

# ForceNeteZine

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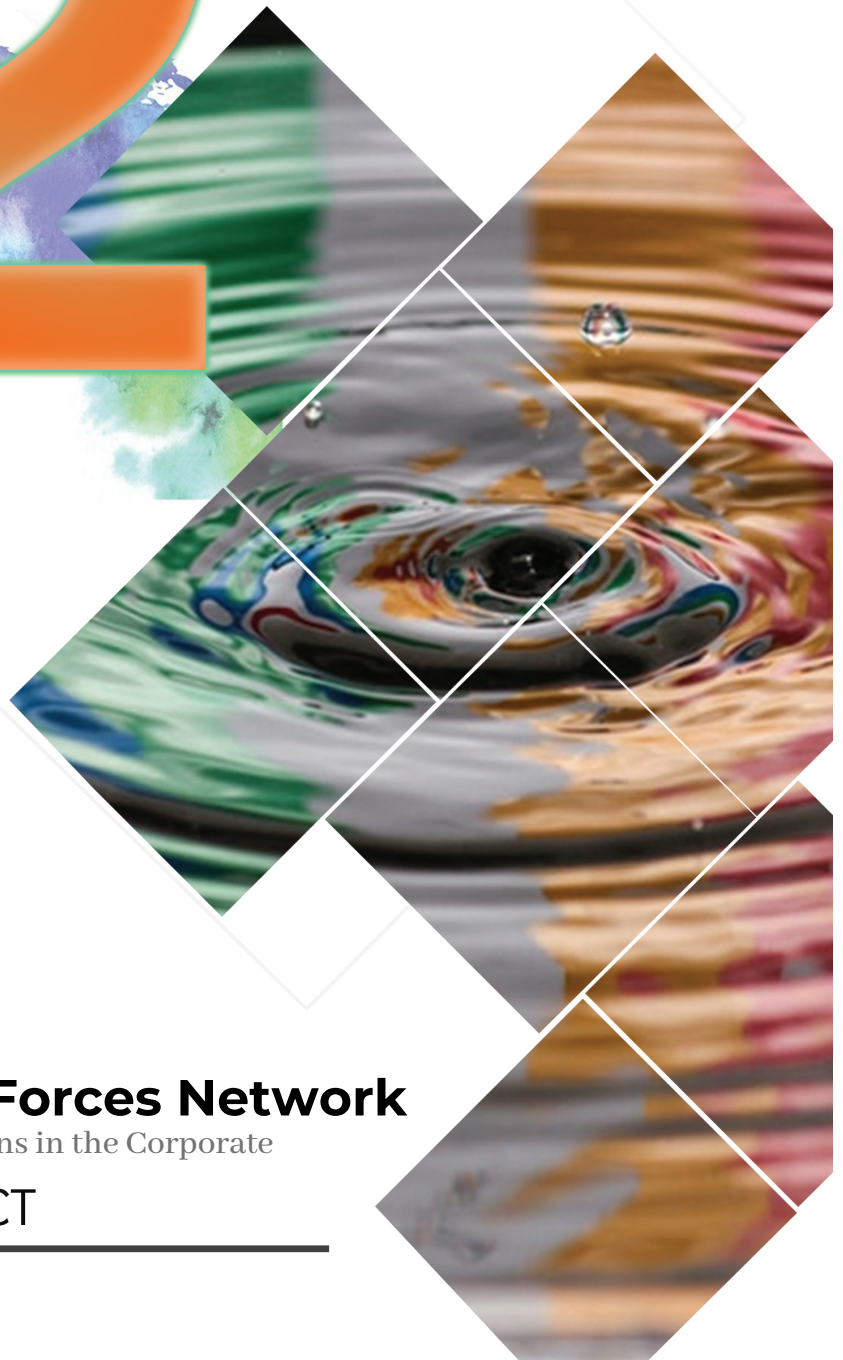


## **FORCES NETWORK**

THE NETWORK THAT WORKS

**GLORIOUS YEARS  
CREATING IMPACT !**

# 12



## **The Newsletter of Forces Network**

The Network of the military veterans in the Corporate

**FOCUS | PASSION | IMPACT**

 @FORCESNETWORK1

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**You can have everything in life  
you want if you will just help  
enough other people get what  
they want.**

—

Zig Ziglar, author, salesman, speaker

# From the Editor

Twelve long years!! Phew...and, it seems like it was just yesterday.

Going back to my school days, we would have said 'Dirty Dozen'. Definitely, the rigmarole to reach the present state by this, now enviable and potent, group The Forces Network, has definitely been challenging. It was only with the utmost dedication of the founding team, and the wholehearted proactive support of all the members that we are now able to achieve the desired mission, and are now collectively enjoying the fruits of our labour.

I had thought that I would have a lot to write in my note in this special Anniversary issue, but when the articles were received from the contributors, I felt overwhelmed by the feeling of knowing too little after reading what they have expressed. Hence, I will let them regale us with their experiences and recollections, instead.

It gives me great pleasure to see that the josh of the members, for the activities of the Group as well as this new initiative in the eZine, is always on the rise. The Group also made another wonderful start through initiation of imparting training to keep the ever desiring members in step with the needs of the day, and corporate establishments, and thus the first such initiative became evident through ABCT Workshop. A wonderful feedback about it forms part of this issue.

Now, two editions old, I am expecting the tempo to pick up for the forthcoming issues. I, as well as the Founding Team, would love and like to see participation of ladies and children in this effort, through their invaluable contributions.

I would also like to place on record the help rendered by Maj Vikrant Gulani from Icon Planners in designing the beautiful cover page of our eZine.

Till the next issue, happy reading...and we end this year on a great note.

Cheers to Forces Network - the Network that Works!!!

Regards,

Lt Col Ranvir Singh

# Events

## Any Body Can Tech (ABCT) Workshop - Cyber Security and Cloud Computing

BY SANGEETA THAKUR

SEM, CRO, CTA, DEVOPS, CIA, API, Asset,

Public Cloud, Dark Web, Ransomware, Social Engineering.....all these terms carry the same meaning as Verbatim!!!

Why does it make us feel disorientated? These tech jargons were conceptualised during our Armed Forces stint even as a non-technical entry, then why does it all sound Greek to us?

The world of cyber security and cloud is ever dynamic. Thousands of news and articles about the latest trends in technology are published every day, it is easy to get drowned in the sea of tech blogs, and most of us have a hard time choosing the right one.

Digital dementia or information overload, whatever we name it. The question which keeps bothering us most is, "How much, what and where to learn and upgrade the skills from?" Especially when we are seeking a well-deserved Mid/Senior level lateral entry into the corporate.

*"A gap in skills and abilities reveal a golden opportunity!"  
— Abhishek Ratna, in 'No Parking. No Halt. Success Non Stop.*

The concept of ABCT democratizes technology, by taking non-technicals to technical learning and in my opinion is a ground breaking concept. I was lucky to be part of the first training batch of ABCT.

Learning the trade secrets from Lt Col Iqbal Singh, the Master, about the paradigm shift in the cloud technology to effectively managing costs, it is almost impossible to believe that someone could make you stretch your imagination to that extreme.

Our learnings included:

- From realising the fact that Gottfried Leibniz identified binary numbers for machines in 1671 itself, to creating our own virtual machine on Microsoft Azure cloud on our own laptops.
- From the birth of Uber and Airbnb, to the thrilling success of Netflix through migration to Clouds.
- Nokia – Microsoft collaboration for digital transformation and Industry 4.0



Col Vikas Yadav, a qualified trainer from within Forces Network could show the way in helping the information security enthusiasts manage a balance between protection and access. He apprised us about the following:

- From tips to safeguard your smart phones, online transactions, emails, WiFi networks etc., to certification pathway to be a cyber security expert.
- From understanding what you compromised for the comfort and convenience of Zomato, to discovering who all hacked your email.
- From breaking news and analysis on attacks, breaches and vulnerabilities, to strategies for protecting enterprise data with guidance on setting risk management and compliance policies.

The interactive discussions had enough to explain what strategic innovation is all about. It sounds incredible as well as great that we did this all in just 17 days, which included webinars, quizzes and other DIY exercises.



Please find the take away points, if anyone's keen to ponder on the phenomenal wave called ABCT:-

1. To start with, a value for money program. While there are many players in the market I do not think there is anyone taking someone from total non-technical scratch to as far as logging into Virtual Machines remotely in the cloud. The build-up of the course curriculum was amazing starting from scratch with a gradual ascent, weekly webinars, assignments, daily quizzes and enough reading material.

2. Secondly, a small batch size ensured personalised attention to each. In a small group you learn faster and everyone is carried along. You are in a virtuous environment of constant learning and that makes all individuals in the group to up their game.

3. Thirdly, especially for many senior members (in age), this provides an extremely familiar and benign learning environment. I would have had reservations doing this course in civil with students of my children's age. Here, one could ask any question however silly, without any hesitation, which may not be possible in a setting with lots of tech savvy and younger people.

4. A big factor! it opened the eyes towards new vistas with huge opportunities for a non-technical genre in the Global IT Giants, something most defence personnel are unaware of. The program broke a lot of myths and gave us a great deal of self-belief and confidence to undertake a career in technology or use technology effectively as a leader.

After the program I am now on my way to higher levels of tech learning! Thanks to our instructors Iqbal Singh and Vikas Yadav for being our true mentors in the journey which has just begin, and a heartfelt gratitude also to all the ABCT batchmates for knowledge sharing, an exemplary model of collaborative learning which is only possible at Forces Network.

Three Cheers to ABCT! Waiting for the next series of ABCT!

***Sqn Ldr Sangeeta Thakur*** served as Meteorological Officer in IAF. She has 20 years of diversified experience in the field of Weather forecasting, Education and Airport Terminal management. She has been associated with various schools and University of repute. She was part of the operational team for overall upgradation of Ahmedabad Airport as a consultant with Airports Authority of India. She is presently pursuing a course on Strategic Innovation, digital marketing and business analytics from IIT Delhi.

# Stars of Forces Network

A Forces Network Star is a member of the Forces Network who has gone on to achieve glory in the his/her corporate/civilian avatar. The aim of this series is not just to celebrate our successes from the veteran community, which unfortunately we do not do enough, but also to inspire others. The ultimate goal is to set up a virtuous self-sustaining cycle of inspiration leading to more successes in turn inspiring many more.

BY IQBAL SINGH

## Deepankar Chaudhary Veteran

**Team Member, Global Security, Law, Security & Public Policy for a world's leading manufacturer of construction and mining equipment/engines/ locomotives**



### Military to Corporate

Deepankar was commissioned in the Indian Army in Dec 1987. He is an alumnus of Defence Services Staff College, Wellington (India) and National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla. A certified instructor in Vehicle Technology & Transport Management, and all the Small/Medium Arms Weapon Technology, with several instructional and operational appointments at few Category A Establishments, along with few prestigious and command assignments during two decades of Army stint are a few of his checkered career highlights as an Infantry Officer.

The transition to corporate started with the six-month pre-release course at XLRI, Jamshedpur in 2008 and he was a part of the Placement Team. He began his journey as a Physical Security Consultant for a startup consulting group Tricolor in Mumbai, and then to Mahindra Special Services Group (MDS) till relocating to the Global Security Team for a leading manufacturing company in Apr 2014, where he has been responsible for all neighboring countries in the AP Region on physical security matters for the organization.



## Physical Security Perception

Being an Infantry Officer, there was always a decision dilemma that security jobs in the corporate world as perceived from outside was like a glorified Head of security guards deployed at either communications, healthcare, technology, hospitality, energy, finance or manufacturing Installations in remote areas/field conditions, and one of the lowest paying job in corporate. Or, the other thought process was to open a DGR sponsored Security Guarding Agency. Even the peers, colleagues, guide and mentors during transition advocated to opt for HR, Project Management, Facilities, Hospitality, Administration, Soft Skills, Sales, Marketing, Technical which had no correlation despite knowing that our expertise lies in the field of security. The thought of security itself gave shivers down the spine as it would never be a respectable job matching Army Officer's reputation.

## Why Physical Security?

SWOT analysis and a self-introspection finally kindled the mindset to zero on onto Physical Security itself with some difference. Honing the acquired skill set in Armed Forces and converting the strength was one of the favorable option as the forces' qualifications compatibility in civil world and corporate perception was a major challenge to get some plum job other than security. Outlook of Physical Security market then in 2008, futuristic trends, likely transition from physical mode to total dependency on technology with thin line difference and major overlapping factors between information security, cyber and physical security firmed in the belief that future was here rather than re-inventing myself in the fields in which we had very superficial knowledge with contained experience and it would have taken years to reach the desired competency level in corporate.

## Principal Domain

Having done 12 years in the corporate, the services rendered and vast exposure in multiple domains of physical security, has been a major feel good factor when the corporate refers to us as SMEs on various system and services other than the guarding force.

## **Challenges and Exposures as Physical Security Risk Advisor to Organizations**

Challenges were not only limited to theft and burglary related to safeguarding people, property and assets, the more one got involved and sought responsibilities, it graduated to forensics, fraud investigations, audit, due diligence, geo political advisories, M&A involvement, surveillance networking and designing, travel advisories, blast mitigation, EPs and many more which was much beyond the laid down or so called defined boundaries of Physical Security. This was mainly attributable to keeping eyes and ears open for the changes and in security parlance doing some windows.

As the Vice Chair for Security, FSAI since Jan 2017, has been featuring as the SME during various workshops and seminars on Domestic and International circuit. As a founder member of SECONA, featured in all the seminars and workshops organized by SECONA globally at Colombo, Malaysia and Vietnam (HCMC) in 2015, 2016, 2017 respectively. On several occasions contributed as speaker as well, on disaster and crisis management.

## **Domains/Verticals of Physical Security**

As mentioned earlier, Physical Security is much beyond guns, guards and gates as perceived in the corporate world as well by the Armed Forces fraternity. In addition to the concept of managing security personnel/manpower guarding force there are scores of verticals if chosen carefully as a career can be much rewarding and satisfying.

Few of the domains which must be considered and planned for expertise are closed-circuit televisions, ACS, window and door alarms, turnstiles, bollards, blast mitigations, EP, EEP, E-Fencing and Sensor Technologies, anti-ramming devices and related technologies, video and audio eavesdropping counter measures.

## Advice to Fellow Officers

Physical security is no longer the distant cousin of logical security and would converge into one big tent. Physical security systems currently being managed in silos, as more of these devices become IP enabled enterprises, would migrate physical security to the data network and, eventually, be implemented and supported by solution providers and IT admins. Though most of these expertise will come through hands on experience in field conditions and individual decision depending on the interest tilting for the domain of choice of Physical Security. Anxiety and inhibitions for not being technically qualified to meet the changes in the field of Physical Security has to be overcome by acquiring theoretical knowledge by attending seminars/conferences/exhibitions/workshops, and going through the papers on the subject of interest. In last 12 years we have very learned Physical Security SMEs in the Forces Network who have been generously contributing their knowledge and expertise in terms of time and research papers. Technically it is the time which must be invested in the field of interest. In terms of financial investment to gain expertise in Physical Security, not much of financial portfolio has been allocated as our major strength in this field and pre-qualification is to be an average member with basic Armed Forces skill set.

Yes, gradually as we move forward to meet the future challenges, future generation exiting Armed Forces will require some certifications which are globally accredited. It will always be advisable to add on some certification in terms of PSP and CPP from ASIS to the profile.

# ForceNetPreneurs

*In this series we plan to showcase a few entrepreneur members of Forces Network who have achieved a reasonable degree of success in their business ventures. The aim being to celebrate their success as also to learn from them with a view to motivating more amongst our community to take up entrepreneurship as a full time vocation. Finally – we do need job creators in greater numbers than job seekers.*



**Maj Neelendra Chauhan**

**Major Neelendra Singh Chauhan** is the Director of City Hawks Group. As a business group it includes one Security and Facility Management company, one Training and Skills Development company, one Sports Management company, one Consultancy Firm, and one NGO.

The entrepreneurial journey started after his decision to leave Army in 2006. This was again a tough decision, more so due to his being from defence family background and no one in his family having left the service before completing the minimum service to become eligible for pension.

**Uday: What were the challenges, and how did you face them immediately after leaving the Army?**

**Neelendra:** Having decided to leave the most respected career of Army, I had to face the real world where my batchmates of MBA program had already attained some seniority in their organisations, and it was very difficult to ask them for help in finding a good job. Finally I realised that I need to earn and save some good amount to start any business, but my self-respect was coming in way to ask for funds from friends and family members. So I decided to jump on an opportunity of an overseas assignment for three years.



During this stint abroad, I met an NRI who was into restaurant business and was looking for an opportunity to start some business venture in India. It seemed that our thoughts clicked and together we decided to start a franchisee of Management Institute with a focus on Retail Management. This was in view of the talks of Walmart coming up in a big way in India. We started this venture in 2008. I was devoting full time to this venture and we were expecting to break even in two years time. However, my partner had other intentions as he wanted his family members in India to get involved in this business, so gradually the things did not go the way I planned and wanted them to. The interference by my partner was more than desired. I then realised that our mental level was different and so finally we parted ways within a year, and he decided to run the business with the help of his family members. Later on the business was closed within next six months.

**Uday: That must have been a big setback. So, how did you recover from all this?**

**Neelendra:** There were big lessons for me to learn through this bitter experience. I had lost almost all my savings, I started feeling that my partner had not been fair, and I also realised that I had not done proper due diligence before entering into this partnership, thus losing two valuable years of my life.

Nevertheless, the fighter within me did not let me lose my morale, I desperately wanted to bounce back by taking all lessons as stepping stones. Then a fauji senior advised me to register for DGR Security Agency. I did that and got some work in 2009. From this security agency I started getting some financial support but that was not enough. Finally, I decided to surrender my DGR security agency and then jump full time into Security and Facility Management business. This still continues to be my core business and now we are operating at pan India level. In between, I diversified into Training and Skills Development domain and we are now successfully running this Company along with two Army coursemates of mine.

**Uday: Having excelled in domains of your core competence, then how and why did you move into other ventures?**

**Neelendra:** I always had an innate desire to contribute socially in the form of education and employment generation for rural youth, as my roots are in feudal family in Uttar Pradesh. With that at the back of my mind, we started an NGO to accomplish this desire, and since then have been working on various issues.

I have been a huge risk taker by nature, and thus have been investing in new ventures as Angel Investor or boot strapping in some venture. Though not very successful financially, but it gives me a huge satisfaction to support some idea of youngsters, as sometimes I see my reflection in them.

Our latest venture has been in sports domain. We have developed eight acres of land area as private sports complex in Greater Noida. We are working towards making this as Centre of Excellence for Sports coaching and employment generation.

**Uday: There must have been great lessons during this tremendous entrepreneurial journey. So, what advice would you like to give to the fellow ForceNet members?**

**Neelendra:** Yes, the journey has really been challenging as well as exciting, and from from experience, I would like to share these ides with my fraternity:

- Choose your business partner very carefully.
- Do not put all your eggs in one basket.

- Do not hesitate to take risks but calculate the risks, evaluate what is the worst possible that can happen and how you would handle that.
- It's very important to have a trusted team of people with you.
- Think big, focus on the work. The money is a by product of business and it will follow.
- You have to jump into the water to learn to swim, implementation of the plan is the key to success.
- Trust people, give them freedom to take decisions and follow management by exception principles, else you will get over burdened with operational tasks. Your main role is the strategy and resources management.

*Based on inputs provided by Maj Neelendra Singh Chauhan*

*Authored by Capt Uday K Shriwas. Capt Uday is a long time member of Forces Network an ex Signals officer. He is currently VP In a major private bank based at New Delhi.*

# Gratitude

## **Forces Network - A Passion Project : A Dozen Years and Counting**

*THE FOUNDER'S PERSPECTIVE*

Its been 12 years since our Founding on 04 Dec 2007 – but it only seems like yesterday to me, how time flies! We started with only 6 members but today our count stands at 5150 members, we began with virtual conversations but now our seminars and events span across the length and breadth of India. While many today find our growth to be meteoric – the fact is that it has been slow but steady. We took 5.5 years to have the first 1000 members, later on the power of compounding kicked in. It is extremely satisfying to hear when people call us a platform of trust – even more gratifying fact is that we are the first port of call for our members in any kind of distress anywhere in the world. I would like to express my gratitude to our members for the same.

There are many who tell us today that Forces Network is a very powerful brand, honestly I find that a little strange for we have never worked towards branding consciously. In fact we have been very, very reticent and stayed away from the spotlight, have no Facebook page, did not even have a Twitter handle till a few months ago, never had a website thus far (though we are working on one now), and we have never advertised. Honestly as a Founder, I have no clue about Brand management! I now believe that strange good things can happen in a cohesive community.

The environment perceives Forces Network as a rare oasis of excellence in a surrounding desert of mediocrity. Our Members have a strong sense of affiliation and a near tribal bonding. Feedback from our members about ForceNet reads something like this, “Clarity in a noisy world”, “Building careers improving lives”, “My life changed after attending Forces Network Seminar/Workshop”. Where does all of this come from? Some people have asked me what’s the “Secret sauce” of Forces Network? Well, without any pretension let me say, “I don’t know. Truly I never thought about all this.”



The 12th year anniversary and the impending Talk that I have to deliver at the upcoming Military Literature Festival in mid December got me thinking. My thinking process is a little slow, albeit laborious. I thought and I thought “Why?” “WHY?”. I thought during my morning walks, driving to work, prior to sleeping, upon waking up, interacted with a few members and here is what I came up with.

**Purpose:** Our founding purpose I think has been quite pure and meaningful. It was also perfectly aligned with the needs of especially those leaving military service. Impact, not vanity, has always been our guiding mantra. Purpose is like a goods train, it is really hard to get started and continue but once you attain momentum it is extremely difficult to stop. In my assessment we attained momentum after nearly 6 years when we did our first event in a 5 star venue on 26 Jul 2015 at The Lalit, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. After that I feel that our trajectory changed completely.

**Focus:** While defining the Purpose is the easier part staying on course is not. Distractions are aplenty and it’s easy to lose focus and go astray. Most people would define focus as knowing what to do, however in my understanding it also means knowing what not to do. We maintained very strong focus on our objectives and it was enforced almost ruthlessly over the years, consistently. To correlate to our reality in my opinion the fact that we stuck to a single platform and did not succumb to the temptations of starting up on other “Not so serious kind” of platforms helped us stay the course. This helped us earn the image of serious professional Network.

**Passion:** Passion can be a fluffy word and it gets thrown around a lot these days. To me passion comes from people because our members are the heartbeat of Forces Network. They are the pulse and energy of the Group. We never wanted our members to be dull, lackluster or tired. We always encouraged them to be competitive, driven and full of gusto. In organizing all our events we always pull out all stops and do our very best. I have been very fortunate to have been surrounded by passionate and well meaning colleagues who have always pushed themselves to their limits putting in maximum efforts as if their lives depended upon it. In ForceNet I feel passion pervades all our endeavours and passion is like wild fire, spreads really far and fast.

**Culture:** While there maybe some very good organizations, they may even build brands, only an exceptional few create Culture. It is the most difficult road to take but for those who can stay the course, it results in solid, organic, enduring success. Changing the mindset of people can be the most difficult thing, and this I feel has been a crowning achievement of Forces Network, helping change the thinking of a vast majority of our members despite many of them being in their forties or fifties. TSOFN - The Spirit Of Forces Network is the underpinning I feel that holds all this together. This is what has led us to being an authentic, credible and a meaningfully differentiated community. We have helped people shift from a victim mindset to a champion mindset. This is something that can be easily assessed from the conversations in Forces Network today to what they were in their initial years. We believe in feeding minds and not mindless feeds.

Some of the mantras and advice that we share within the community is as below:

- From being tradition-trapped and being caught in a time warp we have encouraged our members to be progressive, strategic in their thinking and future focused.
- The future is bright as long as you redefine and reinvent yourself.
- Staying in your comfort zone will lead to mediocrity – growth comes from the discomfort of facing facts your failures, identifying your development needs and getting on with them.
- Embrace the concept of continuous learning. Learning has no age barriers. This is something we have achieved to large extent. Proof point was in evidence in the recently concluded ABCT (Any Body Can Tech ) Workshop held in Nov 2019, 25% of the batch was above the age of 50 years including superannuating Brigs. And, they all passionately learnt all about cyber security and cloud computing successfully doing lab exercise creating virtual servers in the Azure cloud and then remotely logging into them.

**Quality:** This has been a cachet for Forces Network. We based our founding philosophy on this, the only thing we shall pursue is quality – not numbers or any other vanity metric. Quality permeates through all our heart, soul and body

For those who notice – quality is baked into our very DNA. You can gauge it from our focus, the quality of our forum discussions online, our group posting guidelines, the marquee guest speakers in our seminars, the event venue, our events always start and end on time and much more.

## **Mastering the Military to Corporate (M2C) Transition Framework**

Another significant achievement is the fact that we have to a large extent mastered the art of successful M2C Transition. This has come about after years of study, research, surveys, mentoring, teaching, experimenting and seeking feedback. Today we can claim with great confidence that we have successfully created a system and a framework for transition, which if correctly followed ensures successful outcomes. We have also learnt a lot by conducting these M2C Transition Workshops right from 2016 onwards. Our core team of Trainers has not changed since then, consequently they have been enriched with a wealth of experience and deep expertise which comes from repetitive practicing. So we can say we have successfully cracked the M2C Transition code. We have conducted three public workshops since Aug 2018 at New Delhi and what is most gratifying is the fact that many participants fly in from all parts of the country to attend these workshops. Many have already reported success using our methodology.

## **Conclusion**

The journey thus far has been fulfilling and satisfying. But I think we still have miles and miles to go. We need to guide, inspire and transform more lives. Help more people unlock their true potential not only to benefit them but even the society at large. I am sanguine that our best and most productive years lie ahead of us. Of course, we cannot do it all alone we would need all the help support and cooperation of our valued members to fructify all this and more.

Long Live Forces Network!

Cheers to Forces Network – the Network that works!

**IQ**

# My Musings on the Forces Network

BY GURUSADAY BATABYAL

“You mean to say that you have never met my son?”

“How do you know that I am admitted here?”

During our limited conversation, these questions were asked to me in disbelief by the ailing father of a Lt Col when I spent some time with him in Command Hospital Kolkata early last year. To his queries I replied, “Your son flashed a mail in the Forces Network requesting if any member stationed in Kolkata could visit his father admitted in Command Hospital, and give him a first-hand feedback. So, I am here.”

After thanking me he kept quiet for a few seconds gazing at me and mumbled, “These days people hardly visit their ailing relatives, you fauzis are really different.” His heartfelt compliments to the comradeship of the Armed Forces was so humbling and touching.

I was recalling this anecdote not to pat myself on my back for this very small act, the least one could possibly do for our comrades in need but to highlight the power of Forces Network which was ideated and founded on December 4, 2007 by Lt Col Iqbal Singh, an Infantry officer from The Garhwal Rifles. And within months I too joined the group. I had first met Iqbal, then a dashing young Captain, albeit briefly in 1991, but who knew at that time that this man will sixteen years later create a history through his out of box thinking. Even at the time of joining the Forces Network in early 2008, little did I imagine that it will one day become such a potent force with members from Army, Navy and Air Force across the genders, countries, regions, and continents making it a strong global community of the defence officers, by the defence officers and for the defence officers; positioned uniquely and unparalleled without any office but occupying mind space of all.

*Forces Network indeed exemplified Khalil Gibran's profound thoughts,  
“Work is Love made visible”.*

Before this group was formed, I was already in the corporate for some years and did my humble bit individually to help few officers, JCOs and NCOs from

the services to transit to the corporate world basically by arranging/recommending suitable placements for them. However, I must acknowledge that such great thought like founding a group for the officer cadre of the Armed Forces, veterans or soon to be veterans never occurred to me. A great idea can be stillborn too unless it is nurtured with utmost care. Iqbal, ably assisted by a few active supporters like Samir Anukul, Sanjeev Hadia, ever available and spirited Uday, Meena Arora, Sajan to name a few, whose selfless dedication ensured that the newly born baby who has now stepped into teenage stayed on course.

I would like to recall its fascinating evolution process by looking at some milestones it has travelled thus far. Most important aspect of the journey was strategic vision statement of the Group. It was used as a guiding polestar, and terms of reference so religiously followed, at the same time also adapting to the new environ to suit the changing world. The journey included a new website, which has obviously modified over the years, creation of an apt logo depicting a network that truly works, cares and helps; guidelines for the membership which too were changed couple of times.

Initially people transitioning to corporate joined the group with a hope to get a suitable placement as many of them were like fish out of water struggling to get into a different kind of space. Forces Network quietly grew out to an all-encompassing outfit informing, educating, mentoring and assisting the members not only in soft-landing in the corporate, but also to change the mindset and thinking pattern of the members and industry alike. Till early 2000, the industry thought that the Armed Forces officers are fit for mainly security and administration jobs and willy-nilly many officers for compulsions or otherwise too thought alike. Except a very few, sizable numbers were employed in such roles making it a stereo-type thus restricting opportunities and un-exploring such a huge talent pool. Forces Network helped in navigating to chart the right path and encouraged officers in acquiring skill sets through discussions, guidance, knowledge sharing, assisting with materials for PMP/PPP, GMAT/GRE, CV writing workshop, and most importantly demystification of technology through ABCT (Any Body Can Tech) pursued by Iqbal with full sincerity of purpose unfolding future of Analytics and Artificial Intelligence.

By the way, I have an abiding interest in both Analytics and AI; and started analytics projects in my Company way back in 2008 when I was CEO Data-Core, though much has changed since then. Must I say that our group traversed a great journey from the era of Cloud Computing to AI. Now to connect better, Forces Network has a twitter handle, and 'ForceNeteZine' the e-magazine for thought sharing.

*Henry Ford succinctly said , "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right."*

The Group has built a platform of belief system reassuring the veterans who were/are transitioning from M2C that undying attitude of 'can do' which was so dearly held while in uniform has to be continued despite the change of operational environment through competence building. Through sharing, caring, encouraging to build new skill sets it armed its members to kiss the world without reservation breaking the barrier of stereo type moulding. Bonding of the group was further cemented through events like Annual seminars being held in Delhi/NCR since 2011 and later held in few other metros. Now a days, Annual seminar held in NCR is a much sought after signature event. Over the years these seminars matured to a different level: themes were carefully chosen keeping with the changing environmental need to stay relevant where industry bigwigs were invited to share their thoughts which was indeed a great value addition. As a sequel, industry too got to know more and more about the talent pool besides seeing few successful veterans in top roles already ensconced. Proliferation of new and positive ideas overpowered the odd negative mindset which was part of the discussion in the initial years. I could with much satisfaction see many venturing into entrepreneurship, like Cols Gaurav Sharma, Samarendra Kumar, Sanjiv Govila, Krishan Kumar Singh, Hemant Kumar, Narender Bahl, Praveen, Sanjeev, Sajan, Ravi Joshi, Maj Neel Chauhan, Capts Harsh Kumar Singh, Manoj, Vipul Choudhary and many more. Great to see how print media promoted the group with the help of Prason and Vidisha. Now we have veterans in so many different fields as Operational Heads, HR Heads, Project Heads, Marketing Heads, Vice Chancellors, Deans and other Academic Staff. Persons like Rita Gangwani, Mohammad Ali Shah and a few more are engaged as motivational speakers. Some are writers, some are into films, some one like Tapesh Sen mentoring children over telephone, Govila giving expert advice on finance during TV discussion, some one like Brig Anand writing blogs on Sensex.

And on the social side, besides sharing the official communications related to pension, ECHS etc. the group platform is facilitating with plethora of activities like matchmaking, sharing experiences on travels and tours including selection of tour operators like Colonels Travelz, and ticketing from Udd Chalo, guest room/hotel facilitation, problem solving with various agencies through member representatives working there, arranging internship for the wards and last but not the least sharing requisite inputs for work from home for the spouses. Oh!! what range! Pardon me for exclusion of names, neither space nor my inadequate knowledge of 5000+ members of the Group allow me to name all, though so deserving.

Why despite bidding adieu to the corporate five years ago I am still continuing with this Group? Well I was never too active except advising some when solicited for PhD course/foreign education or at times arranging some facilities in Kolkata and that too mostly in a private mode on one to one basis without cluttering the mail box or at times writing a detailed comment during the preliminary discussion on AI. And of course steadily appreciating and encouraging Iqbal for his stupendous work in addition to few deserving others. I have retired from the corporate but not taken sanyas from learning and keeping abreast with the happenings .It gives me a sense of living active human being to remain connected. When I visit villages and do some small bit of sessions on career opportunities, then the information gained here helps. While helping others in need at times I seek information from some members which usually is replied and honoured. In this way I serve humanity better. My humble service is also available to members if needed. And possibly in future I may pen few articles for the ForceNeteZine, being edited by Lt Col Ranvir Singh.

I also get a sense of pride observing how Forces Network influenced veterans to change their mindset, how willing they are now to acquire more knowledge and more skill sets. I enjoy witnessing power of this elite group, I was amazed to see someone staying in New Jersey/New York after reading our Group mail soliciting help for his visiting ward if needed, and someone not only meets the ward but treats him with a meal too. What a gracious gesture and commitment on the part of the officer settled in US when they did not know each other; only possibly in an old Regiment where bonding is too strong but otherwise a rarest of rare gesture. I couldn't agree more with Iqbal when he says Forces Network is a 'Platform of Trust'. Paraphrasing Field Marshal Lord

Wavell's observation on Regiment, I can say with certainty that Forces Network like a Regiment is more than an organisation, it actually is a family with its ancestors and descendants, with all its pride and its possessions, and through all its vicissitudes a strong sense of community and continuity.

Like Swami Vivekananda, I strongly believe in the essence of what Aitareya - Upanishad says in a verse, "Honeybees move constantly to give honey, birds keep moving (flying) and the sun is perpetually emitting light. So, Keep moving, keep moving". Charaiveti, Charaiveti (चरैवेति).

Taking cue out of these philosophical thoughts, may I urge brothers and sisters of the Forces Network never stop moving. Even if we cannot do much, we can at least follow those who are selflessly serving this great organisation nay a great movement!

**Col Gurusaday Batabyal** was commissioned into 3/4 GR and is a graduate of Defence Services Staff College and holds a PhD degree from Visva Bharati-Santiniketan, a century-old prestigious university founded by Rabindra Nath Tagore. He was Commander of the First Indian Contingent in UN Peacekeeping Mission Lebanon, Special Representative of Government of India in Manila (Philippines), and also MA to Deputy Chief of Army Staff. His journey with the corporate began with the appointment of CEO of a IT Company of B K Birla Group, later he was CEO of Data-Core, and Executive Director of DCPL Group. He has been member of Executive Council of CII and Bengal Chambers of Commerce and was engaged by Government of Fiji as adviser on e-governance. Since 2015 after retiring from the corporate, he is pursuing academic and research activities and occasionally working as a visiting professor teaching Theory of Strategy, International Relations in a few universities in India, Bangladesh and USA. His articles have been published in India and abroad.



# Knowing and Honing My Passion Through the Forces Network

BY BIDISHA PANDEY

“When I first heard about the Forces Network, it was through my seniors who were discussing their plans post retirement. It was lunch time and they were full of praises for this unique Google Group which was adding a lot of value to their lives. Out of curiosity, I joined the discussion and came to know that Forces Network was a group consisting of Armed Forces personnel (both serving and retired) who helped each other grow by sharing ideas and information. Being an SSC officer, due for retirement in 2021, I knew that being a part of this group would be a great help. Therefore, I was referred by my senior to be added to this group, and I became a member of the Forces Network.

Within a week of joining this group, I knew that being a part of it was the best decision I ever made. I could see people getting valuable inputs on almost any topic under the sun. Right from career guidance in fields such as Data Analytics or Safety, to getting PR in countries like Canada and Australia, there were experts in the group to guide you. The most interesting case was that of a missing piece of luggage at the Delhi International Airport, who knew that the group had the potential to solve even such emergency issues!

I was just a spectator of all this great work until the day I shared my blog post on Forces Network. I was an amateur blogger and I had my own website where I interviewed veterans who are doing well in various fields and shared their stories. I shared the link of my blog on the group thinking it might benefit those planning to get into that particular field. Not only did I get a fantastic response from the group, I also got an amazing opportunity to work with Fauji India, India's first popular format Armed Forces Magazine. Lt Col Iqbal (Founder, Forces Network), in collaboration with Capt Praseon Kumar (CEO, Fauji India) came up with this idea to feature stars of the Forces Network under the Faujis in civvy street section of the magazine, and from there on started my transition from an amateur blogger to a feature writer. Every month I interview one of the veterans in the upper echelon of the corporate world and pen down their transition journey. With every article, not only have my writing skills improved, but I have also had the opportunity to interact and learn a lot from

the best of veterans in the corporate. On 30th June 2019, I was awarded a token of appreciation by the Forces Network for my work during the 'Staying Ahead Seminar' held at Radisson Blu Hotel, Pune. It was the first award in recognition of my writing skills, a huge encouragement for a budding writer! Fauji India and Forces Network gave me a lot of visibility and I was also offered feature writing and blogging offers from other media houses later. The Forces Network helped me tremendously in pursuing my passion for writing and getting better at it.

What makes Forces Network so effective as a group is the positive and helpful nature of its members, the desire to grow collectively and the eclectic mix of people working in diverse environments who contribute and give solutions to almost every problem that any member has! It is truly a privilege to be a part of this unique group.

Three Cheers for Forces Network – the Network that WORKS!

**Lt Cdr Bidisha Pandey**, commissioned in July 2001, is a Short Service Commissioned Logistics officer currently posted at NOIC (Mah) in Mumbai. She has led the Naval Marching contingent twice on Rajpath as a part of Republic Day Parade 2014 and 2015 in New Delhi. She was 'Officer of the Guard' for International City Parade 2016 and led the entire parade consisting of naval contingents from various countries as part of International Fleet Review 2016 at Visakhapatnam. She has also participated in the iconic Trans-Atlantic Cape Town to Rio de Janeiro Ocean Sailing Race 2017 and has sailed approximately 5000 Nautical Miles in 33 days as a part of the return leg crew of INSV Mhadei from Cape Town to Goa. When she is not on duty, she is an amateur blogger who believes every individual has a story and a lot can be learnt from every story. More stories and interviews by her can be read on her blog website [www.sassyweekender.com](http://www.sassyweekender.com)

# Direct, Dil Se...

I would like to thank and give credit to IQ Sir led Forces Network for my successfully transition to Corporate and landing a role as Channel Head in an Alco Bev MNC. Specifically, my gratitude to the following Forces Network members:-

(a) Cdr Sanjay Dhingra (Retd) who introduced me to Forces Network and advised me to attend the Forces Network Seminar in Dec 2018. The seminar gave me valuable insights for transition and more importantly confidence to achieve my goals. It helped me network with other veterans, gain from their experiences and reconnect with Captain Uday K Shriwas (Retd). I was highly motivated by Mr Deep Kalra (CEO of MakeMy Trip) 10 point lecture during the seminar which I attended.

(b) Captain Uday K Shriwas (Retd) whose positivity is contagious and who helped me realize the importance and power of Personal Branding.

(c) IQ Sir, whom I met only for 20 seconds during the Seminar in Dec 2018, but who has guided me via WhatsApp and Email constantly, gave valuable inputs for my CV, salary expectations, interview tips, Tech knowledge, etc.

(d) Col Amish Chadha (Retd) for his support and helping me reach out and network in the corporate.

(e) Cdr Jagdeep 'Bobby' Ghumman, who has been a true friend, mentor and guide and taken me through this whole process of PMR, PRC to joining my new job. I will always be indeed grateful to him for his good counsel, continuous support and patient listening.

I like to mention that it was only through these Forces Network members, I was able to land a job the very next day after Pre-mature Retirement.

Thanks IQ Sir, for Forces Network.....A network that really works.

**Cdr Ashim Mahajan**

Heartiest Congratulations! I have been fortunate to have been a member from the early days of this Group.

You are rendering a yeoman's service to our fraternity through this ever evolving and progressive platform. Best wishes.

### **Col Gaurav Sharma**

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What a wonderful thing I did, to become a member of the Network long after my retirement in 1994, and now become a witness to see the 11th anniversary of our network. The network has come a long way and that too with tremendous success. All kudos to you Iqbal sa'ab on this successful journey of ours.

### **Gp Capt NK Maharishi, Veteran**

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Heartiest congratulations on the 12th Founders Day.

Thank You for creating a platform and making it reach to new heights with your zeal and dedication.

It's a platform ideated and created to bring the brethren from each region and services to support each other to stand, gallop and run in various fields of life. A platform where each one is connected through a thread called Forces Network and come forward to help each other without having met, all thanks to the network.

May the network grow and prosper and stand tall. Congratulations Sir.

With Warm Regards

**Jaideep Misra**

I used this platform to assist a Naval officer who was searching for house in Mumbai. I was vacating my house to relocate to Hyderabad. He now stays in the house I vacated at Mumbai. This could happen all because of this platform, as he had posted a query here.

I have used this platform to ask for guidance on Digital Pramaan Patra alternatives for my mother.

I have been with corporate since 2007 across Walmart, Reliance and JP Morgan Chase across Technology and P&L roles. Happy to mentor. City wise Chapter connecting using technology along with mobile app can be next level for this platform.

Thanks.

**Anil Kumar Chahar**

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**We Continue Our Journey...  
And Enter The Teens...!!!**



# Stories

## "I Love You" From Kupwara

BY AMARDEEP SINGH

**Situation in Brief.** As the title of the story says, one of the characters of the story is based at Kupwara. Kupwara, for the non Armed Forces and some of the Armed Forces readers too, is a border district in North Kashmir, in J&K. The year is 1995 and the security situation on ground is bad. The lack of communication facilities made the Hero of the story (that with all modesty will be yours truly, means me).

"What is STD?" asked a millennial.

"No its not what you think", replied the not so old man.

There was just one STD (Subscriber Trunk Dialling) booth in Kupwara town, near the Headquarters, where we could go safely. Smart ones had found friends in the BSNL exchange. Smarter ones had a link through army exchanges. Smartest ones had no one special to call.

I was newly engaged. Generally, 'newly' is prefixed to 'marriage' but you must know that I was engaged for a period of approximately two years and also belonged to the category of having had no girlfriend in the school time. National Defence Academy (NDA), though offering undergraduate courses does NOT offer all the privileges like co-ed colleges and thus can safely be termed as School Plus. Thus, I belonged to the majority of emotionally challenged people who needed to stay in touch with near and dear ones, and one's fiancée indeed topped this list.

### **You Are Just a Captain.**

The visit to Kupwara could only be on operational reasons as my Company's base was a good 30 kilometers away and the area was infested with the terrorists as also the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices ran high. The operational reasons were far and few and yours truly was a just a Captain who

could not be detailed for too many conferences at the Headquarters. As it is, the conferences that we attended, never went beyond the level of Battalion Headquarters, where we were frequently called to be given a 'piece of mind' by anyone who happened to be senior (most of the seniors did enjoy this additional task of 'taking youngsters to task', given by the CO. Oh snap!!! the story.

### **Letters, Civil Numbers etc.**

I spent all my free time in day dreaming and in writing letters to my fiancée. The replies that I received to my ten page long letters never went beyond one page and the ratio of numbers never went above 10:1. The romantic situation was really bad and so many times when I managed a chance to go to Kupwara, the person whom I wanted to talk to, happened to be away. I had to perforce talk to the whole bunch of would be's (would be mother-in-law, would be brother-in-law and would be aunt-in-law, but sadly no would be sister(s) in law). It was with sheer flash of good luck that I found an old acquaintance in the Signal Regiment and he promised me a weekly call to my would be in laws' civil number. All the phone numbers other than our internal Army numbers are called Civil Numbers, even though they are just numbers only, such racism.

However, reaching Kupwara, even electronically from my Company base was a thoroughly complicated process. We had the Battalion Exchange, then we had one at Chowkibal, then Kupwara, another one at Srinagar and finally at Jammu and from there if one was lucky, the operator would connect the Civil Number and if all the nine planets (yes in those times, we had full nine planets then including Pluto, which has been thrown out from the Solar System under some vague definition....poor guy), were aligned, my fiancée would be there to receive the call. The calls also got through at odd hours (odd signifying any time after 9 PM which was not appreciated as my would be in-laws belonged to the extreme (farthest) end of conservative families). Because of so many 'exchanges' in between, the voice quality also used to be very bad.

### **The Key to Rebecca.**

One had to thus rely on the operators to pass the message and saying 'I Love You' (which was maximum level of proximity permitted in those times) was

one hell of a task. In those crazy days, I said more 'I LOVE YOU's to men (the operators at the army signal exchanges), than to my fiancée. What hit me hard one day was the title of this story. I heard the operator saying "I Love You Madam, Sir is saying". It hurt me that the 'I love You' message that was supposed to be conveyed in 'Third Person' by the operator, was being relayed in nearly 'First Person', but then, there was no way out. The romantic in me was both excited and hurt by those relayed calls. There had to be a way around all this.

Extreme situations call for extreme measures. Thus, a new coding system was devised by yours truly. This must be the most innovative idea, even ahead of the German Cipher innovation 'Enigma' of World War II fame. I call it ahead, because Enigma's code was eventually broken by the British, while the code devised by me remains unbroken till date. (Readers must try and read 'The Key to Rebecca' by Ken Follett).

### **Beat Them At Their Own Game.**

Yes sir, communication suddenly became exciting after I prepared a list of 51 words, phrases and some complete sentences and sent one copy by post to my fiancée, and my calls through the various Army exchanges (read operators) went like this.

**Yours truly (me):** "Tell madam, 21" (code for 'I miss you' darling. 'Darling' was added for the kick).

**Operator:** "21"

**Fiancee (through many operators):** "Tell him 43" (code for 'I miss you too').

**Operator:** "43" (???)

**Me:** "12, 15, 23".

**Operator:** "12,15,23" (???)

**She:** "17, 17, 17".



**Operator (now at his wits end):** “17,17, 17” (%\$#@\*&^%\$).

Don't expect me to decipher the rest of the numbers. I told you, the code remains unbroken. The operators thus, could never understand why they could not anymore say 'I love You' in 'near First Person' to the female voice on the other end of the line.

I had beaten so many on their very own turf.

**Col Amardeep Singh, SM** commanded his Maratha Light Infantry Battalion in Manipur from 2009-2012. He has had three tenures in J&K including Siachen Glacier, UN Peace Keeping mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (North Africa). He was awarded Sena Medal for Distinguished Service in Manipur. He has also had instructor tenures at training institutions and IMA Dehradun. He was Col GS (IW) J&K and specialises in Media, Psychological Warfare and Perception Management. The officer has five published books to his credit, and is currently the Chief Consultant (Defence) at The Winning Edge, which prepares students for Defence Entrance exams. He is a regular speaker on Defence issues on TV and Radio and writes columns for national dailies and magazines.

# “SANSKAR” FROM ONE GENERATION TO OTHER

BY DINESH DUTT SHARMA

*“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”*

As I cross the threshold of the fifties, my thoughts flicker back over the years gone by and settle down on a long long ago memory which remains as sharp and clear as though it were yesterday. My grandfather, who retired from a vigorous tenure with the Railways during British period, and a five year old me, clinging to his little finger and trying valiantly to keep up with his brisk stride, till he would realise my predicament and swing me up on his powerful shoulders.

The world suddenly became insignificant from my superior vantage point. My grandfather instilled in me the seeds of discipline and spiritualism. “Early to bed and early to rise” was not a saying learnt in grammar school, it was a principle we lived day in and day out. My grandfather’s spiritual routine was another fascinating event in my little life. His day would start at 4 AM without fail, with a long walk of 6 to 7 km with only his sturdy walnut wood walking stick for company. On returning, he would have a bath from the well in the courtyard and sit for long meditation and prayers. I would also ready by then. The initial preparations for the prayer ceremony itself used to take long time. The lovingly cleaning of the temple, bathing and polishing of the idols of Lord Krishna and Raadha Ji, preparing new oil lamps and material for sacred oblations, none of it would be trusted to any servant or even to any other family member. I used to enjoy assisting him without the slightest interest in the task or any altruistic motives of spiritual discipline. Once all this was ready, the prayer service used to begin with sounding of the conch, incantation of various mantras, aarti, ringing of the bells and most important of all the distribution of prasad which was my sole aim for assisting him at that age. I cherished it and thanked both God and my grandfather.

When exactly, his discipline and spirituality transferred itself to me I do not know, but one thing is sure, that I never had any formal lessons in spirituality, discipline or values. And I am sure none of my contemporaries had any either. The values, life skills and self management which are much touted in today's schools were for us a way of life. We had a very humble word for them - "Sanskar" and it included the complete gambit of faith, humility, forgiveness, tolerance, service, care, mercy, happiness, selflessness, devotion, harmony, connectivity with the supreme Lord, love, empathy and consciousness.

Unfortunately the modern day life has become such that every individual is increasingly becoming an island with practically no human bonding. Each person seems to be encased in an insulated cocoon which cannot be permeated. Therefore the "Sanskar" which can be transmitted only through human contact/ connections are slowly and irrevocably dying. If we wish to conserve this rich legacy and pass it down to the future generations then let us all embrace the universal religion of humanity.

**"It doesn't matter how many say it cannot be done or how many people have tried it before; it's important to realize that whatever you're doing, it's your first attempt at it."**

**~Wally Amos**

*Col Dinesh Dutt Sharma was commissioned in to Army Service Corps in 1985. He has served in all corners of the Country and in prestigious appointments. He is presently on his first leg of re-employment.*