

December 2020, Volume II

# FORCENET E-ZINE

Magazine of the military veterans in the corporate

## Anniversary Issue



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**A JOURNEY OF PASSION**

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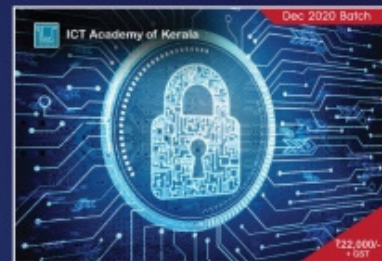
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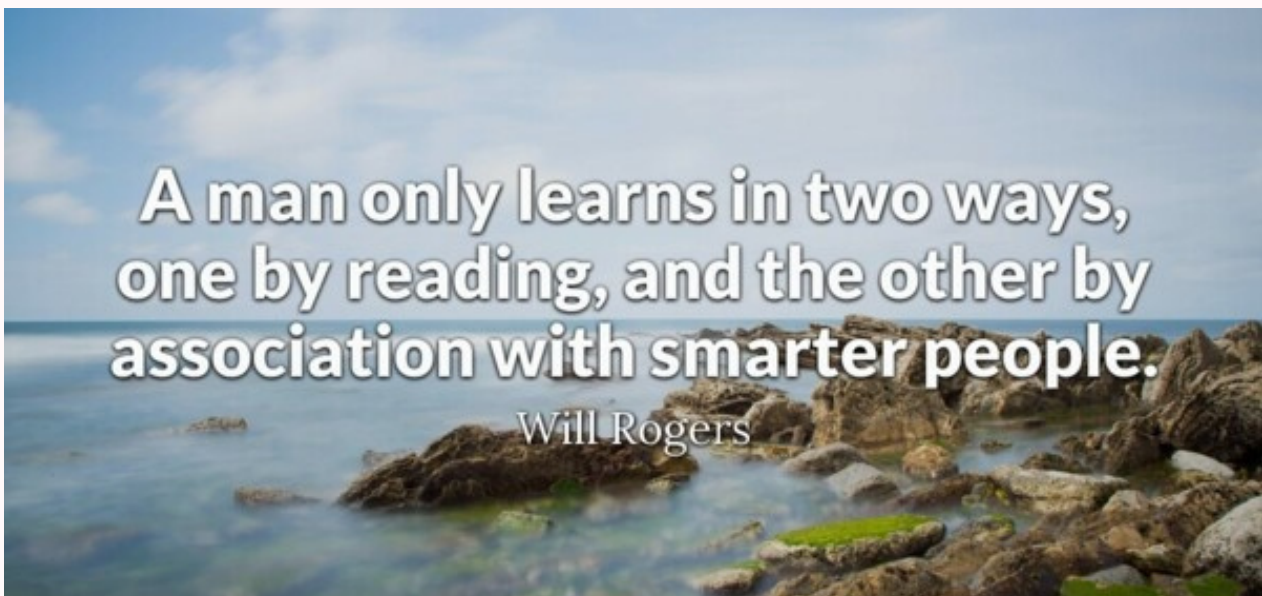
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# From the Editor

Dear Reader,

I feel privileged to present this Anniversary issue for your reading pleasure. I am sure, you would have a lot to take home this time as well.

Our Network has successfully entered the teens!! It seems just like yesterday, when this idea was given shape by IQ, and thereafter we all have seen it growing in leaps and bounds with us. The compounding growth has not merely been cosmetic. It has rather been a phenomenal growth of value, self-belief, camaraderie, knowledge, outreach, association, and recognition. A membership of 6000 plus, in 13 years in mathematical terms works out to five members joining this wonderful band of brothers every four days. That's plain marvellous.

The Network does not have to shout from the top of the mountain to highlight the value add it has done so far in the lives of all the members, and probably even the non members in the uniformed fraternity. We all know about it in our hearts. Collectively, we surely have been able to conquer our fears, face our obstacles and break apparent boundaries that one encounters in the process of M2C transition, before, during and after. The days of lacking self belief are history, and now each one of us is well geared up to rise and meet all related challenges with the confidence of adequate preparation and desired skills.

We definitely need to acknowledge the success of our Network, for which each member needs a pat on the back. It definitely would not have been feasible unless it was a collective effort. It is actually a form of collaboration through idea sharing and thinking, to achieve a common goal. It's teamwork operating at a high level. This was possible only because the actual building blocks of strong performance are continually being addressed, and which are - belief in a common cause, openness to learn, openness to share, and finally above all - trust. Bringing these characteristics to the fore across the Network are actually dependent on a culture firmly based on a collaborative approach, fully embraced by leadership. We aced it.

Growing exponentially, and not withering away soon after being formed like many other similar networks, projects the inherent capabilities and strengths of our Group. It has though been possible through a long term vision by being aware of, and keeping pace with the changes that are continually taking place in the corporate world, and thereafter initiating steps to not only guide but also assisting in upskilling the members to meet these challenges. However, surely we are not going to sit on our laurels, as we are pretty aware that there is still a lot of work to be done to fill the vacuum, and clear the mist for the brethren making the M2C transition. May God be with us all, in our joint efforts.

Until next time, take care. And, cheers to Forces Network - the Network that Works!!!

Regards,  
Lt Col Ranvir Singh

# The Founder's Perspective

## Forces Network - Then and Now

**BY IQ**

On the occasion of our Founding Day it is indeed time for me to reflect. Forces Network was founded with two objectives; to make the military to corporate transition a friction less process and, to help establish the Network of the military veterans in the corporate.

How far have we come? How did we do?

These clearly are questions which just come to any Founder's mind. Of course, they do come to my mind as well. Forces Network was conceived in an environment of negativity and despair back then amongst the veterans seeking a second career. We have largely worked on volunteer effort and built a formidable and trustworthy community over the years. Personally, for me I am not in it for vanity but for impact!

Firstly, I think it would be important to reflect upon the values that we created at Forces Network. I think they provided a very strong underpinning.

### **Forces Network Values**

- No Negativity. Right from inception we have lived with this value.
- No Adverse Commentary. We do NOT encourage anyone venting out their frustration on the three Services.
- Future Focussed. While we had a glorious past we encourage the community to focus towards the future.
- Humility. Arrogant intellect has been the undoing of many. We do not want our members to become a victim of this.
- Fact Based. Denial cannot be a strategy for success. We must stare facts in the face and not live in denial and of course take remedial action if required.

### **The Spirit of Forces Network (TSOFN)**

It were the above values that led us to create the TSOFN. The spirit of Forces Network is not about seeking doles or favours, but maintaining one's dignity, not about a sense of victim-hood but competing on equal terms on the corporate turf, not about cribbing or negativity but a 'Can-Do' attitude, and not about being a 'know-it-all' but about humility and constantly learning.

### **What We Can Be Proud Of**

Having guided or mentored hundreds of officers in their Military to Corporate (M2C) Transition journey firstly we learnt a lot and shared those learnings with those

transitioning. I would say, back then it was almost impossible to find any veteran coming directly from the military getting placed in a senior role in an MNC set up. Most people were only offered traditional roles ie Security, Administration and Facility Management for a pittance as salary. Today I see that changing. We have members cognizant of the fact that the corporate world needs a slightly different type of skill sets than the military. They start preparing for their transition, three or even five years in advance. We have seen many such members getting attractive salary offers and senior VP level roles in their first jobs post the military in MNC organisations including in technology roles – something that was not realistic back then. We are proud to have played a small part in this transition journey of their.

We can take fair credit for changing mindsets of several military personnel towards their second careers. At Forces Network we have made continuous learning as our DNA. I am happy to share that several veterans well established in the industry have shared their knowledge with others using the Forces Network platform. Just to reiterate, changing mindsets is never easy – especially for those coming from a strict regimented environ. We are proud that we have succeeded in doing that.

Back then there was an absence of adequate veterans success stories in the corporate or as entrepreneurs. We at Forces Network celebrate our veterans successes. We have celebrated their success and shared their stories in our magazine ForceNet E-Zine, as well as in our seminars. This has inspired so many others and has sowed the seeds for the next generation of veteran success stories.

Connecting military talent with opportunity. You would have heard this phrase often. However, at Forces Network we have been able to achieve this to a large extent. Though I must admit this is WIP – Work In Progress still. With our corporate connects, we have been able to articulate the value proposition that a veteran employee can bring to a company. Many companies have hired using Forces Network as a platform. This was unthinkable back then, today it is a reality.

Expatriate job opportunities – this is an area which was almost unknown to most military veterans. It was sad that while it was such a lucrative and large opportunity, most people could not tap into this as they were completely unaware about it. We demystified the expatriate experience by carrying out interviews of several Indian military veterans in expatriate roles right across the globe. As a result, many of our members are exploring these opportunities today. Back then, this was not even a pipe dream, and today a reality!

In the process we have set up a strong Network of the military veterans which has proven to be extremely helpful to several veteran entrepreneurs starting their businesses. Many found their first clients, customers and contracts at Forces Network itself. In addition, these veteran entrepreneurs have been more than willing to share their lessons along with the larger community. This has helped make other aspiring military veterans make more informed choices. Back then there was no such ecosystem available for learning from other fellow veterans, today it is only a few clicks away.



Today at Forces Network we have also enabled mentorship via volunteer members already well established in the industry coming and contributing time and valuable insights with other comrades in arms. We make these mentoring sessions available at our seminars as also some of our online events. Back then, no one even thought, let alone ask for mentoring, and today it is a reality!

While I can go on and on, let me conclude with this last one. Something, I am really proud of a sobriquet bequeathed upon us by some members, Forces Network – the Force of Good. We have been helping many in our community in their times of distress. Whether it is someone who loses their jewellery at an airport, someone whose house is burnt down, or someone working in Dubai whose minor daughter needs to be received at the Newark airport in the USA, Forces Network is their first port of call in times of distress. By the collective force and goodwill of our members we have been to help out a large number of our members not just in India but in every nook and corner of this globe. My sincere gratitude to our members for this. Back then this wasn't even something anyone felt could be done it is done anywhere on this planet.

## The Way Ahead

We will continue on our charted path with energy, empathy and enthusiasm. We will continue to serve the military veterans to not only raise their aspiration quotient but also help them elevate their competency quotient to matching levels to make their aspirations a reality. We will strive to bring dignity to the M2C Transition process and ensure better outcomes for our members. We shall continue to work with a sense of urgency to throw light on the pathways to career success post military service. We shall continue to diligently build a platform of Trust and Integrity that would be a global benchmark.

Of course, we can be proud of how far we have come! Well done Forces Network!

However, there is so much more left to do! I am sanguine that we shall continue our glorious march just like the brilliant blazing trail of our past.

Three cheers to Forces Network - the 'Network that Works'.



# Six Thousand....And Still Counting

**BY GURU SADAY BATBYAL**

On a wintry morning in early 2008 I got a mail inviting me to join the newly created group named 'Forces Network'. I could not place the sender of the mail, Col Sameer Anukul, and a quick scan of my memory data confirmed "unknown person" but my inner voice prompted "honour the invitation" - it is from a comrade in arms and a group created by and for the comrades-in-arms must be supported. And I joined. Then I was CEO of Data-Core, a mid-size IT Company with its global Headquarters in Kolkata. However at the time of joining the Forces Network in early 2008, there was future uncertainty and little did I imagine that it will one day become such a potent force with members from Army, Navy and Air Force across the genders, countries, regions, and continents making it a strong global community of the military veterans, by the military veterans and for the military veterans - positioned uniquely and unparallelly without an office but occupying mind space of all. So recently when IQ announced that Forces Network has crossed 6000 marks - besides making me immensely happy the message provoked me to analyse organisational anatomy of Forces Network to identify why this group is ever thriving?

A word about the concept of Organisational Anatomy. From a biological perspective, "Organisations are live creatures which are breathing, functioning, moving and developing inside their specific environments". Organisational Anatomy links existing theories and discusses five archetypes of organisations, namely - producers, knowledge-dependent, location-dependent, donor-dependent, and state-affiliated organisations. By looking into their specific features, the characteristics of organisations of different ages and levels of maturity, the access and utilisation of resources, and the development of productive external relations, allows insights into the role of each function in achieving superior performance.



So, what kind of organisation are we? Forces Network is not a producer organisation; we are knowledge dependent, donor-dependent (unlike NGOs where donors are members who invest their time and share knowledge and skill sets) voluntary organisation on a sharing and caring mode. In this piece my main emphasis would be to briefly look at the role of leadership in driving the group so admirably and dwell on the evolutionary process.

Reasons for success could be attributed to many factors but most important of all we need to recognize the key roles the leaders of Forces Network have played in helping its members to not only be successful in their efforts, but also to do work that creates a sense of meaning and purpose. Leader numero-uno of Forces Network Lt Col Iqbal Singh, needs no introduction who ideated and founded this group more than a decade ago. His imagination, like a star, hinted at something in the distance. His passion, persuasiveness, dogged determination, dynamism and unremitting focus, ability to not only to remain current but also to make the group members future ready, besides his penchant for perfection and bit of sprinkling of sternness ensured Forces Network is not a still born baby. Legendary American automobile industry CEO Lee Iacocca famously said, "You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere". A great idea therefore must be nurtured with utmost care. Iqbal was not alone in his belief, he had 12 members on Day 1. In lighter vein, it reminds me of 1967 famous Hollywood movie "The Dirty Dozen" whose achievements erased their past sins. And people who made Iqbal's idea into fruition are the complete fraternity of the Forces Network because, "No one is so big that s/he can go all alone and no one is too small that s/he cannot contribute". Many of you deserve kudos; but I am listing names of **a few prominent active members** who ran with beacons and glowed the path:

- Col Sameer Anukul: SamCool is the Guru of Corporate Security - a much sought after mentor and a lovable person at heart who is always willing to share his knowledge and help others. He is a regular volunteer trainer in almost all Forces Network training events.
- Capt Uday K Shriwas: He became active in Forces Network during the 26 Jul 2015 seminar at The Lalit, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. Ever since then he has made significant contributions towards the Network. He takes a lot of load off IQ for managing the Group.
- Col Sanjiv Haldia: He is the HR expert in our Group who has contributed significantly to training programmes of Forces Network and guided officers to understand the finer nuances of salary negotiations.
- Lt Col Ranvir Singh. Ranvir an infantry officer from Bihar Regiment who took the onerous task of editorship of ForceNet E-Zine when it began journey in November 2019, and in no time with his great flair for writing, and with the help of others made the magazine absolutely world class with high quality content and multifaceted layout making it an "Owner's Pride".
- Col Rajeev Sharma: From being a faculty on Aerodynamics at the BITS Pilani, to an EME officer, to a DRDO Missile Scientist, to an MIT student, and on to a CEO of a Machine Learning company in USA, this is a dream profile and an extremely

inspiring one. He is the Tech Guru in Forces Network and an ever-enthusiastic volunteer trainer on technology topics that IQ relies upon.

- Col Sameer Chaturvedi: A Long time member and an extremely helpful ex JAKRIF officer who is now working as an expat in Nigeria for the past 7-8 years. He was instrumental in organizing the first few get-togethers of Forces Network in 2011-2012 when it was most difficult to organize them.

- Col Vinay Gupta: Another long time member. He is the Data Science mentor in Forces Network. This extremely tech savvy ex EME officer has a passion for sharing his technical knowledge and has significantly contributed to Forces Network seminars and training events.

### Other Active Contributors

- Col Sajjan M: A member for past nearly six years. After an illustrious career in the Army he is now engaged in an offbeat profession pursuing his passion into the field of Psychology and is the go-to person in the Network for Psychometric tests whether it be for officers or their wards.

- Sqn Ldr Meena Arora: She is a Clinical Psychologist who has always made herself available as a volunteer trainer on M2C Transition psychological aspects, though she joined only in 2018.



### Key Take Aways: Leadership and Style of Functioning in Forces Network

Having observed IQ's functioning style almost since inception and other volunteer leaders of our organisation and having had a look at the commonalities within organizations that are thriving, I am able to see a few themes emerge. They are:

- Organisations have defined values.
- They have great democratic leaders who are humble, a bit ruthless, and ignite curiosity.

- To make the organisation successful, their leaders by design or by default embrace Psychologist Seligman's PERMA Model elucidated below:

- P – Positive Emotion
- E – Engagement
- R – Relationships
- M – Meaning
- A – Accomplishments

## Highlights of the Evolutionary Milestones

Forces Network helped the member officers in navigating to chart the right path and encouraged them to acquire skill sets through discussions, guidance, knowledge sharing, assisting with materials for PMP/PPP, GMAT/GRE, CV writing workshop, and most importantly demystification of technology through ABCT (Any Body Can Tech) pursued relentlessly by Iqbal, and ably supported by the team members with full sincerity of purpose, thus unfolding future of Analytics and AI . Now to connect better, Forces Network has a twitter handle, and an e-magazine for thought sharing.



Henry Ford had put it succinctly, "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're always right". The group has built a platform of belief system reassuring the veterans who were/are transitioning from M2C that undying attitude of 'Can Do' which was so dearly held while in uniform has to be continued despite the change of operational environment, through competence building. Through sharing, caring, encouraging to build new skill sets, the Network has armed its members to kiss the world without reservation. Bonding of the group was further cemented through events like annual seminars held in Delhi/NCR since 2011 and later held in a few other metros as well. Nowadays, the annual seminar held in NCR is a much sought after signature event. Over the years these seminars matured to a different level. Themes were carefully chosen keeping with the changing environmental and the need to stay relevant, where industry bigwigs were invited to share their thoughts which was

indeed a great value addition. Industry too got to know more and more about the talent pool besides seeing few successful veterans in top roles already ensconced. And during this pandemic situation, our Group did not close its shop. Various webinars have been organised intermittently and catching mood of the environment, IQ has now proposed a webinar on the organic farming.

Proliferation of new and positive ideas over-powered the odd negative mindset which was part of the discussion in the initial years and thereafter. If anyone deviated from the stated objectives of the Group, he received a warning from IQ who ensured discussions are not aimed at washing dirty linen in public. I could with much satisfaction see many venturing into entrepreneurship, like Colonels Gaurav Sharma, Samrendra Kumar, Sanjiv Govila, Krishan Kumar Singh, Hemant Kumar, Narender Bahl, Praveen, Sanjeev, Sajan, Ravi Joshi; Major Neel Chauhan; Captains Harsh Kumar Singh, Manoj, Vipul Choudhary and many more. Great to see how even the print media promoted the Group with the help of Capt Prasoon, Founder of Fauji India magazine and Vidisha Pandey.

Now we have veterans from the Group in so many different fields -Operational Heads, HR Heads, Project Heads, Marketing Heads, Vice Chancellors, Deans and other Academic Staff, Persons like Major Deependra Sengar of Microsoft and his incredible journey to fame, Rita Gangwani, Mohammad Ali Shah, mountaineer of repute Sqn Ldr Toolika Rani - to name a few who are engaged as motivational speakers. Some are writers, some are into films, some one like Tapesesh Sen mentoring children over telephone, Govila giving expert advice on finance during TV discussions, author Rajat Chakraborty giving tips on self-publication of books, And on the social side, besides sharing the official communication related to pension, ECHS etc. the group platform is facilitating with a plethora of activities like matchmaking, sharing experiences on travels and tours including selection of tour operators, hotel facilitations, problem solving with various agencies through member representatives working there, arranging internship for the wards, the list is endless. Endless range of activities!

Pardon me for exclusion of numerous names because of my inadequate knowledge of a large number of members of the Group, though many more are deserving to be mentioned here.

So it is amply clear that PERMA Model that I have mentioned, is being maintained in this group by design, by IQ and those in the leading roles and maybe at times by default evoking positive emotion, through constant engagement, maintaining relationship internally and externally. Understanding the impact of your work helps you enjoy the tasks and become more satisfied with what you do, making your journey of life meaningful. Lastly, through mentoring, helping in skill-set upgradations and exchange of ideas, the group members are guided to make realistic goals that can be met and achieving those goals then gives them a sense of pride and accomplishments when they finally achieve them. This has a cascading effect on other members too, who see the magic happening and then start developing more self-confidence.



The numerous studies that have unequivocally demonstrated that in a company or in any government organisation, the ability to motivate employees through financial incentives has a very short shelf-life and is especially difficult to maintain when obstacles or challenges are placed in their way. That makes defence forces unique. With similar awards from the 7th Pay Commission, wonder if any other organisation could deliver in extreme ambiguous and adverse situations or dare say we take the challenge for any task, anytime, anywhere. When we quit uniform we carry this deeply indoctrinated ethos in us to the civvy street and 'can do' attitude stays on. Forces Network actually is a family with all its pride and its possessions, and through all its vicissitudes a strong sense of community and continuity. And quietly grew out to an all-encompassing outfit informing, educating, mentoring and assisting the members not only in soft-landing in the corporate but also to change the mindset and thinking pattern of the members and industry alike.



This is the famous shloka from Shreemad Bhagwat Gita in which Lord Shree Krishna is advising Arjuna about "Nishkaam Karma". Forces Network is a classic example of "Nishkaam Karma". Forces Network which is totally voluntary and with no monetary incentive, has sustained and has been maintaining such impressive YoY growth because it has followed the most effective way to sustain motivation of the members and drive over the long run. It has been able to connect what we do with an internalized understanding and appreciation of the purpose behind why we do it; of why it matters both to ourselves, and to the organization and the community we serve. Ours is a purpose-driven organization with stated set of objectives and defined values of what we do, created internally and collectively. Our purpose tells us why what we do, is so important that only we could do it, also why we must do it. And this is what lies at the very heart of success and failure – how much we have reached or moved away from our shared purpose. But this is where our sense of purpose truly begins to matter as it is our shared purpose – our collective understanding of why we do what we do – that will serve as our compass and guide going forward. Naturally, a clear thread running through all of this is, communication. With hopes in my heart and prayers in my lips for the road ahead, I end with a note of optimism quoting from the poem 'Journey':

*"I do not know where we will be, but we will light up the darkness together, when our imagination and the present become one." — Eric Overby*



**Col Guru Saday Batabyal**, an officer of 3/4 GR is a DSSC graduate and holds a PhD degree from Visva Bharati-Santiniketan. His journey with the corporate began with the appointment of CEO of a IT Company of B K Birla Group, later he was CEO of Data-Core, and Executive Director of DCPL Group. He has been a member of Executive Council of CII and Bengal Chambers of Commerce and was engaged by Government of Fiji as adviser on e-governance. Since 2015 after retiring from the corporate, he is pursuing academic and research activities and occasionally working as a visiting professor teaching Theory of Strategy, International Relations in a few universities in India, Bangladesh and USA. His articles have been published in India and abroad.



# 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**

**Maj Prashant Palai** is an alumnus of the prestigious National Defence Academy, Pune and the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun. He got commissioned into the Corps of Army Air Defence in 1995. He topped the Army Aviation Training course in 2000. His most memorable tenure has been the one as an Army aviator in the NE sector, with its challenges of flying in the mountains, but equally rewarding at the same time doing casualty evacuation sorties. Maj Prashant completed his Pre-Release course at IIM Indore and joined TCS as the Head of Recruitment for Campus Recruitment as well as Lateral Recruitment for Andhra Pradesh area in the year 2008. Presently, Maj Prashant is a Senior Human Resources Leader at TCS.



**Bidisha: What were the major highlights of your tenure in the Indian Army?**

**Prashant:** I joined the National Defence Academy in Dec 1991 and then trained at Indian Military Academy before getting commissioned into the Corps of Army Air Defence in 1995. I served in the 156 Light AD Missile Regiment (SP) thereafter. I was selected for the Army Aviation Training course in 1999 and topped in academics/ground subjects. My tenure in the NE as an Army aviator has been the most memorable tenure, with its challenges of flying in the mountains, but equally rewarding at the same time doing casualty evacuation sorties. In June 2002, I suffered a major spinal cord injury due to an unfortunate helicopter crash. The injury was of permanent nature, rendering me medically unfit for flying duties and also restricting my employability in my parent arm (AAD). Therefore, I decided to leave service.

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

**Prashant:** Owing to my injury, I left after 12 years of service in the Indian Army. I did the Pre-Release Course from IIM Indore which helped me gain an overall knowledge of how things work in corporate and got placed in TCS in 2008. Apart from the formal course, I did a lot of extensive/general reading on management/company case studies etc before going for the course and that certainly helped.



**Bidisha: How has your experience in the corporate domain been so far?**

**Prashant:** I started as Head of Recruitment for TCS (Campus Recruitment and Lateral Recruitment) and that part of my HR career was truly exhilarating. I travelled a lot during that time, visited around 200 colleges for campus recruitment! Addressing the young and vibrant students and interacting with them was something very close to my heart. Even though my job was to only oversee the recruitment process, but I used to personally shortlist a few resumes of the best students and interview them myself. In 2011, I was promoted as the HR Head for a Business Unit (Technology Business Unit) and in 2016, I was elevated as the HR Head of a Business Group (Communication, Media and Information Services BG). The only difficulty I initially faced was adjusting to the 'not so clearly laid down' policies and channels of communication, because back in the Army, everything was strictly hierarchical and clearly defined. Once I learnt to become flexible and adapted to the environment, I used my strengths and went ahead full throttle on the corporate road.

**Bidisha: What does a normal working day look like as a Senior HR Leader at TCS?**

**Prashant:** Though I directly report to Mr Milind Lakkad, Chief Human Resources Officer, TCS, I need to work with the business leaders from my Business Group, spread across the globe. Being in a global role demands adjusting my calendar to have overlap with all the geographies. My workday usually starts at around 7 AM as I check my mails for updates and important information. Also, this is the time I schedule meetings with teams in US. My pre-lunch session is usually for meetings/calls with my team and to scrutinise various reports and look into HR matters that need attention. Post lunch, we mainly deal with our leaders in Europe and UK for work. The evenings are again for sync up with US based leaders. I usually pack up by 10 PM, but at peak

times, like appraisal/compensation/promotion cycles, the timings extend to 12.30 AM. Each day thus comes with its own unique challenges.

**Bidisha: What are your hobbies?**

**Prashant:** I love to read, however I find time for that on weekends only, and I have recently taken up cooking as well, as a novice!

**Bidisha: What are plans for the future?**

**Prashant:** My role in TCS is extremely satisfying and fulfilling, and therefore, I would like to continue my work here, learn and grow. In the next 5-6 years, I see myself as a subject matter expert and have thoughts of taking on the entrepreneurial route.



**Bidisha: What would be your advice to Armed Forces Officers who wish to pursue a career in Human Resources?**

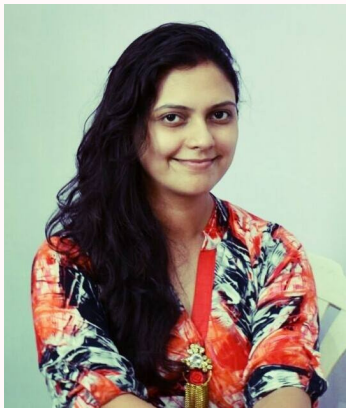
**Prashant:** I would broadly classify the career prospects post retirement into three main fields; namely, Entrepreneurial, Technical and Managerial. Entrepreneurial would mean doing something of your own and that could be anything ranging from blogging/photography to starting your own company. This takes time but is extremely fulfilling. The second is technical; officers with an inclination towards coding and technology should opt for this field which is growing at an extraordinary pace and has huge potential for growth and career. The third league is the most suited one, i.e. managerial roles. This includes areas such as Operations, Human Resources, Sales and Marketing.

After having spent over a decade in human resources, the first thing that I would like to clarify is that a career in human resources is not at all easy. It is extremely

challenging, demanding and requires one to have a high level of understanding of human psychology and tact to deal with a multitude of problems on a daily basis. Human resources, today has a number of specialisations in it such as Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, Employee Engagement, Business HR and Compensation. One should be clear as to which one suits him/her the most and accordingly plan his/her career. It is helpful to do worldwide acknowledged certifications rather than short online courses that just give a vague idea about the subject. Having said that, I agree that a military background does help us in being better leaders in this field.

**Bidisha:** Thank you Maj Prashant, for sparing your time and sharing your experiences with us.

**Prashant:** It is always a pleasure to associate with my brethren from the defence fraternity, and I hope it will be of some value to them. Cheers to the Forces Network.



*Bidisha Pandey is a blogger who believes every individual has a story and a lot can be learned from every story. More stories and interviews by her can be read on her blog site [www.sassyweekender.com](http://www.sassyweekender.com)*



Amit Dalvi

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## Talking Money With Family

Last month we wrote about how it is important that your family be in the know about your financial status and managing it in your absence. For this month, let's talk about something a lot of us can be somewhat uncomfortable with - including our families in the financial decision-making process.

Culturally, it's been frowned upon to discuss money matters with our family. Times change and as the overall knowledge and inclusiveness increases, how and what we communicate with our families also changes.

Money, for instance, is no longer something to be discussed in hushed tones only when absolutely necessary. Bollywood has created a trope, in earlier decades, out of the hapless husband who informs his wife that suddenly they are under debt worth crores and have to leave their family mansion. The wife - as is expected - is shocked.

That's quite avoidable in 2020. But talking money with the family needs a planned approach if you want to avoid confusion and the wrong outcomes. Let's approach this in a three-pronged manner.

### Talking Essentials

Just as we mentioned in the last article, your family definitely needs to be aware of where all the key financial documents are and about the overall state of the family's finances. From a family budgeting point of view, ensure the following:

Share details of large expenses. The definition of what constitutes a large expense can keep changing, however, partners in a marriage will have a sense; things like jewellery, luxury watches, premium smartphones will surely make the cut. Be honest about the big spends and make a conscious effort to inform your partner beforehand.

An inability to do so can put other monthly pay-outs like loan repayments or SIP instalments at peril. Also, hiding too many large spends leads to a sense of distrust among partners. Lastly, sharing information can help you understand each other's preferences around spending habits and create a better understanding of important expenses that are yet to happen.

A smart way out is to simply plan for your big expenses and create a fund for the same beforehand. It would also be a good idea to check your ability to afford a large expense.

This becomes critical when it comes to matters like spending on children and their higher education or buying assets. Your partner may be more cautious in money matters and prefer a savings heavy approach, whereas, you may think it's okay to

indulge once in a while. This difference in attitude towards money makes it imperative to share and communicate details of those big spends.

Do a Monthly Review. Knowing where you are financially each month is a great way for the family to work together, towards financial goals. This means doing a monthly review of your expenses vs the budget allocated. For this exercise, focus especially on big and extraordinary expenses. Mistakes will happen but knowing that you made one will help you avoid it in the future.



## Talking Savings

Savings is a family goal irrespective of your spouse earning or not. More often than not where both the husband and wife are working, lifestyle expenses can go up without a commensurate increase in savings.

Since the vast majority of financial goals are for the sake of the family - retirement for you and your spouse, education funding for your children - there needs to be a collaborative approach to saving for them as well.

As a Defence services professional, you can save a lot as a family if your spouse and children have a mission-centric approach towards your joint financial goals. This means agreeing to savings goals together as a family after understanding non-negotiable expenses.

Your savings goal needs to take into account your key financial objectives such as planning for your child's higher education and supporting your life-style post-retirement (considering you have a pension to rely upon). Discuss this together as a family. You can also include your teenage children in this discussion to give them an early primer on personal finance.

Army kids can be quite disconnected from the world of money management as most of them lead lives inside a relatively egalitarian and sanitised cantonment and go to Army Schools or Kendriya Vidyalayas. The self-contained world they live in rarely requires using money, in contrast to the civilian world where both wealth and poverty can be seen quite starkly.

Helping them understand the value of money and savings will help avoid a cognitive shock when they leave this protected world and step into college.

### **Talking Debt**

Debt can be a major reason for discord within a family especially if one member is unaware of the debts taken by another. With easy credit available through credit cards and personal loans it is essential to discuss with your spouse, the kinds of debt that both of you agree on. This could be the loan you have taken or intend to take to buy your house in the city you want to settle down in.

Ensuring that there is transparency when it comes to the usage of credit cards by either spouse can prevent future conflicts.

### **Talking Investments**

When talking about investments, you can approach the conversations from the following angles:

- How are we going to achieve our objectives that are years away - Here you can discuss the value of making equity investments.
- How are we going to achieve our short term objectives, such as the international vacation being planned - Here you can talk about your savings and fixed income investments.

Talking about equity or debt and asset allocation without context will simply bore people. Discuss your investment plans keeping in mind what they are designed to achieve.

For example, you can show how a regular SIP in a portfolio of good equity mutual funds can provide the added boost to your pension, and thus ensuring you won't ever be limited to a hand-to-mouth existence, retired or not.

Speak to a financial advisor as a family if you aren't confident of making these decisions by yourself. The most important thing is to understand any investments you make, and as a family.

Follow us on



# 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 BIDISHA PANDEY**

**Capt Ashok Shiroor** got commissioned into the 27 Air Defense Regiment (SM) (Amritsar), now 27 Air Defense Missile Regiment, the first AAD (Army Air Defense) Regiment. He has been through a myriad of experiences during his tenure in the Indian Army which include counter insurgency operations. Capt Ashok, post release from the Indian Army, set up his own IT firm 'Mikroz' in 1994 and today it has customers not only in all possible verticals of the industry across India but also customers outside, in Africa, South-East Asia, the Middle-East and Europe. Mikroz was nominated amongst the Top 3 in the country at the CRN Xcellence Awards, Solution Provider - Security



**Bidisha: Please tell us what were the major highlights of your tenure in the Indian Army.**

**Ashok:** After approximately forty-nine weeks of training at OTS, Madras (now OTA, Chennai) and passing out on August 26, 1989, I was commissioned into 27 Air Defense Regiment (SM) (Amritsar), now 27 Air Defense Missile Regiment, the first AAD (Army Air Defense) Regiment, the one with highest number of awards and decorations, to convert to Akash SAM (Surface to Air) defense system. The grooming here and exposure to the equipment, the AD being a high-tech fighting arm, laid the foundation for what I decided taking on eventually, especially the official communication, documentation practices and standard operating procedures. Since this also was the time when 1984 counter-insurgency operations took place in Punjab, Op Rakshak offered me the kind of hands-on leadership honing opportunity only few experiences can offer. Thinking on one's feet, with split second decision making became my second nature. Also, since one rotates through various appointments in the unit, rounded and cross-functional evolution was facilitated. My stint in the Indian Army had a huge influence on me as an individual, especially experiences like coming under fire and also firing in active operations, and I am thankful for it.

**Bidisha: Did you have any concrete plans for post retirement innings? How did you prepare yourself for it and the retirement?**

**Ashok:** Being a Botany graduate and a University top ranker, with experience in the highly specialised 'tissue culture' stream, the logical next step was to get back into that space. However, since this involved significant investment, something I did not have the privilege of or the wherewithal to raise, it got sidelined. I happen to be from



one of the 200 schools in India that got gifted two Micro-computers that belonged to the BBC, and as they were upgrading to XTs, so the next best option was IT. I had good exposure to these PCs when in school and that was like a subconscious trigger too. The investment required to start at that time was negligible, with more sweat equity investment needed. My extended family in Delhi helped with the initial few months of requiring a base to launch from. I was 'lucky' (I had to give a good fight, actually) to get 2 months of leave and 2 months of furlough in the last year of my 5 yrs. with the Army, i.e., in 1994 and I spent this time in preparation; going to market mostly in Pune (Maharashtra), learning the ropes, understanding the subject, etc. Just a submission, I did not 'retire'. I was released, after completion of my contractual service on my selecting this option vis-a-vis extension or permanent commission. However, to answer your question, no, I had no concrete plans for post 'release'. Just that I would try my best and give my best to whoever I engaged with.

**Bidisha: When did you decide to set up your own firm? What were the factors you had to keep in mind while planning the same?**

**Ashok:** The need to set up my firm came up in 1994-95 as the large clients like the PSUs wanted to deal with a business entity in the city. The primary factor I needed to keep in mind was that I had absolutely no idea what it meant, be it from a registration, office premises, staffing, business planning, organisation building, sales team mentoring, services and support engine establishment, accounts and finance, taxation and all the other nuts and bolts perspective of starting and successfully running and business entity. I left the Army around August end (1994) and I had my first order in my business entity in the first week of September 1994!

So, the task needed me to be to be extremely agile, lean and fast on the uptake and implementation. Character traits like being passionate, determined and constantly thinking out-of-the-box were critical. To summarise it, I hit the road-running, and I am still learning along the way.



**Bidisha: What are the major highlights of your 26-year long journey with Mikroz?**

**Ashok:** Well, from the time I started Mikroz A S Solutions as a proprietorship in 1994-95 till today, when I run Mikroz A S Solutions in parallel along with Mikroz InfoSecurity Pvt. Ltd. which was incorporated in 1998, but the business formally started in 2005, I have had to re-start from scratch twice; so the present one is the third iteration of the business, growing from strength to strength progressively after each point of re-birth.

While we had been providing service to Maharatnas, Navratnas, Miniratnas, PSUs, the Army, Navy, Air Force, large groups like Times, Indian Express, DCM Shriram, etc., the actual shift on size and addressability came in 2002-2003 when we picked up a country-wide order with the Punjab National Bank. Incidentally, we went onto provide solutions for their London and Hongkong branches too when connecting back to their DC/DR in India, for deployment of a cutting-edge end-point security solution on the Core Banking network (CBS) that spanned over 4,500 branches in 370 locations across India. Thereafter, there was no looking back. Today, we have customers not only in all possible verticals of the industry across India but also customers outside, in Africa, South-East Asia, the Middle-East, and Europe, etc.

**Bidisha: What were the initial difficulties which you had to face?**

**Ashok:** In my humble opinion and with the 25 years of running the business, I believe the biggest difficulty has been the constant struggle to grow, with no background or foundation which is usually facilitated by working in organisations that are well structured, with clear systems, processes, etc. Whatever I do today is just on the basis of logic, and mostly personal experience. Intuitive abilities and a practical, common-sense approach have been of immense help too. Business opportunities or the availability of funds themselves have never been a contributor to difficulty. How to scale, to make the most of these otherwise scarce resources in most businesses has been the challenge.



**Bidisha: What does a day in the life of an entrepreneur look like?**

**Ashok:** Well, my day starts at 6.20 AM with 30 minutes of pranayama, water therapy, etc. Thereafter, I head to play squash at 7.15 AM and go through the morning review points at 9.30 AM. The daily AIP helps me pre-plan the day; meetings, internal interaction, follow-ups, tenders, order processing, deliveries, feedback and relationship calls, etc. I also have to interact on a day to day basis with highly qualified and educated alumni from IIM, IIT etc, to discuss challenges they face, and then provide immediate and long term solutions to the organisations they work with. The evening time utilisation is dictated by the work at hand; so what typically is expected to close by 6 PM, may extend to 8 PM and beyond occasionally. And I have realised that,

the harder I worked, the luckier I got. Then I am back home, I unwind with my wife and eight years old son, provided he's still awake, or then catch up with some music, current affairs or any work and then dinner. I retire for the day by 11.30 PM.

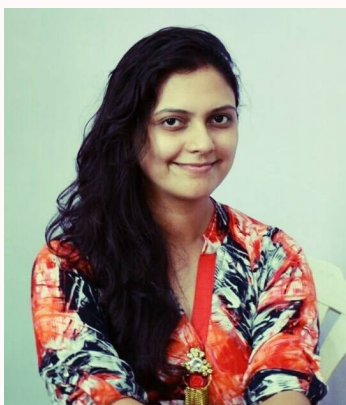
**Bidisha: What are your plans for the future?**

**Ashok:** I wish to transform what we presently are, into a predictable, recurring revenue model, a process-oriented and system-driven working engine, improve personal productivity and efficiency for each team member and develop the team so that they can work without me, the company being self-driven, reliant and sustainable. I would like to continually adapt to the environment and create value and sense of fulfillment among my team and our customers, partners, and continue inspiring and influencing people through demonstrated qualities of teamwork, empathy, building trust through personal integrity and providing valuable guidance on professional excellence. I would like to do all this while keeping things simple for others' quick assimilation. I would also like to consider assisting other business such as my own so they don't need to re-invent the wheel and hit the road running, avoiding the pitfalls we went through. Giving back to society is another area I would like to explore, with my understanding of the subject, so the environment is safer, more secure. Success is, I believe is when we are able to return back to the society.

**Bidisha: What advice would you like to give to the fellow ForceNet members who would be wanting to take up entrepreneurship like you?**

**Ashok:** Firstly, put pen-to-paper, "hawa-mein-baat" doesn't work. Next, have a clearly enumerated and pow-wowed business plan; definitely try and speak to a few self-starter entrepreneurs, not 'C' level employees or VC funded set ups, but those that have actually put their sweat, equity or money where their mouth is. Do a crash course in Entrepreneurial Development, preferably workshop based. Lastly, get a psychological investigation done, preferably by a professional who understands the mental make-up necessity of an entrepreneur required to sustain and succeed. With honest and straightforward business principles, careful attention to detail, great customer interface and the ability to take advantage of favourable opportunities, there is a definite scope for success. Believe in yourself. However, always remain humble, be ever ready to learn, unlearn and gather knowledge.

**Bidisha:** Thank you, Capt Ashok. It was really a pleasure interacting with you.



**Bidisha Pandey** is a blogger who believes every individual has a story and a lot can be learned from every story. More stories and interviews by her can be read on her blog site [www.sassyweekender.com](http://www.sassyweekender.com)

# Expatriate Interview

In this series we plan to showcase the achievements of the members of Forces Network who have settled abroad and carved a niche for themselves through hard work, grit and determination. The aim is to bring to fore the mechanics of such transitions, and thereby quell the apprehensions of the larger community in the Network. Learning from each other would help us exploit our true potential in any part of the World. And, it could be beneficial for our families too.

**BY BIDISHA PANDEY**

**Maj Deependra Sengar, SM** got commissioned into 17 Para Field Regiment in 1991 and then joined 21 Para SF. During the ten years of service, he operated in North East, North, as well as in Western Sector. After being injured in a firefight, Maj Deependra was informed that he may never be able to walk again, and that is when he started planning for his second innings. He completed the two-year MBA at IIM Ahmedabad, and then worked for large companies like GE, IBM and Microsoft, and also had his own startup for some time. He also completed his PMI certification, and also Program Management from University of British Columbia. Presently, he is based in the US and works at Microsoft. He has also founded a Non-Profit [FoodLynk.org](http://FoodLynk.org) to help feed the homeless.



**Bidisha: What were the highlights of your tenure in the Indian Army as a Special Forces officer?**

**Deependra:** I was fortunate to be part of the Indian Armed Forces and to serve with some of the finest soldiers that will ever walk this planet. My experiences in the Army were as varied and unique as the nation I served but the common thread in that decade of service, was the sense of fulfillment and accomplishment that each of those stints provided me. I got commissioned as a Gunner and then joined the Special Forces. My ten years in uniform were eventful and highly satisfying. I got opportunity to serve in J&K in anti-insurgency operations, served in Siachen, operated in North East, had war room view of military exercises and many successful operations in North East, and also in Strike Corps as an ADC to a General. During my service, I had my fill of adventure too. Got opportunity to be a Paragliding Pilot and also to lead summit to a 7000er in Ladakh. Almost all through my service, I had more medals on my chest than the number of years in the Army. Except the ADC tenure, almost all my appointments were as an independent commander for operation or for the post, as is usual in the Armed Forces. I would never trade this experience for anything else.

**Bidisha: Did you have any concrete plans as to what exactly you wished to do post retirement? How did you prepare yourself for the second innings?**

**Deependra:** No. Right from my childhood, I had only one dream and that was to be a

soldier. Period. My journey through Sainik School, NDA and then IMA only served to reinforce that dream. In fact, I was so oblivious to any other reality other than that of my army fatigues, that when I got shot up the first time, yes, there was a second time too, my only question to the attending doctor was about how soon I would be able to rejoin my team. The second time around, fate had a different plan for me and the medical prognosis after being injured in a firefight was that I would never walk again.

Which is when I was forced to look at options other than my first love, the Armed Forces. The camaraderie of the uniform came to my rescue, with serving officers and veterans offering their help and suggestions on my very unplanned second innings. I stumbled along, literally and figuratively, learning as I went along and finally found my niche in the corporate world.

**Bidisha: How was your experience at IIM Ahmedabad? Would you recommend the two-year course to other Armed Forces officers preparing for transition?**

**Deependra:** Everyone's situation and skill set is different and one needs to plan accordingly. I was a foot soldier with a BA from NDA and zero knowledge of anything other than the Armed Forces. Moreover, I got two days each between leaving the hospital, getting married as I was already engaged for a couple of years by then, and joining IIM Ahmedabad for my MBA. I was still recovering and body immunity levels were at their lowest. My first month in IIM was not easy. I fell sick and was barely coping up with the classes. I used to walk with the help of crutches. For almost whole of the first year, it was too painful to sit on hard wooden classroom chair for hours. In my case, the two-year MBA was a good option, as I got time to learn general management as I also got time to recover physically. Moreover, that was the only option available at that time. However, we have multiple options now, including one-year PGPX. Also, all the officers leaving the forces now, are way more equipped and fitter. I guess today, the officers would be able to make wise choices looking at multiple options available.



**Bidisha: Please share the major highlights of your corporate journey so far.**

**Deependra:** Just like in the Armed Forces, success in the corporate world isn't a solo effort. I was blessed to have friends, managers and colleagues who worked with me to give me my breaks and opportunities. I have had the good fortune of having worked for large companies like GE, IBM, and Microsoft as also had my own startup for some time. I have worked in disparate industries like Pharma, IT, BPO, and Services, and in various geographies like India, Japan, Philippines, Singapore and the US.

The biggest highlight of my two-decade journey in the corporate sector has been the way I have been able to successfully marry and align what I learnt in the Armed Forces with the demands of the corporate world.

**Bidisha: What were the major challenges you and your family faced during different country moves and especially after moving to the United States?**

**Deependra:** My family has been quite accommodating, to the almost Army-style of movements, we have been making, even in the corporate setting. We have been moving every two to three years. If it is not a change of country, it is change of city, at least. However, all my previous moves have been within Asia where distance back home was much lesser and one had lot of house help. I remember that my wife reached back home from Philippines, in less than a day, when she got news of her father not being well. Some of our relatives in India could not reach by then. One can't think of such short travel times, when one is in the US- Corona of course has made things even more complicated. For household chores, one is largely self-dependent. However, the facilities and level of automation more than makes up for these gaps. As a family, we have always been involved in some or the other charitable cause. The regulations in the US, especially as compared to India are conducive and in a way encouraging for setting up a corporation - in our case, a Non-Profit Corporation. That has helped us as a family, to be able to work in a focused manner on the causes we support. We started FoodLynk ([www.foodlynk.org](http://www.foodlynk.org)) last year. I spend each weekend while my family members go beyond that, exploring how we can help homeless people across the globe.



**Bidisha: What does a regular day in the life of a Senior Architect at Microsoft look like?**

**Deependra:** I am an early riser and by choice, I start my day at about 3.30 AM. where for the next hour, I devote to yoga, mindfulness and prioritization for the day.

Since I work with teams that are spread across different time zones, my calls and virtual meetings usually start by about 5 a.m. A short break for lunch at noon, followed by catching up on mails and some focus time, and by then by evening, it's time for the APAC region. I try to log off early to devote time to the family. For me, it's less about managing time and more about working to my own energy levels; the qualitative aspect of the output rather than the time spent. Equally, if not more important, is the "how" we address and resolve issues. Co-operation and collaboration augments my energy levels and I don't really feel the passage of time.



**Bidisha: A lot of officers aspire to move abroad post retirement. Do you think moving abroad is always a good decision? What are the major pros and cons of doing so?**

**Deependra:** Like everything else, moving abroad is a decision one makes, based on personal circumstances. While there is no doubt that the officers today are so capable, that they can excel in any area they decide to go in, however, the way one prioritizes work, family and extended family, does make a difference. Career is one of the variables in the equation of life. I know of some folks who got a chance, but did not move to take care of their ailing parents. These things crossed my mind too. One does look at extended family support for parents, kids' education and the ability for one to contribute while staying abroad and a lot more. I made my choices - not an easy decision though. I personally learnt a lot in this process and continue to do so every single day. Every single decision will come with its own set of pros and cons as per one's view of life, and moving abroad is another such decision point.

**Bidisha: What would be your advice to officers who wish to specifically move to the United States post retirement?**

**Deependra:** I don't think that I am qualified to give any advice, but will talk of my personal learnings through this move, as also what I observed looking at others. I have met a lot of young officers, who have moved to the US – both short service as also permanent commissioned officers. I marvel at their courage, as they burnt the ships-Captain Hernán Cortés style- retreat not being an option. Most of these youngsters spent considerable amount of money in equipping themselves for the road ahead by completing a formal academic program in the US and learning new ways of working. I see them doing well and things working as per their plan. I am also aware of some senior folks who moved later in life, and still have upgraded themselves where some I idolize have even completed PhD at that stage in life.

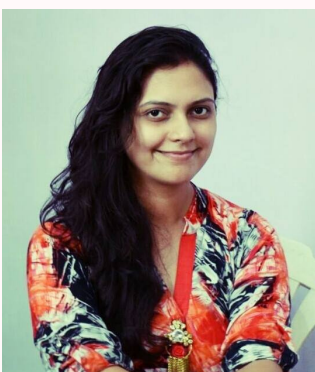
When you operate behind enemy lines for extended period of time, you get used to sleeping with one foot in the shoe, just in case there is requirement of a hasty move. What I observed in most cases was the support- financial, moral and everything else, from their spouse, in most cases. Most of those who moved had their spouse working and supporting them during the transition, but that could be just one of the factors.

Personally for me, Seattle was not exactly a new place. This being the headquarter of the company I work for, I had opportunity to visit at least 20 times, even before I thought of moving. I had a fair idea of what to expect.

However, with the way Indian environment is changing, there are numerous opportunities within India which one can look at. Not even discussing the move to the US, but just talking about differences between the Armed Forces and Corporate life, my take today is the same, as what it was lying on the hospital bed 20 years ago – there is no better institution than the Armed Forces.

**Bidisha:** Sir, it has been really motivating for me to speak and interact with you. Your journey of life has been full of challenges, which you have successfully overcome with your focus, grit, determination and raw courage. I am certain that the readers will have a lot of lessons to take from it. Thanks again, for taking out your time for us.

**Deependra:** I also enjoy every moment of interaction with members of my defence fraternity, and would not have missed it any cost.



***Bidisha Pandey** is a blogger who believes every individual has a story and a lot can be learned from every story. More stories and interviews by her can be read on her blog site [www.sassyweekender.com](http://www.sassyweekender.com)*



# Women Power

Spouses of Defence Officers have immense potential as individuals. While many of them have already established themselves as successful independent entities, a very large number still has to recognise and exploit their inherent hidden capabilities and worth. In this series we plan to showcase the achievements of such spouses of the members of Forces Network who have carved a niche for themselves through hard work, grit and determination, so as to provide adequate motivation to the others.

## **IN INTERACTION WITH RANVIR SINGH**

**Mrs Sarala Verma is a fauji wife from IAF. She is an Electronics and Communication Engineer with specialization in Robotics with proficiency in Kannada, English, Hindi, Bangla, Japanese and French languages. A Teach for India 2019 Fellow, she is currently working on her community project 'Ondu Hosa Kathe' - Kannada for 'One new story', which aims at creating a common space for bringing together parents as partners in the child's learning. She envisions herself working in the development sector to contribute towards changing the Education landscape of the country for better.**



Mahatma Gandhi's quote, "*Live as if you were to die tomorrow, learn as if you were to live forever*", has been my life motto as long back as I can remember.

I actually learnt everything that came my way or everything that was possible. When a music teacher moved into my neighborhood in a small town in Karnataka, I learnt the harmonium. When the teacher acquired some new sitar instruments, I learnt sitar. When the neighbouring aunty started knitting, I learnt that. I was experimenting with rangoli designs on an everyday basis. I was the captain of my school volleyball team and put my life into it. Being very interested in studies and a hard worker by nature, I burned a lot of midnight oil and topped my school and PU college. I was one among the three students from my town to get a merit seat in Engineering and Medicine and thus became the first girl in my family to do a professional course as I chose to do a B.Tech in Electronics and Communication Engineering. It was a hard 4-year study as, being only 10% of the college strength, there did not exist an established girls hostel. Makeshift staff quarters were the shared girls hostel rooms with no arrangement for food. I cooked my meals more often than not alongside my engineering studies. Meanwhile I discovered my strength in programming, especially micro-controller programming. Micro-controllers are those chips which are found in automated devices ranging from washing machines, lifts, automated cars and robots.

After completion of engineering, I took up a job of R&D engineer at a firm that manufactured battery chargers. The job was to replace manual chargers with the

automated ones using micro-controllers. I was the sole person working on it as the technology was new and there was no senior staff available to work in this field at the firm. I used manuals as there was no internet to figure out the specifications, and was thus able to develop a working model.

Then in the year 1996, I was to marry my husband, an officer in the Indian Air Force. The discussion was about how Air Force Stations were based out of remote areas and there would be no career options for me. I was disappointed by the news. My strong belief that knowledge does not only help you earn your bread and butter but also helps in leading a better life everyday, if we can transfer those skills and apply them in everyday life, helped me with the transition to become a part of the AF family. The hope was that a chance posting to a big city will let me have a career option.

The first posting was to a tiny place called Bidar. I even tried a short stint of teaching at the Engineering college in Bidar, but I had to say quits when the posting signal was out. Then came postings like Hashimara and places in the East. I was slowly pulled into the social life that characterises the defence forces, the AFWWA meets and the ladies' clubs. I participated with full josh and found purpose in those interactions when families are in remote areas. During this time, our son was born. While I was busy bringing up my son being posted in areas without even an STD connection, I totally missed the IT boom.

Then came the hard earned MTech selection. I helped my husband during the preparations as two brains were better than one. He was selected but for an MTech at IIT Kanpur, instead of Pune, the station we were planning for. Though disappointed at going North instead of South, I was happy to go to a place of knowledge. Initially I was awed by the sheer magnitude of the knowledge that was available at the IIT. As I started exploring the campus and made friends with local residents consisting of families of professors, I could understand the depth of knowledge that IITs host. It was a heaven for knowledge seekers with 24x7 open labs and libraries, open classrooms that are accessible to anybody who wants to learn and the like. IITs are a powerhouse of knowledge and one feels humbled by the quantum that is in there.

I desperately wanted to be a part of IIT and my husband understood my thirst for learning. He brought home a brochure for evening classes to learn foreign languages for a 1-year diploma. I chose to learn Japanese. It was just curiosity to see how an alien language looks like, at that point in time. Leaving my toddler son with my husband, I attended evening classes. I thoroughly enjoyed the world class language labs and passed the year end exam with a high score.

By the start of husband's second year in IIT, I signed up for a Diploma in French. During the same time, a friend told me that the Robotics department is looking for a micro-controller programmer for the football playing robots that are being developed to participate in the robo soccer tournament for inter IITs. My son had started kinder-

garten. I applied, and one criteria was that the winning team was supposed to go to Tokyo for the international match and the interviewers were happy that I knew Japanese along with experience in programming. I became part of the programming team and it was a dream JD! Our team stood second in the tournament.



When the Robosoccer ended, the professors at the center for Robotics were in approval of my programming skills and offered me a place in the project called Build Robots Create Science(BRiCS), sponsored by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology(MIT) and was called Media Lab Asia (MLA). This project aimed at bringing technology to the grassroots.

I was part of a team that worked at studying the impact of teaching programming to underprivileged children in villages around Kanpur to see how learning programming can improve their logical thinking skills. Initially we started out with robotic kits donated from different partners but somewhere in between I realized that the controller for robots can be developed by us. I gave a proposal that I want to work on it. I was confident because it basically involved micro-controller programming. But this time I had to develop the circuits, make my own box to house it, and design my own printed circuit boards. I learnt PCB designing on the go. It took me about one year to put together everything block by block. And, we had a working model. Me, along with my professor applied for a patent for a handheld computer capable of programming a robot. This device, named the PrISM (Programmable Interface for Sensors and Motors) has a keyboard with sign language that does not require English knowledge, so that even children who do not know English can learn logic and programming.

My research papers got published in journals and I got to present in national level conferences. I was at the peak of my success with local newspapers covering the patent application. But just at that time, my husband was shortlisted for a foreign deputation. It was a tough decision, but keeping the family requirement in mind I

decided to pause my career and continue whenever possible. I thought that family commitment was important at that time. I quit my IIT job and joined my husband.

## Elementary programming sans computer

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kanpur:** Elementary programming can be learned with or without computer. Engineer of project 'Learning made fun' Sarala Verma demonstrated the technology at workshop 'New Business opportunities in information technology and related sectors' at the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (IIT-K) on Wednesday.

Programmable blocks having sensors and motors could even move a robot, she said. She told the *Times News Network* that the technology would be very helpful at villages.

Besides, other projects were presented. Raj Manohar, student of Master of Design at the IIT-K, presented a tourism promotional film on Mandu Fort in Chattisgarh. Animated advertisements and short educational programme on the Indus Valley Civilisation were presented also.

Sunil Jha, PhD student at the IIT-K, who presented an interesting project on security alarm for two-wheelers, said that the effective alarm was cheaper than others.

## 'प्रिज्म' सिखायेगा बच्चों को कम्प्यूटर

कानपुर, 6 जून। आई.आई.टी. में एक ऐसा खिलौना विकसित किया गया है जो खेल-खेल में बच्चों को कम्प्यूटर चलाना सिखायेगा। यहां के रोबोटिक्स विभाग द्वारा तैयार प्रिज्म नाम के इस खिलौने के पेटेंट के लिए भी आवेदन किया गया है। जल्दी ही प्रिज्म स्कूली बच्चों के हाथों में दिखायी देगा।

इस कम्प्यूटर खिलौने को विकसित करने वाली रोबोटिक्स विभाग की सरला वर्मा बताती हैं कि प्रिज्म स्कूली बच्चों के लिए अत्यंत उपयोगी होगा। बच्चे इसके माध्यम से कम्प्यूटर प्रोग्रामिंग सीख सकेंगे। बमुश्किल सौ ग्राम के इस पांच इंच लंबे व ३ इंच

### आई.आई.टी. में विकसित खिलौने का पेटेंट लेने के लिए आवेदन

चौड़े कम्प्यूटर खिलौने से प्रोग्रामिंग कर इससे जुड़े रोबोट को मनचाहे ढंग से घुमाया-फिराया जा सकता है। रोबोट के स्थान पर कार या टैंक आदि भी लगाये जा सकते हैं। इस रोबोट को चलाने के लिए बच्चों को प्रिज्म में ठीक उसी तरह प्रोग्रामिंग करनी पड़ेगी, जिस प्रकार कम्प्यूटर के संचालन में करनी पड़ती है। प्रिज्म के निचले हिस्से में बने छोटे से मनीटर में पूरी प्रोग्रामिंग का विवरण आता रहता है। सरला बताती हैं कि ग्रामीण इलाके के बच्चों तक कम्प्यूटर का ज्ञान पहुंचाने में प्रिज्म अत्यंत उपयोगी साबित होगा।

रोबोटिक्स विभाग के प्रभारी प्रो. अमिताभ मुखर्जी की देखरेख में तैयार इस खिलौने की मार्केटिंग की भी योजना है। जल्दी ही प्रिज्म स्कूली बच्चों के पास होंगे। इसकी लागत लगभग ३ हजार रुपये होगी।



आई.आई.टी. में विकसित कम्प्यूटर सिखाने वाले खिलौने 'प्रिज्म' का प्रदर्शन करतीं सरला वर्मा। छाया: आज

After my daughter was born, I immersed myself fully in bringing up my kids in a foreign country. Meanwhile an online curriculum development company approached me based on my IIT reference. I took it up and worked from home curating a syllabus to teach robotics to Classes I to V. When that ended, I took up volunteering at our kids' school, The American International School. That experience changed my perspective of education forever. Now I looked at education as a means to bring out the best in a child and grow holistically as opposed to rote learning. I was introduced to it during my IIT days but could now see it in action.

When we returned to India, my older kid were stepping out of school and the younger one was nearly independent. I decided to take up my passion. When I zeroed down on what I wanted to do, the requirement of personal satisfaction emerged as the highest priority. However, there were still some more postings to take care of. We were posted to a remote place in the West where my husband took up a senior position and I got to take the decision making chair in the ladies' welfare association. With 1250 families under the umbrella, this was a perfect setting for me to conduct hands-on-learning workshops to the kids on campus. With the help of enthusiastic ladies, I created

hands-on learning workshops. These included expressing yourself by making your own puppet, making your own quartz clock, Science club, etc which the kids thoroughly enjoyed. By then, I had discovered that I have proficiency in teaching and understanding the learning process.



This was a short tenure and when we returned and were placed at Bangalore, my husband decided to hang up his uniform. While he started to work on the process, I also presented some of my learnings at our Air Force station to bring awareness about hands-on learning to the campus community

One day, as my husband and I were watching an MTV Roadies Superheroes episode, we came across a contestant who mentioned Teach for India. Out of curiosity, we googled the name and the vision of TFI, 'one day all children will attain an excellent education' and the videos of transformational classrooms from low-income schools latched on. We discovered that the deadline to apply for a fellowship was just two weeks away. We both were eligible, so both of us applied. Thus, out of sheer coincidence, the TFI fellowship opportunity emerged.

This had a five level elimination method and a selection rate of only 7%. I was not sure of getting in as this is usually taken up by freshers of my son's age and I had lost touch with writing. But I decided to give it my 100%. For three days, food was ordered from the officers' mess as we set upon writing essays upon essays that was a requirement of the application process. We both cleared the initial selections. But midway, we realized that this is a full time commitment and one of us needed to step back to look after home. My husband knew that I had missed out on my opportunity to explore my full capabilities as a professional, so it was sweet of him to decide to take a backseat and let me explore the world.

I was selected for the coveted Fellowship, but then, reading the selection letter it dawned on all of us that I had to undergo training for five weeks in Pune. I hadn't left my daughter even for a single day till date and my husband was clueless how our home worked, that too with two dogs thrown in for extra responsibility.

As I pondered on what to do, my daughter said “Please go, this is your calling, I will manage”. She had school to attend to while making her own long hair for the first time. I was not sure how she would cope. Husband said, “There is nothing to think about, You should go” and my son, a NIKE fan said “Just do it!”. So I packed half heartedly, full of self doubt and was off to Pune.

The training was hectic and I got very little time to think about home. I thought, as long as there is no SOS call, things would be running at home. I could make out that my daughter was missing me when I called, but she held on. Eventually, the husband and the kids sailed through. It was great learning for all of us as a family. When I returned, ladies in the station were awed at how my family members let me go for such a long time and my husband had no issues filling in! I sincerely think that it takes a broad minded attitude to do that from an Indian husband’s side.



My fellowship in a low income primary school in South Bangalore started and I am in charge of 54 children. What a journey it has been for the last 18 months! The amount of personal transformation and learnings are immeasurable. It taught me empathy, honed my leadership skills and ensured personal satisfaction from a different perspective. From a senior officer's spouse used to being served at messes and car doors opened, it took a tremendous amount of shift in attitudes to develop a mindset of serving a community.

As I write this, we have transitioned from being a serving defence family to a veteran family and my dear husband is happily filling in as the caretaker of the family while enjoying his retired life. I am busy with my real life 'Be the Change Project', to set up a community center and library in the community I serve. I have named the project 'Ondu hosa Kathe' for 'One New Story' in the Kannada language. This has shifted online due to the pandemic but is taking the twists and turns, that provides maximum learning and satisfaction.

Currently, I am working on providing counselling sessions on mental well being to the

parents of my students to support their child's learning during the pandemic and become partners in their child's growth. I am gearing up to take a role in the developmental sector once my Fellowship concludes by the end of this year and hope to contribute my bit to changing the Education landscape of the country for the better.

I just realized that writing about oneself is a very tough job. Hope I did justice to the write-up in narrating the facts and not seemed boastful. My learning from life, especially from the defence family perspective has been to take one day at a time, put my best foot forward and let life take its own course while hoping for the best all the time. Hope this write up serves as an inspiration to many talented defence ladies out there waiting to harness their potential and to the family who are waiting to be proud of their achievements.

*(We decided to deviate from our Question-Answer format for this Section this time, as I felt that we may miss out on some vital emotions, and in this case the story could not have been told much better, than in own words. - Editor)*



**Lt Col Ranvir Singh**, a product of Rashtriya Military School and an alumnus of National Defence Academy, was commissioned into 2nd Battalion The Bihar Regiment in June 1988. After hanging his boots in Jan 2009, he has contributed immensely as a Corporate Warrior 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. Apart from being a Security & Safety specialist and an Administration expert, 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](mailto:ranvirsm@gmail.com)

**It is amazing what you can  
accomplish if you do not care  
who gets the credit.**

Harry S. Truman

# Stars On The Horizon

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

**BY UDAY K SHRIWAS**

**Ria Rathore**, is the daughter of Col Deepak Rathore. She has done most of her schooling from various Army Public Schools. She is fond of travelling and experiencing various cultures around the globe. After graduating as a lawyer from Army Institute of Law, she stepped directly into entrepreneurship. Before launching her own brand of Air Purifying and Healing Candles (Zenense, India), she worked as a consultant for various companies in the travel, hospitality, real estate and education sector. She can be reached through [@Zenense.India](#) on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).



**Here is Ria, narrating her wonderful journey.....**

Any Army child worth his salt knows that change is inevitable, and sometimes unwelcome part of life. Every new posting my father undertook meant a different city and school for me. At the time, this was challenging and hard. Today, it is clear that all these experiences were a blessing in disguise. It helped me become more accepting of people from different cultures and backgrounds, which in turn played a significant part in becoming the confident individual I am today. However, life has its beautiful ways to manifest our deepest desires and passions. The journey was not as easy as I would have imagined, but it has been very rewarding and fulfilling in every sense.

After completing my school in Delhi, ecstatic to be done with the board examinations, I joined the Army Institute of Law. My parents were avid believers of formal, practical degrees and encouraged me as I embarked on my degree with much focus. Despite making it into law school and doing well in academia, I veered towards creative sectors such as event management, hospitality, etc. Developing concepts from scratch, handling logistics and execution, marketing, and overall business administration were the things that always brought out the best in me.

Along with active participation in co-curricular activities, I worked hard to keep my grades steady and eventually secured a place at Dreamweavers in 2014. At that time, it was my dream job, and I had five months at hand before joining. But, little did I know that I would let it pass because I was neck-deep into something much more



exciting. I then stepped into entrepreneurship, only to never look back.



I launched a hospitality consultancy firm based out of Chandigarh, which was almost an unknown concept for that time and age, along with my partners and friends. The first project that we did as a firm was establishing a speakeasy bar in Chandigarh. This project was challenging, but fun, nevertheless. We worked endlessly, starting from the very conceptualization of the bar to running it successfully for a few months.

The end of 2014 and the following year were all about learning and experiencing first-hand about setting up a business from scratch. Yes, there were hardships and challenges. The very first of which was, landing an actual project. Ours came six months later, which did feel like an eternity. Unfortunately, by the end of 2015, the realization of differences in work ethics had set in.

Therefore, I knew it was time to move on. What came next was not easy. I had to make one of the hardest decisions of my life. I could either return to a secure job with a corporate law firm or stand my ground to do something entirely on my own. So, I took the plunge and decided to go with the latter. The initial phase was all about struggle—whether it was finances, ideas, or landing projects. There would even be times when I had to decide between cab fare and lunch! Luckily, the values instilled in me by my parents of 'never quitting' were my key to success at that time.

Social networking is a major part of my personality, and that is precisely where I started. To my amazement, it landed me many opportunities where I worked on different projects in business development consulting, marketing, and branding.

In my network, I connected with someone who had experience in the travel industry. After many meetings and brainstorming sessions over coffee, we agreed to work on two projects, one of which was a co-working space cum cafe in Chandigarh together.

Another project we collaborated on was InstaVisa- a company where we provided end to end travel solutions to our clients. I felt connected to this idea as I had personally faced many inconveniences while organizing travel for myself- paying exorbitant prices and handling enormous amounts of paperwork. We wanted to create a service that allowed people to travel with ease, without burning a hole in their pocket. Here on, no matter which ventures I launched or hopped on, hospitality and consultancy have always been a huge part of what I do.



For the year 2020, I even had a wedding e-commerce start-up in the pipeline, but the year had its own different plans for us. The lockdown period however gave me a lot of time for creative thinking. Which, of course, was the inception of Zenense. The vision behind it, and the methodology can be perused [here](#).

After lots of research and development, product trials, and re-iterations, I was finally able to narrow down to the exact specifications that would make a candle air-purifying, antiviral, and antibacterial, with some healing properties as well! We got an experienced professional on board that does the essential oil blending for us, which gives our candles most of their qualities. We searched and tested wax samples from all over India to narrow down to only the purest, unadulterated soy wax and beeswax. I intended to offer only the most high quality and genuine products - so nothing could convince me otherwise. It was as if everything around me fell into place, as my intentions began to manifest themselves without any resistance, and soon, I had a small, passionate team working with Zenense.

In no time, we were able to launch a high-end and premium product, unlike anything accessible in the market - a handmade, air-purifying, antiviral and antibacterial candle that calms anxiety, headaches and promotes fuller breathing. We kept it clean, organic, and sustainable to the environment and local communities. We further enhanced the candle-experience by using hand-rolled hemp-wick, which burns slow with no smoke or soot. This product is something I made on my own, and I can proudly stand by it for its authentic and unique qualities. It gives me immense joy to share this product with everyone else, gifting their homes a cleaner, warmer

environment! It is a candle that cares, silently improving your indoor atmosphere and spreading calm and joy. So far, we have received a great response and even better reviews from our customers- showing us that we are heading in the right direction. Because of such great feedback, I am inspired to launch more wholesome products- so stay tuned for more natural wellness for you and your home!



**CHRISTMAS GIVEAWAY**

BY **zenense**  
ORGANIC | PURIFYING | AROMATIC

Two lucky winners will win one of the following sets of Antiviral, Antibacterial and healing candles:

- Round Pillar Jar set of 3 (MRP: 2199 INR)
- Clear Glass Votives set of 4 (MRP: 1599 INR)

**Want to know how?**  
Head to our Facebook and Instagram handles @zenense.india and participate in the giveaway!

Round Pillar Jar Set of 3



Clear Glass Votives Set of 4



I am eternally grateful to my family for their love and support. Inheriting my perseverance and resilience from them shaped my experiences and enabled me to live my life on my terms. My sister, who is also a very successful entrepreneur, runs her own AI venture backed start-up based out of Seattle, Symb.ai that enables businesses to build AI-powered communication applications using conversational intelligence APIs. In a chaotic and unsure world, I saw an opportunity, owing to the values and upbringing of my parents. Throughout my eventful journey, I was lucky to have the most genuine and supportive friends right by my side. Adjusting to a new city, the struggles or the hard times never felt like a task, thanks to their unwavering love and strength.

As Christmas is round the corner, and with the New Year following, I would like to add a little cheer to to the mood. There is a little giveaway from Zenense, our signature product, the details of which are there in the banner above (*click on it for the link*). Best of Luck to the participants, and hopefully we all will see the end of the pandemic soon in the following year.

*(As narrated to Uday K Shriwas on phone and through e-mail)*



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

# Gratitude

## Forces Network- A Force Across Seven Seas

**BY SAJAN MOIDEEN**

Seven years back I came across Forces Network. Probably we were about 1300 people. Today it has crossed 6000. One thing, Col Iqbal always maintained, was that we are not looking at numbers. He has been strict with those who did not follow the core spirit of the Network and single-handedly has been guiding this Network to be one of the best and fastest groups among faujis to help each other across Seven Seas.

The core aim was to help the uniformed services to transition smoothly, however so many queries get resolved instantly from suggestions for a Washing Machine to a Robotic Cleaner to getting advice from Medical Treatment to access to Customer Care of various companies. Some members are ever present to help. Capt Uday is one example.

In fact I may not be exaggerating if I say that our Group is faster than Google to settle queries.

Capt Uday helped us get a washing machine from IFB and since then he has been helping get it serviced every time we face a problem even though he is not with IFB now. In fact he is there for any help for anyone, always and every time. Many members go out of the way to help the near and dear ones in distress from Australia to US. Members have travelled for hours to help without any expectations. This is the true brother hood that I have witnessed over the years.

I have been helped my members of this very group when I started my Career Counseling journey. Col Manish Kapoor was the first one to recommend me. While I helped children of members, so many of them recommended me to their friends and their relatives which enabled me to help guide more kids and Officers planning their transition. Career Counselors who were certified along with me were wondering how I was able to guide so many students every month for the past three years. Today as I counsel 1200+ students in over 14 countries, a large part of the credit goes to Forces Network.

There are officers who have been guided meticulously by various mentors in this group and have been acknowledged publicly by them. The group held many Seminars, mostly in Delhi. They were attended full house. However, members from far and wide still felt the need to be part of it. As the COVID pandemic started, Forces Network got into an overdrive with online webinars that helped many officers to plan their transition journey and get relevant industry best certifications. I have personally

interacted with many officers who have sincerely followed the transition advice of the mentors like Col Iqbal, Col Sandesh Sharma, Col Sameer Anukul, Col Haldia and many others, got themselves industry ready and landed in very good jobs.

Today our group has grown much more than what was envisaged by the Founder. It is one of the best groups where there is no SPAM, where there is still the feeling of Brotherhood, Altruistic, helpful without needing to get returns and favours. I hope we continue like this and benefit more of our uniformed fraternity in the years to come.



**Col Sajan Moideen** is the Principal Consultant of *Reenergetics Consulting*, and an experienced International Trainer, Consultant, and a certified Career Counselor. He was commissioned into the Corps of Army Air Defence in 1991 and is an alumnus of NDA, DSSC, and Army AD College. After a remarkable career of 22 years he stepped out in to the world outside. He has been regularly guiding officers transitioning out through Psychometric Based Career Counseling. He also writes a popular blog [www.sajanspeaks.wordpress.com](http://www.sajanspeaks.wordpress.com). He is reachable at [www.reenergetics.com/careercounselling](http://www.reenergetics.com/careercounselling) and on LinkedIn at <https://in.linkedin.com/in/sajanmoideen>



# The Network That Aids Smooth Transition

**BY RAJESH NAIR**

It has been a wonderful association of mine with Forces network. My dear friend and coursemate, Uday Shriwas had introduced me to Forces network.

Moving from the Armed forces to the civil was and remains the top dilemma for most of the officers. The question whether to leave or not still haunts a major chunk of officers. The same was for me when I was planning in 2007 to move out into the civil realm. With nothing and no one to guide on how and what needs to be done, it was left on own to decide and act.

It was during this time I felt there was a vacuum and a need for a platform which would connect brother officers. Like me there would be plenty more who would be as clueless and shy as me

The advent of Forces Network was hence a fair thing to happen. A platform which would guide officers from the verticals of the three stream of Defence forces. A place where the officers would fall back when in doubt or a help required. A world which is driven by philanthropy where every member is learning and helping, a place which is not for commercial or barter purpose.

Col IQ with his vision to help fellow officers created a group, a group which would banish negativity and promote help culture. The group started in Dec 2007 with six members to become a power pack group of 6K in 2020. At a time when the net and its content are closely scrutinised by the Defence HQ. Forces network was acknowledged and felicitated for the Omni noble work being done by them.

On a personal note I do feel the group has not only broadened horizon for many it has also increased the learning appetite and very important allowed people like me to make good friends from comrades Sr/Jr. alike. It introduced us to stalwart officers in their own fields. Most of them being dormant a good period of their life and showcasing the skills in this platforms.

The group's attitude of banishing negativity has instilled a positive obelisk in my own mind. A pillar which goes like the Pillar of truth in our constitution. This is a group where I have seen due respect being given to all irrespective of their rank, service or gender. Ofcourse there has to be a strict and genuine vigilance on the content being share, which Col IQ has been doing well as the moderator.

Forces Network from helping officers in deciding their future careers has moved ahead in multiple aspects including training officers in various aspects of civil society, helping them in distress, clarity or help in the uniform, guidance through professional

and personal matters, opportunities, networking, medical, sell or buy, advertisements etc. However my personal best and an innovative one is “ABCT” (Any Body Can Tech) proven by his own experience, Col IQ leads in showing that being GD in the forces doesn’t stop you from becoming tech savvy in the civil.

I was given the opportunity to help Col IQ in hosting the first Forces Network event last year in Pune. Being in Administration it was not new, however handling so many Officers serving and Ex. was an experience in itself. The one day event was held at one of the hotels in Pune. With leading speakers speaking on different subject. Coaching and mentoring, connect and knowledge were in abundance. The day might have been hectic however the satisfaction it gave deep inside was PRICELESS.

Everyday the confidence of many are installed in the network with the help and support they get from all quarters. The icing on the cake is you send a small query and you get all the resolutions under the sky. To the extent, officers calling up and explaining the solutions and providing themselves to personally help further if required.

It would not be a hyperbole to say Forces network is ..... “The Network that WORKS”



**Capt Rajesh Nair** is a Commerce graduate from Nagpur University. He was commissioned into 14 MARATHA LIGHT INFANTARY IN Mar 2003 from OTA Chennai. He has served with his unit in various operations and terrains, but had to opt out of the Army after completion of his mandatory tenure due to an injury. Thereafter, he has been working in the field of administration for companies like Wipro, Mahindra Automobile, Tata Communications and Credence Global Solutions. He has done many a course in PGCBM, Certification course in FM, POSH, ISO etc. Capt. Rajesh loves Training and cooking as a hobby. He is based out of Pune.



# Don't Seek Answers Here...Rather Ask Questions

*BY A DEDICATED MEMBER*

As cliché as this sounds, I still wish to begin by saying 'Thank You' !

I came looking for answers, Col Iqbal and others taught me to ask questions. That was the game changer in my journey.

I wish to put on record how grateful I am for the clarity, readily available help and belief that this Network has given me over the past two years. Having the opportunity to learn from the collective expertise of this network has made a substantial change in my outlook towards my planned second innings.

When I joined this network, I never imagined I would be able to make as much progress as I have.

Looking back, I realize that what really sets this network apart is that there is a place for each one of us here, especially for the silent majority to whom engaging and networking doesn't come naturally. I think they are the biggest beneficiary of this group.

Since I joined the network for seeking clarity for my second innings (like most of us do), I can elaborate on how the network enabled me towards that aim. I am sure others would have various other reasons for joining the network, mine was this.

To start with, it is the readily available help that is just not a mile, but a mail away. Where else will one find a cohort of such large numbers from similar background and different 2nd innings journeys. One literally gets to choose his own path, his own mentor and his own journey from this enormous group of subject-matter experts.

While I can enumerate numerous ways in which I have personally and professionally benefitted, I wish to specifically mention the one aspect which I hold most close to my heart.

I'll call it - BELIEF !

I've said this above and still wish to reiterate - I came looking for answers, Col Iqbal and others taught me to ask questions. That was the game changer in my journey.

I learnt to stop expecting 'Ready-made' answers. Initially, I would approach seniors in the group with the typical 'What should I do' ? As days passed and as I began to indulge in the sea of information, knowledge and clarity that the network provides,



that's when I began to notice the transformation in my thought process and I finally began asking the right questions.

It is remarkable how this single aspect of self-belief can handle so many aspects of one's transitioning journey. I guess this belief in one's ability comes from the opportunity of networking with fellow comrades who have been down one's planned future path. Its easy to relate to one from similar background, right?

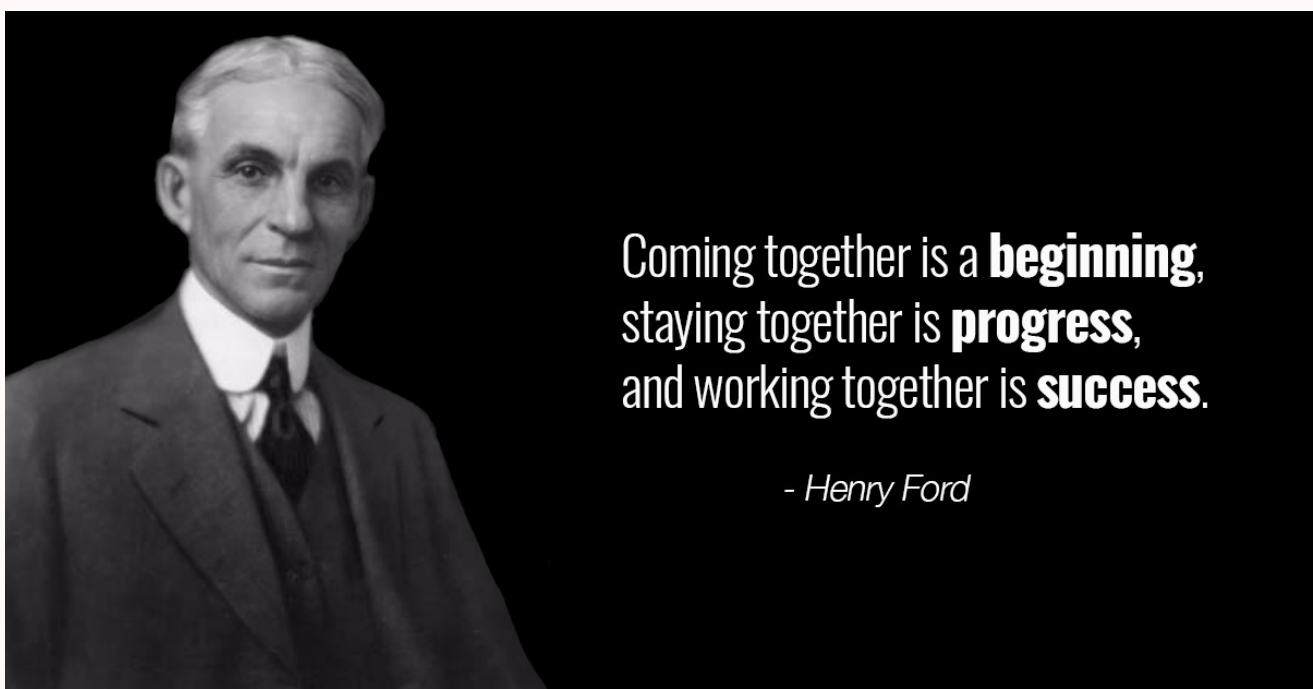
'There are no free lunches' is a phrase not really fit for this community. I have found mentors and friends who genuinely expect nothing in return and who generously only give.

It's often said in the Corporate world that 'Networking' works like magic. We know this does not come naturally to most faujis. That's another aspect where the network has helped me immensely. Being on familiar territory with veterans is a comfortable and doable first step towards this important journey of networking. Isn't it easy to begin discussing Corporate aspects with veterans (who have successfully transitioned) rather than with a Corporate guy.

There will always be naysayers, there will always be apprehensions as to what value will another group provide. And then, there will always be many lucky ones like me who will be grateful for a lifetime of value gained in just two years, thanks to 'Forces Network'.

Thank you Iqbal Sir!

Heartiest Congratulations, We are in the Teens now!!



# We Tackle Bank Frauds Too

**BY KAILASH BANSAL**

At the outset, I must acknowledge my gratitude and sincere thanks to all who have resonated with my situation of having been smitten by a bank fraud wherein my account was wiped clean. Here are few names, who reached out to me and extended an out of way help to get the favorable resolution (pardon me, but ranks are being omitted for a purpose):

- Prabhat Kumar
- Sanotsh Khadsare
- Ghandharv Singh Chauhan and his good friend
- Kalush Bhatia
- Gaurav Bhatia
- Nilanjan Biswas
- Manish Anand
- Smita (ex ICICI, Bhatinda)

Just in case I have missed out anyone, do kindly accept my sincere apologies but my gratitude to everyone from Forces Network in this time of crisis goes beyond words!

**What Happened.** My ICICI bank account had supposedly 11 ATM withdrawals on 10 Nov 2020, for which I received SMSs in rapid fire from 11.58 PM to 11.59 PM. I noticed it at 12.20 AM and was able to initiate all necessary actions (blocking the card, informing bank etc). Unfortunately, my ATM card was not to be found and hence FIR was also filed online. The total amount was Rs 94000/-. Anyway, I was sweating, as for most of us, this is quite a substantive amount. The good samaritans of our group came forward and did what they did. What would have taken five weeks (a millennium for me!), happened in just about seven working days. To me, it is like waving a magic wand and saying 'abracadabra'!!

**How.** Nothing has been shared by the bank as yet. From my end, I can share it that my ATM PIN was accurately guessed (stolen, skimmed etc). Frankly, I noticed that my card was not with me, only once the cash was debited from my account. Until then, like all gentlemen, I had kept it safely along with my other cards - in my wallet!. What is most intriguing is the fact the SMS time was from 1158 to 1159. Giving the whole two minutes to the 'adversary', it is physically impossible to trigger 11 withdrawals in 120 seconds (@ one per 12 seconds) and that too from two different ATMs. Point to note, the ATM was a non ICICI ATM. Therefore the matter was indeed complicated to investigate!

**Inference.** The only logical inference that I drew was that these transactions were done using machine interface. The withdrawal limits (of safety!) of Rs 25000/- on own bank ATM and Rs 10000/- on non- bank ATM was greatly breached. That led me to hypothesis that the crime was committed from a ICICI ATM only and the machine code was perhaps changed to mislead the investigation. It was my hunch that this

could not have been done without the complicity of a ICICI bank employee having physical access to the ICICI network/ credentials. I shared all these reservations with everyone and went gung-ho with mails to all listed ICICI bank officials.

**Outcome.** The resolution has been achieved with the amount reversed in full. Gratefully, it is not a temporary credit which gets reversed if the investigation is unfavorable. Though bank has not shared any details, I can only presume that some or all of my reservations would have found a mark. It is only through the hammering from potent FORCE of the Network members that have yielded the desired resolution.

**Safeguards.** I can only suggest one safeguard. Do kindly change your PIN very often. Methodology - one can be to rotate the digits. Other can be to add date to the last PIN or the amount withdrawn (four digits from RHS). Maybe use card less withdrawal facility if available with banks. Avoid giving our ATM cards to our runners and getting money. And, if done, maybe use the above strategies to overcome the default.

Had the FORCE of the Network not been there, I am not sure if this resolution would have come through so expeditiously, and possibly the bank would have closed the case with one bottom line of "PIN shared".

Once again ..... a great many THANKS to the members of the ForcesNetwork for their kind help.

And, to Col IQ..... this is truly amazing. Thanks for 'the NETWORK.... that really works'.



“Associate yourself with men of good quality  
if you esteem your own reputation;  
for 'tis better to be alone  
than in bad company.”

- GEORGE WASHINGTON

# Knowledge Bank

## Why People Quit Jobs?

**BY TARUN KUMAR**

Recently I received a call from Rose during the middle of the pandemic, she was one of my favourite coachee at an organization where I was doing Leadership session. Rose was a go getter, I always admired her work. She was full of infectious energy and I saw the potential of a leader in her, yearning to unleash herself.

She had all the ingredients to be on the top of the ladder and most importantly Rose's colleagues would heap praises about her work and helping nature to no end. In nutshell Rose was smart, hardworking, socially savvy and a very likable human being. She was one stop shop for clients, co-workers and the senior executives, you name it - she has it kind of person. She was in the CRM and was privy to her rising up the ladder over a short span of time purely on merit.

We spoke over the phone and I could sense discomfort, although she was finding it difficult to express I was certain something was bugging her and she needed release of those pent up emotions. As a long standing high performance employee it was being joked about that World was in her pocket as she has mastered the World domination strategy through sheer grit, determination and steely resolve.

Couple of calls but ice breaking was taking time, pandemic was restricting physical meeting and the clock was ticking. Until one day I came to know she has handed her resignation. The news came as a bolt from blue to her firm and senior executives and I was asked to assist in ascertaining the root cause, if possible get her back.

Finally one day Rose called and opened up when I asked during the conversation, what made her decide to leave?

She said, "When I joined the organization the leadership created an amazing culture of growth, development and community. Over the years there has been changes in top echelons where new leaders with different values were inducted. Over a period of time this changed the culture of the organization. I was finding it difficult to identify with the same organization anymore."

*"Train people well enough so they can leave,  
treat them well enough so they don't want to."- Richard Branson*

I was amazed at the clarity of thoughts and the reason she was mentioning. In fact, till then I believed that employees quit because of bad bosses and not organisations, unable to manage their cultures. This was an eye opener and brought to fore another dimension which went beyond Leaders. Employees do not quit Bad Bosses but unacceptable organizational cultures.

Organisational culture, simply put is an eco-system of underlying beliefs, assumptions, values, attitudes, behaviours and ways of interacting amongst the group of employees driven by Leadership that contributes to the creation of a unique social and psychological environment.

The reasons for poor organizational culture could be many but some random thoughts encapsulated to have a better understanding of the concept:-

- What is the Vision of the Company? So often we come across limited company vision, employees not knowing where the organization is going or what is the ultimate goal? I have left assignment and sessions primarily because I don't see where I fit in. Remember, if Leadership doesn't have a big enough vision for the growth of employees (dreams & aspirations) they'll be looking for alternatives.
- Misaligned Leadership. When leadership doesn't know the difference between selling and growing, doubt occurs. It happens when the organisation's values contradict their business decisions and the rot starts to set in. Leadership must answer why we're investing time, effort, funds and resources if there's no mention of goals and are they realistic?
- Coerced Working Environment. Employees are asked to do things which don't align with their values. There are groups within groups having favouritism or parochialism as the flavor of the day. If you are having right connections even mediocrity is a merit. No scope for creativity or new age concepts to be tried acts as a last nail in the coffin.
- Increased Toxicity. Abuse in workplace is on the increase with unrealistic expectations. Surrounded with disrespectful people who only know how to gossip and banter with condescending attitudes makes daily survival a challenge.
- Lack of Affinity. When there is no appreciation, connectivity with the team or organization as a whole suffers. Disengagement due to gender bias, ethnicity, inability to manage introverts further aggravates the situation.
- Uncertainty During Difficult Times. During pandemic when the pruning of staff was underway I could see lack of faith in certain organisations' with poor culture. The fear of unknown tore the team apart as fear took the flagship position.
- Zero Error Syndrome. The environment where you can't grow, be heard or make mistakes is like a prison. Lack of feedback mechanism makes the decision making laborious. Unstructured processes lead to inequity and lack of flexibility in implementation takes away the initiative from employees.

I don't know about you but the day I feel I'm not growing, learning new things or was able to leverage my experience is the day to say quits – because it reduces my

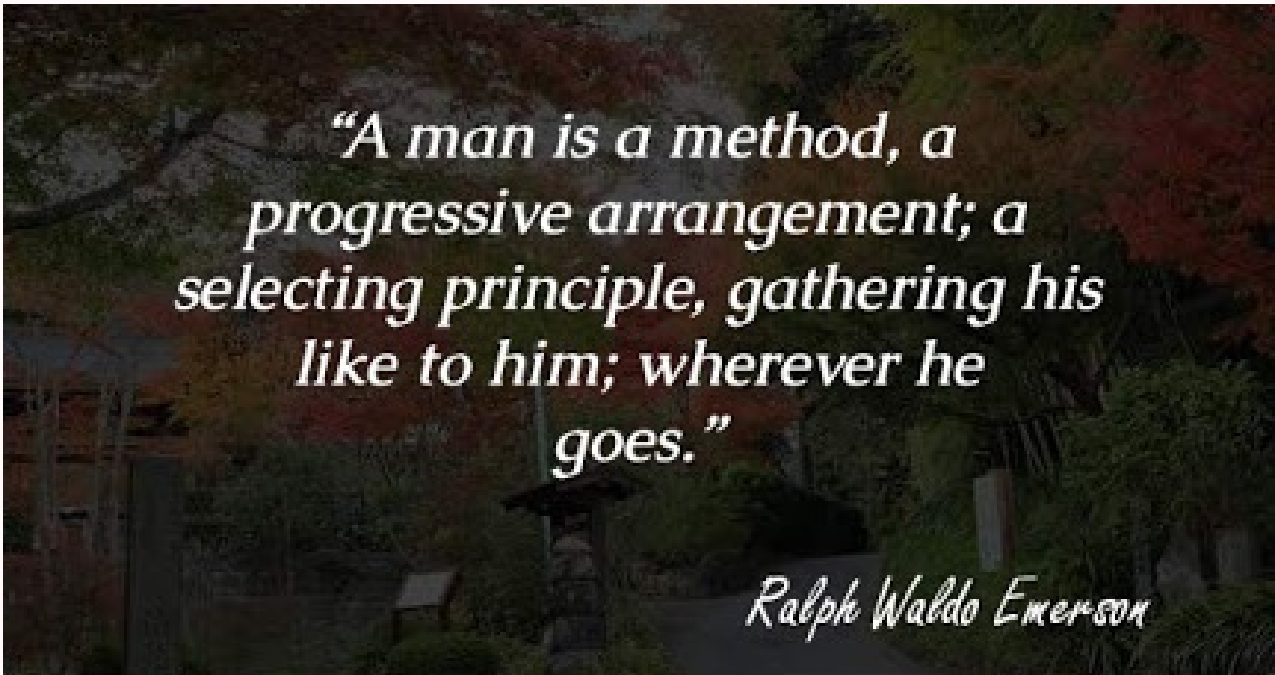
motivation and output. Every employee wants to learn, grow and have a future in the organizational scheme of things. How about you?

*“As soon as something stops being fun, I think it’s time to move on. Life is too short to be unhappy. Waking up stressed and miserable is not a good way to live.”*

What could be the steps undertaken to help maintain the course of organizational culture? Well, I leave it for you to work out.



**Col Tarun Kumar** is an author, influencer, speaker, certified coach and business story teller who is popularly known as ‘The Force Multipliers’ for his thoughts on how to have the mentality of leadership. Apart from serving at the highest battlefield in the world – The Siachen Glacier, he was also an instructor at prestigious National Defence Academy – The cradle of Military Leadership where he taught Leadership and survival skills to cadets. As a proponent of strategic negotiations and critical decision making, he was instrumental in strategic intelligence gathering on Counter terrorism while serving as a staff officer at UN mission in Sierra Leone. His book “The Winning Edge – Unleash the Leader Within” has been endorsed by great thought leaders on Leadership Marshall Goldsmith.

A background image for a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, showing a dark, wooded area with trees and a path.

*“A man is a method, a progressive arrangement; a selecting principle, gathering his like to him; wherever he goes.”*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

# The Changing Face of Leadership

BY DINESH DUTT SHARMA

*“Leadership should not be an aspiration.  
It should be a consequence of competence” - Sadhguru*

“Leadership is action not position” says Donald H McGannon. So it does not really matter whether you are at the fore or in the rear, except perhaps in physical battle. The fundamental and intrinsic aim of leadership is to initiate consolidated effort towards achieving set targets. Today’s leader is not the maestro wielding the baton in front of the orchestra- he is the man who has brought the orchestra up to that stage in the first place.

## Learning from History

Every individual today has the opportunity to be a leader in some situation or the other and hence needs to enhance his leadership skills. Today’s leader is not expected to be like Arjun of Mahabharata fame, the supreme marksman who could lead his army into war, rather he needs to be like Krishna who could play myriad roles, sometimes the charioteer, sometimes the philosopher and sometimes the counselor. In view of the changing social equations, it is high time that we rethink team dynamics and take a second look at desirable leadership patterns and view the much touted leadership paradigm in a fresh light. Hitler with his suicide squads can be remembered at best as a commander, never as an exemplary leader.

## Learning from Nature

Indeed if nature was to award degrees, geese would get an “MIL” (Masters in leadership). These migrating birds fly in a ‘V’ formation and take turns to be the leader at the tip of the formation. The weakest birds stay towards the centre, where they are protected from the swift wind currents and the speed of the group is determined by the slowest in the flock. When a bird is injured or unwell, a couple of comrades get themselves grounded along with their mate, restore it to health and eventually rejoin their team. If only humans, who are supposed to be blessed with the gift of intellect, could display such team work! Unfortunately, the quality which can be best attributed to men in the present times is the “crab tendency”, where all others join hands to pull down the one who is managing to crawl upwards. If we take a closer look at some more of our quadruped friends, the dragon may be huge and powerful but no one wants it breathing fire down their necks. The lion may well be the king of the jungle and rule by virtue of its aggressive nature but it is the calm and steady elephant, which with infinite patience and tremendous inner strength can clear jungles and create pathways. Without doubt, leaders have to be exceptional; they must have that ‘plus factor’ which sets them apart from the milling crowds. Yet all leaders are not necessarily born—they can be made---provided they imbibe the skills of team management.

## Higher Order Leadership Skills (HOLS)

In the Army especially, sound leadership skills are a mandatory requisite for every individual. It is that unique organization where you don't lead only once you've attained the top notch, managerial post. Rather you get an opportunity to unleash your leadership potential at various levels of rank and appointment. Hence a quick look at HOLs would definitely be beneficial both for the individual and for the organization. Some of the attributes, which distinguish the best leaders from mediocre ones, are listed below:

- **Identify Direction and Vision to Set Clear Goals:**

- A leader cannot afford to be ambiguous in his thought process.
- An effective leader maps out a detailed and pragmatic blueprint of his tentative plan of action, minutely scrutinizing all angles before presenting the proposal to the team.
- Goals should be realistic and specific, not self contradictory.
- Once tasks have been established and prioritized, resources must be assessed. If there is a paucity of manpower but enough time, tasks must be prioritized and divided into different time slots. On the other hand, if enough human resource is available, then the group should be divided into smaller teams for different tasks.
- It is advisable to create teams for specific tasks, rather than working towards multifarious goals simultaneously, as one collective team.
- Delegation should be as per capability and aptitude of the individual and not as per the personal preferences of the boss.
- Members should not be overlapping or working at cross purposes. Each sub unit should be fully attuned to what the other sub units are doing and the broader perspective of the team as a whole.

- **Know your Team:** A good leader acquaints himself with not only the professional capabilities but also the personal background of each team member. A scientist working in a high profile institution once asked his boss if he could leave an hour early in the evening as he had promised to take his children to the circus. Permission was granted but subsequently he got so engrossed in the work at hand that at 5 p.m. when the boss passed his cabin, the scientist was still deeply immersed in his work. Many hours later when he got back home, he was prepared for the justified resentment and reproach of his children but was pleasantly surprised to find them in a joyous mood. Apparently the boss, seeing him busy had decided not to disturb him and had himself taken the children out for the promised treat. This particular boss was no other than Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, our erstwhile president. Who would not give his utmost in terms of work output to such a concerned and sensitive boss! Concern for your subordinates does not imply that you are soft or can be taken for granted.

- **Implement Right to Information in your Office:** The team has a right to know what it is doing and why. So share the vision. People don't need to be simply told what to do. Most jobs are not done satisfactorily or need to be redone because of a communication gap. The leader feels it unnecessary to divulge complete



information and simply passes the order. There is a high probability of misinterpretation in such cases. Everyone aboard must understand and appreciate how his individual role can effect the output of the entire team. A healthy discussion, in which all pros and cons are weighed, should be initiated at the onset. A leader should have the courage of conviction to put his blueprint up for examination. A good plan can withstand any amount of microscopic scrutiny. In fact this would result in further refinement and fine tuning.

- **Adopt Democracy in your Functioning**: “I must follow the people. Am I not their leader?” Questions Benjamin Disraeli and rightly so. Instead of demanding a ‘yes sir, yes sir, three bags full sir’ approach; doubts should be brought out in the open and clarified. Suggestions should be invited and the plan of action can be rethought and modified wherever necessary because every team member should be fully convinced before they set out on the job. Conviction of purpose is half the battle won.

- **Appreciate, Praise and Encourage (APE)**: A good leader catches his team “doing things right” instead of looking for opportunities of catching them napping. Remember – your team members are good or they wouldn’t be there in the first place. So don’t wait for an opportunity to trip them up or take pride in your ability to detect their mistakes. Of course mistakes cannot be overlooked but can easily and just as effectively be rectified in a matter of fact way without projecting superiority or emphasizing the hapless victim’s extreme inferiority. At the same time, the leader should encash every possible opportunity to appreciate. Don’t wait for the grand finale before you pass on complements or words of encouragement. In a match, the spectators cheer their favourite team through every minute of the game, not after the winning goal has been shot. One thing which should never be postponed or put off is genuine appreciation.

- **Set Example Through Action**: Action not words should be the mantra. Often bosses punctuate their conversation with how effectively they could handle situations or what wonderful feats they have accomplished in the past. This ‘I-ME-Myself saga’ should be replaced with concrete action. Leaders don’t need to rest on their past laurels or hold their own achievements up, as reminders of their efficiency. Their actions speak louder than their words. Good leaders motivate, they don’t dominate their team. You don’t have to establish a larger- than - life, superman image of yourself. The team relates better with a person who is as human as they are.

- **Accept Criticism Positively**: Remember that critics always make the best friends because they are the one’s who carve the path towards improvement. If all ideas are critically evaluated at the formulation stage, then most mistakes can be avoided during implementation and more the probability of error free completion of the set task. Encourage your team members to assess critically, as it helps to iron out flaws and drawbacks but not to criticize because criticism spreads negativity and does nothing to enhance the work force.

- **Delegate Responsibilities and Power**: The leader is not God’s gift to the world and not the only one who can do all jobs the way they should be done. Neither is he Hercules – who has to carry the weight of the entire world on his shoulders, nor

is his way necessarily the best way in which something can be done. Making people responsible for their actions and trusting them ensures that they come up to expectations.

- **Manage Time Effectively**: A person who sits the longest hours in office is not necessarily the one who produces the best results. Effective time management is a key mantra to a happy and productive team. The boss, who sits for long hours and keeps everyone's nose to the grindstone, nurtures resentment and dissatisfaction. Time spent in doing a job should be measured in terms of quality not quantity.

- **Establish Sound Inter-personal Relationships**: A dynamic leader would discourage back biting and stifle the habit of working as individuals within the team. Many bosses enjoy pitting their subordinates against each other and encourage bad mouthing of one by the other. Some even discuss one employee with the others. If you do, rest assured you are diluting the quality of your work output. Group dynamics dictate that team members should not be working against each other but with each other.

- **Facing the Music**: A true leader distributes bouquets unstintingly between his team members and receives the brickbats (if any) himself. Remember Lord Shiva and the centrifugation of the ocean? He distributed the profound wealth tossed up among everybody else and kept the poison for his own consumption. A leader who hogs the limelight and wants to be center-stage at the time of curtain call is nothing but a showman. He who accredits his team for a job well done is genuinely appreciated and respected both by both subordinates and superiors.

## Conclusion

In today's world a perfect example of wholesome leadership can be seen in Gandhiji's persona. He broke across barriers of country, colour and creed to emerge as the greatest global leader of all times. This fragile thespian with his austere life style and low pitched voice proves that one does not need to be a Mohammad Ali with a domineering aggressive and loud voice, to be an effective leader. Loud voices and politically incorrect language are symptoms of low confidence and lack of authority. A true leader leads with the strength of his principles, the charisma of his personality and the sheer force of his conviction that his team can do it!



**Col Dinesh Dutt Sharma** was commissioned into Army Service Corps in 1985. He has served in all corners of the Country and in prestigious appointments at both operational and staff levels. He has also made significant contribution during his tenures in NCC He is presently on his first leg of re-employment at New Delhi.

# Book Review

## Essentialism - The Disciplined Pursuit of Less: by Greg McKeown

**BY SURESH CHANDRA**

**About the Author:** Greg McKeown born 1977 in London is a business writer, consultant, public speaker and researcher specializing in leadership, strategy design, collective intelligence and human systems. He is also New York Times Bestselling Author. An American citizen now Greg holds a B.A. in Communications (with an emphasis in journalism) from Brigham Young University and an MBA from Stanford University. Greg is an active Social Innovator and currently serves as a board member for Washington D.C. policy group, Resolve, and as a mentor with 2Seeds, a non-profit incubator for agricultural projects in Africa. He also serves as a Young Global Leader for The World Economic Forum. Greg is currently CEO of THIS Inc., a leadership and strategy design agency headquartered in Silicon Valley. He has taught at companies that include Apple, Google, Facebook, Salesforce.com, Symantec, Twitter, and VMware. He is a regular keynote speaker at non-profits groups including The Kauffman Fellows Program, St. Jude and the Minnesota Community Education Association.

(Source: [Goodreads](#))

### The Book Review and Notes

This is an appropriate book for someone who struggles to keep up with day-to-day demands on their time. For those people who feel like they are sprinting to keep up. How do we combat being busy in life? How do we deal with abundance of options and information? Why do we have lack of clarity despite best technology and abundant information. *Essentialism, as per the author is a disciplined, systematic approach for determining where our highest point of contribution lies, then making execution of those things almost effortless.* It gives us a framework to develop our own purpose and stay focused on our goals. It is applicable to both work and personal life.

I am not an admirer of self-help books which are riddled with clever and catchy terminology and lack conceptual clarity. In the present times, where it is fashionable to look busy and overloaded with work, McKeown tells us to do the opposite – “Less but better”. “Fewer obligations but greater clarity.” It is the way of living that I have been converging towards in many areas of my life for some time now but without knowing what it is called.

Essentialism encapsulates the best practices of mindfulness and planning to achieve a desirable end state - that by investing in fewer things we have the satisfying experience of making significant progress in the things that matter the most.

The book is divided into four parts, namely Essence, Explore, Eliminate and Execute, which according to the author is an Essentialists road map.

- Essence: what it means to move from “non-essentialist” to essentialism.
- Explore: here we assess and experiment with changing our patterns and habits to gain some essentialism in our work and lives.
- Eliminate: the ongoing practice of eliminating any and all low-value distractions that take us away from being truly effective.
- Execute: Daily practices and small wins.



### **ESSENCE - What is the Core Mindset of an Essentialist?**

The central tenet in Essentialism is “Choice”. We need to assess our current reality and make hard choices so that we are living by design, not by default. McKeown defines the paradox of success as “The more success you get, the more distracted and unsuccessful you are.” He drills down to three key issues – 1) too many choices 2) too much social pressure and 3) the idea that “you can have it all”. We want more, but we are poorly prepared to accept it when we get it, so we work harder, run faster, sleep less, and complain more. Our “pursuit of success can be the catalyst for our failure.” Choice is a powerful action and to become an Essentialist requires a heightened awareness of our ability to choose. When we overlook our ability to choose, we become helpless. Slowly, we allow our power to be taken away until we end up becoming a function of other people’s choices - or even a function of our own past choices. McKeown recommends we should replace the three commonly entrenched assumptions: “I have to”, “It’s all important”, and “I can do both” with: “*I choose to*”, “*Only a few things really matter*”, and “*I can do anything but not everything*”.

### **EXPLORE – How Can We Discern the Trivial Many from the Vital Few?**

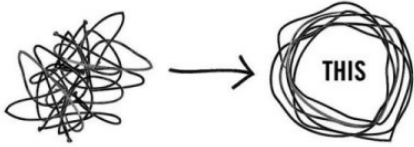
Over time there has been a shift in our mindset - from the old age wisdom “do less to

get more” with our unending “To-Do list mindset”. We often blindly assume crossing more tasks off our list moves us forward. In fact, the opposite is true. Time to reflect and think is “critical to distinguishing what is actually a trivial diversion from what is truly essential.”

Greg suggest three ways of exploring Essentialism:

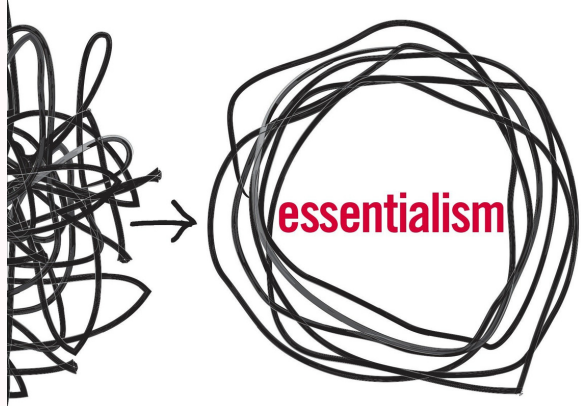
- Get More Sleep - our mind, body, and spirit are the most essential assets we need to make superlative achievements. One of the most common ways people - especially ambitious and successful people damage these assets is through a lack of sleep. Essentialists see sleep as absolutely necessary for operating at high levels of contribution more of the time. Sleep will enhance your ability to explore, make connections, and do less but better throughout your waking hours.
- Be More Ruthless Saying No - Without the courage to say NO, the disciplined pursuit of less is just lip service. Being an Essentialist, the author says that people respect and admire those with the courage of conviction to say no. So, we need to learn to say no gracefully?
- Employ The 90% Rule - Greg says that one can apply this rule to just about every decision or dilemma. As you evaluate an option, think about the single most important criterion - for that decision, and then give the option a score between 0 and 100. If you rate it any lower than 90%, then automatically change the rating to 0 and simply reject it. The benefits of this ultra-selective approach to decision making in all areas of our lives should be clear: when our selection criteria are too broad, we will find ourselves committing to too many options.

### The Model



	Nonessentialist	Essentialist
<b>Thinks</b>	<b>ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE</b> "I have to." "It's all important." "How can I fit it all in?"	<b>LESS BUT BETTER</b> "I choose to." "Only a few things really matter." "What are the trade-offs?"
<b>Does</b>	<b>THE UNDISCIPLINED PURSUIT OF MORE</b> Reacts to what's most pressing Says "yes" to people without really thinking Tries to force execution at the last moment	<b>THE DISCIPLINED PURSUIT OF LESS</b> Pauses to discern what really matters Says "no" to everything except the essential Removes obstacles to make execution easy
<b>Gets</b>	<b>LIVES A LIFE THAT DOES NOT SATISFY</b> Takes on too much, and work suffers Feels out of control Is unsure of whether the right things got done Feels overwhelmed and exhausted	<b>LIVES A LIFE THAT REALLY MATTERS</b> Chooses carefully in order to do great work Feels in control Gets the right things done Experiences joy in the journey

*New York Times Bestseller*



**The Disciplined Pursuit of Less**  
**GREG MCKEOWN**

## **ELIMINATE – How Can We Cut Out The Trivial Many?**

Consequent to sufficiently exploring the options, the question one should be asking is not: "What, of my list of competing priorities, should I say yes to?" Instead, the essential question should be: "What will I say NO to?" This is the question that will uncover your true priorities. The process of elimination also starts with getting clarity. "When there is a serious lack of clarity about what the team stands for and what their goals and roles are, people experience confusion, stress, and frustration."

A favourite strategy for eliminating could be the "reverse pilot", a term coined by Daniel Shapero, a director at LinkedIn. Essentially, it is that you remove something and see if it is missed like a newsletter, a regular Monday morning meeting, or report.

## **EXECUTE – How Can We Make Doing the Vital Few Things Almost Effortless?**

After essence, explore, and eliminate, comes learning how to execute as an Essentialist on what is most important. Nonessentialists tend to force execution. Essentialists invest the time they have saved by eliminating the nonessentials into designing a system to make execution almost effortless. Like Michael Phelps famous pre-race routine successful habits reduce the mental workload and, according to author of *The Power of Habits*, Charles Duhigg - "means you have all this mental activity you can devote to something else."

'Essentialism' sounds simple but trying to implement these concepts in life could be much harder in practice. An excellent and refreshing read, nevertheless. This book could be summed up with these two quotes:

*"Essentialism is not about how to get more things done; it's about how to get the right things done. It doesn't mean just doing less for the sake of less either. It is about making the wisest possible investment of your time and energy in order to operate at our highest point of contribution by doing only what is essential."*

*"Remember that if you don't prioritize your life someone else will."*

### **My Takeaways**

"The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of non-essentials." - Lin Yutang

"When we don't purposefully and deliberately choose where to focus our energies and time, other people—our bosses, our colleagues, our clients, and even our families—will choose for us, and before long we'll have lost sight of everything that is meaningful and important."

"Studies have found that we tend to value things we already own more highly than they are worth and thus that we find them more difficult to get rid of. If you're not

quite there, ask the killer question: 'If I didn't already own this, how much would I spend to buy it?'"

"To attain knowledge, add things every day. To attain wisdom, subtract things every day."- Lao-tzu

"If you believe being overly busy and overextended is evidence of productivity, then you probably believe that creating space to explore, think, and reflect should be kept to a minimum. Yet these very activities are the antidote to the nonessential busyness that infects so many of us. Rather than trivial diversions, they are critical to distinguishing what is actually a trivial diversion from what is truly essential."

"Beware the barrenness of a busy life"- Socrates

"When there is a serious lack of clarity about what the team stands for and what their goals and roles are, people experience confusion, stress, and frustration. When there is a high level of clarity, on the other hand, people thrive."

"Without courage, the disciplined pursuit of less is just lip service."

"Since ultimately, having fewer options actually makes a decision 'easier on the eye and the brain,' we must summon the discipline to get rid of options or activities that may be good, or even really good, but that get in the way."

"I realized that until I knew what was important right now, what was important right now was to figure out what was important right now!"

"The best asset we have for making a contribution to the world is ourselves. If we under invest in ourselves, and by that, I mean our minds, our bodies, and our spirits, we damage the very tool we need to make our highest contribution.

### **Some Quotes from the Book**

"Remember that if you don't prioritize your life someone else will."

"Essentialism is not about how to get more things done; it's about how to get the right things done. It doesn't mean just doing less for the sake of less either. It is about making the wisest possible investment of your time and energy in order to operate at our highest point of contribution by doing only what is essential."

"You cannot overestimate the unimportance of practically everything."

"What if we stopped celebrating being busy as a measurement of importance? What if instead we celebrated how much time we had spent listening, pondering, meditating, and enjoying time with the most important people in our lives?"

“The word priority came into the English language in the 1400s. It was singular. It meant the very first or prior thing. It stayed singular for the next five hundred years.”

“Essentialists see trade-offs as an inherent part of life, not as an inherently negative part of life. Instead of asking, “What do I have to give up?” they ask, “What do I want to go big on?”

“There should be no shame in admitting to a mistake; after all, we really are only admitting that we are now wiser than we once were.”

“Today, technology has lowered the barrier for others to share their opinion about what we should be focusing on. It is not just information overload; it is opinion overload.”

“Sometimes what you don’t do is just as important as what you do.”



**Col Suresh Chandra** was commissioned on 11 Jun 1988 in the 94 Field Regiment. He commanded 121 Light Regiment and superannuated from service on 30 Nov 2017. An MTech (CSE - IITD), he has been instrumental in the design and development of the ACCCS/Project Shakti. He was an instructor in School of Artillery and DS, JC Wing, Army War College. He has also served with the Wargaming Centre, SWC and was Col GS (Systems) Western Command. Post retirement he divides his time between mentoring underprivileged kids in Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science of Class XII level, and freelancing as a cyber security and data analytics expert. He is available at [sureshchandra@protonmail.com](mailto:sureshchandra@protonmail.com)

**“People have the potential to create your environment.  
Your environment then determines your mind-set,  
and your mind-set determines your future”**  
*- Myles Munroe (The Principles and Power of Vision)*



# ForceNet Connect

## ACHIEVED PCI QUALIFICATION

With blessings of Almighty and good wishes of all members of the Forces Network, I have cleared PCI (Professional Certified Investigator) qualification exam. I express my gratitude to members of ForceNet for supporting me, especially Ruchika and Mayank for motivating and supporting me. My special thanks to Capt Ajay Pandey, and his team of ForceOne for providing guidance and helping me achieve this milestone. Thanks everyone.

- A Dedicated Member

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## A PURELY PROFESSIONAL AND NO-NONSENSE GROUP

A lot can be written but simply words can not explain the feelings of the affiliation with this Network. I had joined the Group when we were roughly around 300 members. I am sorry but I don't exactly remember the member who invited me to the Group. I would ever be grateful to him for connecting me to this wonderful Group. The group which is a purely professional and no-nonsense group, a group which is much higher in rating for the networking it provides and generates, a group where due respect and appreciation is given to a member irrespective of the rank and service for his ability, guidance and expertise. It gives full satisfaction to seek or give views or advise on one's personal experience. Last but not the least all the above would not have been possible without the strict and genuine approach, action and discipline by the moderator Col IQ

- Col Mahesh Mathur

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## A PURELY PROFESSIONAL AND NO-NONSENSE GROUP

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Group for helping me in getting refund for the air ticket bookings which were booked through Make My Trip and further converted to Shell by the airlines due to pandemic. Although, as per terms and conditions of airlines the booking was non refundable, but just because of the unstinted support from the members, I got the refund yesterday.

Thanks a lot Sir, for guiding me and coordinating with MMT and also my sincere thanks to MMT team to get the job done up to the satisfaction level.

- Lt Cdr Anshul Dhangar

*Compiled from mails received in the Forces Network Group - Editor*

# Matrimonials

## Grooms Desired

A suitable match is sought by Col Sanjeev Gupta for his daughter. The daughter was born on 02 Aug 1993 and is 5' 9" (175 cm) tall. Her education qualification is BBA LLB. She is now employed as a practicing lawyer with The Supreme Court of India at New Delhi. Father is Veteran Officer and presently working as Dean cum Director at Manav Rachna University, Faridabad and the family is presently settled at New Delhi. Her mother is a home maker. She has a younger sister who is working in Corporate Sector. A boy is desired who is professionally qualified and working in Delhi NCR.

Col Sanjeev Gupta can be reached at +91-9559628770 and sanjeevgupta.col@gmail.com for additional details.

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A suitable match is sought by Col Mohammed Saleem Gaded for his daughter. The daughter was born on 17 Apr 1998 and is 5' 3" tall. She has done Bachelor of Hotel Management and presently pursuing MBA (First Year). Father is on first leg of re-employment and the family is presently settled at Pune, Maharashtra. Her mother was a Teacher and now a home maker. She has a brother who is in the final year of Engineering. A well settled boy with a pleasant personality and decent outlook, serving in Army/Air Force/Navy is desired. The boy's family should be Muslim, learned and respectable.

Col Mohammed Saleem Gaded can be reached at +91-6375743187 and +91-8331840942 and msgaded39@gmail.com for additional details

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A suitable match is sought by Col Jeetender Sharma for his daughter. The daughter was born on 01 Oct 93 and is 5' 6" tall. Her education qualification is MBA(HR). She is now employed with IT Company at Pune. Father is still serving and the family is presently settled at Pune. Her mother is a home maker. The daughter is their only child, who has been brought up in a mix of conservative and modern environments, in a nuclear family, A suitable boy from a nuclear family is desired, who will treat her as an equal in all aspects of life and is well established. The family is strictly opposed to dowry or any demands of any kind.

Col Jeetender Sharma can be reached at +91-7028013544 and coljsharma@gmail.com, for additional details..

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A suitable match is desired by Col Rameshwar Gupta for his daughter. The daughter was born on 18 Jul 1993 and is 5' 5" tall. Her education qualification is M.Sc. (Maths). She is now employed with a Education firm at Mumbai. Father is a retired officer, and the family is presently settled at Lucknow. Her mother is a home maker. She has a sister, who is married. A well educated and boy is desired who is a serving officer in the Army/Air Force/Navy, from a respectable family.

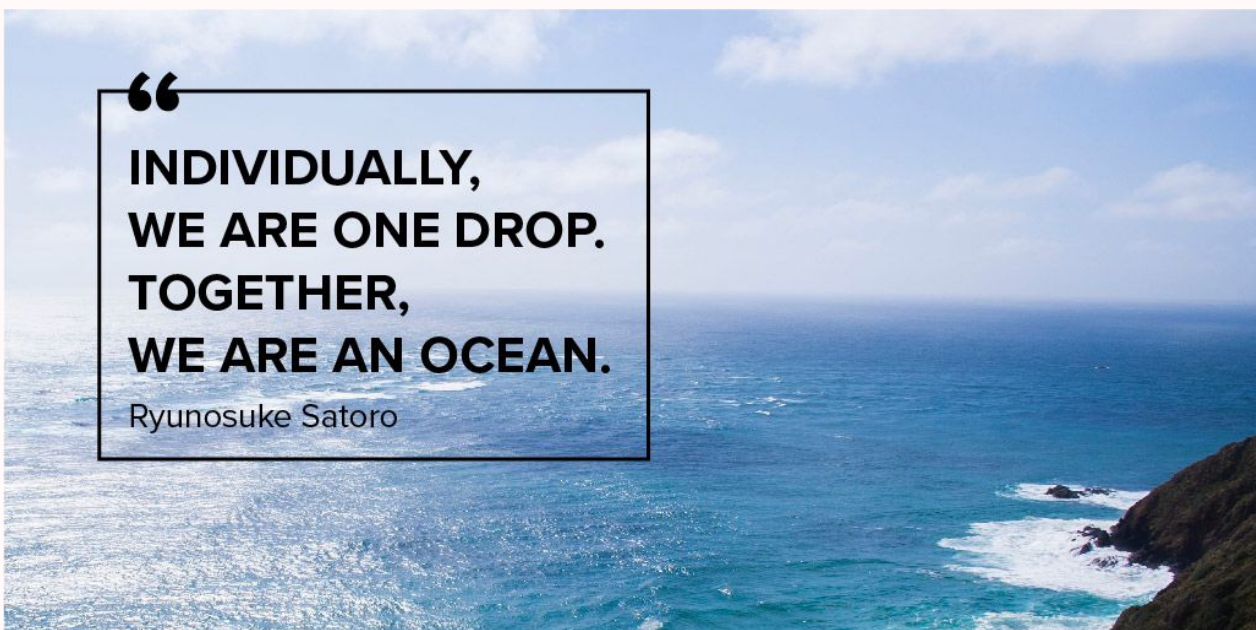
Col Rameshwar Gupta can be reached at +91-8948591129 and colrameshwar1991@gmail.com for additional details.

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## Brides Desired

A suitable match is sought by Cdr SS Randhawa for his son. The son was born on 03 July 1993 and is 5' 11" tall. He has qualified in Hotel Management from IHM Aurangabad, and International Leadership Course from Seneca College Toronto, Canada. He is now employed with JW MARRIOTT at MUSKOKA, Canada. Father is a retired officer and the family is presently settled at Jalandhar. His mother is a home maker. He has one sister who is a Pilot and married. A girl is desired who is beautiful, tall, and is blessed with a caring nature.. The girl's family should preferably be Jatt Sikhs.

Cdr SS Randhawa can be reached at +91-8427831509 and on email randhawasukhi2000@yahoo.com for additional details.





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