

ForceNeteZine



The Newsletter of Forces Network
The Network of the military veterans in the Corporate

M2C Transition Workshop

BY LT COL RANVIR SINGH

Ordeals of Transition

BY MEENA ARORA

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BY CAPT MEERA DAVE

Stars of Forces Network

BY LT CDR BIDISHA PANDEY

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BY IQBAL SINGH

A Journey in Faith

BY COL DINESH DUTT SHARMA

AND MANY MORE...

From the Editor

At the very outset, on behalf of the founding Team of the Forces Network, I am delighted to announce the electronic publication of the inaugural issue of the ForceNeteZine.

Not many of us would be surprised to hear and learn that the incubation period for the launch of this eZine has been very short, as we collectively represent a determined potent force which does not believe in procrastination, and rather believes in getting the work done, and doing it well too. The gap between date of announcement of the launch, and the actual date of launch is only a few weeks!!! We all can pat ourselves for that remarkable accomplishment.

I would not hesitate to add that this has been possible only with the whole hearted support of the members, and many amongst us who contributed with their literary contributions within a short span of time. Would like to place on record thanks to Junaid Singh who helped with the design and formatting of the eZine. It is a very positive indication that in the issues of eZine which will follow hereafter, we are not going to have any dearth of participation from not only the ForceNet members, but their family members as well. With quantity taken care of, quality will also be taken care of, soon.

Forces Network was founded on 04 Dec 2007 as the Network of the military veterans in the corporate. Over the years, there has been steady and exponential increase in the number of members in the Group, which presently stands at 5100 plus. Through this network, we have been able to help many service personnel transition smoothly into a corporate career as also build a formidable Network of the military veterans in the Corporate.

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

Regards,
Lt Col Ranvir Singh

Events



M2C Transition Workshop

BY LT COL RANVIR SINGH

Forces Network conducted a full day Military to Corporate (M2C) Transition Workshop at Holiday Inn, Aerocity, New Delhi on 20 Oct 2019. The number of seats was limited, however a few adjustments still had to be made at the last moment, and the members accommodated, in view of the importance of the subject being dealt with. Finally, around 100 members were present for this highly informative and path breaking exercise, majority of those being at the cusp of transition. Since the inception of the Forces Network, it has been observed over a period of time through various inputs received from the members, and concluded that CV Writing is the weakest link in the job hunt process for the veterans.

It was with this background that there was a great amount of stress laid on CV Writing in this workshop. While the veterans are the most qualified community for being absorbed by the Corporate, however they lose out to a great extent for want of a suitable CV. It is only this hurdle of 'getting their foot on the doorway' which is required to be overcome, as thereafter the latent talent of the veterans is enough for most of them to sail through. The workshop thus aimed to work on, and overcome this weakest link.

With their past experience and learning, the Forces Network trainers reduced this activity to a system, based on a framework created by them. Not only was the framework shared with the participants but the CV makeover of several participants was demonstrated in the workshop. Nearly two hours were devoted to this activity with the participants made to recreate their CV from scratch using the framework, duly assisted by the trainers. Subsequently, a live mock interview was also conducted in front of the participants. The interview panelists, veterans who are practicing industry professionals then shared their feedback which was found to be extremely insightful and valuable by the attendees.



Salary negotiation aspects were also covered in detail by the HR professional. Mindset reset is also an important part of the M2C Transition. With that in mind, a session was devoted to this aspect wherein a clinical Psychologist Sqn Ldr Meena Arora, a veteran herself, conducted a few Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) exercises, which were very well received by the attending members.

A commendable initiative was also taken by Forces Network to invite Mr GR Reddy, the Founder of Husys, India's first publicly listed HR company, who delivered a wonderfully insightful talk on the "Opportunities for Veterans in the MSME Sector". He had flown in especially from Hyderabad for attending this workshop. In a post event interaction he confided that he was pleasantly surprised to see and interact with such an energetic, well qualified and a positive community, and eagerly looked forward to an enduring association with it.



The workshop finally concluded with an hour long mentoring session where selected trainers mentored the mentees in small groups of 4-6 people on a round table. They encouraged the mentees to freely ask any questions related to their anticipated transition from Military to Corporate. The mentees found this session to be extremely helpful and cleared a lot of “cobwebs” from their minds. The participants were genuinely excited after the workshop, and freely expressed they felt more confident and empowered after attending this workshop, and expressed optimism towards their second career in the civil. They returned back confidently with assurance of accelerated learning as well as faster realization of their aspirational goals.



I have already been in the Corporate life for 10 years now, and have contributed to four major organisations during this period. Always eager to add more to my kitty of learning, I found this workshop as another opportunity and thus volunteered for it. I have no hesitation to state that, after attending it I have become many times wiser. I only rue the lack of such opportunity when I had started my journey in the Corporate, which could have helped me to sensibly work on my CV and grasp many wonderful job opportunities that slipped from my hands. However, there is always another chance, and now with my CVs well configured as per what we learned from the able trainers during this workshop, I am sure and certain that it will further help me optimally exploit my potential for many more years for which ample steam is left in me.

I on my personal behalf, and also on behalf of the members who attended it, would like to extend and convey our sincerest thanks to the organisers of the event, and the very well qualified trainers and mentors. The knowledge gathered is going to hold not only the attending members in good stead, but also other peers who are going to draw on their knowledge.

We certainly are in, to bring the change.

Lt Col Ranvir Singh, a Georgian and an ex-NDA, was commissioned into 2 BIHAR. He has served in all terrains of the country, and hung his boots on completing pensionable service. Thereafter, as a Corporate Warrior, he has immensely contributed for last 10 years to reputed organisations. Presently, he is engaged as Chief Security & Safety Officer of MMTC-PAMP India Pvt Ltd.

Stars of Forces Network

Sanjiv Haldia. Veteran General Manager, Human Resources, Tata Teleservices Ltd.

BY LT CDR BIDISHA PANDEY

Military to Corporate



Col Sanjiv Haldia (Sanjiv) joined NDA in Jun 1983 and was commissioned in the Indian Army in Jun 1987 as an ASC officer. A paratrooper who is Staff College alumni, he handled multidimensional assignments such as heading the Research and Trial Wing head at the Army Airborne Training School, commanding a Supply Depot in the North East. He has served as an instructor in Cat A establishments such as the YO Wing of ASC Centre & College, Bangalore and Army Airborne Training School at Agra, besides postings in operational areas like Ladakh, North East & in RR.

The transition to corporate started with the six-month pre-release course at MDI Gurgaon, where he was a part of the placement outreach team and visited companies in Bangalore & Delhi to make a pitch on behalf of his batch. He began his journey as a Human Resources Specialist in Wipro BPO as the Location HR Head for a site in Mumbai in Nov 2007. He quickly rose through the ranks to be the Head of the Corporate HR Team for Wipro BPO and then became the Global Business HR Head for BFSI, Sales Team & Support Services in Wipro BPO. He moved to Tata Teleservices in Oct 2013 where he is presently the Regional HR Head for North and East India besides heading Off Roll Management & HR Compliance verticals, nationally.

Why HR?

The HR professional is a key catalyst and a strategic partner in the success of any enterprise, being the custodian of all the important and dynamic “Human Capital”. HR is looked up to by employees as the face and voice of the organization that they work. The HR professional has the challenging role of understanding and helping define business strategy with the Management, and from therein taking forward the human resource strategy to help meet these organization goals, whilst at the same time continuing to be strongly & deeply connected to the employees (especially the front line) and ensuring their voice and issues are heard by the top leaders in the company. This involves proactive interactions through multiple communication channels and ensuring the organization is an “Employer of Choice” for all aspirants in the job market. In good companies like Wipro and Tata, the sky is the limit for growth, if you have what it takes to create amazing work spaces for people.

During his HR journey, Sanjiv got the opportunity to travel extensively to multiple countries across continents for international projects and enhanced his understanding of HR across geographies & cultures. He finds the work life balance reasonable, though as in the Armed Forces one is expected to be available at times of need. However, he could always find adequate time for his family, amidst all the work.

Fields in HR

HR is a fine blend of hard and soft skills. Deep domain knowledge along with understanding of the nuances of softer aspects are critical to the success of a HR professional

Sanjiv describes HR as a very wide and diverse field. Talent Acquisition (commonly known as Recruitment and Hiring), Training and Development for soft and hard skills, Leadership Development, Coaching and Mentoring, Talent Lifecycle Management, Talent Engagement, HR Compliance, Compensation and Benefits, Organizational Behavior and Development, Mergers and Acquisitions, HRIS, Off Roll Management, Workforce Management, Payroll Management, and HR Shared Services are some of the key verticals. One can have a complete career in any one of these, other than in HR generalist roles.

Advice to fellow officers

Sanjiv advises officers who wish for a career in Human Resources, post retirement to start the preparation for the same 2-3 years in advance. The base should preferably be a core degree/diploma program in HR – here a full time course carries weight. Reputed institutes such as XLRI, Jamshedpur, TISS, SCMHRD, SIBM, MDI, XIBM, NMIMS and IIMs offer such courses. This can be topped up with certifications basis the specific HR vertical chosen. Certifications from professional bodies like SHRM, HRCI, ATD, ASTD, ISTD, ISABS etc. add weight to one's resume when being considered for an HR role. Along with this are unsaid aspects like the ability to work in a non-hierarchical manner and the ability to pick up softer aspects like "Active Listening".

The probability of succeeding in any field is directly proportional to your interest and capability! If you have the flair to work passion with people, for people, be the voice of people and understand the value you add to the positive business outcomes, HR is the field for you. Go for it!!!!

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

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 fulltime vocation. Finally – we do need job creators in greater numbers than job seekers.

In the current issue we feature an interview with Capt Vipul Choudhary, the founding partner of Olive Green Consultants, a Gurugram based Consultancy. The organization is a broad based financial product and services provider with products ranging from Real Estate, Mutual Funds, Insurances, Direct Equity, etc.

I decided to visit Vipul's office to interview him on a Saturday morning. I requested him to send me his office geo-pin location on WhatsApp as I was driving from Delhi to Gurugram. A click on the link sent, opened up the location of Bristol Hotel, I was a bit surprised, for I did not expect an office in the hotel. Anyway, I thought he must have given that as a reference landmark and his office must be somewhere close by. As I reached close to Bristol Hotel I decided to give him a call to find out the exact location of his office. He told me to come to Bristol Hotel itself as that he said was his office location I was a bit surprised. Upon reaching the hotel I saw an adjunct of the hotel called Edmonton Mall, upon entry I saw string of posh offices all along the long corridors of the mall. Soon I located his office – my first impressions were it certainly was plush, impressive and tastefully decorated. I was greeted very warmly by Vipul.

Vipul served in the Indian Army for 5 years as a short service commissioned officer in the Infantry. He is an MBA (Finance) from the prestigious MDI, Gurgaon and did his education in the year 2008. He is keenly aware of the market movements and is reputed for following a strict process of due



Capt Vipul Choudhary in his plush office at Edmonton Mall, Gurugram

diligence to protect his investor's interests. He initially worked in a real estate company for 9 months before being smitten by the entrepreneurial bug. In 2010 he founded Olive Green Consultancy along with a partner, both of them are still together and going strong. They initially focused on real estate.

He had his share of ups and downs in business and today is an extremely successful business owner. He runs six companies which have several offices totalling up to nearly 8000 square feet in the elegant Edmonton Mall, many of them are owned by the company. He has more than 100 + employees on his company rolls and plans to increase the headcount to up to 150 by 2020 end. In the last financial year his holding company clocked a revenue of more than Rs 10 Crores. Till recently he also had four defence officers working for him as employees.

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Q: What was the vision behind starting Olive Green?

Vipul: I started the consultancy in the year 2010 with an objective to provide viable and investment-worthy products to the Officers and personnel of the Armed Forces. Being an ex-Infantry Officer I was keenly aware of the lack of awareness which persists amongst Armed Forces in the personal financial sector owing to difficult service conditions and distance from the mainstream. I also imbibed the Chetwodian motto very well and applied it in my business, which has helped him greatly.

Our Credo:

*"Safety of my client's investment comes first,
always and every time.*

*My team member's welfare and training,
comes next,*

*My own ease and comfort,
comes last always and every time."*

Q: What were the challenges he faced in his entrepreneurial journey?

Vipul: While there were challenges on multiple fronts the major ones could be listed as below:

- Supply consolidation in a very fragmented market. Product due diligence.
- Finding viable channels of marketing.
- Training the sales team to reach out to clients with an idea to problem solve.
- Servicing the clients over the product life cycle.
- Collections for the sales made from the builders whom we represent.
- Discounts in a hyper-competitive market.

As of now, I don't think that we have overcome all these challenges. They are still work in progress.

Q: How did you find your entrepreneurial journey? Any regrets?

Vipul: The journey has been though challenging but extremely rewarding. All that I have today I owe it to the success of my business. No regrets at all. I would strongly recommend that more defence officers take up entrepreneurship, it is easier than what most think, plus most of us have it in us to succeed in business.

Q: What would be your message to would be entrepreneurs from the defence community?

Vipul: I would say the following:

- Don't just focus on the "Clients/Customers/Buyers", "Suppliers/Sellers" are equally important and so are the "team members/employees".
- It is very important to make "profit" as early as possible. Do not just keep trying to have the best products, best service mix, etc. Sales have to happen as soon as possible, rest of the things will keep evolving.
- Initially focus on getting buyers from a limited segment, say doctors / Officers etc to keep costs low. Also initially focus on a small product supply to keep supply costs low and manageable.

*Based on inputs provided by Capt Vipul Choudhary
Authored by Iqbal Singh.*

Stories

Success is a Low Hanging Fruit

BY BRIG ANAND SAXENA

You might find the topic of this article slightly bizarre, may be arrogant, or even preposterous. How can success be a low hanging fruit? If this was the case, majority of the humanity would have been rich, famous and happy - the established outcomes of success. But let me stick my neck out and still reassert my claim, but with due modification. Success is a low hanging fruit, if you don't make it a big deal. In other words, success will come your way if you don't sweat for it or make it a life and death issue for you. Easy does it- as they say.

What, you don't have to work hard for success, would be your next probable question? Work hard you must but don't attach an expected outcome to your effort. Success has its own path and time to reach you, and hence your sweating for it won't make it come to you earlier than it is destined to. In fact, if you are too impatient, you might end up taking actions which are detrimental to your being successful. The universe works on immutable, divine laws and there is no place for fear and trepidation in these laws.

A seed whether carelessly thrown around or carefully planted has its own success journey. It doesn't bother about the harsh surroundings or whether it is being lovingly nursed by the gardener. It marches on its path to growth which takes its due time but must transform this tree into a sapling and then into a shady and fruity tree. A Chinese bamboo tree takes all of five years to break through the ground. Yes, for full five years there is no visible sign of a sapling. But once it breaks through, it rapidly grows 90 feet tall within a short period of five weeks. The question arises-

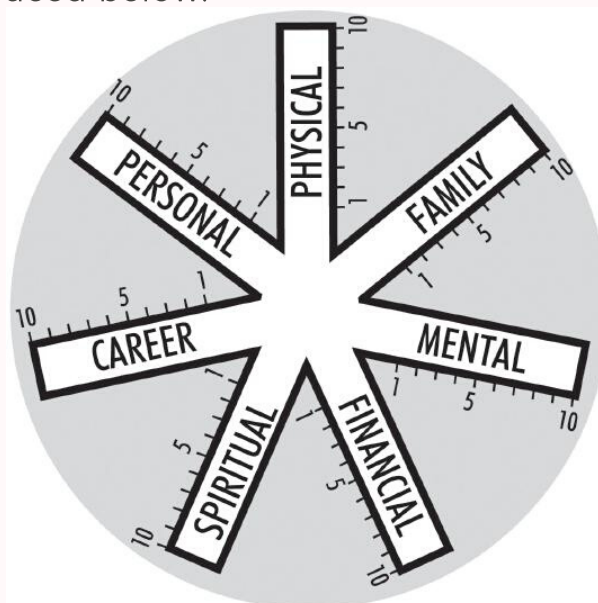
should the seed have given up during the five years when it was struggling to break the hard crust of earth? If that was the case, the result would have been an ignominious death buried deep inside the womb of mother earth. Instead, the Chinese bamboo perseveres and is rewarded with a magnificent 90 feet tall tree, admired and useful to the humankind. The success thus is inbuilt into every seed by the nature with potential of magnificence guaranteed- if it perseveres.

Migratory birds fly hundreds or even thousands of miles to find the best ecological conditions and habitat for feeding, breeding and bringing up their young. The Red Knot flies a distance of 16,000 kilometres, one way, and twice a year, on its migratory journey- breeding in Siberia and going up to South Africa. To get a perspective of this miracle let me remind you that this distance is about 1000 kilometres more than the distance between India and U.S.A. The birds use sun for orientation and navigation during the day and stars during the night. Who teaches these migratory birds the precision navigation to traverse such long distances, often interspersed with harsh climate and “inhuman-humans”? Since nature only asks for survival of these birds, survive they do, and thus emerge successful in their quest. Are they comfortable during their long and harsh journey? Absolutely not, by any stretch of imagination. But they persevere, and win.

Let's look at the most wonderful creation of God- a human being and its tryst with success. I recently visited a friend of mine who had a one-year old child. While we were admiring the antics of the child over a cup of tea, the mother of the child quipped, “I am taking him to the paediatrician tomorrow” Why, was our natural question as the child was looking perfectly healthy and happy to us? “He is one year old now and still not walking, I am worried” was the reply of the young mother. She further added that her neighbour's daughter had started walking at 8 months of age. We understood the cause of concern of the mother. A child who attempts to walk first has no success precept in mind and is not afraid to fall and rise again; even if she gets injured in the process once in a while. She is not bothered if she is not walking till one year of age, the normal walking age for a child in our society. Why, she is not even bothered to see her neighbour's child walking at eight months of age- though her parents might be. She doesn't consider herself to be a failure just because she walked a few months later than her neighbour's child.

Is walking for a child or growing into a healthy tree for a Chinese bamboo seed or successful migration for the Red Knot or waking up alive after months of hibernation for a wood frog a success? If the child who walks at eight months of age grows into a drug addict and rapist or a child who walks at fifteen months of age grows into a rich philanthropist, who has been successful? *This brings us to the fundamental question- what is success and how can it be defined?*

We have a dear friend who is blessed with two wonderful children, both grown up. The elder one, a son, is passionate about making music and travels around in India and abroad with his group. He is in his mid-30s, unmarried and without a steady income. Their daughter on the other hand is a commercial pilot, flying for a reputed Airline as a captain now. The parents are very proud of their daughter's success. Whenever we meet this couple, the discussion invariably shifts to the apparent diverse lifestyles of their son and daughter. The mother especially is quite vocal about the fact that the son has now chased his passion enough and should settle down in life. The son though, he is happy and enjoying his life but clearly his parents are not. It is a debatable point as to which of these two children are successful? Oxford Dictionary defines Success as "the accomplishment of an aim or purpose" as also "the attainment of fame, wealth or social status". The definition though appears incomplete as true success must contain much more than the physical aspects covered in the definition. I personally like the definition of success given by the iconic motivational speaker Zig Ziglar in his "Wheel of Life concept". The wheel is reproduced below.



The “Wheel of Life” has seven spokes joined in the centre, and each having gradations from 1 to 10. As is obvious, a truly successful person must have attained success in all spheres of life- represented by the seven spokes. The gradations indicate the level of success with 1 being very poor and 10 being outstanding. Each spoke has further 10 categories, for example, the Physical spoke has the following categories.

Physical Spoke Categories: Appearance, Regular check-up, energy level, toned muscles regular fitness programme, weight control, diet and nutrition, stress control, endurance and strength and other.

One has to rate oneself on each spoke under each category to get the sum total. For example, under Physical spoke, one may rate herself 9 on appearance but only 3 in regular check-up. The sum total of the 10 categories will be divided by 10 to get the overall score for each spoke. This score will be plotted on the respective spoke and then the points on each spoke will be joined. The resultant figure may vary from a perfect large round wheel to a small and flat one. This wheel will give you a perspective as to where do you stand in various fields of life. A small (2 or 3) but perfectly round wheel may mean that your life is in balance, but you are really going nowhere[3]. A large wheel (7 to 9) with a dip in say, physical spoke, would indicate that you need to get your physical affairs in order, though you might be doing well in other fields of life. Having defined success, let me revisit my initial statement that success is a low hanging fruit provided one doesn't sweat for it and waits patiently. You first need to define for yourself as to what is your idea of success. Success should never be defined against someone else's yardsticks.

Having defined success for yourself, open the “Wheel of Life”[4] and rate yourself along each spoke and each category. Now look at your wheel critically- the areas where you are falling short will clearly emerge. You now need to make a time-bound programme to improve yourself in each of these areas. Having done so, march fearlessly on the path of improvement, detaching yourself from the outcome. If the outcome is not

as per your expectation or plan, don't treat it as a failure, it's only a consequence- of your effort. Learn from these consequences and carry out the course-correction to your initial path to each goal. The success will be yours- trust me and try, it works.

Brig Anand Saxena is a serving Army officer from Regiment of Artillery and Army Aviation. The officer has done all mandatory courses like DSSC, HDMC and NDC. He is also an author. His book 'MUSINGS OF A FINANCIALLY ILLITERATE FATHER' is an Amazon Bestseller which ranks at # 5 as in November 2019.

The Art of Giving - to Yourself

BY SANDIP MUKHERJEE

Much has been written, recorded and replayed about “Giving” - whether it is material, emotional or psychological. And giving is a wonderful thing to do. Just imagine how much more beautiful and loving this world would be if more people “GIVE”.

Much less have been put on record and shared about giving to yourself. Well it seems that we don't need much to understand this when it comes to giving something tangible - we are great at that. However, when we talk about the emotional and psychological giving to ourselves, most of us draw a blank.

We perform diverse relationship roles throughout our lives. Children, friends, partners, colleagues, parents, managers and the list goes on. To perform any of these roles, there is a significant emotional and psychological exchange and it is here, that we get lost.

“You cannot pour from an empty cup”

So before you shower love, blessings, advice, happiness trust, loyalty et all, do remember to check if your cup have the emotions that you are trying to give.

And as you do that, please remember that we HAVE all those emotions within us, waiting at your beck and call, to come and fill your cup. Sometimes, we have difficulty in accessing them because we are “out of touch” with them. Like any other activity, practice makes it easier to do things. With the plethora of stimuli that we get in the present time, many of us have become used to looking outwards for everything. But all those wonderful emotions and the reservoir of all resources, lies within us.

Even if you find it difficult to look inwards and tap those resources, there are ways and means to do that.

There is enough scientific proof to show that our minds can be addressed to change any limiting patterns that we have and if you have the desire to do that, you will always find help. So, look within, do an introspection and find that source of emotions that affect our state. If you don't find it - create it. Our state affects our emotions and they affect our behaviours.

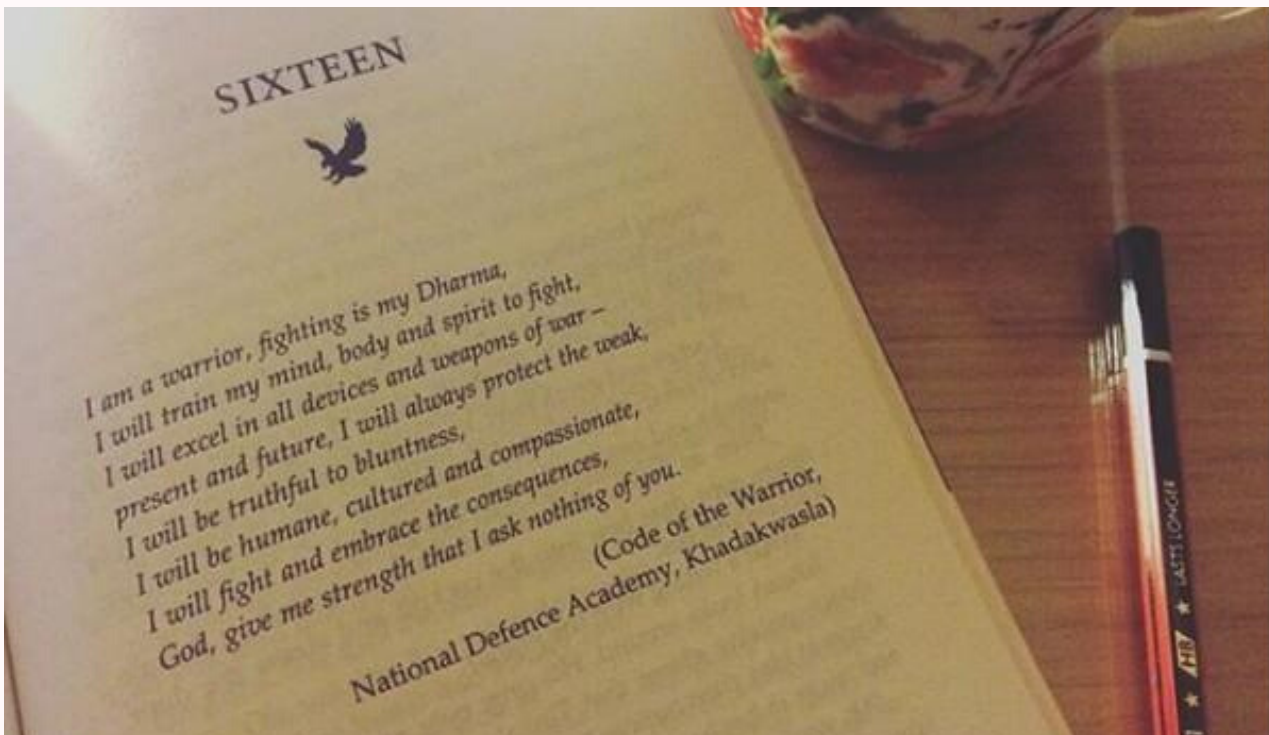
Let us be consciously aware of the source of our feelings; let us then, accept and acknowledge that we can master them - only then, can we feel the emotions and spread them across the world.*

Maj Sandip Mukherjee is an Infantry officer who has served in the Forces for eight years till 2007. He is a Master Practitioner of Neuro Linguistic Programming and member of the NLP Association of Australia. He coaches and consults with people who are invested in change, at www.theguidingstar.coach

The Fauji Factor

BY NISHIKA BHATIA

On a Saturday evening in the quiet city of Coventry, I look out of the window and it is rainy and chilly. The weather was just like mood, gloomy and grim. It is one of those evenings when you are mentally and physically exhausted after a long week. I decide to stay at home, make myself a hot cup of "adrak" wali chai and pick up one of the many books I have been procrastinating to read. I skim through multiple books to decide which one to read when my gaze falls upon the following page.



I sat still and read it carefully again. These words sound so familiar yet so distant.

Glimpses of all my father's postings came rushing in front of my eyes. Poonch, Nowshera, Manekshaw Marg, Ferozpur, Masimpur, APS, Loreto, TAPS, Mall Road, no cycling on Mall road, going to school in Shaktiman, "My school has a tank!", "We studied in 10 schools!", "Where did you grow up? Everywhere!", canteen wali maggi, bon-bon, tipsy pudding, pineapple-cheesy-cherry on a toothpick, Bryan Adams, Enid Blyton, brasso ki smell,

New Year eve at DSOI, RSOI, “Oh Miss India! Nah! We have May Queen, Navy Ball”, and the list never ends.

There is no doubt that army kids have the best childhood but I am most thankful for how the army childhood prepares us for the life ahead. The small things like dressing neatly and greeting everyone cheerfully gets imbibed in us for life. Being late or unprepared for any meeting is not an option according to the fauji families. We never differentiate anyone based on caste, colour or gender because the Indian Army doesn't and we learned from the best. In my hardest times, I have repeatedly thought about my father's time at the border. It gives me strength and hope like nothing else does.

Of all the amazing memories, experiences and precious lessons, the Indian Army entrusts its brats with its strength, power and the fighter spirit. A big, heartfelt and warm thank you for the fauji ration in our bloods. Signing off with my favourite lines from my go-to fauji song. Jai Hind!

“Ab jo bhi ho shola banke pathar hai pighlana,
Ab jo bhi ho badal banke parbat par hai chhaana,
Kandhon se milte hain kandhe,
Kadmon se kadam milte hain,
Hum chalte hain jab aise to,
Dil dushman ke hilte hain”*

Nishika Bhatia, D/o Col Vipin Bhatia is a Doctoral student at Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom.

Snakes Elope, Scorpions Shower: Posting of Military Officer to a Desolate Location

BY A K SINGH

While on manoeuvres in desert, a tank troop got lost, forcing the young Lieutenant to radio for help.

“Are you near any landmark that might help us locate you?”, the base operator at the other end asked.

“Yes”, said the Lieutenant, “We are directly under the Moon.”

The mental trauma undergone by the base operator at this point stated above, was very similar to mine, when I put the telephone receiver on cradle after conversing with an officer. After I had received the posting order, it was again a futile attempt to discover the location of my new abode for next two years, which was a peace station. However, the situation was clear to the extent that my luggage is now to be prepared and kept ready for move within a period of one month to a new destination. Which place? It was still to be found out.

The posting order received by me had reached through Army mail to me, but was not available elsewhere. It certainly did not reach the place where I was required to go. Thus, whenever I used to give a ring to some office in order to find details of the unit, the officers at the other end after ensuring that I am not a potential security threat from another country seeking information, then would mostly render a calculated and crisp reply which could in no way be helpful to anyone, be it a friend or a foe.

On a mental assessment of the situation at hand, the root cause of the problem got identified by me. As my new unit and its higher headquarters were all ‘non-existent’ at the moment, being a new raising, the authorities dispatching the posting orders themselves would be having a tough time making sure, which office the letter should reach. Wow!! what a thought.

After three days of struggle, I finally managed to find out my place of posting after wrestling the information gaps. The momentous feeling of a self-styled mini Gladiator just breezed in, and out, when many interesting stories started surfacing about the new place. The source of these, were the gossip pool of ladies who were supposedly omniscient and super confident in their opinions. In fact, with large number of ladies in the fraternity, inputs grew exponentially, quantitatively and qualitatively with days passing by. Sample some:

“If you open the water tap in the bathroom there, sometimes snakes come out along with the flowing water

“Watch for snakes on road, in room and even in your parked car, as they creep inside it when it is in garage”

“Depression is a very commonly found health issue among families after a tenure to this station”

Such advice came flowing to me unabated, of course through my wife and often with questions/warnings which made me feel like a whipping boy many a times.

“Wow, this is interesting “, I exclaimed in my mind

Finding Peace in Jungle



With the prior knowledge of above stated chilling scary scenarios waiting for me with open arms at the new abode, I along with my wife and 14-year-old son, reported at the new duty station. The duty station was having accommodations of World War II vintage, with wild life spruced around in the thick and dense vegetation which was in close vicinity of old constructed married accommodations of soldiers. The icing on the cake was that (pun intended), it had a grave shortage of accommodation for the newly posted personnel with no good schools around for children. So, I had to find a way to ensure the proper education of my son who was aspiring to be an engineer, and also devise a method to live in harmony with all the wild animals around.

The greenery of place with rich vegetation around, gave inviting looks to all humans and wild animals in equal amount, or perhaps more to the wildlings. We were informed by the residents, that herds of elephants frequently keep roaming around the residential area in night hours, so we should be vigilant when moving out in dark.

“So far so good, for a PEACE station” the thought flashed, bringing a subtle smile on my face.

Extending a Wild Welcome: Snakes Elope, Scorpion Shower.

At the very first opportunity, we moved into our allotted married accommodation, which was on the first floor. On the very first morning in the house, when my wife was making up the bed after a good night sleep, I heard a loud scream from the bedroom. I was shaving and getting ready for office. I then immediately rushed into the bedroom, to amazingly find a black scorpion elegantly lying in the middle of the bed, alive, still and quiet.

My son immediately started searching for the mobile to click a picture and my wife still in awe, started preparations to remove it from bed. In the meantime, I quickly did a mental scan of the bedroom to find out a possible entry point for this intrusion. Well now, the walls of the room had intensive seepage and plaster taken out at number of places, also had holes in corners, windows of the room do not shut down properly due to their very old creaking frames, and trees all around the walls had branches protruding into the room windows. It was terribly hot and humid,

therefore a bit of cool shade inside room would have attracted our uninvited guest.

“Wow, avenues of approach are too many to count. So just leave it. It’s not important from where, he managed to come”, I thought in my mind.

While wife and son were gaining momentum for their respective actions to counter the threat from this intruder, I again started wondering that how did we all manage to avoid its sting during the night in our sleep. Advice received from well-wishers at my previous duty station, which I had light heartedly brushed aside, just cropped and then boomed in my mind. The fine variation between the theoretical inputs and the ground situation was that – the Scorpion had interchanged its place with Snake.

In spite of making a sudden and uninvited appearance in house, we as a family were grateful to the scorpion for leaving us unhurt. Therefore, giving full due credit to the kind gesture of the scorpion for sparing us, we carefully took him away from the bed on a book and threw it out from the window instead of beating him to death.

We also collectively concluded that the scorpion must have crept in through the window into the home and then on to the bed, probably in morning hours, which did not provide him enough time to bite any one of us. The other Engineered Logic which was more convincing for me and came in my thought was, “This house had been his home always, in fact, for far greater duration than ours. So, in reality, we are the intruders, not him”.

It took few sessions of inter alia discussion spread over number of days amongst me, my wife and son to dwell upon the circumstances of our miraculous escape from a possible scorpion bite. At that time, we had no idea that it is just a start. We had something more in offing.

In an afternoon, after exactly three days from the last encounter, my son opened up his water bottle after coming from School. He found a scorpion sitting tightly on the closed lid of a water bottle, as if he was trying to have a sip from it. Once discovered, this scorpion was lifted by an improvised spoon (to ensure the safety of the person holding it).

Instead of being bashed, it was also shown way out of the house with all the due respect he deserved (actually he was thrown out of window). Now, this was very close again.

Therefore, after a round table conference (pun intended), my family met these incidents with the best of engineered logics which was drilled into us after a long army career:

Engineered Logic No 1 - The wild life here is very kind hearted and they believe in peaceful coexistence.

Engineered Logic No 2 - The best posting which one can get is no better than the place where you are finally posted.

Engineered Logic No 3 - "It's all mental". The very golden words shouted by our drill sergeants in Academy while whipping the hell out of cadets during training.

As days started passing, my family would frequently come across herds of wild boar, rabbits, foxes seen playing in the close vicinity of family accommodations whenever one goes out for evening walks and it becomes dark. And, then it became a routine, and an accepted norm of our stay in the supposedly peace station by certain standards.

Lt Col AK Singh is an EME officer with 20 years of experience of leading cross functional teams in India and abroad. Presently, he is undergoing International Business Management Course at IIFT, Delhi to adequately equip himself for stepping into civil domain in February 2020.

The Good Space

BY UDAY SHRIWAS

When Rohit Sharma was interviewed (<https://youtu.be/4dDU6HE01wA>) during the recent World Cup and was asked what is the secret behind his run scoring spree, he replied that, when he was preparing for the World Cup, he had been working on creating this GOOD SPACE for himself very-very conscientiously for quite some time.

Mornings are the moments in our life where many of us feel in equilibrium with our own self, and that is also the time when we are in that Good Space from where amazing thoughts emerge.

The challenge is to define your morning and arrive at that quintessential morning. For all of us, that challenge is called "Transition". Fortunately, what a lovely opportunity it is for us to be able to make ourselves available for the challenge of life in which we move from our old feathers and don new ones. The outcomes may vary on the scale of success, satisfaction, excellence, depending upon how much initiative and perseverance one shows in creating that Good Space.

Let us go back in time. Just recollect that day when you entered the SSB Centre, that first step in Academy, and yes that Golden moment of taking the 'Antim Pag'. All those moments were of transition, but here's the secret hidden in the moments, it is called AIM, "I want to be an Officer and Serve the Nation". Yes, it is not easy to find the Aim, and once found it is equally true that not all achieve their AIM. Just like that, "Transition is a process that starts in past, lives in present and continues in future"

Here's a simple look at it and let me try giving my personal experience. The word that defines me as an individual is 'Eclectic'. It implies, 'deriving ideas, style, or taste from a broad and diverse range of sources'. What I have done is that I have cautiously committed the word 'Exposure' to the word Eclectic to drive my Good Space.

If we observe it closely then we will realise that it is the exposure to the diversified experiences that define us, shape us, refine us. I am sure you will understand that this graduation from one way of life to another one is just a matter of exposure. Transition starts with not just you alone but it is for the complete family and that's the most important fact in the journey. Think of it.

When I realised that my skills in observing and capturing the nuances is a natural extension of my learning process, I started making myself available for more and more and more conversations. Every conversation led to another new world, a new thought, a new opportunity, a new meaning that defies old one, and so on.

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn” - Benjamin Franklin

The crux of the matter is how you create that Good Space for yourself so that when you transition then you cherish it beyond the timelines. The idea is to create the Good Space from where you can create something new for yourself and your new journey. But then, how do we create the Good Space?

Expose, expose, expose yourself to new areas, to new surroundings, to new settings, to new subjects, to new technologies, and keep doing this like a ritual. Go out and meet at least two new people each week. This is one of the basics of Art of Networking. Go out and register for new courses, and you will gain from this investments for the rest of your Life. Go out and learn one new skill, go out and attempt something new, go out, like I mentioned above Transition is a Journey worth enjoying and of continually exploring.

The old secret “READ”. Start with few simple yet powerful books like ‘Who Moved My Cheese’, ‘How Starbucks Saved My Life’, ‘The Goal’, and keep this going.

More importantly, join hands with those who have taken the journey as they transitioned earlier, make yourself available for the cause of transition not for yours alone but of everyone who is trying to transition,

Start preparing for your own GOOD SPACE, and our collective GOOD SPACE.



Submitted by Col. Amit Dalvi

Capt Uday K Shriwas was commissioned into the Corps of Signals, and served in various theatres during his service for five years, including in a newly raised RR Battalion. Thereafter he has worked with many renowned Companies, and is now the Relationship Leader with Yes Bank Ltd.

Ordeals of Transition

BY MEENA ARORA

Our career is much more than the work we do. It is not only our sustenance but also our identity, self-esteem and ideally a mission in life. We spend most of our time at work or preparing for work. Any other activity comes in as a hobby or a short break in work. As it takes the major part of our lifetime, it has to be well thought and well engaged, but imagine, what will be the plight of people who are not happy in their line of work?

Our career is an ever lasting imprint that we leave in this World, hence nowadays, people look for meaning and purpose in their careers. They crave for a sense of direction and a feeling that they make the world a better place. And if you are one of them, then it is probably time for a dynamic transition.

Although, the life of defense personnel consists of never-ending series of transitions, it does not necessarily make transitions easy. Yet a transition involving change in career can still cause anxiety and concern. To overcome this anxiety, it's always better to prepare well for the demands of the new career. Career transitions rarely happen smoothly which might lead us to develop new behaviors and relationships, work more hours, learn new skills and do careful planning and decision making. However, the fountainhead behind all this calls for an increased self-awareness and knowing how we are likely to react to those changes. This can help us be better prepared for any forthcoming challenges.

Most people go through four distinct stages during a career transition. The speed and urgency of everyone's path through these stages will be different from one another. You might move through a stage so quickly that it may seem that you never experienced it.

The first stage is of Acceptance - We assume that we might not need to prepare for anything in advance. Our past glories and positive experiences prevent us from accepting the truth of it. The truth lies in the fact that

prior to most of our victories we have gone through proper planning & preparation. In this stage of major transition from armed forces to civilian environment, the longer we remain in denial, the more our career & progress becomes hampered.

The second stage is of Conflict and Opposition - The level of our frustration and anger, rises. We start blaming everything and everyone for our plight. Instead of the future, we focus on the past. Past the stage of Acceptance, we might still be unemployed or with no job satisfaction. Our stress levels may rise and we may suffer from headaches, insomnia, and other physical & psychological complaints.

The third stage is of Probing and Investigation - We begin to break free of the negativity and despair. We shift towards a positive and future-oriented frame of mind. We gather our knowledge, experience, energies and self-realization to explore alternatives and new possibilities. We become receptive to new learning, skills and consultancy.

The fourth and final stage is of Hammering the last peg - We become committed and focused towards our new course of action.

The endeavor during the transition should be to reach to the final stage at the earliest. This process can be fast-tracked with the help of right guidance and mentoring. We are surrounded by many resources and supporters; all that is required is the willingness for Self Awareness and Exploration.

Sqn Ldr Meena Arora has served in the Indian Air Force for 10 years. Thereafter, she has devoted herself completely to counseling and training. She is a Clinical Psychologist, Certified Coach (International Coach Federation) and NLP Trainer.

A Journey In Faith

BY DINESH DUTT SHARMA

When on leave, I invariably seem busier than at all other times of the year. As I rush from one place to another, trying my best to juggle and balance between tasks to be accomplished, the rickshaws which are a hallmark of NCR roads become a godsend as they manoeuvre quickly and efficiently through traffic clogged roads. But for them, I would have spent a larger part of the day behind the steering wheel.

It was on one such day when I flagged a rickshaw to get back home after completing my multifarious chores. I was pleasantly surprised when the young, bearded man quoted a meager 20 rupees, which was about five rupees lesser than the usual fare for that distance. I clambered into the seat willingly and the man eased the rickshaw out of the line. It was then that my eyes fell on the loose sleeve hanging limply from his left shoulder.

I felt guilty and a niggling doubt entered my mind. Would it be safe? What if he was unable to balance? My doubts were set to rest as he deftly pulled onto the road and swung into his seat. After a few minutes I hesitantly asked him if he found it difficult to manage with one hand. His simple and totally unexpected reply left me speechless- "Parvardigaar bahut bada hai, sab ka khayal rakhta hai" (The almighty is great, and He takes care of everyone). The incessant blaring of honks and the irritating screeching of brakes ceased to exist for a moment as I reeled under the impact of his words.

I pride myself in being a staunch devotee and I always felt that my faith in the Almighty was unparalleled. I have always thanked Him for his blessings and made the rounds of shrines with offerings to show Him that I appreciated his generosity. Yet there have been so many times when things have not gone the way I would have wanted them to. My hurt and pain at such times have been directed towards the Maker as I have questioned Him feelingly...."Why me?" I have reproached Him for not being at my side when things have gone wrong and I have blamed Him for my blues ; the worst of which could not have been half as tough as the ordeal that this man must be undergoing every day.

I was humbled by this poor man's magnanimity. Feeling very large hearted and charitable, I added an extra ten rupees to the pre-decided fare. Once again he outdid me in generosity as with a beaming smile he blessed me warmly and wholeheartedly "Allah Bhalla Karega" (God will bless you). The hard earned money which I placed in his hardened and calloused palm could never compensate for the lesson in acceptance and faith which he taught me in those few minutes on that hot afternoon.

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.

My Nostalgic Experiences

BY MEERA DAVE

"This gift is for you, Didi. You will always be our Didi." These words spoken by the women students of Usha Fashion Design School, carrying ample warmth and belief, left an indelible imprint for the lifetime on the heart of this young Captain, while serving with the Indian Army at militancy affected area Baramullah.

I, as a young Captain, was entrusted with this onerous responsibility as OIC of this Design School, an initiative taken by the Army as part of Op Sadbhavna, also referred to as Op Goodwill. Aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the local population, as one of the means to tackle insurgency, not surprisingly the catchphrase of the operation is "Jawan aur Awam, Aman Hai Muqaam" (Peace is the destination for both, the people of Kashmir and the soldiers posted in the Valley).

Many social initiatives have thus been undertaken by the Army units in their respective area of operations, aiming to overcome the drawbacks of slow development in those areas due to various reasons. Such projects are usually undertaken after obtaining suitable feedback from the local population in that area.

One such requirement led to foundation of Usha Fashion Design School. It is a Vocational Training Centre set up to train local women in local crafts and then market their products. Many women trained in this school have subsequently been able to open their own boutiques and became self-reliant. The school has a proper training schedule, and follows the standards set by the Usha Company. It had four local teachers, all of whom had been trained at Usha Fashion Design School, Lucknow through Army. The students were required to undergo a three months course, and take an exam on its culmination. A Certificate and a free sewing machine was then given to the successful students. The exercise was aimed at boosting the self-confidence of the women, and enabling them to work independently and also contribute to the income of their family.

I vividly remember my first visit and day at the school when I met the first batch of 15 students. The excitement and cheer on their faces, and their confident poise was very infectious. Seeing a lady officer in uniform amongst them, boosted their feeling of security and safety manifold, and it was pretty evident with the plethora of questions they directed at me. And within no time, we became a 'One Team'. The interest and enthusiasm increased from one batch to the next, and within a span of two years, I was professionally and emotionally satisfied to witness the passing out of 120 students from this school during my tenure, which left me with a lot of learning and a lot of emotional nostalgic moments.

One of the most remarkable event which took place during my tenure was when our GOC decided to send the women students for a 'Bharat Darshan'. It was to be a 15 days tour from Baramullah to Srinagar-Delhi-Agra-Jaipur and back to Baramullah. I was extremely excited to be part of this unique exercise and to be responsible to organize it, assisted by another fellow officer. However, we faced initial resistance from the parents and elders of these students as they were circumspect about moving out from their place of stay. Nevertheless, we were able to suitably address all their concerns, build up their trust on the Indian Army, and ignite profound enthusiasm for the planned tour.

We then earnestly set out on making suitable administrative arrangements for the tour, which included getting uniforms made for the students. On the day of being flagged off for the tour by Maj Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Bar) (now Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Bar), retired) the pride seen on the faces of the students, in uniform, was something exceptional. While there was a lot of excitement in the air, mixed with a lot of inquisitiveness and expectations, the scene also turned emotional with some students and parents having moist eyes, affected by this first time temporary separation, and move out of Kashmir for many, and even out of Baramullah for some.

And, our journey started. It was very surprising to see the unexplainable awe on the faces of many students, who had never moved out of Baramullah, on seeing the Dal Lake, the gardens, and other beautiful sites of Srinagar. I could now anticipate the tsunami of emotions they would go through during this complete tour. As expected, when we reached Delhi, all these students virtually transformed into toddlers and jumped about,

enquired, experienced, re-experienced the novelties and facilities that the city had offered them on a platter. They bombarded me with innumerable questions, like a child throws at his mother. Things like an escalator which we have got so used to, was a huge source of excitement for them. Intrigued initially, afraid thereafter, and experts finally they were when I led many of them on it by holding their hands. They were thereafter unmindful of what the people around would be thinking, seeing and observing them going up and down on these escalators like school kids. At many a moments, there were tears in my eyes observing them burst with excitement. The scenes were no different when we visited Agra and Jaipur. The excitement and energy was never ending. They were discovering 'Bharat' they had never known before.

I also felt bad at times that the insurgent situation in the Valley had led to denial of opportunities to such children of the Valley to become an integral part of the country and enjoy its largesse. Nevertheless, I also felt proud that the capable Indian Army had taken on this onerous responsibility of bringing the people of the State into the mainstream, and that I was also contributing to this cause through this novel venture.

Mahatma Gandhi, has rightly said, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family." I was witness to this saying, as I could see the positivity and learning in these women. They were more empowered.

And, the day came when we returned to Baramullah after a thoroughly enjoying, educative and enriching tour, and it was time to part and for the students to fall back to their respective homes. Now, it was more emotional scene than the day we had started. The students were crying uncontrollably, silently asking me with their moist eyes as to why this wonderful journey has ended. Unlike before, they were clinging to me instead of their parents. It literally sends shivers up my spine, when I recall this scene.

There is one more incident which is very close to my heart and deeply etched in my memory. It was one day during my visit to the school, that I was presented a beautifully stitched kurta-pyjama set by one of the students. I politely refused it, stating that it would be inappropriate for me

to accept any sort of gift from the students. The student, Rehana Sultan, then said, "I have stitched it myself, on the sewing machine given to me on passing the exam successfully. This is the first full dress stitched by me. It is a tribute to you, Didi. You will always be our Didi." I was extremely touched by this selfless gesture and their love and belonging towards me. And, to this day, these words keep ringing in my ears. I can unmistakably say that it was not just a mere dress that they gifted me on that day, but it was the confident display of their trust towards the complete Indian Army.

This is only one of the many efforts put in by the Indian Army to reconnect with the people of Kashmir Valley. I am very fortunate and proud to have been a part of it. Op Sadbhavana is indeed making a commendable difference in lives of the people of Kashmir.

Capt Meera Dave, has served in the Army Ordnance Corps. She is a recipient of Bhaskar Women of the Year Award - 2012. An alumna of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, she currently assumes a leadership role in Swedish telecom company.