distance by at least 200 meters, yaar gives me 2 mins extra time. Hope that before I get to the kote the pistols are not all issued so that I have to carry a rifle.

## by Neil John

Kal subah BPET (Battle Physical Efficiency Test) hai, can actually send shivers even in the best of runners, raat ko khana kam, to keep your stomach in running shape and still you find, as you wake up in the morning a rumble, hard to actually clear the bathroom in time. Saala aa hi nahin rahi... aur woh bhi aaj? !.,%# The selection of your boots and socks is like the mantra. A wrong pair of socks or a new pair of boots can ensure disaster.

Suddenly you find your combat dress too heavy. Roz pahenta hoon aaj hi bhari kyun lag raha hai. You actually realise that the water bottle with water is something you need to do without, who drinks

water during the run anyway, maybe just carry a little to ensure the content. Your backpack needs items that have long back disappeared into a wife's sewing kit.

You try to make up by filling it with the lightest of ingredients, plastic mess tin, used soap with anything left, drained out toothpaste and shaving tube, smallest of towels like a micro mini kerchief, extra shorts and banian. Hello who uses them? Machhardani? What's the logic u try to argue. Trying to dispense with anything that you presume will add to your woes. Then the most difficult decision, cap pehna hai ki nahi? I better carry a Jap cap rather than a beret. Lighter and I can actually swing it on and mid course even if I lose it, itni sasti hai that it won't matter.

Subah jaldi uthana, you tell your wife, she dryly asks you, chai pee ke jaoge? And you say I don't mind a warm cup, to clean out the system. She frowns under her breath, BPET, iski hai, aise lag raha hai, as if he is going to war. Baaki sab pareshaan. Why did I have to ask him for bloody tea, something as it is, he never drinks in the morning, lekin aaj piyega. Your kids pipe in, dad why are you looking worried, all well?

And the wife laughs and says, tumhare baap ka test hai. Dad aap toh officer ho, phir bhi test, you



No one doubts his own capability, but there are too many intangibles, packs opening, ankle sprained, rifle sling broken, so all add up to lost time. You know you have to meet the excellent mark, don't want to be embarrassed when your buddy crosses you and smiles grunting and panting

look at them and smile and say, dekho kya kya karna padta hai, aap dono ki parvarish aur badauti ke liye. Ah! c'mon dad hum toh aap se saste mein hi pat jaate hain. Audi maangi XUV le aaye. Harley Davidson maangi, Bullet le aaye. Mom ne LED curved TV maangi aur woh bhi Sony cause of picture quality, aap ja kar micromax le aaye. We ask you for anything and you say go on OLX. Aap to rahene hi do, talking about our parvarish. We keep arguing yeh hai baap milna tha.

Anyway, back to BPET, final checks before you sleep, kal jaldi uth kar you need to be fresh both mentally and physically to run at full capacity. Alarm set, double check, arrey baby you also put your alarm for 5 am na, just in case mine doesn't buzz. She turns around away from you without answering. You wonder where all the vows taken at the altar disappear. In sickness and in health, in turmoil and in peace, yeh toh muh bana kar palti maar gayi.

Please can you put the tv off, I need to sleep. WTF Neil you can sleep through sound, hail and storm and even in situations where a bomb goes off and today you act like a sissy, even when I am watching my favourite programme on mute. Go and bloody sleep in the guest bedroom. You murmur under your breath, kitni selfish ho, you won't understand, you can't even say it loud lest she hears it, kahin sachi mein guest room mein sona padh jaye.

Through the night you keep seeing the finish line flag wave at you panting and struggling to finish

and people shouting, sahab shoot lagao, 30 second baaki hai. And in your sleep you are talking and screaming about LMC ke aulaad, abhi do minute baki hain. You wake up every hour to check if your alarm is working. Restlessness gets you. You decide you can't

the stopwatch, sala can I actually tell him, bhai dekh kar stopwatch rokna. There is even a shortcut through the football field, although only 20 mtrs of pakdandi, but will still save me at least half a minute, lekin yaar what example will I set to my men.

Chai pee lo, you will feel better, why do you worry, you run every day. Meri jaan tum kya samjhoge yeh BPET hai. Last minute checks and you are out, you see everyone there talking and warming up, your heart sinks even more, this time of waiting before you hear the conducting officer say GO is the worst. You can't even make conversation, some of your buddies are



Soldiers traversing obstacles

sleep anymore and are up at 4 am. Warm up hi ho jaata hoon. You convince yourself and suddenly realise that your knee hurts, your shin pains, your joints are creeping unceremoniously. Lagta hai ek Brufen pain killer kha leta hoon, just to be on the safer side.

All dressed up at 5:00 am and your wife walks out, is it already 5:45? You seem to be over excited and enthusiastic to run. You try and ignore such heartless people. Hope the Subedar Major has been smart enough to reduce the distance by at least 200 meters, yaar gives me 2 mins extra time. Hope that before I get to the kote the pistols aren't all issued so that I have to carry a rifle. Have to see who is carrying

extra happy and extra loud, lekin andar se sabki phati padi hai.

No one doubts his own capability, but there are too many intangibles, packs opening, ankle sprained, rifle sling broken, so all add up to lost time. You know you have to meet the excellent mark, don't want to be embarrassed when your buddy crosses you and smiles grunting and panting, sahab ji daud lo, bas pahunchne waale ho that too at the 2nd km when you have three more to go. Or your CO standing at the finish line looking at you mockingly, as if to say, I told you, you were an overrated ass. Too many imponderables.



OTA cadets climbing the vertical rope

Then you hear over 45 of age excused, that's the only time you pray to be over 45. God over 45 kar de yaar, yeh trauma door ho jayega. Over 40, these blokes get 1.5 mins extra, lucky blighters. Age group 30 to 40 and everyone is like pumped up. You are waiting for Go, time stops, you can see the earlier group disappearing from sight, morale at its worst interplay with your mind. Then GO, suddenly everyone is sprinting, you want to shout out and say, hello assholes 5 km hai. But no one listens and you don't want to lose that energy.

Head down, speaking to yourself, self-motivating you trudge along, someone matches step to step with you, you like that, cause it helps you pace and control your breath and then he shoots off, you want to curse him, all the choicest Maa, Bahen ki gaali, but you let it be. In your mind you keep saying, c'mon Neil John (yahan apna hi full name yaad aata hai) keep the pace till the bend, don't slow down, when you reach there, ok increase a little till the hackle numa darkhat. Okay now till the Sudarshan mod, you turn your head to look behind, hope peeche kaafi hain, you realise you are leading from the rear. Shit and then you double up. Can't fail, can't let me be a mockingbird.

That gust of wind suddenly helps you increase your pace, that idiot who paced you is struggling, you run abreast of him and say, kadam badao, bas pahunch jaoge. You see the guys who sprinted at the start, huffing and puffing, catching up with them, you scream more to convince yourself and boost your internal system then to address them, abey chalo ... thak gaye kya. I couldn't even resist that 20 metre shortcut, before me at least 50 took it, that's the justification.

Then you see the excellent enclosure still open, the green flag waving at you, people screaming and shouting, 30 second bache hain, 30 second, you know that you have to sprint as if life depends on it, you forget the world those 30 seconds and shoot like a star, you can hear your CO say, c'mon guys a few steps more, you can do it. You know deep inside, he is exclaiming, sala yeh kaise excellent mein aa gaya, a pot full of lard. Route kam toh nahin tha.

You can't even smile sarcastically at him cause all you want to do is finish. You cross the line and plonk yourself in the grass and you hear your 2IC who has never run in his life, LMC from birth, shouting at you and saying, no sitting, you are soldiers, kaun rifle zameen

par rakhta hai etc etc. Get up and join your men in the enclosure. You want to tell him to shut up, but you don't even smile or look at him. Like a mild lamb you just went through the slaughter, you join the enclosure.

You look at the finish line, the flag for the failures is waving, you screen through the mist in your eyes to see who failed. You see stragglers and then one or two awfully familiar faces. Arey yeh toh abhi abhi aaya hai, academy mein BPET nahin hoti kya. This squadron commander failed. How? He is a good runner. Lagta hai biwi ne subah chai nahin pilaya. You hear your COs voice booming, get a control of your men and report to the vertical rope. Bloody hell .... rassa bhi chadna padega? The day isn't over yet. Victory is still absconding.

Having done all, the worst is the moral lecture when you are struggling to stand and all tired and sweaty. Aap sab apne khud ke physical fitness ke zimmedar hain, mujhe kamzor log nahin pasand ... jab BPET hi pass nahin ho sakte, toh ladai kaise ladoge .... and the rant goes on. Kabhi CO sahab ko bar bar poor mein aate hue dekha hai, as if anyone is going to say yes.

Back home and your wife is having her morning tea and Marie biscuits in the lawn with her fur babies and she looks at you and says, congrats you ran well. You smile and you say bloody who incorporated this stupid test. She already knows which officer came in which enclosure and who failed, what the CO said, thanks to her intelligence sources, I look at my buddy and he scurries away. Before I can sit down she says, atleast go have a bath you are smelling of sweat.

You look at her and wonder what happened to that beautiful babe you married. Who loves your sweat and didn't mind your body odour, which she said made her feel closer to you...? sab samay ke lihaaz se badal jaatey hain ... lekin yeh BPET! ?.%# Sala jisne bhi isko incorporate kiya...MC, BC! 🦀



# From Airman To Policeman: Powai's Top Cop's Unique Journey!

From an airman in the Indian Air Force (IAF) to a Senior Police Inspector (Sr Pi) at Powai police station, Sudhakar Kamble has a life story worth hearing.

by Gaurav Sharma, Rishu Pandey

Sudhakar Kamble hails from Sarood, a small village in the district of Kolhapur, in a town where education was limited to matriculation. Sudhakar outshined academically and was loved by everyone there. This love by everyone around him was his source of motivation to get good grades. However, things took a drastic turn after high school.

"After my matriculation, I went to Kolhapur and took admission in the science department of Swami Vivekanand College which is situated on the banks of Panchganga river. However, things got difficult for me because all my life I had studied subjects which were not in the English language, and this sudden transition to everything in English was awfully hard for me. I tried to cope up with language but it was quite difficult," narrated Sr. PI Kamble.

## On Joining the IAF

Prior to joining the IAF, Kamble's knowledge of the Indian Armed Forces was restricted to Indian Army. Kamble recounted, "During my college, my uncle pitched the idea of joining the IAF to me, I wasn't really aware of that branch of India's Defence Services, it was he who discussed this idea with me."

He continued, "One day in February 1979, I was in the library reading the Indian Express and an article about the recruitment in the IAF caught my eye. I applied for the exam and sent a handwritten application to the recruitment center in Mumbai. However, I did not expect to hear back from them, and was doubtful whether I would even be able to crack the exam."

## On his Selection Process

Being doubtful whether he'll hear back from the recruitment center and whether or not he would be able to crack the written examination. Kamble was elated to get a letter from them. "After about 15 days, since I had sent my handwritten application, I heard back from the recruitment center, and got a letter informing me about the written examination. I was required to attend Cotton Green in Mumbai. Luckily, this examination required knowledge up to 10th grade only, and I was good with academics in school as I had mentioned.

They also asked me to exercise and build my body as well, however since I couldn't afford a gym or proper supplements, I let them know the same, following which they advised me to do bodyweight exercises along with



There have been many cases which we cracked, but there was this one recent case I came across quite recently when I joined Powai police station. While going through the old records, I found a case of a young girl Dipali Yadav, a 13-year-old who was missing since July and we started working on it immediately, till march there was not even a trace of her. With the guidance of our superiors, we started the investigation in this case. We cracked the case and found out the two guys who murdered her and threw her remains in the sea and brought justice to the young girl and her family.

following an affordable healthy diet. I started with my preparation, and in one month I began to see results which motivated me to push myself more to work out."

"I then arrived in Mumbai with my maternal uncle for the examination which was held from 13th of march. There were 2,000 candidates for the recruitment for a vacancy for 30 posts, and the exam was for five days, and only if you've cracked every examination will you be allowed to sit for the next one. I cracked all my examinations as well as my interview and medical examinations. I was selected and was asked to join from 25th May in Mumbai, where I was given my training certificate, and my train ticket for Bangalore as my training would start there along with an allowance of 150 Rs which was a great deal at that time." narrated Kamble.

## Training and his Career as an Airman

With an allowance of 150 Rupees, Kamble reached Bangalore for his training which was for a duration of 15 months. "While joining the air force the thought in my mind which helped me a lot was how I am not alone in the air force, there were thousands of people working in the air force, and if they can serve their nation, I shouldn't be hesitant either. I completed my training in Bangalore and then I was transferred to Kalaikunda near Kharagpur in West Bengal from Kalaikunda to Jaffarpur in Calcutta.

From there I came back to Bangalore in 1983 where I did my yearlong conversion course. Following which I was then transferred to Chabua in Assam. I was serving in Chabua till 1987, after which I was transferred to Belgaum i.e. to the administrative training institute, I was there till five years. In 1992 I transferred to Ambala where I served for two years and then in 1995, I retired from the IAF at the age of 32 with a pension."

### Retirement at 32 and Joining the Police Force

Post retirement most people usually go to start their own businesses or spend more time with their loved ones, however, Kamble had other plans. "I retired at the age of 32 with a pension, however according to my belief system, that age was not meant for sitting at home, so initially after my retirement, for two years I worked at a company at Kolhapur. During that time, I sent an application for recruitment as a Police Sub Inspector (PSI), I got a call back for the examinations, and I cracked all the required examinations as well as the interview and got through.

I was doubtful initially, but the thing that motivated me was my own thought process, I asked myself if other people are going for it, what's stopping me?" elaborated Kamble when asked what motivated him to join the police force. In December 1996, Kamble then went to Maharashtra Police Academy (MPA) in Nashik and started with his training and after a year of the rigorous training he was transferred as a PSI at Azad Maidan Police station." I went through a lot of transfers before being transferred to Powai Police station in February 2020." Kamble believes that working in the defence services and in the police, force is quite different, they are different worlds.

He does believe however that his years in the IAF acted as a foundation for his career in the police force. "If



Station bakery bidding Stn Cdr SSS Chauhan farewell



The IAF is the fastest branch of the defence system with top-level planes and top-level brains, I learned everything in the air force. In the air force, everything from big grounds to big libraries was provided to us, and I made sure that I took advantage of each and everything available. The main quality I learned from there was the importance of discipline and punctuality. I learned the importance of having a good work ethic being up to date and working efficiently.



we compare defence and police, they are quite different from each other, when it comes to defence, we never really come in contact with the citizens but as a police official, it's the citizens who we are constantly serving so there are difficult situations, however as a police official it's our responsibility to take up the local people in confidence and ensure them that we will work according to the law, only then will the people cooperate us."

#### Lessons Learned in the IAF

According to Kamble, his years in the IAF truly shaped him in the best way possible, here's what he has to say about the qualities and the lessons he learned during that time, "The IAF is the fastest branch of the defence system with top-level planes and top-level brains, I learned everything in the air force. In the air force, everything from big grounds to big libraries was provided to us, and I made sure that I took advantage of each and everything available. The main quality I learned from there was the importance of discipline and punctuality. I learned the importance of having a good work ethic being up to date and working efficiently.

According to me, the most passionate people in India are the ones working in defence and serving their nation while being away from their families. I am grateful for the things I've experienced and learned during my years as an air warrior, they've helped me create who I am today and blessed me with the best of opportunities, it really gave me a platform for my enthusiastic patriotism. All the qualities that I've learned during my years in the IAF helped me in building my career in the police force."

## **Most Challenging Case**

Kamble has worked in the Police force since 1996, in his 24-year long career he has come across a lot of cases. "There have been many cases which we cracked, but there was this one recent case I came across quite recently when I joined Powai police station. While going through the old records, I found a case of a young girl Dipali Yadav, a 13-year-old who was missing since July and we started working on it immediately, till march there was not even a trace of her. With the guidance of our superiors, we started the investigation in this case.

We cracked the case and found out the two guys who murdered her and threw her remains in the sea and brought justice to the young girl and her family. Another case that crosses my mind was when I worked at Dongri police station, the drug selling business was on a high rise, and we had caught around 14 drug sellers and traders who were from Nigeria." said Kamble when asked about his most memorable cases Kamble has been working in the police force for 24 years now, however, he has never allowed fear to dictate or affect his

He has been representing Mumbai police and never let anything come in the way of him and his vision of changing and removing the dirt from the society. "We can never live with fear, it was my job to deal with such cases, and if fear sets in then it would've been impossible to solve these cases" Whenever I am doing a good job, my superior and my colleagues have always supported me.

#### Pressures of the Job

Kamble believes maintaining composure is an important factor to be kept in mind for a police officer while working. "There wasn't a lot of job pressure during my years in the IAF as the work hours were flexible, but



Kamble with fellow airmen at Sombra, Belgaum

in the police force there is a lot of job pressure due to the number of cases that come to us and every citizen every complainant is expecting a result from us and we don't get a lot of time to solve their cases so we always have to be quick on our feet and give the best possible results to the public. I used to cope up by doing morning meditation and exercises."

#### Pieces of Advice

Kamble has a few words of wisdom for the youngsters joining the police force. "People coming to the police with their complaints hail from different backgrounds when it comes to poor or uneducated people, the police are their only source to justice. The police officer has to help them with their needs, the police officer has to help and assist every complainant to the best of their abilities and ensure that they are satisfied. It is important to listen to the complainants when they come to us because the news lies in the question itself"

"An officer has a lot of complainants coming to them, and sometimes it becomes impossible to attend all of them, it's then the officer's decision to choose which case to get started with first. This leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding between the citizens and the officials. The official must maintain composure even during such pressure and one way we deal with it is meditation, yoga, and exercising. It is unethical to use violence and verbal abuse, they should always be passionate about their work and resorting to violence and verbal abuse is not the way."

Your work must be a passion driver, devotion is not enough." On how passion is one of the main factors that helps in assuring work efficiency Kamble believes for the police to work efficiently, cooperation between the police officials and its citizens is very important and for that, it is also necessary for the citizens to be aware and take precautions.

"I advise citizens to work under the framework of the law and always take precautions when needed. When it comes to using the online medium for important things, the citizens should



Kamble as Sr Pi Powai Police Station

always be aware and alert of the method and website they're accessing to avoid any fraud and if they are not confident, they should avoid using such methods in the first place. And whenever in need the police are always ready to assist and help you."

When the world witnessed the wrath of the pandemic, the police officials got to duty and tried their best in assisting the citizens and avoiding the spread of the virus, here's what Kamble did along with his team.

"During this pandemic, the citizens helped other citizens and police officials as well. After a meeting with my colleagues, we came to a decision where we set some rules along with the government required laws to follow, to ensure more discipline among the citizens and to avoid the spread of the virus, to protect the well-being of the people. The public appreciated us a lot and was very happy with our work during the lockdown when

we helped 14,000 migrants reach their home state. We made sure that the citizens followed our rules and were safe and maintained social distance."

Kamble is nearing his retirement from the police force now and when asked what he'll be missing the most of his wonderful service period he said "I will certainly miss government service, I will miss my colleagues, I have a very high attachment with people and the way that they believed in me always motivated me to strive to do more. I will miss this belief as well, and the love and affection I get as a police officer. I used to motivate my colleagues and guide them to the best of my abilities.

Kamble is currently studying about the field which he will be entering after his retirement, and becoming educated on the subject, he says it is a surprise and he will reveal it to us soon.



### Gauray Sharma

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Gaurav Sharma is a freelance investigative journalist with a penchant for civic and crime reporting. His reportage has led to exposing several instances of civic maladministration in the slums of Mumbai. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'



# Op Cactus Lily: The World's First Night Heli-Borne Drop At Sylhet

"This article is about the Indian Air Force's First Night Special Heliborne Operation from Kailashaher in Tripura to Sylhet, in (then) East Pakistan during

## by Air Commodore RM Sridharan (Retd)

## **Earning Wings & Preparing** for War

I was commissioned into the Indian Air Force (IAF) on 21 June 1969 as a Helicopter Pilot at Yellahanka Bangalore. I was among 15 helicopter pilots who were given their wings and pilot officer rings after one and a half years of flying training in which I did a total of 175 hours of flying on the Indian HT-2 Trainer, the T-6 G Texan Canadian Indian Trainer and Bell 47 G-3 American Helicopter Trainer Aircraft. I was then posted to a totally unknown place in South Eastern Assam called Kumbhigram to 110 Helicopter Unit, later to be known as the 'Vanguards'.

Silchar was the nearest town and rail head and it would take me more than 10 days to reach Silchar by train via Madras, Calcutta, Siliguri, Gauhati

and Lumding. To reach Kumbhigram one had to cross two small townships called Dwarbundh and Udhaarbandh and finally when I arrived at the Air Base at Kumbhigram with my coursemate Obe, there was very limited power supply as we had only six hours of Generator Electricity per day-two hours in the morning and four hours at night.

So we had finally made it to this supposedly exotic place after the arduous train journey due to the now familiar Assam floods. It took me more than two years to get my conversion and become fully operational on the Russian MI-4 which was a very tough and exceptionally reliable flying machine.

During this time I flew actively to the exotic locales of Aijal, Champai, Lungleh in Mizo Hills and Kohima,

Mokokchong and other helipads in Nagaland and Imphal, Churachandpur and many helipads in Manipur Area, also Agartala, Teliamura and more Helipads in the Tripura Region, to be very familiar and operational in all terrain and constantly changing weather conditions of the 'Far East India'.

So, when the 1971 War came up I was not only fully operational on the MI-4 both by day and night, but also a C White Categorised Pilot. I had also built up my flying experience through couple of MI-4 Ferries from the Base Repair Depot at Chandigarh and 109 Helicopter Unit at Jammu just before the War was declared.

Being so fortunate to carry out training and actually carry out all types of roles of the helicopter due to the excellent supervisory staff of the unit

including our CO Squadron Leader Charu Sandhu, Flight Commanders Pushp Vaid and Jayaraman I were fully prepared and excitedly looking forward to the 1971 Liberation War for Bangladesh in which we carried out the First Night Special Heliborne Operations in the IAF without Night Vision Goggles (NVG) or any night aids like today, from Kailashaher in Tripura to Sylhet in East Pakistan. The excitement and thrills that we all felt in our unit as we waited for the balloon to go up and the war to commence is narrated in succeeding paragraphs

## Operational in 71'

I had already spent over two years at 110 Helicopter Unit at Kumbhigram when the clouds of war became imminent with the massacre of Bengali's in East Pakistan and the mass exodus of refugees into Eastern India.

My operational training culminated with my categorisation as a C White Pilot absolutely competent for all kinds of Heli-borne and other related role-based operations, both by day and night. This happened to most of the 20 pilots posted in the unit and this all happened just a day before the war broke out.

We pilots were all delighted with our Commanding Officer, Sqn Ldr CS Sandhu and Flight Lieutenant PK Vaid's decision to only utilise the pilots who were on the posted strength of the unit and not the experienced few MI-4 Pilots, who had just returned from Russia after MI-8 Training. This was a great morale booster for us young enthusiastic junior pilots, just waiting for combat war action.

War broke out in the early hours of 3 Dec 1971 as a pre-dawn airstrike in the Western Sector, sparked off the conflict. As per our unit war plan, we reached the unit premises with our kit and bedding in our overalls and pistol holster webbing, awaiting further instructions from our CO and Flt Cdr. The war instructions were noticeably clear as the bulk of the Unit Helicopters with Air and Ground Crew were to move to HQ 4 Corps located at Teliamura on War Detachment with them.

The remainder of the Air and Ground Crew would be dispersing the reserve helicopters to different locations, before finally joining up with the main unit when required. The Eastern element of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had been virtually wiped out but the air threat was not completely neutralized. Thus, the rest of the unit had to be dispersed and kept in readiness at different locations.

All pilots were issued with a revolver pistol with six rounds for our self-defence and we kept it in our webbing holster. We stowed away our kit and bedding's in our respective helicopters as we began dispersing to different safe locations.

At the met briefing it was stated that the weather would be clear and fine for the next few days in our area of operation. I dispersed to different locations in three days till lastly I along with Fg Offr Kruts Krushnamurthy set Course for Aijal in Mizoram with a set of Ground Crew & Flight Gunner as Load Master. Flying to dispersed locations had been thrilling as we flew really low to avoid detection just above any obstructions.

We set course for Aijal early morning and landed at the 1 Assam Rifles Helipad around breakfast time. Our Unit operated all round at this Helipad mainly for the Army. We had special affiliation with 1 Assam Rifles as we generally stayed at their beautifully located Officers Mess. That night we spent at the Mess and while listening to the radio giving all the war news from different areas, I received a message to take off for Teliamura for further briefing over there.

I got airborne just after lunch for Teliamura. There was a huge ground at Teliamura which is in the state of Tripura, a short flight from Agartala, the capital of Tripura.

After landing at Teliamura we were called to the Ops Room of 4 Corps for Briefing. Here I came to know that Heli lift of 4/5 Gurkha Rifles Battalion was being done by our unit from an Airfield at Kailashaher to a Ground at Sylhet. I was instructed to move to Kailashaher with air and ground crew to augment our unit force. I got

airborne late that afternoon and set course at tree top level for Kailashaher which was a small airstrip being used by Indian Airlines for hopping flights to Agartala.

We landed around sunset in fading light and poor visibility due the setting sun and was directed to park on the grass on the side of the runway. Incidentally, the only navigation aid for the MI-4 was the radio compass. By the time we switched off the helicopter and reached our makeshift crew room at the small airport complex, I was told that all helicopters of the last formation of the second wave led by our Flt Cdr Palokha Vaid was on the way back.

Earlier the first foray was led by CO Charu Sandhu who inaugurated 110 HU'S SHBO Operation for 4/5 GR to Sylhet with two Vics of three Helicopters each. Subsequently Paloka Vaid took another two Vics after a Mukti Bahini of Kilo Flight Allouette flown by Sqn Ldr Singla strafed the Pakistani positions as our helicopters and troops encountered lot of ground fire at the landing ground.

The Forward Air Controller Fg Offr SC Sharma and his helipad team with Kerosene Goose necks were also dropped by the second wave for our night operations the next day.

I had only done SHBO by day at Mizoram and Nagaland from proper helipads with trained army battalions. However this Gurkha battalion was untrained but they were quickly operational with professional and enthusiastic briefing by our Flt Engineers/Flt Gunners and Pilots and the first day of the SHBO went off quite well with the troops and our aircrew full of enthusiasm and Josh. That night was spent in the airport building with all of us pilots sprawled in beddings on the ground exchanging notes on the day's happenings. The next day we were all set for action.

I was all excited the next day awaiting my turn to go into battle stations and enter the war zone. I had to wait till about 1000 on 8 Dec for my first Sortie of SHBO to Sylhet. Palokha briefed us about our Sortie. He asked me if I was confident to take on No 3 in the

Formation as that would involve a little extra time on ground at Sylhet as the mortar had to be wheeled out with some extra ammunition.

Both No 1 flown by Flt Lt Jayaraman, Jaya & No 2 by Fg Offr Murtuza Ali, Lamboo, had done 2 sorties on Day 1. Both helicopters would only carry 14 Troops. Briefing in short was to start up with No 1 giving a call and other two acknowledging with clicks. Line up one behind the other and take off. After take off the other two will take position on the Starboard Lamboo and me on the Port behind Jaya.

All went as briefed and I was slotted in at No 3 on Portside of Jaya. The formation was maintaining as low as possible with no obstructions in the flat terrain in (then) East Pakistan. In a few minutes we had settled inside enemy territory. We had been told that there was no aerial threat and concentrated in keeping both 1 and 2 Helicopters in visual contact. Weather was very clear and no turbulence at that time. After 5 mins we went past Kalaura which was held by our troops.

In the distance after about 30 mins of flying I could make out the river which flowed around Sylhet. Formation Leader Jaya gave a call to FAC SC who gave a reassuring call saying that the Helipad was clear and no Firing. I spotted the big building across the river was landmark for the formation. Jaya lined up in the centre of the big ground as I remained to the left with some trees just short of landing spot. All three landing points had similar approaches.

On final approach for Sylhet my co-pilot Sukhi Hundal blew the helicopter horn to keep Troops on stand-by in a couple of minutes No 1 touched down with bit of dust and then no 2 and finally my helicopter was on ground. As soon as the troops disembarked both 1 and 2 would in the empty state turn right and back and clear Sylhet LZ. Because of the Gun I took a few seconds for the troops to clear the helicopter and my Flt Gunner gave us the OK on intercom for us to clear the LZ.

SC on ground was by now warning us about firing from the left. So there was live action on the LZ as we landed

and scampered our take off back to Kailashaher. Once clear of the enemy area we increased our speed and keeping low altitude were back on course for base. The flying time to base was another 35 mins and I concentrated in keeping both 1 and 2 in sight. It had been a successful induction for me into SHBO for Surprise Induction of 4/5 Gurkha troops to Sylhet.

The Gurkha boys in all three Helicopters were full of josh and shouting their war cry just before leaving the Helicopter. I had felt so proud for carrying out my first war sortie successfully as we touched down at Kailashaher and parked the Helicopter back in the Grass besides the other unit helicopters. As we were midway to base, we crossed the next Vic for Sylhet. After landing Sukhi and I did an external check of our Helicopter and found a couple of bullet holes on the tail boom which were was located in battle on our side. Both these sorties also went off quite well with my helicopter again being struck in the third and last day sortie this time on the main rotor. But fortunately all the damage was minor and did not affect our helicopter serviceability which remained at 10 serviceable all through at Kailashaher.

Day SHBO ended late in the evening almost around dusk when we were back to base while preparations were being made for history to be made as it had been decided to continue the SHBO by night for the first time ever in the IAF Helicopter history.

Our Unit Night Flying Briefing was done in the same old ATC building. The Weather remained clear & cloudless. Moonrise was around 2000 and the moonlight would be of immense use for our operations through the night. Flying programme for the night



MI-4 in Action During Op Cactus

minor as per our Senior Technical Officer Flt Lt Shankaran, Shanks.

Perhaps we got hit while on ground at Sylhet while our FAC had warned us. Returned to my Flt Cdr and briefed him that Sortie had gone off well as also Formation Leader Jaya gave his thumbs up to Flt Cdr Palokha as sortie well done. Baptism by fire had been achieved in the first sortie and all the nerves and butterflies in the stomach had been calmed.

That day I did two more Sorties in No 2 and No 3 Position in the Vic Formation by Day. both sorties were done with Kruts Krishnamurthy, first one we had to land and pick up the troops from Kalaura where the 4/5 GR

was made and I had two sorties both with Fg Offr Jagdeep Singh.

My first sortie was again at No 3 position in the same Vic Formation with Flt Cdr in the lead. Jagdeep and me moved to the helicopter which was ready with the troops and load in position. Helicopters were started and like during the day we taxied onto the runway and took off for Sylhet. The runway was lit with Goose Necks and a few went off with the Downwash of the Helicopters.

I got the Helicopter in position above and to the left of Palokha in No 3 position. I could see Fg Offr Chatsy Chatwal in No 2 Slot. We climbed to a slightly higher altitude than day for



I had participated as the junior most unit pilot in this historic night SHBO to Sylhet with no formal training of night operations to unprepared landing grounds. Was very proud to have been part of such a historic event which played a very crucial role in speeding up Operation Cactus Lily in the War for Liberation of Bangladesh.

better visibility and the moon was shining bright. I kept my position and kept asking Jagdeep about No 2 and as the day sortie we cruised along till we approached just short of the river near Sylhet which was shining in the moonlight.

The Goose Necks lit by SC and his helipad party became visible and No 1 was first onto the helipad with transmission of ground fire from helipad control. Palokha did a No Hover Landing and I followed to land looking at the Goose Necks in my front and to my left. I also did a Smooth touch Down and Jagdeep gave the horn for the Gurkha boys with their Mortar to disembark & clear the Helicopter area by which Time No 1 was ready for take-off & seconds later No 2. As they both commenced their take off to the Right and back.

With the Bright Moonlight it was easy to keep the other Helicopters in sight as also control was similar to Day operations. Visibility on return was slightly worse & we were flying smoothly back to Base at Kailashaher where we landed back 40 mins after take-off from Sylhet.

The Goose Necks were again quite nicely visible as at Sylhet. On return I carried out external inspection of the Helicopter to find all okay. The Helicopter was readied again for another Sortie with the same crew. The Second Vic must have been landing at Sylhet by this time as there was a Gap of 30 mins between Vics.

For the next Night SHBO Sortie I had CO Charu Sandhu as leader with Fg Offr Reddy BLK as No 3 and self at No 2. This Sortie was quite like the first one except the Moon was shining nice & bright, this was a great help for

Night Navigation. This time there was a Flurry of calls from FAC SC

to exercise caution as there was plenty of Ground Fire from Pakistani Positions while we were on approach. I again landed watching the CO'S No 1 Helicopter to my left. This time the Goose Necks were mostly off while landing & subsequent take-off. The Troops again were very quick in leaving the Helicopter & the Sortie was without any unusual happening.

The heavy Pakistani Ground Fire on ground at Sylhet did find my Helicopter on the Tail Boom which did not trouble our Technicians. Our CO and Flt Cdr were very happy with the performance of the entire unit. Late at night when all Helicopters were back and the First Night SHBO Operation had been completed, we all gathered at our makeshift crew room at the Kailashaher ATC.

CO was extremely happy and so was our Flt Cdr for a Most Successful Helilift of 4/5 Gurkha Rifles by day and night. The unit had lifted 254 troops and equipment to Sylhet to airlift the Battalion so that the Gurkhas as planned by General Sagat Singh Cdr 4 Corps took over the Pakistani Garrison in a swift and lethal Strike.

I had participated as the junior most unit pilot in this historic night SHBO to Sylhet with no formal training of night operations to unprepared landing grounds. Was very proud to have been part of such a historic event which played a very crucial role in speeding up Operation Cactus Lily in the War for Liberation of Bangladesh.

The Speed of Operations by 110 HU with 10 Helicopters & Crew without any loss in Man & Material was High Praise for the Unit under Sqn Ldr CS Sandhu and Flt Lt PK Vaid who went onto earn Vir Chakras for our Illustrious Unit.

#### Conclusion

I hope you enjoyed my narration of the First Night Heliborne Operations that 110 Helicopter carried out with the valliant 4/5 Gurkha Rifles of the 59 Mountain Brigade from Churachandpur. The planning of this highly successful operation as part of Operation Cactus Lily was the brainchild of Gen. Sagat Singh GOC 4 Corps and supported by Brig Bunty Quinn Bde Cdr 59 Bde.

Gp Capt Chandan Singh was Air Force Task Force Cdr with execution by Sqn Ldr Charu Sandhu and Flt Lt Pushp Vaid of the Mighty 110 Helicopter Pilots, Aircrew, Tecnhnical Staff and Ground Crew with the very brave and gallant officers and personnel of 4/5 Gurkha Rifles who with their high spirit and valour outfought and outclassed the Pakistanis to capture Sylhet in record time to hasten part of Operation Cactus Lily and the Liberation of Bangladesh. 🜇



#### Air Commodore RM Sridharan

Air Cmde. Sridharan is a highly decorated 1971 Indo-Pakistan War Veteran and a renowned IAF Helicopter pilot with over 8000 flying hours. He has served in HQ Comm Sqn where he flew top dignitaries among other important appointments. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'



# Remembering A Visionary Admiral

"For a few of us who had the opportunity to serve under his leadership, it was not surprising to see that he had left an indelible impression on a large cross section of the strategic community too and that is evidenced in the tributes to him forwarded by eminent people from different fields."

## by Commander K Ashok Menon (Retd)

A person holding a high rank in the armed forces is always remembered by a grateful nation. When he not only distinguishes himself while in active service but brings his experiential knowledge and razor sharp intellect to bear on key questions of national security after retirement, then his field of recognition extends beyond the armed forces community too; be it in the academia, scholars who have read his books or the students who have benefited from his work and lectures. Admiral Koithara was one such.

Vice Admiral Verghese Koithara (Retd) a former Controller of Logistics (COL) of the Indian Navy, an author, a thinker, and a strategic analyst passed away in the Military Hospital, Wellington, Nilgiris on 22nd May. No wonder, on

learning of his demise, Shashi Tharoor penned a tribute thus, "Sometimes one gets news of the passing of a great Indian whom very few Indians know about, and who deserves to be better appreciated. The sense of loss I felt... was augmented by regret that so few knew enough about him to mourn with me." [Open magazine on 19 Jun 20].

For a few of us who had the opportunity to serve under his leadership, it was not surprising to see that he had left an indelible impression on a large cross section of the strategic community too and that is evidenced in the tributes to him forwarded by eminent people from different fields.

## Admiral Vijai Singh Shekhawat (Retd) [Former Chief of Naval Staff of India

Verghese Koithara who passed away a few days ago, was my valued colleague in 1988-89 in the Defence Planning Staff, a think-tank and support staff for the Chiefs of Staff Committee. The integrated staff consisted of civilian and military officers, chosen for their high caliber, and Verghese stood out for his grasp of any subject, which could be strategic, nuclear, technological, organisational, administrative and so on, involving not only the three services, but other agencies of government having linkages with national security.



"His sharp intellect, wide interests and humanistic approach always left a mark on me. Whether it was discussing the Indian nuclear doctrine, international issues such as the emerging China challenge or domestic conditions such as Jammu & Kashmir; his views were inquisitive, sharp, and deeply analytical." -Maj Gen Dipanakar Banerjee-



Most work in DPS consists of voluminous reading on complex subjects, obtaining information from usually reluctant Service headquarters, collating inputs, followed by evaluation and animated, often heated discussions to arrive at a workable consensus leading to position papers. There could be a tendency for officers to protect the interests of their service rather than subscribe to the larger objective of the common good.

Verghese proved a Master of Diplomacy and tact, with his penetrating intellect and good humour, to guide the processes towards the desired outcome. Having worked as Naval Assistant to the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral JG Nadkarni, who thought very highly of his intellectual capacity, Verghese was familiar with senior staff of all the three Service headquarters, and on friendly terms with them. That made our work in DPS easier, as good personal relations are an important factor in working with diverse civil and military agencies, across the full range of government activities.

It was after retirement that Verghese's other talents came into play and he acquired a role in discreet negotiations with political and dissident elements in J&K, and also went on to publish books on strategic and nuclear issues. I ran into him at an airport some years ago, to be informed that he and his wife, Indira, had just spent three months in a Japanese home on a cultural exchange basis. I marvelled at his range of interests and his enthusiasm to pursue them.

It is sad that Verghese Koithara passed away at an age when he still had much to contribute in the academic field, and surely much to live for.

## Dr. Ashley J. Tellis, Senior Associate, Carnegie **Endowment for International** Peace, Washington DC

I had the privilege of meeting him only a couple of times, but I had known of him and his work long before I had ever met him in person. I remember our discussion at Carnegie very vividly: he was researching his India nuclear book then and we spent over an hour talking about the challenges facing India as it built up its deterrent.

His concern about India's quandaries was palpable: these arose both from his deep patriotism (but without any jingoism) and his interests as a scholar. He was wonderful and deeply thoughtful person. I remember reading his book on Kashmir previously and was struck by his sheer humanity and his desire for a lasting peace that would serve both the people in that troubled state as well as India and Pakistan well. He will be dearly missed."

## Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd), Former Chief of Naval Staff (CNS)

Vice Admiral Verghese Koithara was some years older, and a few NDA courses senior to me. While we were not close friends, over the years, as our paths crossed a number of times, and I came to know his huge intellectual ability and grasp, my respect for him grew enormously.

My first encounter with him was in the mid-1960s, when we served together on an anti-submarine frigate where he was the Supply Officer (now re-designated Logistics Officer) and I, a raw Midshipman. Unusually for a Supply Officer, Verghese would spend a great deal of time on the bridge, especially during exercises and manoeuvres.



Portrait of Adm Verghese Koithara



"He had a clear worldview and his books are of enduring value. In discussions, he presented and defended his case without getting perturbed even when others raised their voice. He held that a logical argument would prevail ultimately. As the country faces the Covid-19 and aggression at the border, I often ask myself, what Varghese would have said." -Ambassador Fabian-

One day, when the Captain stumped me with a tricky question regarding navigation, Verghese took me aside and patiently explained it at length. It was then, that I realized that his interests and grasp extended far beyond the Logistic domain of pay, accounts, stores, victualling and clothing etc.

I next met him in 1981, when my ship touched Singapore and he received me as the Indian Naval Attaché. Given its strategic location, Singapore is considered a vital 'listening-cum-observation post' and the appointment of Naval Attaché, in the High Commission, is reserved for the 'best and the brightest.' Varghese's outstanding performance, in Singapore fully justified the faith that the navy had reposed in him.

A few years later, I was pleasantly surprised to see him accompanying the CNS, Admiral JG Nadkarni, who embarked my ship for a few hours at sea. Admiral Nadkarni, a shrewd judge of men, had hand-picked Verghese as his Naval Assistant, overlooking many other aspirants, and was not disappointed in his choice.

Over the years, Verghese Koithara's intellectual depth, maturity and professional acumen saw him being selected for coveted key senior positions in NHQ, where he brought about a transformation in the naval logistics system. He distinguished himself as the Director General, Defence Planning Staff and the navy's Chief of Logistics, from where he retired.

I first became aware of his literary abilities when he wrote a book titled, 'Crafting Peace in Kashmir,' in 2004 when I was CNS. Possibly recalling my Kashmiri origins, he sent me a complimentary copy and asked for comments. It was an outstanding piece of work and must have come to the attention of the PMO and NSA.

A bigger surprise was, yet to follow. Five years into my retirement, in 2011, Verghese asked me to vet the draft of his new book, titled; 'Managing India's Nuclear Forces.' As a former Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, it was a revelation, for me, to see how far and deep the mind of an outsider like Varghese Koithara had been able to visualize the intricacies of our strategic domain, using only open-source information.

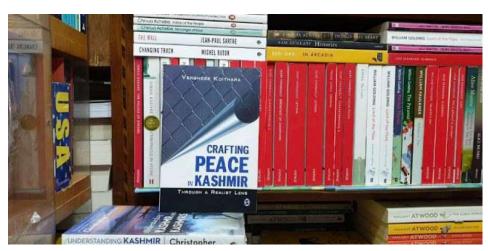
institutions and think-tanks, in India and abroad, that he was associated with.

"In Managing India's Nuclear Forces, Verghese Koithara casts a laser-sharp beam to illuminate the Stygian dark of India's strategic domain. With an unerring instinct he not only picks out the debilitating infirmities which afflict the management control and operationalisation of our nuclear forces by a scientist-dominated enclave, but also zeroes-in on the flawed thought-processes that guide India's national security decision-making.

Koithara's spotlight on the "barren" and mistrustful relationship between India's political leadership and the armed forces, and the total exclusion of the latter from national security planning could not have been better timed. His compelling exploration of India's nuclear deterrent mercilessly holds up a mirror before the Emperor."

#### **Ambassador KP Fabian**

I had the privilege of being friends with Admiral Verghese Koithara for two decades. What struck me most about him is that he combined an



Adm Koithara's landmark writing lives on in bookstores

His sharp intellect had been able to accurately pinpoint flaws and offer sound and constructive recommendations. One hopes that his book was widely read by India's strategic community and his suggestions implemented.

The passing of VAdm Verghese Koithara is a sad loss for India and the Indian Navy, as well as for the many intellect of exceptional value with a good heart abundant with the milk of human kindness. Verghese had the rare ability to master a huge quantity of facts with Teutonic thoroughness, organize them methodically, and at the same time see the big picture.

He had a clear worldview and his books are of enduring value. In discussions, he presented and defended his case without getting perturbed even when others raised their voice. He held that a logical argument would prevail ultimately. As the country faces the Covid-19 and aggression at the border, I often ask myself, what Varghese would have said.

Varghese cared for his fellow human beings finding themselves in poverty, ill health, or otherwise disadvantaged. He gave his full support to Indira in her NGO activities and together they have, with singular dedication, lifted above the poverty line and empowered many a family in the Nilgiris and elsewhere. Verghese left indelible footprints on the sands of time.

## Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar (Retd), Former **Deputy Chief of Army Staff**

I am indeed sorry to hear that my good friend and colleague, Admiral Verghese Koithara is no more with us. I got to know him briefly only towards my closing years in uniform. But it was after my retirement (and his), as the Director United Service Institution of India, and on the seminar/conference/strategic analysis circuit, that I got to inter-act with him and came to know him well.

Particularly when he was working on his many publications, because he considered it appropriate to seek my views and thoughts. Needless to say, I was deeply impressed with the scope and depth of his knowledge on matters military, statecraft and international relations; without doubt acquired over the years through reading, study and application. I was always impressed by the intensity and dedication with which he approached the subject he chose to write or speak on.

Not that we agreed on everything, but it was always a joy to engage with him. He had no airs about him, or pretensions; but his analyses were well researched and painstakingly compiled. Though he had not been active in recent years, the strategic community in our country will miss his wisdom and capacity for analysis."

## Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar (Retd), Former Vice Chief of Army Staff

I am 15 NDA, have known him from that time. He was heading a study on streamlining Defence procurement, while I was the VCOAS... He has done considerable work on modernizing naval, supply chain, computer generated maintenance system, from shore to ships. He was an exceptionally fine human being, able professional and gentleman. The Services are running by people who are committed and devoted.

### Air Marshal VG Kumar (Retd), Former Commandant National Defence College, New Delhi

He was President Defence Service Officers' Institute, New DelhiI and I was member of the Managing Committee as AOC 3 Wg Palam. At that time a wholesale renovation of DSOI was undertaken and we had a lot of interaction as I was in the Subcommittee overseeing the projects.

In the process we developed a personal rapport that I fondly remember...He was understanding and compassionate almost to a fault. Always kept his cool during the stormy MC meetings. I looked up to him as my own anchor amidst the vicissitudes of project management...

## Major General Dipankar Banerjee (Retd), Former **Director Institute of Peace** and Conflict Studies, New Delhi

We first met in Singapore in 1983, where as a Commodore, he was the Defence Attache of India. A coveted assignment for a brilliant naval officer, which opened up for his wife and him a window to the world. I was on a visit to the Island visiting my brother and shared many pleasant evenings together discussing global strategic affairs... About a decade later we met again in Delhi.

He was a Rear Admiral and heading the Defence Planning staff, the apex strategic planning body of the Ministry of Defence. I was the Deputy Head of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses and he often invited me to interact with the DPS on various global strategic issues.

His sharp intellect, wide interests and humanistic approach always left a mark on me. Whether it was discussing the Indian nuclear doctrine, international issues such as the emerging China challenge or domestic conditions such as Jammu & Kashmir; his views were inquisitive, sharp, and deeply analytical.

I was particularly struck by his humanistic approach to the Kashmir question. At his invitation I wrote a short introduction to his Kashmir book, which I found to be deeply thoughtful and constructive. Much later we were to find common cause in the "Global Zero" project for the elimination of nuclear weapons."





#### Commander K Ashok Menon

Cdr. Menon is an ex Indian Naval Officer whose key assignments in the Navy included, Joint Director of Personnel (Information Systems) and Logistic Officer INS Delhi among other prestigious appointments. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'

# Book Review: COVID-19 & It's Challenges-Is India **Future Ready?**

#### Vivek Verma

COVID-19 & Its Challenges-Is India Future Ready Edited by Lt Gen VK Ahluwalia and Dr Amrita Jash (New Delhi: CLAWS in association with Pentagon Press LLP), 2020, Price Rs. 750/- (Hardback)

The Enigma shrouding COVID-19 outbreak and its impact are now revealing itself. The world stands destabilised, and India is no exception. The loss of lives and livelihood has added to social anxiety and governance paranoia.

At a time when India has been struggling to provide sustenance to its population and making a meaningful contribution to the world community by supplying medicines and medical assistance, the aggressive Chinese design on India's Himalayan borders has posed dual challenges to the security planners.

Line of Control (LC) simultaneously with the happenings at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China exposes the sinister China-Pakistan Collusivity scenario. Probably for the first time, India is embattled with a worst-case scenario.

'COVID-19 & Its Challenges- Is India out by CLAWS to highlight the essential facets of national security which can only be diluted for India's peril.

thought out chapters by subject experts add to the wealth of knowledge and provide insight into areas which need greater attention and impetus.

The Chapter One on 'India's National Ahluwalia very succinctly encapsulates the new challenges across mains. He posits that COVID-19 has strained India's security landscape

and managing the destabilising spiral needs a whole-of-a-government approach to get out of the volatile, uncertain and unpredictable, ambiguous and complex situation.

The next two chapters written by Dr Manjari Singh and Colonel RS Sandhu examine the economic costs and fallout due to COVID-19. Dr Manjari has examined the very pertinent aspect concerning the impact on social development goals and migration of labour in her chapter, 'India's Alarming Call: Need for Greater Sustainability'.

centred on kick starting the economy post-lockdown has been captured Seeking a Silver Line in the Cloud'. He has evaluated the sector-based impact on the industries and provided polpost-COVID.

In Chapter Four, 'India at the Global High Table: With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility', Dr Amrita Jash has tried to look at geopolitical issues that confront India. She has explored the ramifications due to India's presence in security council at the UN and assumption of appointment of Chairperson of the 34-member WHO Executive Board. She has also vividly analysed India's ability to magnify its influence in the regional and global

Chapters Five to Eight examines the various facets of defence-related issues. Brig Akhlesh Bhargava and Kanchana Ramanujam have studied

the sensitive issue surrounding government surveillance for tracking, tracing, and monitoring as a method of containing COVID-19.

In the Indian context, the 'Aarogya Setu' became the world's fastest app to reach 50 million downloads; however, the article points out that India needs to plug the voids surrounding surveillance mechanisms and architecture.

In Chapter Six, 'India's National Military Strategy: A Task in Hand', Lieutenant General Rakesh Sharma distils the strategy relevant for the military. He highlights the budgetary deficit as an anathema to force capability and capacity building which, according to him, will get aggravated due to budgetary cuts imposed in light of COVID distress.

While reappraising the national military strategy, he concedes that it is He vociferously bats for hardening of systems across all domains in view of the contested unsettled borders and emergence of effect-based operations as part of kinetic and non-kinetic non-contact warfare.

In Chapter Seven, 'Indian Armed Forces: Agile, Responsive and Ever Ready', Major General PK Chakravorty has highlighted that the border and counter-insurgency situations have not changed despite COVID problem faced by both Pakistan and China.

He has drawn the attention of the security planners to the evolving biotechnology domain and suggests that organisations like DRDO, Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) must be empowered and funded to work in this critical field.

Air Commodore AS Bahal in Chapter Eight, 'India's Quest: To Maximise Security, Exploit Technology' has pitched for technology as a security maximiser and a tool kit to fight the pandemic. Importance of AI, blocktems in predictive analytics have been very concisely discussed.

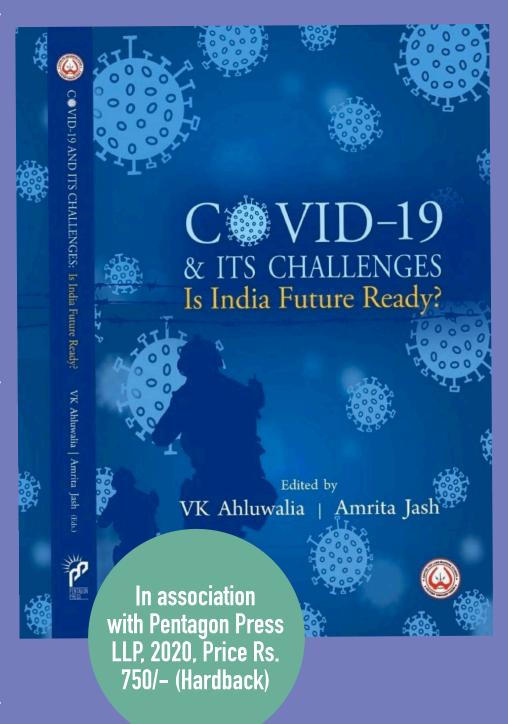
In the last and final chapter, 'Making India Future Ready', Lieutenant General VK Ahluwalia and Dr Amrita Jash talk brass-tacks about, 'What follows strategy; hence the emphasis has been laid on creating structures that allow agile governance measures based on credible data and mapping of public health and public distribution systems.

It lists out measures that need to be taken by the government of India to reboot the economy, pursue its global interests, defence preparedness and force preservation and above all policy prescription to revamp the administra-

COVID-19 has destabilised strategic stability, and economic distress is likely to pose a myriad of administrative challenges. 'COVID-19 & Its Challenges- Is India Future Ready', is winding arguments.

It goes straight-away with the task of highlighting the problems and protended to enrich the policy planners' options. It is a must-read book for those who are in the business of deand technology management.

the foreseeable future and will always remain a source of concern for India. Chanakya in 'The Arthashastra' has said that "deliberations should not be unduly delayed once an opportunity policy planners court.





### **Brigadier Vivek Verma**

Brigadier Vivek Verma is a Gunner Officer with experience in sub conventional ter management. He is a Postgraduate in Weapon Systems and M Phil in Defence

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