FORCENET
E-ZINE | Magazine for military veterans in the corporate
January 2022, Volume IV, Issue 01

BREAKING STEREOTYPES

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FORCENET

From the Editor

Dear Reader,

Wishing you A Very Happy New Year 2022. An exciting roller-coaster year we had!! I am happy to share the New Year's first edition. We have chosen this month's theme to be- **Breaking Stereotypes** – a norm that we have been following at Forces Network.

A Stereotype is a fixed idea or belief that many people have about an individual or group that may often be untrue or partly true. It's an expectation that people might have about every person of a particular group. Breaking free of these stereotypes, is proving that the branding is not correct.

If this year has taught us anything – it's that conventional thinking has been thrown out of the window. When the pandemic hit us in 2020, we were caught unaware and laid our best plans to waste. The stereotypical approach to crisis management was shattered. Embracing risk, out of the box thinking, hybrid ways of working are fast becoming the norm. We too have to unshackle ourselves from our stereotypical mentality and approach. There needs a paradigm shift in our thought process as we take on the post pandemic world. It is time we challenge the Status Quo.

Our own stereotypes need to be broken first. Veterans have traditionally been viewed by the industry to be 'stereotypically fit' mostly for 'traditional' roles like physical security, administration, HR and facilities. Looking at the current data that seems to be true as contemporarily veterans are over represented in these verticals vis-à-vis verticals like technology, marketing, sales, strategy, finance, PR , P&L leadership roles in corporates,

Forces Network is proud to have been at the forefront of this movement to break stereotypes and elevate not only the aspiration levels of the veterans but also the required matching skills. ABCT (Any Body Can Tech) program is a prime example of this. Several participants who very hesitatingly joined our ABCT training programs have come out with flying colours and are today occupying plum positions at the most desirable of employers globally.

The future belongs to those who prepare for it. So aspire audaciously , plan, execute and achieve for no goal is too big! Keep Unstereotyping! Forces Network shall be with you every step of the way!! In continuing with our legacy we have also broken the stereotyped cover page of our E-Zine. I do hope that the Interviews and articles in this edition motivate you to break your own stereotype and that of the environment around you. Happy reading!

Until next time, cheers to Forces Network – **"the Network that works".**

Yours Unsterotyping,
Capt. Rajesh Nair

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A NOTE FOR THE READERS

This is an interactive e-magazine, with active links on many pages, including the advertisements, which can be used by just tapping/clicking on them. For the ease of providing a feedback, such links have been provided at the end of the articles too.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed within this e-magazine are the personal opinions of the authors and interviewees. The facts and opinions appearing in the articles thus do not reflect the views of Forces Network, and Forces Network does not assume any responsibility or liability for the same.

Star of The Month

A Forces Network Star of month 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 in 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.

IN INTERACTION WITH UDAY K SHRIWAS

Capt Satender K Sighadia is a 3rd Generation Fauji, commissioned from OTA in Sep 2002 to join 15 SIKH LI. He Served for 5 years including a tenure in the UN Peacekeeping Mission. He is an alumni of MDI and a strategic Human Resource Leader with 20+ years of extensive including 10+ years of Country Leadership experience. Leading the HR function across all areas of the HR work stream with expertise in Merger & Acquisition, Change Management, Business & People Strategy conceptualization, implementation & business process integration.

Uday: Tell us something about your background prior to joining the Army, and your subsequent Army career?

Satender: I am a 3rd Generation Army BRAT - **B**orn, **R**aised **A**nd **T**ransferred, where my Grand father served the Army, my father joined as a sailor in the Navy and retired as Lt Cdr and also my sister is presently Wing Commander in the Airforce. I completed my graduation in Geography Hons. from Delhi University and passed out from OTA in Sep 2002 to join 15 SIKH LI in North East. Thereafter I went to Ethiopia & Eritrea as part of the United Nations Peace Keeping Force for one year where I got awarded with Force Commander's Citation. After UN, I was posted in Bikaner where I completed by Commandos & Young Officer's course with Instructor grading and also worked as ADC-Aide-de-camp to the General of the DIvision. My last posting was to Leh and post the same I went and joined MDI Gurgaon to complete my P.G. Diploma in Business Management.

Army Days

Uday: Give us an understanding about your role and what you are presently engaged in?

Satender: It has been almost 14 years of working in the Private Sector now where I started my work by joining Infosys as HR Manager and after working for 5.5 yrs I joined FMC in 2013 and since then have been with them. I am presently heading the HR for FMC India's commercial business.

Uday: Why did you join HR as a function and what can one expect from it?

Satender: I wanted to build upon my manpower handling experience from the Army and put it to good use. Also, I hardly had any experience in other functions such as Sales, Marketing, Supply chain, logistics etc. I could have looked at Security, Administration and project management as well, but they were not of my interest. HR as a function has varied sub-functions i.e Talent Acquisition, Compensation & Benefits, Organisation Development, employee relations, Business Partner etc.I decided to go for Business Partner function as that is a great place to start with and also is a function which works as a Single Point of Contact -SPOC between the Corporate HR and the employees and Business Heads. BPHRs also get maximum exposure to all other HR and Business. functions due to the nature of their work and are considered the top contenders to qualify for any open position available internally in the HR function.

On the question about what can you expect from HR? HR is an evolving function and has come a long way from the days of handling operational processes such as Salary disbursement, hiring and firing. It now has a seat at the table with the Business Heads in Modern Organizations and helps define the people strategy as well as work on building the culture. As an HR partner you need to provide people solutions to the business leaders based on data, be their guide in talent development to help it's business gain competitive edge over others. The operational work like salary disbursement etc. can be outsourced to third parties but not the strategic ones. Make your choice on how much time you as an HR are spending on which task.

Uday: How did you prepare yourself for the military to corporate transition?

Satender: The management course from MDI helped me a great deal in understanding the Pvt. Sector and it's various functions. It was also extremely important to be part of the team formed for interacting with the Companies and inviting them for Campus placements as we were able to generate a lot of interest in the targeted Companies and got them for Campus placement process.

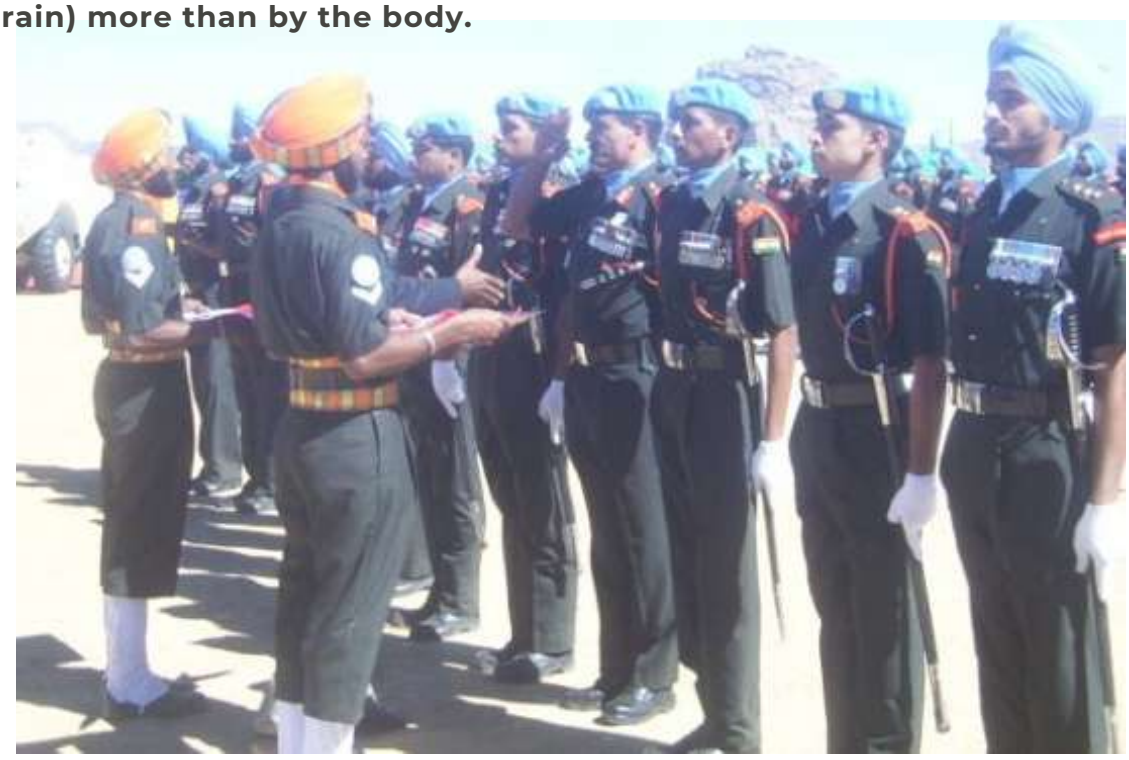
Uday: What were the challenges faced during your transition? How did you overcome the challenges?

Satender: The major challenge to overcome for any Ex-Defence Personnel is a mental one and the major skills required to overcome it are Adaptability and Learning Agility. Whether it is Hierarchal Vs Flat structure, Single line reporting Vs Matrix reporting, work timings or the missing perks of Head clerk, runner etc. Every aspect of work is

different, and we need to be open to adapt accordingly and be a quick learner. Spending the initial few months to deeply understand the deliverables helped me a great deal in smoothening my transition. Working on my Computer skills also helped me a great deal in analyzing the data and proposing solutions.

Uday: How has been your experience in the corporate domain so far?
Satender: It has been fabulous with God's grace. I have been fortunate to have worked in Companies which have a great working culture as well as an environment for employees to learn and grow.

Uday: Academy Training teaches a lot and it prepares us for our future life in uniform? What has been your biggest take away which has been really a big lesson even as you take up challenges in corporate life?
Satender: It would be difficult to pick one. Army life has given me so many life lessons and I still put them to good use in my work-life as well as personal life. Commando training was a big learning where the challenge was not a physical one but a mental one. Anyone without the Army training and who is physically fit can easily clear those obstacles. The idea is to see if you can conquer them when you are sleep deprived, mentally exhausted, and physically drained. **The game is played between the ears(brain) more than by the body.**



Being awarded with Force Commander's Citation

Uday: How important is it to understand your own expertise and then to work towards upskilling in that domain so as to have a Better Outing in corporate?
Satender: This is the first step to excel in any domain. We need to first understand our interests and then assess our strengths and areas of improvement. Based on the assessment you need to see if you require upskilling or reskilling. Learning is a continuous process and we need to keep on learning to stay relevant to our present and future needs.

Uday: The VUCA world is a huge learning experience for all of us. Could you please share how much the present world situation has impacted your professional world? And what is your insight and suggestions to our readers?

Satender: The VUCA world has always been there and it got magnified during the recession of 2008 and especially during the Covid times. Biggest lesson for me was to see that any Company -irrespective of it's size, would need to take hard calls to make sure they not only survive the tough times but also stay profitable. The Pink-slips given out by Companies were part of the harsh truth. Also, the speed of acceptance at alternate solutions-work from home, online doctor consultations etc was unbelievable during Covid times. Goes to show us that when the question is about survival, our risk-taking capacity goes up.

Uday: Do you have any other hobbies or interests, which you pursue passionately? And how?

Satender: I have always been inclined towards the creative field as well as physical fitness. I was part of Shiamak Davar's special potential batch for 10 years and have performed on stage with him. I have also participated in theater, musicals, and short films. I am also a certified trainer from New Zealand and used to take physical fitness classes during my free time.

Lion King Musical

Uday: We all have had great mentors and coaches in our Lives? Would you like to talk about them from your Journey in Fauj and in Corporate?

Satender: A coach or a mentor plays a very important role in shaping your life and you career as well. My father's teachings have played a very important part in influencing my life choices. I did not have a dedicated coach in my early professional life and would usually observe and learn from others. The good ones taught me what to do and the bad ones taught what not to do.

I have had a Mentor from the last 4 years with a plan to work on my progress and growth. I have regular interactions with him to make sure I am progressing as per the plan and to realign my approach if needed.

Uday: Top 5 Qualities that you look for in a candidate whom you interview?

Satender: Top 5 Qualities that I look in a candidate are

- Domain expertise
- Learning agility
- Adaptability
- Leadership skills
- Communication

Uday: One question that you always ask any candidate you plan to hire?

Satender: What is that you bring to the table for the Company and separates you from others.

Uday: Tell us more about your family?

Satender: My wife's name is Dr. Renu. She is practicing and is an established cosmetologist. I am blessed with two sons, Nivaan who is 6yrs old and Kian who is 3 Yrs old.

Family Time

Uday: Your views on the role played by Family, Friends and Well-Wishers in the Transition and in future assignments?

Satender: My family has played the biggest role in making me who I am. I am sure it is no different for the others. No amount of success can ever replace the warmth of family and friends as they are there for you to share your happiness and sorrows.

Hobby and Passion

Capt Uday K Shriwas *was commissioned into the Corps of Signals, and served in various theaters during his service for five years, including in a newly raised RR Battalion. Thereafter he has worked with many renowned Companies, like Kingfisher Airlines, IFB Home Appliances, JK Cement, and Yes Bank Ltd. He enjoys working in the field of Marketing, Business Development, Strategy. He also has keen interest in the field of Personal Branding.He is presently working as Regional Head - Honour First (Defence Vertical) IDFC FIRST Bank*

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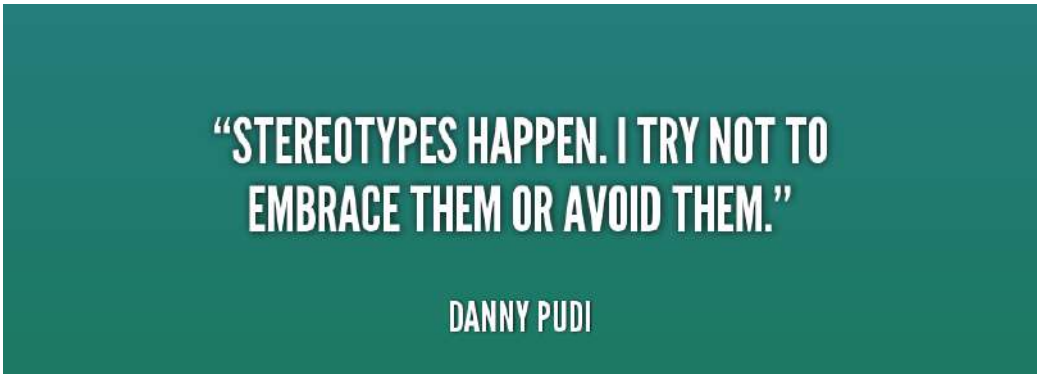


ForceNetPreneurs

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.

IN INTERACTION WITH UDAY K SHRIWAS

Capt. Praveen Dahiya, was commissioned into the regiment of Artillery in Mar 2002 from Officers Training Academy. After his short service stint, he joined the corporate world in 2007 and after working with organisations like Microsoft, Amazon, MTS and JSPL, he founded InQuest Advisories Pvt Ltd in Apr 2018. InQuest works as a Security and Fraud prevention / Investigation agency and are spread in Indian and neighbouring countries. They are now moving global.

Uday: Tell us something about your background prior to joining the Armed Forces, and your subsequent Forces career. What are the Top 5 Learning from the armed forces Career?

Praveen: I was born in a Jat farmer family at village Barona of Sonipat district, Haryana. After primary education in our village, my father took us to Chandigarh for further studies. I was an average student with not much clarity on my future till I joined the college. Infact when someone would ask about my ambition in life, I would either go blank or give some random response. A bit of clarity started pouring in when I joined NCC and there came an inspiration to join the Indian Army. I was studying economics and psychology at Govt college of Chandigarh right before I joined the force. I was fortunate to clear my SSB in the first attempt and join OTA as one of the youngest Gentlemen Cadet's of my batch.

There have been countless learning from this great institution but here are the top 5:

Aim: The first learning from the Armed forces was to learn that how to deal with any problem in life. Just like every PowerPoint presentation of armed forces starting with "The Aim" slide, I made it a point to take a pause and think of the aim at every step of my life and take decisions accordingly. Even in day to day situations this worked amazingly well for me.

Be the Driver, not a passenger: Live life to the fullest with no remorse or guilts by taking chances to work on your plans no matter how crazy these are. Just like all those who donned the Olive Greens, I had my share of few life-threatening experiences in the Army while at Siachen, Ladakh, J & K and Rajasthan. And therefore, I could gather

major lesson that live a meaningful life i.e., create, innovate, take risk and foremost work on your plans don't just make them and things will fall in place sooner or later. Take charge of your life and drive it in the direction you intend it to go. Every single moment is precious as life is extremely unpredictable and delay in taking decisions might result in regrets later. Somehow Covid crisis has given further impetus to this learning of mine.

Be a Shock absorber: Living an absolute righteous life is a myth. Even Lord Krishna played tricks for his friends and therefore another important lesson for me was to stand with friends & family irrespective of whatever is the norm at that place or time and be the true shock absorber. There's an interesting story behind this learning. During one of our Administration Inspections in Ladakh, I was performing the duties of a GPO (Gun Positioning Officer) for Q Battery. My immediate senior Capt. Ashish and a few courses junior Capt. Sanil were the GPOs of P and R batteries. We all had well-rehearsed and revised our gunnery lessons before the Guns inspection by our Brigade Commander, Brig. Mishra. He along with our CO and other unit officers marched towards the first gun of Capt. Ashish who confidently responded to all the questions asked by commander until this. When Cdr asked him about this specific part of our 105 LFG, Capt. Ashish called it out wrongly. This part which looks like a shock absorber of motorbike, is known as the balancing gear but Capt. Ashish called it a shock absorber. Brig. Mishra asks him again and after getting the same reply from Capt. Ashish he straightaway comes up to me and asks the same question. All 3 of us GPOs were standing at a comfortable audible distance and hence I knew what went wrong at Capt, Ashish's gun. But now its my turn and CO & all other unit officers were looking up to me with such optimism that Praveen will now bail us out of this blunder. With full confidence I responded, "Shock absorber, Sir". Cdr was furious by now and so were all the unit officers at such an embarrassment due to their young officer's shallow knowledge about their Guns. But Cdr didn't give up and moved up to Capt. Sanil with some hope and asked the same question. Sanil did exhibit what's called being the true shock absorber for his brothers in arm. With even more confidence, Sanil responded "Shock Absorber, sir". By now CO and other unit officers had that mild pleasing smile on the faces as they had realised what these 3 GPOs were up to, but Cdr had different plans for us all (That's the classified part).

Somewhere in ladakh

Be a part of the solution and not problem: This was the first poster I had put up in my cabin at Indiabulls after I was bombarded with the problems by my team. The incident that made this learning perpetual in my mind is sort of a secret that I am letting out today. While stationed at a location somewhere in Ladakh, we had some high-profile visitors, visiting us for lunch on their way back from some tourist destination. There were 6 adults and 4 teenagers for whom we had organised the lunch in our officer's mess. During the usual conversation about the place, our CO went a little over the board in bragging about having Yak's (a large domesticated wild ox with shaggy hair, humped shoulders, and large horns, used in Tibet as a pack animal and for its milk, meat, and hide) milk every day. The guests requested him to please arrange some milk for them to taste. Me being the food officer was in a fix now. CO confidently asked me to arrange for some milk. I had no idea what to do in this situation. It is now when my senior officer Maj. Nasir came up with a plan to fill up a glass about 70% with powdered milk, some butter and salt. The waiter was instructed aptly to specifically speak "Sahab, itna he bacha tha" (Sir, only this much was left). As we came back and occupied our chairs, CO was expecting us to express sorry for no milk being there. But there enters the waiter with a glass of milk and the look on CO's face made our day. He was petrified at the fact that what are we making the high-profile guests drink. Almost all of them tasted the milk and had their unique comments about the taste. They probably till date think that they drank Yak's milk in Ladakh. Being a part of the solution is what I learned that day, loud and clear!

Listen to the lady: Last and the most critical of all is this lesson. Though. this isn't a new learning for the universe, but I have had my first-hand experiences. All the decisions taken after my wife's due diligence have proven to be the best. There were times when I didn't listen to her and suffered. But for all other times, I had someone to blame at if it didn't work 😊 therefore taking the lady in confidence is the first major step before your march ahead. On a serious note, she is your biggest strength. One of the best decisions of my life was that i married this beautiful Iranian Bahai lady Rina Sabet Rasekh who stood with me like a rock and was the biggest support and strength at all times. Having an understanding partner who's equally adventurous in living life like you, makes your life a wonderful roller coaster of highs and lows that you live with the same zeal.

Jat & Jatni

Uday: What was the impetus for you to leave the uniformed service? And How was your Corporate journey and the valuable experience gained in your career in the private sector?

Praveen: I'll be honest that I miss my uniform almost every single day and it was a tough call even at that time. And that's why I initially applied for PC (Permanent Commission). Then for almost over a month, I had sleepless nights as I wanted to quit but had opted otherwise. During the same time, I was performing the duties of ADC (Aide-de-camp) to General Officer Commanding at Jodhpur and had seen almost the best of the Armed Forces in terms of exposure but then deep down in my mind and heart I had plans of further exploring my life and doing something more. Those sleepless nights were all about mulling over our future which was going to be full of uncertainties if I decided to quit. The strong craving to explore the world outside of our Armed forces and create/innovate something new, cleared the clouds of doubt and I went in for a change of option.

Corporate journey so far has been adventurous. I started my corporate career with Indiabulls, moved on to Videocon to MTS to Microsoft to Jindal Steel & Power before I took my first leap of faith into entrepreneurial waters. As I landed in the corporate world, I was misinformed on what to expect monetarily and therefore ended up joining at the lowest possible remunerations. It took me 3 years, a lot of learning and certifications and some job switch overs to join the group of veterans receiving high salaries (if not the highest). From early on, my time investment in positive networking paid me excellent results. Staying positive was the biggest trait that helped me at all times.

Uday: If I have to ask you about that moment when your heart said that it is time and I want to start my own venture, Please give us details about it?

Praveen: Well, I had the entrepreneurial bug twirling in my mind since the day I landed in my first job at Indiabulls and therefore this moment came a number of times but to take that plunge you sometimes need a kick. I got this kick at JSPL when I wasn't really happy with the maddening travel and poor job satisfaction due to my own aspirations / expectations. It was at this moment that I decided to give shape to my long awaiting plan of creating something of my own. This was similar to getting a kick from my Instructor at the Academy swimming pool diving board. What's interesting is that it was the only and the perfect dive I ever made in the academy pool, almost similar to my decision to dive into the entrepreneurial waters. After 3 years of amazing entrepreneurial journey with a partner, I decided to go solo and took another tough call and joined Amazon for a pre decided period of precise 7 months. By now, I knew that the generous money at amazon would lure me back into the older comfy ways of corporate life and therefore I kept it simple yet precise. Beginning 11th Sept 2017, I ensured that I resign precisely on 11th March 2018. InQuest was pioneered right after I completed my 1-month notice period in April 2018. As a first-generation entrepreneur, with no Godfather, no fat bank balances to back you up, both times there were mixed emotions of fear and hesitation but with limitless vigour just like one feels at the start line of a race. You need to be there to feel it!

Uday: Please tell us about your entrepreneurial venture? What was the vision behind starting your venture, and thereafter expanding it?

Praveen: As I said, the first venture was in partnership and therefore after a certain point I realised that I need more decision-making powers, in order for me to shape my vision into reality. InQuest was therefore pioneered with one mission i.e. to help the society at large be it businesses or individuals. We as security and Fraud Prevention / Investigation professionals have so much that can and needs to be done for the masses. In a populated country like India, LEAs (law enforcement agencies) are overburdened in their fight against crime and therefore I wanted to innovate products and services that help the masses, not just the businesses. My prior experience with companies as an employee provided huge insight on the problem areas and what actual solution looks like.

I realised there was always a gap in what companies as clients wanted and what was being served to them as solutions. For e.g. a true Background Verification entails accurate identification of risks associated with a candidate and accordingly the BGV checks must be selected whereas common practice across the industry is to have standard BGV checks for almost all roles. For e.g. a driver's BGV must include his medical condition, eye body coordination, eyesight, mental state and other physical/mental conditions etc in addition to the standard criminal and license verification check but rarely this part is covered as organisation's most of time look at meeting the minimal compliance and not maximum safety, since it comes at a cost. Likewise, organisations are usually reluctant to conduct a proactive Fraud Risk Assessment to check the health of their organisation and effectiveness of internal controls but end up spending hefty amounts on reactive measures like Investigations when things go haywire.

InQuest with its unique service offerings of proactive, interventional and reactive solutions, currently serves over 60 Multinational and domestic brands across India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The Inception

Uday: What were the challenges faced in this entrepreneurial journey? And, how did you overcome those challenges?

Praveen: The biggest challenges for me like many others have been lack of funds to scale up and paucity of time. One always runs short of liquidity and time to put things on ground. In my case, I had saved some money from my short stint at Amazon and used it to run the house for the first year as company operations were settling down. Another major challenge which remains to be there is to get passionate trained professionals on board. Forensic investigations and Due diligence is a fairly new domain which has gained momentum in the last one decade or so and therefore you don't get enough trained professionals.

Another sad part is that the ones you tap early from the educational institutes, invest in their training and up-gradation of skills, they soon abandon you to join the BIG4 consulting firms. Since many of them don't share the same level of enthusiasm and passion as you, they choose the scenic skyline from corporate buildings over massive learning, faster growth, better salaries and exposure at a startup like InQuest. These have been the major challenges for us and therefore the way to overcome has been intense research and investment in identifying the right talent for InQuest. We believe to invest heavily in our human resources right after the technology.

Uday: Would you like to share the details of your business, services offered and your strategy behind growing your company forward?

Praveen: InQuest's vision is to Inform, involve and inspire entities & people around the globe to identify/mitigate/eliminate crime, corruption, exploitation, misconduct, unethical practices, delinquencies and Frauds, through world class detection, prevention and investigation methodologies. InQuest realises that organisations constantly strive to become proactive from reactive in managing their risks. Therefore, our service offerings are structured accordingly i.e. Proactive, Interventional and Reactive.

As a part of proactive services, we provide Fraud risk assessments, Security Risk assessments, Fraud Prevention, design/implement Fraud risk management framework, Threat Intelligence and Incident management, compliance and Security Audits, FCPA and Anti Bribery & Corruption Audits, Development of policies & SOPs, Security design engineering, and imparting in-house customized or certificate program training.

Interventional services are where we assist organizations in containing any situation from reputational, security or monetary losses by acting in time to plug the gaps. Some of the services under this segment include Due Diligence of individuals, senior management, third party vendors and entities of concern. We also assist financial institutions in managing their NPAs by conducting asset and skip tracing of defaulters.

Reactive services include the Forensic Investigations, IPR investigations, Corporate frauds investigations, cyber frauds, conduct investigative interviews, digital forensics,

e-discovery, forensic accounting and personal investigations.

Finally as a part of special services, we also provide TSCM (Technical Surveillance counter measures), Executive Protection for the HNIs/Celebrities/Corp Leaders and discovery assessment/VAPT (Vulnerability Assessment penetration testing).

InQuest successfully runs the IDP (InQuest Dedicated Professionals) program for organizations requiring specialized human resources around Investigations, Security and Intelligence. Our investment in identifying, training and monitoring the performance of IDPs has garnered excellent results for many of our clients.

Awarded for Leadership in Cyber Security at CAPSI

Uday: Where do you operate from, what is your reach, and how do you tackle the challenges usually associated with this business, especially in today's competitive world?

Praveen: InQuest Head Office is in Gurgaon with regional offices at Mumbai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, and Chandigarh. As far reach is concerned, InQuest has successfully delivered work in almost all corners of India and its nearby countries. In addition to this, InQuest has the capability to undertake and deliver work in over 73 countries through our vast international network of associates. There are numerous global success stories for our esteemed clients.

This is a niche domain, and we usually compete with none other than ourselves here. There has to be consistent investment in timely upgradation of your team's skills, tools, and technology to beat the competition and stay ahead in the race against time. Risk is dynamic and evolving faster than we think, the risk mitigation measures therefore go obsolete in no time. Covid has thrown newer challenges and transformed how we perceived security & Fraud risks 2 years back. Staying ahead of time or at least keeping up pace with has become essential for us as risk consultants.

Trainings by InQuest

Uday: What is your team like, and how did you build it?
Praveen: InQuest team comprises of Forensic experts, Security professionals, CAs, Ex LEAs, Ex Armed forces personnel, Researchers, Field agents and analysts.

Building this team has been one of the most challenging tasks. More than their background, we looked for the degree of passion in each one of them. Right after joining the team InQuest, they are asked to come up with their training needs and growth plan for next 4-5 years. We focus at keeping them engaged and instil a strong feeling of belongingness for them to take charge of their respective AORs. The highest levels of professionalism, integrity and discipline are basic prerequisites for anyone to be a part of this team.

At InQuest, we pursue flexible working hours for all to maintain healthy work-life balance.

Uday: How do you plan to tackle the challenges thrown at you in this COVID-19 situation?
Praveen: My learning from the armed forces of one life and making it meaningful has come handy in tackling the challenges due to covid. Team InQuest adapted brilliantly to the newer ways of working i.e. a hybrid approach of working from home and/or office.

We have maintained zero tolerance on the violation of covid protocols at InQuest. We ensured that team InQuest is 100% vaccinated and adheres with the laid down norms. We have kept health of our employees and their family members on top priority during the covid times and shall keep so till we are completely out of this crisis. As far as business was concerned, InQuest has not laid off a single employee due to covid crisis. On the contrary many deserving ones received salary hikes of over 30% in the middle of pandemic crisis.

Uday: How have you found your entrepreneurial journey so far? Could you please share the Moments of Happiness and those moments when it was really demanding and you dug deep and faced the situation?

Praveen: It has been an enriching journey so far in every way. A lot of our plans were disrupted by the pandemic, but we stand tall with our achievements and valuable learnings. It might sound weird, but I take pleasure in disbursing salaries on the 1st of each month. I visualise and sense the happiness on the faces of my employees as they receive that notification. As an entrepreneur, these experiences are life changing and they transform you as a being. There have been times when I felt like falling back to a secure job but then I took a pause and reminded myself of "The Aim". There are times, when you don't draw a single rupee, in fact withdraw from your savings to make sure that employees get theirs on time.

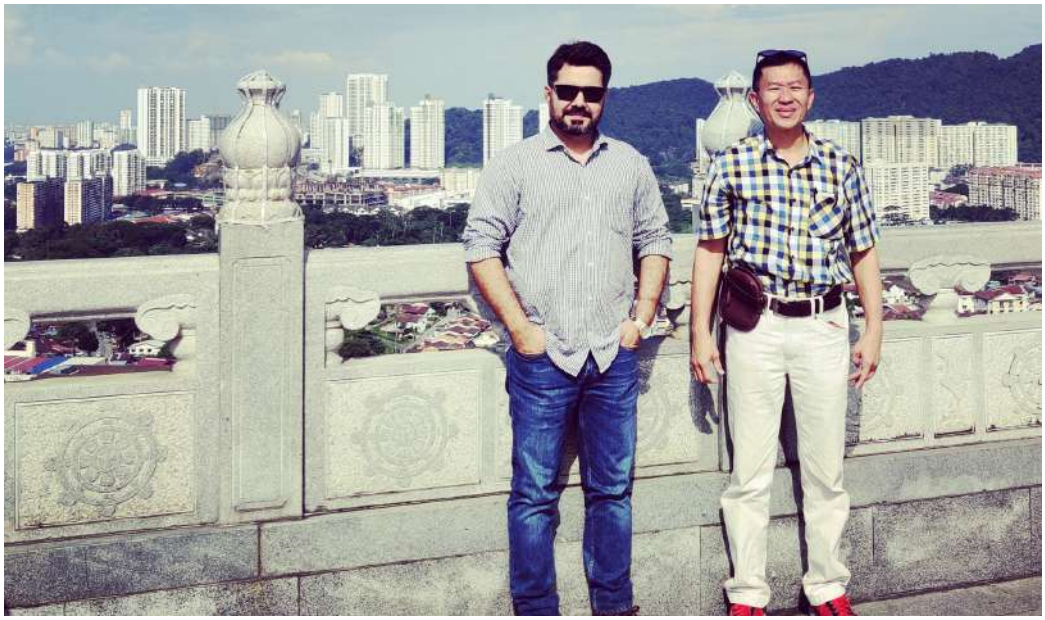
A huge moment of accomplishment and pleasant surprise was when In 2020; InQuest was Recognized as one of the best and fastest growing Risk Management companies of India, as per independent research data collated by Crunchbase and SEMRush for WELP Magazine. Further every client and business secured is a moment of happiness for an entrepreneur. I have had numerous such moments. However, the biggest one was when we secured work from an international client (worlds one of the top global brands) who had come to us after unsatisfactory work from a big consulting firm. Our successful delivery of that assignment in 2018 was a huge moment of accomplishment and happiness for us. Though delivering them the desired results was a task in itself and we had to really dig deep to get them the desired results.

International Collaborations

Uday: What are your future plans going forward?

Praveen: We are all set to launch our office in Singapore in early 2022, subject to travel restrictions in view of new covid virus strain, to address the APAC market. We shall try to strengthen our position across APAC region in Forensics, Due Dilignce and Security Risks. We hope to capitalise on our existing excellent reputation with our global clientele.

We are also developing certain unique risk management and DD products and might be exploring the investment option soon thereafter to scale up the operations.



International Partner

Uday: There must have been great lessons during this tremendous entrepreneurial journey. Can you share a few from your experience?

Praveen: Be true to yourself, invest on your personal & professional self, equip yourself with latest certifications and degrees, network positively, not just give & take relationship, help people genuinely - with no expectations or premeditated plans of payback, promote and mentor young people - the future leaders, learn the basic marketing skills - irrespective of your subject matter expertise, stay happy - a cheerful face helps in creating opportunities, spend quality time with family and live healthy.

Team Dinner - International and National Team

Uday: So, what advice would you like to give to the fellow ForceNet members who want to take up entrepreneurship?

Praveen: There's no right or wrong time to start a business, mindset is. India has over 18% of global population which means you are sitting right in the middle of the world's one of the biggest markets. Sell anything but sell it with conviction. Your conviction will be reflected by the look on your face. Have no doubt about your idea or your product. Learn about your biggest strength that you are a soldier and in a country like India where majority holds us in high regards, you already have won half the battle. I am yet to come across anyone till date who has disrespected me, especially after they realised that I am a veteran, therefore you already have a huge advantage and rest is all about your product/service, your confidence, conviction and sales pitch.

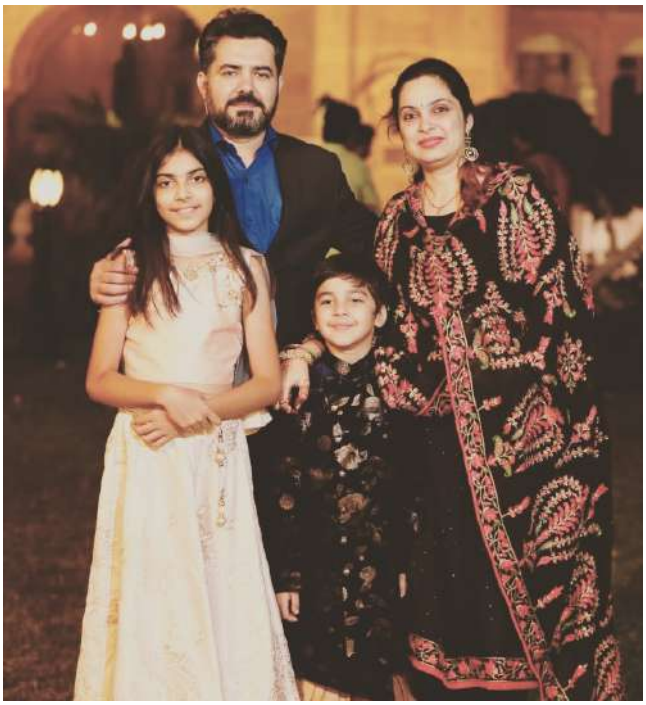
If you possess anyone of these, you can become a successful entrepreneur. If you have a good body built or a good face or a charming smile or you dress up immaculately or you speak excellent language - English/Hindi/Spanish/Urdu…. or you can sing or you can write well or you can speak well or you make people laugh or you are a good storyteller or you are good at dancing or you are as raw -desi as Udham Singh or you are polished to the core or you are simply an officer & a gentleman! Just go for it.

Currently, veteran owned businesses in USA employ over 5 million Americans and contribute almost $1 trillion to their economy annually. With 18% global population and worlds' second largest military force, we have so much to achieve together as VOBs -Veteran Owned Businesses in India.

Who better to lead successful startups in our country, than a veteran?

Uday: Tell us more about your family?

Praveen : My family includes my wife Rina Sabet Rasekh and two kids. My elder daughter is 13 yrs old and son is 9 year old. They both are studying in The Heritage school, Gurgaon. My wife is also a successful entrepreneur. Her venture is named Doodleboxx Design and Communication LLP. They help multiple brands with desired market visibility and are based out of gurgaon.



With Family

Uday: Any important projects undertaken by you over these years?

Praveen: There are many such project in Security and Forensics. Most of the forensics work is confidential in nature, hence not much can be disclosed however multiple large scale security projects have been successfully delivered across India. One such project was of managing event security where we secured a mega product launch event for Nike at Reliance Jio Park, Mumbai. It was an all-women event, right after the church attacks in Sri Lanka. inQuest was entrusted upon with the responsibility of managing end to end Security Risk for this event. With an estimated number of over 10k women attending this event, wearing sports bras - as the event was about launching of Nike Sports bra, it was distinctively challenging task for us. However, our team worked really hard to dig deep into identifying all pertinent risks and create a holistic mitigation plan. It was essential for us to have complete understanding of the total event landscape, which provided us with a unique understanding of how the security and safety function would have impacted all other functional area operations. Our experience from past enabled us to offer Nike with the world class event security & safety from completing initial strategic security reviews to developing full turnkey security infrastructure solution for this event. Some broader aspects of security covered by us included threats to the celebrities and guests, possibilities of large-scale attacks, crime against women, damage to property, Crowd control, troublesome guests and other unexpected situations.

I'll be happy to share many interesting stories and case studies in person.

"Let the world listen" - Nike Event secured by inQuest

Uday: Do you have any other hobbies or interests, which you pursue passionately? And how?

Praveen: I love trekking and bike expeditions. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to pursue these regularly but whenever I get an opportunity, I try to find some time for myself and indulge in some unadulterated me time. I love mountains and my wife loves seas and therefore we both are stuck in the plains 😊

Himalayan Odyssey -
With brother coursemate and fellow rider

With Team-
Fun Bonding activity

Capt Uday K Shriwas *was commissioned into the Corps of Signals, and served in various theaters during his service for five years, including in a newly raised RR Battalion. Thereafter he has worked with many renowned Companies, like Kingfisher Airlines, IFB Home Appliances, JK Cement, and Yes Bank Ltd. He enjoys working in the field of Marketing, Business Development, Strategy. He also has keen interest in the field of Personal Branding.He is presently working as Regional Head - Honour First (Defence Vertical) IDFC FIRST Bank*

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping HERE - Editor

Stars On The Horizon

Children of Defence Officers have the capability to excel in various fields, owing to their extensive exposure resulting from frequent transfers and change of stations. They possess very high adaptability skills, and immense potential as individuals. In this series we plan to showcase the achievements of such children of the members of Forces Network who are on the path to carve a niche for themselves through hard work, grit and determination, so as to provide adequate motivation to the others.

IN INTERACTION WITH UDAY K SHRIWAS

Dr Nishika Bhatia is an Asst Professor at the Jindal School of Banking & Finance. She is a Ph.D. in Operations Research and Management Science from the Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, UK. She has an M.Phil. in Management Science, M.Sc. in Applied Operations Research and B.Sc. in Mathematics. She has worked at the Warwick Business School, Evalueserve and IIT Delhi. She was involved in the development of a new course on financial optimisation at the Warwick Business School. In addition, she founded a mathematics newsletter in University of Delhi and continues to take interest in science communication.

Uday: Please tell us about your childhood and the life you spent in an Army environment. What's the best thing that Army life teaches you?

Nishika: Like any army kid, I have spent my childhood in small and big cities across multiple Indian states. Since I was born in Jammu, I have lived in remote areas of J&K, Pooh, Sumdo and Nowshera. I must be honest and will admit that I don't remember much of it since I was very young. But the memories of J&K have been regularly and ever so warmly narrated by parents. The memories and stories of J&K are the important ones, they have had tonnes of bravery and fear, happiness and sorrow, warmth and cold, but most importantly of love and hope. So even though I don't remember them by myself, I am so honoured to live them through the eyes of my mom and dad. I have observed J&K postings to be one of the toughest ones for any Fauji family and yet I am surprised (and proud) how every Fauji family manages to create fond memories of them for their kids.

After J&K, we were posted to Masimpur, Silchar in Assam and Ferozpur in Punjab. I believe Assam and Punjab years were my formative years and my most favourite ones too. I remember cycling around in such fun places, the most exciting one being this hill top in Masimpur which had black snakes all around. Another fun incident related to cycling happened in Firozpur Cantt, Punjab. As any other army cantt, there is a nice mall road in the Firozpur Cantt. The mall road had certain timings for the officers to go for a walk and it blocked us kids to cycle at that time. We, the army brats, felt the need to bike on the same time at the very same Mall road of Ferozpur. So a bunch of

5-6 twelve year olds got dressed neatly and marched straight to the GOC of Ferozpur Cantt. We narrated our ordeal and tension of how we must bike on the same time. The cute GOC uncle first laughed and then nicely said no to us. However, he made us an offer we couldn't refuse. He allowed us unlimited entrance to the make-shift movie hall created in the cantt. So instead of cycling, the movie Lakshya was showcased to us every other day. Also, he was kind enough to get a popcorn machine installed.

There is no doubt that army kids have the best childhood and I can go on with fauji life stories. But I must express how I am most thankful for army childhood preparing us for the life ahead. The small things like dressing neatly and greeting everyone cheerfully gets imbibed in us for life. Being late or unprepared for any meeting is not an option according to the fauji families. We never differentiate anyone based on caste, colour or gender because the Indian army doesn't and we learned from the best. In my harshest moments, when I am very close to giving up, I am reminded of my father's time at the border. It gives me strength and hope like nothing else does. Of all the amazing memories, experiences and precious lessons, the Indian army entrusts its brats with strength, bravery, courage power and the fighter spirit. It teaches us to never ever give up without a strong "Indian Army-level" damdaar fight.

"Jis khaak ke zameer me hai aatish-e-chinar,Mumkin nahi ki sard ho woh khaak-e-arjumand"
The dust that carries in its conscience the fire of the Chinar, It is impossible for that celestial dust to cool down - At warwick

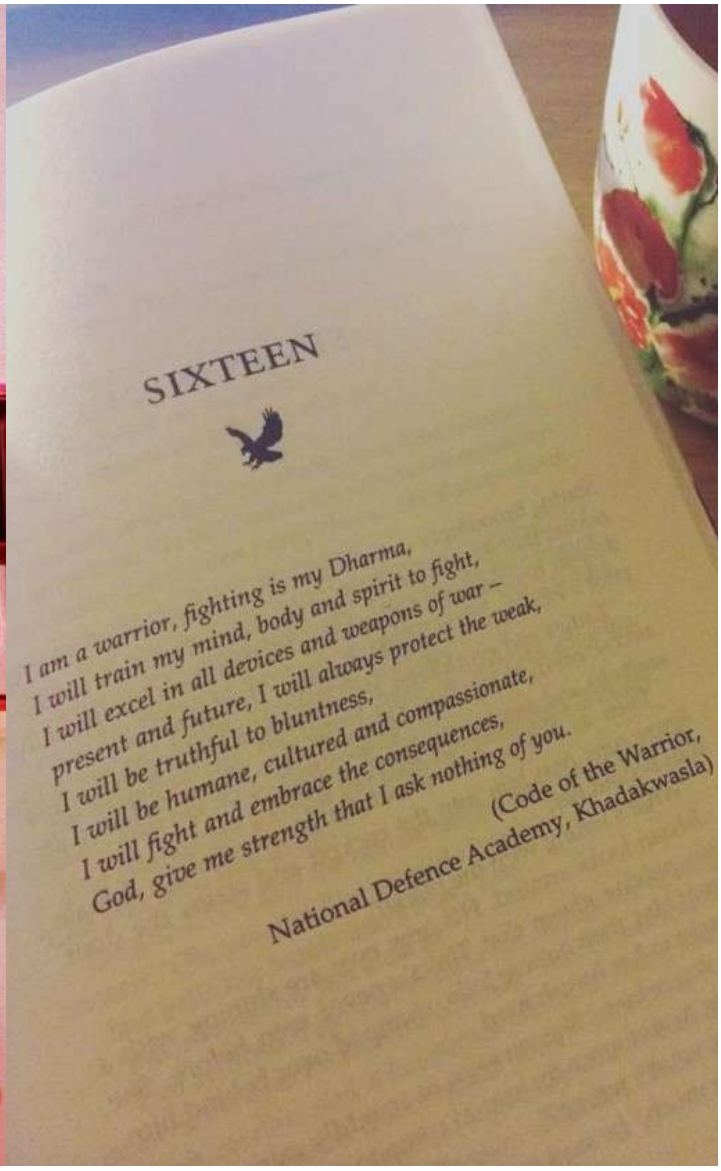
Uday: What has been your childhood dream and any specific moments from your early childhood which left an imprint?

Nishika: Living in remote places, our sources of entertainment were limited as kids. We were not used to regular television shows and were very familiar to irregular power cuts. But that never stopped our mothers from thinking of creative ways to engage us. When we were posted in Sumdo, I was probably 5 year old and I lived alone with my mother in a camp full of army officers. Since most officers had elder kids, their families were based in peace stations with good schools, making me and mom the only two females in the camp for a while. My mother fondly tells me how she used to narrate stories to me and draw the stories on big charts with lots of colours and paints. Maybe I don't remember the exact details but I remember Samdu with a lot of colour and emotions. Mom was so good at these stories that she once convinced me that the donkeys on our way to school were my friends and she used to make me say hi to them. Till date, I say hi to donkeys. The story-world created by mom pushed me towards reading when I was growing up. The cycle rides in Masimpur and Ferozpur were mostly to the school and the cantt library. A special mention and kudos to the cantt libraries for always being well stocked with an amazing collection of books, like Enid Blyton, Tinkle, Reader's digest, Harry Potter etc.

Reading was an integral part of my childhood and it certainly nudged me in the direction of my current profession. The urge to read, research and investigate the depth of anything are must-haves for anyone wanting to pursue academia.

Reading in the lawns of Miranda House

Christmas tree of books at Oxford



My Favourite Quote

Uday: As you started your college life what's been your approach (preparation and research) to get closer to your dreams?

Nishika: I believe it is very difficult to exactly know you want to do with your life, especially when you are young. I was also never sure of a lot of career-related decisions when I was in school and college. So I mostly made my decisions based on two criteria, i) will doing this add some value to my life and to life of others?, ii) will I have fun? If the answers were yes or even half yes, I would purse the path. For instance, I had science in school and most subjects - like Chemistry, Physics, scared or bored me. But the one subject which I always liked was mathematics. I know it sounds scary but I will happily let you all in a small secret of why I love mathematics. In school, I used to practice mathematics while listening to some fun music. So even though the thought of other subjects bored me, I always looked forward to study math as there was the added bonus of listening to music on my Walkman. Thus, I decided to do mathematics hons from Miranda House, Delhi University. I followed my two-criteria rule, i) did studying math added value to my life and others? Yes it did, ii) was it fun? Hell yes!

Inn Oxford university ki galliyaan ghumte ghumte Delhi university ki galliyaan yaad aa gayi..

The above picture caption sounds a little crazy but i truly felt it and I shall explain myself for making this funny statement. Oxford has a beautiful spirit, the spirit that it houses knowledge, infinite knowledge. The famous Bodleian Library of Oxford houses over 12 million items and it grows with each passing day. Oxford is this lovely silent town which speaks volumes with its lanes, buildings and just the air. I feel Oxford's biggest asset is not just the way it stores and preserves knowledge but also how it helped the academia grow and flourish. Oxford houses those very same lanes walked on by the greatest of great, the people who isolated themselves, the people who dared to differ! Over my time in the UK, I have developed some critical thoughts for both, Britain and academics, but Oxford brings in so much positivity. The much needed positivity given how negative the world often gets. I sincerely thank Oxford for being what it is, for spreading the idea of preserving, studying and analysing knowledge. DU is not even close to what Oxford is, but I believe, I could never have felt the extraordinary spirit of Oxford, had it not been for what my dear Delhi university taught me about knowledge and life.

Uday: How did you prepare for your career in the college of your choosing ?

Nishika: My time in Miranda House was a significant one! It charted out my career path in the best way possible. The advantage of being at a DU college is exposure to multiple activities, be it Science Olympiads, Mathematical fests, research competitions or dramatics, cultural fests and business conclaves. Even though I was a shy girl in school, I tried participating in a wide range of activities in college. I often failed at a lot of these competitions but those failures were very much needed. Failures taught me important stuff about myself and it helped me gain clarity which no success ever could.

Uday: It is evident that you decided to follow a certain path in your career? Any reasons?

Nishika: When I was doing my bachelors' at Miranda House, I participated in an event where we designed a business plan for a restaurant using some mathematical techniques. The idea of using mathematics to solve real-life problems intrigued me nothing else ever did! I started digging more about applied mathematics and how useful it has been in areas of business, operations, health-care, finance, policy-making and even armed forces. To be regularly aware of these math applications, a bunch of us also started a newsletter in college by the name of "Mathletics". We became very popular in DU and the newsletter is still run by the students of Miranda House.

The 3 years at Miranda House pushed me to develop a career where I can apply mathematics in solve problems. So I pursued my postgraduate degree in operational research (OR). OR uses techniques from math, statistics and computer science to analyse data and develop efficient policies. I further explored this interest by working as a research intern at IIT Delhi and ultimately bagging a PhD offer with full scholarship at the prestigious Warwick Business School in UK.

In Front of my office at Warwick

From the famous science museum in London

There was a small graphic prototype near this which taught how Enigma coded messages. The cutest thing observed - a man with two kids, 7 and 11ish, he was teaching his 11 year old how enigma coded messages. He explained the math behind as well using heavy math jargons. The 11 year old had a clueless expression at some points but she didn't stop listening, she kept asking questions till she could understand anything. Her father talks about fluid dynamics and differential equations, she kept listening, grasping as little as she could. I loved that! There was a point in my life I didn't even use to listen to other subjects, I used to just shut myself when people started talking of subjects which are not of my interest but I realised that's not how it should be. There is no harm in listening, one might just learn something new! That little 11 year old definitely inspired me that day, thank you :)

Uday: Would you like to talk about mentors and teachers who have guided you through your journey? And why do you think mentors or teachers are really important in our life?

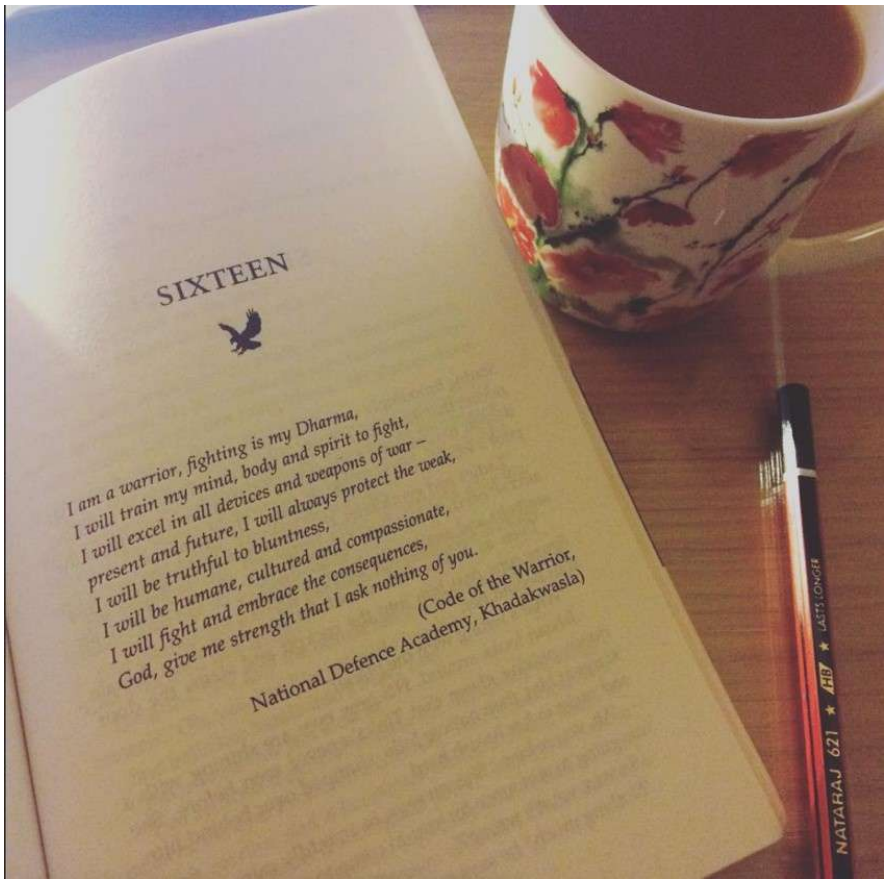
Nishika: In an economics class, I learned how economy of a nation consists of three sectors; public, private and human. Out of the three sectors, the growth of human sector is most important in any nation. This happens because without a good human sector, there is no growth possible for the private and public sectors. And there was one more important lesson from the class which has stuck with me for life; the credit of development of a good human sector solely lies in the hands of teachers and the parents. I owe my thought-process and any useful skill I have to my teachers and parents.

A special mention to my school teachers in the 13 schools I changed in my fauji life. I believe teachers in primary and secondary classes see us in our most vulnerable age, the “teen” age. A teenage life is well talked about because it is the transition period for any kid where everything is changing. Well, for Fauji teenagers, “literally” everything is changing, we are also changing schools, uniform, stations, houses and even friends. And in this funny and peculiar teenage time, it is very easy to get distracted. But a good teacher can make all the difference. I have nothing but gratitude for my teachers at all my schools and colleges. They have been an immense source of inspiration.

Uday: What is your larger goal in life, and how are you preparing for it?
Nishika: In a broad sense, I want to do work which results in solving essential problems related to government, policy-making, environment and health-care. The general aim here is to do work which enhances well-being of people. My PhD was centred around a similar topic. I used data analytical techniques to solve three different problems of perishable supply chains. I created novel techniques to resolve and improve decision-making of three different firms of the supply chain network in UK. The benefit of my research work was that the models we developed could also be applied in multiple settings as well. I hope to continue developing data analytical methodologies to solve real-life problems.

Apart from this, I also aim to do work which enriches intellectual calibre of the coming generation and I have a special interest in working towards creating opportunities for women. I am often invited to schools and colleges to encourage students to take up STEM courses where I do a special segment for girls. I plan to carry forward this interest by conducting more events and maybe building my own organisation in the near future.

Uday: There is a huge potential, especially in fauji Kids. What would be your message for them?
Nishika: Although it has been a long time since I have lived in a cantonment but even today I can spot a Fauji kid or a Fauji family from a good distance. It is such a delight to talk to them, oozing of confidence and impeccable manners, which is becoming a rarity day by day. I must say that all Fauji kids have been gifted with the opportunity to grow up like no one else, so cherish it, enjoy it and most importantly, treasure those times. These times will become an important part of your personality, it will give birth to this amazing spirit which I like to call the Fauji spirit. And I will certainly encourage the kids to keep the Fauji spirit alive because it will help you in unimaginable ways in the most unthinkable circumstances of your life to come.



This is from a cold winter night in Coventry

"Poonch, Nowshera, Manekshaw, Cariappa, Masimpur, Ferozpur, Ganganagar, DAPS, APS, Loreto, KV, St Josephs, TAPS, Mall road, no cycling on Mall Road, canteen wali maggi, bon-bon, Bryan Adams, Enid Blyton, Famous five, HP, Tinkle, Champak, watching Lakshay uncountable times at the make-shift movie hall at Ferozpur, RSOI, DSOI and i can go on and on." Have been reading Anuja Chauhan's Baaz recently and the moment i came on this, I stopped. Words that hit home, the real home.
Glimpses of all my father's postings came rushing when i read this. I have had my doubts about the hyper nationalism emerging but so thankful for belonging to a fauji family.

Uday: Would you like to tell us about your achievements in your professional world ?

Nishika: My biggest professional achievement has been my research work being published in a very reputable international journal. It is a tough process to get accepted in these journal and I managed to do it along with my PhD. I have also worked closely with retail partners in UK.

On the teaching front, I have been given the opportunity of designing courses at Warwick as well as Jindal. My courses have been a good success and I love teaching them. Since the courses are a hit at both Jindal and Warwick, I have started my own research group for students interested in studying more about data analytics.

First Diwali in UK

Christmas in Birmingham

Capt Uday K Shriwas *was commissioned into the Corps of Signals, and served in various theaters during his service for five years, including in a newly raised RR Battalion. Thereafter he has worked with many renowned Companies, like Kingfisher Airlines, IFB Home Appliances, JK Cement, and Yes Bank Ltd. He enjoys working in the field of Marketing, Business Development, Strategy. He also has keen interest in the field of Personal Branding.He is presently working as Regional Head - Honour First (Defence Vertical) IDFC FIRST Bank*

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping HERE - Editor

Amit Dalvi

ADVERTORIAL - From Hum Fauji

The Hum Fauji Initiative Money Talk

What a boon it is to be completely debt-free!

Last year, Reliance Industries was in the news because it declared itself net debt free after it raised Rs 1.68 lakh crore in less than two months. Being debt free is important not only for behemoths like Reliance Industries, but even for small businesses and us as individuals. Let's see why?

You get more money to spend: Maj Prakash Singh had a personal loan of Rs 5 lakh for which he was paying an EMI of Rs 18,000 every month. He got an insurance policy money-back and he used that plus some of his savings to pay off the high cost debt and closed the loan. Having done that, Prakash now has more money left in his hands every month and he feels that his family is livings slightly more comfortably now. Paying off your debts, especially the high cost ones, frees up your income and gives you more flexibility with your money. When you are debt free, you can spend on things you need without feeling guilty.

Makes it easier to meet your long-term goals: One of the most important benefits of being debt free is the ability to invest for long term goals. When you require less money to pay your outstanding debts, you can free up more money to invest for long term goals like children's education, house, retirement and also build an emergency fund. Basically, getting rid of your debt frees up cash that you can use to invest for the future. Closing his home loan early meant Cdr Akash Dubey could allocate more funds towards his children's education. In fact, when you have a high cost debt, investing might be counterproductive. Let us say that you are paying 10 per cent interest on a personal loan. In such a situation you would rather pay off the loan if you have money rather than invest it in an instrument that gives you a return of 7 per cent.

Helps you lead a stress-free life: It is a known fact that stress is the leading

cause of lifestyle diseases. Debt, which leads to financial worries, increases your stress levels. All of us are exposed to some level of financial stress, but too much of stress is harmful and can lead to diabetes and heart issues. So being debt free can actually save your life. If you have a home loan EMI, there is a constant worry that you may lose your house if you fail to pay your EMIs. Col SP Awasthi and his earning wife had a home loan, a car loan and also a personal loan. So, they were paying almost 50 per cent of their salaries as EMIs. The Awasthis were worried about how they would service the debt in case she lost her job or had a salary cut. Having paid off the personal loan and the car loan, now they are less stressed out.

Your credit score improves significantly: When you are debt free or even when you move towards zero debt, your credit score improves. Your credit score takes into account various factors. One of the factors is your payment history. If you have high levels of debt and have often made late payments or defaulted on your payments recently or in a regular manner, your credit score is likely to take a hit. Once you have paid off most of your debt and your debt is under control, your credit score will improve significantly. Also, if you have a high debt, you are more likely to use up more of your credit card balance. This would in turn affect your credit score adversely as it means an increased repayment burden. Being debt free or having manageable levels of debt will thus boost your credit score significantly. A good credit score in turn increases your chances of getting a loan and that too at a competitive rate of interest.

Here, one needs to understand that while the ideal situation is to be debt free, one should focus on getting rid of high cost debts like the personal loans and credit cards which fall squarely under 'bad' debt. On the other hand, 'good debt' like a home loan or an education loan is a good thing as long as repayments are made on time.

When you are planning your finances, your focus should always be on how you can pay off your debt and move towards being debt free.

After all, it directly translates to meaning that you get a good night's sleep!

Have more questions on Good Night's sleep part?

Contact us.

2nd Floor, Bimal Plaza, Near Kotak Mahindra Bank, Pocket 4 Market, Sector 11, Dwarka, New Delhi - 110075

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Tech Corner

Indian Penal Code Its Applicability With Respect To Cyber Law

BY ASHWIN PRADHAN

The Indian Penal Code (IPC) extends to the whole of India. It Contains 23 Chapters with 511 sections.

The Indian Penal Code applies to everyone including a foreigner for any violations committed in India. Under certain circumstances, the Indian Penal Code also applies to cases wherein offenses are committed abroad.

One of the most important amendments to the Indian Penal Code was the substitution of the word "document" for the word "document or electronic record" by the Information Technology Act, 2000. This automatically brought more cyber crime under the ambit of Indian Penal Code.

These include:

- Incorrect translation of the electronic record by a public servant,
- To avoid bringing a record to court,
- Destroy electronic evidence,
- Creating duplicate electronic records

The issue of defamatory websites, especially profiles on social networking websites, is punishable by section 500 of the Indian Trade Code. The penalty is imprisonment for up to 2 years and / or a fine. Problems with fake websites (phishing scams) and fake emails (email spoofing) are also addressed by Indian Penal Code.

Indian Evidence Act

The Indian Evidence Act establishes the rules to be followed in the production of evidence in a court of law.

The nature of electronic evidence is that in almost all cases where any electronic record will be produced as evidence, it will be a copy of the actual record to be shown and not the original. Recalling the extraordinary features of digital evidence, the Indian Proof of Law was amended by IT Act.

The most important amendment was the introduction of section 65B relating to the acceptance of electronic records as evidence. This section sets out the conditions that must be met before electronic information can be accepted as proof. This also provides authentication of computer output such as printers, CDs, hard disks etc.

This section states as under:
65B. (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, any information contained in an electronic record which is printed on a paper, stored, recorded or copied in optical or magnetic media produced by a computer (hereinafter referred to as the computer output) shall be deemed to be also a document, if the conditions mentioned in this section are satisfied in relation to the information and computer in question and shall be admissible in any proceedings, without further proof or production of the original, as evidence of any contents of the original or of any fact stated therein of which direct evidence would be admissible.

(2) The conditions referred to in sub-section (1) in respect of a computer output shall be the following, namely:—

(a) the computer output containing the information was produced by the computer during the period over which the computer was used regularly to store or process information for the purposes of any activities regularly carried on over that period by the person having lawful control over the use of the computer;

(b) during the said period, information of the kind contained in the electronic record or of the kind from which the information so contained is derived was regularly fed into the computer in the ordinary course of the said activities;

(c) throughout the material part of the said period, the computer was operating properly or, if not, then in respect of any period in which it was not operating properly or was out of operation during that part of the period, was not such as to affect the electronic record or the accuracy of its contents; and

(d) the information contained in the electronic record reproduces or is derived from such information fed into the computer in the ordinary course of the said activities.

(3) Where over any period, the function of storing or processing information for the purposes of any activities regularly carried on over that period as mentioned in clause (a) of sub-section (2) was regularly performed by computers, whether—

(a) by a combination of computers operating over that period; or

(b) by different computers operating in succession over that period; or

(c) by different combinations of computers operating in succession over that period; or

(d) in any other manner involving the successive operation over that period, in whatever order, of one or more computers and one or more combinations of computers.

All the computers used for that purpose during that period shall be treated for the purposes of this section as constituting a single computer; and references in this section to a computer shall be construed accordingly.

(4) In any proceedings where it is desired to give a statement in evidence by virtue of this section, a certificate doing any of the following things, that is to say,—

(a) identifying the electronic record containing the statement and describing the manner in which it was produced;

(b) giving such particulars of any device involved in the production of that electronic record as may be appropriate for the purpose of showing that the electronic record was produced by a computer;

(c) dealing with any of the matters to which the conditions mentioned in sub-section (2) relate, and purporting to be signed by a person occupying a responsible official position in relation to the operation of the relevant device or the management of the relevant activities (whichever is appropriate) shall be evidence of any matter stated in the certificate; and for the purposes of this sub-section it shall be sufficient for a matter to be stated to the best of the knowledge and belief of the person stating it.

(5) For the purposes of this section,—
(a) information shall be taken to be supplied to a computer if it is supplied thereto in any appropriate form and whether it is so supplied directly or (with or without human intervention) by means of any appropriate equipment;

(b) whether in the course of activities carried on by any official, information is supplied with a view to its being stored or processed for the purposes of those activities by a computer operated otherwise than in the course of those activities, that information, if duly supplied to that computer, shall be taken to be supplied to it in the course of those activities;

(c) a computer output shall be taken to have been produced by a computer whether it was produced by it directly or (with or without human intervention) by means of any appropriate equipment.

'Explanation.—For the purposes of this section any reference to information being derived from other information shall be a reference to its being derived therefrom by calculation, comparison or any other process.

Section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act relates to admission of electronic records as evidence in the Court of law. A computer with initial evidence is not required to be presented in court. Printed copy of record, or copy in a CD, hard disk, pen drive etc can be displayed in court. However, some conditions like a certificate in form of undertaking validating the I.P address form which the evidence was collected and the functioning of computer system. This certificate is to be provided by a manager responsible for the servers managed by service provider.

Illustration

ABCL Ltd is an internet service provider. The police are investigating a cyber crime and want information about the person of a specific IP address. They have asked ABCL for this information.

What ABCL is going to provide the police is a printout of data saved in its computer systems.

State vs. Mohd. Afzal and others

2003VIIAD(Delhi)1, 107(2003)DLT385, 2003(71)DRJ178, 2003(3)JCC1669
IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI
Reference No. 1/2003 and Crl. A. No. 43/2003
Decided On: 29.10.2003
Appellants: State
Vs.
Respondent: Mohd. Afzal and Ors.
[Alongwith Crl. A. Nos. 59 and 80/2003]
AND
Appellants: Mohd. Afzal
Vs.
Respondent: State
[Along with Crl. A. Nos. 12, 19 and 36/2003]

Summary of the case

Few terrorists attacked the Parliament residence on 13th December, 2001. Digital proof played an vital role throughout their prosecution. The accused had argued that computer systems and digital proof can effortlessly be tampered and consequently must no longer be relied upon.

The court brushed off those arguments. It stated that contesting accuracy of digital proof on grounds of misuse of device or operational failure or interpolation, need to be established by the defence. Mere theoretical and common doubts can't be cast with regards to the proof.

Background of the case

Several terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament on 13th December, 2001 intending to take as hostage or kill the Prime Minister, senior Ministers, Vice-President of India and Members of Parliament. Several terrorists were neutralized in the encounter and several individuals were apprehended in connection with the attack.

The Designated Judge of the Special Court constituted under Section 23 of the Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act, 2002 (POTA) had convicted accused. They filed an appeal in the Delhi High Court contesting the legality and validity of the trial and the sustainability of the judgment.

Digital evidence played an important role in this case. Phone CDR were heavily relied upon. A laptop, several smart media storage disks and devices were recovered from a vehicle intercepted at Srinagar pursuant to information given by two of the suspects. These articles were deposited in the police “malkhana” on 16th December, 2001. Although the laptop was deposited in the “malkhana” on 16th December, with subsequent examination of evidence it was noted that some files were written onto the laptop on 21st December.

The laptops were forensically examined by a private computer engineer and the Assistant Government Examiner of Questioned Documents, Bureau of Police Research, Hyderabad.

The laptop contained incriminatory evidence with regards to duplicate identity cards and stickers that were used by militants to gain access to the Parliament premises. Cyber forensic examination showed that the laptop was used for creating, editing and viewing image files (mostly identity cards). Evidence found on the laptop included:

- fake identity cards,
- videos of political leaders with the backdrop of parliament. These were downloaded from TV news channels,
- scanned images of valid identity card,
- image file of design of Ministry of Home Affairs car sticker,
- the game 'wolf pack' with the user name 'Ashiq'. Incidentally Ashiq was the name in one of the fake identity cards used by the militants.

Issues raised by Prosecution

- Evaluation of the Windows registry files of the suspect laptop showed that its hard disk had not been replaced.

- If the internet had been accessed through a computer then the time stamp of such access would be reflected. Additionally, if any attempt to alter the date setting of the computer, it would be reflected in the history i.e. in the REG file.

- A hard disc cannot be changed without such changes being registered in the history maintained in the REG file

- It was not possible to alter the date of any file unless the system date had been altered.

- The files written on the laptop on 21st December were "self generating and self written" system files. These were created automatically by the laptop's O.S. when the laptop was accessed by law enforcement agencies at the "malkhana".

Issues raised by the Defence

- Although the laptop was deposited in the Government "malkhana" on 16th December, some files have been written on the laptop on 21st December.

- The date setting on a computer can be edited.

- In the absence of established time setting and dependable records vis-à-vis the hard disc being original, there is no certainty that new data discovered to have been written on the hard disk at a later date, had the date stamp as of the preceding date.

- Hard disc is a replaceable component and could be formatted. If a hard disc was replaced, it would not contain the data which was stored earlier unless it was re-fed.

- The Windows registry files are editable.

- The back-up of complete suspect hard disc was not taken by the law enforcement agencies.

- The date setting on a file is related to the date setting on the computer. It is possible to modify this date.

- Information stored in a computer is on a magnetic medium which can easily be polarized. Therefore, any data in a computer can be altered if the user has relevant knowledge of the system.

- The date of last access to a file is treated differently by diverse software. The time of last access was meaningless in the absence of knowledge as to what software is used to process the file.

- Software engineers can modify and uninstall any software in the computer by removing registries thereby erasing all traces.

Points considered by the court

In any proceedings, a statement in a document produced by a computer shall not be admissible as evidence of any fact stated therein unless it is shown.

- that there are no reasonable grounds for believing that the statement is inaccurate because of improper use of the computer.

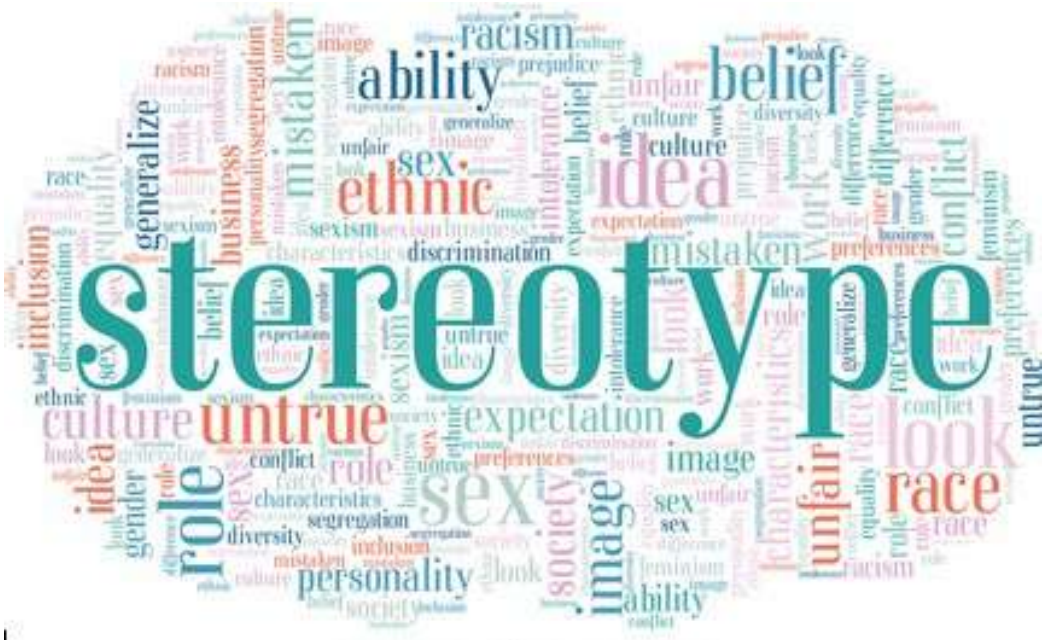
- that at all material times the computer was operating properly, or if not, that any respect in which it was not operating properly or was out of operation was not such as to affect the production of the document or the accuracy of its contents.

Conclusion of the court

If someone contests the accuracy of computer evidence on the ground of misuse of system or operating failure or interpolation, then the contender has to establish the premise for such challenge. Mere theoretical and generic doubts cannot be cast on the evidence.

Capt Ashwin Pradhan *was commissioned in Arty Sata regt. on Mar 2003. He is a IIM Graduate in Operations with over 18 years of experience in Information Security, Risk & Compliance management, Physical Security management and Facilities management. Currently working with Maersk GSC in Site Office Management team. He is a certified Dip In Cyber Law, Digital Evidence Specialist, Internet Investigation Specialist, Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA), Certified Ethical Hacker V9, Certified Information Security Consultant, Certified Professional Forensic Analyst, Certified Lead Auditor in Information Security Management System (ISMS) ISO 27001:2005.*

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping HERE - Editor



Tech Corner

Cyber Security: A Primer - Part VI

BY ATUL KUMAR

(This is going to be a six article series on the subject, starting Aug 2021. This is the last part of the Article in the series by the Author)

In the series of articles in last few months we have endeavored to understand cyber security in all its manifestations as also actions to be taken by us in this regards. In as plain a language as was possible to explain this very complex and technical subject we have covered most of the topics that are relevant to an end user of technology. This month we shall summarize the last five month's discussion as also enumerate some best practices to be followed by all of us.

What is cyber security?

To start with let's remember what we understand by cyber security. Almost everything relies on computers and the internet now and the list is almost endless. How much of your daily life relies on computers? How much of your personal information is stored either on your own computer or on some other system? Cyber security involves protecting that information by preventing, detecting, and responding to attacks and misuse of the same.

What are the risks?

There are many risks, some more serious than others. Among these dangers are viruses erasing your entire system, someone breaking into your system and altering files, someone using your computer to attack others, or someone stealing your credit card information and making unauthorized purchases. Unfortunately, there's no 100% guarantee that even with the best precautions some of these things won't happen to you, but there are steps you can take to minimize the chances.

When you visit a web site, a certain amount of information is automatically sent to the site. This information may include the IP (internet protocol) of your computer, the domain name, software application used (e.g. browser and Operating System) and information about which pages you visited, how long you stayed on a given page, and whether you came to the site from a search engine. If a web site uses cookies, the organization may be able to collect even more information, such as your browsing patterns, which include other sites you've visited. If the site you're visiting is malicious, files on your computer, as well as passwords stored in the temporary memory, may be at risk. By representing a malicious site as a legitimate one, attackers may be able to convince you to give them your address, credit card information, social security number, or other personal data.

Generally, organizations use the information that is gathered automatically for legitimate purposes, such as generating statistics about their sites or marketing. However, some sites may collect your information for malicious purposes. If attackers are able to access files, passwords, or personal information on your computer, they may be able to use this data to their advantage. The attackers may be able to steal your identity, using and abusing your personal information for financial gain.

What is at stake?

Only you can determine what is actually at stake here. If a thief steals your laptop or PDA, the most obvious loss is the machine itself. However, if the thief is able to access the information on the computer or PDA, all of the information stored on the device is at risk, as well as any additional information that could be accessed as a result of the data stored on the device itself. Even if there isn't any sensitive official information on your laptop or PDA, think of the other information at risk: information about appointments, passwords, email addresses and other contact information, personal information for online accounts, etc.

Although there are ways to physically protect your laptop, PDA, or other portable device, there is no guarantee that it won't be stolen. After all, as the name suggests, portable devices are designed to be easily transported. The theft itself is, at the very least, frustrating, inconvenient, and unnerving, but the exposure of information on the device could have serious consequences. Also, remember that any devices that are connected to the internet, especially if it is a wireless connection, are also susceptible to network attacks.

The most obvious security risk for USB drives, is that they are easily lost or stolen. If the data was not backed up, the loss of a USB drive can mean hours of lost work and the potential that the information cannot be replicated. And if the information on the drive is not encrypted, anyone who has the USB drive can access all of the data on it.

Another option is for attackers to use your USB drive to infect other computers. An attacker might infect a computer with malicious code, or malware that can detect when a USB drive is plugged into a computer. The malware then downloads malicious code onto the drive. Some attackers have also targeted electronic devices directly, infecting items such as electronic picture frames and USB drives during production. Even computers that have been turned off may be vulnerable, because a computer's memory is still active for several minutes without power. If an attacker can plug a USB drive into the computer during that time, he or she can quickly reboot the system from the USB drive and copy the computer's memory, including passwords, encryption keys, and other sensitive data, onto the drive.

How do you know your computer is infected?

When corrupting files, attackers often take advantage of vulnerabilities that they discover in the software that is used to create or open the file. These vulnerabilities may allow attackers to insert and execute malicious scripts or code, and they are not always detected. An attacker may be able to insert malicious code into any file, including common file types that you would normally consider safe like those created with word processing software, spreadsheets, or image files. After corrupting the file, an attacker may distribute it through email or post it to a web site. Depending on the type of malicious code, you may infect your computer by just opening the file.

Unfortunately, there is no particular way to identify that your computer has been infected with malicious code. Some infections may completely destroy files and shut down your computer, while others may only subtly affect your computer's normal operations. Be aware of any unusual or unexpected behaviors. If you are running anti-virus software, it may alert you that it has found malicious code on your computer. The anti-virus software may be able to clean the malicious code automatically, but if it can't, you will need to take additional steps.

Why does cyber security extend beyond computers?

Actually, the issue is not that cyber security extends beyond computers; it is that computers extend beyond traditional laptops and desktops. Many electronic devices are computers—from cell phones and PDAs to video games and car navigation systems. While computers provide increased features and functionality, they also introduce new risks. Attackers may be able to take advantage of these technological advancements to target devices previously considered "safe." For example, an attacker may be able to infect your cell phone with a virus, steal your phone or wireless service, or access the data on your PDA. Not only do these activities have implications for your personal information, but they could also have serious consequences if you store official information on the device.

Any piece of electronic equipment that uses some kind of computerized component is vulnerable to software imperfections and vulnerabilities. The risks increase if the device is connected to the internet or a network that an attacker may be able to access. Remember that a wireless connection also introduces these risks. The outside connection provides a way for an attacker to send information to or extract information from your device.

What security threats are associated with wireless networks?

As the name suggests, wireless networks, sometimes called WiFi, allow you to connect to the internet without relying on wires. If your home, office, airport, or even local coffee shop has a wireless connection, you can access the network from anywhere that is within that wireless area. Wireless networks rely on radio waves rather than wires to connect computers to the internet. A transmitter, known as a wireless access point or gateway, is wired into an internet connection. This provides a "hotspot" that transmits the connectivity over radio waves. Hotspots have identifying information, including an item called an SSID (service set identifier), that allow computers to locate them. Because wireless networks do not require a wire between a computer and the internet connection, it is possible for attackers who are within range to hijack or intercept an unprotected connection.

What are security concerns with Bluetooth?

Bluetooth is a technology that allows devices to communicate with each other without cables or wires. It is an electronics "standard," which means that manufacturers that want to include this feature have to incorporate specific requirements into their electronic devices. These specifications ensure that the devices can recognize and interact with other devices that use the Bluetooth technology. The Bluetooth technology relies on short-range radio frequency, and any device that incorporates the technology can communicate as long as it is within the required distance. The technology is often used to allow two different types of devices to communicate with each other.

Depending upon how it is configured, Bluetooth technology can be fairly secure. You can take advantage of its use of key authentication and encryption. If someone can "discover" your Bluetooth device, he or she may be able to send you unsolicited messages or abuse your Bluetooth service or worse, an attacker may be able to find a way to access or corrupt your data. One example of this type of activity is "bluesnarfing," which refers to attackers using a Bluetooth connection to steal information off of your Bluetooth device. Also, viruses or other malicious code can take advantage of Bluetooth technology to infect other devices.

Why is it important to remember that the Internet is public?

Because the internet is so accessible and contains a wealth of information, it has become a popular resource for finding information about people. It may seem less intimidating than actually interacting with other people because there is a sense of anonymity. However, you are not really anonymous when you are online, and it is just as easy for people to find information about you as it is for you to find information about them. View the internet as a novel, not a diary - Make sure you are comfortable ith anyone seeing the information you put online. Expect that people you have never met will find your page; even if you are keeping an online journal or blog, write it with the expectation that it is available for public consumption.

When deciding how much information to reveal, realize that you are broadcasting it to the world. Supplying your email address may increase the amount of spam you receive. Providing details about your hobbies, your job, your family and friends, and your past may give attackers enough information to perform a successful social engineering attack. As a general practice, let your common sense guide your decisions about what to post online. Before you publish something on the internet, determine what value it provides and consider the implications of having the information available to the public. Identity theft is an increasing problem, and the more information an attacker can gather about you, the easier it is to pretend to be you.

Using web browsers on internet

A web browser is an application that finds and displays web pages. It coordinates communication between your computer and the web server where a particular website "resides". Your web browser is your primary connection to the rest of the internet, and multiple applications may rely on your browser, or elements within your browser, to function. This makes the security settings within your browser very important. Ideally, you would set your security for the highest level possible. However, restricting certain features may limit some web pages from loading or functioning properly. The best approach is to adopt the highest level of security and only enable features when you require their functionality.

To decrease the amount of confusion surrounding different languages, there is a standard for domain names within web browsers. Domain names are included in the URL (or web address) of web site using a code known as ASCII (American Standard

Code for Information Interchange). Attackers may be able to take advantage of internationalized domain names to initiate phishing attacks. Because there are certain characters that may appear to be the same but have different ASCII codes (for example, the Cyrillic "a" and the Latin "a"), an attacker may be able to "spoof" a web page URL. Instead of going to a legitimate site, you may be directed to a malicious site, which could look identical to the real one. Some steps you can take to help determine if a site is genuine using encryption are to look for a closed padlock in the status bar at the bottom of your browser window and to look for "https:" rather than "http:" in the URL.

When you browse the Internet, information about your computer may be collected and stored as cookies. This information might be general information about your computer (such as IP address, the domain you used to connect (e.g., .edu, .com, .net), and the type of browser you used). It might also be more specific information about your browsing habits (such as the last time you visited a particular web site or your personal preferences for viewing that site). To increase your level of security, consider adjusting your privacy and security settings to block or limit cookies in your web browser. If you are using a public computer, you should make sure that cookies are disabled to prevent other people from accessing or using your personal information.

Type of cyber attack

There are various types of malicious code like Viruses, Worms, and Trojan Horses that infect your system, with the range of consequences varying and designed to perform one or more functions, including:-

- interfering with your computer's ability to process information by consuming memory or bandwidth (causing your computer to become significantly slower or even "freeze")
- installing, altering, or deleting files on your computer
- giving the attacker access to your computer
- using your computer to attack other computers

Then there is Spyware also known as "adware." It refers to a category of software that, when installed on your computer, may send you pop-up ads, redirect your browser to certain web sites, or monitor the web sites that you visit. Some extreme, invasive versions of spyware may track exactly what keys you type. Attackers may also use spyware for malicious purposes. Because of the extra processing, spyware may cause your computer to become slow or sluggish. There are also privacy implications like - What information is being gathered, who is receiving it and how is it being used?

Another category is rootkit which is a piece of software that can be installed and hidden on your computer without your knowledge. It may be included in a larger software package or installed by an attacker who has been able to take advantage of a vulnerability on your computer or has convinced you to download it. Rootkits are not necessarily malicious, but they may hide malicious activities.

Botnet is another one which in its most basic form, is simply an automated computer program, or robot. In the context of botnets, bots refer to computers that are able to be controlled by one, or many, outside sources. Your computer may be part of a botnet even though it appears to be operating normally. Botnets are often used to conduct a range of activities, from distributing spam and viruses to conducting denial-of-service attacks

Attackers can use rootkits and botnets to access and modify personal information, attack other computers, and commit other crimes, all while remaining undetected. By using multiple computers, attackers increase the range and impact of their crimes. Because each computer in a botnet can be programmed to execute the same command, an attacker can have each of them scanning multiple computers for vulnerabilities, monitoring online activity, or collecting the information entered in online forms.

Finally there are Chain Letters – Hoaxes and Urban Legends. The most serious problem is from chain letters that mask viruses or other malicious activity. But even the ones that seem harmless may have negative repercussions if you forward them:

- they consume bandwidth or space within the recipient's inbox
- you force people you know to waste time sifting through the messages and possibly taking time to verify the information
- you are spreading hype and, often, unnecessary fear and paranoia

Debunking some common myths

Myths may have been formed because of a lack of information, an assumption, knowledge of a specific case that was then generalized, or some other source. As with any myth, they are passed from one individual to another, usually because they seem legitimate enough to be true. While believing these myths may not present a direct threat, they may cause you to be more lax about your security habits.

- **Myth:** Anti-virus software and firewalls are 100% effective.
  Truth: Anti-virus software and firewalls are important elements to protecting your information. However, neither of these elements are guaranteed to protect you from an attack. Combining these technologies with good security habits is the best way to reduce your risk.

- **Myth:** Once software is installed on your computer, you do not have to worry about it anymore.
  Truth: Vendors may release patches or updated versions of software to address problems or fix vulnerabilities. You should install the patches as soon as possible; some software even offers the option to obtain updates automatically. Making sure that you have the latest virus definitions for your anti-virus software is especially important.

- **Myth:** There is nothing important on your machine, so you do not need to protect it.
  Truth: Your opinion about what is important may differ from an attacker's opinion. If you have personal or financial data on your computer, attackers may be able to collect it and use it for their own financial gain. Even if you do not store that kind of information on your computer, an attacker who can gain control of your computer may be able to use it in attacks against other people.

- **Myth:** Attackers only target people with money.
  Truth: Anyone can become a victim of identity theft. Attackers look for the biggest reward for the least amount of effort, so they typically target databases that store information about many people. If your information happens to be in the database, it could be collected and used for malicious purposes. It is important to pay attention to your credit information so that you can minimize any potential damage.

- **Myth:** When computers slow down, it means that they are old and should be replaced.

Truth: It is possible that running newer or larger software programs on an older computer could lead to slow performance, but you may just need to replace or upgrade a particular component. Another possibility is that there are other processes or programs running in the background. If your computer has suddenly become slower, you may be experiencing a denial-of-service attack or have spyware on your machine.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES

- **Keep your laptop or PDA with you at all times** - When traveling, keep your laptop with you. Meal times are optimum times for thieves to check hotel rooms for unattended laptops.

- **Lock your computer when you are away from it -** Even if you only step away from your computer for a few minutes, it's enough time for someone else to destroy or corrupt your information.

- **Password-protect your computer** - Make sure that you have to enter a password to log in to your computer or PDA. Don't choose options that allow your computer to remember passwords, don't choose passwords that thieves could easily guess, use different passwords for different programs, and take advantage of additional authentication methods. If your internet service provider (ISP) offers choices of authentication systems, look for ones that use Kerberos, challenge/response, Multi Factor Authentications like an OTP or public key encryption rather than simple passwords. Other programs, such as Apple's Keychain and Palm's Secure Desktop, use strong encryption to protect the information. These types of programs may be viable options for managing your passwords if you find you have too many to remember.

- **Consider an alarm or lock -** If you travel often or will be in a heavily populated area, you may want to consider investing in an alarm for your laptop bag or a lock to secure your laptop to a piece of furniture.

- **Back up all of your data -** Whether or not you take steps to protect yourself, there will always be a possibility that something will happen to destroy your data. Regularly backing up your data on a disk or network reduces the stress and other negative consequences that result from losing important information. Determining how often to back up your data is a personal decision. Not only will you still be able to access the information, but you'll be able to identify and report exactly what information is at risk.

- **Consider storing important data separately -** By saving your data on removable media and keeping it in a different location like on cloud you can protect your data even if your laptop is stolen.

- **Use passwords and encrypt sensitive files** - Passwords and other security features add layers of protection if used appropriately. By encrypting files, you ensure that unauthorized people can't view data even if they can physically access it. You may also want to consider options for full disk encryption, which prevents a thief from even starting your laptop without a passphrase.

- **Use and maintain anti-virus software and a firewall** - Protect yourself against viruses and Trojan horses that may steal or modify the data on your own computer and leave you vulnerable by using anti-virus software and a firewall. Make sure to keep your virus definitions up to date. Regularly scan your computer for spyware - Spyware or adware hidden in software programs may affect the performance of your computer and give attackers access to your data. Firewalls can help prevent outsiders from gaining unwanted access.

- **Avoid unused software programs** - Do not clutter your computer with unnecessary software programs. If you have programs on your computer that you do not use, consider uninstalling them. Keep software up to date - Install software patches so that attackers cannot take advantage of known problems or vulnerabilities. Many operating systems offer automatic updates. If this option is available, you should turn it on.

- **Follow your official policies** for handling and storing work-related information - If you use your computer for work-related purposes. These policies were likely established to protect proprietary information and customer data, as well as to protect you and the company from liability.

- **Dispose of sensitive information properly -** Simply deleting a file does not completely erase it. To ensure that an attacker cannot access these files, make sure that you adequately erase sensitive files and destroy removable media.

- **Disconnect your computer** from the Internet when you aren't using it. The likelihood that attackers or viruses scanning the network for available computers will target your computer becomes much higher if your computer is always connected.

- **Evaluate your security settings -** Most software, including browsers and email programs, offers a variety of features that you can tailor to meet your needs and requirements. It is important to examine the settings, particularly the security settings, and select options that meet your needs without putting you at increased risk. It is especially important to check the settings for software that connects to the internet (browsers, email clients, etc.). Apply the highest level of security available that still gives you the functionality you need. To make sure that other sites are not collecting personal information about you without your knowledge, choose to only allow cookies for the web site you are visiting; block or limit cookies from a third-party. If you are using a public computer, you should make sure that cookies are disabled to prevent other people from accessing or using your personal information

- **Don't click on links within pop-up windows -** Because pop-up windows are often a product of spyware, clicking on the window may install spyware software on your computer. To close the pop-up window, click on the "X" icon in the title bar instead of a "close" link within the window.

- **Choose "no" when asked unexpected questions -** Be wary of unexpected dialog boxes asking whether you want to run a particular program or perform another type of task. Always select "no" or "cancel," or close the dialog box by clicking the "X" icon in the title bar.

- **Be wary of free downloadable software -** There are many sites that offer customized toolbars or other features that appeal to users. Don't download programs from sites you don't trust, and realize that you may be exposing your computer to spyware by downloading some of these programs.

- **Don't follow email links claiming to offer anti-spyware software -** Like email viruses, the links may serve the opposite purpose and actually install the spyware it claims to be eliminating.

- **Adjust your browser preferences / settings -** to limit pop-up windows and cookies by reducing or preventing scripting or active content and to only allow cookies for the web site you are visiting.

- **Be wary of unsolicited attachments -** even from people you know - Just because an email message looks like it came from your mom, friend, or boss doesn't mean that it did. Many viruses can "spoof" the return address, making it look like the message came from someone else. Use caution with email attachments especially if they are from people you do not know. If you decide to open an email attachment, scan it for viruses first.

- **Report messages as spam -** Most email clients offer an option to report a message as spam or junk. If yours has that option, take advantage of it. Reporting messages as spam or junk helps to train the mail filter so that the messages aren't delivered to your inbox. However, check your junk or spam folders occasionally to look for legitimate messages that were incorrectly classified as spam.

- **Try to verify the identity of the person** you are talking to in a chat room if you need to have a degree of trust in that person, either because you are sharing certain types of information or being asked to take some action like following a link or running a program. Don't believe everything you read - The information or advice you receive in a chat room or by IM may be false or, worse, malicious.

- **Do not provide personal information** or information about your organization, including its structure or networks, unless you are certain of a person's authority to have the information. Do not reveal personal or financial information in email, and do not respond to email solicitations for this information.

- **Typing a URL into a browser -** rather than clicking a link within a web page or email message will minimize your risk. By doing this, you are more likely to visit the legitimate site rather than a malicious site that substitutes similar-looking characters Pay attention to the URL of a website. Malicious websites may look identical to a legitimate site, but the URL may use a variation in spelling (e.g., Applle instead of Apple) or a different domain (e.g., .com instead of .net). Be wary of downloadable files from web sites that you do not trust. If you are getting the files from a supposedly secure site, look for a web site certificate. Turn off the option to automatically download attachments.

- **Remember that the internet is a public resource -** Only post information you are comfortable with anyone seeing. This includes information and photos in your profile and in blogs and other forums. Limit the amount of personal information you post - Do not post information that would make you vulnerable, such as your address or information about your schedule or routine.

- **Be wary of strangers -** The internet makes it easy for people to misrepresent their identities and motives. Consider limiting the people who are allowed to contact you on these sites. Don't believe everything you read online. People may post false or misleading information about various topics, including their own identities.

- **Use strong passwords -** Protect your account with passwords that cannot easily be guessed. If your password is compromised, someone else may be able to access your account and pretend to be you.

- **Use a credit card -** There are laws to limit your liability for fraudulent credit card charges, and you may not have the same level of protection for your debit card. Additionally, because a debit card draws money directly from your bank account, unauthorized charges could leave you with insufficient funds to pay other bills. You can further minimize damage by using a single credit card with a low credit line for all of your online purchases.

- **Check your statements -** Keep a record of your purchases and copies of confirmation pages, and compare them to your bank statements. If there is a discrepancy, report it immediately.

- **Change default passwords -** Most network devices, including wireless access points, are pre-configured with default administrator passwords to simplify setup. These default passwords are easily found online, so they don't provide any protection. Changing default passwords makes it harder for attackers to take control of the device.

- **Restrict access -** Only allow authorized users to access your network. Each piece of hardware connected to a network has a MAC (media access control) address. You can restrict or allow access to your network by filtering MAC addresses. Consult your user documentation to get specific information about enabling these features. There are also several technologies available that require wireless users to authenticate before accessing the network.

- **Protect your SSID -** To avoid outsiders easily accessing your network, avoid publicizing your SSID. Consult your user documentation to see if you can change the default SSID to make it more difficult to guess.

To conclude it is strongly recommended to keep in mind fundamental rules of using computers and networks and follow above best practices when using your IT devices at home or in office. Cyber security is more a state of mind than anything else. Remember in the chain it's you who is the weakest link so Beware and Be Aware.

Col (Dr) Atul Kumar, psc *was commissioned in Army Ordnance Corps in June 1988. During his 31 years of distinguished career he has tenanted varied regimental, staff and operational assignments. Qualified in armament and ammunition technical activities, he is an alumnus of DSSC Wellington and possesses Masters in Science, Computers and Business Management as well as Doctorate in Strategic Studies. He was awarded COAS and VCOAS Commendation Cards for contribution in the field of ERP implementation in the Army. He is a voracious reader and an avid writer whose articles have been awarded and published in various journals. Currently he is working in Deloitte India as Director Enterprise Technology and also visits institutions like IIMB, JIMS and CMM as guest faculty.*

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Tech Corner

CYBERSECURITY: SMART CHOICE AS A SECOND CAREER

BY P AANAND NAIDU

SolarWinds Hack Grabs Senate Spotlight With CEO in the Hot Seat- Bloomberg February 2021
Executive Order aims to protect software supply chains- Reuters' June 2021
Unified Cyber Security Task Force by March (in India)- ET December 2021

Cyber threats, the newest global security challenge, increasingly compromise Critical Infrastructures and Key Resources and they are directly linked to human security. As per a recent job portal study in India, reported in Business Standard 04-08-2021, India will be short of 35 Lakh cybersecurity jobs by year-end 2021. As per a NASSCOM study Indian cybersecurity services industry would grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 21 per cent to touch $13.6 b by 2025. There are more than 30 cyber security unicorns today.

Apart from offering competitive pay and excellent growth opportunities, cyber security jobs also offer security, exciting day-to-day tasks and a chance to make a difference to the organisation. Work from Home and Work from anywhere have been very common in this field making it very attractive even to women. Cyber security opportunities are global, sector agnostic and recession proof.

Most of the veterans transitioning to civilian life want to do something totally different than they did while on active duty, according to LinkedIn's recent Veteran Opportunity Report. A person with sound knowledge of strategic planning, swift decision making, impeccable character and discipline and reasonable experience of military career should be a perfect fit for cyber security professional .

The non-military workforce is built on certifications and career training, and not all veterans have a specialisation in new technologies. No matter how much more real-life experience and personal character a veteran might bring to the table, without the right credentials, they may not get a job that puts their extensive training to use. On the other hand, veterans bring a different set of value addition like trust, integrity honesty and more importantly discipline with them. Add some useful and timely certifications, veterans can contribute a lot in cyber security management.

Information technology companies will definitely benefit if they hire these seasoned professionals into cyber security . Whether it is a data breach, ransomware, or any form of systems' attack, cybersecurity professionals are on the front lines to protect and minimize threats because Cybersecurity is a high-stakes field with mission critical operations to protect businesses from cyberattacks. They actively work to ensure the security of their information systems, making sure no outsider can gain access.

People in forces have been defending the country by assuring national security. Similarly network security requires military tactics for active, thoughtful, and rapid response. Veterans are natural fit for this intense environment, and may even be the best with their abilities in mentoring teams in times of crisis. In combat, this means anticipating the tactics and next steps of an enemy organization. In cybersecurity jobs, it means doing the same against tens of thousands of hostile state sponsored organizations or individuals.

The military mindset, mentorship and focus on outcomes will help other employees of the organisation do better as they lead by example. This field is certainly exciting, and suits because of our adaptability to new challenges every day, it is a smart choice as a second career.

While India has been a major supplier of human force for the IT and ITES industries in the world, 75% of the cyber defenders as of 2021 are in USA while the next highest concentration is in Israel. There is an urgent need and a moral responsibility on India to create foot soldiers and managers in cyber security to protect its own cyber assets as well as to cater for the external demand. All this augurs well for the veterans, especially those re-attiring early to choose cyber security as a career.

Forces network and Information Sharing and Analysis Centre have jointly hosted a webinar recently on the subject. The success of the event and the enthusiasm of the participants indicated their willingness to move towards cybersecurity as their preferred destination in the civvy streets. All that great transition needs is to undergo short term courses on corporate ethics to have an understanding of world outside the chamber, and specialisation courses like Basic Information Security officers course or any other course that suits the technical aptitude in the specialised skills like threat management, reconnaissance, bug bounty research, vulnerability assessment penetration testing, digital forensics etc. There are some techno-managerial programs like Cyber Security Governance or National Cyber Security Scholar etc which are open to experienced professionals. It is pertinent that Forces Network and ISAC are collaborating in providing these training programs with hands-on practicals (many of them recognised by the Min of Edn, GoI under AICTE NEAT2.0 program), at concessional fees. A bouquet of programs have been identified as useful for the transition into the cyber security field. Many serving Short Service and Permanent Commissioned officers in their last year of service and veterans have already commenced their training.

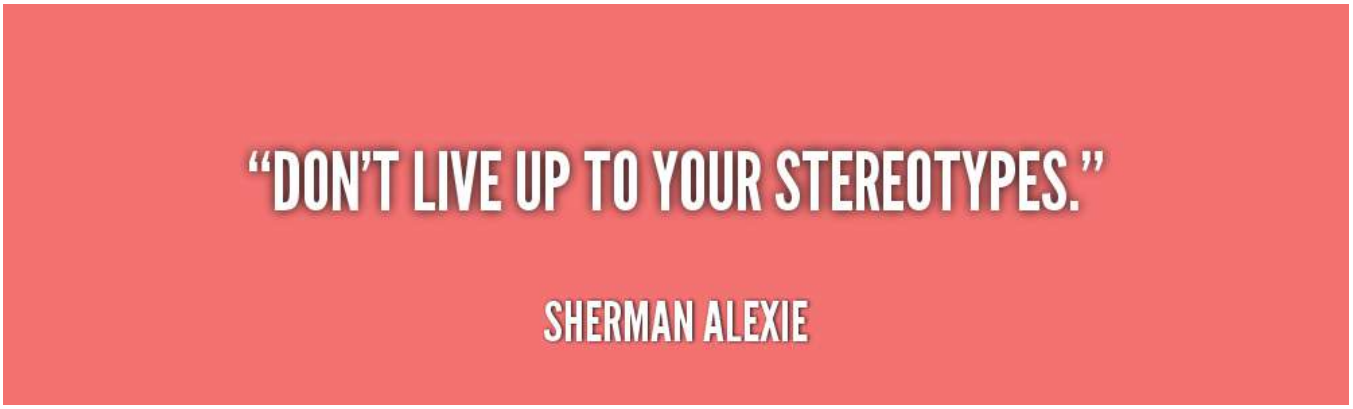
Non-technical veterans need not feel left out as the requirement of serious technical skills are essential only in a few domains. Many job roles like the governance and risk mitigation in the MSSPs, Audit firms, Cyber Insurance companies etc can be performed easily by the non-tech veterans as well. In fact there is a unique convergence of some functions in physical and information security job roles that require basic knowledge of cyber security even for the physical security officers.

The job roles up for grabs are dependent on the certifications and experience and can be that of a Bug Bounty Researcher, SOC Analyst, SOC Manager, Reverse Engineer, Threat Manager, Pentester, Forensicator, GRC professional, Cyber Psychologist, Cyber Lawyer, Auditor, Cyber Security Consultant, CISO etc. Offensive operations can be an attractive choice for veterans. There are many opportunities for freelancing as well.

A career in Cyber security offers a smooth transition from the life of a warrior to a cyber warrior and gives immense job satisfaction apart from a good pay package. The knowledge of strategy, attention to details and mindset of perseverance places the military personnel in an advantageous position.

Group Captain P Aanand Naidu, *has served the IAF for 25 years before retiring from the post of Director Personnel at Air Hq and has served as Additional Director General in Prasar Baharti for 5 years. He is presently one of the Directors in ISAC (www.isacindia.org), Cyberange (www.cyberange.io) and Clean Exit (www.cleanexit.io)*

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping HERE - Editor



Members Speak

Breaking Yet Another Stereotypes

Dear Veterans,

I would like to really thank Forces Network through which we were able to place 19 Veterans (members of Forces Network) as expatriate employees in Nigeria since 2020.

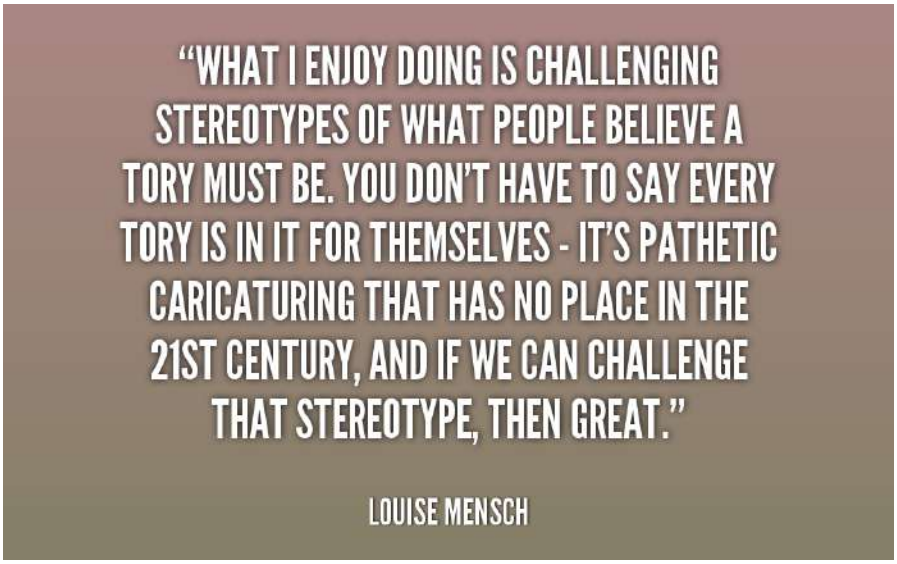
I really thank IQ in helping us in closing the previous 6 Vacancies also through the Forces Network.

Thanks
Col Akash Ghosh

The Above testimonial by Col Akash Ghosh speaks the way Forces Network has been **Breaking Stereotypes**. The industry had stereotyped veterans as a person who would want to settle at their hometown, "a retired fauji".

The Members of Forces Network have changed this image and proven them wrong by showing, they still possess a **LOT of Fire in their bellies** and also showing that the veterans are open to be hired not only in varied fields but also across geographical locations globally.

Editor



Author of the Month

John Ranjan Mukherjee

IN INTERACTION WITH UDAY SHRIWAS

Lt Gen J R Mukherjee, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, is an alumnus from the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, Imperial Staff College Camberly, United Kingdom, and the National Defence College, New Delhi. He was commissioned into the Assam Regiment in 1964 and retired from Army service in 2004 as the Chief of Staff, Headquarters Eastern Command. He had authored a series of articles published on the Editorial pages of newspapers and three books. He is currently 'Member Emeritus on the Governing Council' of a Kolkata based think tank titled the 'Research Centre for Eastern and North Eastern Regional Studies and a Patron of 'Kolkata Achilles Research and Analysis Wing Pvt. Ltd'

About the Author:

Lieutenant General J R Mukherjee, Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Vishisht Seva Medal (Retired), completed his education at Kolkata from La Martiniere College. He is an alumnus from the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, Imperial Staff College Camberly, United Kingdom, and the National Defence College, New Delhi, besides having done many other career courses of instruction and been an instructor at the College of Combat, Mhow. He was commissioned into the Assam Regiment in 1964 and retired from Army service in 2004 as the Chief of Staff, Headquarters Eastern Command. During his service career, he had participated in the Bangladesh War in 1971, commanded three battalions, a mountain brigade, a mountain division, 15 Corps in Kashmir during the latter part of the Kargil Conflict onwards; and had served at staff appointments at Army, Command and Corps Headquarters besides having been Head of the Indian Training Team at Botswana Africa. He is well known for his knowledge of India's North East and Kashmir having served in these regions extensively and with regard to China having dealt with the People's Liberation Army for almost his entire career. He had authored a series of articles published on the Editorial pages of the Statesman, the Ananda Bazaar Patrika and the Telegraph newspapers and three books – one in 2006, titled 'An Insiders Experience of Insurgency in India's North East' and the second - the 'History of the ASSAM Regiment Vol 3'. He has just released his third book titled “A Soldier for Life; My Story”. He is currently 'Member Emeritus on the Governing Council' of a Kolkata based think tank titled the 'Research Centre for Eastern and North Eastern Regional Studies and a Patron of 'Kolkata Achilles Research and Analysis Wing Pvt. Ltd' - a Kolkata based Organisation dealing with Cyber Warfare.

“A Soldier for Life; My Story”

Preview of book.

This book is about my experiences about why and how I set about soldiering and what life was like in the Indian Army. I have included a lot of my experiences/ anecdotes/ happenings related to the Assam Regiment, the North-Eastern region of India, Jammu & Kashmir (particularly during the latter part of the Kargil War and its aftermath) and the Chinese. I have ended this book with my thoughts on what in the Indian Army was good and what was flawed and some of my experiences on trying to fit into the retired life. It is important that the reader recognise and appreciate that this book is written after much thought, analysis and reflection by a man who had made the Indian Army his career and life. The perspectives, thoughts, analyses, and interpretations penned down by him are both personal and professional, based on the 44 years I have spent in uniform in a profession that I enjoyed, loved and sometimes found extremely frustrating

I have been planning to write this book for quite some time but have never quite gotten down to doing so. But now, with the Coronavirus pandemic and the consequent “Lockdown”, all my planned visits to the Northeast and activities of our “Think Tank” have been on a low key. I am now confined to our homes in Calcutta and Mizoram – more so as I am currently a stage four cancer patient. So, I have the ideal opportunity to sit down and write my story. After finally deciding to put my pen to paper, let me first explain what this book is about.

This book is about my experiences about why and how I set about soldiering and what life was like in the Indian Army. I have included a lot of my experiences/ anecdotes/ happenings related to the Assam Regiment, the North-Eastern region of India, Jammu & Kashmir (particularly during the latter part of the Kargil War and its aftermath) and the Chinese. I end this book with my thoughts on what in the Indian Army was good and what was flawed and some of my experiences on trying to fit into the retired life.

It is important that you as the reader recognise and appreciate that this book is written after much thought, analysis and reflection by a man who had made the Indian Army his career and life. The perspectives, thoughts, analyses, and interpretations I have penned down here are both personal and professional, based on the 44 years I have spent in uniform in a profession that I enjoyed, loved and sometimes found extremely frustrating.

I hope that these ideas will be interesting and will stimulate discussion as you explore some of my experiences and concepts of life. I also hope this book will help some of those who might wish to join the Army as a career and give them an insight into the variety of opportunities there are in this profession. It also might be of interest to those wishing to write essays on the Indian Army or on aspects of history.

I write this book because I have served in a wonderful organisation – the Indian Army. And in that Army, I feel privileged to have served in the Assam Regiment. And I would like to tell the world about my experiences. Over 56 years ago, I was commissioned into the ASSAM Regiment of the Indian Army – a regiment that recruits soldiers from the NorthEastern region of India. I have had extensive contact with its people. I have been in close touch with the veterans of my regiment, and their families – even after retirement. And I have, because of my close association with them, developed a great deal of love for the people of the North-Eastern states – to the extent that I have even married into that community!

In my later career, as the General Officer Commanding of 15 Corps, I was put in charge of the military situation in Kashmir and Ladakh. It was during an extremely difficult period - the latter part of the Kargil War as well as its aftermath. I was given a little less than three years to clean up the situation in Kashmir Valley, which was then infested with terrorists, and we faced constant problems with Pakistan on the Line of Control. I was perhaps the longest serving Corps Commander of Jammu & Kashmir. I, therefore, consider it my sacred duty to relate the difficulties people have faced and continue to face while trying to eke out a living in these two regions of India.

Therefore, I hope that this book will be read by some of those in authority and that it would contribute to better handling of the situation in both the North East and Kashmir. I also write this book for those who serve and function in the North East and Jammu & Kashmir – government servants, Police/Central Police/ Para Military Force, my fellow army officers, intellectuals, and businessmen. People invariably go to these regions only for short periods. So, I hope that this book will help them understand the regions better and hence function more effectively. I feel this is important as this book is based on a lifetime of experience – not only my own but also that of my comrades, all my friends from other walks of life and those on the other side of the fence – including the insurgents with whom I have interacted at length.

I have written this book more from the point of view of a social scientist than as a soldier as I believe that most of the concerns stem from social, economic, and political factors. Many are rooted in the history and the geography of the region.

The question I have is: Will anyone want to read the reminiscences of a nondescript soldier of the Indian Army? After a great deal of reflection, I feel that they may be worth reading by some – subject to my relating my experiences truthfully and interestingly enough – which is what I will now try to do.

This book is dedicated to the brave men who serve this nation in it's Army and their families. I must also express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my wife Linda, a woman from Mizoram, my children - Chabi, Anjali and my late son Sanglura, my sister Angela (all of whom have contributed extensively to the writing of this book), my friends and colleagues, my publisher and colleague Brigadier Pradip Vij of Vij Books

who has kindly agreed to publish this book, and the editor of my book, who is also my daughter - Anjali Lalsawmliani Mukherjee Siddiqui who has done so inspite of being severely handicapped due to being under treatment for cancer! All these people have given me their wholehearted and overwhelming support and views in the writing and publication of this book.

I have organised this book into Six Parts and 26 chapters. Each of the chapters covers a stage in my life and my experiences during that time.

Part I: This part comprises 12 Chapters and covers my early life till becoming a General.

Chapter 1 & 2 covers my early life – my family background, how I trained to become an officer, and my initial induction in my battalion and regiment – the 3rd Battalion of the Assam Regiment.

Chapter 3 to 6, I have then written about my experiences in the 1971 India Pakistan War with Headquarters 101 Communication Zone Area in the East; my time with the Battalion in the Western Theatre at Fazilka and at Ranchi, and my tenure at Junior Command Wing, College of Combat at Mhow. Chapter 6 covers my experiences when I attended the Scientific Orientation and Staff College Courses at the Royal College of Military Science and the Imperial Staff College at Camberley, United Kingdom after being specially selected to attend these courses by the Indian Army.

Chapters 7 and 8 encompass my tenure at the Uttar Pradesh-Tibet Border Sector, the 'Valley of the Gods', the raising of the 9th Battalion of the Assam Regiment as their Commanding Officer and Headquarters 24 Infantry Division as the General Staff Officer Grade 1 Operations. This assignment is followed by my attachment with the Indian Air Force. I was the first Indian Army Officer selected to attend the first Higher Air Command Course and the unfortunate demise of my wife during the Course.

Chapter 9 encompasses my period heading the Indian Army Training Team, Botswana helping to raise the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), my experiences as Colonel Military Secretary 1 at Military Secretary's Branch Army Headquarters and my tenure thereafter as the Training Battalion Commander at the Assam Regiment Centre.

Chapter 10 encompasses my commanding 5th Battalion of the Assam Regiment in Arunachal during Operation Chequer Board on the border with Tibet, my remarriage and experiences commanding 165 Mountain Brigade during Operation Brass Tacks. Chapters 11 and 12 cover my posting as the Deputy Director General Discipline & Vigilance, Army Headquarters, then as Brigadier General Staff IV Corps in Assam, General Officer Commanding 2 Mountain Division in Assam and Arunachal looking after the Tibet Border and handling insurgency in the region and then as Maj Gen-General Staff, Central Command dealing with the Uttar Pradesh Tibet Border Sector.

Part II:

Chapters 13 to 18 cover Jammu & Kashmir, the Kargil War, my tenure as the longest serving General Officer Commanding of XV Corps, as well as my views on Kashmir. The purpose of these chapters is to give the reader a background to Jammu & Kashmir so that you may understand the possible ways forward in resolving the Jammu & Kashmir problem.

Part III:

Chapters 19 and 20, I have covered the problems related to China. I have tried to give my own reasons as to why the dispute with China remains unresolved.

Part IV:

I have in subsequent Chapters from 21 to 24 covered India's North East and my period spent in the Indian Army Eastern Command and the issues related to the North Eastern States of India. I have in these Chapters explained the issues plaguing the North East in detail. I have also covered about India's Act East Policy in Chapter 24.

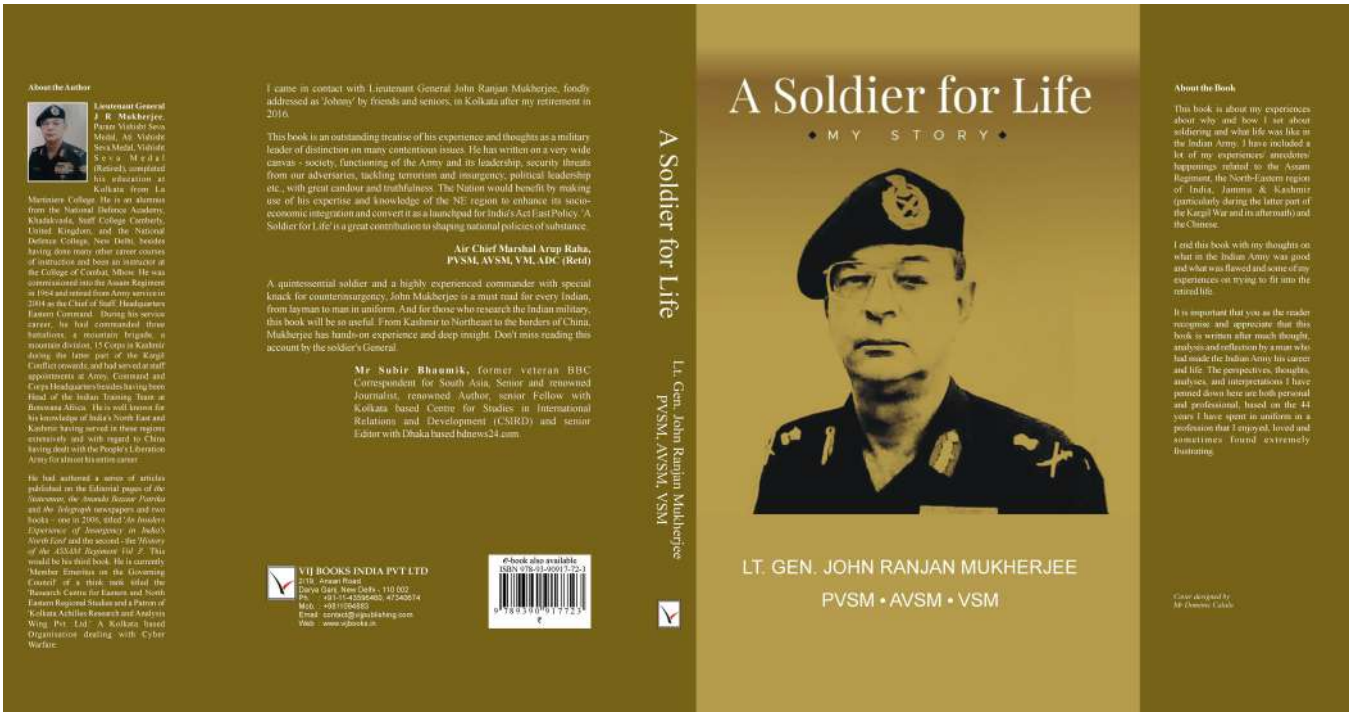
Part V:

Chapter 25 covers India's foreign relations with her neighbours. My suggestions regarding the resolution of problems of all these states are dictated by my research and experience of the region.

Part VI:

Chapter 26 covers my perceptions and views on certain actions needed to resolve issues related to the Indian Army.

Chapter 27 covers some experiences as a veteran.



A large amount of the material given in this book has no reference material as it is gleaned from contacts with a huge number of people from all walks of life, and my prolonged stay in the regions that have shaped my personal experiences and perceptions. I have, however, over many years read on these subjects extensively – books, media reports and articles, journals, and the storehouse of unclassified material available on the Internet and elsewhere. All this information has been interwoven with and into the fabric of this book.

I have, however ensured that I do not cover any classified issues related to the Nation's security in any form – all material in this book is from open sources and from my experiences after retirement from the Army.

I have not included any footnotes giving detailed referencing, as is the norm with such books. I have, however, added a bibliography providing details of some of the material I have sourced, and I must acknowledge to the authors of this material that it has been of great help to me. I have, in this book, made certain categorical statements – including naming countries and blaming them for adding to our country's woes by waging a proxy war against us. Adequate proof is available in official press releases, the media, circumstantial evidence, and even foreign reports on the subject just to name a few. I have mentioned a few of these sources in the bibliography.

I must also state that a lot of the material, particularly the latter half, is one of the perceptions based on circumstantial evidence, which has been given in the subject matter – obviously I remain culpable for expressing these views. I do not by any means claim to be the gospel in terms of providing possible solutions. I have merely offered certain options with the hope that these would at least prompt a re-examination of policy by those in authority and provide healthy debate and food for thought on somewhat mismanaged subjects.

I must also apologise to those who feel aggrieved by any of the views expressed in this book. The views are totally my own and are based on perceptions which have been shaped over decades. I have tried my best to put across unbiased and rational ideas in the best interests of the people of the Indian Army, Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East and the nation at large. These views may not be in tune with everyone's – but they are directed at the larger issue of finding answers to the problems which have plagued us for long

The book is available in Amazon for purchase.

Review by Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha, PVSM, AVSM, VM, ADC (Retd) former Chief of Air Staff

This book is about his fascinating journey in life and career. It starts with his intriguing family history, grooming in a social milieu with a liberal outlook, non-conservative approach to marriage, religion and ethnicity. It reinforces secularism, a tenet enshrined in the Indian Constitution and a symbol of the social fabric in the Armed Forces with an abundant display of camaraderie and bonding. The professional growth of Lt Gen Mukherjee has been highlighted in his outstanding performance in prestigious training institutions, like Staff College in Camberley, UK and tenanting very important and diverse assignments in various capacities, both in India and abroad. His Army career spanned over four decades, serving most of the time in the Northeast and in J&K, tackling tenacious security scenarios with an exceptional feel of the ground realities, the pulse of the local people and application of professional acumen.

A veteran of 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, fighting insurgency in the NE, leading the forces against the Pakistan- sponsored terrorism in Kashmir Valley as the longest-serving Corps Commander of Srinagar Corps, each chapter of his career narrated wonderfully of how he converted every challenge into an opportunity, making the book unputdownable. This book is an outstanding treatise of his experience and thoughts as a military leader of distinction on many contentious issues. He has written on a very wide canvas - society, functioning of the Army and its leadership, security threats from our adversaries, tackling terrorism and insurgency, political leadership etc., with great candour and truthfulness. The Nation would benefit by making use of his expertise and knowledge of the NE region to enhance its socio-economic integration and convert it as a launchpad for India's Act East Policy. 'A Soldier for Life' is a great contribution to shaping national policies of substance.

Review by Mr Subir Bhaumik, former veteran BBC Correspondent for South Asia, Senior and renowned Journalist, renowned Author, senior Fellow with Kolkata based Centre for Studies in International Relations and Development (CSIRD) and senior Editor with Dhaka based bdnews24.com

A quintessential soldier and a highly experienced commander with special knack for counterinsurgency, John Mukherjee is a must read for every Indian, from layman to man in uniform. And for those who research the Indian military, this book will be so useful. From Kashmir to Northeast to the borders of China, Mukherjee has hands-on experience and deep insight. Don't miss reading this account by the soldier's General.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping HERE - Editor

Wisdom Bytes

BREAKING STEREOTYPES: SOME INSIGHTS FOR TRASITIONING VETERANS

BY ARUN HARIHARAN

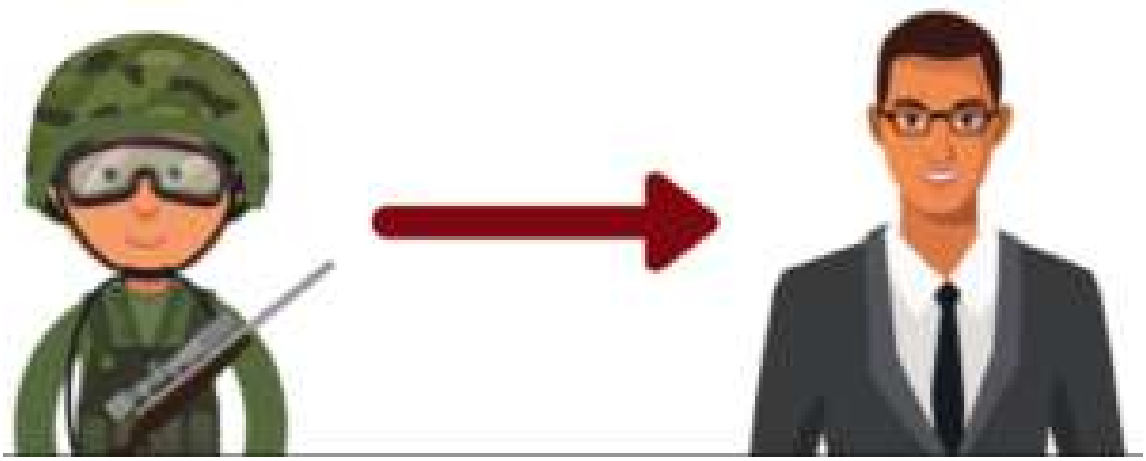
Mike Cardwell in the Dictionary of Psychology defines a stereotype as a generalized belief about a particular category of people. It is an expectation that people might have about every person of a particular group. The type of expectation can vary; it can be, for example, an expectation about the group's personality, preferences, appearance or ability. Stereotypes could be based on gender (e.g. women expected to a particular kind of work or job), race (e.g. persons of a particular race are more prone to be criminals), geography (e.g. Bollywood stereotyping South Indians, Anglo-Indians, Sindhis, Parsees), profession (cops, doctors, faujis stereotyped by Bollywood), religion, physical appearance etc. Typically it is a subconscious reaction in many cases and deeply embedded in human psyche.

The 'stereotype' typically continues to haunt military veterans transitioning from the uniform to the civvy street and employers attempting to hire them alike. In my opinion there are a plethora of reasons for this both at the hirer and candidate ends- prior experiences/interaction of employer/hirer with servicemen/ex-servicemen, their pre-conceived perceptions of their suitability for a particular role etc and conversely the ex-serviceman/woman stereotyping oneself to a particular role or profile only (e.g. HR, security, facilities etc) and not looking or offering oneself for roles over and beyond.

A word of caution here too- even these so called 'stereotypes' aren't exactly stereo types- HR, security, facilities, real estate management etc are very specialised fields which require specific skill sets, training and certifications- which few service-persons realise when they apply for such jobs for the first time.

Classically transitioning veterans fall in three categories

(i) those who do the DGR re-settlement management course at one of the B Schools- not sure of the value add, as good placements are still dodgy- stereotypical or in non-traditional fields;



(ii) those who join a job straight away post retirement- a few lucky ones are able to have a good job or jobs at hand the day they retire- needs luck, a lot of energy, planning and applying well in advance. May end up in one of the stereotype jobs or otherwise and

(iii) those who do a proper exec-MBA post clearing CAT exams- this category is the least likely to head into a fauji 'stereotyped' job- hence this category has practically already broken the mould.

Now, coming to breaking stereotypes especially for veterans transitioning at a reasonably younger age- it is also not about from where you start from- it is about what all you pick up during the journey, stuff which will expand your horizons, increase skill sets and increase one's value to the company. Let me explain this a little more.

In my own case, the first job I was hired for was a classic stereotype – Head of Security and Admin in an industrial township in the middle of nowhere. However, as I dug in my feet in the corporate world- I realised that there were a lot of other places which interested me and where I could contribute and also upskill myself while on the job. In the 4 ½ years that followed- I got involved in safety, compliance, CSR, Industrial Relations, corporate affairs, liaising etc which not only greatly expanded my horizons, enhanced my skill sets but also opened a lot of avenues for professional growth and increased job security within the company- since each enterprise eventually wants a person who can 'get the job done'. Of course it was a lot of hard work and involved me doing a lot of extra work which otherwise was not part of the JD for which I was hired for.

Thereafter, when I moved on to my next job (the current one)- all the skills and experience acquired not only in the army but also during my earlier corporate job helped me qualify and get selected for a job by which I was able to break the mould or 'stereotype' of being fit for only the profession of a security or admin head. Being

part of a large tech company has exposed me to not only hitherto unknown terminology, a plethora of technology and above all a large number of tech professionals. Being an engineer myself- helped me assimilate new skill sets better and before I realised I was contributing as a valuable member of many cross functional teams (CFTs) on subjects as varied as cyber fraud management, mobile site acquisition, roll out projects of internet fibre and leading the safety and compliance function etc. Hence- moving out of the stereotype in my case was a gradual process which took me a few years- and continues to eveolve till date (though I still continue handle the Physical Security Head profile as one of the responsibilities of my role!).

In our own esteemed Forces Network we have many sterling examples of 'breaking the mould' – starting with our thaliava Col IQ! He is an example of an Infantry Officer successfully reaching the highest echelons in an information technology related field- all because he believed in himself, badly wanted to do it, and up-skilled himself as he went along. There are many like him who have chosen to break the mould- either following their passions, educate themselves and upskilled themselves to reach apex roles in so -called 'non-traditional' roles.

It would be fair to say that each transitioning veteran is an ocean of experience, skill and enterprise above all integrity- all which are valued commodities in the corporate world and are positive stereotyped qualities expected of a veteran- and gives us all an advantage as such.

Hence to summarise the whole discourse,

Breaking the stereotype- starts with one self- how you present yourself for an interview, how do you evolve in your work place, how do you re-invent yourself day-after-day and how well are you able to connect with your team, peers and superiors to eventually add value to the organisation- people's negative preconceived notions about you or your earlier profession will automatically dissolve. In my own experience,

I have seen veterans who were either too rigid, never got used to the corporate ways of working or had un-realistic expectations. In the process they were unhappy as were their employers – because to my mind -they never really broke the mould nor could they re-invent themselves. Next important piece is to constantly upskill (through formal trainings/certifications, on the job learning etc) as one meanders along the corporate street and lastly to look over and beyond one's portfolio to see where all one is capable of adding value. Lastly, you must definitely find your calling or a job of your comfort- after all the most important thing is to be happy in life!!

I sign off by saying that breaking stereotypes is perhaps the hardest thing to do as it takes a lot of time, hard work and dedication. But look at so many people around us..they are doing it and you too could be one of them.

Col Arun Hariharan *a Corps of Engineers officer, took premature retirement in 2013. He is a senior corporate professional with a large telecom company and lives in Gurgaon. Arun is a voracious reader with a lot of interest in history, archaeology and occult. His weekly column on light hearted stories of his experiences in the military was published in Hindustan Times from 2011-2014 and he is currently a columnist with the Hindu Businessline. Arun is also a prolific blogger and maintains blogs for his short stories, travelogues and on his family heritage. He is also passionate about photography and dirtying his hands maintaining his motorbikes*

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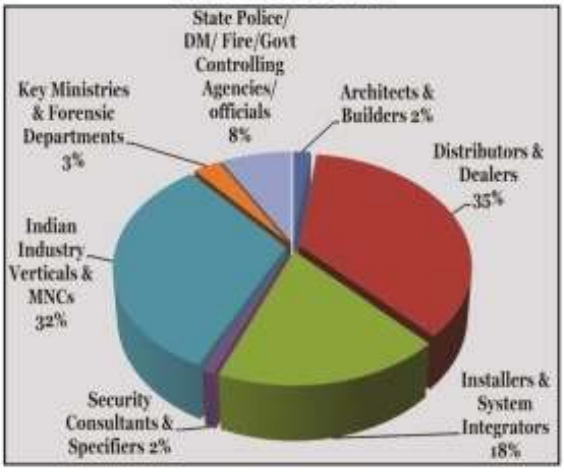

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Leisure

Inspiration

BY GAUTAM VIJAY

Remember those mandatory "How was your Summer Vacation" essays we had to write during every new session at the school?

I wrote pretty much the same essay, with few differences here and there from the same essay book, every year. But summer of 1998 was different, nothing drastic, but different. Something stirred inside me and I was itching to write about it, but with the fear of sounding too philosophical for a 13 year old, I skipped it.

It was the usual "summer holiday" evening, mom took me to the local park for slides. For some reason, she started telling me about her family, her extended family, and then something about my maternal grandfather, I wasn't honestly paying attention, till I heard, "He was a Doctor in Indian Army".

Capt. Hanuman Prakash Gupta

Rest of my holiday was spent asking about him each and every day, who was he, what was he like, what he studied, how he got into Army…an endless series of such inquisitive questions. Mom patiently answered to the best of her memory & knowledge about him; little did she know, what her son's heart had suddenly started aspiring for!

The last straw that ignited the fire for that 13 year old was when he saw Late, Capt. Hanuman Prakash Gupta's picture in Army uniform.

At the age of 22, he got married to Smt. Sharda Gupta and next year, on 24th July 1966, he was commissioned as a Captain in the Medical Battalion, Army Medical Corps.

His first posting was somewhere in the field area of Kashmir. On 16th March, 1968, while he was going to relieve a fellow officer, there was a mine blast and he met with a fatal accident. His body was found several days later. He did leave behind a legacy, not knowing that he will be inspiring someone 30 years later to follow his footsteps.

Today, when the younger generation comes asking me the same questions, which I had once asked, it makes me smile. To them, all I can say is: "Yes. The love of uniform & the respect, the fascination of being called an "Army officer," is all very attractive, but that's not the totality".

What inspired me was my grandfather as a person, a person who believed in selfless dedication to his country and to humanity in general. A simple, calm and helpful human, that's how everyone remembers him till date and that's what I aspired to be. Inspiration comes when you are least expecting it, in the simplest of things, but it is difficult to grasp. It makes you reconsider your views, makes you push your limitations, makes you kick open the closed doors and find, your very own, hidden sanctuary behind it.

Maj. Gautam Vijay Capt.Hanuman Prakash Gupta

People always asked me, why and how I joined the Armed Forces. I could never touch this particular string of memory, as if it was buried somewhere deep within.

Looking forward to many more...

Maj. Gautam Vijay - *An SSC Medical Corps officer served at Drass, Kargil, Siachen, and Badmer from 2008 till 2013. He had a close escape from an Avalanche in the Glacier and was awarded COAS commendation card for rescuing 9 soldiers out of it and later 2 pilots off a Heli crash. Was part of the expedition to Mt Bhagirathi in 2011 and a Camel Safari expedition in Jaisalmer. Took release in 2013 and went to the US to pursue higher studies. Post studies he has been part of the corporate world - into Operations Management for last 7 years, recently joined Infosys Pune as Senior Consultant in their Healthcare Domain.*

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Leisure

Run to Rediscover……

BY ADITYA PRATAP SINGH CHAUHAN

I have been an avid runner since my academy days and have made long distance running my passion over ten years. As many amongst us can appreciate that it is not always easy to follow one's passion without disturbing one's work-life-family balance which remains hinged precariously all the time. All these three tenets of life throw enough challenges towards one's pursuit for his/her passion. It is only up to oneself to take on and overcome these challenges to chase one's passion. I personally feel that it really is not a passion if one cannot break the shackles and emerge out of a hopeless situation for the sake of one's passion. With this prelude I would like to share my recent experience in pursuit for my passion of running. I hope it encourages our fellow members in pursuit for their passion.

Though I am into running long distances since the year 2011, however two years back i.e. 2019, I had to take a forced break from running and other forms of fitness activities due to an important transition in my life wherein I re-attired from Olive Greens to Civvies. From Sep 2019 till Aug 2020, my daily routine was devoid of any significant physical activity which adversely affected my physical and mental well-being. During that torrid period of one year I made several attempts to break the shackles of inactivity but for some reason or the other I could not make my way through. It was then that I realized that something drastic has to be done to get rid of this pathetic

state and for which I need to break free with all my resolve. It was in Sep 2020 that I re-started my running journey to regain my self-esteem, confidence and fitness. Of course this could happen because of the support from my family and my professional organization. I started my journey rather cautiously and gradually as the last thing I wanted was an injury which potentially could have stalled my progress.

Though at times it was a bit heart breaking to see my run stats which were no way near to the ones I recorded much earlier however I kept faith in my abilities to match up to those earlier standards.

Throughout my journey, I focused on consistency of runs without being too bothered about the pace and distance as I knew both these parameters will pick up with consistency. A little into three months of my journey, I started to reap the benefits of being consistent as I made significant forays in pace and distance parameters and then there was no looking back as I had regained my rhythm and confidence, from thereon it was 'Bash on Regardless'. My runs ranged from 5 km to 50 km distance.
Most of these runs were done in mornings however there were occasional runs that had starts as early as 2 am and as late as 10 pm. Bulk of my runs were done in Pune, Mumbai and Surat. During this phase I achieved my PBs (Personal Best) for 10 km, 30 km and 50 km. It is even bizarre to think that I would achieve my PBs at the age of 45 years, something which was difficult to imagine at the start of my journey.

To sum it up, it has been a magnificent journey where I managed to rise from the shambles of despair and got to rediscover myself by following my passion of running.
Few important learning and takeaways from this experience of mine that I would like to share with everyone are as under:

- **Be Consistent** in your efforts, never worry about your pace and distance targets. With consistency things will fall in place sooner or later.

- **Never Get Bogged Down** with what your peers are clocking in terms of pace, distance, intensity etc. Take it as an inspiration rather than a competition. As a recreational runner, one must compete only with oneself. Remember whatever you may do, you will never be the quickest nor will you ever be the slowest, so set your own targets & goals and give yourself time to achieve them.

- **Always Respect Your Efforts** however trivial they may seem. Remember, every step you take gets you closer to your goal. Thank ALMIGHTY and consider yourself fortunate for getting this freedom and opportunity to run, cycle, swim wherever your passion lies. Also, always look up upon fellow runners and respect them for their efforts. Admire the ones who are faster than you and respect the ones who are slower than you.

- Lastly and most importantly **Fuel Your Passion** for running to the extent of meeting your goals. Remain passionate, at times even to the extent of being a bit selfish. Remember that your passion for running is the most important link in the entire cycle of your training. So keep your passion ignited at all times.

I have learnt a lot from this experience and will retain all these lessons learnt so as to remain happy, healthy and wise….

Though this experience is aligned more towards regaining one's fitness however, if seen from a broader perspective, this may apply to all facets of life… This is my humble expression of my pursuit for my passion spread across past 12 months…

Wishing happy, healthy & safe RUNs to all….

Lt Col Aditya Pratap Singh Chauhan *in an alumnus of National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla and Indian Military Academy, Dehradun. The officer was commissioned in the Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers in Dec 1998. The officer predominantly served in Armoured formations and was instrumental in reorg of an EME outfit in HAA of North Sikkim. The officer took PMR in the year 2019 after serving for 21 years. The officer is currently working with Larsen & Toubro (Defence) and is based in Pune. The officer is an avid long distance runner and a triathlete. The officer is also a Certified Marathon Coach.*

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping HERE - Editor

SAVE OUR ENVIRONMENT

BY RUHAAN MALHAN

I wonder where are the animals?
I wonder where are the trees?
O God! Are our jungles about to Freeze?

This world, climate and all the things beautiful,
seems going dark, ugly and very painful;

We kill living beings for our gain,
we take away their homes and leave them in pain;

Things won't be like this in a year or two,
if killing, polluting and cutting is all that we do;

It's time to set things right,
enough of being selfish, for the speechless that we should fight;

Dear friends, let us protect our forest, animals and this beautiful land,
before things slip out of our hand.

Poem by : Mstr Ruhaan Malhan
Age: 7 Yrs
S/o - Lt Cdr Vikrant Malhan
Centre Point School, Katol Road, Nagpur

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A Poem on Corona

BY VARDAAN MALHAN

Hey Corona!!
Hey Corona! Howdy.
You made sure that we don't go to places that are crowdy.

The World has come to a stand still
You seem to be taking life at your own will.
Nature surely has won this race
and at once, stopped the human pace.

There should now be a respite!
How long will the planet go through this horrendous site.
There is a deafening silence everywhere,
The roads are empty and we can't just stare.

There is a penalty that we all have to pay,
To make Corona completely go away.
Leave us in peace, we plead,
There is a beautiful life ahead for all to lead.

You have given us the knowledge of hygiene & health,
and that life is not only about Wealth.
You have taught us to respect nature and value our lives,
and take care of our future and its beautiful vibes.

It's high time we value the lock-down,
Before the Virus spreads its vicious crown.
Stay Safe, Stay Home!
This is not the time to roam.
Our Salute to the Health Care warriors, Police and those fighting this cause
We are with them, in this hour of Chaos.

Hey Corona, Our Countrymen will defeat you!
At the end of the day, you will be just a normal Flu.
Let's pledge solidarity to bring CoVid-19 down,
We all will smile and you alone will frown!

Poem by : Mstr Vardaan Malhan
Age: 13 Yrs
S/o - Lt Cdr Vikrant Malhan
Centre Point School, Katol Road, Nagpur

Digital Parenting Vs Real-Life Heroes

BY MEENA ARORA

This year my daughter asked me to get her “Miraculous Lady Bug” dress and cake for her birthday and last year she wanted everything on “Elsa” theme. Are they just her favourite cartoon characters, fascinations, or role models?

I never anticipated this as a warning sign unless I met my client Drona (Name and facts changed due to confidentiality clause). Drona came to my office walking and talking like his favourite superheroes, i.e., Iron-man, batman, and Hulk. He had a huge collection of all these superheroes and their accessories. He preferred his imaginary world more than the real one. The reason his parents brought him to me was to connect him more to the real world. Alas! The real world was not so fascinating or, so it was perceived by Drona.

Children, below 13 yrs. and in many cases upto 21 years, struggle to find and make up their identities. This is a natural growth process. They look for objects, people, and characters in their surroundings as role models. According to their unique personality, all children choose their own characters to seek inspiration from. Subconsciously, they also become like them.

Our ancestors knew this very well. This is the reason most of the people, especially, Hindus, name their children after some God/Goddess, real-life heroes or words having a strong positive meaning. This is in expectation that their children will imbibe the positive traits and characteristics associated with that name.

Humans have a great power of imagination and an urge to be more and more effective and meaningful. In childhood, they may not rationalise things, but they are seeking and learning continuously from their surroundings. This is the reason our ancestors were very careful about the imaginary world children were creating around themselves. Hence, great stories and Panchatantra were written, especially, for children. Epics are narrated in the form of stories with many strong characters. Children can relate to them and choose their path of action and righteousness. Along with being magical and fascinating, these stories keep children in touch with reality, right action, and deeds.

The new era digital parenting is quite different now. We are exposing our children to Gods/Goddesses like Barbie, Elsa, Hulk, Ironman, Doraemon, and the like. We are engaging our children more and more in video games with targets of reaching to next and next levels, when in reality, they are reaching nowhere. So much is the futility of time, efforts and especially the wastage of divine gift of imagination and creativity. Well, Drona was a 23 yrs. old man, and I was not much hopeful of big transformation results, until the concept of role model was reframed. Drona was excited to find his real-life heroes. I took the spark and decided to blaze it into fire. I made his parents come and talk more about themselves, their fears, struggles and how they overcame them all. Their family sessions made them understand each other better and Drona found his parents to be the best role models he had ever known. Soon he started discarding his toys.

During Drona's sessions, I started parallel sessions in my family. This is a wonderful routine we follow even today. My husband and I sit with my daughter every evening chatting, playing, and relating stories of our childhood. We talk about our struggles and also heroic deeds. We even meditate for 10 minutes together thanking God for this wonderful life.

I wish every child to know that their parents are the best real-life heroes; but who will tell them? Obviously not the digital parents

Sqn Ldr Meena Arora *has served in the Indian Air Force for ten years. Thereafter, she has devoted herself completely to counselling and training. She is a competent Life Coach, Counsellor & NLP Trainer. She takes Personal Sessions (One on one's) and conducts Workshops in Schools, Colleges and Corporates. She also associates with organizations in creating specific training content, customized presentations, videos and audios, especially, utilizing her knowledge and awareness of Psychology and Neuro Linguistics Programming.*

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