

JANUARY 2020. VOLUME II, ISSUE 1

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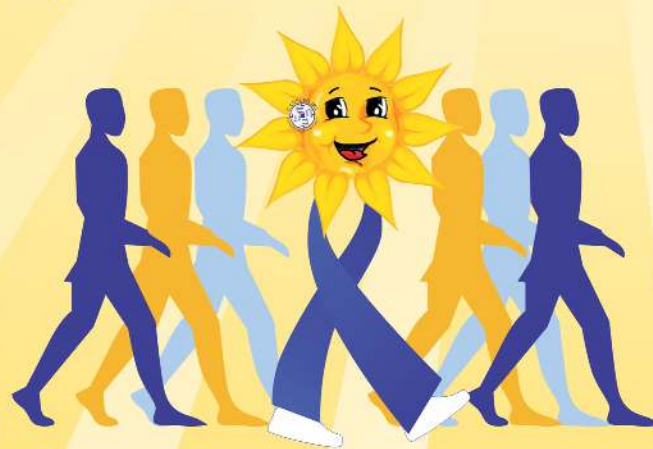
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Contents

| | |
|--|---------|
| From the Editor..... | 5 |
| Forces Network Makes a Debut at Military Literature Festival 2019..... | 6 - 11 |
| HR Conclave - The Forces Konnect at IIFT Delhi..... | 12 - 16 |
| Stars of Forces Network..... | 17 - 19 |
| ForceNetPreneurs..... | 20 - 26 |
| My GMAT Journey..... | 26 - 30 |
| Data Science as a Career..... | 31 - 38 |
| Corporate Survival Techniques..... | 39 - 42 |
| Author of the Month..... | 43 - 44 |
| Book Review..... | 45 - 47 |
| Life's Lessons..... | 48 - 49 |
| Most Beautiful Set from the Best Asian Beach..... | 50 - 52 |
| Disruptive Travel Trends..... | 53 - 59 |
| My Real Family..... | 60 - 62 |

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Here's wishing all of you A Very Happy New Year 2020!!

Armed with renewed vigour and multiple resolutions, we are going to put our best foot forward for a brighter future in our personal lives. On similar lines, we as Forces Network fraternity also look forward to not only spreading our reach, but also further consolidation of comradeship which is the foundation of, and the spirit behind our existence and being, as a potent force.

We have already made a welcome and strong debut at the Military Literature Festival, and surely recognition on similar other platforms is going to follow soon. Our credibility is now being fully recognised, and those transitioning from the uniform to civvies are sensibly exploiting this aspect.

As we take baby steps, we are also increasing the variety of content in our eZine, and many more innovative changes are in the offing. Aim is to keep our ear to the ground, and address all those concerns which are of bigger interest to our Members, apart from transition concerns. We are going to draw from the experiences of our vast community, and then provide a comprehensive storehouse of information and knowledge, such that each issue of the eZine becomes a collector's pride.

I am also eagerly looking forward to whole hearted participation and contribution from the families and children of the Members. We can never deny the fact that there are many lessons even to be learnt from the younger generation, so I earnestly exhort you to nudge them to be our valuable contributors.

Recently we experienced another demonstration of true comradeship of the ForceNet Members, in complete sync with the spirit and ethos of our Group. Quick and proactive support was provided without even batting an eyelid, far away in another Continent, thus cementing the fact that national boundaries and physical barriers are inconsequential in our brotherhood and bonding. It gladdens our heart beyond expression, and at the same time is surely going to motivate us to emulate it when situation arises.

So, have a wonderful year, and take care of the environment. We have already done our part, by starting the paperless eZine, which has the potential to reach every corner of the World with impunity!!!

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

Regards,

Lt Col Ranvir Singh

Events

Forces Network Makes a Debut at the Military Literature Festival 2019

BY IQBAL SINGH

It was a pleasant surprise to receive an invitation to speak at the prestigious Military Literature Festival (MLF) 2019 at Chandigarh. The invite was received almost at the time as we were celebrating the 12th Founding Day of Forces Network in early Dec 2019, that made the event even more memorable. The MLF is an annual event that brings together the finest minds from battle grounds and literary fields to discuss watershed of information on defence issues for three days. The Event is a joint initiative of distinguished military historian and Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and Punjab Governor HE VP Singh Badnore, with full support extended by the Western Command, Indian Army. This year the event was scheduled from 13-15 Dec 2019 and was inaugurated by the Governor of Punjab. The event has grown in stature over the years and draws several international scholars and writers from across the globe. (<https://militaryliteraturefestival.com/>).



Set on the banks of Sukhna Lake the MLF presented a magnificent spectacle

What was gratifying personally to me was the fact that the invitation was a validation and recognition of the work being done by Forces Network over the past 12 years. In a way it was also a recognition for all our members who make Forces Network what it is.

The event was very well conceived and conducted with impeccable attention to detail. It was quite a large event, much larger than what I had anticipated. There were several parallel tracks ongoing at multiple venues set up in temporary structures on the banks of the picturesque Sukhna Lake. In addition to the organizing team, the MLF Director Mandeep Bajwa (Twitter handle- @MandeepBajwa) deserves special credit for the content, quality of speakers and the smooth conduct of the various tracks.



Entrance to a Venue for Panel Discussions, and with Sir Mark Tully

The list of speakers was impressive, as they were all luminaries in their respective fields. Manish Tewari, (MP, INC), Mark Tully, Ravish Kumar, Mahua Moitra, MP, TMC, Kishwar Desai, Sandeep Unnithan (India Today) Christine Fair, Capt Amarinder Singh, Maroof Raza, Ram Madhav, Desh Ratan Nigam, Gen VP Malik, AS Dulat, Vivek Katju, ACM BS Dhanoa just to name a few. It was an excellent platform and I got an opportunity to rub shoulders with the likes of Sir Mark Tully (ex BBC) in the Speakers Lounge – someone whose name I would hear every day in my childhood listening to his dispatches on the BBC Radio.

In addition, I also got an opportunity to share the concept of Forces Network with several important personalities, especially over the Governor's Dinner hosted in the beautiful Rock Garden. There was a delegation of serving British Army officers led by Brig Celia Harvey (Twitter - @celiaharvey) – and they could immediately relate with the challenges of transition from a military to a civilian career and were very appreciative of the efforts being made by Forces Network in this direction. The Defence Attache from the UK Embassy in New Delhi was also in attendance, his wife had served in the British Army for 16 years. She shared that she has also been leading training initiatives in the UK for helping the military personnel to smoothly transition to a civilian career.

The Talk on Forces Network was conducted at the Clarion Call Theatre which has Audio Visual presentation capabilities. Our presentation was a mix of videos interjected with my talk in between. We ran four videos and I spoke thrice in between, the total duration our presentation was just 15 minutes, however our presentation was extremely well received. There were several members of Forces Network as well who were present in the auditorium for our talk. Some like Capt Uday Shriwas and Col IPS Sidhu had travelled especially from Delhi to attend the event. It was a humbling experience for me when I saw one of my ex COs, Brig Vikram Goswami (was my CO in 1993-1995 time frame) attending my presentation with his wife.



Talk on Forces Network

It was fascinating to watch some other presentation as well. Still fresh in my memory is the presentation on Battle of Fatehpur by 8 Sikh Light Infantry Battalion, which is also their battle honour from the 1971 War. It was nice to see the current Commanding Officer attend with his whole team filling up the auditorium. The presentation was made by a retired Brigadier of the Battalion who had participated in the same operation 48 years ago. It was really an emotional moment for him! That made the presentation authentic and compelling.

Another memorable presentation was made by Lt Gen Anil Puri, who is still in service. He is into long distance endurance cycling, and he spoke about his 1200 km cycling odyssey in France (<https://twitter.com/MilitaryLitFest/status/1180182222952783872>). His passion came across clearly, his talk was inspiring and received a thunderous applause. I will try and do an interview with him for our monthly e-magazine ForceNeteZine, in due course



With Lt Gen Anil Puri – the General who cycled 1200 kms in France



Some members of Forces Network who attended the ForceNet Presentation

The Panel discussions were held in three different venues, they were all of a very high quality, extremely engaging and informative. I mistakenly entered a venue where the Panel discussion was being moderated by Kishwar Desai and the subject was “The Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre and the Freedom Movement”. The panelists included Manish Tewari, Walter Reid and Prof Sohal, and I thought that there would be nothing

new in this, anyway I decided to sit down for two minutes. However, the discussions were so engaging, the speakers so good, their research so thorough that I could not get up for the next one hour till the panel discussion concluded. In the bargain I learnt so many new things about the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre – I realized how little I knew!

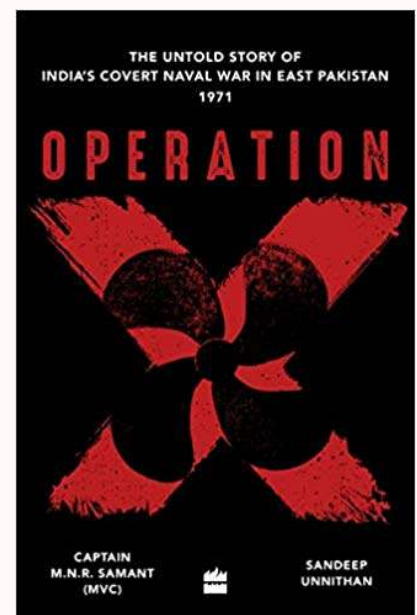


With British Army Delegation

The abiding learning experience were the interactions with the various speakers. They were deep, articulate and truly experts in their respective domains. For instance the American Dr Christine Fair a security expert in South Asia spent 22 years living in Pakistan, she could speak several regional languages fluently. She used her Punjabi quite effectively in the MLF! It reaffirmed my thinking that being an expert makes you exclusive vis-a-vis being a generalist.



With Dr C Christine Fair



There were also several book launches / discussions in a dedicated venue. Listening to the authors talk about their books was truly mesmerizing. Their books clearly were a labour of love, they were too excited to speak about it and their passion was palpable.

I was lucky to attend one session on the book - Operation X: The Untold Story of India's Covert Naval War in East Pakistan, co-authored by Captain M.N.R Samant (sadly passed away during the writing of the book) and Sandeep Unnithan (Executive Editor, India Today). Sandeep spoke very passionately about the book, as they had visited and met some of the real life characters of the book (many in their eighties) while researching for the book. It was an excellent experience. (<https://www.amazon.in/Operation-Untold-Indias-Covert-Pakistan/dp/9353570190>).

Apart from the talks, the panel discussions, the book launches etc., there were a host of other activities as well at the MLF. There were stalls by around 50 Publishers, books all around and discounts to add. There were cultural shows, martial dances, food courts, Armament display, Vintage Cars display, children's contests and much more. I must say it was truly a carnival experience and entry was free and open to all citizens.

There was a Sky Dive as well by Satyendra Verma, the Indian Army Sky Diver. (<https://twitter.com/MilitaryLitFest/status/1185837419444097025>)

To conclude I must say that it was an impressionable experience. I came back enriched, motivated and with a broadened vision. In my opinion this is a platform which can be useful to several members of Forces Network whether they be writers, speakers or be involved in an activity that can motivate the youth. I am expecting the MLF to grow and become much bigger in the years to come. Would highly recommend that they explore this opportunity. Feel free to reach out to me on this topic.

Long Live Forces Network! Cheers to Forces Network – the Network that works!

Iqbal



Lt Col Iqbal Singh was commissioned on 19 Dec 1987 into 4th Battalion The Garhwal Rifles. He completed MTech after undergoing the EME Officers Degree Engineering course on Infantry vacancy, and subsequently graduated from the DSSC Wellington. The officer has also done a tenure in the Indian Army's Wargaming and Development Center (WARDEC). After hanging his boots in Jun 2008, he is currently working in a senior role in a large European telecom MNC based at New Delhi. He is a frequent speaker on various industry fora on technology topics especially Cloud Technology and Artificial Intelligence. He founded the Forces Network, having 5200 plus members, on 04 Dec 2007 and continues to drive it to greater heights. He can be contacted at iqchucks@gmail.com

HR Conclave - The Forces Konnect at IIFT Delhi

BY GAURAV CHHONKER

Transition' is defined as change from one position to another. The term itself is an all-encompassing experience to veterans who live through this seemingly improbable and difficult situation. Why does it feel so difficult? there can be many answers to it and possibly so much can be spoken about it, but in my opinion a successful transition from military to corporate is like a 'Mission execution in VUCA environment'. A successful transition as a group has three ingredients - Initiative, Networking and confluence.

Initiative relates to a 'leading action' by a group , followed by networking ie system of sharing information and services amongst groups having a common interest and lastly the confluence - coming together of people or things; a concourse.

"The 52 Formidable" are part of DGR batch at IIFT, Delhi who also faced similar transition dilemma when their journey commenced on 26 Sep 2019. However the three ingredients as mentioned previously were blended perfectly by guidance from senior members under Maj Gen Sanjeev Grover, with initiative taken by the PLACOM headed by Col Tarun Vohra who was ably supported by bunch of young stalwarts of the course. Fabulous efforts put in by Maj Smriti Jha who created the interactive Webpage instead of traditional brochure and hence an Environmental Friendly initiative. The computer wizard Sqn Ldr CK Nalva took on entire responsibilities of digital communications.

The networking saga began from our very own FORCES NETWORK SEMINAR which was organized just one day prior to commencement of the course; this is the network which always works. Col Iqbal aka IQ met with PLACOM and gave direction to the relentless efforts of the Team.

The last ingredient of Confluence was a tricky one since it had to be well planned, iterated and executed with finesse. This was the time to seek assistance of ever helpful management of IIFT itself led by Director, Dean, Head of MDP and the PD. It was during interaction with the faculty that the idea of organizing a seminar at IIFT was seeded with an aim to bring together Industry experts, HR experts and Recruiters on a platform having a greater impact. PLACOM members Lt Col Pradeep Thapa and Sqn Ldr Mayuri Yeolekar came up with the thought of 'What better than Delhi NCR chapter of National HRD network'? A lot of time and effort was put in to plan each aspect of seminar and responsibilities were distributed to all officers who left no stone unturned to contribute effectively.

The date was set to 21 Dec 2019, Venue was the grand auditorium of IIFT, Delhi and rightfully christened as 'HR CONCLAVE - THE FORCES KONNECT'.



The seminar was chaired by Mr Dwarkanath, The Chairman, GSK Consumer Health Care Ltd and the Head of Group Human Capital, Max India and Prof Manoj Pant, Director of IIFT graced the occasion with his presence.

A total of three panel discussions were organized and same are summarized below.



Tailored for Tomorrow: Managing Resources in Volatile Environment: Human resources are the assets for an organization. These assets play a major role towards enhancing the performance of a company. HRM Practices facilitate the development of completeness among the company employees that are specific to an organization. Management and Development of HR include varieties of training, such as induction/

orientation of new employees and development of all categories of employees without exception in order to prepare for organization's future challenges. Managing career helps employees in pursuing their career path as they grow with the organization. At the front, overshadowing everything is disruption. We continue to experience volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, but must add to this the reality of diversity including gender balance, plus cross-cultural and inter-generational diversity. The possibilities of tailoring the resources were brainstormed on aspects of Managing Human Resources, Challenges and Solutions, and D-VUCAD World.

Session Chaired by: Mr SK Jain, Director-HR (CHRO), Jindal Stainless.

Session Speakers: Mr Vijay Lal, Sr. Executive Vice President (HR), BYPL, Dr Kamlesh Vyas, Partner - Forensics (Financial Advisory), Deloitte, Col Iqbal Singh, Founder, Forces Network and Col Rohit Agarwal, Head Strategy & Plans, The Bird Group.



Industry 4.0: Industry 4.0 refers to a new phase in the Industrial Revolution that focuses heavily on inter-connectivity automation, machine learning, and real-time data. Industry 4.0, also sometimes referred to as smart manufacturing, marries physical production and operations with smart digital technology, machine learning, and big data to create a more holistic and better connected ecosystem for companies that focus on manufacturing and supply chain management. Industry 4.0 is not just about investing in new technology and tools to improve manufacturing efficiency, it is also about revolutionising the way your entire business operates and grows. The salient aspects discussed were 'The Need of Industry 1.0 to 4.0', 'Benefits of Adopting Industry 4.0 Model', 'HR/ Talent Analytics', 'Block Chain', 'Smart Manufacturing' and 'Challenges to Overcome'.

Session Chaired by: Dr Jatinder Singh, Director, PHD Chamber of Commerce.

Session Speakers: Mr Ansul Dureja, Chief Enablement Officer & Managing Director, Creating Values Pvt. Ltd, Ms Mamta Wasan, Sr VP-HR, FIS, Ms Shalu Manan, People Supply Chain Program Lead, Genpact and Dr Raj Gupta, Author & GM - HR, Tata Consultancy Services.



Emerging Trends of Sectoral Skills: The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is impacting and changing the industrial landscape, and with it, the skill requirements, thereby forcing government, industry, and academia to focus on developing twenty-first century skills (critical thinking, design thinking, creativity, sustainability, etc.) among fresh recruits and the existing workforce. Policy and implementation in a large country like India, where the Central and State governments could play important roles, could cut across various dimensions. Lack of skill training, creating employment opportunities for millions of youth entering the work force annually and ensuring inclusive growth are some of the challenges that India faces in its transition to knowledge based economy. Policies and programs were discussed towards 'Sector Skill Councils', 'Range and depth of skills at CEO Level', 'Top Sectors that need re-skilling or up-skilling', and 'Opportunities Ahead'.

Session Chaired by: Dr Sushil Chandra, Scientist 'G', INMAS, DRDO

Session Speakers: Mr Arun Lakshman, Industry Expert (Road Transport), Automotive Skills Development Council, Mr Aneesh Kadyan, ED & India Head-Business Operation, CBRE, Mr Ranjan Kumar Singh, Head, Customer Relations – Government Grants Management, National Skill Development Corporation and one of our own Maj Gaurav

Arya, Chief Consulting Editor - Strategic Affairs, Republic TV.



The seminar was a truly successful. The panelists who were introduced to all officers through a 30 second elevator speech could further interact with them during the networking opportunities. Lot of Good-will was curated by the standard of seminar, networks developed and faith in military veterans re-affirmed. The HR fraternity could easily identify potential candidates for their respective companies.

The measure of a successful venture is when we start experiencing the results. The results are now visible with lot of head hunters and corporate HR lined up to visit IIFT for campus interviews and placements of the 'FORMIDABLE FIFTY TWO'



Lt Col Gaurav Vikram Singh Chhonker is an ex-NDA second generation officer. Having done his Masters in Weapon Technology from Pune University, he is also LSSBB and PRINCE2 qualified, and presently pursuing PG Program of Artificial Intelligence for Leaders from University of Texas at Austin. He is a qualified trainer and psychological counselor. Being a keen sportsman and adventure enthusiast, he is qualified in hot air ballooning and para jumping too. He is a passionate writer and also pursues poetry writing.

Stars of Forces Network

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

BY BIDISHA PANDEY

Col (Dr) Guru Saday Batabyal, a graduate of Defence Services Staff College and a PhD from Visva Bharati Santiniketan, has 40 years of cross functional experience as an officer in the Indian Army and as the Chief Executive Officer of two major IT companies. Col Batabyal has a brilliant academic record who is presently engaged into full time research and academic activities.



After leaving the Corporate, he taught 'Theory of Strategy & International Relations' to M.A. students of North Bengal University as a visiting professor for two years, and has also been invited to speak and participate in seminars at both, the Indian Institute of Historical Studies Kolkata, and Presidency University Kolkata, University of Washington, Dhaka University, Chambers of Commerce, and various academic seminars in India and abroad. His articles have been published in India, Bangladesh and in U.S.A. Two books, one in Bengali on 'Role of Foreign Powers and United Nations During the Liberation War of Bangladesh' and other on the 'Grand Strategy of Bangladesh Liberation War' are due for publication.

Life in the Army

Col (Dr) Guru Saday Batabyal was commissioned into the 4th Battalion of the Gorkha Rifles in June 1979 after four years of training as an officer cadet in ACC Pune, and IMA Dehradun. Major highlights of his tenure in the Indian Army include a tenure as Adjutant of 3/4 GR during in the Battle of Bila Fond-la , Siachen Glacier (Sep 1987), Command of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles, Commander of the first Indian contingent deployed in the UN Peace Keeping Mission in South Lebanon , M.A.to Dy Chief of Army Staff, and posted as Special Representative of Government of India on a deputation to MEA in Manila, Philippines in an International Project named 'End State: Exit Strategy'. (US-UN Sponsored Project). He has also been a part of the Indian Army delegations to Nepal, Myanmar and Royal Military Academy Sandhurst(UK).

The Corporate Switch

In January 2006, when overage became a hindrance for further promotion in the Army, Col Batabyal transitioned to the Corporate in January 2006 as Chief Executive Officer at Manjushree InfoTech (BK Birla Group). The Company was making losses since last two years at that time. Despite coming from a non-technical background, Col Batabyal was chosen for this role because of his rich profile and experience, and it was definitely the right decision as the Company was able to break even in 18 months under his leadership. After two years, he moved to Data-Core (India) Private Ltd, one of the oldest IT & ITES companies in India, again as the Chief Executive Officer. He established the Analytics and SAP cells (less heard of during that time) at Data-Core. He emphasized on new certifications like CMMI, ISO 27001, HIPAA etc., in order to get more business from the US. At the end of his tenure of five years, Data-Core growth was a record 125%. Later, he was appointed as the Executive Director of DCPL Group, an industry conglomerate consisting of 17 Companies for three years. He was engaged as an Adviser to the Prime Minister and the Government of Fiji on interface of IT in governance. He also served in the Executive Council of CII and Bengal Chambers of Commerce.

Being a CEO

Becoming the Chief Executive Officer of a Technical Company with a Non-Technical background is not easy. Col Batabyal recalls how he would read and prepare himself every time he interacted with his staff (technical graduates from top engineering colleges) regarding any project. He says knowing your job is extremely important. What helped him get through this whole process was his photographic memory, habit of reading, interactions with a variety of people, knowledge sharing, maintaining focus, not losing cool and keeping himself abreast of the latest trends in the industry.

Initiatives Taken

The CEO is always among the top most people in any organization, and therefore, one may often think that he/she is not required to attend to the minor issues in the organization, but Col Batabyal believes that a true leader must be able to empathize with his/her team and understand their problems. This is what brings in the sense of belongingness and trust in any organization. Initiatives such as provision of transport for women working in the company, childcare arrangement, yoga sessions, provision of gymnasium, organizing annual day functions and picnics etc., helped inculcate a feeling of pride and loyalty in the employees, and therefore, increased the overall productivity exponentially in all the organisations he worked with.

Advice to Fellow Officers

Col Batabyal says that the two main qualities that are needed to grow in any field are the ability to learn and hard work. Officers retiring from the Armed Forces join the IT industry as Team Leaders and Project Managers. While one doesn't need to be an expert programmer to excel in this field, a good mathematical and analytical background helps a lot. Today, the world has become highly competitive, and therefore, it is advisable that officers do relevant certifications before stepping out into the corporate. A full time MBA, if feasible in terms of time and money, is also a great option for SSC officers for a good start. In the end, all that matters is the motivation and dedication towards the goal.



Bidisha Pandey is a blogger who believes every individual has a story and a lot can be learnt from every story. More stories and interviews by her can be read on her blog site www.sassyweekender.com

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.

BY RANVIR SINGH

Capt Avinash Satapathy after completing his short service in Artillery, followed by a stint with RBI, ventured into security related domain as an entrepreneur. He started the firm eSec Security Consultants Pvt Ltd, and has not looked back thereafter. Having contributed in the Smart City projects and such Government related projects, he shifted his base to Dubai, UAE to provide similar services. Upon landing he diversified his field of services and has very innovative plans for the future.



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

Avinash: My father was in the IAF, so I spent my growing years in various cantonments all over India. After his retirement we moved to our home town Bhubaneswar. I did my Graduation and was actively involved in NCC. I attended the Republic Day Camp and during the march on Rajpath got motivated to join the Army. From OTA, I got commissioned into the Regiment Of Artillery in 1997. I served in J&K, Dehradun, Siachen and Devlali. After hanging the uniform in 2004, I joined the RBI at Ahmedabad, where the entrepreneur bug bit me, and I transitioned to eSec full time in 2009. Presently I am based in Dubai with my wife who is a Commercial Pilot flying in UAE and we have one son studying in 11th Grade.

Ranvir: Please give us more details about what you are presently engaged in.

Avinash: Our firm eSec Security Consultants Pvt Ltd (www.esecconsultants.com) is in System Integration and Consulting Domain of Security, Automation and Communication Solutions. Our major focus is on Design and SITC (Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning) of turnkey projects in Government and Corporate sector. We also carry out Consulting Assignments and Value Added Distribution of certain multinational brands. As part of our services we provide free audits/site surveys to our clients and assist in identifying the requirements. Based on budget and resources available we propose multiple solutions like Surveillance, Access Control, Perimeter

Security, Traffic Management, Command and Control Room Applications, Video Analytics etc. We have also recently ventured into IoT space by providing solutions related to Large Scale Water Management Solutions, Street Lights, Asset Tracking, Parking etc.



In interaction with Iqbal Singh at Dubai

Ranvir: What was the vision behind starting your venture?

Avinash: During my stint with RBI I was exposed to the various technologies being used for Safety and Security of the institution. I came across various vendors who were providing very average solutions and services and always thought that any Fauji worth his salt can do a much better job. At that time my good friend Dhruv came along with his multiple skills to start this journey. The vision was simple, be credible, and to provide clients with the latest technologies to address their Safety and Security requirements. There was also this innate believe that who else is more suited to represent and talk about security than us Faujis!

Ranvir: What were the challenges faced in this entrepreneurial journey?

Avinash: There were many. The uncertainties of business environment in comparison to the security of a Government service coupled with family responsibilities at the time of transition are the biggest concerns for any Fauji seeking entrepreneurship. I was fortunate that my wife supported me fully with moral and financial support during the transition. My co-founder, Dhruv and his family too played a big role during this journey of ours. Another major challenge was to adapt to the so called civilian environment which took some time. My RBI stint helped, but I wish there were more formal courses or workshops available in those days. It also took some effort to understand the new technologies being used in the public sector as they are much different than what we are exposed to during our defense career. Eventually it took us almost two years to reach a comfortable stage.



Junagadh City - Inaugurated By Sh Narendra Modi

Ranvir: Comparatively, how challenging is it to start a venture in a foreign land, and what were the challenges faced in this regard? How did you overcome the challenges?

Avinash: UAE (Dubai) is an exciting place to be in. It has presence of best of companies and technologies. At the same time it is fiercely competitive with limited local market opportunities in terms of scale. Initial fund requirements to set up a company and operational expenses are substantial. As a service provider we have taken a cautious approach by having strategic alliances with established firms and brands in this region. We have also collaborated with brands who want to explore Indian market for distribution. However I would still advice any company having a strong product/solution to take a chance on Dubai as an important gateway to MENA region. We would be happy to assist in any way we can in this regard.



Bhavnagar City - Inaugurated By Sh Vijay Rupani - CM Gujarat



With President of Taiwan after Signing of MoU

Ranvir: How do you find your entrepreneurial journey so far? Any regrets?

Avinash: Except for missing out on the feeling of serving our nation, I feel working on your own dreams and ideas comes as close to anything in terms of work satisfaction. There is no time for regrets. The biggest downside is lack of time for family , health etc. I have been guilty on these counts.



SI of The Year (2018)- South Asia By Genetec

Ranvir: What are your future plans going forward?

Avinash: Future is very exciting for our domain. Indian market is warming up to the latest technologies and processes in all sectors. With Smart/Safe City projects there is a massive infusion of funds to implement world class solutions. This opens a window to firms like us who are perfectly suited to deliver such solutions having implemented multiple safe city projects all over India. We are also considering investing to create our own products in Analytics Like Face Recognition etc. We recently implemented a turnkey security and ticketing solution for Statue of Unity, the World's biggest statue, and which has many firsts to its name. We are preparing to replicate more projects like this. We are also focusing on the emerging IoT domain and introduce related solutions in Indian market.

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

Avinash: The lessons are many and would vary for everyone. I would equate entrepreneurial journey to a route march/race back in the Academy in which your family, friends and colleagues are like course mates, You can not do it without them. Patience and endurance are the key to every challenge. It will be tough for sure. But aren't our toughest days part of our fondest memories of Academy! Whatever we have learnt during our service will be useful in one place or another. Some points to prepare for transition are -

- Networking.
- Adding relevant qualifications.
- Certifications.
- Workshops.
- Financials basics.



Statue of Unity – Secured and Managed by eSec

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

Avinash: During my transition in 2004 I noticed that the corporate world treated veterans mostly as suitable for Security and Administration related profiles only. The mindset has seen a sea change since then with veterans taking up a variety of challenging careers after leaving. However in my opinion there is still a huge scope in having more veterans taking up entrepreneurship. This would be possible only with Positive Govt Policies and a robust network of veterans in civvy street. For example VOB (Veteran Owned Businesses) constitute almost 10% in US Economy (Ref - <https://smallbiztrends.com/2019/11/veteran-owned-business-stats.html>). In comparison our numbers are miniscule. Many veterans are well established in Guarding and Security Services as entrepreneurs. I would like to request them to establish divisions to look into Security Systems related projects. This will give chances to many veterans who are capable to executing such technologies. The potential is huge as Government and Corporates are budgeting big money for this domain.

Ranvir: Thanks a ton, Avinash. It was really enlightening to interact with you.

Avinash: It's been a pleasure for me too. I am available to any ForceNet member, who would like any additional information or assistance on the subject.

Authored by Lt Col Ranvir Singh, based on telephonic conversation with Capt Avinash Satapathy, and inputs provided by Iqbal Singh on personal interaction.



Lt Col Ranvir Singh, a product of Rashtriya Military School and alumunus of National Defence Academy, was commissioned into 2nd Battalion The Bihar Regiment in June 1988. He has served in all terrains of the country, held appointments at Armoured Brigade HQ, Area HQ, and HQ ARTRAC, and finally hung his boots in Jan 2009. Thereafter, as a Corporate Warrior, he has immensely contributed for last 10 years to recognised organisations like IL&FS Technologies Ltd, National Institute of Bank Management of RBI, and MMTC-PAMP India Pvt Ltd. He has a keen interest in the field of ever evolving Information Technology, and a flair for writing. He can be reached at ranvirsm@gmail.com

Knowledge Bank

My GMAT Journey

BY MONICA SHARMA

This is a small but sincere effort and a token of my gratitude to the forum of the Forces Network, and Col Iqbal who exhorted me for quiet sometime, six months probably to share my experiences of GMAT preparation. So, as a farewell resolution to this year 2019 which brought me many wonderful experiences, I sit down to write this piece, and I will try my best to organize it for benefit of the readers.

About Me: I am a serving EME officer with 20 years of service. I have so far successfully handled the double responsibilities of profession and home, like all serving women officers. God has blessed me with a pretty curious and energetic son who is eleven now. So the first motivation I can give you is that age is no barrier to start a thing and follow it passionately. The seed of GMAT was planted in my brain in 2016 and it actually germinated in 2017. During 2016, I had only spoken to my juniors who had taken the GMAT recently or were already in/past their MBA phase. It is humbling how the older generation can learn a lot from the newer generation. I read one odd book of GMAT to familiarize with the pattern of questions asked on the exam, but not with the required seriousness. My posting from a countryside station to Secunderabad gave me the scope to join a coaching centre nearby for a preparatory course for GMAT. Now, it depends on the individual whether one subscribes to one-to-one coaching or not. In my case, since I was more comfortable in a classroom mode after so many years of remaining away from active studies, I took this option although the online free resources/online paid courses are also suitable as per the comfort level of the student. Though I was good in Mathematics in my school days and knowledge of English was taken as a given, but what to study and how to study was my main aim and purpose to go for this coaching.

Why GMAT? Simply put, GMAT is a standardized exam conducted by GMAC worldwide which is accepted by all business schools in the World for their MBA programs. For making a double switch in my career in terms of function and organization after my Army stint, I chose this option which has more acceptance in the corporate world. The test is a computer adaptive test, complete details of which are available on www.mba.com. The exam has a Quantitative (Quant) section of Maths questions and a Verbal section testing Sentence Correction (SC), Critical Reasoning (CR) and Reading Comprehension (RC) skills. Besides this, Integrated Reasoning (IR) and Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) sections are also included which are compulsory and important but they do not contribute towards your overall GMAT

score. The total score is 800 out of which anything above 700 is taken as a high score bracket for admission to various MBA courses in India and abroad. So I too started my preparation with the target of 700 score or above. Shared below is a table to give details of the structure of the exam, as also given on the official GMAT site www.mba.com.

Structure of the GMAT Exam: The GMAT Exam has four separately timed sections. You will have the opportunity to take two optional eight-minute breaks during the exam.

| <u>Test Section</u> | <u>No of Questions/ Time Limit</u> | <u>Question Types</u> | <u>Score Range</u> |
|-------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Analytical Writing Assessment | 1 Question/ 30 min | Analysis of an Argument | 0-6 (in 0.5 point increments) |
| Integrated Reasoning | 12 Questions/ 30 min | Graphics Interpretation, Table Analysis, Multi-source Reasoning, Two-part Analysis | 1-8 (in 1 point increments) |
| Quantitative Reasoning | 31 Questions/ 62 min | Data Sufficiency, Problem Solving | 6-51 (in 1 point increments) |
| Verbal Reasoning | 36 Questions/ 65 min | Reading Comprehension, Critical Reasoning, Sentence Correction | 6-51 (in 1 point increments) |

Study Materials: Although there is an ocean of resources available, both paid and free, but one should not go overboard with buying books.

(a) The Official Guide. This is a must buy, must read and the basic Bible for GMAT preparation. I have highlighted the word basic for two reasons. Firstly, because everyone should understand, practice and re-practice this book to understand what will be asked in the GMAT exam. This book has all samples of GMAT Quant and Verbal Questions with answers and explanations. Secondly and more importantly, one needs to understand that it is just a starting point and not the end all of your preparation for GMAT. You should practice from other sources as well. But the level and type of questions covered in OG gives one a fair idea of the actual exam questions. In addition, once you register for the exam date on www.mba.com website you get a free access to two GMAT PREP TESTS. These exams you should take when you are finally ready with your preparation to see your level of preparation vis-à-vis the score you are targeting because this Preparatory Test is the nearest and most accurate indicator of

how your actual performance on test day is going to be under similar time constraints as the actual test.

(b) Additional GMAT Prep Test. Buying any more books other than the Official Guide is not recommended by me. Instead, one can invest in additional GMAT Preparatory Tests Packs sold by www.mba.com. Additionally, you should exploit and practice some other good preparatory tests which you get for free on the net from MGMT, Kaplan and few others. But remember these tests are more for practice under real test conditions, but their scoring algorithm is not the same as actual GMAT or GMAT PREP TEST.

(c) www.gmatclub.com. Join this wonderful forum for FREE and you would not need anything else (of course the OG remains), not even the classroom coaching which I joined because there are so many people on this forum who are in the same boat as you and the questions are solved so simply and in different ways that you get a complete perspective of where you are in terms of preparation. Plus, with its blogs and latest questions and the endless resources available, this is the best option for online study. There may be other websites too like www.pagalguy.com or e-gmat.com or Magoosh, which you may occasionally browse, but one thing to beware of in this exam preparation is not to squander your energies too much here and there. You can get a decent score by restricting your studies to 2-3 sources otherwise it is likely to become counter-productive.

Study Plan. GMAT is not a difficult exam in terms of what topics are being covered. Quant portion tests basic math concepts taught till class X level (no integration, differentiation or logarithm or even trigonometry is in the syllabus) but the tricky way in which simple concepts like Pythagoras theorem are tested in the form of questions is what you have to practice to deal with the mental pressure that a timed exam like GMAT puts you through. Now, I do not claim to be anywhere in that elite club of people scoring 740 or 760 or even 780, sometimes with less than 6 months of preparation, but I would say that an average middle age working person can take about 6 months of preparation time to reach a reasonable level from scratch. However this effort should be continuous with occasional breaks to refresh the mind and body. My study graph went haywire as after having undergone the coaching for three months and self-study of three months, when one of my friends gave the GMAT before me and got a poor score (he was definitely ahead of me in the coaching class), I got a bit doubtful and felt that I needed to prepare for some more time. But due to some domestic issues, "some more time" became a year and I drifted from my preparation.

Cut to month of Jul 2018, I realized that my tenure in the present station was about to come to an end and that again jolted me out of my status quo reverie. I had wasted a

year, submitted to self-doubt and had not achieved anything great out of the time I had invested in other so called important things. So I booked an exam date in Oct 2018 and dedicated my next three months for preparing for GMAT. This was the busiest time professionally due to commitments at work but I religiously studied for 2-3 hours daily. And that actually is my mantra for GMAT preparation – Consistency and Perseverance. I realized that studying for two hours daily was more beneficial than studying for 10 hours on weekends. I also downloaded the GMAT Club App on my phone and never wasted a moment even during the brief breaks that I got in the office. It became an addiction and what a wonderful addiction it was to study for GMAT. It is as if your brain is getting sharpened every day. I also used to keep an error log for all my mistakes and spend time on understanding why I made those errors, as one has to change the way our mind is conditioned to think while attempting a tricky GMAT problem or a grey area. The GMAT Club forum was immensely useful in this phase of practice.

Final Stages. One month before the exam day I started doing my Prep Tests on weekends and would spend the following week in analysing where and why I went wrong and, then addressing those weaknesses. During the final phase of practicing my GMAT Prep Tests, I was scoring between 680 and 720 and this was close to my actual score. Just a week prior to the D-day, I took leave and then refreshed almost all topics where I needed a revision but a day before the exam I just relaxed, In fact, I was doing and thinking of everything but the exam because last minute studies are not required for this exam. You know what you know and further engagement of an already overflowing brain will most likely drain you out before the exam.

Exam Centre. GMAT test is conducted at designated Pearson VUE centres across all major Indian cities. There are different time slots available for the exam and one should choose a time slot he/she is comfortable with and when your mind is the most active and sharp during the day. ACs are quiet effective, so dress up accordingly, the dress rules for exam center are given on their website and I won't elaborate on that. Headphones or earplugs are provided on request. I would advise everyone to visit the test center once before the actual day of exam to get familiarized with the route and time taken to reach. It keeps the tension level low.

On Day of Exam. Just as an afterthought, you must have a passport before you can apply for taking the GMAT exam, so if you have made up your mind to attempt that your passport should be ready. Also, it's the only document that the test centers accept as Proof of Identity. The test is of roughly three and half hours duration with two optional breaks allowed during the test but if you exceed the time allowed for these breaks, the excess time is deducted automatically from the next section of the test. So time your breaks mentally as you would not be allowed to wear a watch.

though a clock is provided for at the Examination Centre.

Conclusion. I have tried to summarize my GMAT experience in the above paragraphs but there are many other experiences which I can share with people who are seriously contemplating to take this exam. I will be more than happy to help in any other way I can and it will be my little contribution to help others in our fraternity. You can connect with me on monicasharma365@gmail.com.



Monica, an alumna of Delhi University, was commissioned into the Corps of EME in 1999. During her service period, apart from operational duties, she has also been an Instructor in Cat A and Cat B Training Establishments. She has also served as a Staff Officer in Force Headquarter in United Nations Mission in Eritrea Ethiopia (UNMEE). An avid reader and a commentator, she is all set to join ISB Hyderabad for which she has qualified in her very first attempt.



Amit Dalvi

Data Science as a Career

BY VINAY GUPTA

On 10 July 2019, I got a call from my colleague from Army, Colonel Iqbal Singh. He informed me that he is planning to do a seminar for Forces Network Group and wanted me to do a fireside chat along with him. During the fireside chat, I was required to share my experiences on 'Data Science as a career'. He seemed very excited on phone talking about Data Science career for veterans, and also informed me that Harvard Business Review in Aug 2012 edition had published an article "Data Science - the Sexiest Job of 21st century". This revelation made me understand his excitement.

Owing to his persuasion and passion, I was not able to refuse him and agreed to share my thoughts and experience during the seminar. After hanging up, I started thinking as to why this term 'Sexiest' has been made analogous with Data Science, which is supposed to be a geek job. And a geek is someone, who is seen as an overly intellectual, obsessive, introverted or lacking social skills with poor dressing sense. So, comparison between the two seemed sceptical. I am aware of one fact that Data Scientists are supposedly to be the one, who has an extensive knowledge of complex data mining algorithms, statistical models and artificial neural networks along with the ability to write software programs to solve known/unknown business problems. Thus in wildest stretch of imagination, data scientist career does not appear to be correlated with the four letter 'S' word. On the other side, considering the acumen of Harvard Business Review (HBR) pundits, who had written this article, I also knew that there must be some strong argument and reasons, which led to this CORRELATION.

So, I began to explore and research on Internet, discussing with my friends in data science community and few interns working in my team. After initial exploration, few aspects came to light with respect to data scientist career, which may have led to this correlation/analogy.

These are namely -

- Data Scientists are difficult to find, they are well qualified for the tasks performed, highly paid for the job due to rare breed, difficult to retain due to multiple and exciting opportunities, and they need to continuously work upon to retain the edge amongst the peers.
- I believe, similar qualities/features are applicable to sexy men and women.

So, on a closer look of the two disparate words - Data Scientist & Sexiest Job, I discovered a lot of similarities between them. I am sure that these qualities must have enabled HBR experts in labelling the data scientist job as being the 'Sexiest'.

During the course of my interaction with officers, families, students and other participants, I realised that there is lot of myth, confusion and complexity in the data science eco-system. In order to simplify or demystify the same, I thought of writing a six series article on Data Science as a Career.

The six series of articles include the following:

DSC_1 : Why there is so much hype about Data Science?

DSC_2 : What is Data Science?

DSC_3 : What skills are required by a data scientist?

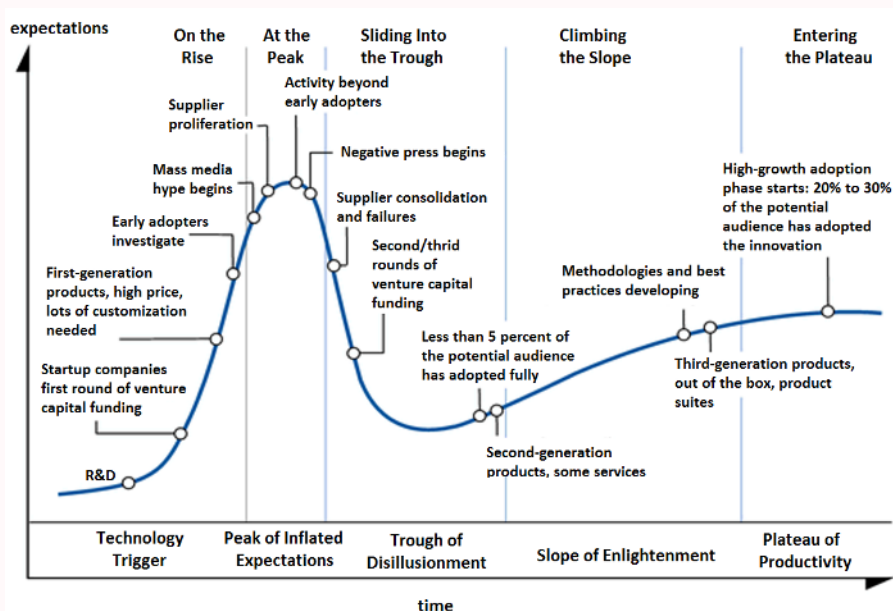
DSC_4 : Data Science: 5 shades of career

DSC_5 : Roles applicable at different age groups?

DSC_6 : Data Science : Education Eco-system

DSC_1 : Why there is so much hype about Data Science?

Hype by dictionary meaning is the use of a lot of publicity, references and advertisement to make people interested in something such as a product, technology or concept, which leads to unrealistic expectations. In last ten years or so, there has been similar excitement, media coverage or references around Data Analytics, Big Data Technology, Machine Learning, Deep Learning and Artificial Intelligence. These buzzwords are being increasingly used in social, business and personal conversations.



If we correlate with the Gartner Hype cycle, then various facets of data science technology landscape can be seen at each level of hype journey. At its core, the Hype Cycle tells us where in the product's timeline we are, and how long it will take the technology to hit maturity. It attempts to tell us which technologies will survive the hype and have the potential to become a part of our daily life.

Artificial Intelligence based Autonomous systems and driverless cars are in the initial rising phase of the Curve, where First generation products are being made and mass media hype is going-on. Deep Learning and Machine Learning have moved over the hump and leading companies such as Microsoft, Amazon, Google, Facebook, IBM have moved to second/third generation products/services and are now at the point of high-growth adoption. Few big data technologies such as Hadoop and Pig are gradually phasing out. R had seen a meteoric rise in adoption in 2013 but now has been taken over by Python. Due to the on-going developments, we are now witnessing the rise in popularity of Julia, which is being pitted as better alternative to R & Python. Let's see how the future unfolds.

The hype is generally characterised by the following features:

- Increase in usage of related terms by community members and media persons
- Increase in job opportunity available in the market
- Increase in median salary than other competing jobs.
- Mushrooming of training institutes, to acquire the related skills
- Unrealistic expectations



We have witnessed a similar hype in the field of software engineering during the beginning of 21st century. There was a sudden rush of students opting to choose the career in Computer Engineering and then migrate to US for good career and money. As a matter of fact, this become one of the key point during the matrimonials. "Software Engineer, working is USA, Handsome salary....." This became the ticket to stardom, for self and family.

In a similar manner, analytics and big data technologies are now playing the role. Only change is that everyone is not rushing to migrate to US. Due to development of good eco-system in India itself, cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Mumbai and Delhi-NCR have become the hub of analytics ecosystem, where students migrate to, in order to find a dream job and salary.

All these changes have come-in due to increase in service offerings, algorithms and capabilities by leading players of analytics platform, cloud based computing and big data technologies. Amidst all these changes and developments, the media hype around the field of data science has remained for last ten years. In order to encash this opportunity and talent/skills demand-supply gap, a large number of online/offline/ blended courses and institutes have mushroomed in every Tier-1 and Tier 2 cities.

One interesting phenomena observed due to the creation of data science hype-bubble is, unrealistic expectations by the community involved and an increased inability to communicate, especially with non-data science colleagues. Unrealistic expectations slow down progress by deflating the enthusiasm when projects yield less than the expected results.

They also make it harder than it should be to agree on project success metrics and ROI goals.

While attending the seminars or workshops on Data Analytics, I have observed that AI word is being very loosely used, and at times, in one breath ML, DL or AI (acronyms for Machine Learning, Deep Learning or Artificial Intelligence), all three words are used to explain the technology used in their analytics projects. When someone talks about AI solutions, or doing AI, most of the time on further discussions, it emerges that they really should be talking about building a deep learning or machine learning model.

Presently, in industry more than 50% of new roles are driven toward skill sets related to Data Science. Further, various recruiting companies and industry pandits are rooting that there is a severe shortage of industry ready skilled people and employers are scrambling to find certain type of resources in the market and are willing to pay a premium to get them on-board. It is also seen that the requirement for the number of

data scientists is growing at an exponential rate. This is resulted by the emergence of newer job roles and industries. This is supplemented by the increase in data and its various types. It is a staggering fact that over 90% of the data in the world was generated in just 2 years. It is unimaginable to realize the amount of data that will be generated in the next decade. It is therefore anticipated that the number of roles and data scientists will only increase in the future.

According to IBM, an increment by 364,000 to 2,720,000 openings will be generated in the year 2020. This demand will only grow further to an astonishing 700,000 openings. According to Glassdoor, Data Scientist is the number one job on its website. This position will remain unchanged in the future.

All these signs indicate that we're in a hype cycle of Data Science.

Another dimension of Data Science hype is related to the expected value it can create for the existing organisations or create entirely new business models or create value for the masses. A lot of exciting use cases, success stories and new business models have created the euphoria around this technology. Owing to this, the companies and organisations are considering the adoption of Data Science as panacea to their various operational and financial challenges.

Due to increase in competition, pressure on reducing operating costs and enhancing revenue, every business house is looking to identify the methodology for implementing data analytics in their processes or products. If we briefly look at the journey of Information Technology wave; the advent of computer systems, web technologies and implementation of ERP applications in 1990s resulted in digitising of various processes and collection of data as part of various business operations. These data sets were generally related to sales transactions, customer history, accounting information, financials, operational tasks, service/maintenance activities and so on. Thus the data either in databases or in excel sheets started growing in the company.

Consequent to this growth in data, the next logical and intuitive question arose - What we should do with this data? Can we derive some insights from the data? Can this data help us to solve our simple/complex business problems? Can the data help us to make our life better and more sustainable or will it create new or unknown problems and many more?

Data based decision making has been favourite for the organisations runs by professionals. In military, we have something akin to it called as OODA (Observe-Orient-Decide-Act) loop. The OODA loop was developed in the mid 20th century by the military strategist, US Air Force Colonel John Boyd. It was initially used to train

soldiers to make and take time-sensitive decisions rapidly when there may not be time to gather all the information. The goal of the strategy was to execute the OODA loop process more quickly than an opponent in order to infiltrate and disrupt the enemy's decision cycle. Applying the same analogy in the Corporate sector, in order for the company to remain competitive and profitable they need to acquire data, process the same, take decision and act in a time frame quicker than their competitors. Surviving and winning in the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) type of situation rests upon making better decisions. Therefore, improving the quality of decision-making is something what most organizations should focus upon. Data Science plays a major in acquiring this capability.

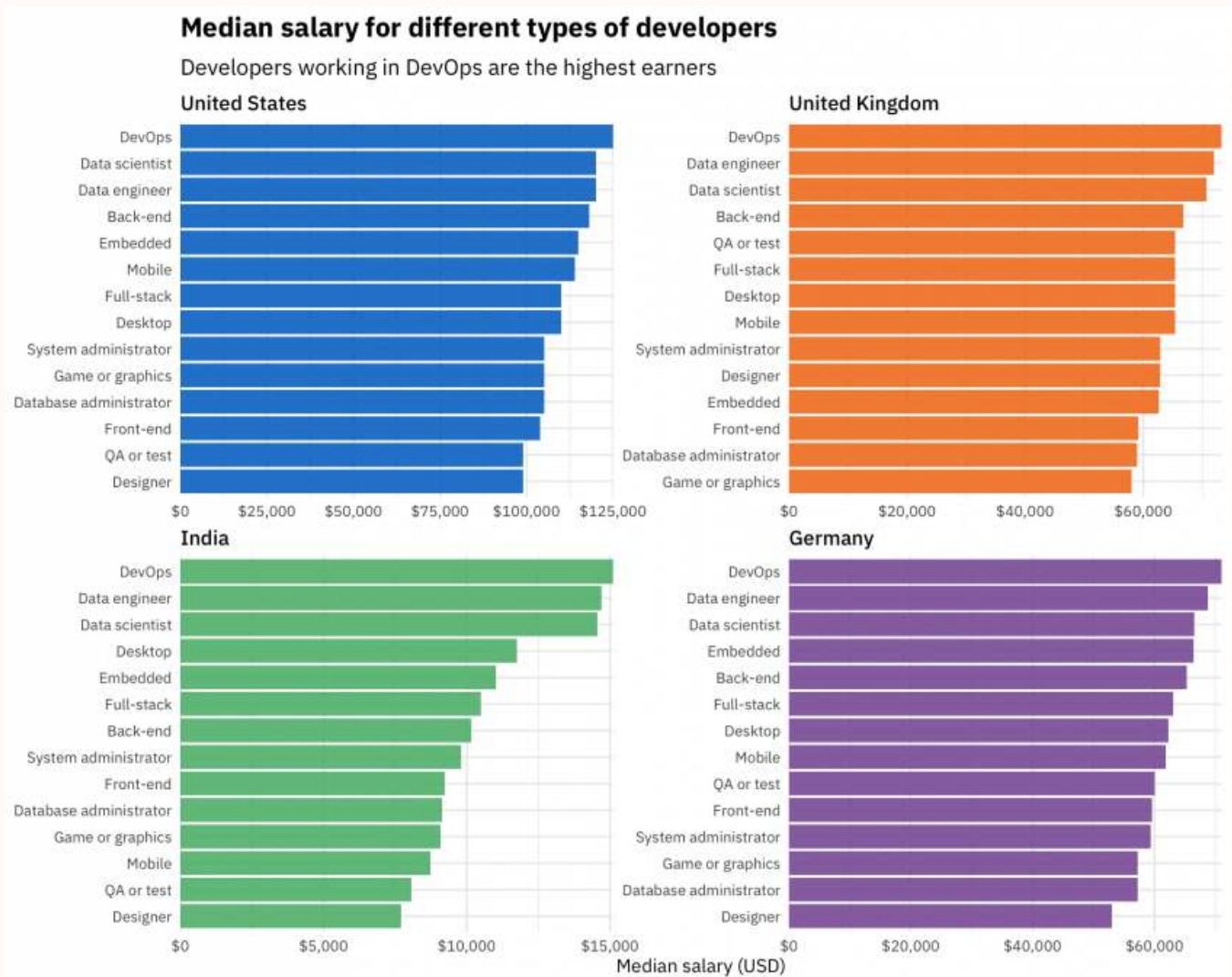
There is a gradual shift from intuitive based decision making or so called gut based decisions to data driven decisions. This is primarily due to the developments in the field of data science, which allows businesses/processes/customer's data to be analysed and presented in an easy to consume/comprehend and intuitive dashboards. Presently, the world is generating more and more data every year, so it's reasonable to expect implementation of methodologies that extracts business value from it and earn revenues/profits. More data means more demand for the data scientists, in order to carry out three main activities within data science viz. statistical analysis, machine learning, data visualisation. These skills will stay very relevant in the coming years, though their names might evolve.

An important and striking aspect of Data Science career, is its applicability in all sectors/industries viz. healthcare, retail, telecom, utilities, transportation, media, sports etc. The use cases developed in all the sectors have resulted in cumulative rise in the demand of data science professionals due to increase in their range and depth. The successful use cases, have increased the confidence in the business leaders, making them more amenable to experiment and invest in data science projects/initiatives. The growth in demand is unprecedented in last five years and across all geographies.

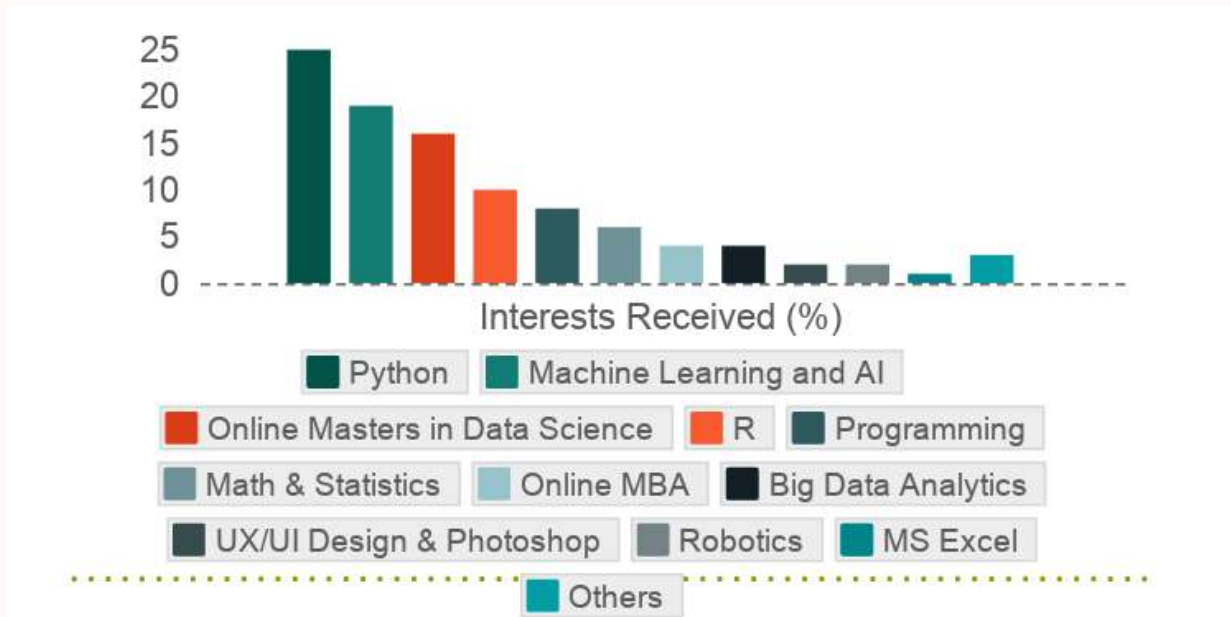
If we compare the median salary then according to Glassdoor, the average data scientist salary is high in comparison with other IT/Business roles. The driving factor behind high data science salaries is that organizations are realizing the power of analytics and big data and want to use it to drive smart business decisions. And because the supply of data professionals hasn't yet caught up with demand, starting salaries for these positions remain high especially for those who have an advanced degree in data science or a related field.

It is pertinent to note that the Data scientists are highly paid, but not more so than a similarly educated developer doing other kinds of work. (Both bachelor's degrees and even higher degrees are associated with significantly increased pay for people who

code.) Over the past several years, data science and data engineering work have been moving away from an extreme outlier position into the mainstream of software work. Comparative analysis done by Stack Overflow is given below:



As per the study carried out by Stoodnt, Inc., a career guidance and college admissions platform, it has been observed that there is a huge interest in the online courses on data science, machine learning, artificial intelligence, cloud, and big data analytics. This trend does support the report by TNM 2017 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are the most widely chosen (25% of respondents) domains for reskilling among working professionals. Here is a snapshot of what the students and professionals were looking for in 2018 - based on keyword search, requesting info, free trials, and sign-ups. This again indicates the hype or craze or affinity towards courses related to data science. The educational institutes, training institutes and online platforms are cashing on this trend and accordingly, a large number of courses are being offered by them to cater for needs of different age group, educational background and financials involved.



According to Gartner's 2019 CIO Agenda survey, between 2018 and 2019, organizations that have deployed artificial intelligence (AI) grew from 4% to 14%. That indicates that the hype to a certain extent has also become a reality.

As per the Gartner Hype Cycle 2019 for emerging technologies, the hype in the field of Data Science is likely to continue for few more years. However, the specific technologies in Data science ecosystem may evolve or change. This includes emerging technologies such as Adaptive machine learning, edge AI, edge analytics, explainable AI, AI PaaS, Generative Adversarial Networks and graph analytics. Conversational AI remains at the top of corporate agendas spurred by the worldwide success of Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant and others.



Vinay Gupta served in the Army for 22 years where he established the Centre for Data Analytics in MCEME Secunderabad and thereafter developing analytics driven Military Equipment Management system. He has participated as speaker/panelist in various international/national seminars/ conferences on Big Data Analytics, Industrial IoT and Renewable Energy. Presently, as Head Data Analytics & Business Excellence of Suzlon Global Services Limited, he is leading the Digitalisation & Analytics Program of wind and solar farm operations. A thought leader with 28 years of experience in the field of Predictive Analytics, Big Data Applications, IIoT systems, Telecommunications and Military Equipment.

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Corporate Survival Techniques

BY CP PREM VAS

This write up is a condensed version of my experience in HR of 32 years. 21 years of holistic HR which was a way of life in the Army and remaining decade in Corporate – two different worlds with a lot of commonality in handling the human factor!

I have taken three issues that I felt are common professional devils we need to live with, and how to angelize them.

Attitude is not everything – it is the ONLY thing!

Every task/job has Knowledge, Skill and Attitude as its ingredient to be professionally successful. While Knowledge and Skill are mandatory and an essential factor to do well, Attitude is the only factor that gives you an edge over others where knowledge & skill are on even keel.

Just take a hard-unbiased look at the successful ‘Top Guns’ in all organisations. They are a ‘select few’ who have more or less the same knowledge and skill as you. Yet they take the cake and eat it too!! Why?

Well, they take on additional responsibility easily and don’t complain. They address issues with positivity in spite of challenges. They think in terms of solutions and will not work up excuses as to why a job or task can’t be done. They do not complain, backstab, crib, gossip or play politics as a matter of habit. In the subject of politics, they understand the necessary evil of office politics fairly well; but, do not ‘play’ politics. See the difference?

Okay, let me correct myself a little bit here – these high fliers may not be as holy as I have painted them. They do have shades of these negatives which certainly is NOT their only or primary goal in professional and personal life. See what I mean? They know when to call their negatives off – especially when it is working against their interests! That is smartness as they do not endeavour to become professional martyrs! Perhaps one of the main reasons why they stay longer and get promoted faster when all other factors are on even keel!!

As an HR head, when it comes to promoting or giving a raise to two equally competent resources in terms of knowledge and skill, I always went for the one who showed a greater attitude. Accordingly, convinced my business heads too on the importance of attitude.

So far, I have never been wrong!!

When you run the extra mile, there are no traffic jams!

This is not my quote. I read this somewhere – can't recollect where!

Most of us, whether we like to admit it or not, will work just to meet the expectations of ourselves and our boss. Moving out of our so-called comfort zone is a big 'No-No'. Unfortunately, a lot of us think moving out of comfort zone is extremely painful or it is only meant for fast runners! We feel we are justified in working only for the 'pay' we get (especially those types in the Government jobs or large Corporates where lethargy is a way of life). By the way, these days the Government work ethics and culture are changing for good - although the snail is faster in this race for change!

If you pray hard enough to all the Gods you know, you might get away with the above 'I couldn't care' attitude for some time - but not all the time!

When it comes to layoff or churning the workforce, you will be the first to be blessed in the attrition list for being an 'average' worker who specialises in being 'mediocre'. So why vent on the Glassdoor for a fault that is largely yours and partly of the company's economics?

Winners love to beat the deadline, spend extra time to make a flawless report, make a value add presentation or smash the target, or decide to work with an employee to address a promise to give a feedback to their concern or try to understand your organisation's bigger picture and learn how to contribute 'better' and 'showcase' your performance. In such cases, you are not exactly sweating extra or working up stress levels; you are actually enjoying improving yourself and creating an environment that recognizes your initiative. Raises, promotions and success to such people are by-products because their performance excellence is like a beacon from a lighthouse. You can't ignore it even in a storm!

The immense satisfaction that comes from running the extra mile is actually giving you the euphoria of 'no traffic jams'! No pay in the world can compensate for the joy of having done something special and exclusive which only you are entitled to experience! This experience cannot be bought online or from the neighbourhood mall.

Sceptics will find this hard to swallow; but believe me, I am a practitioner of this trait and have closely observed it in successful people.

"Doing is believing" and what people consider as 'passion' is a result of this experience of going the extra mile!!

Learn to Handle your Boss!!

Most people do not leave their company – they leave their boss! They say this percentage is between 60 to 75 % depending on the environment and who did the survey. Got bored of listening to this oft-repeated statement!

When you join an organisation, to a large extent, it is your choice – could be by compulsion or otherwise. However, when it comes to your boss – there is no choice!! Your boss or immediate supervisor is usually non-negotiable. You need to live with this angel or devil depending on perceptions both of you share of each other.

We spend money and time on education, learning professional and technical skills. Unfortunately, our teachers, parents and competitive exams do not teach us how to handle ourselves and the people we interact with. Digitalisation, in its various avatars, has buried us in its coffin of isolation and rivetted it nice and thorough!

Professionally, your next raise, promotion and growth including your very existence in the organisation you work for, depends to a large extent on your boss' perception of you. Hate to admit it, right?!

Your boss; by virtue of being a human being, comes with nature's manufacturing defects in various shades of - good, bad, and ugly qualities, unpredictable idiosyncrasies, assumed expectations, inflexible personality traits, etc.

If that is the hard reality, shouldn't you learn the skills on how to handle your boss? Isn't it equally important as coding & programming, marketing, negotiating and presentation skills, etc?

Nobody has created an MBA on Boss Handling till date because of the futility of such an effort!! So where do you learn about it? If someone starts to write a book on it, she will run out of paper! Well, I will risk guarantying a few tips that will fetch your reasonable insurance against the residual effects of a lousy boss. These tips are not applicable to ethical issues between the boss and employee, for which nobody needs guidance. Here goes: -

- Tip 1: (You will never go wrong here)!!
 - a. Rule 1: The boss is always right.
 - b. Rule 2: In case the boss is wrong, apply rule 1.
- Tip 2: Downplay his 'bad' and enhance her 'good'.
- Tip 3: Communicate bold enough to understand his expectations of you. You will save a lot of heartburn!

- Tip 4: Make him look good in front of his stakeholders with your value-add skills and knowledge. Remember, there will always be those special skills and knowledge that you are good at and known for. He will join your fan club delightfully if you do this with professionalism.
- Tip 5: The boss's ego and position somehow give him the unwritten right to yell at anyone except his own boss. Be cool enough to delete the emotional outburst and the tendency to retort with smart replies to figure out what triggered it? (It will put you at higher emotional intelligence than your boss for once !!) If you can't figure it out - ask him point-blank. You will earn respect for being assertive! (remember 'assertive response' is different from 'aggressive response')
- Tip 6: Tip 1 is to keep you awake. Don't take it too seriously!

There are many situations that I can relate to. Currently, the above three should suffice before this write becomes a fiction novel.

Please share your bricks and bouquets at cppremvas@gmail.com. I take delight in accepting both! Bricks to construct my house and flowers to brighten my garden!!



Lt Col CP Prem Vas, is an LGSC qualified Artillery officer of the Sep 1987 batch. He has also had a stint with Special Action Group of NSG. He commanded an Artillery Regiment and was part of Military World Games Cell at Hyderabad before signing off. Post the Armed Forces stint, he has had a decade of Corporate experience in HR which included providing leadership to HR Centre of Excellence of US based Software company in Bangalore and Chennai, and headed HR of an IT company at Kochi. Fond of reading and listening to music, Prem loves writing for professional and leisure pursuits.

Author of the Month

Anand Saxena holds triple master's degrees to his credit—Master of Science, Master of Philosophy and Master of Management Studies, in which he majored with Financial Management. He is also a helicopter pilot with vast combat flying experience.

Anand feels passionate about the lack of institutionalised financial education to the children, or indeed to a common person in India, which results in their long-term financial doom despite handsome pay packages. He has read extensively on this subject, building upon his core knowledge. He writes on personal finance regularly on his blog (andysfinancial.blogspot.com). He distilled these financial nuggets in the form of short musings, which a 20 - 22 year old youth could understand, internalise and apply in real life. The result, in the form of the book, *Musings of a Financially Illiterate Father*, was published in July 2018 and also debuted in two lit fests.

His book, 'Musings of a Financially Illiterate Father', is scaling new heights and is ranked # 15 on Amazon books (Business- Self Help) and # 12 on Kindle (Business and Finance) as in October 2019.

His second book, 'The Millionaire Mechanic: Financial Wisdom in the Rann', narrates the fascinating story of the protagonists of his first book – HoneyCool and Anshreya. It is a Financial Travelogue, a maiden genre in Indian writing, and combines the racy thrill of a road trip with the wisdom of personal finance.

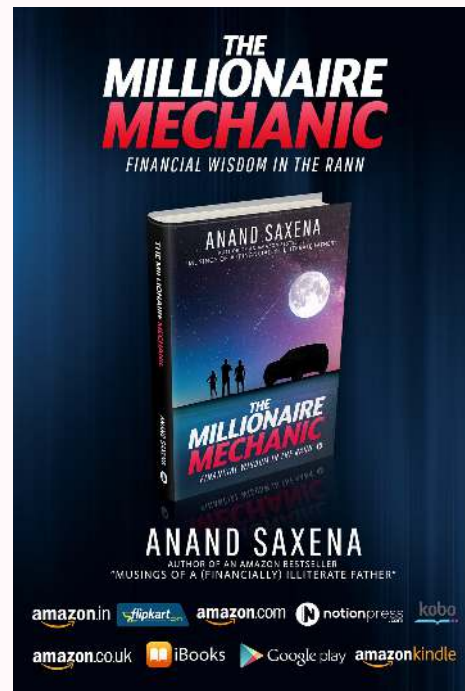
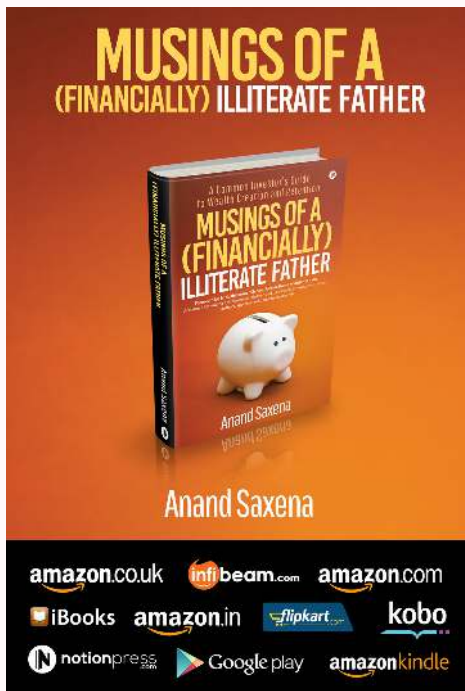


MUSINGS OF A FINANCIALLY ILLITERATE FATHER

Is being rich and wealthy the one and the same thing? Is there an alchemy of wealth creation and retention? Does a higher income or cash flow necessarily result in tangible wealth? Are there some eternal principles following which one can accumulate sizable wealth – irrespective of income or cash flow?

These and many more of such questions flirt with our minds every day. Anand, with the help of his protagonists - Anshreya and HoneyCool, has unlocked many of these ancient secrets for a common investor. He has laid out a roadmap towards creating enduring wealth which is independent of the income or cash flow. More importantly, he has aligned these timeless secrets to the modern financial assets and systems.

Anand has ruthlessly laid bare the mistakes that he has made during his lifetime and how he would do things differently if he were to start his investment journey all over again. This book also contains the distilled nuggets of wisdom of around fifty financial masters whom the author has studied. Young investors or indeed investors at any life stage or age will immensely benefit from the precepts given in this book.



THE MILLIONAIRE MECHANIC

“Travel is the only thing that makes you richer”- but what if it also equips you with the tools for wealth generation and retention?

Join Anshreya and HoneyCool, the protagonists of the book, “Musings of a Financially Illiterate Father”, on a heady joyride of Kutch along with the millionaire mechanic, Aman. Their exciting road trip covers the Rann of Kutch, the ruins of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization town Dholavira, the disputed area of Sir Creek, the port town of Mandvi and other hidden jewels of Kutch. The barren landscape of Kutch gets filled with vivid colours of history, geography, culture and anthropology. Aman keeps imparting nuggets of financial wisdom which are going to last both the friends a lifetime.

The book unlocks many of the ancient secrets of wealth creation for a common investor and lays out a roadmap for creating enduring wealth which is agnostic to the income or cash flow. The result- a financial travelogue, a new genre in Indian writing, will leave you spellbound as you discover new oceans leaving the comfort of the shore behind. Traveling was never so much fun.

How to Reach the Author:

- Website - <https://www.musingshappinesswealth.com/>
- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/anandsaxenapersonalfinance/>
- Twitter - <https://twitter.com/anandsa89875292>
- Instagram - anandsaxena10
- Blogger - <http://andysfinancial.blogspot.com>
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Book Review

Connecting the Dots: by John Chambers

BY RAMESH KUPPUSWAMY

The heart pulsated with enthusiasm to meet John when he had visited Mumbai for Jio Talks. A legendary leader in the Corporate World. Listening to his speech and answers to many of the questions from the audience truly connected why he was an amazing leader at the helm of affairs of Cisco for two decades. Sailing through the toughest time in 2001 during the dot-com crash, the peak of economic meltdown and then steering CISCO to the top as the global leader, a multi-billion-dollar company. The eye-catching thing was his eagerness to donate his book to all those who had asked questions. It certainly prompted me in my mind that I should read this book.

The book is a journey connecting many dots from his childhood to what he is now. Learning through the experiences, he gained and how those came handy through his journey in CISCO and beyond. The curiosity to read increased like a teenager as I flipped the pages to know what more, which he had mentioned many times to be like one in your business. Be curious like a teenager.

Parents, other family members and people around him in West Virginia, his birthplace, built a strong foundation for his life. He goes to quote as to how each lesson learned helped in business decisions. John found great strength in his physical disability with Dyslexia, which turned out to be an asset to make many of the best decisions. That made him more humble to be humane, which revealed when he caringly talked to an employee's child with the same disability during a program in CISCO; bring the children to the workplace.

Staying calm in a crisis is a much-sorted lesson learned from his father. When he was drowning in the river Elk slipped from a rock while fishing, his father kept shouting to him to hold the pole. Until John reached a point to save him. He was just six years old. To keep him not to lose calm during the crisis and stay focused. That saved his life and later, CISCO during the crisis in 2001 during the dot-com crash. When many companies had pulled the plugs, CISCO stood by its strategy. John met the key customers to understand the reality on the ground. Understanding that the situation was not favorable, he has to make a tough decision to restructure CISCO to navigate the realities of the market without changing the strategy.

John's journey through IBM and Wang Lab to Cisco taught him a great lesson. It was about, how companies failed, doing the right thing for too long and competing with their peers. They missed seeing the market transition to stay ahead disrupting itself with newer products required by the customers. Being customer-centric is the way to stay relevant in the market transition.

John narrates as to how many of the leaders whom he met or worked with influenced him. One among them was the Israeli Leader Simon Pere, then the President, for his inspiring, fearless and brash about solving big problems. He narrates an event when this leader landed up in his house for dinner and how he was eager to bring in solutions to improve their technology. There were other visionary leaders like John Doerr, Marc Andreessen, Henry Kissinger, Bill Clinton, George W Bush, King Abdullah of Jordan, Narendra Modi and so on, who did influence him by their non-linear way of thinking, a healthy desire to challenge the conventional wisdom, following curiosity and trusting instincts.

The first acquisition of Crescendo Communication was a game-changer for CISCO paving a way to create a DNA for switching technology from merely focusing on routers. A decision, which would have costed his job standing against the board. He believed that the merger of equals with different strategy and culture is always riskier. That was the beginning of building confidence within CISCO and customers with that acquisition. That didn't end the journey of the growth, 180 more added to its kitty of acquisitions, strategic partnership, and Spin-in over the years and that hasn't stopped to keep in pace with market transition meeting customer's requirements.

John believed that the crowd sourcing of data points remain merely data. Unless a correlation with customer inputs done to have a clear picture of how the market is moving. Certainly, he does not obviate the requirement of expert analysis to add value to the data. Cisco has evolved with a strategy to keep customer-first and add value to change the way we work, live, learn and play. Being a bridge to possible.

The emotional connect with employees made John look at them as a family, then not just as teams working for a company. Such a relationship is stronger for everyone to deliver the best. He also believed that insight of employees becomes important in any crisis. Building a culture is equally important as pursuing a strategy for the company's success.

In the subsequent chapters, he goes about answering all questions through a playbook as to how are startups driving the wave of disruption, and what can companies and countries do to tap digital innovation at scale? What are the

foundations of customer success in a connected world? How should one keep reinventing oneself in a world of change irrespective of age to stay relevant in the current context of the market?

John talks much about how the leaders of the countries of Israel, France, and India embraced digitization. That gave an edge for many startup companies to come up in these countries, which will certainly help in their development.

John has been candid sharing his experiences and the lessons gained in ups and downs. Many times, he goes about repeating the lessons to emphasize how important are those for business leaders. Also, he mentions how he went about making decisions when faced with challenges. Connecting each dot of these lessons gives a larger picture to view in any scenario to make the right decisions and that would add value to new entrepreneurs in any startup and successful businessmen to succeed. The measure of great companies comes from their ability to create shared wins for everyone.

JC2 Venture is a small company that he started after stepping down as CEO of CISCO in 2015 creating value for startup companies as an advisor, mentor, and coach. Leaders always feel lonely in tough times and such wisdom shared in this book will add strength to them. The book is a must-read for all who are into business or planning to start a startup and for who aspires to become a leader in the Business world.

You're not as good as people think you are when things go well and you're also not as bad as people think you are when there's a downturn. - John Chambers



Col Ramesh Kuppuswamy, commissioned in Dec 1987, is an alumni of National Defence Academy, IIM Bangalore and IISc Bangalore. His last designation in the Indian Army was Addl Director - Telecom and IT Infrastructure Management, and has seven years of experience in implementation and O&M of telecom network worth 12.12 Billion USD. Presently he is the Program Manager & PMO - Implementation for 4G IP/MPLS with CISCO Systems, India, at Mumbai.

Stories

Life's Lessons

BY DINESH DUTT SHARMA

The steps taken by the Government to curb corruption and black money by demonetization, took the Nation by storm. However, it had a reverberating and rippling effect on each and every member of our country.

The endless queues outside banks and the ATM's found wide coverage on all TV channels, even as political parties tried to gain mileage out of the issue. However, one very important aspect which was not splashed in the media but which merits applause and appreciation is the single minded determination of the bank employees and their dedicated efforts to meet the herculean demands of the situation. The entire bank staff of all the nationalised and private banks worked round the clock, without rest or relief to give positive support to the public and ensure the successful implementation of the Government's directive.

Sitting in the office of the Manager, of my bankers of twenty years, I had the opportunity to witness an unusual interaction. It was about 4 PM in the evening and I was in the bank with a request for release of money for my daughter's wedding, as stipulated by the government. The tired eyes and strained posture of the Manager spoke of the long and stressful hours he must have put in, yet he gave me a patient hearing and guided me about the procedure. There was a knock and a man wearing an expression of extreme fatigue and dejection stepped in and pleaded with the Manager to intercede on his behalf and help him to withdraw Rs 2000/-. The Manager, in the same courteous manner, informed him that the bank had disbursed all the cash it had for the day and the cash was exhausted. The man requested to be given at least Rs 1000/- if not two thousand as he had been trying for the last two days without success. He said he worked as a driver and had taken one day's leave only to draw money and the situation in his house was bad. The manager called for a staff member and asked him to assist the man, in whatever way they could.

After about fifteen minutes he was back saying that no cash was available. With tears in his eyes, he said there was no rice or flour in the house to feed his family. Spontaneously, the manager pulled out his wallet from his pocket and handed him the two 100 Rupees notes, which was all the currency. The man was taken aback but in a very polite and undramatic manner the manager told him that he could return it to him when he had the cash. The man hesitated but perhaps his need was greater than his pride, and he wordlessly pocketed the money and left.

I left the bank with renewed faith in humanity.

We may express our lack of faith in the government and its policies, but as long as there are citizens like him, there is hope and confidence that as a united entity, we the people of the Country can rise above difficulties and trials to bring the much needed change which everyone wants but only a few are willing to make.

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



Amit Dalvi

Amit Dalvi

Travel

Most Beautiful Sunset from the Best Asian Beach

BY SANGEETA THAKUR

Nature at its best in a serene atmosphere, happening, yet peaceful and spotless.

While in the hunt for finding such a destination, Radhanagar beach caught my attention. The lush green canopy of colossal natural skyscrapers along with banana and coconut plantation follows the road leading to a beach curved in a crescent of golden sand. Geography, best suited for the sunset view but one can spend hours enjoying the waves, sunbathing or just pondering about one of the cleanest shores.

How it fits all age groups will amaze you! Why this place jumbles everyone in its magic? Visitors from different cultures across the globe experience akin feeling from within. While my teenagers were busy frisking in the waves. I kept wondering the contrasts around.



The newly married not leaving any opportunity to explore their love-mate, while old couples masquerade it as a second honeymoon balancing each other in the waves. While small kids were busy making sand models as well as collecting rare and colorful seashells, their parents took turns to enter into the waves.

It's a beach full of crab made sand balls! Sand bubbler crabs emerge out on the surface, scrub the sand for food and make sediment balls on the beach. One must

observe this activity very closely to believe the speed and the symmetry with which the pattern is made by tiny arthropods.



The other stretch of the beach had a dazzling site of holidaymakers enjoying sunbathing along the shoreline. While some vacationers were taking a stroll to soothe the eyes and taking selfies which were more focused to capture the background effect, lifeguards and security also had their own rational motives to make frequent rounds of this side. Overall blessing in disguise for every sightseer with the romantic savior.

Radhanagar, named after the principal admirer of Lord Krishna, a Hindu Deity, is one of the popular beaches of Swaraj Dweep(Havelock Island). It is about 2 hours away by government-operated ferries and private cruises from Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. Famous for promoting eco-tourism, water sports and blue-green beaches with tree lines is one of the safest places for vacation. One can feast in hotels and beach resorts of own budget, indulge in scuba diving, snorkeling or take glass-bottom boats to explore the marine life and coral reefs. One can wander around in one's favorite Sedan, SUV or two-wheelers easily available on rent.

Around sunset, everyone got ready with their best possible camera angle to capture the splendid view of the horizon. After the breathtaking view of the sunset, flawless night sky, shining water and skyline of the Island were illuminated by the full moon. Stunning beyond imagination. The splendor made everyone leave their cameras and phones behind and actually admire nature at its best.



On the journey back, I could hear the waves thrashing the shores narrating the saga of the mighty ocean. With the melody of birds chirping and flying back to their nests, the soul felt calm and composed. Designated “Best Beach in Asia” by Time in 2004, Radhanagar is ecstasy when compared with crowded easy to reach beach destination. So, take some time out, plan it around a full moon, visit and fall in love with the simplicity of this place, discover miraculous marine life with coral reef and experience the most beautiful sunset ever.



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

Disruptive Travel Trends

BY VIKRANT GULANI

New year is here and time to get cracking on the list of resolutions - **RESOLVE TO TRAVEL!**

Plenty is going around in the world around us, and it's very prudent to think that it is going to affect the way we are going to travel. As millennials along with Gen X +Y, a sort of disruptive travel trends are visible and cannot be ignored. "Expectations" and "Experiences" being two of the most featured lookouts when booking or planning your own travel, but what is it influenced by? Role of social media, from photographs to scenic views by celebrities, along with the internet and artificial intelligence which lead us the way we want to proceed and spend our travel time.

To support the above, let us give our number freaks some data. As per Bain and Company and Google report on "How does an Indian Travel", Indians (in 2018) took over two billion domestic and international trips ranging upto a revenue of USD 994 Billion dollars worth of spent on Transportation, Accommodation and F&B.

One of the major contributors to these travel figures is the Bleisure trends, the buzzword defined as a trip requiring a Saturday night stay at a destination either at the start of the end, or both, usually before or after a business trip. Thus becoming one of the most important and alternate employee perks. Solo and short haul travel has seen an increase in last minute bookings.

All these make travel dynamic and with great exposures to limitless boundaries.

Thus WE are making DEFINITE choices. Some of the suggested choices for travel in 2020 are as under.

- **Yangon**. Old colonial charm, dazzling Buddhist temples, and fascinating day to day street life, provides more time to linger longer. People with heartwarming smiles and curiosity all over. Hustle bustle colorful streets, that's vibrant Yangon for you. Ideally a 3night 4days is a good time at the destination. Impressive Pagodas are not to be missed in your program.

- **Tokyo**. Experience top attractions of Tokyo with a wide collection of sightseeing tours. Hop on a bus and see popular favorites such as the Asakusa Temple and the Tsukiji Fish Market. Find trips from convenient locations like Shinjuku and Shibuya. If you like exploring on foot, give walking tours a try and get the chance to gorge on palate-pleasing meals. Countless adventures await in the city of delights! Not to

miss - Yokochō, Japanese for “alleyway,” but it has grown in meaning to refer to streets packed with izakayas, bars, and eateries tucked away in Japan’s busy streets. Visit for a less polished, more authentic taste of Tokyo, and for the chance to say kanpai! with the locals.



Yangon



Tokyo

- **Bhutan.** Paro and Thimpu, are the “holy grail” of travel destinations for many people. Before it closes its door to Indans. Looking at the way it is going, a tourism tax of USD 250 something is going to be levied to Indian travellers soon. Hurry and trek up to the Tiger's Nest.



Danube, Budapest

- **The trio - Budapest, Prague and Vienna.** Land into Vienna and drive. You may also take a train from the busy and always connected Vienna train station to any place in Europe. Buda and Pest, contrasting spaces in Budapest are not to be missed , along with experiencing the well known Thermal Spas. Trio has a lot to offer to all ages. Hop skip and jump, you could venture out till Salsburg too.



- **Athens and Santorini**. With its sparkling white beaches, crystalline water and venerable ancient sites, Greece lives up to all the hype. Most first-time visitors will arrive and depart through Athens, which makes an excellent jumping-off point or punctuation at the end of the trip, but beyond that it's time to explore.



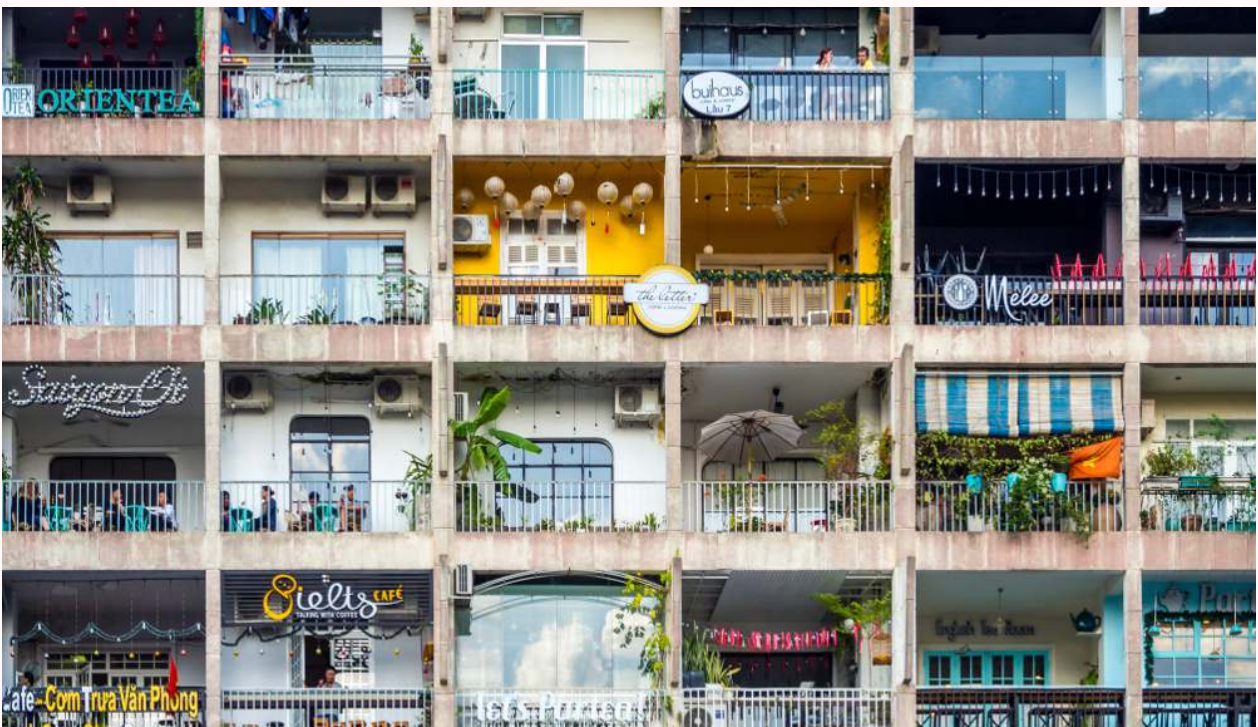
- **Reykjavik, Iceland**. The World's most Northernly capital combines colourful buildings, quirky but creative people, eye-popping design, wild nightlife and a capricious soul. Great insights and sightseeing tips on a walking tour of downtown Reykjavik, Admire the amazing Golden Circle wonders of Gullfoss waterfall and Geysir hot spring area, Feel the power of nature when you view the massive waves crashing on a black sand beach. Each day explore a different part of Iceland, marveling at waterfalls, geysers, volcanoes, black sand beaches and the Blue Lagoon.



- **Maldives.** The embodiment of paradise, with endless stretches of white sandy beach and crystal-clear azure waters, our holidays in the Maldives are perfect for relaxation and discovery. This beautiful archipelago is made up of hundreds of coral atolls and islands. Most are uninhabited but others have been transformed into some of the world's most spectacular beach resorts. Maldives holidays really are a taste of heaven on earth.



- **Ho Chi Minh City,** Vietnam. A land of staggering natural beauty and cultural complexities, of dynamic megacities and hill-tribe villages, Vietnam is both exotic and compelling. Travel in Vietnam is often based around a journey between Hanoi and Saigon, taking in the highlights of the central region between the two.



- **Bentota, Sri-Lanka.** A laid back coastal town on Sri Lanka's south coast, Bentota embodies the charm of island living. With easy-going fishermen, the age-old cinnamon trade and isolated beaches, Bentota captures the heart of all those who visit. There's no shortage of things to do here, either. Visit the beaches, Turtle parks, river cruises, and water sports.



- **Dubai and Abu Dhabi, UAE.** A city that never stops innovating, Dubai is now the world's fourth most visited destination. Here you'll find iconic tourist attractions, unparalleled shopping, pristine beaches, cultural gems, culinary delights, state-of-the-art business facilities and so much more. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a regular to these shores, it's always new every time.



Challenge yourself, and you will discover how resourceful you are when you are exposed to new places, people and experiences. Maybe it's finding your way around a busy city. Or ordering a meal when you don't speak the language. Or zip-lining. You'll feel pride when you finish your trip successfully. Overcoming challenges will bring you joy and energy for future tests. You will realize how capable you are and build your confidence.

Just travel. It helps open your mind. You realize that there is no one way to live life. Meeting people from other places will show you that your world view is not the same as everyone else's. By being exposed to new places, people and cultures, you will develop a wider world view.

*Rachel Wolchin rightly said, "If we were meant to stay in one place,
we would have roots instead of feet."*



Maj Vikrant Gulani is a third generation officer who has served in the Jat Regiment. On completion of his service, he now manages MICE company called Incentives & Conference Planners LLP. iCON Planners with its pan India and presence in USA and UAE, has successfully curated and completed multiple projects in MICE, including destination weddings. Vikrant can be reached at vikrant@iconplanners.com

Gratitude

My Real Family

Goodness gets back - if you have been good to any fellow human being.

Consider These Aspects:

Two Continents - Asia and North America, separated by the proverbial seven seas.

Four Cities - New Delhi in India, Dubai in UAE, Newark in NJ (USA), and Washington DC in USA.

Five Retired Army Officers - Iqbal Singh in New Delhi, Syed Rizvi aka Bobby in Dubai, Ronnie Anand in Washington DC, and Rajeev Sharma and Himanshu in NJ.

Two Second Generation Children - Fatima Rizvi, daughter of Bobby, and Siddhant Sharma, son of Rajeev Sharma.

Surprising Fact - Only Iqbal had earlier met Bobby and Rajeev, and none of the other persons mentioned above have met each other anytime in the past.

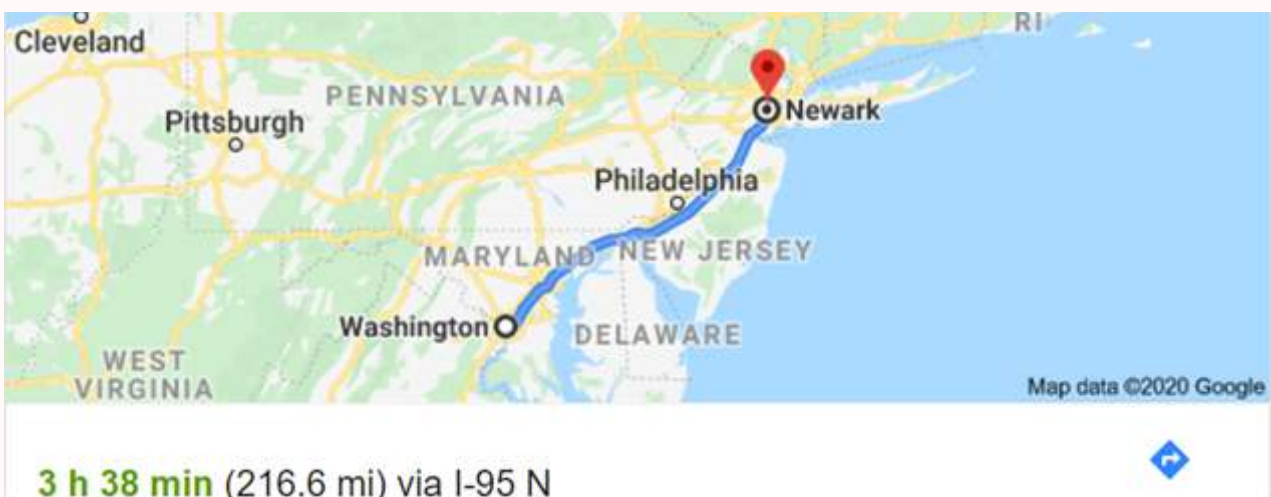


Fatima Rizvi - Pursuing her passion

Situation - Fatima is a budding golfer, and has been picked up by a Golf Academy in South Carolina, USA. She was to travel from Dubai to Newark NJ, and after a layover of six hours, had to catch a connecting flight to Savannah, Georgia. However as she is a minor, she had to be booked as an unaccompanied minor, and only a pre-designated and authorised person whose name had to be registered with the Airlines could hand over/receive her at the airports. Unfortunately, Bobby's cousin who was to receive and hand her over at Newark NJ got admitted in a hospital, and thus was not in a position to assist. Bobby ran out of possible options to overcome this peculiar situation at the last hour.

Solution - It dawned upon Bobby that the potential and reach of Forces Network could be utilised to overcome this predicament, and he contacted Iqbal, enquiring if solution could be worked out relating to receiving his daughter at the airport.

Let us just get an idea of the distances, from the maps below:



Unfolding of the Events: Iqbal provided details of three officers he knew who stay around New Jersey. Then, Ronnie Anand, Himanshu, and Rajeev Sharma were contacted. Confirmed assurances like, "Just take it as done", "I am away, however my wife will receive her and she is welcome to stay at our home as well", "Just leave it on me and forget your worries" were provided even without a hint of doubt. Ronnie, though being in Washington DC, even proposed to drive down four hours one way to receive Fatima!!

It was then Siddhant, son of Rajeev Sharma, who arrived early at the airport and then received and escorted Fatima. He waited with her for over five hours at the airport, got her to have lunch, booked the trolleys for her, and made calls to Bobby to let him know that she has landed, been received and also boarded for next airport..

While Bobby is extremely thankful to Siddhant, Rajeev, Ronnie, Himanshu and Iqbal for this timely assistance, he also feels indebted to the spirit and camaraderie which the members of Forces Network have displayed, transcending all boundaries of Continents, course seniority, religion, race and sex. He says, "I am sure, even blood brothers would not respond in this way as my brothers-in-arms have responded. I am now certain that this is the real family that we have and are extremely fortunate to be blessed with such camaraderie and synergy. I am extremely fortunate to be a part of this great Forces Network. God speed to the network that works.....and rocks. The experience has firmed up my belief, that we are one big family....the REAL FAMILY"



Siddhant Sharma

Three Cheers for Siddhant Sharma, s/o Col Rajeev Sharma, who took all the pains and became a vital link in strengthening the bond of brotherhood in Forces Network members. Siddhant has been a student-athlete having played Varsity level basketball, volleyball and football during his high school. He has an undergraduate degree in Economics and a Master's degree in Business from Fuqua Business School at Duke University. He has also been a "Teach for India" Fellow in Ahmedabad, India for two years. Currently Siddhant is working with a Tech Start- Up in New York City as part of their sales team. It speaks eons of his upbringing by the parents, as displayed by him in the manner he attended to all the aspects of the hospitality and made Fatima comfortable, in true Indian essence of 'atithi devo bhava'.

Details compiled by Lt Col Ranvir Singh, based on inputs gathered from mails in the Forces Network Group.



*Team Hum Fauji Initiatives
wishes all who have served and
are serving.*

72nd Army Day

January 15, 2020



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