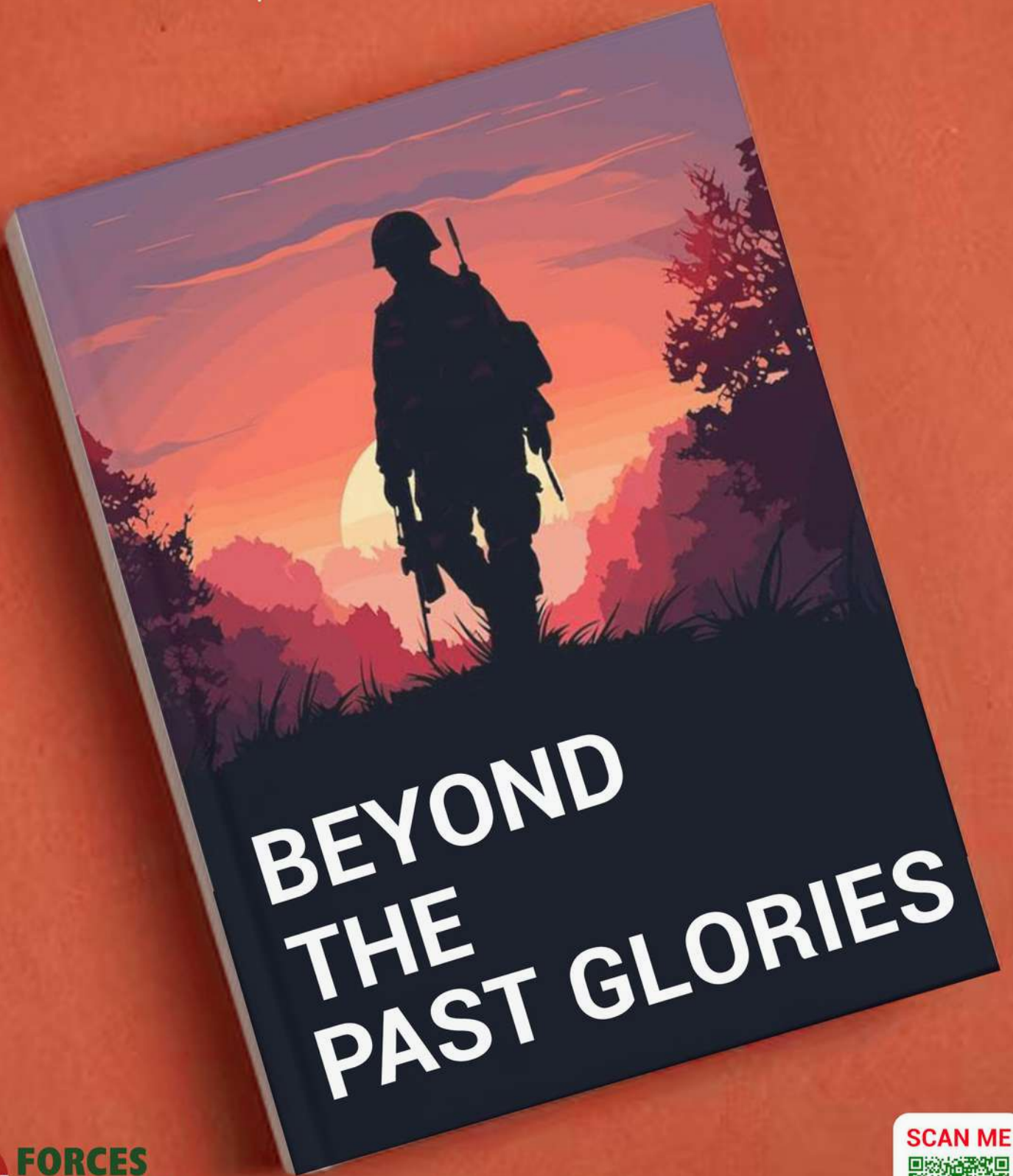


FORCENET

E-ZINE

Magazine for military veterans in the corporate
February 2024, Volume VI, Issue 2



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FORCENET

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

We all have our own past glories. Few sung some unsung. Each veteran has tales of his / her past glories. In the tapestry of history, our past glories stand as testaments to the heights we have reached, the challenges we have overcome, and the triumphs that have defined us. Yet, as we stand at the precipice of the future, it is imperative that we shift our gaze beyond the nostalgia of yesteryears and focus on the boundless possibilities that lie ahead. And hence we decided the theme for this month as **Beyond the Past Glories**

The phrase "*Beyond the Past Glories*" encapsulates a call to action, a rallying cry for a collective consciousness that transcends the boundaries of what has already been achieved. It beckons us to explore uncharted territories, to innovate, and to imagine a world that goes beyond the constraints of the familiar.

While cherishing our history is essential, we must not allow the shadows of past glories to cast a pall over our potential for growth. It is in the spirit of evolution that societies have thrived, cultures have flourished, and civilizations have endured. It is not a dismissal of our past, but a celebration that acknowledges the dynamism inherent in the human spirit. Ultimately, the journey to finding purpose after the military extends beyond securing a job.

In the context of societal progress, this theme urges us to move beyond the limitations of outdated norms and prejudices. It implores us to create a future that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable, where the mistakes of the past are learned from and not repeated. It demands that we collectively strive for a world where every individual has the opportunity to contribute their unique talents and perspectives.

As we navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world, the call to go "*Beyond the Past Glories*" is a compass guiding us towards resilience and adaptability. It prompts us to be architects of our destiny rather than mere custodians of a bygone era.

Embracing the theme "*Beyond the Past Glories*" is an affirmation of our commitment to progress, innovation, and inclusivity. It is a declaration that our journey does not end with the laurels of the past but continues with the promise of a future brimming with untold possibilities. Let us, stand united in the pursuit of a future that goes beyond the echoes of yesterday and resonates with the aspirations of tomorrow.



Your Always,

Capt Rajesh Nair
Editor, ForceNet E-Zine

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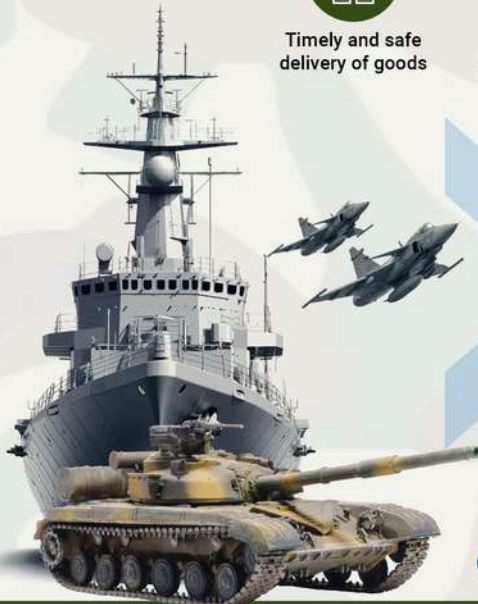
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A NOTE FOR THE READERS

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

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed within this e-magazine are the personal opinions of the authors and interviewees. Thus, the information and viewpoints presented in the articles do not represent those of Forces Network, and neither does Forces Network accept any duty or responsibility for them.

Online Feedback / Review

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Feedback on: Finding your purpose by Sajan - Jan 2024

Excellent article written very lucidly. Finding your purpose in life and aligning it with your passion is the key.

Additional Suggestions:

Very good magazine

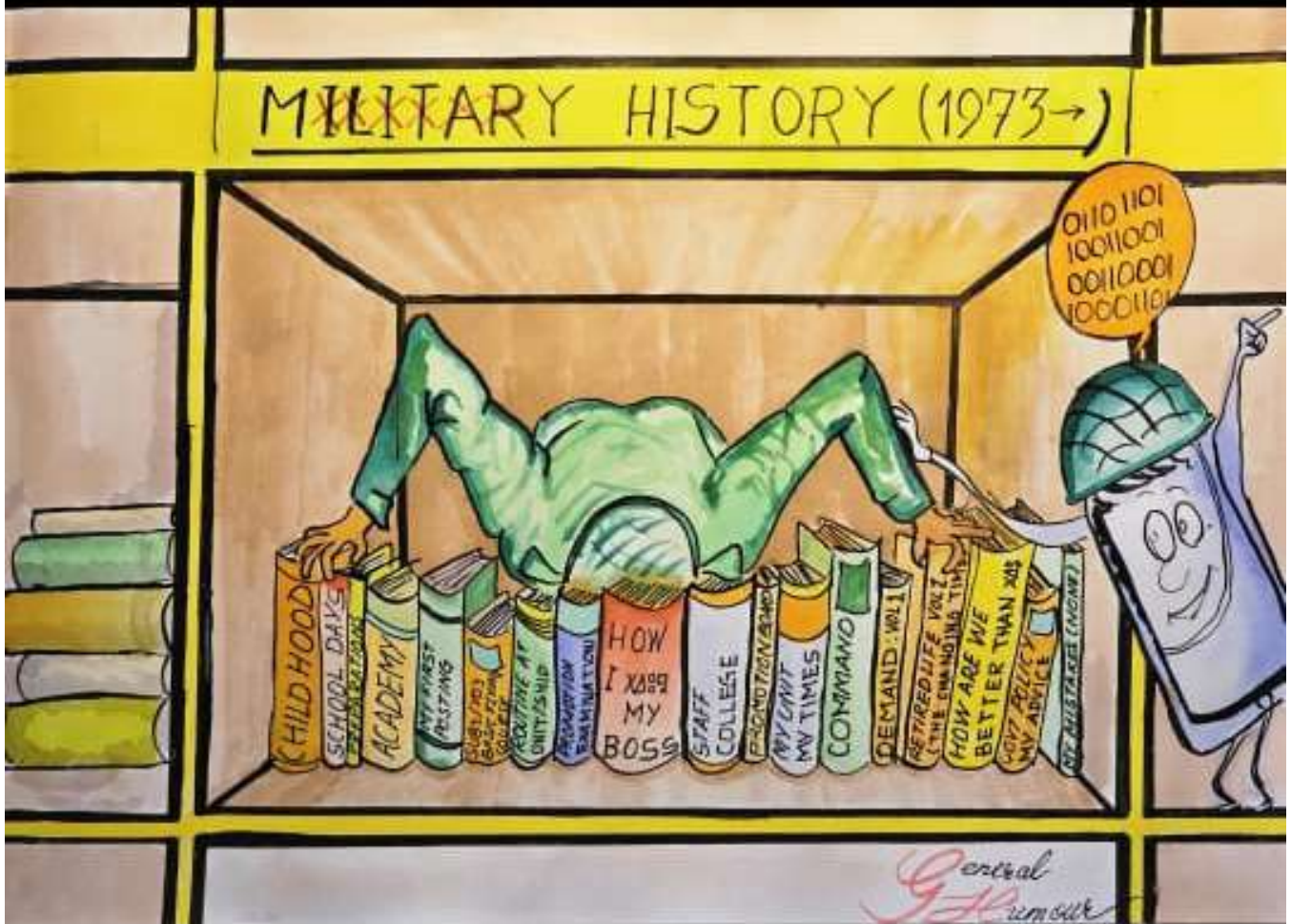
COL AMAR BAPAT

Feedback on: Star of Forces Network: Capt Shankar Subramanian - Jan 2024

Very thoughtful insights I came across while reading interview of Capt.Uday Shriwas with Capt. Shankar Subramanian. I learnt lessons like as Factory HR Manager, advice on upskilling. I agree with the advice of Capt. Shankar Subramanian sir that not to pursue certifications just for the sake of it. One must pursue knowledge of exposure that one can use in current work.

LT CDR VARUN DHAND

Go Beyond Your Past Glory



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Beyond the Past

Glories

Theme Articles

Theme Article

Look Beyond your Past Glories – The Future Can be Bright and Shiny

BY IQBAL SINGH

*The jukebox spits out a scratchy rendition of "Glory Days,"
a song by Bruce Springsteen.*

I had a friend who was a big baseball player
Back in high school
He could throw that speedball by you
Make you look like a fool, boy

Saw him the other night at this roadside bar
I was walking in, he was walking out
We went back inside, sat down, had a few drinks
But all he kept talking about was

Glory days
Well, they'll pass you by, glory days
In the wink of a young girl's eye, glory days
Glory days"



“Glory Days” was released in 1984 as part of Bruce Springsteen’s album “Born in the USA.” While the song was a commercial success, it has subtlety for it also carried a deeper meaning. The song warns us that if we continuously dwell on the past, we will miss out on the present and the future as well. I personally find this message to be ever- relevant and timeless.

In the context of military veterans seeking a second career in the civil world, the message, I feel, is profoundly important. The typical stereotype of a military veteran, sadly reinforced by the Bollywood movies, is the shooting-from-the-hip, loud person regaling people around with his past military stories about war or combat. For most civilians with no exposure to military life they form an opinion based on such stereotypes. Such people could then be your workplace colleagues, managers of even worse hiring recruiters in your civilian avatar. While military personnel face several other several challenges in transitioning to a civilian career, these sometimes misinformed stereotypes can be difficult to shake off during a job search or an interview creating further obstacles to veteran’s already difficult transition.

Is there something that the military veterans do to shake-off this stereotype?

While there are many challenges beyond our control, I feel that this one is something that we can do something about.



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Is it OK to trade on past career triumphs? And if so, for how long?

Let's first realize it. While we may be emotionally attached and even justifiably proud of our past achievements the rest of the world stops caring for it the minute it slips from the present to the past. We need to ask ourselves if it is relevant and dignified?

I **DO NOT** mean in any manner to diminish the accomplishments of the veterans while in service. I very well know that some of the awards especially the gallantry awards are won with a lot at stake. My suggestion is well meaning and rooted in practicalities especially for those veterans who wish to start a second innings in the civil world. The point isn't that those memories aren't important, aren't precious or not significant but that life going forward is far more important than life looking back.

Look at it in another . If someone makes a lot of their past, it also suggests that their present is not up to the mark. Perhaps that is why Condoleeza Rice once remarked "*Never be a former anybody!*" Letting go of past glories can open the possibilities of life's second coming. So, please do NOT wallow in washed-up irrelevance.

Why People Like to Cling to the Past

The future is uncertain, the present is still unfolding and the past is the only thing that is certain. Certainty is one of the Six Human Needs says Tony Robbins and is fundamentally about survival. We need to feel certain that we can avoid pain and, ideally, find some comfort in our lives. We also like to feel certain about what's next – and letting go of the past means stepping into the unknown. It takes courage to let go of the familiar

Another reason comes from psychology. Researchers have observed that memories associated with negative emotions fade more quickly than those associated with positive emotions. This phenomenon is known as fading affect bias. Hence since we associate past glories with happy events we selectively like to keep them. That is why it is said that letting go is a strength that many can demonstrate.

As conscious and progressive individuals we must do some objective process of evaluation to persuade ourselves that past glories will not sustain into the future. Therefore as logical human beings while we must treasure them we must not cling on to them. In fact you must strive to be the person who is willing to work hard to create more glories in the coming future.

Productivity & Relevance

We sadly, live in a society where immediate satisfaction and speedy outcomes are highly valued. This is even more if you join a corporate setup. You need to understand that you have not been hired here for what you have done in the past but what you can contribute to the present and the future. Hence you must ensure continuous relevance – that may at times feel like constantly running on a non-stop treadmill, but you need to step up to that, to stay relevant and productive in the context of the organization. In my experience many veterans seem to forget that and once hired in an organization, they forget about maintaining their relevance and productivity.

One research study in the US on veterans transition had this finding. For veterans for succeeding in a civilian position required the ability to separate their identities from their previous ranks and status in the military.

Psychology for Success

If you study psychology for success you will learn one profound lesson. You need hope in the future to have meaning in the present. What does this mean? Viktor Frankl the psychologist and author who survived a nazi concentration camp had this to say. For those who lost hope in the future present became toxic and meaningless. If you look at it in a different perspective you can choose the future that you wish for and let that dictate your present. My identity as to who am I right now is based on how I am framing my future.

Indirectly, this research finding is alluding to be future focussed and not get trapped in your past triumphs and glories. You are a product of the stories that you tell yourself. So tell yourself good, positive, inspiring stories.

Conclusion

While we all have had a glorious past and we need to treasure them. But, make no mistake do not get stuck in the past. Look towards and envision a positive future and that itself will elevate your spirit and launch you in the journey of self-improvement, learning and success.

Remember, everything can be taken away from us our financial position, status, rank, authority except the ability to choose your attitude in any given set of circumstances. So choose wisely! Look ahead with confidence!



Lt Col Iqbal Singh (retd) is an infantry officer who started his career with the Garhwal Rifles in Dec 1987. He is currently a senior technology executive with a Big Tech firm based at Gurgaon. He is firmly of the belief that tech is an enabler and your friend. He is the Founder of **Forces Network** – the Network of the military veterans in the corporate. His message to comrades-in-arms has been do NOT be afraid of tech but embrace it. In line with thinking he relishes breaking stereotypes, crashing glass ceilings and doing the seemingly impossible. He believes that there are no barriers: all the barriers exist only in one's mind. It was with that firm conviction that Iqbal started the now famous **ABCT** (Any Body Can Tech) Program in Forces Network in 2019. Under this program non-tech officers were taken to cloud certification level. Over 40 participants got certified from Microsoft in cloud computing under this program. This launched the tech careers of many of such participants. Iqbal believes that cyber security as a career is set to boom. He is convinced that military personnel can easily transition to cyber security with some upskilling. Accordingly he has authored a series of articles demystifying cyber security. The current article is the sixth article to appear in the ForceNet E-Zine as part of the series.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

Theme Article

METEMPSYCHOSIS: THE REBIRTH WITHOUT LONGING

BY KRISHNA RAJ

"To go beyond the Past Glories: Relinquish whatever holds you back"

Abd- ur Reyhan-Mohd "Al Beruni", who travelled to India in 11th Century c.e. with the Ghaznavid forays, stayed ten years, learnt Sanskrit and scripted the classic work "Al Hind". The book is the first recorded link of deep study of Native religion by anyone from the Islamic world. Al Beruni homed on to the root of the Hindu belief system. He stated that Metempsychosis or Punarjanam was the root of the Karmic belief and that it regulates the core Hindu behaviour. Such was the in-depth study.

A service man who sheds his uniform stands true with the epithet - *"You can take out a soldier from the Army, But you can't take the Army out of Him"*.

Cut to the twenty-first century where security forces still tend to be the final solution. The forces are the trump card to a diplomatic solution, being a part of this elite services of Arms, it is extremely challenging to take the fauj out of a soldier, airman or sailor, well after he has left the service. Be it a Captain or a Wizened Colonel, Lt or a Cdr, Flt Lt or a Groupy, the rank hovers on him like a 'Halo', his purposeful walk exudes confidence and his charm clings to him like a uniform.

Now look at an Ex-soldier; all this is then represented in his humble dwelling in form of mementos, shields, spears with Black and Red grip designs or the Mishmi pipe that rings in the folklore; the 'Tirap clasp' proudly topping his medal tally on the chest.

When an Officer who moves out of service, for many it is like the disintegration of the Colossal USSR. At the end of the cold war period in early nineties the staggering power of USSR came to an grinding halt, breaking-up the many peripheral soviet-socialist republics into independent nations like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan etc sounded the death-knell of the colossal edifice. In India Service officers relinquishing their service after Short Service or attwenty years and who look out to civil world - they go thru a similar internal turmoil.

There would be simple jobs of Logistics/Liaison etc that beckoned the soldier. Many Companies that accepted service officers for their outgoing attitude, integrity and commendable language did not always find them conducive for long term stay.

The memento on the Mantelpiece

Reasons while are attributable to many causes the main one is generally archaic-most *officers transitory to corporate could not leave their baggage behind*. More of an innate nature the services give certain inherent support and standards that cling to the Soldier's Psyche like a relentless shadow. The Memento stands testimony to great many achievements.

Down the memory lane it acts as a reminder of the glorious days in uniform where the newly commissioned officer is received in ever ingenious ways to lend him a lifelong remembrance.

This kind of glorious welcome to a Newly wed Officer couple- with Red Cushion thrones placed in a jeep trailer festooned and decorated with Balloons and "Banda Baaja Bride" scripted all over! This is something unimaginable in corporate where the reality of transient job culture prevails.

For the Soldier in second life - In the Corporate When you welcome a guy in, one does not know how long he will stay-its nota bonding for life. The affinity and affiliation one is expecting has be taken in with a pinch. Dear "man out of Uniform"- Settle down patiently, prove your credentials slowly, let your team discover your feather in military cap by your actions in new set up rather than self proclaimed stories . Tread softly, speak amicably and unseen, carry a big Stick.

**He who 'knows not 'and knows he 'knows not 'is simple- teach him.
He who 'knows not 'and knows not he 'knows not 'is a fool! So they say.**

So dear friend, brave Horatius! Captain of the Gate! Learn the ropes in corporate, quietly box in the Memento on the mantel piece, to turn a new leaf -the tree sheds the old!!

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam famously recounts in his book for the young "**Ignited Minds**" Unleashing the power within "The message of the book is clear" Aim at developing that conviction in ourselves and discarding the things that hold us back" .

Pack up the relics of your achievements as you decide to step into the civvy street. what the man in uniform brings to the table will be known by itself over a period of time more from the mind than from the physical self. More from the interior than from the exterior.

Food for thought

Trappings have to go, Inclusiveness comes in,
short tempers have to go, Measured response comes in,
Helping hands have to go, Self help moves in,
Red carpets have to go , Green norms come in,
'Gamlas' of the mind have to go, austerity comes in business comes in.
Implicit orders have to go - collaboration to move in
Archaic slow methods have to go - Techno centricity has to move in.

A study claims that at the end of world war-II many U.S. soldiers returned home to voids. Military service is difficult, demanding and operationally dangerous, *But those who understood their mission found it easier to adjust into civil environment.*

Later the famous author & mathematician, Joseph Mazur wrote “scientifically speaking, the art of choosing is easier when choices presented are lesser”. Carrying it a step further, when the soldier's mantle piece at home is adorned with less of relics the transition would be easier.

Introspection into what a military relic really does that brings in possible brakes to civil forays. For a soldier who has spent a major part of his life in service can live by gazing at the memento all alone. But where a younger profile officer steps out he finds the joining level in corporate to be at a moderate level, though reasonably well paid, they are laden with functional responsibilities. Here there is no one below him to take care of his minor loose ends, many times he carries stuff received from some place to his home as there is no one at the office to deliver it to. Next day he lugs the stuff back and takes it to office. No luxury of Night space or store at random or a CHM who will immediately respond.

It is the reminiscing at this stage that gets the better of the youngster and puts the proverbial brakes.

Three major metamorphosing facets.

The start point is the sense of belonging to new organization which includes shedding the baggage of clear out roles; Many times **“not my job”** quip from corporate colleagues will place all tasks in the lap of the soldier who stepped into second life.

Following a close second is the extensive email based **“Passing the Parcel”** that discourages the soldier when he realizes that the parcel is in his lap just close to the tipping point and ‘He’ has to accomplish the task.

Third major paradigm shift is **“No buddy - no runner – no bell to ring on his desk”**. Get used to it! Says his alter ego.

“Stare longingly at the memento” says the Man in the Glass in Olive Greens.

Undoubtedly the human species is the pinnacle of evolution on earth and tongue in check, the soldier (Hunter Gatherer) is the eldest and most versatile version. He can adapt to any environment and take in adversity or changing circumstances at the drop of a hat. It is this quality that brings out the best in his persona.

Oscar Wilde is infamously quoted for his quip, **“one cannot change a new leaf till one has reached the bottom of the page”**. When the soldier in one’s self realizes the need to ‘let go’ of relics for the time being and surge ahead to Donn another hat that’s the awakening that is called for hereafter.

Ask a world beating quality with every human. Why not with the ex soldier sailor or Airman? Don’t lie 6 feet under the ground fading away.

Recalling Thomas gray’s Elegy written in a Country churchyard...

*Many a gem of purest ray serene the un fathomed caves of the ocean bear
Many a flower is born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the Desert Air .*



Brig Krishna Raj commissioned in 1987 into the Artillery, he opted for Aviation and joined Army Aviation as a helicopter pilot. He flew for 12 years with 1500 hours of operational flying. He has operational experience in The Kargil War 1999. He commanded his Unit in CT Ops Kashmir and subsequently commanded two operational Brigades. While in service he took up LLB, UGC NET and HR qualifications. He participates in seminars and, writes for the Hyderabad Newspapers on contemporary Geopolitical issues. He is presently undertaking PhD research in the field related to Geopolitics. In Corporate sector he has worked in the field of Port and Shipping, At present he is in the Textile and flooring industry in V P level Administrative post.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor



Star 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.

IN INTERACTION WITH IQBAL SINGH

Col Alex Jacob (Retd.) is from 71st Course, NDA and 81st Regular Course IMA. He was commissioned into 8 MADRAS and commanded 25 MADRAS in Counter Insurgency Operations in J&K. After his command, he worked as the Colonel Administration for a Rashtriya Rifles Force in J&K and as Director Infantry 5 in the Infantry Directorate. Post his Army Service he has worked in Marketing for multiple companies in various sectors and is presently Director Marketing, Land Systems for Saab, an international Defence Company. He is based out of New Delhi.



IQ: Please tell us something about your background prior to joining the Army, and your subsequent Army career. Please share any significant achievements?

Alex: I come from a defence background. My father, a retired Lt Colonel, was the motivating factor in my selecting the defence services as a career. I was a student before I joined NDA in 1984, securing an All India Rank of six in the NDA entrance exam. I was commissioned into the MADRAS Regiment in Dec 1987. I have successfully completed all relevant courses, consistently earning an 'Instructor' grading.

I commanded 25 MADRAS and subsequently was appointed as the Colonel Administration of a Rashtriya Rifles Force in active Counter Insurgency operations. My final appointment was as Director Infantry 5 in the Infantry Directorate. During my career, I was awarded the Chief of Army Staff's Commendation Card twice.



IQ: Give us an understanding about your current role and what you are presently engaged in. Also please share in chronological order the roles and companies in your corporate career?

Alex: Currently I am Director Marketing, Land Systems for Saab India. I am primarily responsible for marketing Saab's products to Indian Military and Para Military Forces. In addition, I also handle marketing to the Civil Aviation Sector. My main focus is on Signature Management, Laser Warning Systems, Fibre Optics Gyroscopes, Air Traffic Management and Vertical Take Off and Landing (VTOL) UAVs.

After my retirement from Indian Army, I initially worked for Good Living India, an interiors, design and furniture manufacturing company. Post that, I was picked up by Barracuda Camouflage Private Limited, a subsidiary of Saab AB in India. In 2016, I joined Saab India Technologies Private Limited a 100% owned subsidiary of Saab AB to market various products of the company.



IQ: How did you prepare yourself for the Military to Corporate transition?

Alex: During my time in India Army, I got the opportunity to do an MBA from Symbiosis, through distance learning. This was a very interesting learning curve for me and helped me to prepare for the corporate world. In addition, I kept myself abreast of the technological advancement in the Defence Sector. My appointment as Director Infantry 5 helped me in mastering defence procurement which has proven to be very helpful in my career with Barracuda and Saab.



Academy days

IQ: What were the challenges faced during your Transition? How did you overcome the challenges?

Alex: The reason that prompted me to seek pre-mature After dedicating 25 years in the service of our nation, leaving was a tough decision to make. However, my personal reasons forced me into undertaking this difficult step and the challenging endeavour of getting adjusted to an entirely new work environment and culture. My main challenge was to find a company which provides a good work culture that provides an opportunity to learn the corporate ethos and enables me to grow professionally. I faced my share of challenges in getting the right opportunity and right work culture but I feel blessed at where I am today. Saab is a wonderful company to work for with a great work culture and a very supportive and

friendly environment. The company is professional and recognises your hard work and professionalism.

The biggest challenge I faced was that as an Infantry officer my knowledge about Saab's products which are on the cutting edge of technology, was lacking and it was all highly technical. I overcame this by firstly accepting that I need to start from basics which was fortunately available in Saab and a lot of self-study. It was hard and challenging, but today, I am proud that I am able to handle a varied bouquet of products from very different product lines and technologies.

IQ: Though you are an infantry officer now working in a Defence technology company. Did you have to learn some technology related subjects even for your role? How did you do so?

Alex: Yes, Saab's products are all highly technological and I am glad that the company provided me opportunities to get extensive knowledge on the products I am marketing. In addition, some products such as the Fibre Optics Gyroscopes, Signature Management and Laser Warning Systems required me to learn some basic physics and the details about the technology involved. However, my grooming in the Indian Army and the confidence that I could take on any challenge came handy and I was able to learn and to understand both the technology involved and as important, the customers' needs. Here, my stint as Director Infantry 5 was also a big help.



With Colleagues

IQ: If you were to Transition from the military to the corporate today with the benefit of all the insights and wisdom that you have gained in the corporate today, what would you have done differently?

Alex: Not much. I was fortunate that I got the right breaks when I left Army. In hindsight, maybe I would do the six months DGR course from IIM before leaving.

IQ: Any important lessons you learnt while switching jobs and companies in your corporate career? Any advice for transitioning military personnel on this front?

Alex: Network is the Key for an ex-military person to enter in the corporate world. There are very few jobs for us in the Defence Sector that get posted on job websites. The jobs at middle and senior management levels are filled based on reputation, your network or sometimes (rarely) by professional head-hunters. It is necessary to network and this should start a few years before leaving the Armed Forces. Attend Defence Seminars and Expos, talk to retired defence personnel in Defence companies, be active on LinkedIn.

IQ: How important is it to understand your own passion and expertise and then to work towards upskilling in that domain so as to have a better innings in the corporate? How does one identify one's passion?

Alex: It is important that your work is in the area of your expertise as that is the key to success. Passion towards your job is also important as without that your job will become jaded soon and you might lose interest. Also, always remember that learning and up skilling is a lifelong activity.



My Parents

IQ: You have had a long stint in the corporate. To be successful what traits from the military must be given up and what must we imbibe?

Alex: The first thing that you need to give up in the corporate world is the sense of Hierarchy. We in the Defence Forces have grown up with a rigid hierarchy based on seniority, however, in the corporate world they follow a flat hierarchy and people who are 20 to 30 years junior/ younger than you will be calling you by your first name and treating you as their equals. It must be accepted that colleagues your kids age may address you as 'buddy' and 'dude'.

In Army, we are used to having help for day-to-day tasks at work. However, in the corporate world, you may not get similar privileges. You will be expected to be self-sufficient and do all tasks on your own like your civilian co-workers.

We also have a misconception that people in the Defence Forces are more professional than civilians. The civilians might be casual in their behaviour in the corporate world, but they are also highly professional and experts in their particular fields. They would not be able to survive in the corporate world if they are not.

The most important trait from the Defence Force that needs to be kept alive is a 'Never Say Die' attitude. We also need to retain our flexibility and ability to think on our feet especially in situations without all inputs - the well-known 'Fog of War'. This is equally applicable in the corporate sector.

IQ: What message would you like to give to transitioning military officers who wish to make a career in the Defence industry?

Alex: The corporate world respects a Defence Force officer and his professionalism and commitment. One should prepare for the field that one wish to join by acquiring necessary education and certifications. An MBA is an asset and should be acquired while in service. Also, do the six-months course from IIMs. It helps in giving you a good introduction to the corporate world.



At Office

IQ: Tell us about your family. What role did your parents play in shaping your value system. Also share the role played by your family including spouse in your successful Transition?

Alex: My father was in the Army and we moved around a lot. I am the eldest of three siblings and grew up a typical Army Brat. I admired my father as an Army man and it played a very important role in my opting to join the army. I cleared the NDA exam midway my 12th standard and joined NDA when I was only 16 years old. My father was very proud of my career choice but my mother worried, however, eventually she too fully supported my decision.

My wife was very supportive of my time with Indian Army and she was proud to be part of the journey of serving our nation. Since my reason of leaving Army was very personal, I had full support from my wife and my sons. I couldn't have achieved what I have today without their support and trust in my ability. They were with me every step, motivating me to accept new challenges in the corporate world.



My Family



Iqbal Singh is a former infantry officer who started his career with The Garhwal Rifles in Dec 1987. He took premature retirement from the Indian Army in 2008 as a Lt Col to pursue a career in the corporate in the technology industry. He is currently working in a senior role with a Big Tech company based at Gurgaon. Iqbal is also the Founder of Forces Network – the Network of the military veterans in the corporate.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Interview, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

ForceNetPreneur

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

IN INTERACTION WITH AFZAL AMDANI

Cdr Pravin Tulpule retired from Navy in 2001 and chose the purpose of his life - making children happy. It is heartwarming story of selfless compassion and following one's heart! Lt Cdr Pravin's transformation from a Naval officer to Happy the Clown shows the immense power of bringing joy and happiness to those who need it most. It's a reminder that sometimes, the most fulfilling paths in life are the ones driven by a deep sense of purpose and the desire to make a positive impact on others.



Afzal: Please give us a glimpse of your life journey starting from your childhood days, your family and friends, life as a Cadet and an Officer of Armed Forces?

Pravin: I come from a simple middle class Maharashtrian family. Dad was a food/dairy technologist with NDDB and Mom a school teacher. We moved places due to Dad's frequent transfers and that exposed us to various people, languages and cultures. We, as kids, were never under pressure to be the best or first but the condition was to put in our best effort. That helped in, games, sports, college and profession of our choice.

I picked up magic at an early age of 13 and the wonderful hobby helped me in a million ways and more. School, College, Cadets time Or even after being commissioned as an officer it stayed with me and that's how I honed my skills with children and people (without realising it). Ever grateful.



Incidentally I almost joined the 60th course NDA but for making the final merit list. Subsequently I joined the 26th Integrated DE- GSES (64th equivalent).



Navy Days

Afzal: You have been blessed with a wonderful gift of bringing smiles on the faces. We would love to know more closely about this wonderful evolution in your life?

Pravin: As a teenage magician I realised, I wielded the power to fool people right under their noses and at times even control their decisions. That's a super feeling. Nothing gives one a high higher than being superior to others!

However as I grew up I realised that the aim of performing magic is to entertain and not just fool people. People, especially children love to be entertained and not challenged.

So I started creating tricks and gigs where the audience was not just being a spectator and getting fooled but was a part of the entertainment. This change in approach and application was the point where I turned into a clown from a magician.

A clumsy awkward clown who forgets things, names, colours etc is an ideal candidate for the audience to take charge and control. I assume that persona on stage and have been very easily accepted by all age groups.



Afzal: Intelligence + Innocence + Humour + Service = Life. Do you think this is the right formula for a person to make progress in their journey?

Pravin: Indeed... However I would add a couple or more ingredients to this recipe... Gratitude, Acceptance, and Contentment/Expectations... With a little common sense and lowered ego we can all balance these and make our lives (and others) beautiful.

(Gratitude for the life we have. Acceptance of the situation we are/would be in. Contentment- Expectations/Satisfaction and Happiness are correlated. As expectations rose the chances of being unhappy rise too).

Afzal: It is said that Kids can teach us the reasons for celebrating life under any circumstances. I think this is best understood by no one else but you. You have been so close to kids throughout this time. Please help us understand this better?

Pravin: Children are ruthless in their appreciation as well as criticism. So if we play our cards well we can win them over. As is natural children don't like to be called children - friends is a better and most loved option. Similarly instead of teaching anything I prefer to "share" ... These two are the master keys that I have found also work with adults.

Giving up your superior status/ego/designation makes things easy. Also handing over control (apparently) is the easiest way to guide things your way subtly.



Afzal: Years after having taken up a unique and innovative ways of bringing happiness in lives of so many, how do you see this journey has been. What are the most important aspects of this life of dedication and service that you are living with so much compassion?

Pravin: I expect nothing from anyone or and any situation. My personal needs are far and few. I am easy going and have no pretence about myself. I realise and accept that I am an average ordinary human with some understanding of magic and people. I am NOT someone special.

My personal requirements are limited and that helps me focus on the children I meet. Gratitude to the life and health I have along with for the little less fortunate keeps me grounded at all times.

Afzal: Family support is essential for taking the path that you have chosen. We would like know more about your family?

Pravin: Indeed again! To step out as A Clown, especially when you have proudly donned the white uniform is not easy. Wagging tongues and pointed index fingers can destroy a mans determination. But when your family stand with you, your citadel is unbreachable!

Without the unconditional support of the family including those who are related not through blood but service/uniform is my strength.

Blessed with two adorable and now responsible children (Shruti n Malhar) I have nothing to fear in life. Their respective spouses (Akshay n Gaurisha) too help strengthen my resolve of being useful to the society.



Afzal: The journey from the thought (dream) of creating a difference to living a life that is creating positive change in the lives of so many. It must have been an amazing experience. Please let us know about it?

Pravin: Frankly, its a journey I hadn't really dreamt of, to be true to myself. Never in my wildest dreams did I dream this life. Things and events just kept happening as if pitstops in my life and I haven't ever complained.

Truth be told - though there are moments when I miss my Uniform, my Naval Service and the Culture never have I regretted my decision of surrendering my pension n medical benefits to become a caring hospital clown.

Every encounter with a child patient or a grown up always ends on a positive note for us both. Even those standing on the side lines become a part of this synergy.



Afzal: Which is the most important factor for you to keep you going on and on to bring joy in lives?

Pravin: Money or material goods never held much fascination for us even when we grew up. We did have a good upbringing and exposure to everything as we were brought up.

The appreciation that we are blessed with something that can be shared and can help people smile, laugh and be happy helps. What's the point in holding on to something that could otherwise be used for the good of atleast a few? The idea "**Sharing is Caring**" or even the other way round is my driving force.

Afzal: Do you feel short of energy at times and what's your motivation mantra?

Pravin: Rarely, but yes! We all good through our ups and downs, being humans that we are. There's no specific mantra or hack for that. I just stay out for a day or two and focus on my other creative hobbies like constructing models inside bottles, cooking, woodwork etc. These diversions help big way.



Afzal: You are living a life of your own choice and you creating positivity everywhere? Could you please share the best learnings from your own life. And 5 lessons for our readers to follow?

Pravin: That's a big order for a clown to fill... But personally, I follow some things that I have learnt from my parents and life too...

Here they are and I hope they are useful to our readers.

- be kind and empathetic
- share your joys and happiness
- dont expect much from others
- try and be self sufficient
- avoid, as practically possible, to be a source of trouble to others
- help to the best possible extent without expecting anything in return.
- be good to yourself too, self torture never works.

Last but the most important one is-

Eat, drink, laugh, play and be merry but dont take your self too seriously!



Captain Afzal Habib Amdani, commissioned from the Officers Training academy and a Madras Sapper Officer, leads a delivery center for an Indian tech giant in the Philippines. He sees his professional and personal convergence as a means to create a positive impact, leveraging digital technology to fulfill this purpose. A marathoner and paragliding enthusiast, he is fascinated by agility, speed, and scale.

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Women Power

Spouses/Daughters of Defence Officers as well as those who have donned the uniform, 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 women 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 UDAY K SHRIWAS

Ms. Puja Kelkar comes from an Army background. A certified Soap maker she has done her Diploma in Soap Making and started her own venture Svata: She uses plant based ingredients to make her Col process soaps. The ingredients are home grown stuff like Aloe Vera gel, Coconut milk, herbs, fruits extract etc. She also makes Scrubs, Shipped cream Soaps, scented wax Tablets and small Jar Candles. Her Skincare products are unisex and suitable for all skin types. Svata: is a registered Micro Manufacturing unit.



Uday: Please tell us about yourself and what you do?

Puja: I am Puja Kelkar, an army wife, mother of 2 lovely girls, a kindergarten teacher by profession and a home based business owner by choice. My brand **svata:** (which literally means self made / self done) is about handmade skincare products, candles, wax air freshners which is free of harsh chemicals and environment friendly.



Uday: What is it that inspired you to embark on the Entrepreneurial journey?

Puja: After being a teacher for about 10 years in various military stations (which I thoroughly enjoyed), the pandemic and lockdown changed the entire scenario of teaching and I personally felt that online teaching to students of such a tender age would not be very satisfying. So I started looking out to learn a new skill that would fulfill the creative streak in me and at the same time was sustainable and eco friendly.

Since all offline courses were shut down during Covid, I enrolled for a soapmaking business diploma course from an online platform in UK and thus began my journey as a Soapmaker.

Uday: We all have mentors and guides in our professional world and they are a great influence, could you please tell us about them from your life?

Puja: Before covid, Handmade Soapmaking was not a very heard of craft and specially Cold Process Soaps were relatively new in India as compared to the West. So when I started out I really did not have any mentor or anyone to guide me. My course material and videos were the only guide I had.

Uday: What's your biggest source(s) of inspiration ?

Puja: My ParentsMy mother is extremely creative and talented and she wears many hats. She was never into full time working but since I was a child I have seen her making things out of her hands.... So she has been the biggest inspiration in the creative part of my journey...

My father never made us (my sister and me) feel that there's nothing we cant do as girls...that was not the thinking process in my house...He always says ...what use is good education if it doesn't teach you to go out and face the world...So yes, my parents are the biggest source of inspiration.



Uday: As an Army Wife, the Army life must have had influence in your choices as you travelled and grew in personal and professional life, could you please tell us more about the Fauji aspect of your life journey?

Puja: The woman that I am today is thanks to the army, this organization grooms you like no other can. Since I started my entrepreneurial journey, I have been stationed in Pune only but the army has been very very instrumental in giving me the best platforms to showcase my work, the latest being the AWWA Lit Fest Abhiyakti 3.0. The support and encouragement that I have received from senior ladies is unparalleled. We are very fortunate to be in this wonderful phase wherein the army, Specifically AWWA is promoting women entrepreneurs in a very big way.

Uday: Would you like to share the details of venture you have brought up and how it all started?

Puja: Actually way back in 2012, we were on a family trip to Mukteshwar where we stayed in a beautiful homestay. The owners had kept handmade soaps in all the washrooms and I was very intrigued with that. And somewhere I made up my mind that I will learn this craft if I get a chance. So that is how the seed was planted. My venture **svata:** aims to give handmade skincare products which are made from scratch using the best possible ingredients which are plant based or used mostly in the food industry and are free of any added chemicals. The colourants used are also botanicals, clays and various herbs. I followed up my soapmaking course with some others to learn about different products and now our range comprises:

- Vegan Cold Process Soaps
- Face and Body Scrubs
- Whipped Cream Soaps
- Beeswax and Soywax Candles
- Scented Wax Air Freshners
- Bath Salts



Uday: How has been the journey so far and any stories of great remembrance and significance you wish to share with us?

Puja: So far, the journey has been very enriching...the experiences have been memorable but one definitely stands out...this happened on a flight last year while I was retuning from my first outstation exhibition. We experienced turbulence throughout the flight and I was extremely nervous. The gentleman seated next to me sensed my anxiety and struck up a conversation to calm me down. So I told him all about my journey as a soapmaker and entrepreneur and he listened very intently....a few weeks later he called me up and told me that he had enrolled for a soapmaking course and that I was the inspiration behind it...that was the a really high point in my entrepreneurial journey. When I get a random message from a stranger that they enjoyed using my products...that brings me so much joy and it is very overwhelming and gratifying.

Uday: Being a woman entrepreneur, what are your thoughts, learnings and what you think is still required to be done so that more women take up entrepreneurship?

Puja: The pandemic and the time after that has seen lot of small businesses emerging...I have learnt to use social media as a platform to showcase my products but theres still a lot more learning to do. I think women need to push boundaries and believe in themselves and the fact that a really nice work - home balanced life can be achieved.



Uday: You also run a self made enterprise, could you please tell us about the challenges? How important is the role of Family members as you strike a balance between personal and entrepreneurship front?

Puja: The biggest challenge I faced and still face is willingness from a certain section of people to try handmade skincare products. The trust is missing...people will buy a product that is loaded with chemicals from a store but are not willing to spend on handmade...they do not appreciate the hardwork and research that goes behind each and every product. I don't know about others but in my case my family has played an extremely important role in my journey. My husband has been my biggest rock solid Supporter and Cheerleader. His technical expertise has helped me in so many areas in my venture. My children have always encouraged me to participate in exhibitions and I have a very strong support system in the form of my inlaws. My sister and other friends who are like family have been the biggest patrons of my products. So I believe a strong support from your dear ones definitely gives you a lot of motivation.

Uday: Live in the present moment and/or Plan for the future? What's your mantra?

Puja: I would say both...it is very important to plan for the future but at the same time live in the moment too...I feel we lose touch with reality if we don't live in the moment.



Uday: What advice do you have, especially for family members (wives) from Fauj?

Puja: In my journey as an entrepreneur I have connected with some amazingly talented army wives and daughters but I am sure there are so many more who have so much talent and skill but are reluctant to start something on their own. I would just like to tell them to believe in themselves, take the plunge and be confident to show your skill and talent to the world.

Uday: As an aspiring and confident woman in the World of Entrepreneurship, How's been your experience?

Puja: I would say women are very confident, they are great managers and organisers, they are capable of building a strong team and leading them. Women are great at multitasking and extremely capable of shouldering various responsibilities at the same time.

Uday: Most importantly, What is the best thing you love about entrepreneurship?

Puja: What I love most about entrepreneurship is the independence to work on my own terms. It is immensely satisfying to create something beautiful with your hands and showcase it to the world through various platforms. It is very endearing to interact with people from different age groups, educate them about the products and receive feedback from them. There is no greater reward for the validation of your hard work than the acceptance of your handmade products.

Uday: How does one order if they require the same?

Puja: Any one who wants the delivery can order online through the below link.
<https://svata.mini.store>



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

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Interview, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

Stars On The Horizon

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

IN INTERACTION WITH UDAY SHRIWAS

Ms. Sreeja Sadasivan have an MBA in I.T. after completion of B.Tech. and is currently employed in the Support Services department of a telematics company in Dubai, as Solutions Engineer. She lives in Dubai with my husband and daughter. After college, there was a lull period in her writing. Post the pandemic hit and lockdown days happened, she started writing again. She blogs on her website "euphorically sree" to save moments. Her first book now published is the result of all .her write-ups



Uday: What inspired you to start writing and is it something that you've learned and enjoyed from your early school days?

Sreeja: The realisation that we don't last forever inspired me to write! In fact what I can't or don't articulate well in speech I think I write it better. So I wanted to get it out as a solid book.

Yes, I was educated in an Anglo-Indian school in Kollam and I thank my parents and the teachers there for helping me get the right kind of love with books!



The beginning of "Dream Big". My Dad's aircraft

Uday: What inspired you to write your first book?

Sreeja: I thought my writing should not be limited to my paper or PC – if not for anyone, for myself I wanted to hold all those stories as a book in my hand. Something to last forever!

Uday: You have written about childhood and connected emotions? Why did you choose these areas to write upon? Any more details that you can share.

Sreeja: I had a very happy childhood and that was thanks to a lot of people who impacted my life in many positive ways. While the book is not my life story, there are a few threads here and there that would be actual happenings. I have taken those and fictionalised into stories that most people who grew up with me could connect with.



Uday: How has been your childhood days and it's an influence in your writing?

Sreeja: Like I said I grew up happy – I mean happy mostly; I've also had my sad days, disappointments, sibling fights, caning from mother and teachers – all those normal emotions that most children experience. In general, growing up days were joyful and even luxurious as my father worked abroad and I had everything a child could possibly imagine. However, it was the writing assignments in school that actually made me churn out words and get that practise of bringing out ones imagination on paper.

Uday: How do you gather ideas for writing a chapter in your book or a particular story? Your way or style of writing?

Sreeja: Real life incidents, maybe a dialogue someone actually said and an emotion experienced have instigated ideas. The rest is imagination, adding 'masalas' and trying to write what a reader can connect to and accept.

Uday: Children of present era have an overwhelming flow of information, as an author and a mother what you think would inspire them to read and write?

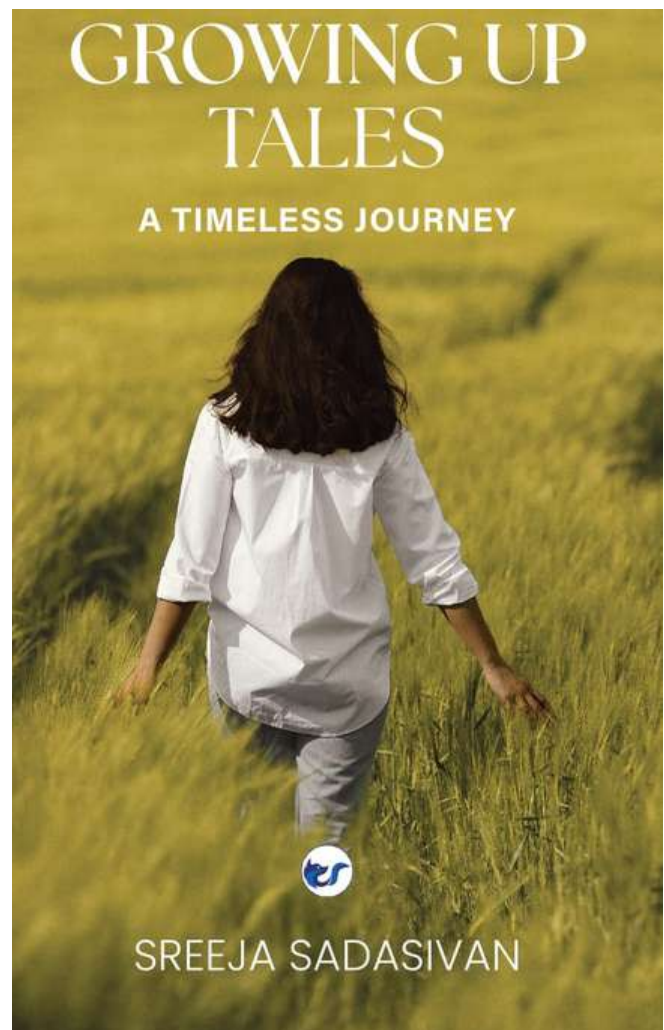
Sreeja: Yes, the possibilities are endless for present days. When I was young to be able to get a book, we had to exchange books with friends or join a library. Now, everything is available online – not just books but inspirational videos too on Tiktok or YouTube! Children and even adults should just make use of such resources.

Uday: We have mentors and coaches who inspire us. Would you like to talk about them who left an impression on you as you grew?

Sreeja: Couple of my school teachers and my tuition teachers have helped me beyond the class syllabus but that had nothing to do with writing. I have seen my grandfather read books and he was good with narrating stories and incidents to us. They have influenced me – especially the young me.

Uday: We all face challenges in our endeavours and we overcome them to reach our Goals? Tell us about the challenges you faced as you chose to put your thoughts together in the form of a book and how has been your experience?

Sreeja: Oh yes, I knew nothing about publishing or how a book comes out released. I still don't know so many aspects



of this. I struggled to draw up details and compare and finally decide on this publisher. I spoke to so many new people in this field, attended literary seminars and webinars and researched online. It was not an easy ride and I can see it won't be in the future too...

"God! What would I forfeit to have the days of my childhood restored, or to be able to forget them forever!"

-Charles Dickens-

Some intertwined tales of coming of age. How some girls blossom, transform, and navigate the bittersweet tapestry of life. Some may strike a familiar chord, while others might be your friend's story or even trigger a passing *deja vu*.

Siya, Sarah, Suhana, Mary and all the others could be you or your friend! An era when grandparents played a crucial role and not mobile phones, where connections were deeper and more lasting. An era when one did not get toys and materialistic joy as easily as we get these days.

With a mix of lighthearted and profound moments, these narratives aim to evoke flashes of nostalgia from the late 80s and early 90s. If only there was a way to know you were in the good old days before you left them!

As they say, "childhood friends may not always be on your mind, but they are forever in your heart!"



Uday: What is the motto of your life and why? Also do let our readers know about your hobbies too?

Sreeja: Expectations and assumptions hurt – I try not to have them. Though it's really hard, I'm practising this art for my life. My hobbies are watching movies – I am mostly up to date with them and also exploring new places. I also paint a little.

Uday: What is your message to all those who plan to write a book but never really take up the effort to do so?

Sreeja: Please keep saving all those snippets and thoughts – type or write them down. Keep saving them up and once in a while read through. If each time you read, you feel a certain emotion then you know it's worth it to bring out as a book.

Uday: Family and Friends are the most important and integral part of our life. What do you feel about this aspect of our personal growth? And how have they contributed to your journey as an author?

Sreeja: Oh definitely – in my case 100% its friends and family. Growing up, parents gave me the best of everything. Grandparents and extended family played a very positive role at each stage of growth. I always had lots of friends. As I said before, they encouraged my writing.

My brothers Rahul and Suraj, we had a lot of the usual sibling fights growing up, but now are always with support, since they reached their senses in adulthood ;)! In fact Rahul had been the push to get my writing out as a book and was with me during my research stage too. He did the illustrations for me – the moment I throw out the idea at him, his drawing comes out! And obviously Suraj has connected me with your ‘Forces Network’ endeavour.

My husband was ever supportive when I announced this idea of publishing. My daughter was my editor and critic – I have amended so much in this book due to her comments, ideas and criticism. She also reads a lot, writes and paints beautifully. Without all these people this book wouldn’t have materialised.



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

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Author of the Month

Col Kaushik Sircar

IN INTERACTION WITH IQBAL SINGH

Lt Colonel Kaushik Sircar (Retd) is a Versatile Soldier and is at ease with both guns and the pen. He joined the National Defence Academy in 1983 and then Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun, and was subsequently commissioned in the Infantry with the Assam Regiment in 1987. He has been awarded the Army Chief Commendation for dedication to duty and exemplary conduct. He has operated in the North East, J & K and the Deserts. He was part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) for two years in Sri Lanka. Having served in the Indian Army for 20 years, of which 5 years were with the National security Guards as a Black Cat Commando.



IQ: Please tell me a little bit about yourself, your background, your education, how you got into writing and why writing is a passion for you?

Kaushik: With over 20 years of coloured service with the Assam regiment, I have done M.Sc. in Defence and Strategic Analysis from Madras University in 2001 and an MBA in Personnel Management from Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies, Pune and a Senior Defence Management Graduate from DAVV, Indore.

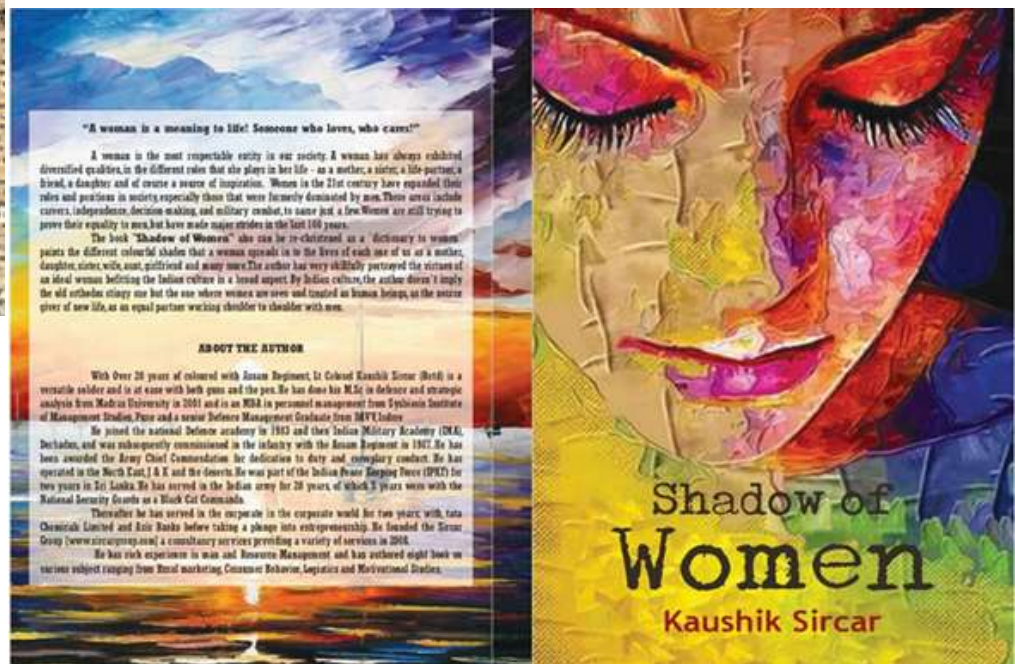
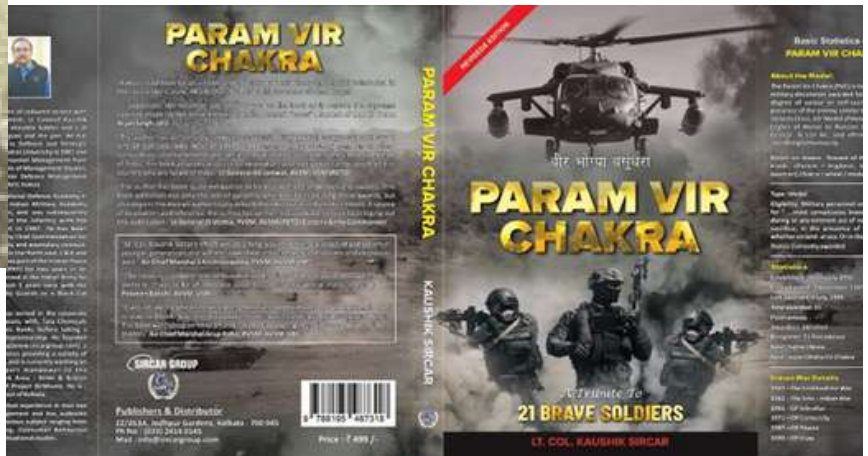
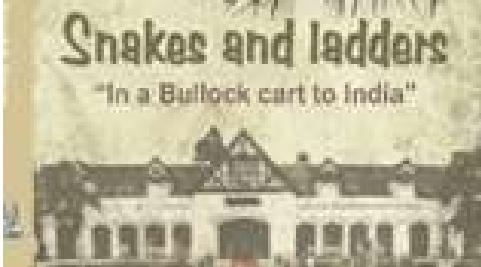
I joined the National Defence Academy in 1983 and then Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun, and was subsequently commissioned in the Infantry with the Assam Regiment in 1987. I have been awarded the Army Chief Commendation for dedication to duty and exemplary conduct. I have operated in the North east, J & K and the Deserts. I was part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) for two years in Sri Lanka. Have served in the Indian Army for 20 years, of which 5 years were with the National security Guards as a Black Cat Commando.

Thereafter I have served in the corporate world for two years; with, Tata Chemicals Limited and Axis Banks before taking a plunge into entrepreneurship. I founded the Sircar Group [www.sircargroup.com] a consultancy services providing a variety of services in 2008 and am currently working on providing expert manpower to the corporate. Work Area: NHAI & British Petroleum (CBM Project Birbhum). I am presently based out of Kolkata.

I also have rich experience in man and Resource Management and has authored eight books on various subject ranging from Rural Marketing, Consumer Behaviour Logistics and Motivational studies.

IQ: You have authored six books. That's extremely prolific. Do you have a creative process or any other methodology that you follow while writing a book?

Kaushik: I ensure to write one to two pages every night before going to bed. The process multiplies to finally take shape of a book in due course.



IQ: You are a Rimcollian, an infantry officer, worked in the corporate and now you are an entrepreneur! That's quite an amazing portfolio of experiences and skills. It is an unconventional profile to become a writer. How do you explain that?

Kaushik: We have vast experience that we accumulate through our years of experience and work. I just put that to writing and ensure it takes a shape of a book worth a read. I mustered the habit of writing diary while at school (through my father) that helped me later on to keep abreast to writing and putting thoughts of pen and paper.

IQ: You are doing multiple things at the same time. How do you make time to write? We need to learn the secret of time management from you?

Kaushik: As I said I write two to three pages almost everyday, which finally takes the shape of a book through days of nurturing and grooming. One has to make that time from the daily schedule of 24 hours. I don't waste time on procrastination and building castles in the air. Sit down on the computer and mind shall flow out. Let the mind wander and one can note down the vast rich experience we have behind us starting from various rural areas we served. Incidentally my first book was "A New Approach to Rural Marketing".



IQ: How do you conduct your research on this book? Do you write in a single draft or you like to work through improving various versions of your manuscript copy?

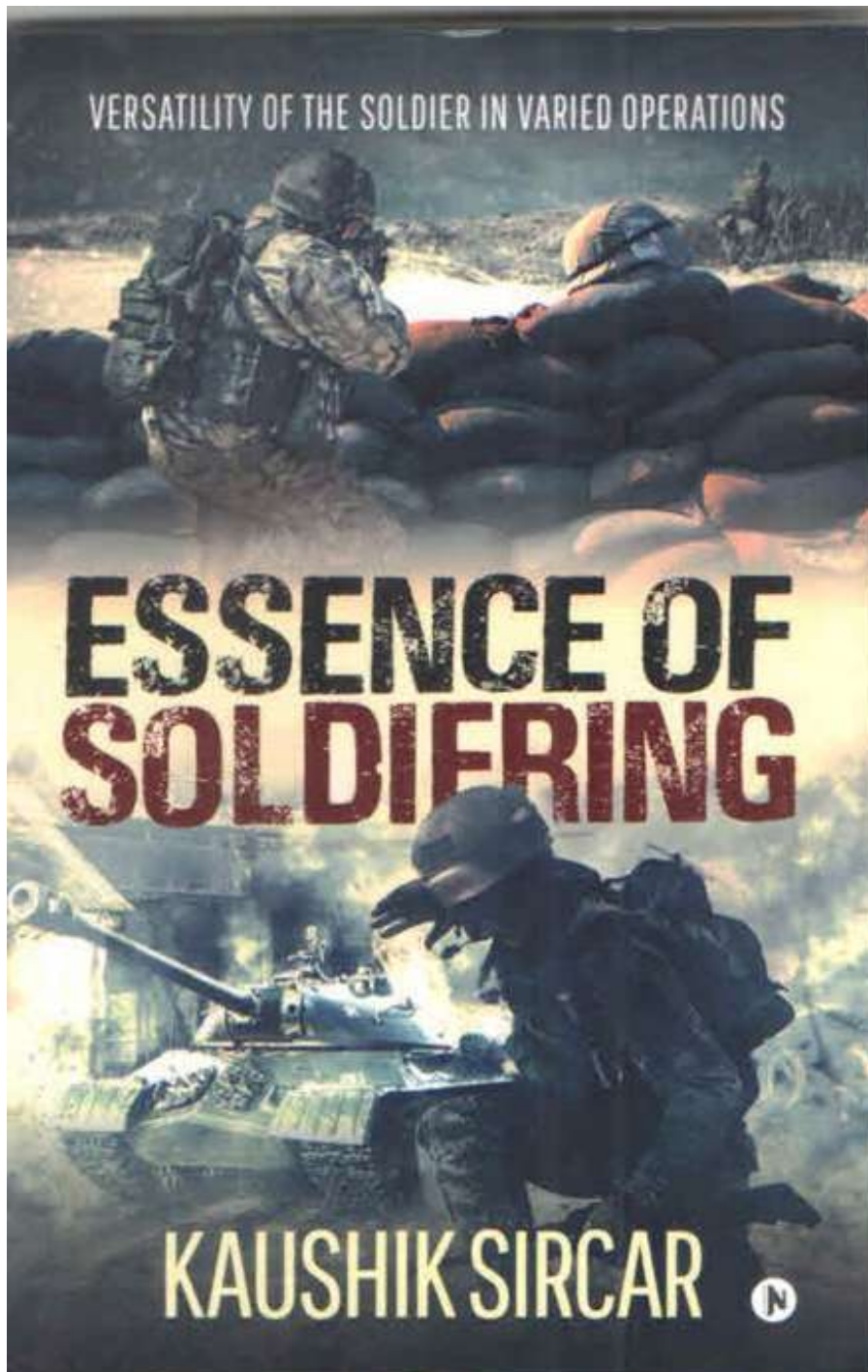
Kaushik: I put down everything to paper on a flow and later groom it to develop the manuscript through various versions of the work. It is interesting and very enjoyable converting the nascent work to a full fledged master copy that finally takes shape of a book. But random thoughts have to be penned immediately or scribbled in rough as draft copy since flow comes only once in a moment and is not a continuous process.

IQ: Any tips for veterans planning to become writers? Where do they start? What skills do they need to have or gain?

Kaushik: We all are very poor in writing. My advice is to start writing and it has to start somewhere. My writing started in 1979 when at hostel I used to write diary on a daily basis a habit inculcated by my father. He always kept the first New year diary for me to get into the habit of writing. It all started in 1979 at Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehradun. Patience is must and perseverance to take on refusals from publishers on your work. I got my first call from Himalaya Publishing House , Mumbai on my Rural Marketing book after about 10 refusals from publishers.

IQ: Your book **Essence of Soldiering: Versatility of the Soldier in varied operations** seems to be a unique concept or rather a novel genre. How did it come about? Tell us more about it.

Kaushik: This book is based on three varied operations and versatility of the indian soldier to adapt to changing situation written in a lucid form through a close knit narration. These are actual on ground operations made to make an interesting read keeping in mind various lessons emanating from it.





IQ: Tell us about your family. How do they take it when you are busy writing , reading and researching your books?

Kaushik: My wife Lalita has always been supportive of my writing and as I always say keep one hour a day away for your writing when you script the thoughts that late may formulate into a book. If you don't pen your thoughts now it doesn't happen again. Its now or never. My sons too gave me lot of support in my endeavours and stood by me and my privacy during my scripting work.

IQ: How can our readers keen to pick up a copy of your book do so ?

Kaushik: Readers can search with my name or can also click on below link to get one of the copy

https://www.amazon.in/Essence-Soldiering-Versatility-Soldier-Operations/dp/1684664977/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2EP8EK9DHH4Z9&keywords=essence+of+soldiering&qid=1706198773&srefix=essence+of+soldierin%2Caps%2C425&sr=8-1



Iqbal Singh is a former infantry officer who started his career with The Garhwal Rifles in Dec 1987. He took premature retirement from the Indian Army in 2008 as a Lt Col to pursue a career in the corporate in the technology industry. He is currently working in a senior role with a Big Tech company based at Gurgaon. Iqbal is also the Founder of Forces Network – the Network of the military veterans in the corporate.

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Knowledge Bytes

PEHLA HAMESHA PEHLA

BY DHIRAJ BHIMWAL

*"THE ENDURING MAGIC OF 'FIRSTS':
A TAPESTRY OF MEMORIES IN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS"*

Allow me to say First Things First.....In the grand tapestry of life, there is an undeniable charm to 'firsts' - the inaugural moments that mark the genesis of something new and extraordinary. From the first steps of a child to the first light of dawn, these moments carry a special significance that captivates the human spirit. The fascination with 'firsts' transcends generations, cultures, and industries, weaving a narrative that speaks to our innate desire for novelty and excellence.



Those among us who have interacted with Tea planters while growing up or during our postings and tenures will agree with me that one realm where this fascination is particularly pronounced is the world of fine teas. The allure of the "first flush," often referred to as the **"Silver Tip"**, is a testament to the premium status accorded to inaugural harvests. This rare and exquisite tea variety is a cherished gem among tea connoisseurs, and its reputation is not merely a matter of happenstance.

The appeal of 'firsts' extends beyond the realm of teas and into various aspects of our lives. As the saying goes, *"First impressions are the most lasting"*. Whether it is the first edition of a novel, the first notes of a melody, or the first rays of sunlight, these initial encounters hold a special place in our hearts. Our firsts hold a special place in our hearts because they are the moments when the magic of discovery and the thrill of the unknown collide.

Recently we celebrated the dawn of 2024 and tried to make our first moment or day of 2024 a memorable one. First thing to do in the morning is on our mind when we call it a day, importance of First aid, the list is infinite. In the world of gastronomy, the first harvest of produce, the first press of oil, or the first catch of the season are celebrated for their unpar-

-alleled quality and distinct flavours, various cultures and communities have specific festivals to celebrate the same. As in culinary circles it is said, "The first duty of wine is to be red. The second is to be a Burgundy." This echoes the sentiment that the first offerings possess a unique essence that defines their superiority.

The phenomenon of cherishing 'firsts' is not only a matter of taste but also a reflection of our collective appreciation for excellence and beginnings. The anticipation, the freshness, and the uncharted potential embodied by 'firsts' make them irresistible, like the allure of a blank canvas or the opening lines of a captivating novel.

In the intricate fabric of our lives, the thread of 'firsts' weaves a narrative that resonates with unparalleled significance. From the first hesitant steps that marked our infancy to the initial triumphant strides in our professional endeavors, these moments become indelibly etched in the tapestry of our memories.

"The magic of firsts lies in their ability to evoke a sense of wonder, infusing the mundane with excitement, and turning ordinary moments into extraordinary memories."

Unknown Author

On August 15, 2021, India celebrated its 75th Independence Day or Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav with full enthusiasm with the theme of- 'Nation First, Always First' focusing on the collective resolve and determination to shape the destiny of India.



Pahla Hamesha Pahla meaning **"First Always First,"** the motto of the Brigade of Guards or One - O - One (101) Second to None or the first among equals are also example how first is embedded with pride and identity or for the armed force officers the love for first stays alive right from SSB , academy to even after hanging the boots wherein many stories or recalls start with My first SSB/ GTO , My first Coy Commander , My first unit, My first CO, My first course and so on.

The corporate sectors also strive to attain and maintain this legacy of being first in technology, industry, or sector or even inclusion of word first in name or brand itself like IDFC First Bank, Go First Airlines.

News channel and agencies are in race to claim first to report. In realms of entertainment films use the concept of "first" is often explored in various contexts, reflecting themes such as first love, first success, or first experiences. Songs on Pheli Baar mele hai or Pehla Pehla Pyar establish a direct connection with audience. Watching First Day First Show is seen equivalent to winning a battle. Channels like BBC First try to stand out.



First position on podium or watching from first row, President being addressed as first citizen of the country, the list can go on and on.

Let us try to understand this magic or The Allure of Firsts, why are they so important:

- **Personal Milestones** Our first steps, first words, and the first taste of independence – these personal milestones serve as the foundation upon which our identity is built. The novelty of these experiences embeds them in the corridors of our memory, creating a lasting impression that often shapes our worldview. The first crush, the first love, and the first heartbreak carve emotional landscapes that define the contours of our relationships. The intensity of these initial encounters lingers, creating a nostalgic allure that resonates throughout our lives. Our firsts in personal relationships become emotional benchmarks, reminding us of the innocence, passion, and vulnerability that accompany the journey of love.
- **Professional Pioneering** In the professional realm, 'firsts' mark the initiation into uncharted territories. The first job, the first project, and the first promotion – these career milestones are eternally etched in our professional saga. The enthusiasm, trepidation, and sense of accomplishment that accompany these moments become integral chapters in the narrative of our careers.
- **The Science of Memory** The Neurological Imprint, Scientifically, the phenomenon of remembering 'firsts' is deeply rooted in the way our brains encode memories. The novelty of a 'first' experience triggers the release of neurotransmitters, strengthening the neural connections associated with that event. This neurological imprint makes 'firsts' more vivid and enduring in our memory, often recalling them with a clarity that other experiences may lack.

- **Emotional Resonance** Furthermore, the emotional resonance attached to 'firsts' enhances their memorability. The amalgamation of excitement, anticipation, and a dash of fear creates a potent emotional cocktail that imprints these moments onto our emotional canvas. The brain, being an intricate web of emotions and experiences, ensures that 'firsts' occupy a special place in our mental archives.

Navigating the Passage of Time

- **Evolving Perspectives** As time advances, our perceptions of 'firsts' evolve. What once seemed daunting or exhilarating takes on new meanings as we gain experience and wisdom. However, the enduring allure of 'firsts' lies in their ability to transport us back to the essence of those moments, allowing us to relive the emotions and lessons embedded in those initial encounters.
- **Shaping Identity** In both personal and professional realms, our 'firsts' contribute significantly to shaping our identity. They serve as the milestones that delineate our growth, reflecting the journey from innocence to experience. The lessons learned from these initial forays into the unknown become guiding principles, shaping the narratives of our lives.

The Tapestry of Life

In the grand tapestry of our existence, 'firsts' are the vibrant threads that add color and texture to the narrative. Whether etched in the soft hues of personal memories or the bold strokes of professional achievements, these moments form a rich mosaic that defines who we are and who we aspire to become. The enduring magic of 'firsts' lies not just in the act itself but in the profound impact they have on the intricate artwork of our lives.

As I conclude this inaugural exploration into the tapestry of our lives, celebrating the "firsts" that shape our personal and professional journeys, it becomes evident that these milestones hold a unique place in our hearts. Whether it is the first job that sparked our career trajectory or the initial bloom of a cherished relationship, these experiences become the foundation of our identity.

In the forthcoming articles of this series, I will delve deeper into the myriad "firsts" that define and enrich our lives. From the thrill of a maiden success to the lessons learned from our initial failures, each tale unravels the intricacies of human resilience, growth, and the enduring capacity to find joy in new beginnings.

Join me on this captivating journey as we will navigate through the sentimental landscapes of our collective memories, embracing the nostalgia that accompanies our first encounters with life's profound moments. Together, let us revel in the beauty of beginnings and discover the profound reasons behind our unwavering love and cherished memories of those initial steps into the uncharted realms of personal and professional realms.



LT COL DHIRAJ BHIMWAL is a serving Army officer, commissioned from Officers Training Academy Chennai in Regt of Artillery in Mar 1999. Having served the nation in various sectors and roles the officer is presently on study leave pursuing a Master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from Pune University.

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“If your past glories weigh more than your future dreams, Decay has begun.”
— Pavan Choudary



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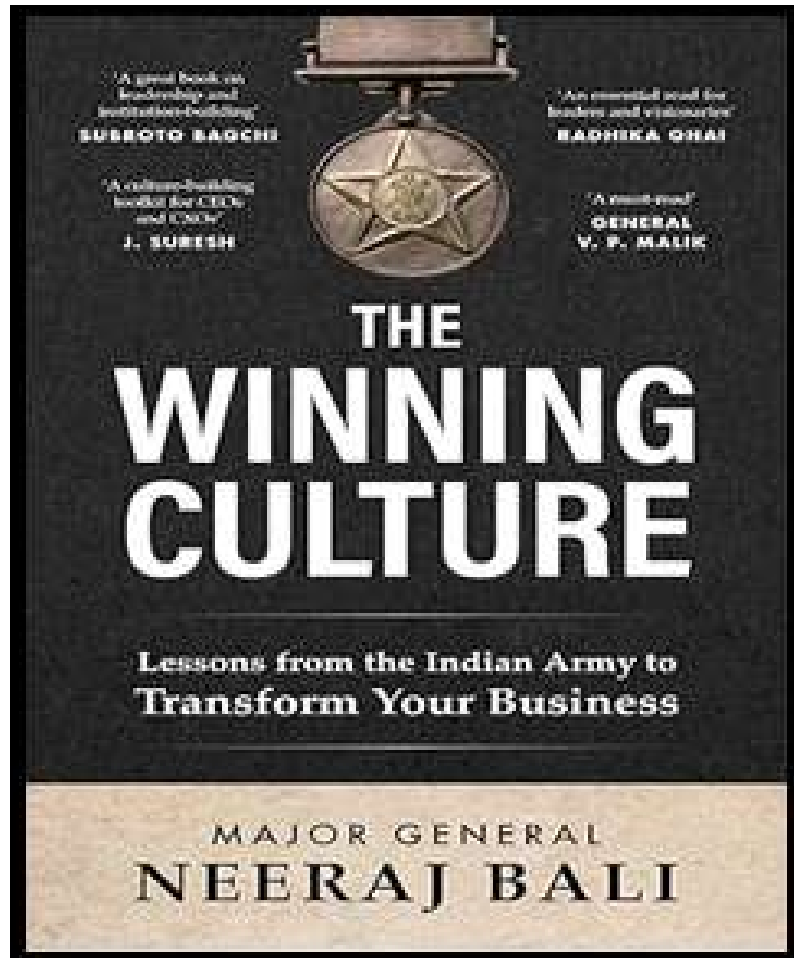
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Book Review

THE WINNING CULTURE - LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE INDIAN ARMY

BY BY MAJ GEN NEERAJ BALI, SM (RETD)



About the Author

Major General Neeraj Bali, Sena Medal (Retd), is an Indian Army veteran with extensive operational experience. He notably commanded a Rashtriya Rifles battalion in an anti-terrorist role and served as a security advisor to the Lesotho government in Africa. Maj Gen Bali led an Indian brigade during an Indo-US exercise. An alumnus of the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, USA, he is a teaching faculty member at the Institute for Competitive Intelligence, Germany, and the School of Inspirational Leadership, Pune, India.

After superannuation in 2016, Maj Gen Bali became CEO of the leading engineering company Rodic Consultants Pvt Ltd and managed a rural education society with ninety-two schools and colleges. He is a management advisor to Dynamic Cables Ltd in Jaipur and Notebook. Maj Gen Bali is also a motivational speaker, corporate performance coach, and Woxsen University, Hyderabad executive fellow. Maj Gen Neeraj Bali is a voracious reader and prolific writer, besides being a proficient speaker.

Relevance of the Theme of the Book

Culture is the mainstay of any society, an organisation, a corporate house, a nation or even a family. Culture drives every bit of us. The author convincingly argues that it does not stop at the corporate world importing management pamphlets from the Army but must imbibe a lot from the Olive Green culture.

As per author A, “Winning Culture” is the beating heart of any successful organization. The collective mindset, behaviours, and shared values drive performance, collaboration, and resilience. Visualise a team where everyone is aligned, motivated, and empowered – a winning culture. It goes beyond financial goals; it is about positively impacting the world. Organisations struggle to attract talent, innovate, and achieve sustained results without it.

The author has done extensive research to acquaint the rest of the civilian world with the Military ethos and culture that makes the Indian Army our nation's last bastion.

The Winning Culture - Leadership Lessons from The Indian Army

Every organisation in different fields devote enormous sums of money and significant resources to draw and implement intricate business strategies. Why, then, do these well-thought-out plans so fall short of expected outcomes or desired results? Why do leaders struggle to motivate their rank and file despite offering generous monetary compensation? What makes it so challenging to build loyal, unified teams willing to put their company's success above all else? According to Maj Gen Neeraj Bali, an Indian Army veteran turned executive performance coach, the root of these persisting problems is the lack of a robust company culture.

In "The Winning Culture: Lessons from the Indian Army to Transform Your Business," the author skilfully explores the rich tapestry of military leadership values within the Indian Army and presents a compelling case for their seamless integration into the corporate world. Majestic in its simplicity, the book serves as a guide for establishing a winning culture that draws inspiration from the disciplined ethos of the armed forces. The book emerges as a compendium of battle lores, citations, hair-raising war realities, the reason for soldiers' valour in the line of fire, the Camaraderie, and tradition.

The author effectively draws parallels between the strategic mindset, teamwork, and unwavering commitment to excellence instilled in military personnel and their applicability in the corporate landscape. By weaving real-world examples from the Indian Army with insightful anecdotes, the book successfully translates these values into actionable principles for organisational success. Such examples are then distilled into intelligent blueprints to help leaders build their own durable culture – the ultimate fount of high performance, effective collaboration, and success.

One of the book's strengths lies in its practical approach. It does not merely idealise military virtues but outlines specific strategies for implementation. The author provides a roadmap for leaders in the corporate world to foster a culture of leading by example, responsibility and teamwork – qualities deeply ingrained in the military ethos. Additionally, the book delves into the nuances of leadership styles within the Indian Army and elucidates how these can be adapted to diverse corporate settings. From decision-making under pressure to fostering a sense of camaraderie among team members, the lessons offered are relevant and transformative.

While the book champions the integration of military values, it remains mindful of the unique dynamics of the corporate world. The author acknowledges the need for adaptability, urging leaders to selectively adopt principles that align with their organisational context.

Layout of the Book

Divided into 08 chapters, the book covers various aspects lucidly and engagingly. Maj Gen Neeraj Bali has used the example of fundamental cultural differences between the Indian Army and Pakistan Army; both nations and their respective armies came into existence simultaneously but have evolved differently. He cites and narrates engaging instances from various active operational areas /wars fought by the Indian Army and peacetime routines.

A brief (I do not intend to spoil the charm and joy of reading the book in person by giving any spoilers) of these eight chapters is as follows: -

| Chapter No | Heading | Highlights |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Chapter 1 | Strategy for Breakfast | The author explains the relationship between culture and strategy and stresses that no matter how good a strategy is, it will fail without a culture in any organisation. |
| Chapter 2 | Why Are Officers Dying? | Highlights the concept of leading from the front. |

| Chapter No | Heading | Highlights |
|------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Chapter 3 | The Strength of the Chain | Stresses upon the Teamwork |
| Chapter 4 | The Fog That Hangs Forever | Conveys the Importance of procedures /processes and norms |
| Chapter 5 | Take Two Risks and See Me Tomorrow | Emphasises the concept of No Risk No Gain |
| Chapter 6 | It Isn't Just about the Brotherhood | The Indian Army as an organisation is a close-knit family. |
| Chapter 7 | Naam, Namak, Nishan: | The Cement That Binds The set of ideals that guide and motivate the conduct of soldiers during war and peace |
| Chapter 8 | How to Transform Corporate Culture | A step-by-step roadmap with stories of successful transformation in the corporate sector |

Summary

As per the author, Culture is not fluff; it is a strategic force for the undermentioned reasons:

- **Talent Magnet:** A strong culture attracts top talent. People want to work where they feel a sense of purpose and belonging.
- **Innovation Hub:** Collaboration thrives in a positive culture. Diverse minds come together, sparking innovation.
- **Resilience Booster:** When challenges hit, resilient cultures adapt. They weather storms and emerge stronger.

- **Brand Reputation:** Culture defines your brand. It is not just about products; it is about how you operate.
- **Long-Term Success:** Enduring cultures outlast market cycles. They are the secret sauce for sustained achievement.

How can leaders actively shape and nurture a winning culture within their organisations? **Maj Gen Neeraj Bali's advice:** -

- **Walk the Talk:** Model desired behaviours. Your actions set the tone.
- **Communicate Purpose:** Connect everyone to the big picture. Why do we exist?
- **Empower and Trust:** Give autonomy within boundaries. Trust your team.
- **Celebrate Wins:** Recognition fuels motivation. Celebrate achievements.
- **Learn and Adapt:** Cultures evolve. Invest in learning and adaptability.
- **Break Silos:** Collaboration beats isolation. Tear down walls.
- **Lead with Resilience:** Show grit. Bounce back from setbacks.

Recommendations

A power-packed compendium of tried and tested guidelines, *The Winning Culture* is the perfect handbook for leaders looking to revolutionise organisational culture and lead their teams to guaranteed wins. It is a must-read for everyone and young military men/women to inoculate the grand legacy of Services culture. The book offers a compelling exploration of leadership and organisational excellence drawn from the rich experiences of the Indian Army. Through insightful anecdotes and practical lessons, Maj Gen Neeraj Bali provides a valuable guide for cultivating a winning culture in any context. The book's blend of military wisdom and real-world applications makes it a must-read for those seeking to inspire and lead teams to success.

Offering a fresh perspective on cultivating a resilient and enduring organisational culture, "*The Winning Culture: Lessons from the Indian Army to Transform Your Business*" seamlessly blends captivating anecdotes with practical strategies, making it an engaging and relevant read for a diverse readership.

The book offers a valuable resource for business leaders seeking to cultivate a winning team and achieve sustainable success. It emphasises that a winning culture is not merely a façade of empty slogans or buzzwords but a deeply ingrained set of values, behaviour, and practices permeating every facet of an organisation—powerful, proven lessons from the Indian Army to revolutionise organisational culture and gain bigger wins.

In this insightful book, General Bali, an esteemed Indian Army veteran turned executive performance coach, pinpoints the fundamental issue hindering many well-designed business strategies: a robust company culture.

In conclusion,

"The Winning Culture: Lessons from the Indian Army to Transform Your Business " is a compelling guide for leaders aspiring to cultivate a winning culture within their organisations. By blending the storied traditions of the Indian Army with contemporary corporate challenges, the book offers a roadmap for success that is both inspiring and actionable. The book is an exhaustive and insightful guide for leaders seeking to infuse their organisations with the time-tested values of the Indian Army. Maj Gen Neeraj Bali's holistic perspective, authoritative voice, practical examples, and notable strength of meticulously analysing specific military doctrines and their seamless translation into corporate leadership strategies make this book an indispensable resource for those aspiring to establish a winning culture in the corporate world.

| Details of the Book | |
|---------------------|---|
| Title | The Winning Culture - Leadership Lessons from The Indian Army |
| Author | Major General Neeraj Bali (Retd) |
| Publisher | Macmillan |
| Number of Pages | 304 |
| Language | English |
| Binding | Paperback |
| Country of Origin | India |
| Release Date | 23 November 2023 |



LT COL DHIRAJ BHIMWAL is a serving Army officer, commissioned from Officers Training Academy Chennai in Regt of Artillery in Mar 1999. Having served the nation in various sectors and roles the officer is presently on study leave pursuing a Master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from Pune University.

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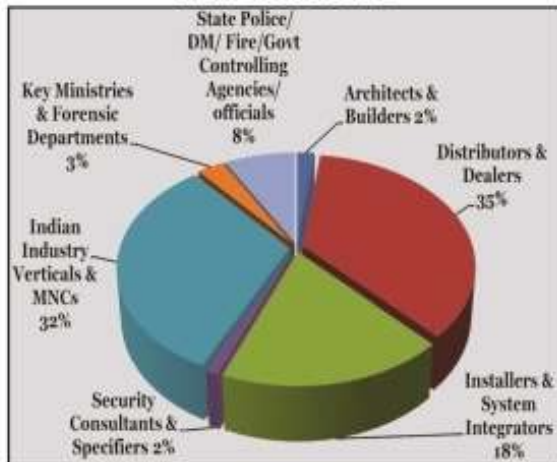
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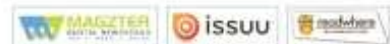
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Members Achievement

A Special Journey @ Cricket World Cup 2023

Though it was my first assignment, but It has been an experience of a lifetime for me to be associated with such a mega sporting event, and I feel myself proud to be able to successfully host the tournament leading it from the front as CEO.

It all started with the Cricket World Cup Trophy tour programme, which was hosted by the Cricket Association of Bengal. The fantastic World Cup Trophy was on display at the Eden Gardens lawns before the start of the World Cup. From fans to former cricketers and legends from all other sports , all made their presence felt at the iconic stadium to get a glimpse of the trophy. The Eden Gardens, which displayed a new look during the World Cup, was possible only because of the continuous hard work put in by the people involved.

Eden Gardens, this time, hosted five matches, including a high-profile semifinal match. This came as an opportunity for me to put in my best effort. On behalf of CAB, we wanted to make this World Cup bigger and better. For this, Eden Gardens got a total makeover ahead of the marquee event. The concrete structure and seats were repainted, and the press box and the hospitality boxes got a new and luxurious look, which caught the eye of all.

Keeping in mind the deadline, we at CAB began its preparations well in advance and squeezed in all possible modern amenities inside the sprawling decades-old structure. Numerous meetings with committee members, office bearers, and people involved made it possible to bring together our vision for an exceptional World Cup.



It all began by switching to modern lighting, redecorating the hanging press box and media centre, redesigning the interiors of the main lobby, dressing rooms and corporate boxes. Besides giving the stadium a brand new look, the ground where the match was played was something we prioritized a lot.

Not many stadiums across the world have the facility to cover the entire ground in case of rain. The Eden Gardens has made it possible. New covers, which can be used to cover the whole ground within a few minutes in case of rains, made it a hot topic in the Cricket world.

Along with this, the bigger and digital scoreboard, revamped wash rooms for fans, and a fresh coat of paint are some other facets that have given a huge facelift to the Eden Gardens.

We took initiative to allow and facilitate over 500 underprivileged children to watch the Pakistan Bangladesh match of the World Cup 2023 at Eden Gardens. Over 250 kids of Bharat Sevashram Sangh and 60 odd kids of Govt Run Shelter Homes by The Child Rights Commission of West Bengal came to witness today's match and to see the enthusiasm among the kids was huge.

The Eden Gardens is famous for its crowd. To be able to bring together a big number of fans for a high-profile match was special. The stadium did not disappoint with over 30,000 people coming down to witness a Bangladesh-Pakistan World Cup match. Not to mention the India - South Africa Match and the Semifinal, the stadium seemed to overflowing with the capacity of 67400 seating.



Watching the thousands cheer from the stands was surely an exceptional feeling. It was wonderful to see the Bangladeshi supporters carrying the Royal Bengal Tiger stuffed toys and as their stars Mahmudullah and Liton Das scorched the lush green turf of Eden with their strokes.

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan came out to a giant roar and did not disappoint scoring at ease all round the field. As the fans enjoyed and got the real feel of a World Cup, the reception the local and foreign media persons received at the Eden Gardens was special. The Bangladesh and Pakistan media enjoyed the hospitality at Eden Gardens hugely.

After more than a month-long cricketing extravaganza, the Eden Gardens hosted the semifinal in a grand fashion. Meet & Greet with Celebrities , legendary Cricketers and making a difference to whatever was a happening at Eden Gardens was something magical. And To be able to witness this and be a part of the team was simply exceptional.



The end of the World Cup matches at Eden Gardens saw a late night cake cutting ceremony by CAB President Snehasish Ganguly in the presence of Former BCCI President Sourav Ganguly. During the cake cutting he praised the whole team of CAB including the office bearers, committee members, office staff and everyone involved in the process for making the administration of the matches flawless.

Everyone captured the moments in the freeze frame for a lifetime. It was indeed a proud moment for not just me but the entire Cricket Association of Bengal to be able to host this magnitude of a tournament successfully.

Capt Chinmay



Leisure

The Perfect Family Man

"Wherever you go, go with all your heart." This timeless quote from Confucius rings true for military families like mine, often separated by duty and distance. My eyes light up whenever I tell my awestruck friends the story of the first time I met my army officer father. He made a long journey home, even when stationed in a harsh field, only to hold me, his newborn daughter, in his arms. After our first meeting, it has taken me 20 more years to comprehend the whole meaning of sacrifice that was demonstrated.

As a naive child, I couldn't grasp why the smiling man with the spectacles and a neat crew cut was absent for months. When he returned home, it would take me a few tries not to be shy when I used the term "Papa." Yet, my most carefree memories feature him indulging me during precious visits—sharing ice creams, fighting over the last chocolate in the fridge, which he eventually always let me have, and conspiring to get me out of mischief.

But it is the loyal, dedicated father he grew to be that truly earned my respect. Deployments kept him frequently apart from us physically but never emotionally. He wrote me tender letters affirming how proud he was of me, how absolutely central I was in his life no matter the distance dividing us. He gave me what every child craves—the security of unconditional love.

Like Confucius, my father followed his calling wholeheartedly, even when it conflicted with being present. He was the perfect family man— to us and his battalion. His sheer belief in his people is what makes him so great. That belief has given me the courage to follow my passions, no matter how difficult the path. Like father, like daughter— venturing far but forever faithful to what matters most. His example shaped me, and for that, I am forever grateful. Wherever military service takes our family, our hearts stand strong together.



***Ms. Rhea Sharma** is a spirited third year BBA student at IIM Rohtak with a passion for travel and writing. Daughter of an army officer, Rhea has cultivated resilience, adaptability, and an appreciation for new places and perspectives. Though she values stability, she craves outlets for creativity even more. Her bold outlook stems from her upbringing as well as an intrinsic drive to continuously gain new knowledge and experiences. With her strong will to keep learning, she finds inspiration in everyday moments and connects authentically through her writing. She believes in channeling her adventurous spirit and reflective nature into impactful stories.*



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