

**ADM R L PEREIRA
CENTENNIAL: 1923-2023**



QUARTERDECK 2023
NAVY FOUNDATION MAGAZINE



ACTIVITIES

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Contact Details: 12th Floor, Great Eastern Summit, B Wing, Sector-15, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai-400614.
Telefax: 022-27563425/14, Email: corporate@krasnydefence.com, Website: www.krasnydefencetechnologies.com

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EDITOR

Arati Rajan Menon

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Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, AVSM, VSM
Chief of Personnel

Rear Admiral Gurcharan Singh, NM
Controller Personnel Services (Offg)

EDITORIAL BOARD

Commodore C P Sanga
Captain Shobhit Agrawal
Commander Tapobrata Dutta

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Directorate of Ex-Servicemen Affairs,
Naval Headquarters,
Room No 004, Talkatora Stadium Annexe,
New Delhi 110004

Tele : 21410482/ 21410476, 21410473 (G & W)
Mob : 7428464442 (WhatsApp Message Only)
IVRS - 1800113999

e-mail : desa@navy.gov.in

Web Site : <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/navy/desa/>
HANDSHAKE : <https://esmhandshake-navy.in>
Twitter : Indian Navy Veterans (@NAVYESM)

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Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in Quarterdeck magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of Naval Headquarters, the Navy Foundation or the Editor



Admiral R Hari Kumar
PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC
Chief of the Naval Staff



रक्षा मंत्रालय
नौसेना मुख्यालय
साउथ ब्लॉक, नई दिल्ली 110011
Ministry of Defence
Naval Headquarters
South Block, New Delhi 110011

FOREWORD

Bharatiya Nausena draws its strength and substance from our men and women who don 'Whites' with pride and élan. Our naval history is peppered with chronicles of brave sea warriors and visionary leaders, who have laid a solid foundation on which the Navy stands tall today as a Combat Ready, Credible, Cohesive and Future Proof Force.

This special edition of Quarterdeck is a fitting tribute to one of the most admired and accomplished Naval Officers, Late Admiral Ronald Lynsdale Pereira, popularly known as 'Ronnie'. Moored in his principles and futuristic in his vision, Ronnie left a lasting legacy that continues to guide our course to steer.

To commemorate his Centennial Celebrations, this edition of Quarterdeck offers a rare glimpse of the life and journey of a remarkable CNS who exemplified the Navy's core values of Duty, Honour and Courage, during his service and beyond. This edition is a testament to his exemplary leadership and, I am sure it would inspire our future generations to carry forward his sense of duty and dedication to the navy and the nation.

This magazine, treasured by our esteemed veteran community, features various news, events and milestones as well as inspiring stories, humorous yarns and fond recollections. I am certain that this edition will bring back nostalgic memories, a silent smile and a hearty laugh.

I am indeed privileged to have penned the Foreword for this Special Edition and I must compliment the Editorial Team for an excellent job. Well done!

I wish all our readers an exciting and prosperous 2024!

Jai Bharat. Sam No Varunah!

(R Hari Kumar)
Admiral

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Greetings, dear readers.

Welcome to a very special edition of *Quarterdeck*, dedicated to Admiral Ronald Lynsdale Pereira in his centenary year.

As Admiral R Harikumar, Chief of the Naval Staff, writes in his message, Admiral Pereira was “moored in his principles and futuristic in his vision”. While ‘Ronnie’, as he was popularly known, left us too soon, his legacy endures. From chronicles of his life and accomplishments, to anecdotes that shed light upon the man beyond the uniform, penned by people who knew him, worked with him and were deeply inspired by him, this issue offers us a rare insight into a CNS who helped pave the way for a modern Navy that continues to break new ground and cement its formidable reputation.

Indeed, there has been much to report since we last met, with the National Defence Academy and the Naval Ship Repair Yard in Kochi celebrating their Platinum Jubilee; INS Garuda and INS Hamla turning 70; INS Agnibahu, INAS 330, INS Kardip and INS Tunir marking their Golden Jubilee; INS Kora celebrating its Silver Jubilee; INS Talwar turning 20; and the Award of the President's Colour to INS Dronacharya. Even as these formidable naval bulwarks cross significant milestones, the new guard is ready for the defence of Bharat – take, for example, the commissioning of INS Vagir. We present insightful coverage on all the above.

That said, *Quarterdeck* wouldn't be the cherished magazine it is without a treasure trove of memories, reminding us of the wealth of experiences a career in the Navy brings – from accounts of adventure and daring to nostalgia, humour and even poetry. Our Commands and Navy Foundation Chapters also update us on their activities in the past year. Further, as always, we pay tribute to our own who are no longer in our midst.

Editing this publication is both an honour and privilege and I express my gratitude to all our contributors as well as Team DESA, for their continued and constant support. Above all, to our veterans, thank you for your service! Respect. Salute. *Jai Hind.*

- Arati Rajan Menon

CENTENNIAL: ADM R L PEREIRA

LARGER THAN LIFE

By Commodore M Doraibabu & Khushie Bhulla

Admiral Ronald 'Ronnie' Lynsdale Pereira, baptised Gregory Ronald Dudley Lynsdale Pereira, was born to Lt (Dr) John Michael Pereira and Charlotte Louise O'Keefe Lynsdale Pereira on a hot and humid 25 May 1923 in Calcutta (now Kolkata). Young Ronnie was the last of Lt and Mrs Pereira's four children.

Ronnie attended North Point, a boarding school in Darjeeling known for instilling strict Christian values in young boys and turning them into morally upright men. Despite his tempestuous nature, Ronnie stood out among his classmates with his strength of character, a lifelong trait. Owing to his average performance in academics and keen interest in sports, he was transferred by his parents to St Michaels High School, closer to his family in Patna. He completed his last two years of intermediate science education at St Edmund's College in Shillong until 1942. On completion of his schooling, Ronnie applied to join the Navy in the war years.

Ronnie was commissioned into the Royal Indian Navy-Voluntary Reserve (RIN-VR) on 16 January 1943. While in the RIN-VR, he underwent a gruelling training regime. The Second World War changed Ronnie's career consideration and he decided to enrol into military service. Although he briefly considered dentistry, his exceptional qualities and past



performance led him to make the Navy his lifelong vocation.

Ironically, based on his initial training assessments during his time in the RIN-VR, his instructors noted that he was "not endowed with the exceptional qualities, but (he) persevered hard to achieve the high standards he (and the navy) set for himself". He also had a disappointing performance in both his anti-gas and signals courses – the latter of which he was made to repeat. His anti-gas instructor even found Ronnie's power of command to be "poor".

Interestingly, Ronnie was the kind of person who experienced immense pride as he was entrusted with commanding different ships,



HMS Excellent

discovering deep satisfaction in leading and shouldering the responsibility for his crew.

During his gunnery training on HMS Excellent at Whale Island, Portsmouth, Lt Pereira and five other officers were informed about India's independence and partition – Ronnie and three others chose to serve India. Upon his return, he exuded confidence and professionalism, commanding respect through his confident presence and meticulous grooming.

In 1952, he married Phyllis, who played a significant role in his success and was regarded as a mother figure by many in the naval fraternity. Ronnie's contributions to the Indian Navy cannot be fully appreciated without recognising Phyllis's support and their shared dedication towards caring for others. They found happiness in the simple joys of nurturing and supporting those around them, leaving a lasting impact on generations of service members.

Ronnie believed that matters close to one's heart were to be done well or not at all; he displayed such a resolve regardless of which department or service he was appointed to work with. During his working hours, his colleagues described him as 'a strict, no-nonsense gunner'; in the evenings, he was always found on the

playgrounds, and by night a completely different man – relaxed, warm, and the life of the party with a fantastic sense of humour.

While onboard INS Kuthar, Cdr Pereira always maintained that for a ship to function smoothly, it needed to be happy; and for a ship to be happy, the crew must be contented. In his view, the wardroom was where the crew was allowed to wind down. The wardroom plays an important role in forging future naval leaders – it is where any disagreements between officers would mend or mellow down. He ensured that all officers on the ship could wind down, solve their problems and difficulties, and have enough recreation to recharge their spirits to get back on to duty.



In 1964, Ronnie was promoted to Captain and appointed as Director of the Directorate of Weapon Policy and Tactics (DWPT) at Naval Headquarters (NHQ) in Delhi. In the midst of a seemingly routine desk job, Ronnie discovered an unexpected turning point. Little did he know that the India-Pakistan War of 1965, which broke out four months later, would propel him into the epicentre of the expansion of the department, as ordered by the Indian Navy.

In 1967, Ronnie was thrilled to return to sea as the Commanding Officer (CO) of INS Delhi. His successor as CO, Capt (later VAdm) V E C Barboza, discovered a notebook Ronnie would maintain during his tenure. He wrote about shiphandling and was utterly critical of himself. He shared these notes with the officers in his crew so that he could improve and the officers could learn, a testament to his commitment to the cause of learning and growth.

On 9 January 1971, Capt Pereira took over the duties of Deputy Commandant and Chief Instructor (Dep Com) of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla. He was strict and curt, yet relaxed and jovial. He practised the 'Cruel to be Kind' theory – a notion that actions that may initially appear unkind can actually be kind in a pragmatic sense, as they ultimately benefit someone.

As Dep Com, Ronnie would always come across as immaculately dressed and morally upright. Ronnie was very particular about his appearance. And rightly so, as it emanated a presence of importance and responsibility. During his time at NDA, he once noted a senior cadet reprimanding a junior while in casual dress, probably a dressing gown or shorts. The



INS *Kuthar*

senior was immediately punished. "Always be in uniform when you have to punish someone," he maintained. "Uniform gives you the authority; without it, you are nobody." Ronnie led by example, so much so that even when he punished certain cadets and asked them to report to his house at specific hours at night, he would appear before them smartly in his uniform, never once in civil dress.

As Dep Com, Ronnie displayed boundless energy and took a hands-on approach to understand the inner workings of the academy. Punishment, to him, was about corrective measures rather than expletives. His favourite punishment was sending cadets on a challenging Sinhagad hike, fostering endurance, stamina and self-confidence. In one particular incident, Ronnie saw a cadet walking and not doubling. The cadet attempted to flee as he saw the Dep Com hoping to outrun him. Ronnie ran down the steps and chased the cadet, only to stop short, realising he had joined a marching squad of cadets all looking the same. He immediately asked the cadet to fall out. When there was no movement, he sent all 16 cadets straight to Sinhagad and back. On their return, the cadets were greeted by the Dep Com with fresh lime and glucose and pride in his eyes. He remarked how the country was in

safe hands if the whole lot was ready to go through the hike to cover for one of their own. He was very particular about the welfare of the cadets at the Academy and always ensured their grievances were heard when expressed. To him, these cadets were thought of – and treated – as his and Phyllis's sons.

While he was Flag Officer, he ensured he flew his flag on every ship under his command, warranting high fighting efficiency and training. His time as the CNS is remembered by two very prominent incidents, both incidentally involving submarines. Essentially, Admiral Pereira initially expressed his preference for the technologically superior Swedish Kockums submarines over German-made HDW submarines. Second, he rejected the offer of a nuclear-powered submarine from the USSR, believing it to be a ploy to undermine the deal for the HDW submarines with the Germans. He didn't see the necessity of nuclear submarines for India's naval strength as yet. Indeed, he never shied away from doing what he deemed correct. The consequences were a matter to be dealt with in the future.

Captain B R Sen (Retd) recounts an incident where Admiral Pereira, on his way to the Prime



INS Delhi

Minister's Office for a meeting, halted to help a youth carrying an elderly man on his back to the hospital as he could not afford transport. Despite the delay to his meeting, Ronnie took the man to AIIMS in his staff car and ensured the man received medical attention. This act of courage and compassion demonstrated Ronnie's unwavering commitment to doing what he believed was right, regardless of the consequences.

As the CNS, Admiral Pereira had strongly advocated for entitled rations for the officers and sailors of the Navy. The former chiefs had advocated for money in lieu. Admiral Pereira believed that rationing in kind was essential to counter inflation in the future. Several years on, the officers and sailors of the Navy look back at this as a blessing.

On 1 March 1982, after nearly 40 years of selfless service to the people of his nation, Admiral Ronald Lynsdale Pereira, PVSM, AVSM, retired.

Ronnie never chased after rank or clout; he wholeheartedly loved and cherished the Navy. Ronnie and Phyllis, Paa and Maa as they preferred to be called, worked tirelessly for the benefit of the naval fraternity – him as CNS, her as



President of the Naval Wives Welfare Association (NWWA). The couple retired to Whitefield, Bangalore, and later moved to the Nilgiris.

In a time when ethical standards sometimes waver, and young people are searching for real role models, Admiral Pereira shines as a symbol of strong honesty that spans three generations of Indian naval officers. Just a whisper of wrongdoing would set off a strong reaction in the Admiral. However, it is his and Phyllis Pereira's steady kindness and understanding that won the deep



love and respect of his beloved Navy – a Service that played a pivotal role in making him the larger-than-life legend he became.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commodore M Doraibabu, NM, was commissioned on 1 July 1997. A specialist in Communications & Electronic Warfare, he is an alumnus of the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington, and completed Higher Command from the College of Air Warfare, Secunderabad. He holds an MPhil and MSc degree in Defence and Strategic Studies and an MSc in Telecom. He has commanded Indian naval ships Kakinada, Sudarshini and Sukanya. He is the author of A Decade of Transformation – Signalling Power and Partnerships 2011-2021, a history of the Indian Navy, along with many other publications. At present, he is posted as Additional Director at the Maritime History Society and is coordinating the Navy gallery being established at the National Maritime Heritage Complex project coming up at Lothal, Gujarat.

Khushie Bhulla is pursuing her master's degree in Management Studies in Heritage Management from Ahmedabad University. She is currently interning at the Maritime History Society.

LASTING IMPACT – FROM CADET TO CHIEF

By Admiral R K Dhowan (Retd)

It would be fair to say that Admiral Ronnie Pereira holds a special place in the hearts and minds of all Indian naval officers, especially for those who were fortunate to have served in the Navy when he was there. And even more so for those who were directly touched by this stupendous military leader. I count myself among the fortunate few in both categories. Let me begin by a reiteration that all the stories about this great Admiral that have been told and retold are true!

I was a young impressionable cadet at NDA, way back in 1971, when the venerable Ronnie Pereira joined as Deputy Commandant. I recall Ronnie as a tall martinet, with an ever erect posture, sharp glint in the eye, clipped style of speaking and a really loud roar when aroused – one that never needed the services of a megaphone or intercom to be heard across the Parade Ground, or indeed the upper decks onboard a ship. But, notwithstanding the strict disciplinarian he was, Admiral Ronnie Pereira was also a man with a compassionate heart. Deeply committed to the well-being of the cadets and their proper development into future leaders, he was closely involved with all aspects of training. He was an icon to the young cadets, even then. His word was law, and his credibility and his persona evoked trust and faith. Never one to allow any slackness to prevail or be tolerated, he was, at the same time, never hesitant to admit any shortcomings on his own part, including having the courage to review his own decisions in the light of new facts or perspectives. Indeed, if I were to try and define

integrity, the image that comes up is, simply, Admiral Ronnie Pereira.



I was fortunate to have served under his guiding hands not only at the NDA, but also during my Sub-Lieutenant courses at the Southern Naval Command in Kochi, where he was the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief. He was reputed among the instructors to always be open to ideas and new approaches, while strongly emphasising upon the basics. It was a privilege to be awarded my Sword of Honour by Admiral Pereira. I still remember his gently spoken words during the Command Divisions in 1975 as he deftly placed the prestigious Sword of Honour into the scabbard at my side. "Stand Tall," he said. "Carry it with Honour."

In the following year, I was to undergo my watchkeeping onboard the old cruiser INS Delhi, which he had famously commanded. The aura of Captain Ronnie Pereira still moved along the mess decks and helped to groom and hone the skills of young cadets who came onboard for training. I grew up in the Navy that Admiral Ronnie Pereira shaped and moulded, much like his cadets. It was indeed my privilege and honour to command the new guided missile destroyer INS Delhi, which retained the spirit and moving force of the old Delhi and her most famous Captain. And, even more so, it was my privilege to be at the helm of the Indian Navy, which he once commanded.

As I look back on four decades plus in the Indian Navy, since those early days at NDA, I must duly admit the lasting impact and influence of Admiral Ronnie Pereira upon me and my evolving perspective, from Cadet to Chief. What we saw, what we imbibed, was to shape and guide what we became and how we conducted ourselves. Over the years, I have often tried to encapsulate Admiral Pereira into a few core ideas, which have helped me in turn to shape and guide others, to run ships, the Fleet, NDA, and the Indian Navy. In tribute to Admiral Ronnie Pereira, I have referred to these as the C4I of Naval Leadership:

- **Commitment:** Commitment to the ship, service and the nation must always come first. The will to undertake all assigned tasks with humility and set about doing them to the best of one's ability, in the face of all trials and tribulations. It must be understood that this is no ordinary commitment but a commitment to make the supreme sacrifice, in the service of the nation, in the line of duty, should the need arise.
- **Courage:** The courage, both physical and moral, to face adversity and come out with flying colours. To maintain one's cool and focus all energies on achieving the larger goals. The courage to face one's men and superiors, at all times, with an open heart and steady gaze, to face the turning wind and tide, with alternating crests and troughs, of the physical and metaphorical seas in one's life and career.
- **Compassion:** Compassion towards the men and women you lead. Understand their strength

and weakness and then work with them shoulder to shoulder as a team.

- **Credibility:** Credibility as a professional and credibility of your character are qualities that will always precede you wherever you go. We, therefore, need to build credibility as a professional as we grow in Service. The credibility that allows shipmates to place their professional and personal trust in you, to be able to hold the Watch and take the ship through, safely and efficiently.
- **Integrity:** Encompassing all the above qualities is the quality of integrity, which has to be beyond doubt, always and every time.

Indeed, Admiral Ronnie Pereira embodied all this – and much more. While these are just a few key reminiscences of how and where Ronnie P influenced my life and career, there are so many aspects to this great leader and human being that, no doubt, inspired so many others. I am particularly happy at this notable initiative of the Navy Foundation to encapsulate his life in *Quarterdeck 2023* – and not to forget his constant companion and equally revered better half, Mrs Phyllis Pereira. I am sanguine that this effort will serve to bring Admiral and Mrs Pereira closer to those who saw, heard and felt their presence in yesteryears, and also shape, guide and inspire generations of future naval and military leaders of India. As I have passed on the sword and baton to future generations, I can only reiterate Admiral Ronnie Pereira's words: "Stand Tall. Carry These with Honour."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Admiral R K Dhowan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, from the 45th Course of the National Defence Academy, was commissioned on 1 January 1975. Following a glorious naval career, he rose to the pinnacle as the Chief of the Naval Staff. After retirement, he now adorns the prestigious position of Chairman, Society for Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Studies (SAMDeS), which keeps him most gainfully engaged in pursuing a passion very close to his heart.

“I'M RONNIE, YOU ARE KUTTY”

By T C Narayan

It all began in 1951 with a Guard of Honour for General Cariappa, then Army Chief, who was visiting Cochin to attend an Ex-Servicemen Rally. My private Sea Cadet group was also invited to be part of it. As the General was inspecting the Guard and came to my unit, I was walking beside him, with the Guard Commander, Lt Cdr Pereira, walking behind us. I had a sudden urge to sneeze and my left hand was slowly creeping into my pocket for my handkerchief, when it received a sharp but silent slap from behind. I choked on my sneeze and the inspection concluded successfully.

At the tea break, I was still wondering what would follow the slap as it had come with a whisper that was not intelligible but certainly did not sound complimentary. Then who should I see striding towards me but the tall, menacing Guard Commander and I prepared for a rebuke. However, to my surprise, he gave me a pat on my shoulder and said, “Well done.” And while I was still savouring the unexpected praise came the concluding part that introduced me to the real Ronnie Pereira. His words were, “And my dear fellow, when on parade keep your bloody hand where it belongs!”

It was in 1949 that my privately funded Sea Cadets, originally Sea Scouts, had been adopted by Commodore Ellison, who was Commodore-in-Charge Cochin or Comchin. When he learnt that many of these boys were originally school

dropouts from poor families and their mobilisation in uniform was an opportunity provided for them to reform, he decided to

support the effort. Successive Comchins showed interest – Cmde McGregor not so much but Cmde Jay, DSO, DSC and Bar, went all out. He ordered that the cadets be given basic training sessions in the B&D and Gunnery Schools, while I was myself, at a later stage, sent for 'medical' and to join a Direct Entry Sub-Lieutenants Course in progress, which sealed my lifelong link with the Indian Navy. This was when I got to know Lt Cdr Pereira personally and had the privilege of receiving his special attention. I found the gunners particularly sociable off the parade ground and, despite the age gap between us, I made many lifelong friends from among them. Successive Navy Chiefs, right from Admiral Katari, found time to meet me on their Venduruthy visits in their generous gesture of support. In my post Sea Cadet life, too, I continue to enjoy a connection with the Indian Navy, which is how I'm now writing about my lifelong friendship with the Pereiras.



Lt Cdr Pereira's ability to inspire a sense of personal loyalty without showing any favours was a unique trait. He could punish strongly, yet retain the victim's adoration. It was not mere admiration for a true professional but inspired by a commitment not to let him down in his expectation. He inculcated a sense of pride in oneself and loyalty to the Service. And he recognised one's progression in life.

There is one instance that has remained etched in my memory. Years had passed by; my Sea Cadets had been disbanded. I had entered the corporate world but remained in contact with Cdr Pereira as he went up the naval ladder. It so happened that he was in Cochin as Oi/c Gunnery School in 1957 when I got married and wished to introduce her to the Pereiras. I phoned him and he greeted me with the same characteristic warmth. We called on them and I automatically stood to attention and said, "Good evening, Sir." He bellowed, laughing, gave us both big hugs, and then turned to me. "Damn it, man," he said, "you are not in uniform and I am no longer your senior. You have grown, you are a manager, we are friends. I'm Ronnie to you and you are Kutty." It was a huge revelation of the man that he could happily and openly accept a former disciple as an equal.

We saw a lot of each other when he was Fleet Commander East and I was in Hyderabad setting up a huge fertiliser plant in coastal Kakinada. I used to visit Kakinada via Vizag in order to spend an evening with the Pereiras. As for the Admiral, he flew to Delhi often via Hyderabad and lunched with us before catching the afternoon flight. My younger son Mahesh, then eight years old, was determined to join the

Navy with Uncle Ronnie proselytising for the Navy – Mahesh thought it was all decorated uniforms, stars and flag on the car. However, he had an eye problem, which meant glasses, and I had to gently wean him away from the Navy plan. Mahesh was confident he would be Chief particularly after Ronnie became CNS. The Admiral was relieved to hear that I had convinced Mahesh that Uncle Ronnie would have retired and would be unable to help when Mahesh was ready to take over!

Ronnie Pereira moved to Cochin as Flag Officer South and my wife Bhavany was visiting Cochin. The Pereiras insisted she spend at least a couple of days with them in Katari Bagh. However, closer to her arrival came the message that the guest bedroom was already taken by an 'unavoidable guest'. She went to lunch with them and was then taken to be introduced to the guest. The door and windows of the bedroom were secured; when they entered, Bhavany saw all the furniture covered by old newspaper and sheets – the guest was a crow with a broken wing, hopping around! The Admiral had been driving back from Coimbatore when he found the bird struggling on the road. The crow stayed as a guest till it was able to fly away! That was another facet of Ronnie.

Bhavany and I later moved to Singapore but we enjoyed the Pereira hospitality at Navy House on our visits to Delhi. I think it was January 1982; I arrived in Delhi from Singapore in the evening and reported to Admiral Pereira. He insisted I join him at his farewell party for his officers as he was on the verge of retirement. I witnessed an outpouring of genuine affection from those who served under him.

We kept in constant touch with the Pereiras as they experimented with various possible homes to settle in. We saw them in their closing years and silently grieved when they departed. What remains fresh in my mind are a few sentences in a letter he wrote to my son Mahesh about the

Navy: "Son, there is no profession like the Navy. You make no money but it gives you dignity and pride in yourself like no other profession can."

That was what Ronnie Pereira lived and worked for.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

T C Narayan is a compulsive writer of books on current affairs with a special interest in the defence forces, particularly the Navy. He has now retired after 55 years in the corporate world in India and abroad. His connection with the Indian Navy began 74 years ago and straddles its British Indian and Free Indian eras. His privately funded Sea Scouts, adopted in 1949 by Commodore-in-Charge Cochin (Comchin), Commodore Ellison, continued to have the support of his successors, Commodore McGregor and Commodore Jay, DSO, DSC (and Bar), the last of whom redesignated it as Sea Cadets and formalised training sessions already in progress. One of his cadets, Verghese Koithara, graduated from the National Defence Academy and later retired from the Navy as Vice Admiral and Chief of Logistics. Now 93, T C Narayan continues to have an active interest in the Indian Navy.

By Vice Admiral Anil Kumar Chawla (Retd)

While I never had the good fortune of serving directly under the legendary Admiral R L Pereira, I had the good fortune to meet him and Mrs Phyllis Pereira on a few occasions. Each interaction was memorable in a different way – some humorous, some motivating, others poignant and philosophical – but all of them were incredibly inspiring and demonstrated the leadership qualities and character that made him our most loved and revered Naval Chief.

First impressions are lasting

I realised there was something special about Admiral Pereira the first time I heard him address our Passing Out Parade (POP) at the National Defence Academy in December 1980. Our Adjutant and the Subedar Major Sahib had repeatedly reminded us during the rehearsals that the former Deputy Commandant would look at every aspect of the parade critically. We were also told that he was not one to mince words if things did not go immaculately. Being sixth termers and leading the parade, we were reminded by our *ustads* that we had a special responsibility to uphold the *izzat* of our staff and the Academy. It was therefore with a sense of anticipation and trepidation that we formed up after the marchpast to hear his speech.

“Nothing,” he shouted into the microphone and a chill went through our tense bodies. “Nothing,” he spat out the word like a bullet for the second time, which seemed to cut through the cadets massed on the parade ground like a scythe through wheat. “Nothing,” he yelled



again for the third time, and we could see our Deputy Commandant's shoulders start to droop on the Quarterdeck. And then sweet deliverance! “Nothing,” he said, “gives me greater pleasure than witnessing this fine POP today.” We would have chucked our berets in the air and cheered, but all we could do was puff out our chests and feel a warm glow of happiness and pride seep through us. We heard the rest of his seven-minute speech with rapt attention where he reminded us of the challenges that lay ahead, the privilege we would have of commanding the finest men and women in the world and of serving our country, if required at the peril of our lives. He bluntly stated that though we would never get rich monetarily, the richness of our experience would be incomparable. I distinctly remember him saying that he was still wearing the No. 1s that had been stitched in Dartmouth when he was a cadet and the only thing that had changed was the stripes! As we passed him in slow march on the Quarterdeck, I immediately marked him out as my role model – such was his charisma and the magnetism of his personality.

During the tea after the POP with the passing-out cadets, my father, then a serving Colonel, introduced me to the Admiral as I was a naval cadet. Both Admiral Pereira and Mrs Phyllis Pereira were a charming and gracious couple and put me at ease immediately – so much so that I queried the Admiral as to how he had been able to preserve his No. 1s for over four decades, possibly implying that it was not possible. Reading my mind, he immediately opened the buttons of his jacket and showed me the tailor's label inside, which read, 'Cadet RL Pereira, Dartmouth'. I was later suitably chastened by my father for questioning my CNS, but the fact that he had the humility to demonstrate his word to a mere cadet is a lesson in integrity and leadership that I have never forgotten.

Meeting in Mombasa

Ten months later, we were on our midshipmen cruise to East Africa. The Training Squadron had been deployed to bolster the Eastern Fleet during the New Moore Island crisis and we were more than relieved to land in Mombasa as our first port of call. The first social event was a lunch at an opulent bungalow by the beach, hosted by a prominent Indian gentleman, to which I and my fellow midshipman were nominated. The beautiful location, the glamorous crowd (which included the newly wed Mumtaz Mahal), the well-stocked bar by the poolside and the tables groaning with goodies all dazzled us and we soaked in the atmosphere. In fresh white 8As, aged all of 19 years, we felt we had 'arrived'. My fellow midshipman, being older and savvier than me, had explained what we needed to do there. The first step was to pick up a good drink (he ordered two Camparis at the bar though we were only allowed to drink beer, as he thought it looked more sophisticated in that crowd). The

second step was to find someone 'influential', strike up a conversation, invite the individual to the Gun Room for a beer and then, hopefully, we would be looked after for the next three days. His theory sounded logical to me. Campari in hand, he then reconnoitred the crowd like a hunter looking for suitable prey. Soon his eyes locked on to a tall and impressive person in a grey lounge suit holding forth among a large group of people. "That person," said my friend, "let's go and meet him."

I remember thinking that there was something familiar about his face but bowed to superior wisdom. My friend fortuitously being taller and bolder than me, cut through the crowd and not being one to waste time, introduced himself and invited the gentleman to the Brahmaputra Gun Room for a beer in the evening, all in the same breath. To be fair, he made the invite sound extremely grand. I was still camouflaged by my friend when I heard the gentleman respond in a booming voice that I immediately recollected. "Good afternoon, young man. I am Admiral Pereira. Who gave you that Campari?" While my friend was desperately trying to retrieve his hand and the situation, I quickly melted into the crowd and ditched my Campari, thinking bitter thoughts about our Sub of the Gun for not having warned us that the CNS was in town. My friend joined me a few minutes later; his normally dark complexion was quite pale and the Coke in his hand quivered. Admiral Pereira had taken charge of him like a true Gunnery Officer. However, the humour of the situation had quickly got to him and he not only pardoned him for not recognising him, but also shared a guffaw about it with Mrs Phyllis Pereira. We apprehended that we would be hauled up before our Captain on our return but we never heard of the incident again. To our teenage minds, his generosity reflected his

large-heartedness and puckish sense of humour, innate qualities that go into making a great leader.

Sunset at the United Services Club

The third and final meeting happened many years later in 1993. I was commanding INS Vinash in Mumbai and Admiral Pereira, by then suffering from lung cancer, was admitted in INHS Asvini for treatment. As luck would have it, my Navigating Officer was appointed as his Liaison Officer, my ship being in short refit. He would meet the Admiral every morning in the Officer's Ward for instructions and after giving him company for a few hours would return to the ship. One day he came back visibly emotional. The Admiral had requested him to arrange for some Brasso, wire jute and a cleaning cloth. A bit puzzled, he arranged for the materials, only to find the Admiral cleaning and polishing the tarnished brass fittings on the door and windows of his cabin a short time later, witnessed by a distinctly alarmed gaggle of hospital staff, apologising for their tardiness, and offering to do the job. The Admiral, however, reassured them saying that while they were busy treating him and a multitude of patients, he had sufficient time on his hands, which needed to be gainfully utilised. Keeping his surroundings shipshape was a thing he could still do. This would also be a small token of gratitude for the care provided by the

hospital. The young officer had moist eyes as he finished telling me about the incident, which demonstrated his humility and dedication to his Service and its personnel.

A few days later I was playing golf at the US Club. Admiral Pereira would often walk down to the Club Tea Hut from the hospital – he was a fine golfer in his prime. My four-ball included the Club Secretary and after finishing our round, we sat down at a table adjoining the Admiral. All was going well when a lady janitor working in the club walked up to the Admiral and stated that she had heard he was “like God”. She went on to state that her son was in the final year of school in Colaba, but she had to now vacate her quarter in the club premises, which would interrupt his schooling. She requested the Admiral's intervention to retain accommodation for a year, as all other avenues had failed. Such was the respect he commanded that before he could respond, the Club Secretary walked up to him and assured him that it would be done. Before she left, we heard her telling the Admiral, “You really are God!”

The brief 'encounters' with Admiral Pereira are cherished memories today. He was a rare individual with sterling qualities of head and heart and his impeccable integrity and honesty shone through his handsome visage. A military leader par excellence, he lives on in the memories of his shipmates.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Vice Admiral Anil Kumar Chawla, PVSM, AVSM, NM, VSM, was commissioned into the Executive Branch on 1st January 1982. He commanded five warships including INS Viraat and the Western Fleet besides tenantry key staff and training appointments. On completion of a glorious naval career spanning over 39 years, he superannuated as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command on 30 November 2021. Post-retirement he is an Adjunct Professor at the Rashtriya Raksha University and is on the board of several think tanks. He is a prolific writer and contributes to several publications.

By Admiral Sunil Lanba (Retd)

Leadership has always been required, and that remains true in today's digitally connected, global environment. Leaders must continue to prepare for what is, and for what may come. After 42 years of service to our country, I have seen and learned a great deal from many different leaders. I have learned many valuable leadership lessons, and continue to learn every day.

There are dozens of personal traits that affect leadership and some, namely integrity and character, are absolute. But in many years of experience, I have observed that the way leaders develop and deploy them is influenced by a handful of them: ambition, drive and tenacity, self-confidence, openness, realism, and an insatiable appetite for learning. These personal traits manifest in many ways. Do you stew over a decision alone or bring in trusted advisers for candid discussions? Do you allow yourself to be influenced by other people, changing your position in light of better analysis by a subordinate? Are you a procrastinator who wants more and more data – more certainty – before making a decision? Or are you impulsive, making a snap decision based on your gut instincts? Do you like to be liked? Will you impose your will on the organisation or seek a productive consensus that aligns the entire Service with your goals?

The personality traits of a military leader have been a subject of research. The most critical skills, traits and attributes a military leader must possess are integrity and honesty; being a visionary; having a combination of physical and

moral courage; having a balance between mission accomplishment and the needs of one's men; being professionally sound and man enough to say when one doesn't know; being calm in handling adversity and instilling confidence in subordinates; being a good listener; and having perseverance and enthusiasm to the aim and purpose; and, finally, initiative.

Great men transcend space and time. Their actions have an everlasting impact and their personalities grow with every successive narration. These narrations define their persona and help us to appreciate their contributions to the organisation. Such narratives become vital in the Navy, which looks up to the actions of its men and women. Admiral Ronald Lynsdale Pereira was an inspirational and charismatic leader and accounts of his leadership are legendary in the Navy.

The first account about Admiral Pereira I heard was from my father, who served in the Navy from 1948 to 1977 and retired as a Commander. The Admiral and he were part of the Navy Musketry Team in the mid-1950s. Admiral Pereira was the Oi/c of the team and they won the trophy, beating everyone at the championship conducted in Mhow. He talked in glowing terms of the Admiral's leadership style and standing up for what was right.

Admiral Pereira was the Deputy Commandant at NDA from January 1971 to April 1973 prior to our course joining the Academy in January 1974. We were told many stories of his omnipresence around the campus, jumping into the squadron



*The Navy Musketry Team in Mhow;
Admiral Pereira is fourth from left*

from the ground-floor cabins, award of 'on-the-spot' punishments, de-tabbing of sixth-term appointments, introduction of the Sinhagad hike punishment and award of the Sinhagad hike to the entire Academy for sloppy marching during POP practice. The 40th to 49th NDA courses were lucky to have him as their Dep Com. They fondly remember him as a leader they would follow anywhere. He also exhibited great concern and compassion towards the cadets. There hasn't been a Deputy Commandant of NDA before or after of his calibre.

I was fortunate to have been commissioned during his time. I still recall his iconic first message as the newly appointed Chief in March 1979: "The human being, the most important factor in peace and war, is uppermost in my mind and I will strive hard for his betterment." (*Cdr Anup Thomas: With Pride and Honour - A True Story of Inspiring Leadership.*) These words reflect his spirit and hands-on style.

Admiral Pereira is regarded as one of the architects of the modern Indian Navy. He served under two ensigns, The Royal Indian Navy and the Indian Navy, and demonstrated a

keen sense of purpose and dedication, tenacity, fortitude, resilience and charisma, which endeared him to the rank and file of the Service. His unblemished integrity, steady nerve and zeal for the Navy made him a true leader.

One of the most important leadership traits is 'walking your talk'. Whether it is your turnout, punctuality, physical fitness, being smartly dressed and well-groomed at all occasions, kindness and generosity or quick decision-making ability, a good leader needs them all. If one does not practise, abide and follow what you preach, your subordinates will have no respect for you. Leadership and credibility go together; in my opinion, they are synonymous terms, because leadership without credibility is pseudo-leadership.

An unwavering moral compass and the highest standard of credibility were central to Admiral Pereira. He was one such leader who not only set and demanded high standards from his subordinates but followed them to the T himself. His abundance of character, courage, conscience, soul and empathy compensated for his anger and impulsive reactions without consideration of his words or actions, which were his shortcomings. That said, he would bear no grudges or ill will.

While the Navy has changed entirely since his time, Admiral Pereira still lives on in the hearts and minds of the many lives that he touched and moulded, especially his cadets.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Admiral Sunil Lanba, from the 51st Course of the National Defence Academy, was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 January 1978. During his illustrious career spanning over 41 years, he rose to be the 23rd Chief of the Naval Staff. During his full tenure of three years as CNS, he rose to the prestigious position of the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee.

On his retirement, he assumed the responsibility of Chairman, National Maritime Foundation, from June 2019 to January 2022.

CENTENNIAL: ADM R L PEREIRA

RECALLING A LEGEND

By Vice Admiral M P Muralidharan (Retd)

Let me begin my recall of Admiral Pereira in a reverse cycle. I was in Kochi in October 1993 undergoing PCT, prior to taking over command of a ship. It was the pre-mobile phone era and I was booking a call through the Navy exchange to talk to my family who were in Wellington, as I was a DS at Staff College. As I got connected to the exchange, I noticed the telephone operator was sobbing loudly. Thinking she had undergone a personal tragedy, I asked her what had happened. I was stunned when she told me that she was crying because they had just learnt that Admiral Pereira, whom she described as "a wonderful person", was no more. That was the impact he had on people who probably had just a passing interaction with him or had merely heard of him. And this was more than a decade since he had retired!

Like many of my contemporaries, I first met Admiral R L Pereira, or Ronnie P as he was fondly called, when I was a cadet at the National Defence Academy (NDA) in early 1970s. He came there as our Dep Com in the rank of Commodore. I was not present at the Academy when he took over as I was admitted at Army Hospital in Delhi, after complications in my fractured left hand due to a horse-riding accident. On rejoining, I heard stories of the new Dep Com who had already gathered the reputation of being with his cadets, wherever

they were, irrespective of the time of day or night.

My first personal interaction with him was during a practice session for the Inter Battalion Bhavani Shankar Memorial Debate. We were being coached by Professor Raina to ensure we put up a good show. Dep Com joined us in one session and, in his inimitable style, gave us tips on public speaking. While I do not particularly recall the subject of the debate, I do recollect that the Admiral brought in the name of Brigitte Bardot! At that time, none of us cadets present there got the name right or were even aware of who she was. Being pre-Internet days, it took some research in the library for us to realise he was talking about the French heartthrob!

Once he learnt about my existence, he always made it a point to enquire about my progress whenever he saw me. Even though I was a temporary low medical category and exempted from physical activities as a follow up of the fracture of my hand, I had decided to take part in all outdoor activities. Soon, Dep Com became aware of this and while he did not tell me directly, as I learnt later, he appreciated the spirit of my participation. One day, he saw some of us in the swimming pool. Basically, it was a



way of skipping some other hectic activity under the pretext that we were weak at swimming and needed practice. He asked me why I was there. When I told him I was practising the breaststroke to clear the mandatory test as I was weak at it, he ordered me to swim half a length in that stroke. Even as I was midway through, he said he found nothing wrong with my stroke, adding, "I always knew no Malayali could be weak at swimming!" I was promptly ordered to leave the pool and rejoin squadron activities.

While a strict disciplinarian, he was always sporting enough to join cadets in all activities. One can never forget him celebrating Holi with us in the Battalion area – he readily accepted being thrown into a ditch with muddy coloured water! Even as C-in-C and the CNS, he retained a special bond with his old cadets. I recall meeting him at a command reception in Bombay when he was C-in-C. It was a breezy evening in the lawns of WNC Mess and my hair was a little longer than permissible. As I walked up to him, he brushed my hair with his hands and said, "Murali, I am glad you have not modified your uniform trousers into bellbottoms; but if your hair is long, brush it down when you come to meet the C-in-C!" I can never forget the look in the eyes of the Commodores and Captains standing around him; they were stunned to observe that such a strict disciplinarian could be so soft to a Lieutenant!

This apart, let me come to the main reason for which I will always remember him – but for him, I may not have remained in the Armed Forces. As mentioned earlier, I had fractured my left hand and after the customary low medical category period, I went for upgradation of my

medical category. The surgical specialist at MH Kirkee, observing that I had not been able to regain full movement of the hand in the supination/pronation mode, told me I could not be upgraded medically till the movement was back to normal. He placed me in a permanent low medical category, which meant that I could be withdrawn as a cadet. However, the Medical Officer at MH Khadakvasla, knowing the implication, took pity on an unknown cadet and send the papers back, requesting the specialist to make me a temporary medical category for another three months, to afford some more recovery time.

I was not aware of all these details as the MO had spoken only to my Squadron Commander; who told me that in the normal bureaucratic process, I may not get upgraded and that he was not in any position to resolve the issue. He advised me to go directly to Dep Com and explain my case. (I must admit that I could not comprehend the logic of the method proposed till I had spent many years in service!) So, I walked right into Dep Com's office and told his staff I wanted to meet him. In an earlier era, such an approach would have been unimaginable, but Ronnie P's staff had become used to cadets coming up on their own to meet him. In a matter of minutes, I was able to meet him. As soon as I finished speaking to him, he told me without hesitation, "Son, we will sort this issue out. Go back to your squadron. I will let your Squadron Commander know when I need you." He also added that he, too, had injured his hand and had not faced any problems.

A couple of days later, I was called to Squadron Commander's office to find a smiling Ronnie P sitting there. By then, we had heard that he was

going on promotion as Rear Admiral to command the Eastern Fleet. He told me he had handed over the duty of Dep Com but was planning to resolve my problem before leaving station. He took me along to the senior orthopaedic specialist at MH Kirkee who had been away when I was referred earlier. After examining my hand, he said there was no issue and that he would upgrade my category when I was due for recategorisation. Ronnie P told me to wait outside the room and I could hear some kind of debate inside. A little later, he came out beaming. "Son, you have been upgraded, so just continue with your training," he said. "See you soon on a naval ship!" On the way back to drop me at the squadron, he told me that he was worried that once he left, if the same specialist were not around when I came up for recategorisation, some other doctor may not have upgraded me, preventing me from passing out and joining the Navy.

Years later, when I discussed the issue with the Admiral, he simply said, "Son, if you can help

any person, and so long as you are not breaking any rules and it is not for personal gain, you should always do it." As I moved up the ladder in the Navy, I never forgot his words or the kindness he showed a young cadet, who he came to know for the first time at NDA – I wonder how many of us would have done such a thing. I have always endeavoured to live up to his ideal of extending a helping hand, so long as no rules were broken, even if it meant stretching them a little!

Indeed, Admiral Pereira was an iconic leader and role model, exemplifying the highest sense of duty, leadership, integrity, kindness of heart and a deep commitment to the welfare of personnel. The impact he had on generations of officers and men is difficult to put down in words. The way he inspired and moulded cadets at NDA has ensured that the legendary stories about him are not restricted to the Navy – they continue to be part of Army and Air Force lore as well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Vice Admiral M P Muralidharan, AVSM & Bar, NM, retired in February 2013 as Director General of the Indian Coast Guard. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, he specialised in Navigation and Direction and is a postgraduate in Defence Studies from the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. In a career spanning close to four decades in the Indian Navy, he has held several key operational and staff appointments, including command of three warships. His Flag appointments include Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST), Chief of Staff of Western Naval Command, Flag Officer Commanding Maharashtra and Gujarat Naval Area, the Commissioning Commandant of the Indian Naval Academy and Chief of Personnel. After retirement, he was appointed as a Member of the Armed Forces Tribunal at its Regional Bench in Kochi.

A LETTER FROM RONNIE PEREIRA

By Vice Admiral Kailash Kohli (Retd)

I was sipping the golden nectar in the salubrious climate of Wellington in March 1980, coming at the end of my tenure as a DS in Staff College. My wife came and gently whispered in my ear, "There's a call for you from Naval Headquarters."

"Who is it at this hour?" I asked, visibly irritated. The man on the line said, "Sir, DOP would like to speak to you." My hands froze and the nectar quickly drained out of my veins as I answered nervously. DOP was the man who, by a flick of his wrist, could send a well-settled officer scurrying from one end of India to the other.

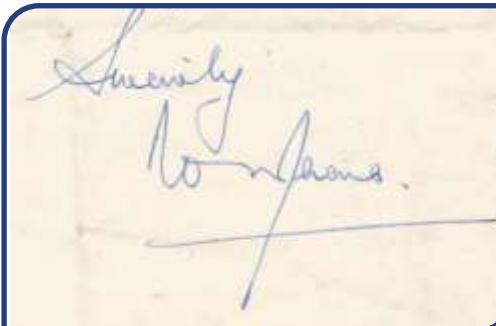
"Kailash, you will be getting a letter from the Chief. That's all I can say at this time. Good night."

My mind went into a spin. A letter from the Chief could only mean a letter of 'Severe Displeasure', euphemistically referred to as a love letter. What could I have done wrong? I certainly had not punched the Commandant on his nose, nor had I run away with a fellow officer's wife.

The next morning, my hands trembled as I opened a cover marked 'Personal and Confidential' from the Chief of the Naval Staff. I fell back in my chair when the contents of the letter crystallised in front of my eyes. The 'Old Man' was asking me to join him as his Naval

Assistant. I had always thought that in the Navy, you were told where to go; nobody ever invited you to an appointment. But that was, as I learnt in the next two years, Ronnie Pereira!

I have preserved that letter as one of my prized possessions to this day. To put it succinctly, it says a few things clearly. To start with, "We have never served together before" (in other words, he doesn't know me from Adam). To quote Admiral Pereira in his own inimitable style, "Personally, I would like to have you as my NA and the reason I am writing to you is to get your personal views in the matter. I would, however, like to be extremely frank and say that I do NOT wish you to join me if you have any reservations on this appointment."



He then goes on to explain at length what the tasks and responsibilities of the Naval Assistant to the Chief entail. He clearly says that the NA is required to give his free and frank views to the Chief, which may, at times, be at variance with the views of other senior officers. Objectiveness and honesty are, therefore, paramount when advising the Chief, because he categorises the Naval Assistant as his 'personal think tank', "because it becomes impossible for me to peruse and study every file personally, and it is your analysis that is important".

Further, he warns that I would have to put up

with his idiosyncrasies, ill temper and "numerous other shortcomings"! "All said, therefore, it might not be the most pleasant job that you wish to take up and I would, therefore, like from you a very honest and frank view as to whether you would like to join me. I can honestly say that you need have no compulsions if you do not wish to slot into this job."

The Chief then goes on to ask the views of a lowly Commander, who is yet to ship his fourth stripe, on whether the appointment as Naval Assistant to the Chief of the Naval Staff would be acceptable to him? Such was the mettle of the man. When cometh another?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Vice Admiral Kailash Kohli, PVSM, AVSM is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Defence Services Staff College and Naval War College, USA. He was the commissioning Commanding Officer of guided missile frigate INS Ganga and, earlier, commanded INS Nistar. His staff appointments include Fleet Operations Officer, Eastern Fleet; Directing Staff, DSSC, Wellington; and Naval Assistant to the Chief of the Naval Staff. His Flag appointments include Flag Officer Commanding, Western Fleet; Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command; Chief Instructor (Navy), DSSC Wellington; and Chief of Personnel, Naval Headquarters. He has served as Director General, Indian Coast Guard, and Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, prior to retirement in 1996.

FLASHBACK

By Vice Admiral H Johnson (Retd)

Can one of you give me a game as my partner is held up in a meeting?" The enquiry was from then Lt Cdr Ronnie Pereira as we two midshipmen came out of the squash court. The missing partner was Lt Cdr (E) Lional Pereira, a close cousin but a challenging opponent. Nervous at first, my confidence was restored by a few friendly remarks from him, and I played far better than my usual game. As I think back, it was the sterling and rare quality of making encouraging remarks in my opponent that induced me to give my best without any coercion. This rare quality in a leader was corroborated by some of my known nine-to-five timers who willingly burnt the midnight oil while on his staff. I have always felt that I missed out by never having to serve directly under him, for that deprived me of an opportunity to be a better leader and, more than that, imbibing the best human qualities. However, even from a distance, there was much to learn from him.

Once I had to fly the Admiral and Mrs Pereira from Mangalore to Kochi in an Alouette III. It was monsoon time and enroute we had to fly through a very heavy shower, which limited front visibility to almost zero. However, the beach below was clearly visible and I could continue without any problem. On landing, the Admiral said that he was white with anxiety but I showed none of it. I replied, "Sir, I had a mask on!" "Next time, give me a mask also," he said, to which his noble lady added, "Me too." Mrs Phyllis Pereira had resigned from a very senior



position in civil life to marry the Admiral. With her refined speech, courtesy and interest in welfare, she was always an attraction in any gathering. She will remain among the most dignified ladies I have ever met.

The Admiral was a deeply religious person and he believed everyone should follow their chosen religion seriously. On this account, he used to be very upset if he saw a Sikh sailor with shoulder length hair called 'modified' in naval parlance. He was to conduct my Annual Inspection when I was on INS Tir. In usual preparations among other matters, we decided to have a very imposing Sikh sailor as the gangway sentry without thinking that he had shoulder-length hair. On arrival, the Admiral had a few words with the sailor and then suddenly reached to feel the top of his turban. I thought our inspection was over but the EXO, standing next to me, whispered, "Sir, I told him to put a rolled-up stocking." All went well thereafter and on completing my command, I received my fourth stripe, which had literally hung by a stocking!

My posting as Naval Adviser had come to Dacca just after our High Commissioner had been shot there. The Admiral called me to his office and

said he did not want me to refuse the posting as one senior to me on the panel had done. "I will go, Sir," I said, "but my concern is for our two sons, aged 10 and 12, who would be exposed while going to school. At this short notice, it is impossible to get them into a good boarding school." He immediately wrote a personal letter to the Father Principal of St Paul's, Darjeeling. Back came a reply to say both boys had been admitted and should report with their kit as soon as possible. Eventually, NHQ had to cancel the posting on the insistence of Bangladesh, but that is another story.

At a Mess Night, he related an incident typical of his personality. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had called a meeting of senior ministers and Service Chiefs to discuss some vital issues. The Admiral was late for the meeting so the PM asked him to stay back after others had left. He apologised for being late but told her the reason: a man was lying on the road profusely bleeding after a hit-and-run incident. He put him in his car and got him to hospital. Incidentally, he always addressed the PM as 'My Girl' for he was not hankering for a plum office after retirement. He moved to a modest but tastefully decorated

house in White City, Bangalore, where he also had a serious accident riding a scooter.

During my last posting in Mumbai, Admiral and Mrs Pereira had to come to Mumbai for cancer treatment. Despite my repeated pleas, he refused to be accommodated in one of the two VVIP suites, saying they were for serving Flag Officers. A senior liaison officer and a car were placed at his disposal, but he never used them. Every morning, he used to walk down to RC Church without using the car.

All medical procedures were completed and it was time for their return to Bangalore. Saying goodbye, possibly forever, to this revered couple was among the most poignant times for Jasmine and I. While the Admiral and Mrs Pereira were their normal selves, we could only respond in monosyllables; our hearts too full to speak.

Not long after returning to Bangalore, the Admiral passed away and, a few years ago, Mrs Pereira followed him. May their most noble souls rest in peace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Vice Admiral H Johnson retired from the Navy in 1992 on superannuation after 38 years of active service. He is a graduate of the Joint Services Wing of the National Defence Academy, Dehra Dun, and Royal College of Defence Studies, London. Early in the service, he specialised as a fighter pilot and subsequently flew from various ships and naval air stations. His sea assignments included command of four major warships, culminating with Flag Officer Commanding, Eastern Fleet. His last three appointments in the Navy were Director General, Indian Coast Guard, Vice Chief of Naval Staff and Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command. After retirement, he worked for the next 15 years as Senior Adviser of major Indian NGO CRY – Child Rights and You and was closely involved in its work for underprivileged children. He is currently on the Governing Body of Lott Carey Charitable Mission in India and on the Managing Committees of its schools.

ANOTHER RONNIE P STORY

By Vice Admiral H S Malhi (Retd)

Anyone who interacted with Admiral Ronald Lynsdale (Ronnie) Pereira, our former Naval Chief, during his lifetime, in any capacity, rank or position, has a tale to tell. His imposing personality, strength of character and innate honesty made an everlasting impression.

So, here's an unusual 'Ronnie P' story involving a young Army Officer fresh from Young Officer's Course, managing to wangle leave for his older Naval Officer brother!

Back in the day, Missile Boat Squadron (25KS) exuded an aura. Fresh from daring exploits during the 1971 war, it was considered a notch above the rest of the Surface Navy. Armed with SSMs, a novelty among the Fleet, and scoring direct hits during PMFs lent the squadron a sense of exclusivity. This was certainly reinforced when these 'boats' revved up to 2,000 rpm in open seas, leaving the more sedate behind in the wake of arching foam at 32 knots.

Being an elite unit also meant that 25KS had to dominate all sports championships. A case in point, the Killer Squadron was reputed for its most formidable water polo team, which won the championship at least three years on the trot in the 1970s.

Now to the nub of the matter. The bulk of the Western Naval Command (WNC) team for the IN Aquatics Championship in 1978, to be held in

Cochin that year, comprised personnel from 25KS, and yours truly was the team captain solely by being the senior participant. Around the same time that year, my younger brother, an Armoured Corps officer posted in Ahmednagar, turned 25 and promptly decided to get married. It so happened that his wedding date, a month down the line, coincided with the Aquatics Championship.

C-in-C Admiral Ronnie Pereira had made it known that WNC would be second to none in any sports championship, so there was no way any participant could take off on leave during the championship, let alone the team captain. On learning that my leave to attend his wedding would not be possible, my brother was naturally quite upset and decided to visit me in Bombay on the weekend, to find some way possible.

So there we were, my brother and I, sitting in the 'Elbowbender' in Command Mess on a Saturday afternoon, trying to resolve this dilemma, when he got a sudden brainwave that he would speak to the C-in-C himself regarding my leave. Assuming that the many pints under his belt were taking their toll, I laughed off this silly suggestion.

At this point, a short backstory would be in order. My brother, a couple of courses my junior at NDA, was a cadet when the Admiral joined



there as Deputy Commandant in 1971. As is well known, Admiral Periera's tenure at NDA is indelibly etched in the minds of young cadets. An iconic figure and tough disciplinarian, he was feared as much as he was revered, and he was a father figure to many. One of them happened to be my brother, who was an Academy appointment and a sportsman. Mrs Phyllis Periera was particularly fond of him.

That evening, my brother announced he would call on the C-in-C and Mrs Periera to invite them to his wedding personally. More than a little bemused by this turn of events, I made him promise that he would not bring up any reference to my leave. We agreed to meet at Lion Gate after his visit to them and planned to have drinks onboard Chapal, where I was serving.

So, there I was, waiting in the Naval Dockyard just opposite the Lion Gate entrance, on my Jawa (a rather rickety 1969 model), when I spotted a black Fiat driving in with a flurry of activity, whistles being blown and stamping of feet and salutes all around. The car then approached me directly and I saw the C-in-C at the wheel himself with my brother sitting alongside. The car stopped next to me and the C-in-C popped his head out and bellowed, "Hello, son! I believe we are having a party tonight onboard your ship. You don't mind me crashing it, do you? Lead the way; I will follow you." All this threw me off so much that I could barely respond with a feeble "Aye, Sir!" After some frantic kicking, the bike sputtered to life and we set off with the C-in-C following in the wake.

By sheer good fortune, which I will come to later, the missile boats, usually berthed at Destroyer Wharf opposite the NCML building,

had been shifted to Cruiser Wharf. As we proceeded, my mind was filled with dread. General alertness, turnout and gangway discipline, a norm on Fleet ships, were not up to the standard on missile boats. Usually, a division of four boats tied up together shared an OOD. Being a Saturday evening, I was sure that the OOD would be taking it easy in one of the wardrooms, and there was no way to warn him (no mobile phones then!). I could only imagine the C-in-C's wrath on seeing slackness on board. He would come down like a ton of bricks on the entire Squadron and I would be held responsible for literally 'piloting' him to the Squadron's doom. All these thoughts swirled in my mind as we reached Cruiser Wharf.

Unlike Destroyer Wharf, at Cruiser Wharf, when it is low tide, the pontoon to which the boats are tied is way down from the jetty and only accessible by a long, almost vertical ladder. The Admiral alighted from the car, reached the ladder, and looked all the way down to the boats, a good 20 m or so, almost vertically down to the pontoon. He turned around and said, "Alright, boys! You go ahead and enjoy your drink. I don't think I would like to climb back up this ladder with liquor in my system!"

This was music to my ears. My insistence that the Admiral join us was half-hearted and mumbled under my breath. I don't even think he heard it. But being the gentleman he was, he thanked us for the 'invitation', shook our hands and drove off. I heaved a sigh of relief and thanked our good fortune that the boats had been shifted to Cruiser Wharf the day before.

Later that evening, I lambasted my brother for this impromptu invite extended to the C-in-C

for drinks. I was mollified a bit when he recounted how events had unfolded.

It seemed that Admiral and Mrs Periera were delighted with my brother's upcoming wedding and wanted to know where he was staying in Bombay. When he mentioned he was staying with me, they assumed I would accompany him home for the wedding. My brother mentioned the IN Aquatics clashing with the wedding date. "Oh, that's a pity!" said the Admiral, but Mrs Periera thought a way could be found in attending both the events.

Well, I am still not fully aware of how it actually came about, but the Command Sports Officer called me the next day to check the schedule of my events in the championship and found there was a window of 24 hours or so during which I could leave for home to attend the wedding and fly back directly to Cochin for the championships (incidentally, my first ever commercial flight!). To compensate for lost time, I was tasked with extra practice sessions in the pool!

By Commodore Rajan Bhandari (Retd)

I had heard of Admiral Ronnie Pereira even before joining the Navy and while in service I was fortunate to interact with him. Each occasion instilled a powerful desire to emulate some of his qualities, not just as a naval officer but as an outstanding human being, with a golden heart, broad shoulders, towering personality, and the will to walk his talk.

These vignettes give some glimpses of his leadership style to better know the man behind the legend.

Fleet Pulling Regatta, 1968

An annual highlight in the (then) Indian Fleet was the Fleet Pulling Regatta in Cochin (Kochi). Though preceded by a series of operational exercises for coveted trophies in RAS, Gunnery, ASW, etc, the crowning trophy, fiercely competed for, was 'Cock Ship' of the Regatta. Selected personnel, duly fuelled with high-protein diets, formed pulling teams of Engine Room, Electrical, Seamen, S&S, Officers and 'Best Whaler'. Training would start in Bombay harbour weeks earlier and messdecks and wardrooms would be abuzz, choosing favourites.

On the grand day, Fleet ships were secured to the trots in Cochin channel with cheering men thronging the decks. Odds were chalked up at betting counters on every quarterdeck, Delhi being the clear favourite. Competing whalers, "oars forward" at the starting line, would be



poised to take off with the bang of the starter's pistol. Lusty cheers from each ship would echo across the channel. As each race was completed, the tote boards progressively showed Delhi far ahead. Then a devastating blow struck! The Delhi ME's team had mistakenly pulled in the wrong race and Delhi was disqualified from that event. We then saw Captain Ronnie Pereira, CO Delhi, zip off to the finishing line in his barge and leap into the ME's whaler. No castigations for carelessness. Just a loud call: "*Hum dikha sakte hain Fleet ko. Ek race gayi, hum phir jeetenge.*" He took the ME's whaler in tow to the start line and the lads pulled again in the designated ME's race – finishing first by two clear boat lengths. Racing up to the finish line, Captain Pereira again jumped into the ME's whaler and hugged each man, who then collectively threw him into the water, leaping in after him in celebration. Finally, Delhi won the Cock. Responding to the Gin Pennant, her quarterdeck was soon engulfed with beer guzzlers, Captain Pereira personally carrying a large jug around to top up any empty glass. A legend came alive before my eyes.

Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet, 1974

In early 1974, I was appointed as Gunnery Officer INS Kiltan, based in Vizag. Rear Admiral Pereira was FOCEF. There was a major tool-down strike in the Dockyard triggered by a ship's officer using insulting language against a worker. The strike had reached an impasse and the readiness of ships was being affected. Admiral Pereira asked the ASD(V) to assemble the core Dockyard supervisors and workers. He then openly apologised to the gathering on behalf of the entire Eastern Fleet. While there was much criticism in wardrooms about this act, the strike was called off. Admiral Pereira had put operational needs ahead of rank and personal pride.

He further issued orders that he would be very angry if officers hung around on deck waiting to sound the "Alert" or 'Still' as he passed. He wanted them to focus on running the ship rather than ceremonials. In March 1974, I was appointed as XO Amar, slated for transfer to Mauritius. The crew would stay on deputation to that government for three years. Admiral Pereira had earlier led a team to evaluate the ability of Mauritius to support Amar's operation and maintenance. He sent for me. Looking over his reading glasses, he said, "The gift of Amar to Mauritius is the first step in a long relationship critical for our country. You are the XO. Your charter of duties is the shortest chapter in the Regs Navy, yet you are responsible for the actions and inactions of every officer and man on board; make sure of it." He then dismissed me with an unforgettable firm handshake and look in the eyes.

CNS visit to DSSC Wellington, 1979

Every year, the Service Chiefs address the students at DSSC Wellington. In 1979, everyone

looked forward to a frank and lively talk by Admiral Pereira. During the Q&A session, an Army student asked, "Knowing your style of speaking and working, how do you handle the differences of opinion between the Government and yourself?" Drawing himself up to his full height and moving to centre-stage, Admiral Pereira replied, "Son, in my job I am expected to comply with government orders. If the Government directs me to put my head in the flush and pull the chain, well, that's what I'll have to do". The Sardar Patel Hall broke up with laughter.

Gunnery Reunion, 1980

CNS being a Gunnery Specialist, INS Dronacharya planned a grand seminar-cum-reunion in 1980. An NHQ circular was floated, inviting Gunnery officers to apply to participate. Quick to volunteer, I was fortunate to be listed. The travel both ways in the CNS's aircraft would spare us the arduous train journey. Shortly after take-off, he emerged from the curtained-off VIP cabin and roared, "Which of you young fellows is hungry? The Air Force has given Phyllis and me more food than we can possibly eat." And with her in tow, he personally handed out choice sandwiches and cakes. Though he said it was courtesy the Air Force, the quantity he dished out convinced me he had carried on a basketful of goodies for us all!

During the evening function at Dronacharya, he moved around casually, regaling us with stories of his Gunnery tenures. Meanwhile, John D'Silva and I took turns at the mike to sing along with the band. During a lull, I was standing next to Admiral Pereira when he looked at our glasses. "We both need another drink," he said, and as I looked for a steward, grabbed my arm, led me up to the bar and directed: "Leading Steward, *woh Admiral ka neeche se* special

whisky *nikalo*." Taking the bottle, he poured stiff measures into both our glasses, grabbed the bar chit book and scribbled, "Two special whisky", above his signature.

Special audio-visual motivational project, 1981-82

In 1981, I was DDOP(S) when a call came from then Captain Kailash Kohli, NA to CNS, to report immediately to his office. Wondering whose bows I had crossed, I was soon ushered into the CNS's office without any preliminary briefing. The conversation lasted about 20 minutes. In sum, Admiral Pereira had been Chief Guest at Lawrence School, Lovedale, where, while meeting with the Board of Governors, he mentioned that the output of Indian public schools was too namby-pamby to seek a career in the Navy. Mr V Narayan, then Chairman of Pond's India, retorted that the Navy didn't position itself properly in the minds of the younger generation. As the Government was unlikely to fund it, he offered to bear the entire cost of a pathbreaking advertising initiative.

Admiral Pereira asked if I was ready to be a one-man project team to conceive and coordinate between Ponds, the Navy and Lintas. He had already told the DCNS, COP and all three C-in-Cs of the requirements of full naval support. The project speedily took off. All stops were pulled out and four months later we had a 20-minute motivational AV capsule spectacularly covering

the adventure, challenge, operations and camaraderie of the Navy. Lintas even got an Advertising Club award for it. In following years, all three services totally transformed their advertising styles for recruitment of both officers and men. Admiral Pereira's handing off such a prestigious initiative to a newly promoted Commander was typical of his style of trusting leadership.

My final meeting, 1991

In 1991, as CO Godavari, I learned that Admiral Pereira was at INHS Asvini for cancer treatment. Keen to meet him, I went to the ward and requested that I be allowed a few minutes. The ward in charge firmly said there was a no visitors rule, but if I hung around outside his room long enough, I may be invited in. I did just that. After about 20 minutes, Mrs Pereira looked out and enquired who I was and why I was waiting. I introduced myself as Captain Bhandari and said I just wanted to shake her husband's hand.

The following transpired:

Mrs Pereira, from just inside the room, "Ron, there's a Captain Bhandari who wants to meet you."

Admiral Pereira, "Bring him in."

As I entered, he stood up from his chair. "That's no Captain, that's a Gunnery Officer," he said, and hugged me. I will cherish that moment all my life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



A graduate of the 31st Course of the National Defence Academy, Commodore Rajan Bhandari served for 30 years in various appointments, moving to the corporate sector from 1997 to 2008, front-lining international business operations. Subsequently, he was a Professor of Strategy and Operations with Amity University till 2021. He currently devotes his energy to mentoring young people through NGO Udayan Care.

By Commander A J B Singh (Retd)

How does one remember anybody? I mean friend, girl friend, wife, neighbour's wife, subordinates – the lot – and yes, of course, your boss. Each one is remembered in a different way and it is often rare that you look back and remember your time with your Ship's Captain with warmth, joy and a half smile on your lips.

I had been kicked out of Vizag and, having supposedly been 'selected' for the job, found myself on INS Delhi as the Captain's Secretary. Ronnie looked me up and down from his 6 ft+ height, shook my hand and, a twinkle in his eye, said, "Welcome son, the Ship's Office needs you."

The Ship's Office was rather small and, invariably, lots of officers would come for one reason or another, making it difficult to get work done. To discourage entry, I put up a board saying, 'Keep off the Grass'. Most officers on Delhi were senior to me and, unhappily, the notice did not prevent a great many from coming into the tiny office. On the other hand, on seeing my notice, Ronnie, the CO, never entered my office and would speak to me from outside. It was a small incident but revealed his character – even though I was junior to most of the officers on the ship, he did not want to infringe on my authority.

Ronnie had that something about him that made you feel relaxed and confident about yourself



while, at the same time, drawing the line at hard work and correct conduct. He did not put it on for effect; he was a hard taskmaster with a hard exterior but understanding and soft interior. He did not throw rank but had the innate ability to inspire trust from us all. Perhaps he achieved this through honest communication and personal example. Add to this is the fact that he had a heightened sense of the ridiculous, a wonderful sense of humour, sometimes self-deprecating, which made for honest and open relationships and that much easier to understand the problems often left unspoken.

Ronnie was inspirational. His leadership consistently delivered performances beyond expectations. He led by example, demonstrating integrity, resilience and a willingness to go above and beyond to achieve outstanding results. That's how and why we won the 'Cock' during the 1967 Fleet Regatta in Cochin – despite an unfortunate error. As it happens, the



Engine Room team was towed in instead of the Supply & Secretariat team and though they won, they still needed to pull again with Engine Room teams from other ships. The team was fagged out but if that Silver Trophy had to be Delhi's, barely 20 minutes later, they'd have to win again. So, Ronnie stepped in to try and make them win a second time and was there, encouraging them as they recuperated on deck. I imagine he inspired and motivated them, even got into the Captain's Boat and towed them to the starting line. They pulled like driven men and won again – making it a day to remember. As CNS Admiral Chatterjee wryly observed, "INS Delhi won because of the amazing leadership of Ronnie."

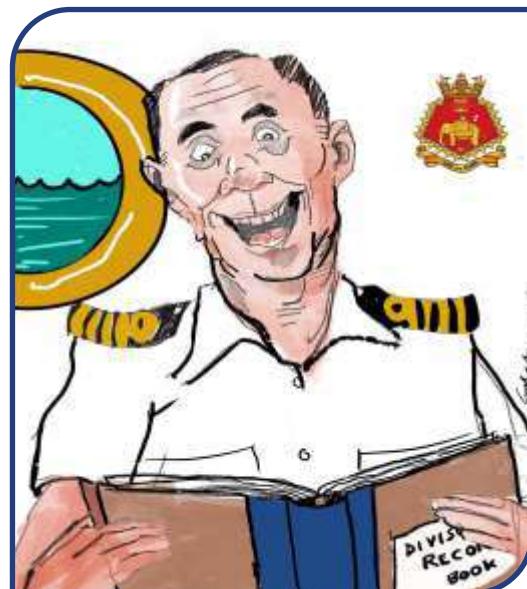
Ronnie had a rare affection for the Navy and the 'right thing to do'. He didn't compromise on work, never took duty-free stuff ashore, and always played fair – which is why we all loved him so. I can think of a couple of examples.

Both Ronnie and his charming wife Phyllis were very fond of me and sometimes had me over for a meal to their house in Colaba. One such evening, I asked him whether I could take a shot at getting a watchkeeping ticket as Supply & Secretariat Branch officers were permitted to qualify. He agreed and I kept watch both at sea and in harbour for a long enough time. On our way back from Mauritius shortly before my

transfer, I cornered him at a 'weak moment' and asked whether I could get the ticket. "Sorry son," he said bluntly but almost affectionately. "You need more time." That was that.

There was a soft side to him in official matters too. Rarely if ever did he deny leave to a sailor who came with the 'standard telegram' for leave because his father/mother was 'serious' (sic). He said it would be terrible if leave were refused and the sailor lost a dear one. "I know," he said. "It happened once."

He had an infectious and long, booming hearty guffaw of a laugh that almost brought tears to his eyes. In fact, he could see a joke in unsuspected places, such as in a Division Officer's (DO's) Record Book. Every DO writes his observations about each sailor – how he is doing, problems, etc. These are often dull, repetitive and boring comments that the CO must periodically review. But one day, I found Ronnie laughing uncontrollably as he flipped through one such Record Book. It transpired that the noting on each sailor in that division ended with the incisive and astute observation that the sailor "... is making good progress on his instrument". It was the ship's band that the DO was writing about, but....!



He had a puckish sense of humour. I had volunteered to join the Garrison in Port Blair but I got posted to a desk job there instead. Then, as expected, we received a signal from NOIC (A&N). It was a routine message, asking for information about the marital status of Lt A J B Singh for 'Sea Passage Arrangements'. Ronnie couldn't help himself. Pat went the reply: "In spite of sustained and enthusiastic attempt, officer unable to find suitable, beautiful, wealthy and vivacious spouse with adequate dowry. He therefore comes unaccompanied with view to vetting suitable Jarwa or Oongi."

To this day, I have a copy of the signal Ronnie made. It is a faded keepsake. Whenever I see and touch that signal DTG 080721Z, I remember Ronnie chuckling with delight on Delhi's Bridge as he made the signal. With mischief in his eyes and laughter on his lips, he said, "Have a great time son; after all, you did volunteer!"

My last meeting with Ronnie was at Admiral Kuruvilla's house in Ooty. I was invited because

I was Secretary of the Ooty Hunt Club and both Admiral and Mrs Kuruvilla loved riding to the hounds. The two Admirals were chums from their old gunnery days, but Ronnie was CNS and I was mildly surprised to see him there. I wondered whether he remembered me at all. There was a chance that he might because, though I was being posted to INS Hamla after my time with FOCWF, there was talk that I would, of all things, be going to Delhi as Ronnie's Secretary. But then I got sent off to Staff College – so much for galley news.

Anyway, he did recognise me, though I was without a turban then. He seemed pleased to see me and chatted away, asking after my family and how the Hunt was faring. It was a pleasant afternoon and I was happy to have met him again. Then as he was about to leave after lunch, he turned to me and, with an impish smile, said, "You're lucky to have come here – there's no riding to the hounds in Delhi."

That was Ronnie – and I miss him still.

Illustrations by Vice Admiral Ganesh Madhavan (Retd)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1965, Cdr A J B Singh retired prematurely after 23 years' service. In addition to the usual assignments in ships and establishments, he was Secretary to FOCWF and later Secretary to COM in Naval Headquarters. He did a four-year stint as Directing Staff at Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington. While there, he was also the Secretary of the Ootacamund Hunt - the only club of its kind 'East of the Suez', they said. On retirement, he joined GRSE in 1988 and while in Calcutta, often wrote for The Statesman. From GRSE, he was deputed to MoD's Defence Exhibition Organisation as its Director. While there, he was the Nodal Officer for organising Aero India 2001, DEFEXPO 2002 and Aero India 2003, in addition to coordinating the Ministry's participation in exhibitions abroad. At present, he is involved in promoting international defence and security exhibitions. A 'keen' rider and sportsman, his injuries on and off the field have reduced his sporting exploits to desultory rounds of indifferent golf once a week.

By Commodore Lalit Kapur (Retd)

Some are destined to leave an indelible imprint on the lives of all they touch. Admiral Ronald Lynsdale Pereira was one such man. His corporeal remains may have been put to rest three decades ago, but as we celebrate his birth centenary, his legacy lives on, inspiring generations of officers and men from his beloved Navy.

I first saw this leadership icon when I joined the NDA as a cadet in June 1971. The ritual hazing that commenced immediately as I entered my squadron was interrupted when a white car sporting a single star on a blue star plate drove up. Out stepped this slim, tall and commanding man in sparkling white uniform. His booming voice enquired how we first-term cadets were faring (fortunately, we had the sense to say all was well). Having ensured nothing unusual was happening, he drove off.

'Ronnie', as he was known to all who served under him, was always very visible to his men, talking to them and giving them a chance to talk to him. He was omnipresent, showing up everywhere we went, ensuring we dressed correctly, studied hard, played to the best of our ability, moved about the Academy in a disciplined manner, and were well-fed. His eagle eye would spot any infraction, resulting in instant punishment: the usual sentence was 21 Restrictions and four Sinhagad hikes. He was particularly tough on cadet appointments. Positions of authority, he believed, necessitated a much higher standard of conduct and



discipline. And he was conscious that he was always under scrutiny, that any gap between his words and deeds would inevitably be dissected by the men he led, resulting in loss of credibility. Credibility and integrity were his hallmarks.

But his visibility wasn't only about punishment. Having no children of his own, he and his wife Phyllis treated every cadet as their son, to be transformed from a teenaged juvenile into an upright and responsible officer. Discipline was part of his toolkit, but so were deep concern, empathy and immediate appreciation of quick wit or extraordinary performance. A cadet who was relaxing in his cabin when he should have been in class reacted imaginatively when the Dep Com turned up for a surprise round of his squadron. He impersonated his cadet orderly by switching clothes with him and squatting in the corridor, polishing boots. There was no fooling the Dep Com; he knew every one of his cadets, particularly the more rebellious ones. "Good thinking, Cadet Mago," said Ronnie as he swept past. "I like people with imagination and a quick reaction."

I personally experienced his concern when my left hand broke during morning PT in early February 1972. An ambulance evacuated me from the PT Ground to MH Kirkee. Breakfast was offered and gleefully accepted, unknowingly precluding anaesthesia. The operation to set both bones of my wrist was postponed to the next day. Meanwhile, I remained in sweat-soaked PT rig; no change of clothes was available. The Deputy Commandant turned up at 0830 hrs to talk to me, apprise himself of the situation and satisfy himself that all was under control. About 90 minutes later, my Divisional Officer drove up with a satchel full of clothes and toilet kit collected from my cabin.

Three years later, when we were undergoing our Sub-Lieutenant's Courses in Cochin, a course mate had a serious motorcycle accident in the wee hours of the morning, resulting in his left leg being near completely severed. The injury was beyond the capacity of the doctors at INHS Sanjivani to deal with. Ronnie, who was then FOCSOUTH, reacted decisively. 'Viru' was promptly airlifted to Pune and taken thence to MH Kirkee, the premier orthopaedic hospital of the Armed Forces. His leg mended in due course; had it not been for the Admiral's decisiveness, the situation would have been very different.

Resilience was another characteristic that marked Admiral Periera. The Flag Lt to the CNS in June 1966, VAdm A C Bhatia, recalls, "I was staying at Kota House, then an inter-service mess. Acting Captain R L Pereira was also there. When the half-yearly message for confirmation of officers in the rank of Captain came on 30 June, we were disappointed to see his name missing, while his junior, Captain Kirpal Singh,

was confirmed. This disappointment was reflected in our demeanour when he met us. 'Why are you so quiet, boys?' he asked. 'Is it because I have not been confirmed? Come on, the Service has only conveyed that Kirpal is our future Chief. I expect to figure on the next list. Come on, let's have a drink.'"

Along with resilience came a quick wit. VAdm A C Bhatia, who was Secretary to CNS in 1978-79, was ushering the Commanders-in-Chief into CNS's office when Admiral Pereira, then the VCNS, remarked, "Look at this! The Navy is truly being run by RCs and Parsis," adding that RCs included all Christians. The CNS was Admiral Jal Cursetji; the three Commanders-in-Chief were VAdms R K S Ghandhi, M R Schunker and V E C Barboza. The humorous remark elicited immediate laughter and broke the ice for what could have been a difficult meeting.

Empathy, the strength of character to stand his ground when he was right, drive and the determination to deliver results were other hallmarks. These traits are evident from another experience narrated by VAdm A C Bhatia, relating to fixation of pay for SD List officers after the Third Pay Commission. The Navy Instruction (NI) recorded that their pay was to be fixed on the basis that the promotion was with effect from 1 January 1973, without adequate thought for the consequences. The unforeseen result was that an SD List officer promoted six years later automatically received six increments from the date of his promotion. The beneficiaries had no cause for complaint, but audit authorities did: they directed that overpayment be recovered. The Navy objected as the officers had neither sought nor claimed the increments; they received them in

accordance with the NI. After interminable correspondence on file and numerous meetings, the matter remained intractable. The Defence Secretary called a meeting to resolve the issue and Admiral Pereira, then CNS, decided to represent the Navy. At the outset itself, he made it clear that the meeting could progress only if it were clearly understood that no recoveries would be made; his officers had been paid based on an NI issued after scrutiny at every level of the financial decision chain, including all present at the meeting. He would not accept his officers being penalised for something that was not their fault. The establishment was left with no choice but to accept his words. The NI was corrected, but not with retrospective effect, thus eliminating any question of recovery of overpayments.

The same characteristics are evident from the well-known story of his being late for a scheduled meeting with the Prime Minister as he prioritised the needs of an unknown youth carrying his father on his back to hospital because he couldn't afford a taxi. His determination was demonstrated yet again when he instituted the rule making helmets compulsory for two-wheeler riders under his Command in Mumbai and personally ensured it was complied with.

His foresight, vision, concern for the welfare of his subordinates and drive provided many benefits for those in service. The APSOH Sonar,

a key sensor to substantially enhance the Navy's ASW capability, was an outcome of his backing Commodore Paulraj, the inventor. The Navy's official history project was his initiative. The five high-rise buildings constructed in NOFRA Mumbai under his watch reduced the waiting time for accommodation for Lieutenants from over 36 to less than nine months; I was a direct beneficiary, being allotted my first home after marriage in Anuradha Building. He ensured the grant of CILQ to all sailors, not just the 14 per cent who received it before he stepped in. As Chairman COSC, he was instrumental in the Government's decision to grant rations in kind to officers in the early 1980s, overcoming attempts to grant an allowance – he foresaw that the allowance would not compensate for inevitable inflation. Even the Air Force Naval Housing Board, which has been instrumental in providing a roof over the head of so many officers and sailors (including me), was born out of his vision and subsequent discussion with his Air Force counterpart.

“Old soldiers never die, they simply fade away,” General MacArthur said during his farewell speech to the US Congress on 19 April 1951. Here is an old sailor, a son of India and one of the architects of the modern Indian Navy, who may have passed away in 1993, but whose indelible imprint on the minds of all who passed through him lives on. Thank you for your continuing inspiration, Admiral. You will never be forgotten.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commodore Lalit Kapur is from the 46th Course of the National Defence Academy and served for over 35 years before retiring as CSO to FODAG in November 2010. He has been a member of the Fifth Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica and the Defence Adviser at the Embassy of India, Muscat. At present, he is Senior Fellow for Maritime Strategy at the Delhi Policy Group.

CENTENNIAL: ADM R L PEREIRA

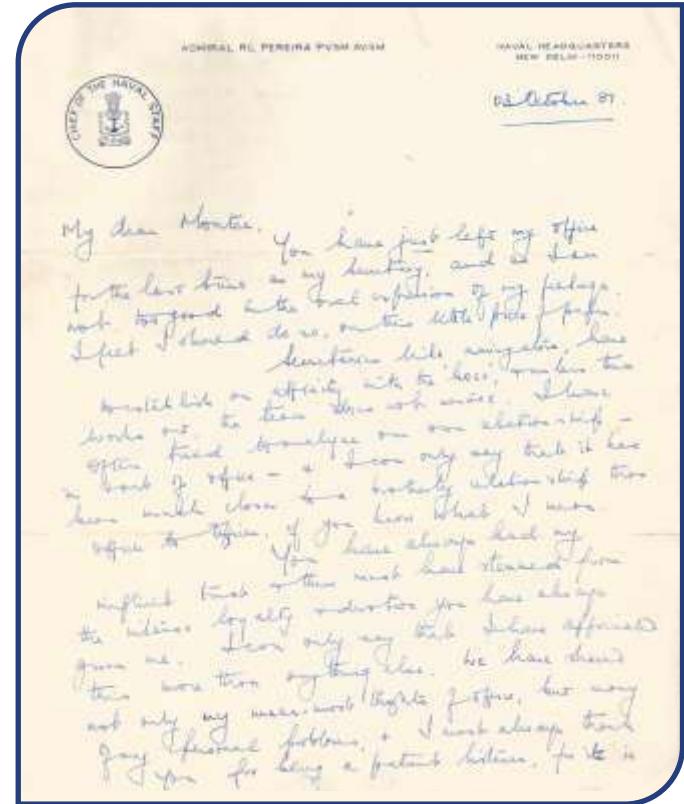
THE ADMIRAL, HIS SECRETARY AND GOLF

By Colonel Robin Chatterjee (Retd)

In the mid-60s we lived in Navy Nagar, Bombay. On the road to the US Club from our house, there used to be a Nursing Officers' Hostel located on the right-hand side. It was almost opposite the GOCs residence. Behind it was the 6th Hole of the US Club Golf Course. This green was different from the rest. In addition to its playing difficulty, it was well protected by a conspiracy of ravens. These birds had a secret lookout post near that golf green from where they observed the golfers beneath them. Whenever an offending golf ball entered their airspace, they would swoop down and seize the intruder in their beaks. Before the golfer could react, they would zoom off and deposit the ball via an open skylight in the false ceiling of the Nurses' Hostel. Lost forever. Many a caddy would give chase but stop short of the wire fence of the hostel. The worst affected were my father Lt Sushil Kumar 'Monty' Chatterjee and his golfing partner Captain Ronald Lynsdale 'Ronnie' Pereira. As a child I have witnessed my father and the Captain leaning on the fence, gesticulating wildly and hurling Haddock-style abuse at those feathered thieves. With the added presence of ladies in the building, they could do nothing about it.

In 1980, my father was doing a course at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, USA, when he received a letter from (now) Admiral Ronnie Pereira that read:

"Dear Monty, I can see that you will be burning up the Delhi course when you get back...it is further reason that I have taken the added precaution of



keeping a somewhat closer tag on you. On your return, I have appointed you as my Secretary. You will not therefore be able to take the imprudent step of beating the hell out of your boss!"

The duo played their golf regularly, three times a week. Always partners, sink or swim. The Admiral, with his influence, managed to convince the exclusive Delhi Golf Club to throw open its doors for out-of-turn membership to service officers for a mere Rs 500. He would catch youngsters in the hallways of South Block and order them to sign up. At times, he would even hand over Rs 500 from his own pocket to the baffled youngster. As a young Second Lieutenant, I, too, benefitted from this scheme and am a proud 'A' member today.

Many years later, in 1980, the CNS and his trusted Secretary were on an official visit to Western Naval Command, Mumbai. Sure enough, golf was on the menu. As fate would have it, on that very same hole, the raiders struck and took off with the Admiral's ball to the same precise location. There were many who gave chase, but the Admiral stood his ground. "Mont," he said to my father, gesturing at the hostel. "Do you think we can do something about these infidels?" My father, the ever-dutiful Secretary, replied, "Sir, now you are the CNS, you can do whatever you want." To this, he replied: "Good. Then I am ordering you to launch an operation on those murderous thieves and retrieve our golf balls of many years."

It is said that while they were having tea after golf at the clubhouse, a smart naval police jeep drove up and emptied over 500 golf balls of the stash at the Admiral's feet. The entire party was aghast! Ronnie was gloating. "Distribute them amongst the golfers and caddies," he directed with a hint of revenge in his voice, looking at my father.

Finally, in 1981, my father decided to retire prematurely from the Navy. He was wanted by the DGC to help in the preparation for the Asian Games. With a lump in his throat, he saluted

Ronnie for the last time in uniform in the CNS office. Both had a tear in their eyes. They were more than just Admiral and Secretary. As my father turned and was leaving the office Ronnie called out to him: "Mont, I have something for you." He reached into his drawer and pulled out an ancient Dunlop 65 ball. "This is for you. It took us 15 years to get it back. Remember? I will miss you buddy." That ball now occupies a place of honour in my bar at home, FUBAR.

On 3 October 1981, my father received this letter from Ronnie:

"My dear Monty, you have left my office for the last time as my Secretary, and I am not too good in the oral expression of my feelings. I feel I should do so, on this little piece of paper. ...finally let me thank you for pulling me out of office so regularly and so often, to put the cares of the world behind me, as I endeavoured to hit a little white ball better than you and seldom succeeded."

Today, every year, the Ronnie Pereira Golf Cup – a tournament between the three Services – is played in his honour. As for me, I like to think of these two friends in Valhalla playing on the finest golf course in the universe. Two old seamen on picturesque fairways, rolling greens and, of course, very friendly ravens.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Colonel Robin Chatterjee (Retd) is the son of late Captain Monty Chatterjee. He is a fourth-generation officer, and the first of the second generation from the National Defence Academy.

A keen golfer, he learnt golf with a club presented by the Admiral himself.

By Rear Admiral K Ravikiran (Retd)

**Whatever a great man does, other men also do;
whatever standards he sets, the world follows**

– Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Verse 21

Very rarely do I put pen to paper these days. Not that I was a prolific writer in the past, but I did write what was demanded or expected of me, promptly. What impelled me this time was the message posted by the Secretary, Navy Foundation, Visakhapatnam Chapter, calling for articles on the late Admiral R L Pereira, former Chief of the Naval Staff, in view of his centenary celebrations. I was immediately reminded of anecdotes we had heard about the Admiral and one remarkable interaction that I had with him. I did not wish to forego the chance to share them.

I was undergoing *ab-initio* training for most of the duration that the Admiral was the CNS. One anecdote I heard was narrated by the CO, INS Shakti, in June 1980. It was at the end of my watchkeeping training and the ship was slated to participate in the National Day celebrations of the Republic of Seychelles in the Indian Ocean. At the briefing, while the officers were wondering what to buy at Port Victoria, the CO recalled an incident involving Admiral Pereira. When the Admiral was commanding INS Delhi, the ship was on a goodwill visit to Port Louis, Mauritius. Captain Pereira bought 2 kg of sugar, as sugar was a controlled commodity and was not freely available in the Indian markets!



Though I never saw him during my time as an under trainee Acting Sub-Lieutenant, I formed the impression that he was a towering personality from other anecdotes we heard.

Our course was fortunate to have the Admiral, then the CNS, as the chief guest for our Passing out Parade (POP) at INS Shivaji. It was early March 1981 and the first time I saw the Admiral. He was a tall figure both physically and literally. I was elated that day because the POP was the culmination of many months of our training. His presence only intensified that feeling.

It was only in early 1988 that I could meet the Admiral, nearly six years after his retirement, while I was undergoing the Long Logistics and Management Course at INS Hamla. He was invited to grace the ship's anniversary celebrations as the chief guest. A lecture on leadership was also slotted among the various activities. It still gives me goosebumps whenever I recall the one hour he spoke in his booming voice. He recounted various incidents

when he had to stand behind what he believed in. He told us what leadership meant for an engineer or an electrical officer. He also urged us to focus on doing our jobs correctly without being carried away by extraneous influences. We were all too stunned to speak and could not even ask him any questions after his speech. The naval officers from friendly foreign countries undergoing the course were also bowled over. I believe he expressed his views so freely because he walked the talk at every step of his career.

I got the opportunity to speak to the Admiral at the social gathering in the wardroom that evening. I told him that his lecture was idealistic and impractical during our day and age. He said, "You may be aware of what happened

about the promotion of an officer. I did not promote him. I told the Ministry of Defence that he was eighth in merit. Give me eight vacancies and I will promote all eight of them." He said that he would have done grave injustice to the other officers had he agreed. He then added, "You know what happened after I retired. Now tell me, what respect do you have for me and what respect do you have for him [the officer who subsequently allowed the promotion]?" He advised me, in his typical way of pointing and placing his right index finger on the left shoulder, "Son, it is for you to decide what you want to do. You make a beginning now."

That advice left an indelible impression on my mind and has stayed with me to this day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rear Admiral K Ravikiran was the Admiral Superintendent, Naval Ship Repair Yard, Kochi, prior to his retirement. He is an alumnus of the National Defence College, College of Naval Warfare and Defence Services Staff College.

CENTENNIAL: ADM R L PEREIRA

AN INIMITABLE ADMIRAL

By Vice Admiral Harinder Singh (Retd)

I first met then Captain Pereira in early 1963 and served as a lowly midshipman under his Command onboard Kuthar. The most memorable aspects of his Command were his oneness with the crew, their willingness to do anything for him, and his popularity with them. They would have gone great lengths for him.

I was again with him for a very brief time onboard Delhi in mid-1967. I was appointed to the ship while waiting to proceed to the USSR for training and commissioning of Kamorta. On reporting, he nominated me the Oi/C of the Regatta Team and he was fully committed to winning the 'Cock of the Fleet' trophy. He was the first to arrive daily for the training at 0530 hrs and we went on to win the prestigious trophy. I was destined to serve with him yet again when he was Deputy Commandant NDA and I was a Divisional Officer — which meant I had little to do with him directly. His rapport with cadets was exceptional and extraordinary and no other senior officer ever came close to him.

It was not unexpected that he was appointed as the CNS. He conducted himself with utmost integrity and was known for his adherence to ethical principles, both within and beyond the Navy. His honesty and sincerity earned him the trust and respect of all those who had the privilege of serving under his Command. Further, Admiral Pereira's professionalism was unmatched. He approached every task with



meticulous attention to detail, leaving no room for error. His strategic acumen and ability to make sound decisions in high-pressure situations earned him accolades within the Navy and beyond. His commitment to excellence served as an inspiration to his colleagues and subordinates, fostering a culture of professionalism and achievement.

One of Admiral Pereira's most remarkable qualities was his unwavering support for the Navy. He understood the significance of a strong maritime force in safeguarding national security and protecting the interests of the nation. He was not happy with the decision of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to go in for the procurement of HDW submarines – that was the only time I saw him come close to making a compromise in the larger interests of the Navy when it was an issue of 'take it or leave it'. His interest was for the Navy's modernisation, ensuring that it remained at the cutting edge of technology and operational capabilities. His steadfast commitment to the Navy's advancement earned him the admiration of his

peers and established him as a champion of naval strength. There were other instances where he had disagreements with the MoD but the Ministry or Mrs Gandhi didn't have the courage to overrule his advice while he was the Chief; they had to wait for him to retire and have their way. Such was his standing.

Admiral Pereira's remarkable career encapsulates the essence of a true naval leader. Admiral Pereira's legacy will forever serve as an

inspiration to future generations of naval officers, reminding them of the qualities that define a perfect gentleman and a thorough professional.

Mrs Phyllis Pereira was another outstanding example of a Navy wife's commitment to her husband's career and welfare of the naval fraternity at large. Never in my service career did I see another example that came even close to her commitment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Vice Admiral Harinder Singh, of the 21st Course of the National Defence Academy, was commissioned on 1 July 1963 and swallowed the anchor on 31 May 2002. During his glorious innings of 39 years, he commanded numerous warships and the Eastern Fleet. He served as FORTAN, DCNS and finally the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command.

After retirement, he ventured into the financial world and was a Director at the Delhi Stock Exchange and two other financial companies. He was Financial Adviser to a group of NRIs and had an illustrious tenure as President, Navy Foundation, Delhi Charter, for 12 years.

By Vice Admiral Premvir Das (Retd)

It was the end of May 1979. I was just over a year in Command of the new missile corvette, INS Vijaydurg, which had come in from the Soviet Union (now Russia) two years earlier, with six months remaining for our fixed commission to come to an end. So, a move was neither due nor expected. At a lunch hosted by a close friend, his telephone rang. At the other end was the Deputy Director of Personnel, Commander Madhvendra Singh (later to become Chief of the Naval Staff). The DDOP had found out my whereabouts and wished to speak to me. How soon could we move to Naval Headquarters in Delhi was his query. When I told him about my fixed commission tenure, he said that could be forgotten—I had to move in a week.

This is how I came to know of my appointment as Naval Assistant to the CNS, Admiral Ronald Lynsdale Pereira (henceforth RLP) and a person whom I had never known. I had encountered him only superficially in 1963 when, as a Commander, he was commanding INS Kuthar and I was Flag Lieutenant to the Flag Officer Commanding Indian Fleet (FOCIF), then Rear Admiral A K Chatterji (later to rise to Chief of the Naval Staff).

RLP had been CNS for three months and I wondered what had happened to his previous NA. His Staff Officer, then Commander Krishnan, hinted that the officer had felt overtaxed and that he was given an 'easier' assignment. I met my new boss. He told me that everything that was referred to him, other than



confidential 'personnel' matters, would pass through me and that I had to show great discretion regarding what came to him and what made him deal with those issues in the way he did. His final words: "You are to ensure that you are out of this office by 5.30 pm." This gave me some idea of why I was his NA at such short notice. The Krishnans had been with the Pereiras for long and were almost like family.

My wife, who was to rejoin her old school in Safdarjung Enclave, and I met with RLP and Mrs P at Navy House. They were both exceedingly nice and Nalini became "my girl" to them. She could not be of much help to Mrs P in her welfare work due to her own commitments but that did not prevent her from being treated with great affection. Soon we settled down to our own respective routines which saw me returning to my SP Marg flat by 5.30 every day. Outstation visits with the CNS, first getting and preparing briefing papers for him and, on return, compiling his tour notes and having these directed to the appropriate departments for implementation became a simple affair. Every file put up to the Chief went through me and if I had a comment to make, it was generally written in hand and pinned to the top. When the file came back to me, the note had been removed – but I must immodestly claim that in most cases RLP's comments or decisions as endorsed on the

file, by and large, coincided with my opinion. And life went on happily and became even better as my interactions with him grew and became closer.

RLP had a great reputation as a straightforward person, firm on good conduct and discipline but equally for his close and father-like treatment of all those who came into contact with him. There are countless people who were cadets at the National Defence Academy when he served as Deputy Commandant and there is endless praise for his interaction with them. But he was no tender heart when it came to disciplined conduct. An incident that comes to mind is one that arose from an anonymous letter, written by some technical officer, to higher ups in the Ministry of Defence, bemoaning the disparaging way in which officers of that branch were being treated. RLP was furious that the offender had not approached him directly with his grievance. The technical officers serving in Naval Headquarters were assembled in the South Block Conference Room where RLP read them the riot act. Soon thereafter, one Commander-level officer submitted his request for premature retirement, complaining that he felt dismayed at the harsh comments made by the CNS at this meeting. RLP immediately approved this request and directed that the recommendation to the Ministry for this officer's release would go under his own signature and not of any lower official in the Personnel Department as was normal practice. The proposal was approved the very next day by the Defence Minister. Such was his credibility and stature!

RLP was straightforward in his dealings with the Government too, and the civilian hierarchy

knew this well. On one occasion, when the recommendation of Naval Headquarters with regard to the promotion of an officer to Flag rank came back with comments recorded by some official in the Prime Minister's Office, saying that the PM had commented adversely on the proposal, he called me into his office, closed the door, and asked me to read the remarks. In front of me, he picked up the RAX (Secret) phone and dialled the Prime Minister directly (who was then also holding the Defence portfolio). She picked it up herself and RLP sought a meeting on a matter of urgent concern. An appointment was given for that afternoon. He met her and explained the factors that led NHQ to make its recommendation. She listened quietly and he returned. When no further response was received, he told the Defence Secretary that if his recommendation was altered, he would resign. It speaks of the regard in which he was held that the Ministry kept that file pending till the day he retired and implemented the proposal only after he had left and a new CNS came to office.

RLP was reputed for his fiery temper. But in my 14 months with him, he never lost it with me save once when in my anxiety to anticipate his needs, I requested an APSO to be available for any information that the CNS might need as he discussed some issues with FOCinC East in his office. He went red in the face when he saw the gentleman and nearly threw his pen at me! Otherwise, I never saw him lose his cool. Maybe my presence calmed him! One of my pleasant memories was the dinner he and Mrs P attended at our little flat in SP Marg and behaved as if they were just like some other friends present. My regret is that I did not play golf at that time and so could never walk the 18 holes with him!

In May 1980, as I was just completing a year with him, he called me to his office and told me that he was sending me to the Naval War College, USA. This was to happen two months later. Not surprisingly, I was both happy and stunned. He asked me to think and suggest some names as my relief. A few months earlier, Commander 'Monty' Chatterji had replaced Krishnan as Staff Officer. He was an avid golfer and matched RLP stroke for stroke at the Delhi Golf Club. I thought of some names, among them Commander Kailash Kohli, himself a golfer of no mean calibre. Two days later, I got to know that the CNS had written to Kailash himself, asking if he was agreeable to join him as his NA. Such was the nature of this man. If I am not mistaken, Kailash, who relieved me in July, still has that letter in his treasured artefacts.

Soon, it was time for us to leave for the US. While the baggage would be left behind in the

storeroom of INS India, I did not know what to do about my 12-year-old rickety Fiat. I could not afford to sell it as buying a replacement on return would be next to impossible. Seeing my worried expression, one day RLP asked what was troubling me. On being told, he offered a solution: "Leave your car with me." Thus it was, that over the next year, the CNS and Mrs P were often seen arriving for parties in a blue Fiat with him at the wheel! As Mrs P told me smilingly on our return, the car was being returned in better shape than it was received.

There are many other memories of my association with him. Many of them naturally relate to his work as the Chief of the Naval Staff and obviously cannot be shared. All told, it was the learning experience of a lifetime and honour for me to serve in such close proximity to a man like none other. RIP Sir, wherever you might be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Vice Admiral P S Das, PVSM, UYSM, VSM, was commissioned on 1 January 1960. After serving in different ships and establishments in his earlier years including as Flag Lieutenant to the Fleet Commander, he commanded missile corvette INS Vijaydurg and then served as Naval Assistant to the Chief of the Naval Staff. He is a graduate of the prestigious Naval War College, USA. He subsequently commanded missile destroyer INS Rajput and then went on to serve as the Director of Naval Plans at Naval Headquarters. On promotion to Flag rank, Admiral Das first served as the Chief of Staff of the Eastern Naval Command and then commanded the Eastern Fleet. He was Director General of the new naval facilities to be established in Karwar, which has now become a major naval base. On upgradation to the rank of Vice Admiral, he was Fortress Commander of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and then Director General, Defence Planning Staff, in the Chiefs of Staff Committee before retiring as Commander in Chief of the Eastern Naval Command in 1998. After retirement, Admiral Das was appointed member of the National Security Advisory Board where he served for three years. He has been a member of the bilateral Track 1.5 interactions with the US, UK, Japan, China, Canada, Singapore and Turkey. He has also been the Indian representative at international maritime interfaces with countries of the Asia-Pacific region and a regular speaker at all higher defence institutions of the country and at many conferences abroad. Over all these years, he has been a regular columnist in national newspapers. After being engaged in these activities for over two decades, he now leads a peaceful retired life in Noida.

By Rear Admiral Santosh Kumar Gupta (Retd)



I first met the Admiral at pre-lunch drinks in WNC Officers' Mess, hosted by the 25th Missile Boat ('Killer') squadron. I had just taken over as a Div Cdr of the squadron in late 1972 when he was the Eastern Fleet Commander. He came up to congratulate me on my award of the Maha Vir Chakra. I was taken aback as I never expected the attention I got. Many were looking our way.

After serving in missile boats, followed by a tenure in minesweepers as M18, I was transferred to Cochin as Oi/c Naval Academy, when RAdm Pereira was FOC SNA. I was soon to interact with him more for the next 18 months. His interest with cadets was expected, after his reputation as the finest Deputy Commandant at NDA became known. And I was fortunate for his support at every important stage. The Admiral and Mrs Pereira attended each cadets' campfire (held every six months) in Munnar as well as end-of-term concerts and attendant functions, along with a Passing Out Parade, not to mention the BZ on his annual inspection. Their great interest in the cadets' activities was always a great pleasure and honour, as well as an example to officers in the making.

On the lighter side, the Admiral would sometimes find my wife walking and give her a lift, or else send the car for her, and was heard to say, "Guppy has been naughty in not permitting you to use the staff car provided to him." We played golf on the weekends in Bolgatty, transiting in his barge on a few occasions, accompanied by his COS.

We corresponded on a couple of occasions after the Admiral was promoted and moved to Bombay as FOC-in-C West, while I was still marking time in Cochin. While he was CNS, I was appointed NA London. I was CO Hansa at that time. He 'fought' all political opposition, backing me for that appointment. He told me that he had to tell the PM, when asked to consider another name, that he "ran the Navy", putting it mildly. He even made it known that he would refuse to join any government assignment if offered!

Indeed, the Admiral was a man of integrity who instantly and intuitively went by his principles. He would not hesitate sometimes to go hammer and tongs to set right a wrong. He was honest to the core – a rare breed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Rear Admiral S K Gupta, MVC, NM, joined the NDA for the Indian Navy and proceeded for flying with the Indian Air Force as a midshipman in 1957. He was commissioned on 1 January 1958, with award of Pilots' Wings on 29 May. He was part of the commissioning crew of the White Tigers squadron. On INS Vikrant, he took part in the Goa conflict in December 1961 and the India Pakistan hostilities in May 1965. During the 1971 War, he commanded the White Tiger squadron. He has held command of Vikrant, Shakti, M18 & CO Cannanore, and Div Cdr & CO Vijeta, Naval Academy at Cochin, INS Hansa and INAS 551 squadron. He served as the Naval Adviser at the High Commission of India in London. His last appointment before retirement was as ACNS (Air).

CENTENNIAL: ADM R L PEREIRA

A MAN OF HIS WORD

By Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha (Retd)

It was nearly half a century ago when I reported at the Elementary Flying School at Air Force Station Bidar (Karnataka) after completing Basic & Divisional School and SFNA at Cochin (now Kochi) in January 1973. Our Flying Course was 112 F(P), consisting of 43rd Course NDA Air Force cadets and a dozen Navy and six to seven Army officers. The Air Force cadets were fresh graduates from NDA and had passed out under the keen and discerning eye of a tough Deputy Commandant, Commodore R L Pereira. There was not a day when he was not spoken about in our dingy crew room. His discipline and compassion for cadets were often the subjects of discussion. Though the Sinhagadh restriction was described in detail, his directives contributed much to instilling leadership in each one of them.

Our flying course consisted of six months each at Air Force stations Bidar (Basic flying on HT 2), Dundigal, AFA (intermediate stage flying the Harvard T6 G Texan) and Hakimpet (Fighter Training Wing, flying the Vampire T 55 and FB 52). However, the Vampires having aged, our award of wings got delayed by another six months. As a young midshipman, one was quite excited and looking forward to returning to the Navy as a fighter stream pilot. Having heard of Admiral Pereira for two years, I was quietly



looking forward to serving under his leadership.

I joined 551 Squadron in December 1974; almost simultaneously, an IG announced the appointment of Rear Admiral Pereira (FOCEF) as the Flag Officer Commanding, Southern Naval Area.

It was January 1975. Goa Naval Area was much smaller and came under FOCSOUTH. We were undergoing Naval Orientation OFT flying the Kirans and occasionally Vampire T 55. With few Sea Hawks left in 300 Squadron, there was no conversion. We continued to be guided by Admiral Pereira, who took much interest in aviation matters, his major concern being the ageing Sea Hawk fighter replacement for old Vikrant. He would often call for CO Hansa (then Captain R A J Anderson) for discussions on the progress of new pilots (us) and suitability for

new fighter aircraft. In one of his visits to Goa, he mentioned that two aircraft were being considered: A 4, the Skyhawk, and alternately a new aircraft yet to enter the Royal Navy, the Sea Harriers. We had just about completed our OFT when RAdm Pereira's move to Western Naval Command as FOC-in-C in the rank of Vice Admiral was announced.

Then came the signal that FOCSOUTH would inspect Hansa on his farewell visit sometime end January/early February 1976. I was still a sub-lieutenant. Captain's TY Memo was promptly issued regarding the conduct of ceremonial parade on the tarmac in front of the three hangars (551 Squadron, 300 and 310 Squadron shared with 321 Chetak flight). I was nominated as the Second Officer of the Guard (SOG). Having heard much about his expected standards, we worked hard to ensure he did not spot any faults in turnout and the marchpast. We had learnt that while inspecting the guard at Garuda, he had told off the SOG as he was a Sikh officer in turban, but had cut his hair, and sent him off the parade ground. He was also very averse to use of the *kada* in the left/right forearm/wrist by non-Sikh officers. These instructions were passed down by the Executive Officer each practice morning.

Finally, D Day arrived. He arrived dot on time and the Parade Commander made his report. He then walked up to the Guard and began his inspection. He stopped in front of every sailor. This towering personality, rather than walking behind the SOG, came in front of me. He looked me up and down and enquired when I earned my wings. Without moving my eyeballs, I responded. His next question was, as the Sea Hawks were on their last legs, what did I think

my future was? With all the confidence I could muster, I responded that I would wait in the fighter stream in 551 Squadron till a replacement was inducted. "Son, you will fly," he said, adding jokingly to CO Hansa, "Captain, send him for Long G course in the intervening period."

After inspection of the Guard, he declined to inspect the parade on a jeep and chose to walk down to each platoon. Occasionally, one would hear his gruff voice either in reprimand or appreciation. That was my closest encounter with him but it made a lasting impression – his turnout, quick wit, relevant questions asked and his own walk on the parade ground, which was a combination of marching or slow march steps. His punctual arrival at the parade was another observation. Since then, I have emulated him every time.

Admiral Pereira continued to make waves while he was FOC-in-C West. He kept the Command in a high state of operational preparedness and also showed his kindness to the families of men and officers at sea. A lot of infrastructure was created and sanctioned during his time. Today's WNC bears testimony to his commitment. He would often surprise ships in harbour and outlying units by his unannounced arrival. He would say, 'Trouble does not announce its arrival.'

He later took over the helm of the Navy on 1 March 1979. In the meanwhile, I was appointed to 300 Squadron to fly the Sea Hawks. I had completed my Sub-Lieutenant's technical courses and was appointed to old INS Talwar to earn my Watchkeeping Certificate. The frigate was modified to carry P15 SSMs, the frontline

SSM of the Navy. It was monsoon time and the sea usually took its toll in every outing. Talwar was part of the 15 Frigate Squadron, Trishul being the senior ship of F15. On return to harbour post after one of the sorties, while coming alongside South Breakwater in very trying conditions, the mighty ship suffered some damage. I was OOW with Captain on the Gun Direction Platform.

The incident was followed by a Board of Inquiry while the dockyard was repairing the damage. We never lost our nerve and the ship's company always presented itself with great confidence. After repair, the ship was sent on deployment to the east coast and we were all awaiting the outcome of the BOI as we had a C-in-C who was very fond of court martials at the minutest of errors in shiphandling. A month later, we heard in Visakhapatnam that the BOI proceedings had reached NHQ. The Board had recommended

trial by court martial. The CNS is supposed to have said, "If Commanding Officers do not bang ships, who will?" That was Admiral Pereira. (Mind you, this was wardroom gossip but it lifted the morale of the entire ship manifold.)

His effort and contribution to induct Sea Harriers into the Navy will be long remembered. The fighter arm of the Fleet was kept alive. I did fly the Sea Harriers with the first batch (Admiral Arun Prakash, then Commander as CO Designate, and self, Lieutenant then, as QFI Designate). Thank you, Admiral Pereira; you stuck to your word.

Note from the author: My story would be incomplete if I did not mention Commodore Bhaskar Sen (God bless his soul). I learnt a lot more about Admiral Pereira from him as he was the CNS' Flag Lt. It was my good fortune to have Bhaskar Dada as my CSO in HQ Goa Area.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha was commissioned on 1 June 1974 and after a glorious naval career, retired on 21 April 2014 as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command. After retirement, he has been associated with a few think tanks and students conducting research in International Relations. He is Chairman of Trustee Board, India Foundation; Member of Executive Council MP-IDSA, Governing Council ICWA, Policy Perspective Foundation, and on the Editorial Board of Pentagon Publishers and Sunday Guardian Foundation.

By Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan (Retd)

In contemporary India, it is difficult to find a more central challenge facing our Republic than the threat of a diminishing of the country's traditionally high quality of military leadership. Although the issue of 'leadership' can hardly be confined to the defence forces alone and must apply — *mutatis mutandis* — to India's other armed forces and its civilian structures as well, it is within the Indian defence forces that issues of leadership are most striking, and leadership infirmities are likely to have their greatest and most abiding effect. It is, therefore, entirely fitting that we devote this issue of *Quarterdeck* to the enduring legacy of one of the most well-respected icons of military leadership, Admiral Ronald Lynsdale 'Ronnie' Pereira, PVSM, AVSM (25 May 1923 to 14 October 1993), who was India's ninth Chief of Naval Staff from 1979 to 1982.

In considering the growth of the Indian Navy in terms of its material wherewithal, there is a small number of illustrious former Chiefs of Staff of the Indian Navy to whom the appellation, '*one of the architects of the modern Indian Navy*', could be justifiably applied. However, Admiral Pereira is the only one in whose case the epithet, '*the architect of military leadership in the Indian Navy and its foremost*



exemplar', would evoke neither argument nor dissent.

Given that India's defence forces lay great store by the development of leadership in academies and institutions that have been established expressly for the conduct of *ab-initio* training of officers, it is unsurprising that the impact of the leadership-legend of Admiral Pereira should have received its most ubiquitous impetus at the National Defence Academy (NDA) — India's premier *ab-initio* tri-Service training academy and one that continues to enjoy global fame and renown as the finest on the planet. Yet, the fact that this acknowledgement is uniformly evident across all three defence forces is quite remarkable when one recalls that then Commodore Pereira was the 15th Deputy Commandant of NDA but only the third drawn from the Navy. Having joined the Academy in

1971, I was privileged to have been among the approximately 2,000 cadets who were moulded and shaped by his craftsmanship, and to have witnessed firsthand, even if only from a worm's eye view, his captivating and total mastery of the art of leadership. There is no dearth of anecdotes of life at the Academy during his tenure as the Deputy Commandant and I have little doubt that this edition of *Quarterdeck* will be enriched and embellished by raconteurs far more accomplished than me. So, what I wish to reflect upon is not Admiral Pereira's undoubted and amazing charisma but, rather, the officer-level leadership he exemplified and espoused.

Although NDA is India's sole tri-Service training academy, it is, of course, not the only *ab initio* officer-training academy of the Indian defence forces. Service-specific academies — such as the Indian Military Academy (IMA) in Dehradun, the Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Chennai, the Indian Naval Academy (INA) in Ezhimala and the Air Force Academy (AFA) in Hyderabad — have been established to cater for India's burgeoning demand for a world-class officer corps. All of them are striving to produce professionally sound, future-ready officers imbued with an abundance of what are known the world over, as 'Officer-like Qualities' (OLQ), which, in composite form, make for 'leadership'. OLQ, of course, begs the basic question: 'What is an officer?' While almost everyone has an intuitive answer, there is little articulation of a doctrinal or 'standardised' response. From this basic question, arise other equally fundamental ones. For instance, 'What is a 'naval' officer?' The adjective 'naval' prefixed to the noun 'officer' makes it necessary for India's training doctrine to delve into the very nature and purpose of the

Navy. Without this awareness of what one might call 'the big picture', officers who constitute the Indian Navy would remain unable to forge a well-defined organisational identity. Another question that needs to be answered is, 'How does a 'naval officer' differ from a naval artificer?' If one were to provide technological qualifications to the artificer, would that, by itself, make him into an officer? Clearly, there are attributes that lie outside the technological domain and some that lie outside the 'cognitive' domain itself.

An officer may be defined as '*An intellectually, physically, emotionally and behaviourally exemplary, courageous and inspirational leader, imbued with a fine sense of pride, honour and integrity, possessing strong articulation and clear and evident expertise and refinement in multiple domains and deeply committed to the service of his country and the wellbeing of his subordinates*'. Parsing this definition allows *ab-initio* officer-training academies to create and structure specific training-activities to attain each of the several adjectives contained in the definition.

While parsing this definition, the adverb 'intellectually' requires the creation of a broad-based academic curriculum that provides the requisite multidisciplinary, liberal education to each cadet, even while concentrating upon a narrower subset of those disciplines that are most relevant to his or her professional advancement. However, there are several complexities that need to be addressed. While addressing issues of academic development of the officer-centric leadership, military policymakers also need to wrestle with the question of the role of technology in this process of creating an 'officer'. Do they want a BTech

graduate who is also an officer, or do they want an officer who is also a BTech graduate? This is a critical question and the choice made in answering it will determine, to a very large extent, the thrust and prioritisation of intellectual development.

While multiple sources of knowledge can, and should, inform intellectual development, the criticality of 'primary science' — that is, knowledge generated through formalised processes such as research and/or the application of scientific methodology into decision-making processes — appears incontestable. However, it is an error to move from here to a belief that STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is the only encapsulation of 'science'. Harsh experience, both in India and abroad, has taught the Indian military that cognitive disciplines that lie within the social and economic sciences, too, are critical for successful leadership, particularly if it is desired that this success be achieved on a sustainable basis. For instance, the social sciences (including, of course, economics, but not limited to that discipline alone) are crucial for elucidating the cultural beliefs, values, norms and rules of local communities — both external to the military and internal to its essentially heterogenous composition — that make for sound leadership. The Indian Navy, having embraced STEM through its BTech curriculum, is now acutely aware of the need to remove any stove-piping of the physical and the social sciences, and acknowledges the role of the humanities in the development of contemporary and future leadership models that are robust and enduring. It recognises that the humanities provide and promote the ability

to conceptualise, while the 'sciences' provide the discipline through which the concepts that have been conceptualised can be realised.

Technology provides a degree of 'form' that will enable 'function' to be realised by human beings. If the synthesis of these elements of the humanities and the sciences, so as to produce viable 'technology', cannot be done, India's military leadership recognises that we will, at best, be forever stuck, blindly chasing the technologies generated by other people... other countries... other races... other communities... other societies. It understands that future-ready leadership cannot afford to simply copy or ape concepts, sciences and technologies as they apply in other parts of the world. For India's military to attain and sustain its required level of excellence, its leaders must be able to conceptualise for themselves. In its ongoing quest to produce 'quality in quantity', India's current military leadership acknowledges that the spirit of enquiry and the innate spirit of curiosity in the intellectual development of the Indian people has, all too often, been sacrificed at the altar of rote learning. Across wide swaths of the country, rote learning has come to be viewed as a bridge... a mechanism... an elevator... an escalator... that will allow people to move from one socioeconomic paradigm into another. It certainly does do all that. But it does other things, too. Darker things. It stifles creativity, promotes fear of expression, and militates against the free thought that is so essential to conceptualisation. Consequently, leadership training in the Indian military seeks to abjure rote learning in favour of lateral thinking. It is striving to adhere to holistic training that affords recognition and respect to

not merely the physical sciences, but to the biological (life) and social sciences, too, as also to the humanities.

Admiral Pereira was a keen sportsman and recognised the importance of sports in the development of officer-level leadership. He represented the Navy in hockey in 1946 and golf in the 1960s. Brigadier 'Mike' Bhalla (Retd), whom I remember well from my own days at NDA, recounts in his 2018 book, *The Admiral I Knew - A True Story of Admiral Ronald Lynsdale Pereira*, "Stocked in his car were a golf set, a hockey stick, separate footwear for these and other games. During sporting activities he would land up at the hockey or football field, change his shoes and join the game with the cadets." With such a legacy, it is but natural that the adverb "*physically*" should dictate a carefully structured regimen of progressive body-development involving the balanced coordination of all muscle-groups and incorporating cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition. However, Admiral Pereira did not encourage sports *per se* but, rather, despite his own fondness for golf, insisted that cadets play 'troop games' such as basketball, volleyball, soccer and field-hockey, instead of individual-centric games such as tennis or badminton. Not only do troop games — which can have officers and sailors in the same team — promote camaraderie between the leaders and the led, they also teach officer-cadets the importance of occasionally sacrificing one's chance of individual glory for the sake of the team. As such, they train these young men and women to become good team-makers, team-leaders and team-players, while promoting camaraderie, esprit-de-corps and a

healthy spirit of competitiveness. As General Douglas MacArthur famously said, "On the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that on other days, on other fields will bear the fruits of victory." This is not to say that every winning athlete in every team sport will be a winner in war. It does, however, mean that he or she will remain aware of the needs of their team (or troop) and be practised in prioritising the team over themselves.

The adverb "*emotionally*" requires the designing and execution of specific activities aimed to promote maturity of thought, consideration for others, counselling avenues and methodologies, the promotion of reflection and introspection, and so on. With their emphasis on youth, militaries struggle with the leadership-challenges of emotional immaturity among officers. As American psychologist Daniel Goleman, who helped popularise emotional intelligence, puts it, "Emotional intelligence or EI is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, and those of the people around you. People with a high degree of emotional intelligence know what they're feeling, what their emotions mean, and how these emotions can affect other people.... For leaders, emotional intelligence is essential for success." In his inspirational address at a leadership workshop — delivered in the 1990s, well after he had demitted office as the 10th Chief of the Naval Staff and retired from active service — Admiral Pereira exhorted young inexperienced officers, who often find themselves required to lead sailors far older and vastly more experienced than themselves, to demonstrate a "willingness to learn" rather than trying to impose themselves upon these senior sailors. He amalgamated the five key elements of EI, self-

awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, stating, "Therefore, I say, particularly to the young officer, you have to be very careful at this stage. In fact, the best way to do this is to keep your mouth tightly shut, keep your eyes and ears wide open, and glean from your men their experience by working with them physically and sometimes mentally, and they will respect you for it. Only when you have gained that experience... they will come over to you, they will accept you, and they will respect you."

Officer-led military leadership requires that at each level of the hierarchy, those placed in power must necessarily exhibit behaviour that stands as a correct example to their peers and subordinates alike. This always requires moral courage and often requires physical courage as well. In the defence forces, rank is a conspicuous and well-recognised measure of professional competence and an indicator of the individual's progression through the established hierarchy. Consequently, senior officers have every reason to be proud of their achievement. However, it is equally important that they are seen to be setting an example of the dignity and composure with which rank is to be carried and its accompanying authority is to be exercised. Thus, as pointed out by army veteran Maj Gen Mrinal Suman, any nascent tendency towards "arrogance of seniority in stratification of social events and the indiscriminate flaunting of flags and stars" needs to be firmly scotched. Admiral Pereira, for instance, never used his official car when not strictly on official duty. And upon his own retirement the Admiral, who was against post-retirement sops such as ambassadorships because these were posts held by Foreign Service officials with much less seniority than

that of a Service Chief, was famous for riding his venerable but trusty Lambretta scooter everywhere.

In every institution that endeavours to produce leaders, great effort is made to instil pride but to abjure vanity. Closely affiliated to concepts of worthiness and pride is the concept of honour and Admiral Ronnie Pereira internalised and exuded that quality of worthiness and respectability that affects both social standing and self-evaluation — both at the individual level and the collective one (such as a family, clan, school, academy, profession or nation). Dr Samuel Johnson, who, while penning his 1755 classic *A Dictionary of the English Language*, defined the several senses in which the word 'honour' could be used, could well have been referring to Admiral Pereira when he asserted that honour related to the "nobility of soul, magnanimity and a scorn of meanness".

One very strange omission — but a telling one — in the development of leadership in India is the lack of any systematic study of the notion of honour, in the very institutions that seek to promote it. Renowned American anthropologist and writer Frank Henderson Stewart makes the compelling case that there are two types of honour: 'horizontal' and 'vertical'. Admiral Pereira was intimately involved in the development of horizontal honour. This is the "right to respect among an exclusive society of equals" and is premised upon a 'code of honour', which stipulates the minimum standards that must be reached for a person to receive respect within a group and also specifies behavioural circumstances or happenstances by which honour might be lost. The permeation of horizontal honour through a

peer group also requires the existence of a tightly knit, aspirational and inspirational 'Honour Group' that consists of individuals who understand and have committed to live the code of honour. Vertical honour, on the other hand, is about giving praise and esteem to those who are superior. As such, vertical honour is hierarchical and competitive, going to the individual who not only lives the code of honour but excels at doing so. However, for vertical honour to exist, horizontal honour must first be present. As the late British social anthropologist, Julian Pitt Rivers, put it, "Honour is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his claim to pride, but it is also the acknowledgment of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his right to pride." In other words, without a baseline of mutual respect among peers (horizontal honour), winning praise and esteem (vertical honour) means very little. In the final analysis, honour is the quality of knowing and doing what is morally right. This is what has been known for millennia in India as dharma and is what India's military-leadership ethos is centred upon.

In his 1990s address at the leadership workshop mentioned earlier, Admiral Pereira summed up his concept of a leader with three meaningful and powerful words: credibility, authority and delegation. When he famously said, "Leadership without credibility is a whitened sepulchre of pseudo leadership", he was referring to that much misunderstood term, 'integrity'. He intrinsically and intuitively recognised that at the very epicentre of the miasma surrounding the concept of leadership was the notion of integrity. Integrity is derived

from the Latin word *integritatem*, meaning 'soundness' or 'wholeness' and denoting a 'perfect condition'. It is thus that the mathematical term 'integer' emerges to describe a 'whole' number. Similarly, to have integrity is to be solid, whole and of sound mind. As perhaps the most central ingredient of leadership, integrity means that what one says institutionally and what one does individually are matched.

Admiral Pereira, like all great leaders, walked the talk. A system that operates upon and promotes integrity may be likened to a series of valves in a fluid pipeline. Unless all the valve openings or flaps are aligned with one another, the flow of the fluid can never be smooth. The whole thing is working well, undivided, integrated, intact and uncorrupted. Sound leadership and integrity (which Admiral Pereira termed 'credibility') are, as he emphasised, indivisible — in many respects, they may even be said to be synonymous. His concepts resonate well with those outlined by Yale University's Professor Stephen Carter, who states, "When I refer to integrity, I have something very simple and very specific in mind. Integrity, as I will use the term, requires three steps: (1) discerning what is right and what is wrong; (2) acting on what you have discerned, even at personal cost; and (3) saying openly that you are acting on your understanding of right from wrong." In the course of his development of officers, Admiral Pereira repeatedly emphasised the absolute responsibility that comes with the absolute power of command over one's fellow men. It is, however, prudent to bear in mind that while honesty is a *sine qua non* for integrity, it is a 'necessary' but not a 'sufficient' condition for the

realisation of integrity. To quote Professor Carter again, "Plainly, one cannot have integrity without being honest, but one can certainly be honest and yet have little integrity."

Refinement in multiple domains is essential in a leader as soon as he or she begins to interact in a domain even slightly larger than they originated from. As the level of leadership rises, the domain becomes an international one and the words and deeds/actions of the leader begin to have an ever-greater impact upon the horizontal component as well as the vertical component of honour — for example, the avoidance of conduct that will generate embarrassment or shame and the meticulous adherence to conduct that will enhance the leader's own stature, as also the country's standing and prestige in the community of nations. It is never too early to bring in this refinement in multiple domains — the foundations and much of the edifice are either built or marred by the time one's basic education is completed.

Admiral Pereira's deep and genuine concern for the wellbeing of his subordinates was a critical attribute of his, enabling him to garner an uncommon degree of loyalty from all those

fortunate enough to have been led by him. He remained true to the Chetwode Motto: "The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time. The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next. Your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and every time." This is ingrained in every officer of the Indian defence forces and it continues to inspire and guide the actions of the officer corps, long after they have retired from active service. General Colin Powell's well quoted comment could equally accurately have been that of Admiral Pereira: "Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership."

In the final analysis, any recounting of Admiral Pereira's life reminds us once more that India's military leadership is not about rank, privilege or perquisite. It is about the wellbeing of the led... the wellbeing of the country. The country's honour, the leader's honour, and the honour of the led are not different from one another.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd), is the Director-General of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF). He is a prolific writer, a deeply respected leadership mentor, and a globally renowned strategic analyst who specialises in a wide range of maritime affairs and related issues. He may be contacted at directorgeneral.nmfindia@gmail.com

COMMISSIONING: INS VAGIR THE REINCARNATION

By Commander Rajinder Dutta (Retd)

At the commissioning of the reincarnated INS Vagir on 23 January 2023, many stakeholders walked tall, but the proudest must have been RAdm K R Raja Menon, the former commissioning Commanding Officer of the erstwhile INS Vagir. "Go, Vagir, go," he said. "Live up to your second avatar, as you did in your previous one!"



Cdr Vijay Vadhera, NM (G), President NFMC, my wife Meena and I were privileged to attend the commissioning ceremony of INS Vagir at Cruiser Wharf, Naval Dockyard. The veterans and dignitaries gracing the occasion included, among others, former CNS Admiral V S Shekhawat, former COs and crew of the previous avatar, and Lt Gen H S Kahlon, GOC, M&G Area. The dignitaries on stage flanking Chief Guest Admiral R Hari Kumar, CNS, were Cdr S Divakar, Commanding Officer (Desig) Vagir; VAdm Narayan Prasad (Retd), CMD, Mazagon Docks Ltd (MDL); VAdm AB Singh, FOC-in-C West; and RAdm K R Raja Menon.

In the opening address, VAdm Prasad highlighted the efficiency of MDL in shaping the



submarine in record time since its inception and launch. And RAdm Menon, speaking extempore, praised Vagir's service to the nation in her previous avatar and said he had retrieved her 'aatma' during her decommissioning and preserved it to be handed over to Cdr Divakar!

Upon the Chief Guest's approval, Cdr S Divakar read the commissioning warrant and embarked the black beauty for the Colours ceremony, after which the dignitaries embarked the submarine and CNS unveiled the commissioning plaque. After media interactions, a High Tea followed.

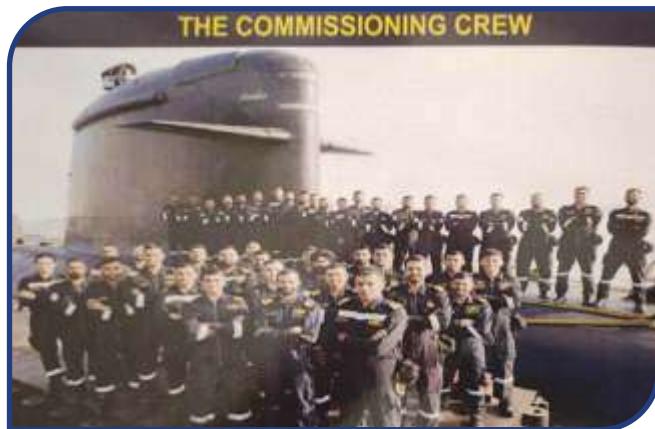
Later in the evening, the Commissioning Cocktails were served in the Command Mess. After the cake-cutting, the C-in-C addressed the gathering and Lt Gen Kahlon wished INS Vagir a glorious innings and presented a cheque of Rs 50,000 for the Ship's Welfare Fund.

Inception and role

INS Vagir is the 5th submarine of the Kalveri

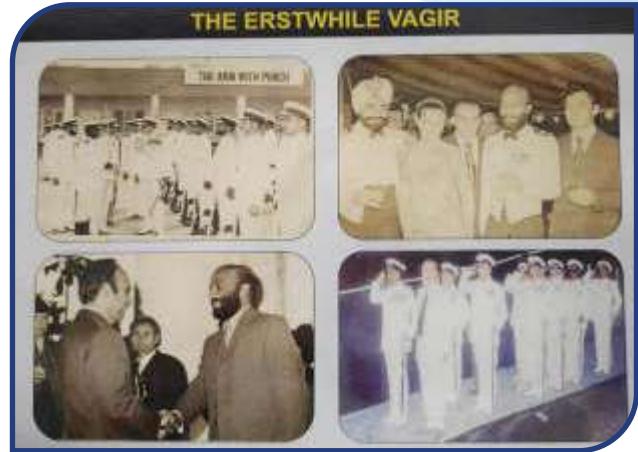
class, built by MDL with technology transfer from M/S Naval Group, France.

Steel cutting began in March 2018; the sub was built in four modular sections that were joined. Two years later, on 12 November 2020, she was launched. Vagir undertook her first sea sortie on 1 February 2022. In a record eight months, she was able to execute her sea trials with 70 days at sea and clock 850 dived hours efficiently. Having performed her max operating dive, completion of crew qualifications, conduct of sonar SATs and weapons firing, she was delivered to the Indian Navy on 20 December 2022 and decked up for commissioning on 23 January 2023.



The crest

The crest of the submarine depicts a sand shark that represents stealth and fearlessness. The motto '*Saahas Shaurya Samarpan*' epitomises the core values of Courage, Valour and Dedication. The ship's company imbibes the spirit behind



the motto and promises to keep the edge 'sharp and ready' at all times.

Vagir is fitted with some of the best sensors in the world. Her weapon package of wire-guided torpedoes and sub-surface to surface missiles can neutralise a large enemy fleet. She has the capability to launch marine commandos for special ops behind the enemy line. And for self-defence, she has a state-of-the-art torpedo decoy system. A fine reincarnation, indeed!

The previous avatar

The erstwhile INS Vagir (S-41), a 4th Foxtrot-class submarine, was commissioned by then Lt Cdr K Raja Menon on 3 November 1973 in Riga, USSR. She sailed independently to Visakhapatnam for 80 days sans escort to join the 8th Submarine Squadron of the Eastern Naval Command. She safeguarded the national interest on both the Eastern and Western Seaboards for close to three decades before being decommissioned on 7 January 2001.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Commander Rajinder Dutta (Retd) has been a naval pilot and a qualified flying instructor with about 3,000 hours of flying on various fixed wing aircraft of the Indian Navy: HT-2, HPT-32, Kirans, Islander, Super Connie, Fokker F-27 and IL-38. He is the Hon Secy of NFMC, a master of ceremonies and an avid blogger.

PASSING OUT OF THE CENTURION

By Commodore Ajay Chitnis (Retd)

A hundred is a hundred, whether it is in the form of a century by Sachin (I mean a Century of Centuries) or a century of courses passing out of an institution – it is always a landmark. I'm referring to the latter here.

It began with an innocuous call one morning in early May, which I reluctantly answered as it was from a number not stored in my phone. When the caller asked if it was me, using my rank and name, I was convinced it wasn't someone offering me an interest-free loan or selling me an insurance policy! The caller identified himself as Lt Kanad from INAS 561. My ears pricked up as I had heard this number after a gap of at least 30 years. He informed me that the 100th Helicopter Conversion Course (HCC) was passing out on 9 June 2023 and asked if I would like to partake in the celebrations. The answer was an immediate yes! This brought back a flood of memories and many a blast from the past. It has been a difficult exercise in restricting these to those relevant to my alma mater.

In 1971, the Fleet Air Arm was in expansion mode and the Navy was inducting helicopters in a big way. As the Indian Air Force could not allot additional vacancies, the Navy turned to Cambata Aviation in Bombay to carry out basic helicopter training to augment its intake of helicopter pilots. This arrangement, too, was



The passing-out course, their instructors and veteran helicopter pilots

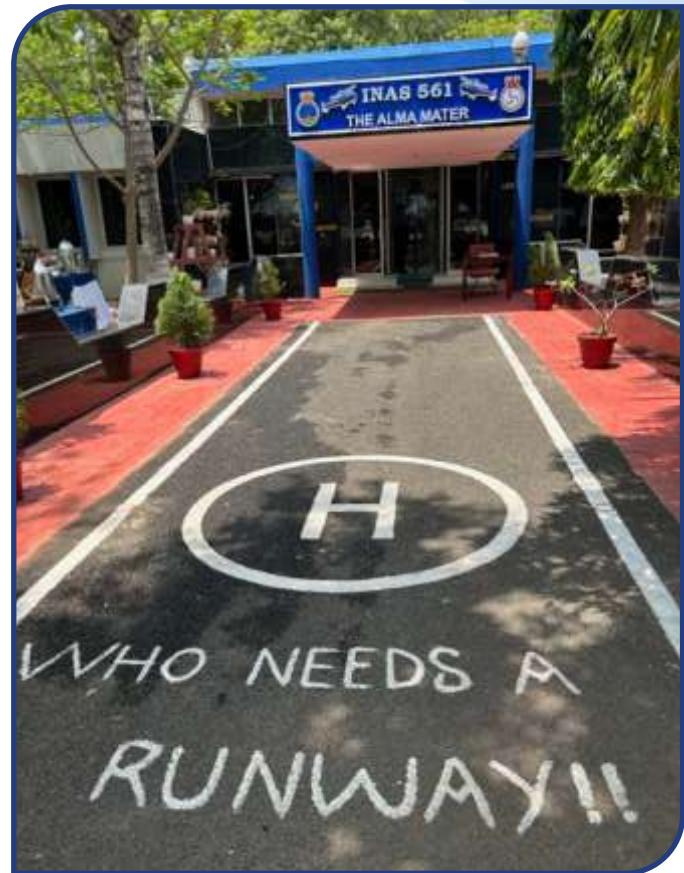
insufficient and it was decided to establish a Helicopter Training School (HTS) at INS Garuda in Cochin. This school was commissioned in 1971 as Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 561, with Lt Cdr S R Debgupta, NM, as Squadron Commander. The squadron had in its inventory Hughes 300 for basic helicopter training and Alouette IIIIs for advanced training. The alma mater of all helicopter pilots of the Indian Navy, the squadron shifted to INS Rajali in Arakkonam in 1992 and has been providing the Navy the best trained helicopter pilots; in fact, 811 helicopter pilots have passed out through the portals of this premier training institution.

There were three pilots in the first course: Lt G Sharma, Sub Lt R H L Maini and Sub Lt U S

Ghura. While they were being trained on Hughes, three pilots (Sub Lts S Gautam, N R Salvi and A K Sabherwal), who had already done their basic phase with the IAF, were trained on Alouettes, and they became the '0' Course. We, Sub Lts K D S Sandhu, A H Chitnis, S N Nair and S S Kukreja, were trained at Cambata Aviation in Bombay on Bell G2 Helicopters and reported to HTS in July 1972 for our Alouette conversion. For want of any other suitable name or number, we were called the 'Ad-Hoc' Course and completed our training in September 1972, a few months before the first course graduated. So, technically, I was part of the '0.5 course'. Thus, I pride myself as one of the pioneers of this institution, which has just passed out its 100th Course.

The squadron has a rich legacy, with a history spanning over five decades. HTS has been awarded the trophy of 'Best Training Squadron' on nine occasions, and was adjudged the 'Best Naval Air Squadron' in 2012-13. While looking at the legacy of the school, it would be appropriate to glance at the history of naval aviation.

In 1971, the Navy flew only Alouette II helicopters; a flight on board INS Vikrant, a flight each at Cochin and Goa, and one helicopter each onboard INS Deepak and INS Darshak. The Seakings were inducted in 1971 and this kicked off the airborne anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities of the Indian Navy. The Seakings were referred to as 'Flying Frigates' because of their advanced ASW outfit. It was a new world in helicopter flying – from single-engine Alouettes mainly engaged in search and rescue (SAR) duties to twin-engine Seakings, hovering at 40 ft above the water by day and night, with the sonar in the water below



searching for submarines. A paradigm shift in piloting skills was required to fly these new machines.

The year 1972 saw the induction of INS Nilgiri into the Navy; this marked the beginning of another genre of naval aviation. Hitherto, flying at sea was restricted to the aircraft carrier, the tanker Deepak and the survey ship Darshak. Now, we had frigates equipped with the anti-submarine version of the Alouette, called MATCH Role (medium-range anti-submarine torpedo carrying helicopter). Small decks and rolling and pitching increasing in degree with the sea state called for a higher skill set than before.

The early '80s saw the arrival of the Rajput class guided missile destroyers with the potent ASW helicopter, Kamov 25, onboard. Simultaneously we also witnessed the induction of the broad-

beamed Leanders – Taragiri and Vindhyaagiri with Seakings onboard. Helicopter aviation was proliferating and so was the scope of the skillset required. Whereas operational training was conducted on location, basic flying skills were inculcated at the HTS and the credit goes to the high quality of the QFIs (qualified flying instructors) at the alma mater.

Currently, the HTS conducts two courses a year, during which 30-40 trainees pass out as qualified helicopter pilots cleared to fly by day and night from ashore. The HCC is a gruelling 21-week programme wherein the trainees are put through the rigours of extensive flying and ground schedule before they graduate to become confident naval aviators. Till a year ago, the trainee pilots had already undergone basic flying training on fixed wing or rotary wing aircraft, but this changed with the advent of the 01 BHCC (Basic Helicopter Conversion Course). Being an *ab-initio* course, BHCC forms the Stage I syllabus of flying training; on completion, they progress to Stage II and conjoin with the HCC. Thus, the Passing Out Parade on 9 June 2023 marked the successful graduation of 100 HCC and 01 BHCC, and the award of the coveted 'Golden Wings' to 16 naval pilots.

So, what goes into the making of a helicopter pilot? Let's take a look at the syllabus. The courses commence with thorough pre-flying training, which includes classes on SOPs, airfield particulars and understanding of checks and procedures of the helicopter. This is closely followed by flying training, which primarily comprises 'hover' and 'general handling' of the aircraft in the initial phases. As the trainees gain proficiency, they are cleared to fly 'mutual' – as 'Captain of the Aircraft'. This is a tried-and-tested formula wherein the aim is not only to

assess trainees but also to instil a sense of confidence in both the trainees and the machine they fly. The training encompasses various phases including pilot navigation, formation flying, instrument flying and night flying. SAR is the most important responsibility of a helicopter pilot. This phase differentiates the men from the boys and is conducted at INS Parundu at Ramanathapuram, owing to its proximity to the Bay of Bengal.

The passing out of the centennial course, being a milestone achievement for the Indian Navy, was aptly celebrated. Among the alumni of the HTS present on the occasion were former CNS Admiral Karambir Singh and four former Flag Officers, Naval Aviation. Also present were Cmde G Sharma (fondly called Gyanu), a pilot of the 1st HCC, and yours truly. There were former QFIs, whose pupils were instructors of the instructors currently engaged in teaching pupil pilots to fly! It was a truly nostalgic occasion. To mark this milestone, a 'Wall of Fame' was created with the names of all the pilots trained at HTS. A statue of an instructor and a pupil pilot was also unveiled outside the squadron premises, depicting the unique relationship that exists between an instructor and his pupil.

The passing-out course let their hair down at the 'Rotor Nite', an event organised on 7 June. The dress code was 'Cowboys/ Cowgirls', while the trainees put up a hilarious musical depicting their life and their perceptions of the instructors, squadron commander, et al. It was a fun evening. And young Lt Kanad, who made the initial contact with me, turned out to be a great singer. The valedictory function on the night of 8 June was a much more sober affair, with the presence of the chief guest, Vice Admiral B

Dasgupta, FOC-in-C Eastern Naval Command. I had met him while I was in the service and renewed our acquaintance. It was an honour to be asked to distribute some of the prizes to the passing-out course during this function.

The parade saw a smart turnout by all personnel. The Rajali parade ground was resplendent with bright young men and women, who, after being inspected by the C-in-C, marched past the dais proudly and in step. A formation of five Chetaks (as the Alouettes are known) did a 'bomb burst' over the parade ground just as the parade was over. The timing was precisely planned and executed.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention INS Rajali. In 1984, the Navy was looking for a suitable base to operate the long-range maritime reconnaissance (LRMR) TU 142M aircraft and selected an abandoned WWII era airfield at Arakkonam. The government sanction was obtained in 1986. The TU 142Ms, also known as Albatross, shifted to Arakkonam in 1988 as INAS 312. INS Rajali was commissioned as the fifth naval air station of the Indian Navy in 1992. In the same year, INAS 561 shifted from Cochin to its new home. In 2013, the ageing TU 142Ms were replaced by the state-of-the art Poseidon P8Is, eight of which now form INAS 312. These aircraft have proven themselves as the backbone of naval air operations. Recently, the Navy commissioned a full flight simulator for the P8Is, which includes facilities for simulated training of the air operation officers and technical crew. The base itself is totally self-contained, and boasts of the longest runway in Asia. Spread over an area of over 2,000 acre, Rajali has a number of sports grounds, a stadium, swimming pool and a marketplace of its own. This is in addition to the standard tennis

and squash courts, parade ground and a nine-hole golf course.

In the end, I must name the two persons directly responsible for ensuring that this landmark event was planned meticulously and executed with military precision and elan. Cmde Kapil Mehta, Commanding Officer INS Rajali, is himself an alumnus of the 50th HCC and an experienced Seaking pilot. 'Kaps' was a perfect host and arranged a windshield tour of the base for us on the 8th. I was fortunate to 'fly' a sortie on the P8I Boeing simulator and later a VR sortie on the Alouette.

Capt Pranay K Pandey is the Squadron Commander of INAS 561, the HTS. He was omnipresent and had mobilised all the resources under his command to ensure events were conducted with clockwork precision and guests looked after.



Our liaison officer was Sub Lt Khushbu Chaudhry. Recently posted to INAS 312, she has just completed her Naval Air Operations Officer's Course and is flying on the P8Is as a trainee. She was a great help in showing us around, accompanying us to the various functions and ensuring we were on time for all the events.

It was an honour to be invited for the celebrations and made me feel that I still 'belong' and am remembered by the family of elite helicopter pilots. While I was looking at the Wall of Fame, a thought struck me; I saw the names of a number of highly decorated naval officers. In

my estimate, there would be at least 10 Shaurya Chakra awardees and about 50 Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) awardees. I have requested the Squadron Commander of INAS 561 to gather the data, and suggested that this list, along with some citations, be displayed in a Motivation Hall, for future generations to see. I also met the Director of Naval Air Staff at Rajali and have requested him for the data on this. My strong feeling is that INAS 561 will emerge as the institution that has given us the largest number of Gallantry Award winners among all the training institutions of the Navy. Time will tell if that is correct.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commodore Ajay Chitnis, SC, NM, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in June 1971 as a fighter pilot. He converted to helicopters and specialised in anti-submarine helicopters. He clocked over 2,500 hours of operational flying by day and night, with over 500 deck landings on frigates and destroyers. He was the youngest officer to be appointed as the Flight Commander on INS Nilgiri, at the age of 25. He was deputed to Russia for training on the Kamov 25 anti-submarine helicopters and was part of the commissioning crew of destroyer INS Rajput. He also commanded Indian naval ships Kadmat, Androth and Jyoti, and an operational air base, INS Kunjali. He served as NOIC Gujarat during the 1999 Kargil conflict. His other important assignments were Chief Staff Officer (Operations), HQSNC; Directing Staff at the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington; and Deputy Director of Naval Air Staff (Operations and Flight Safety) at Naval Headquarters. During this period, he also completed his MSc in Defence and Strategic Studies from the University of Madras. He sought premature retirement in 2001 after completing 30 years of distinguished service. In his second career, he specialised in marine operations in the oilfields off the west and east coasts of India and abroad. He went on to assume the post of Head of Training for his company and went on to head HR and Admin in addition, which he continued to do till the end of January 2016. Currently, he is visiting faculty at the Savitribai Phule Pune University, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Vice President of the Indian Maritime Foundation, and President of the Rotary Club of Pune Central.

CENTENARY: THE LASCAR WAR MEMORIAL HONOURING THE LASCARS

By Commodore Bibhu K Mohanti (Retd)



When we read about the great conquests and exploits of the European powers between the 16th and 20th centuries, we seldom realise that these have often been achieved with the support of large numbers of South Asians.

'Lascars' were Indian seamen employed in the Portuguese, British and other colonial merchant fleets. The word 'lascar' itself comes from the Persian word *lashkar* for 'army' and the lascars were originally sailors from the west coast of India. However, the term came to encompass all non-European sailors on European ships, including people from Eastern India and the Middle East and Africa. They are inextricably linked to the history of the Indian Ocean but ignored in the mainstream historical narrative.

Seamen from India were part of the crew on European ships since the beginning of European voyages to India. By the 16th century, the lascars attained a great reputation for their expertise in seamanship, shipbuilding and port activities, and successive European powers battling to maintain their hold over the Indian Ocean region relied heavily on their services. These Indian seamen employed on Portuguese and Spanish ships were mainly from Portuguese colonies like Goa. Later, they were employed on the ships of the East India Company in the 17th century.

There were many advantages of using the services of native seamen. European sailors were not used to the climatic conditions in the Indian Ocean and in India; sickness was rampant and the death rate was high. They

frequently deserted ships while on shore, leaving vessels short of crew for return voyages. These factors created a need to employ native sailors from the colonies. Lascars were seen to have a daring spirit; they worked hard and were very resilient. They also possessed skills and knowledge of Indian Ocean currents and winds, owing to which they were preferred by Europeans.

Such were their impact and numbers that under the Navigation Acts of 1660, all British-registered ships importing goods from Asia had to make sure that 75 per cent of the crew comprised lascars. The Europeans profited greatly from employing lascars – these sailors were paid only 5 per cent of their fellow white sailors' wages.

In fact, the lascars lived under conditions akin to slavery as shipowners could retain their services for up to three years at a time, moving them from one ship to the next as they pleased. This treatment continued well into the 19th century. Many lascars settled down in European port towns, sometimes by choice and sometimes because of lack of alternatives. Many ended up marrying native women, probably owing to a lack of Asian women in Europe, even though these alliances were seen as unacceptable by many, especially members of the clergy.

Although lascars were employed in trade, they also played a significant role during wars. They

provided naval support during the Boer War in South Africa and the Boxer Rebellion in China. On the eve of the First World War, there were over 50,000 lascars on British merchant ships around the world. These lascars joined the war effort and fought valiantly along with the over 1 million other Indian soldiers and sailors in the war.

The loss of 896 lascars from undivided Bengal and Assam during the First World War was commemorated with the Lascar War Memorial in Kolkata in 1924. The memorial was designed by Scottish architect William Ingram Keir, erected by shipping and mercantile companies, and inaugurated on 6 February 1924 by Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal.

The Lascar War Memorial, a 100-ft-tall, four-sided column, was built on the southern end of the maidan near Princep Ghat in Kolkata. To highlight the naval aspects of the memorial, each side of the column has a design inspired by the prow of an ancient galley. The upper part of the monument comprises four small minarets and a large gilt dome. It has an Indian aesthetic with the addition of wavy lines beneath the projected balcony, which symbolise waves, along with *chhajjas* and trellises.

You enter the memorial through a huge doorway on the northern wall. The interior contains three plaques below the inscription 'Lascar Memorial'. One plaque commemorates the unveiling of the memorial by Lord Lytton. The second states that the memorial was erected

by the shipping and mercantile community of India in memory of the 896 seamen of Bengal, Assam and Upper India (the term 'lascar' is not used) who lost their lives in the service of the British Empire in the great war of 1914-18. The third, smaller plaque mentions the renovation and lighting of the Lascar War Memorial in 1994.

With the passage of time, the lascars and their contribution were forgotten and the memorial, covered with vegetation, lay unattended for seven decades. As it is located in INS Netaji Subhash, adjacent to Navy House, I accidentally happened upon it during my walk one morning. Recognising its importance, I decided to bring it back to its pristine glory. The process of restoration was completed in December 1994, after almost a year, and the monument was illuminated by then Governor of West Bengal on Navy Day. I can proudly say that this is the only naval monument that features in the heritage map of India.

Great men sitting in the grand assemblies and palaces of Europe are often credited with charting the destiny of the world as we know it. What is often forgotten is that this was done on backs of men and women from their colonies, of which the forgotten lascars are just one example. It is heartening that these seafarers and their contributions are now being acknowledged.

Visit: www.lascarwarmemorial.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



A specialist in Communications & Electronic Warfare, Commodore Bibhu K Mohanti has served afloat on Indian naval ships Kuthar, Dharini, Khukri, P249, Vikrant and Mysore. His appointments ashore include DDNS at Naval Headquarters; CCO, Headquarters Western Naval Command; Directing Staff at the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington; and Oi/C Signal School. He has commanded INS Agrani and Circars. Prior to his retirement in 1997, he was Commanding Officer INS Netaji Subhash and NOIC Kolkata.

PEACOCK BAY – THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

By Commodore Srikant B Kesnur (Retd)

I am far removed from yachting and have only a nodding acquaintance with it. I have always admired sailors and sailing (as in yachting and not the generic naval term) and had the pleasure of personally knowing the late Kelly Rao, a wonderful soul if ever there was one. However, like a dancer with two left feet, my clumsy attempts at sailing have seen me more outside the boat (in the water that is) than inside. Therefore, this piece is not about sailors and sailing, much as I would like to write about them. It is about that sanctuary of sailing – the picturesque Peacock Bay – and my own experiences connected to it.

Peacock Bay is one of the most well-known landmarks in NDA, much admired for its natural beauty and sylvan surroundings. However, during our cadet days it was no fun cycling to one end of the Academy and coming back to discover that the evening tea and eats had disappeared. Thus, the sixth-term naval cadets lost one of the pleasurable privileges of NDA seniors, a relaxed evening cuppa. Almost a decade after passing out, I was fortunate to enough to be posted back to NDA and even



Padmaja Parulkar Kesnur

more fortunate to get a house close to the Bay. It was then that the love affair actually started.

The Bay has several reasons to be loved and admired so ardently. First, the beautiful location with the quaint cottage (now sadly demolished), the tree-lined banks and birds of all hues fluttering about. Standing at the jetty, one can see the mighty Sinhagad Fort jutting into the heavens and reminding us of its splendid history. The IAT building can also be seen on the opposite bank, nestled in the verdant greenery. In all, it makes a heavenly sight, not necessarily remote but isolated to a certain extent from mainstream NDA life. It is like a sentinel guarding the Academy from one side. But on Wednesdays and Saturdays, it springs to life in a jiffy as multitudes of cadets assemble to learn

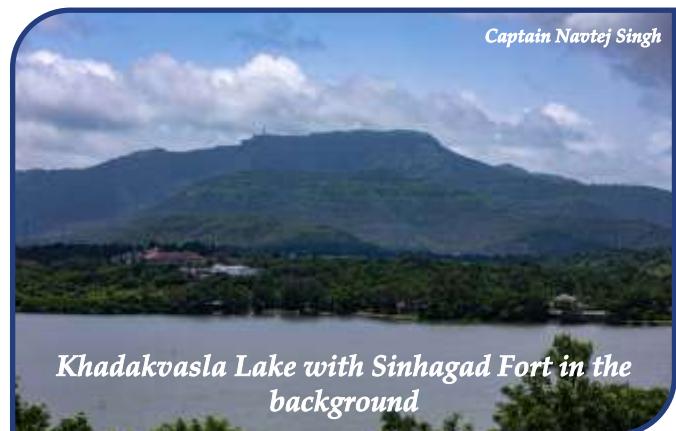
their watermanship skills and try their hand at everything from rowing and kayaking to windsurfing and even angling. But Wednesday and Saturday apart, the Bay has a peaceful existence that may, at times, even appear somnolent. However, it is precisely these movements that give much joy to any person who comes to pause, think, stand, stare and care.

Second, to a Navy man, the Bay is like a welcoming home, a cozy little corner that is the Navy, save the smell of the sea. For these who are interested in birdwatching, it provides numerous, wonderful opportunities. I am not really an avian person but I used to accompany my better half on various such visits, and each time she seemed to learn more. I do recollect a regular rendezvous with a black-crested kingfisher that perched itself on the mast of an enterprise boat every evening at sundown. Each time we visited the Bay, we spotted it without fail as it sat surveying the scene around in splendid isolation, occasionally swooping down in a flash to catch the fish. The kingfisher is a beautiful bird, no doubt, but one can also see the hoopoe, the occasional hornbills, egrets, golden orioles, crow pheasants, drongos and the flycatchers. On the other bank, where the vegetation is thicker, one has also seen jackals apart from the ubiquitous peacocks and monkeys. Simply seeing these birds and animals in their natural surroundings provides much joy to the mind and the soul.

Sunset is an enchanting time at the Bay, through the sun sets in the opposite direction and cannot actually be seen. In the warm afterglow of the sunset and the slowly fading light, hundreds of birds return home twittering about and the sky

takes a magical hue and casts its spell on the lake and the surrounding hills. If sunset is the time for quiet reflection, sunrise is the time of awakening as the trees and birds come to life again and the Bay shimmers in the warm rays of the morning sun. Many morning joggers and walkers make their appearance on the way, some with the customary pet in tow. For all those who believe in picture postcard scenery, try Peacock Bay at this time. It is guaranteed to give any scene in the world a run for its money.

Like the much-hyped monsoon advertisements on Goa, the Bay also takes on a new avatar with the advent of the rains. Come second week of June and the place is transformed beyond belief. The countryside becomes greener as the parched earth devours every raindrop as manna from heaven. The tiny water sanctuary – more a large pond actually – created next to the lake, suddenly comes to life with the croaking of frogs and drone of insects. The water changes colour from sparkling blue to a muddy brown



Captain Navtej Singh

Khadakwasla Lake with Sinhagad Fort in the background

and, further downstream, as the dam gates are opened, it suddenly becomes a free-for-all picnic spot. A rain-drenched, windswept time at the Bay may not be every one's idea of pleasure, but try it sometime – it is sheer bliss.

Of such tiny nuggets are my memories made of Peacock Bay. I have deliberately stayed away from mentioning the various regattas held here, the colourful ceremony of 'away all boats' and the various national-level sailors produced by the Academy. All these have been chronicled ably, and frequently, by many other lovers of the Bay. It was my intention to talk about the smaller aspects and I am sure many old-timers would have their own memories and stories of this beautiful nook.

It is, indeed, a beautiful and picturesque place; but more than that, Peacock Bay has class and character. It is, at once, a living entity, all flesh and blood, with a throbbing vivacity of its own. It has people, pets, birds, animals, boats, the water and other natural elements, each of which leave their own imprint and contribute to the overall grandeur. As the seas around us get dirtier and the air more polluted, Peacock Bay stands out. And even in the beautiful environs of NDA, it is truly a jewel in the crown. While being grateful for the providential acts of nature, we must also salute the great men who chose this site to train future warriors of the country.

Post script: One of the nice things about Peacock Bay in particular and NDA in general is that while infrastructure has expanded and continuously grown to cater to the increasing number of cadets and training requirements, it



has been done in an aesthetic way by being sensitive to the need to maintain green cover and reduce waste and pollution. Peacock Bay now has more quayside buildings and training infrastructure. However, much of the original charm is intact. One wonderful recent addition is the stone frigate called Training Ship Pereira in the memory of late Admiral R L (Ronnie) Pereira, the legendary Navy Chief who also had a memorable tenure as Deputy Commandant of NDA from 1971 to 1973. His tenure here has been written about in many books and publications. But having a permanent marker to his memory, one that is live, useful, relevant and focused on training, is perhaps the fittest tribute to him. This is one more reason to remember and reminisce about him in the centenary year of his birth.

Author's note: This ode to Peacock Bay was first written in early 1996 as part of my memoirs of NDA as Divisional Officer/AQ NO 2 Battalion. It has been updated to take in some of the latest developments.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commodore Srikant Kesnur is a regular Quarterdeck contributor and Naval History maven. After his retirement in June 2022, he has devoted himself to 'Maritime Evangelism'. He can be contacted at srikantkesnur@gmail.com

The Naval Ship Repair Yard (Kochi) was established as the Base Repair Organisation (BRO) on 21 January 1948. Its Platinum Jubilee celebrations culminated with a Technical Symposium in Kochi on 23/24 January 2023 as a milestone event of the Yard's 75 glorious years of service to the nation.

Here are some of the various activities conducted as part of the celebrations.

Inauguration of Prerna Sthal

As an ode to the efforts of the past, present and future efforts of the Yard, a commemorative memento was inaugurated on 21 January 2022, Yard Day, by FOC-in-C, South.



Platinum Jubilee Technical Symposium

The symposium on 'Leveraging Homegrown Technology for Ingenious Ship Repairs and Process Improvements' was attended by many senior officers from across verticals within the Navy, CMDs of PSU/DPSU shipyards and representatives from MSMEs and industry.

Technical papers on various topics giving thrust to indigenisation in the field of equipment development, ship repairs and resource planning were discussed and presented as part of the symposium. Also, a technical expo was set up at the venue, showcasing indigenous vendor capabilities and inhouse expertise in ship repairs and equipment development on the lines of self-reliance. Further, three MoUs for cooperation between MSMEs of the Southern India Defence Corridor – AIEMA (Ambattur Industrial Estate Manufacturer's Association) in Chennai, TREAT (Tiruchirapalli Engineering and Technology Cluster) in Tiruchirapalli and CODISSIA (Coimbatore District Small Industries Association) – and the Indian Navy were signed and released on 24 January 2023 as part of the occasion. Overall, the seminar provided valuable insights into the potential benefits of leveraging ingenious solutions in ship repairs and maintenance to achieve self-reliance, improve quality and increase the operational readiness of our platforms.



Installation of flag mast

A 96-ft flag mast was installed at HQSNC Lawns as part of the celebrations. The flag hoisting ceremony was conducted on 10 May 2022.



Blood donation camp

As part of the 75th year celebrations, a blood donation camp was organised by the Yard at INS Sanjivani in association with IMA. Eighty-five personnel, including officers, sailors and civilians, donated blood.



Self-defence workshop for women

A workshop on 'Self-Defence for Women' was conducted in collaboration with Kerala Police on 11 July 2022. A total of 94 women, including female apprentices, civilian staff, data entry

operators, contractual staff and women officers, were in attendance.



Inauguration of Civilian MI Room

The Civilian MI Room caters to all the civilian employees of SNC. The inauguration of the revamped Civilian MI Room – Charaka – was also undertaken as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations.



Unveiling of Clock Tower

A Platinum Jubilee Clock Tower was unveiled to commemorate the Yard's journey from a small Base Repair Organisation to its present stature. The Clock Tower was unveiled by P M Paramu, a 98-year-old veteran and P X Joseph, a recipient of the prestigious Shram Shree award.



Implementation of 5S concept

Industrial epoxy flooring was laid on five shop floors as part of the implementation of the 5S concept: Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardise and Sustain the Cycle. The same is being undertaken on the balance shop floors in a phased manner.



And more...

Other activities as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations included cycling treks for officers and sailors, a Yard cycling expedition, a 75-km relay run, upgradation of the NSRY façade, organisation of a medical camp at the Government Home for Physically Handicapped Women and a bike expedition to the Southern Defence Corridor. The 50th anniversary of the Apprentices Training School was also celebrated.



Seventy years ago, a significant milestone was touched in the annals of the Indian Navy as INS Garuda was commissioned in Kochi on 11 May 1953. Since its establishment, Garuda has been the 'Cradle of Naval Aviation', contributing to its growth. As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of Garuda, it is an opportune time to reflect upon its achievements, history and lasting impact on naval aviation.

Origins and development

The roots of Garuda can be traced back to pre-independent India. The original airstrip in Kochi was built in 1936 by the Cochin Port Trust. During the Second World War, in 1941, it was taken over by the Royal Air Force. After Independence, the Indian Navy acquired its first batch of 10 Sealand amphibian aircraft from the UK in 1953. They first landed at the Ernakulam channel. Thus, Garuda became the first ever Naval Air Station of the Indian Navy. Conceived as the foundation of naval aviation, the station provided a central hub for training, operations and maintenance of aircraft.

Over the years, Garuda has undergone significant development, expanding its facilities and capabilities to meet the evolving needs of naval aviation. Currently, it has the unique distinction of operating the oldest and latest aircraft in the Indian naval inventory. From its modest beginnings, Garuda grew rapidly, inducting a diverse range of aircraft and personnel. At present, Garuda has four air



squadrons, one flight and MH 60R Operational Conversion Unit. The station's location in Kochi, state-of-the-art infrastructure and commitment to excellence quickly established it as a premier training centre for naval aviators.

Contributions to naval aviation

Garuda has been instrumental in advancing naval aviation and bolstering the nation's defence capabilities. It has been the 'Master Helicopter Operating Base' of the Indian Navy. The mighty Sea King helicopters were inducted at Garuda. It is a matter of providence that its successors, the state-of-the-art MH 60R helicopters, are also being inducted at Garuda.

One of Garuda's most significant contributions has been its role as a training ground for generations of naval aviators. Before the commencement of the 21st century, Helicopter Training School INAS 561 was located in Kochi, providing initial training to all Indian naval helicopter pilots. The alma mater of all Air Ops officers, Naval Air Operations (NAO) School is

located in the premises of Garuda. Garuda has been providing administrative support to Naval Institute of Aviation Technology (NIAT) and School for Naval Airmen (SFNA), who train Aviation Technical and Aviation Ops sailors for the entire Indian Navy. The conversion training of pilots and AOs on Dornier, Sea King, RPAs, Chetak, MH 60R and indigenous Advance Light Helicopters is being undertaken at Garuda. And all flight divers of the Indian Navy receive their basic training at this naval air station. Garuda has consistently upheld the highest standards of instruction, equipping aircrew with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the dynamic and demanding field of naval aviation.

In addition to aircrew training, Garuda has been pivotal in conducting vital research and development activities in aviation technology. In collaboration with academic institutions, military installations and various contractors, the Air Technical Department has facilitated advancements in airframe, avionics and weapons systems. These innovations have not only enhanced the performance of naval aircraft but also contributed to the progress of naval aviation.

Further, Garuda has played a critical role in supporting operational and humanitarian missions at the Southern Naval Command (SNC). As a key base for short-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft Dornier and remotely piloted aircraft (RPA), it routinely conducts surveillance missions detecting transiting warships of our neighbouring countries in the Southeast Arabian Sea. Garuda is also crucial in maintaining high readiness of coastal defence and surveillance around the Union Territory of Lakshadweep (UTL) islands.

Garuda has constantly endeavoured to push its operational envelope. The maiden night landing by Dornier on an unaided Agatti airfield is a perfect example of this. Helicopters from this air station regularly embark on various Indian naval ships, including the indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

During the recent fire at Brahmapuram landfill in Kochi, Garuda was at the forefront in firefighting, from air and on ground. The search and rescue efforts by Garuda during Cyclone Ockhi in 2017 and the Kerala floods in 2018 are etched in everyone's memory. Its aircraft have



often undertaken medical evacuations from far-flung islands in UTL and ships at sea. From combat missions to humanitarian operations, Garuda has been a crucial component of naval air power projection, maintaining a constant presence in regions of strategic importance.

The celebration

The 70th anniversary of Garuda was a perfect opportunity to celebrate its contribution to Indian naval aviation. To celebrate seven decades of glorious service, seven events were organised in a span of seven days.

The first was a Blood Donation Camp, which saw the participation of 70 personnel from Garuda and other SNC units, including families. The next event, a morning walk and street games, saw the participation of over 700 personnel from Garuda, including families. A 70-km cycling expedition from Garuda to Cherai Beach and back saw the participation of 70 personnel. A 7-km interdepartmental run featuring 70 participants was also organised.

The next two events saw the public outreach of Garuda. A visit to Garuda for 70 children from



four different orphanages of Kochi was conducted. They got the opportunity to witness the aircraft displayed on ground in addition to regular flying operations. Further, Garuda, in association with NWWA (SR), extended help to the Government Old Age Home in Thevara. Members of NWWA along with Garuda families interacted with over 100 residents at the home. Other highlights included the anniversary celebrations with veterans.

Force behind the punch

Over the years, Garuda has been a nurturing environment that fosters camaraderie, professionalism and personal growth. It has provided opportunities for career advancement, training, and personal development, making it an attractive destination for talented individuals seeking to serve their country and make a lasting impact in the field of aviation. Moreover, Garuda has been an integral part of the surrounding community. Its personnel have actively participated in local initiatives, forging strong bonds with neighbouring cities and towns. The station's outreach programmes have further solidified its place in the community.



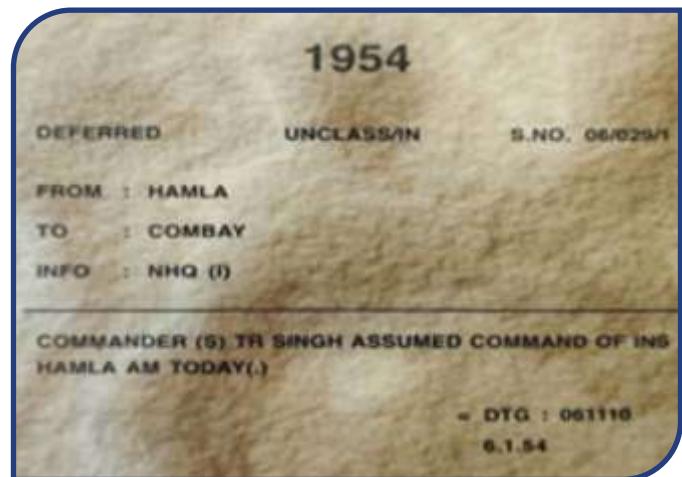
INS Hamla's history is inseparably linked with the history of the Indian Navy as they were both conceived around the same time.

The history of INS Hamla dates back to the time of the Second World War. The present site was used as the Landing Craft Wing as well as a Combined Operations Centre. The wing was commissioned as HMIS Hamlawar in 1943. Subsequently, in 1946, the British Wing (at Marve) was amalgamated with HMIS Hamlawar at its present location and the entire establishment was renamed HMIS Hamla.

Almost immediately after the amalgamation and being renamed as HMIS Hamla, the unit lapsed into low-level activity for a period of over eight years and functioned merely as a Care and Maintenance base; except for a short time in 1947, when, during Partition, the Boys Training Establishment (BTE) was accommodated there. It was only on 6 January 1954 that the establishment was recommissioned as INS Hamla.

Evolution as a training institute

During the early 1940s, training of 'writers' and 'stores' of the Indian Navy was in its nascent stage. There were hardly any trained personnel or formal training arrangements. The Naval Depot, Colaba, Mumbai, bore the initial brunt of training these personnel. Similarly, no specific training was imparted to the cooks and stewards, who were being recruited based on previous experience, if any.



In 1941, for the first time in the Navy, a Cookery School was established at HMIS Khanjar, Mumbai; later, in 1944, it was shifted to HMIS Akbar in Kolshet, Mumbai, where training of the Supply and Secretariat (S&S) and catering personnel was consolidated under one roof. The Cookery School and the S&S School were then shifted to HMIS Venduruthy in Cochin (now Kochi), where all the training establishments were being concentrated under a Commodore Superintendent of Training Establishments. It was here that these two schools, for the first time, were placed under one Officer in Charge in the rank of Lieutenant (S).

It was not until 1953 that a decision was made for an independent establishment to be headed by a Supply Officer as a Commanding Officer. To consolidate and strengthen S&S training, the decision was taken to move the training to INS Hamla. The privilege of taking over the maiden Command of the establishment on 6 January 1954 went to Commander (S) T R Singh. The unit

was initially placed under the administrative control of then Commodore of Bombay (COMBAY), later upgraded as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command. Hamla formally shifted under the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command, in September 1986.

Pillars of learning – The training faculties

With time, it was realised that the logistics functions in the Navy needed a more professional approach from the *ab-initio* training stage. Therefore, a separate Logistics Cadre was created on 15 August 1989. Ever since, training has evolved towards providing a professional and competent logistics component to the Service. At present, training at Hamla has been consolidated under four faculties.

Faculty of Management Studies

The Faculty came into existence in the 1980s when it was envisioned to create professional logistics officers. The First Long Logistics and Management Course (LLMC) of 47 weeks commenced on 7 September 1982 with a batch of 13 officers from various branches. The training curriculum for the course has evolved with time as the role of the Logistics Cadre has multiplied to include material management, pay duties,



First Long Logistics Management Course

civil works, IT, catering, motor transport and civilian management.

Affiliations, accreditation and MoUs

A landmark step was taken in 2002 when the LLMC was affiliated with Goa University for award of Masters of Business Administration (Logistics Management), ushering a new era of management education at INS Hamla. The affiliation was subsequently shifted to University of Mumbai (MU) in 2014-15. The next logical step was to attain permanent affiliation with MU. Towards this, INS Hamla went through a five-stage assessment for accreditation by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in August 2021. To evolve with time and stay relevant, it was imperative to streamline the academic process. Towards this, a maiden audit by an academic team nominated by the university was successfully completed in June 2023 and, after clearance, the proposal from the Board of Deans was put up to the Academic Council of MU. Once approved, Hamla will be one of the few institutes with permanent affiliation with a reputed university.

The faculty eventually started the Sub Lt Logistics Professional Course for *ab-initio* training of newly inducted Logistics Officers in the early 1990s. To enrich the syllabus, in 2006, the course was affiliated with Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies (SIMS), Pune, for award of a PG Diploma in International Logistics and Supply Chain Management. The affiliation, however, came to an end in 2011. A certificate program in management was subsequently introduced for the Sub Lt Logistics Course in association with K J Somaiya Institute in December 2021, with one month of

the management phase as part of the course. In tandem with changing times and rapid digitisation, the syllabus was revised in June 2023 to include more practical training in lieu of management subjects. And in October 2023, an MoU was signed with N L Dalmia Institute of Management and Research (NLDIMSR) for award of a PG Diploma in Logistics and Supply Chain Management.

Today, the faculty proudly trains approximately 900-1,000 officers every year from the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, Army and Air Force as well as officers from 'Friendly Foreign Countries' (FFS) in subjects related to logistics, management, works and staff functions (D&M). The courses run at the faculty range from a duration of seven days to 48 weeks. Each officer of the Indian Navy, except from the Medical Cadre, passes through the portals of this faculty.

Naval Institute of Computer Application (NICA)

In 1984, a modest beginning was made in computer training with the establishment of an Electronic Data Processing (EDP) training centre at Hamla. This was upgraded to an EDP School on 27 September 1989 and eventually rechristened the Naval Institute of Computer Applications (NICA) in 2002. Primary courses include the IT Managers' Course (ITMC) for officers and IT Basic Course (ITBC) for sailors of all branches, as nominated. An MoU has been signed with DIAT, Pune, in June 2023, for award of MSc (IT) to successful officers of ITMC and Certification to sailors completing ITBC. The institute also provides basic IT training to every sailor and officer course passing through Hamla, in consonance with their curriculum. To

facilitate hands-on training, there are a number of software/GeM training labs and eBays. NICA has also pioneered the development of software like Shack Management Software, eIIF, and digitisation of IN707 (the latest).

Joint Services Training Institute (Catering) – JSTI (CAT)

The Cookery School of the Indian Navy was shifted from Kochi to INS Hamla in 1953. To train chefs and stewards to perform their duties in the tight space of a galley onboard warships, a Catering School at the present site was inaugurated on 18 June 1990 with ships' galleys replicated. In 2010, an MoU was concluded with the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology, PUSA, for award of Diploma in Food Production for CPOCK 'Q' and Diploma in Food and Beverage Service for CPO STD 'Q' courses. The MoU was revised in 2019 to keep it valid.



MoU with DIAT, Pune, June 2023

Owing to its quality training methodology, curriculum and affiliations, the catering school was given the status of a Joint Services Training Institute (JSTI (Catering)) on 17 September 2018. The institute conducts courses ranging from eight to 16 weeks' duration and has trained a

total of 753 Indian Air Force and 893 Indian Army trainees. Many steps have been taken to improve the training, boost morale and enhance the curriculum through various affiliations, MoUs, Master Chef Competitions and visits. In June 2023, a working-level Food Festival was conducted, which witnessed the presence of chefs and mess secretaries from across the Navy. Further, for its best practices of cooking healthy and sustainable food, the institute was awarded the 'Eat Right Patron' certification in October 2023 by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).



Faculty of Professional Studies

The Professional Faculty at INS Hamla started Basic and Higher Qualification Courses of Sailors for Material and Finance & Administration Trade of the Indian Navy in 1959. The curriculum has evolved rapidly ever since. At present, the faculty trains sailors of the Indian Navy, Coast Guard and FFCs in finance, administration and material management. Certain specific capsule courses for NA/DA staff and MCPO capsule are also conducted for nominated sailors from all branches. Courses vary from eight to 16 weeks. On 6 October 2023, an MoU was concluded with NLDIMSR for award of Diploma in Material and Finance Management for MAT and F&A sailors.

Training infrastructure

Hamla has always marched in coordination with changing time and technologies. Over the past few decades, various projects have been undertaken to ensure the level of training is always a notch higher. Recent initiatives include upgrade of sailors' dormitories and classrooms with latest training aids being provisioned.

To ensure all-round development of trainees, Hamla has a comprehensive and modern sports setup and a Yachting Association of India-recognised Watermanship Training Centre. Administration of the Navy boxing and gymnastics teams (housed at Hamla) and the regional ECHS is also the responsibility of the unit.

Future-ready!

Consolidating the work of 70 years, the unit is steadfast in staying abreast with higher naval objectives, field requirements and ever-evolving technology to keep the training curriculum valid and fruitful. Also, as most of Hamla's infrastructure is of 1970s vintage and has taken a severe beating from the weather, a consolidated Hamla Redevelopment Plan has been formulated in October 2023. Considering the limited land, utilisation of vertical space using modern technology is the key highlight. Moreover, to ensure realisation of the vision of Hamla being a state-of-the-art training institute and a centre of excellence in various fields by 2028, fund allocation is being arranged on priority. Indeed, Hamla aims to continuously evolve and provide the finest training to the personnel of the Indian Navy while ensuring the welfare of each one!

GOLDEN JUBILEE: INS AGNIBAHU

THE ARM OF FIRE

By Lieutenant Nayan Dubey & Meenakshi Sharma

The definitive attack on Karachi by the ships of the 25th Missile Boat Squadron (MBS) on 4 December 1971 gave rise to the requirement to set up a Tender Ship to support these valiant warriors. Towards enabling logistic and administrative support for the squadron, INS Agnibahu was commissioned on 8 January 1973. An additional squadron, the 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron, was formed with the induction of the Veer class of ships from 1987 onwards and the charter of responsibilities of INS Agnibahu grew. The base depot ship rendered unstinting support to both squadrons till October 1991 when the 25th MBS was shifted to the Eastern Naval Command. Till that period, INS Agnibahu supported eight ships of the Vidyut class (Veer, Vidyut, Vijeta, Vinash, Nipat, Nashak, Nirbhik and Nirghat), eight ships of the Chamak class (Prachand, Pralaya, Pratap, Prabal, Chapal, Chamak, Chatak and Charag) and three ships of the Durg class (Sindhudurg, Hosdurg and Vijaydurg).

Formidable platforms require proactive support at all times, and this is where INS Agnibahu has stood true to its motto 'Always and Forever'. Along with the number of platforms increasing came the additional responsibilities of managing shore units, such as the Middle Ground and Oyster Rock batteries, .22 Firing Range and CW Boat Pool, which continued under the able charter of INS Agnibahu till the relocation of INS Trata to



Inauguration of INS Agnibahu & 22nd MVS Integrated Complex, 21 February 2023

Worli in August 1992 and the reorganisation of Headquarters Maharashtra Naval Area (HQMNA) in October 1998.

With limited permanent staff borne with the unit, Agnibahu still continued to cater to the needs of the 16 ships of the 25th/22nd Missile Vessel Squadron and, in addition, provided support to the only oceangoing tug of the Indian Navy, INS Matanga. While in her present form, INS Agnibahu provides support only to the 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron, it has in the past also been the lifeline of other units such as LWT(W) and waiting-ship sailors providing administrative and logistics support.

Golden Jubilee (1973-2023)

Agnibahu's Golden Jubilee celebration this year is testament to the 50 glorious years of grit, determination, resolve and hard work put in by the unit and crew. The unit has always remained

the 'wind behind the sails' of the Killer Squadron. Each time the squadron flag flew high and proud, the satisfaction that the unit stood in the shadows, the ever-present silent warrior, has been reward enough. The word *agnibahu* translates to 'arm of fire', which is apt considering the unit has been the literal torch that has lit the fire beneath many a furnace and provided ignition to countless cannons of the formidable Killers.

In its Golden Jubilee Year, INS Agnibahu has shifted to a new, state-of-the-art G+20 floor building, namely Agnibahu and 22nd MVS Integrated Complex, accommodating 450 single sailors. The complex represents the aspirations of a large Navy and fulfils the needs of its motivated, dynamic and resilient personnel. Agnibahu is the latest, tallest and only truly integrated complex of the Indian Navy, encompassing accommodation, training, logistics and administrative facilities in a single building.

The unit celebrated its Golden Jubilee on 9 January 2023 in grand style with many distinguished veterans in attendance. While a gunnery symposium on 'Modern Trends in Surface-to-Surface Missile Warfare' sharpened

our claws, the reception and *bara khana* in their honour helped us celebrate the glorious memories, rich heritage and legacy of this unique unit.

As the old Agnibahu building and the new Agnibahu and 22nd MVS Integrated Complex stand side by side, a common thread is intertwined between the two 'Homes of the Killers', celebrating the indomitable 'Killer spirit', the bond between the old and new, and hope for the future. With the planned induction of the Next-Generation Missile Vessels from 2028 onwards, it is certain that INS Agnibahu will continue to stand true to its motto and provide unstinting support to the 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron.



The Killers together

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Lieutenant Nayan Dubey was commissioned on 30 July 2018 and is an alumnus of the 27th Naval Orientation Course (Extended) at Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala. He has completed his Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from the Oriental College of Technology, Bhopal. He has served onboard Indian naval ships Jalashwa, Shardul and Vibhuti.

Meenakshi Sharma holds an MA in English Literature from the Institute for Excellence in Higher Education, Bhopal. She has worked as a Professor and Educational Counsellor at LNCT College, Bhopal, and submitted various research papers and dissertations, and conducted webinars. She is married to Lieutenant Nayan Dubey.

GOLDEN JUBILEE: INAS 330

THE HARPOONS

By Lieutenant Commander Abhishek Gautam



INAS 330 is the premier rotary air anti-submarine warfare (ASW) squadron of the Indian Navy. Commissioned on 17 April 1971, the squadron has been an intrinsic part of the Western Fleet and operated three variants of the versatile Sea King helicopters. Since inception, the squadron has been rendering yeoman service to the Sword Arm and has the unique distinction of undertaking the maximum number of sorties at sea compared to any other embarked squadron. The unit also has the distinction of being the oldest multi-engine helicopter squadron of the Indian Navy and has actively participated in action, accomplishing multifarious tasks. In its glorious service of over 50 years, the squadron has become an integral part of the Western Fleet and embarks Sea King capable decks in addition to operating as detachments from advanced landing grounds (ALGs) and oil rigs.

Some prominent operations in which the unit has actively participated include:

- **Op Falcon:** Longest coordinated ASW operation by the Indian Navy off the Kathiawar coast to search for PNS Hangor after sinking of INS Khukri, December 1971
- **Op Cactus:** Aid to the Mauritian government, 1988
- **Op Pawan:** Embarked INS Viraat towards IPKF operations in Sri Lanka, July 1989
- **Op Shield:** De-induction of UN forces from Somalia, 1994
- **Op Vijay:** Undertook ALG ops, 1999

- **Op Parakram:** Deployed with Western Fleet units, 2001-02
- **Op Castor:** Tsunami relief operations, December 2004
- **Op Rahat:** Flood relief operations, July 2005
- **Search and rescue ops:** Multiple occasions, including rescue of stranded naval personnel from INS Shankush, August 2010, and rescue of 13 survivors from sea during Cyclone Tauktak in March 2021.

COVID times

INAS 330 celebrated its 50th anniversary on 17 April 2021 but with the increasing restrictions mandated by the COVID-19 protocol, the Golden Jubilee celebrations were muted, to say the least. To commemorate this momentous occasion, the event was downscaled and conducted in the squadron hangar among the officers and men of INAS 330. The traditional cake-cutting ceremony was followed by unveiling of the Golden Jubilee Celebratory Envelope in the presence of then FOC-in-C (West) Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar and Quarter Master General India Post (West).



The celebration

The grand celebration initially outlined for the 50th anniversary was rescheduled for the 51st anniversary in April 2022. With COVID-19 in our rear-view mirror and relaxations in the restrictions, a three-day celebration was planned. It began with a *bara khana* on 15 April for sailors and families, which comprised a musical evening, a magic show for the children, a dance performance by local talent and felicitation of Harpoon veterans in and around Mumbai.

On 16 April, a cocktail party was organised on the lawns of US Club, which was attended by many veterans and serving personnel of the Sea King Family. The night was graced by then FOC-in-C(W) Vice Admiral A B Singh, Chief of Staff (WNC), Vice Admiral K Swaminathan and FONA Rear Admiral Philipose G Pynumootil. In the presence of Commodore V Ravindranath (Retd), one of the pioneers of the Sea Kings in the Indian Navy, and Vice Admiral K V Bharathan (Retd) (the officer from the Sea King stream holding the seniormost Indian Naval designation to date), a coffee-table book titled *Harpoons Through the Ages* was unveiled. The evening also saw the veterans recounting their memories in the squadron, which was followed by a musical performance and a stand-up comedy act.

Continuing the celebrations, on 17 April 2022, on the 51st raising day of INAS 330, a get-together was organised in the squadron hangar.



In traditional fashion, cake cutting was undertaken alongside Commodore Ravindranath (Retd). Further, FONA, the big boss of naval aviation, flew on the Sea King along with the skipper for his last sortie as he hung up his boots after an illustrious career in the Navy.

What's more, the squadron organised a blood donation camp at INHS Asvini on 28 April. Then CO Asvini, Rear Admiral Anupam Kapur, in the presence of CO Shikra Commodore Dushyant Purohit and CO INAS 330 Commander Sumeet Kumar Gupta, inaugurated the camp. This noble gesture marked the end of the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Lt Cdr Abhishek Gautam is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla. He is a Sea King Naval Air Operations Officer. He has completed his Long ASW Specialisation in 2022-23 and is currently posted at INAS 330 as Staff NAOO.

GOLDEN JUBILEE: INS KARDIP

SPRINGBOARD TO THE FAR EAST

By Commander Phani Kumar Nadendla



The strategic importance of the Andaman & Nicobar group of islands for maintaining effective surveillance over the Indian Ocean has long been appreciated by military experts. In addition, the geographical location of these islands makes them most suitable for development as an early warning station against any attacks from the East on our mainland. Therefore, it is imperative to keep a close watch against infiltration and unauthorised exploitation of the sea around these islands.

History and background

The above measures were initially introduced by developing a naval garrison on various islands and patrolling by naval ships. INS Kardip made its humble beginning on 23 February 1964 when the first batch of naval

personnel landed at Champin village on Nancowry Island. The Nancowry group of islands comprises eight islands: Kamorta, Nancowry, Katchal, Teresa, Trinket, Tilangchong, Bompoka and Chowra. The location of Kardip is depicted in the map (*see next page*). After five weeks of camping, they shifted to the present site on Kamorta island on 1 April 1964, where the naval garrison was established. With the induction of an infantry battalion in these islands, the garrisoning duties were taken over by the Army. The naval garrison at Kamorta was, therefore, replaced by a naval detachment to provide limited logistics support to the ships operating in the area since 1968.

In view of the increasing strategic importance of this area, there was a need to establish an advanced Naval Forward Operations Base at

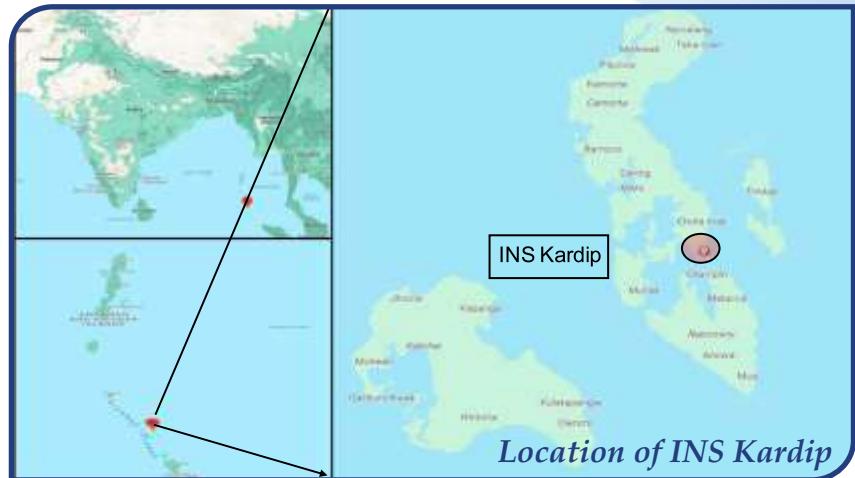
Kamorta. Accordingly, INS Kardip was commissioned on 28 September 1973, as per the Commissioning Order issued by Admiral Sourendra Nath Kohli, PVSM, Chief of the Naval Staff, to Commander Chakkingal Rajagopala Menon, Indian Navy.

Kar in the Nicobarese language means 'new' and *dip* is 'island'. Hence, Kardip means 'New Island'. The island Kamorta, where INS Kardip is located, similarly means 'new-found land'. And thus began an era in 1973, with this establishment evolving through the years into an efficient and reputable unit by always being alert and aware in the defence of our motherland.



The unit's crest comprises a Nicobarese hut on an island with a coconut tree. The green water symbolises the reflection of the abundant greenery on the crystal-clear sea water around the islands. The coconut tree with the Nicobarese hut is symbolic of the cultural heritage of the 'Ulchus', the colloquial name of the local tribes.

Prior to the tsunami, Kamorta was completely secluded from civilisation and life at Kardip was extremely challenging. After the tsunami, many tribal families shifted from the low-lying areas of the adjacent islands of Trinket and Nancowry to Kamorta Island. INS Kardip is a hard station in a Notified Tribal Area and there are restrictions on interaction with the tribal/local population. The unit is completely dependent on naval ships, Triton Liberty (a hired



Location of INS Kardip

oceangoing tug) and merchant vessels for essential commodities. Despite these hardships, the morale of the men is kept high through maintaining a positive operational tempo of a forward operational logistics base, team-building activities, regular competitive sports, yoga, get-togethers and cultural activities.

Ops ready, community-centric, sustainable

The unit has consistently displayed the highest levels of resolve and professionalism, in tandem with the 'Ships First Approach', while providing operational turnaround facilities to ships of the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, submarines, army contingents/patrols, and Air Force/Navy/Coast Guard helicopters operating in the South Andaman Sea. The assistance provided includes provisioning of fuel, freshwater, fresh provisions, dry rations and diving assistance. Additionally, the operation and maintenance of the Ship Support and Refuelling Facility (SSRF), exclusively by Kardip (usually maintained and operated by IOCL in other parts of India), is a shining example of professionalism and dedication. The SSRF, augmented by a fuel barge, has increased the operational reach and endurance of Navy and Coast Guard ships, thereby improving the

operational capability and sustained availability of assets in the South Andaman Sea. The OTRs of submarines at Kamorta have been streamlined to be more frequent, allowing them to be easily deployed for prolonged periods at important choke points far away from the mainland.

The unit operates two FICs of the Sagar Prahari Bal (Kamorta) to carry out coastal surveillance of Kamorta harbour and the Nancowry group of eight islands. A Naval Communication Network Centre, Kamorta, has been established and testing and tuning of equipment is in progress at present.

In addition to its primary duties, Kardip provides aid to local civil authorities, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) when directed. It also fulfils social responsibilities through a multitude of activities, like the establishment of a Naval Kindergarten and Primary School; organising Armed Forces multispecialty camps; search, rescue and MEDEVAC operations; educational visits of schoolchildren; and setting up a recruitment information kiosk.

Further, the unit has taken up various green initiatives, which include the creation of a 5 lakh litre rainwater harvesting sump, plantation of over 1,000 trees, installation of a 1 tonne capacity atmospheric water generator and reducing power consumption by introducing LED lighting.

Education first

A Naval KG was established at INS Kardip on 10 November 1992. It was later upgraded to a Naval Primary School and, at present, caters specifically to the needs of tribal children and the children of government officials working in Kamorta. A few children also come from adjoining villages on Nancowry Island. This school does not fall under the purview of the Naval Education Society and, as a result, relies solely on the fees paid by the students for its administrative expenses. It is the only English medium primary school on the island. The unit undertakes this responsibility as a pure social endeavour to uplift tribal children and it is highly appreciated by the local populace. The school welcomes funding from any CSR or NPFs routed through HQANC.

Humans of Kamorta

On 20 November 2019, during an emergency medical evacuation of a pregnant woman from a remote village named 'Daring', she safely gave



Beti Bachao: Veronica Dorish Rose born onboard an FIC during emergency medical evacuation

birth to a baby girl, Veronica Dorish Rose, on the FIC itself. This delivery was made possible with the careful assistance of a wet nurse and the FIC crew while being trans-shipped to Kamorta Island. As the girl was born onboard an FIC, she was adopted by INS Kardip, and a commitment was made to provide her with free education at the Naval School as soon as she reached the appropriate age. True to the promise, she was enrolled in the school on 12 April 2023 and is currently attending the Nursery class. This initiative not only fulfils the commitment made by the unit but also aligns with the Government's '*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*' initiative, ensuring a bright future for this young girl.

Golden Jubilee

INS Kardip recently celebrated its Golden Jubilee on completing 50 glorious years of unwavering service and dedication to safeguarding our nation's security.

The unit invited various tribal leaders and government officials for the event. Events conducted/planned throughout the Golden Jubilee year include:

- 50 medical camps in 50 Tuhets (A Tuhet, in

the local language, is a subdivision within a village)

- 50-km walkathon
- Planting five trees in each of the 50 Tuhets
- Sealing the 50 years of the unit's history in a time capsule, to be placed in the admin block and opened only on its 75th anniversary
- Clean ship of 50 beaches
- Hosting the Kardip Sports Championship
- Open ship for visitors on INS Kamorta at Kamorta Island
- Hosting the Kardip Mela.



Celebrating the Golden Jubilee

Thus, Team Kardip will always remain 'stood to' in the service of the nation as the forward operations base, a springboard to the Far East.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commander Phani Kumar Nadendla is an alumnus of the 95th course of the National Defence Academy and was commissioned on 1 January 2000. A specialist in Navigation and Direction, he has served on Viraat, Tabar, Vindhyaigiri, Maar and Ranvir. At present, he is Commanding Officer INS Kardip.

By Commander Rakesh Anna



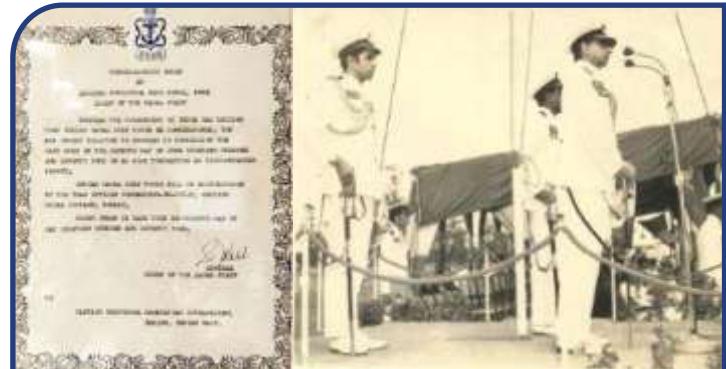
In Indian mythology, mystical weapons possessed unique powers and could be invoked only by certain warriors during battle, such as the Brahmastra or Pashupatastra weapon of Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*. In ancient history, employment of powered projectiles can be traced back to the invention of 'fire arrows' (equipped with tubes of gunpowder), supposedly in 9th century CE. Interestingly, rocket warfare has been depicted in the 12th century Hoysaleswara Temple in Karnataka and recorded evidence exists regarding the use of rockets by Tipu Sultan in the 16th century. In the modern world, powered projectiles have reached unprecedented levels of sophistication with missiles representing the pinnacles of such weaponry in contemporary warfare. By virtue of serving onboard Indian naval ships as an Electrical Officer and having undertaken missile firing, learning about missiles and their maintenance, preparation and delivery methods always fascinated me. Thus, I was delighted to join INS Tunir, the 'Quiver' of the Western Naval Command (WNC), in August 2021.

Essence of the Quiver

INS Tunir, the Quiver, has a long legacy of providing the cutting edge to the Sword Arm of the Indian Navy since 1970s. The induction of P-15 missiles and establishment of a makeshift Technical Position (TP) at Mankhurd marked the humble beginning of this esteemed unit. In 1971, the Navy's daring missile attack on Karachi changed the course of

the war. Each P-15 missile that found its mark was meticulously prepared and delivered by TP Mankhurd. Foreseeing the missile age, TP Mankhurd was subsequently relocated to Karanja in 1973 and commissioned as INS Tunir on 7 June 1974 by Vice Admiral J Cursetji, FOC-in-C (W), with Captain P R Subramaniam at the helm. Ever since, Tunir has ensured the combat-readiness of the WNC platforms.

The unit started its journey with two missiles: P-15 and RZ-61. Today, it boasts of servicing around 12 types or variants of missiles, ranging from 1980s vintage P-Series SSM and 1998 vintage Kashmir SAM to modern-age missiles. To overcome the challenges of evolving ordnance storage and process guidelines, promulgated through Storage and Transport of Explosive Committee (STEC) regulations, the unit has reconfigured its infrastructure and is prepared to expand with the planned induction of BrahMos and other missiles, such as LRAShM, MRSAM, Vertical Shtil, SLCM, etc, in the near future.



Commissioning Order; Commissioning of INS Tunir

Further, the Mobile Technical Facility can be rapidly deployed to locations on the western coast to extend the Navy's reach. The unit has lived up to every single tasking of the WNC and has delivered the missiles under severe time constraints and adverse weather conditions.

Evolving, innovating, indigenising

The expansion of the Quiver was a huge task as more missiles were to be inducted within the same land area, meeting safe distances criteria as per Centre for Fire, Explosive and Environment Safety (CFEES) regulations. As 'necessity is the mother of invention', Team Tunir evolved a unique concept, 'Universal Technical Position', which ensured maintenance of different missiles using the same infrastructure, thus ensuring optimal utilisation of space.

Contemporary missiles, once inducted, have a lifespan of anywhere between 12 and 20 years. However, the erstwhile Soviet P-Series missiles inducted in the 1980s are still a force to reckon with and are expected to be in service for a few more years. When faced with the challenges of limited OEM support in terms of spares, services and documentation, the enterprising men of Tunir have achieved success in the domains of innovation and indigenisation. Take, for instance, the conversion of the subsonic P-21 missile into a supersonic missile through inhouse efforts – a feat not achieved by anyone in the world. The successful firing of the P-21 missile in supersonic mode was undertaken by INS Vipul in November 2014, leading to the unit being awarded the prestigious 'Innovation Trophy'. Further, implementation of modem repair techniques and successful technical indigenisation projects under the Government's Make in India and

Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives have resulted in enhancement of operational inventory and savings of hundreds of crores over the years.



Tunir's mandate includes the dual aspects of missile maintenance and training. Missile maintenance, delivery and handling does not form part of any *ab-initio* technical training in the Indian Navy. At Tunir, personnel from various cadres join TPs and are trained and cross-trained to become professionals with the sole purpose to prepare a missile for successful launch and hitting its target. There is no parallel training facility that can simulate the setup of a missile TP for on-the-job training. The unit annually conducts two flagship courses: Missile Maintenance Course (MMC) and Special MTD (SMTD) Course. It is due to these courses that expertise in the niche domain of missile technology has grown in the Navy.

Tunir and Karanja

Naval Station Karanja, one of the largest satellite stations of WNC, houses 17 units and is home to approximately 8,000 people. Tunir serves as the backbone of the station with Commanding Officer, INS Tunir, as Station Commander (Senior Officer, Karanja). The naval station is a mini-city with self-sustaining facilities in terms of schools, CSD canteens, regimental shops,

banking, hospital, etc. This strategically located station now offers a solution for the acute accommodation shortage being experienced by officers and sailors serving onboard ships and WNC establishments through hiring of accommodation under the Dronagiri project. Further, Team Tunir conducts its social responsibility to the hilt towards the local community by organising various activities such as regular blood donation camps; community awareness programmes such as coastal clean-ups; free medical camps; educational trips cum career counselling for children; and donation of old clothes and rations through NWWA Karanja's Sparsh team. Tunir is also a custodian of the environment. Nestled on the picturesque coast, lush and green, Karanja is surrounded by thick mangroves on the seawater front, features hilly terrain on the northeast and shares a large boundary with the civilian population. The unit's eco-conscious initiatives are evident through its waste management and renewable energy projects, efforts to minimise the carbon footprint, and survey in coordination with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) towards the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. Naval Station Karanja serves

as a model for responsible environmental practices, showcasing how military installations can coexist harmoniously with nature. As a result of constant endeavours, the unit was awarded the 'Environment Trophy' for the years 2016 and 2017 and the 'CNS Trophy for Best Green Practices' for the year 2022.

A relentless focus on safe missile maintenance practices and dedicated efforts towards maintaining a clean, green and serene naval station at Karanja have enabled this unit to live up to its reputation of being a frontline operational unit, setting a worthy example for its peers. In its quest for excellence, Team Tunir continues to be guided by the principle, 'powered by professionalism, driven by dexterity and inspired by intellect'.

Over the decades, Tunir has evolved, adapted and continued to thrive, achieving numerous milestones and making a significant impact. This is a moment to reflect on our achievements, express appreciation to our dedicated teams, and look forward to an even brighter future as we continue our mission and legacy for many years to come. May every arrow of this Quiver always find its mark!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commander Rakesh Anna was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 January 2009. He is an alumnus of the 21st Naval Engineering Course and is an Electrical Officer. He has served onboard Indian naval ships Tabar, Nirghat, Kiltan (Commissioning NBCDO) and Kora.

At present, he is posted at INS Tunir, Mumbai.

SILVER JUBILEE: INS KORA FUTURE-READY

By Lieutenant Anukool Bidla

On 10 August 2023, INS Kora, a guided-missile corvette, celebrated its Silver Jubilee. This momentous occasion allows us to reflect on the remarkable contributions it has made throughout its tenure. From safeguarding our coasts to projecting power on the high seas, INS Kora has exemplified the Navy's commitment to protecting our nation's interests.

History and design

The ship derives her name from a lethal weapon, Kora, used by the legendary Gurkha warriors in the 18th century. INS Kora is the first of the four Project 25A class of ships, indigenously conceived and designed by the Indian Navy and built by GRSE, Kolkata. The ship was commissioned on 10 August 1998 and has since become one of the most versatile and powerful surface combatants in the fleet. The ship has undergone periodic upgrades, enabling it to operate effectively in an anti-surface, anti-air environment. This class of corvettes was built as a follow up to the Project 25 corvettes and as a replacement for the Russian-designed Petya II class corvettes.

Operational achievements

Over the past 25 years, INS Kora has played a significant role in various operations and exercises worldwide. From conducting maritime patrols to long-range deployments,



the ship has proven its worth time and again. Its flexibility and adaptability have allowed it to excel in a wide range of mission profiles, showcasing the ship's versatility.

Role as a missile corvette

The primary role of the ship is that of a surface combatant and it has the capability to carry 16 Uran missiles of Russian origin. Equipped with one 76-mm calibre MR gun and two 30-mm calibre AK-630s, it can engage multiple air and surface threats simultaneously, making it a critical asset in the nation's defence.



Crew and training

The success of INS Kora can be attributed to the highly skilled men who serve aboard this warship. The crew's dedication, professionalism and training are crucial elements that ensure the ship operates at peak performance. Through rigorous training programmes and continuous improvement, the



crew maintains a high state of readiness to face any challenges. '*Himmat, Hausla, Hansee, Hathiyan, Kora Hamesha Taiyaar*', the war cry of the ship, appropriately describes the 25-year journey where Kora has been mission-ready.

Legacy and future

After commissioning, the ship has undergone various upgrades in habitability and weapons complex over the years. The upgrades were aimed at improving living conditions onboard to prepare it for future manning plans and enhance combat capabilities.

As part of these upgrades, the ship has been fitted with long-range surveillance radars in place of the obsolete Positive E radar, which has enhanced surveillance capabilities. During a refit in 2012, the ship underwent a major upgrade wherein the indigenised version of the Italian make 76-mm calibre MR gun was fitted in place of the AK-176. To counter emerging threats, the ship has undergone upgrades to its electronic warfare capability wherein the advanced ESM system Varuna and countermeasure system Kavach have been

fitted onboard to improve offensive and defence capabilities.

During the recently concluded refit, the ship underwent an upgrade in habitability to prepare for the women Agniveer who will be joining after completion of their *ab-initio* training. The installation of the advanced Combat Management System (CMS), along with upgrades in the communication and information system, has enabled the ship to maintain better situational awareness and ensured seamless coordination with other ships in the Fleet.

As INS Kora marks its Silver Jubilee, it leaves behind a legacy of excellence that will be a motivation for future generations. The ship's contributions have not only safeguarded national security but fostered international cooperation through joint exercises and diplomatic missions. The ship has been commanded by stalwarts who went on to hold key appointments in the Indian Navy, including CNS Admiral R Hari Kumar, who was the sixth commanding officer of the ship.

Indeed, the Silver Jubilee celebrations of INS Kora pay tribute to a remarkable naval vessel and its dedicated crew. Through its operational achievements and commitment to *taiyaari*, INS Kora has stood tall and proven to be an invaluable asset to the Indian Navy in the past 25 years – and will certainly continue to do so in the years to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Lieutenant Anukool Bidla is an alumnus of the 97th Indian Naval Academy Course and was commissioned on 25 November 2019 in the electrical cadre. He has completed his competency onboard INS Kirpan and is serving as Deputy Electrical Officer onboard INS Kora at present.

20th ANNIVERSARY: INS TALWAR MAKING OF A LEGEND

By Rear Admiral M D Suresh (Retd)



As the bus turned into the two-lane wide road leading to the crossing of a partially frozen River Neva on a cold, blustery morning in December 2001, there was perceptible excitement and palpable anticipation in everyone, including the many who had been 'noisily' sleeping during the past 45-minute journey to Baltisky Zavod, the Baltic Shipyard, in the beautiful Russian city of St. Petersburg. They had been roused awake by their buddies in the adjacent seats, each craning their necks for the first sight of the warship they had all been selected to commission. But as the shipyard berths came into view, and the sight of the three hulls from their starboard bow became discernible, there was a sudden hush of silence, some disappointment, and a clear cooling-off of the excitement.

As the commissioning XO of the ship, I could not stop myself from exclaiming, "She looks like a tadpole!" We were all expecting an awe-inspiring ship like the Rajput, the last of the imports from Russia we had all seen in our young lives. We fervently desired our ship to be

similarly impressive. However, the three Talwar-class ships, of 'stealth' character, were entirely devoid of the fine lines of the Kashins.

This article is about the highs and lows of the first of the three Project 1135.6 ships (Talwar, Trishul and Tabar) and the indomitable commissioning crew of Talwar. Their tenacity, professionalism, persistent 'service-over-self' attitude, and commitment to the long term resulted in a legend that emerged to rightfully take the place of another erstwhile legend of the Indian Navy as a proud successor with the same name, Talwar.

With a firm belief in 'doing right by her' and 'the long term, always', a tight bond formed among the crew. Someone among us is still the first person to be informed of any incident that calls for celebration or, in the case of bad news, support. Today, the ship remains as fortunate as her worthy predecessor, and there are numerous tales of near misses that could have been disastrous otherwise. Let me start at the beginning.



'Project 1135.6' was a mouthful for the DDNO (War Room I) where I served as a Commander in 1999-2000. Whenever a file with this title arrived in the war room, it was passed on to the occupant of the adjacent table, DDWR II, to handle. If he had queries requiring broader consultation, they were promptly addressed and dispatched back to the parent directorate. There were too many things happening 'today' in DNO to worry excessively about 'tomorrow'! That was the extent of my involvement with this project until a signal arrived indicating that I was to be the Executive Officer of the first of the three ships. Then began the scramble to understand what kind of ship it was and its weapon fit, as starters.

As a Long ND specialist, being appointed an XO was itself a big surprise. The common perception in those days was that XO was largely a weapon officer's assignment. The obvious first question to emerge then was: 'Who is the CO?' The answer, 'Captain Satish Soni', caused some trepidation in me as the War Room officers had experienced a couple of recent brushes with the NA to CNS for some reason related to the use of the War Room car, a luxury in those days. Nevertheless, when I went across to meet Captain (Desig) the next day, he was completely professional and did not show any

sign of friction. The plan for Russian language training for the crew at Kochi, the crew list, and some insights on the project itself were provided to me, and the CO-XO relationship was established right away.

This equation remained unchanged in tone and tenor until I handed over charge after over three-and-a-half years of many twists and turns, numerous highs, and a few lows. Managing this equation was one of my biggest challenges, and strengths, during the entire assignment, serving as a lesson for any future CO. The Captain established and maintained a very formal, correct, professional and no-nonsense relationship with me that was sustained through the Russian language course in Dronacharya for about four months, Talwar cell in Mumbai for three months, the training period in Russia for six months, repatriation back to India for another three months, returning to Russia to accept, commission and sail the ship to India, and a year of operational service under HQWNC/FOCWF. Captain Soni was deeply involved with every officer and crew member, dedicating considerable time and effort to ensure the best possible training and creature comforts for the crew in Russia, even battling an obdurate Naval Attaché in Moscow in this endeavour.

As the first crew, we felt duty-bound to improve conditions for the following two crews, in Mumbai and Russia, as the facilities intended for training in St. Petersburg were not ready until the end of our training period. All orders painstakingly formulated for the first ship were handed over to the crew of Trishul in soft copy when they arrived to form their cell. The second ship's crew, in fact, became the first occupants of the newly established facilities provided by the Russians for the project. During our training, we had to manage in hotels arranged by the NA,

Moscow, which were very basic, but we made ourselves comfortable. Captain Soni, a true blue DDOP as he was reputed to be, proved his reputation right through the commission and beyond. Captain and Mrs. Soni remained strongly connected with every member and the families of the commissioning crew. The message conveyed from the very first day in the Talwar cell was, 'the person matters'. This ethos became the foundation of the ship's culture.

This culture was further strengthened by the second element of 'delegate downward and trust implicitly'. Every officer of the commissioning crew was assigned significant tasks at every stage of the journey, continuing until the last day onboard, and was trusted to deliver at the highest standards. Adhering to this management ethos required broad shoulders and a substantial appetite for risk management and mitigation plans. Consequently, every young officer of the crew found themselves entrusted with crucial responsibilities and minimal supervision. Aside from occasional status reports to ensure plans were on track, there was no intrusive supervision. All processes for the deputation of a large body of men and material, including clothing, stores, canteen, ship stores, commissioning and post-commissioning stores, processes such as listing, identification and collection of items required for various phases of the journey (language training, Russian training, movement of crew, passport and ticketing, etc), were tasks that every member took pride in delivering to the expected standards.

The positive consequence of this management style was the development of the next element of the crew's culture: a deep sense of ownership. The 'pursuit of success' in every delegated task, as

opposed to 'fear of failure', translated into a profound sense of ownership over the ship and her success as a combat-worthy platform upon induction. This ownership continues even today.

The oft-heard words from veteran mariners of yore – every ship has a soul – are so true. I deeply believed in this sentiment and shared it with fellow HODs who readily aligned. Towards this endeavour, I walked down the aisle of the aircraft that was taking the EO (Desig) and me to Kochi from Delhi for the Russian language course. Spotting a gentleman who looked like a possible naval officer, I asked if he was Cdr Narayan Prasad. Upon receiving a grin and a 'yes' in response, he left his centre seat to join me in the aisle. Even before we properly introduced ourselves, I said, "Sir, we both are on the commissioning crew list of the first ship. Let's concentrate on our respective jobs, which, in any case, will be quite demanding, and avoid interfering with each other's work. Let's foster a positive work environment and a contented crew." He appeared surprised but shook my hand firmly, and agreed. We then decided to approach the third member of our trio.

Upon landing in Kochi, we proceeded directly to the cabin of LO (Desig) Cdr S Kale, already in Dronacharya officer's mess, rang his doorbell and introduced ourselves as XO and EO (Desig). I reiterated the same request. He was taken aback, especially given the strange manner in



which it was made, with our luggage at our feet during our very first encounter. However, he grinned and readily agreed. That peculiar first meeting among the three of us HODs set the stage for the rest of the commission and, in fact, our lives, as well as those of our respective families, to this day.

We HODs led from the front, aiming to avoid any argument between us in public or in the presence of any other crew member. While some sailors attempted to sow discord by planting stories about other departments, we promptly rebuffed such efforts, ensuring they were nipped in the bud. Having witnessed HOD egos damaging good wardrooms in the past, we were determined not to let such unnecessary actions tarnish our wardroom environment. Certainly, we had numerous disagreements, as any thoughtful and dedicated members of different branches might, but we resolved each one in private. As long as the overall direction was correct, we refrained from delving into the inner workings of other departments.

The only aspect I insisted upon as XO, and my colleagues willingly agreed to, was discipline. We agreed that any decision reached at the defaulter table would not be contested, even as the DivO did the necessary defence. If any crew member violated discipline, regardless of their importance within the department, there would be no compromise on the punishment. This approach governed the ship during the training and post-commissioning phases, resulting in minimal discipline issues during our stay in Russia and our time with the Fleet. A positive work environment coupled with unwavering discipline constituted the next factor that contributed to creating the right ethos for Talwar.



The P-branch had done a fabulous job in selecting the commissioning crew. Consequently, everyone except for me had absorbed the grammar and vocabulary in chaste Russian, allowing them to navigate the streets of St. Petersburg as if they belonged there, within a fortnight. What we could not convey in grocery shops due to a lack of vocabulary, we managed through mime! The Russians we encountered were appreciative of our attempts to speak their language and took our grammatical errors in stride. Similarly, when we needed to impress visiting dignitaries, such as NA Moscow or delegations from NHQ, who we wanted on our side to secure the best deal for the ship, the officers cooked and served Indian food. They also cleaned and tidied up the kitchen and dining hall after the guests had left, without a single complaint. Everyone chipped in wholeheartedly because 'it was required for the ship', and the spirit to do 'for the ship' was ingrained in each and every member of the crew. This dedication persisted despite many visitors failing to meet our expectations in their negotiations with the Russian representatives at review meetings. Nevertheless, the crew persevered, finding enjoyment in the process, including an incident where the XO mistakenly handed over a bottle of vinegar to the EO instead of water!

The arrival of families in batches during the training phase added colour and noise to our otherwise cold, quiet and dreary accommodations. Little kids emerging from the Captain's cabin with snacks and tales of their encounter with a 'nice uncle', much to the consternation of their parents, were anecdotes we will remember as the children grow up and move on with their lives.

The tale of Talwar cannot be complete without the stories of our repeated failures in the Shtil SAM system, which had shaken the foundation of the Russian military-industrial complex (MIC), to the extent that even the President issued a stern warning to all concerned. Repatriation of the crew ensued, solely because the Captain stood firm in refusing to accept the ship without an operational SAM system, despite the immense pressure exerted upon him from both our own NHQ and the Russians. We stood by him, unwavering, despite knowing that this decision could lead to the denial of 'criteria appointments' to a few among us. Our commitment to the ship's legacy compelled us to insist that the Russians meet our expectations for the operational readiness of our ship.

Meanwhile, Trishul had accepted its SAM system after successful DATs. However, it is a different story that the DATs Captain of Trishul, upon being entrusted with supervising the DATs of Talwar following his successful supervision of the second ship's DATs, was shocked at the rigorous scrutiny by Talwar crew during our 24th SAM firing. Numerous cameras and

observers were stationed at different locations to record every sensor and weapon system of the ship. This thoroughness helped establish the fact that the Russian original equipment manufacturer (OEM) had attempted to deceive the DATs team with a software patch. Once caught, they had no choice but to rework the algorithms and processes to correct the error. The DATs were finally successful, with the ship having fired the SAM in the desired modes and geometry. Only then was she accepted and commissioned, albeit after a six-month delay. The highest level of professionalism and commitment to 'do right' were the other two ethics that Talwar embodied, as consequences.

After a faultless commissioning ceremony in the presence of Admiral Madhavendra Singh, CNS (an erstwhile Talwar crew member himself), the ship finally departed Baltisky Shipyard on 30 June 2003 and arrived in Mumbai to a rousing reception by, initially, PN submarines and P3C Orions, which we successfully evaded. Later, the WNC and Western Fleet welcomed us, bringing all our families to the jetty. Talwar had arrived in India with the most modern sensors, longest-range weapons, fully operational and functional CAAIO, automated BDCS, etc,

heralding a platform that was a generation ahead of any existing Fleet platform at that time.

This superiority was firmly established when a sceptical Fleet Commander, who had visited us as ACWP&A and heard our concerns about the state of sensors and weapons, was informed by his FGO after a night of ENCOUNTREX that we had successfully 'sunk'



Vice Admiral Satish Soni (Retd), Commissioning CO, with Shivaji Yadav, CO Talwar, June 2023

his three frontline warships deployed against us in a mock fight. It took some time for the Fleet to overcome its scepticism and begin to appreciate the capabilities the Project 1135.6 ships brought to the table. After that, there was no looking back.

The icing on the cake occurred when the commissioning XO of the second ship, Trishul, ended up in command of Talwar. This

happened when his helicopter suffered a terrible accident on the helo deck at sea and, miraculously, not one of the 17 persons on the deck suffered even a scratch! Talwar had responded to the rivalry of Trishul's crew in a manner true to her lovely soul. For his part, he graciously acknowledged the 'fine soul' of Talwar during a lunch he hosted for me in his cabin while he was in command of the finest ship, ever.



Commissioning Crew Talwar with Talwar Crew, June 2023

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rear Admiral M D Suresh, AVSN, NM (Retd), of the 63rd NDA Course, was commissioned on 1 January 1984. As a Long ND specialist, he was the Navigating & Ops Officer of Indian naval destroyers Rajput and Rana. As Lt Cdr, he was a Squadron Commander at NDA, Khadakwasla, before assuming command of missile boats Nirbhik and Vinash. After the 53rd DSSC Course at Wellington in 1997-98 for his MSc (Defence Studies & Strategy), he was appointed DDNO (War Room) at NHQ in 1998-2001 and was awarded the Nao Sena Medal (D). He commissioned the first ship of the Talwar class as the Executive Officer and, in 2004, did the 17 NHCC at CNW, Mumbai. He was then posted as the DA at the Embassies of India in Oman, UAE, Qatar and Bahrain from 2005-08. On completion, he commissioned the first P-17 indigenous stealth frigate Shivalik as Captain. He was the PDNO at NHQ from November 2011 after his sea command. As

Rear Admiral, his appointments were Flag Officer Doctrines and Concepts, the Deputy Commandant and Chief Instructor (CI) of the INA, Ezhimala, ACIDS (Int-A) at HQIDS, and COS, HQSNC, till 17 December 20. He was selected by NTRO as Chief Analyst on deputation from 21 December 2020 followed by permanent absorption after his retirement on 31 July 2021.

He currently heads the Remote Sensing and Maritime Centres, steering projects of strategic importance at the premier National Techint Organisation.



AWARD OF PRESIDENT'S COLOUR: INS DRONACHARYA A SINGULAR HONOUR

By Lieutenant Commander Pawan Kumar Nayak

As the President's motorcade approached the Dronacharya statue on 16 March 2023, the pride and anticipation among all were palpable. President Droupadi Murmu's arrival was a grand spectacle, with the 21 Gun Salute heard in the background. Even nature was benevolent, allowing the spectators to catch the aroma of gunpowder, adding grandeur to the occasion. Parade Commander Cdr Bipin Krishna presented the arms with the Rashtriya Salute, marking the beginning of the consecration ceremony.

The journey to this historic milestone began a long time ago. Commissioned on 27 November 1978, INS Dronacharya has played a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of the Indian Navy since its inception. Named after the legendary Guru Dronacharya from the *Mahabharata*, the

institution has lived up to its name by imparting knowledge, skills and values to officers and sailors about all the facets of gunnery and missile warfare with the primary aim of precise ordnance delivery. The 'Gunnery School' was designated a Centre of Excellence in Gunnery and Missile Warfare in 2004.

Preparations for the mega event began months in advance to oversee every minute detail. The excitement was contagious, the preparations were extensive and the base was high on an adrenaline rush. Personnel worked tirelessly to ensure the event would be an unforgettable tribute to the history and achievements of INS Dronacharya. The main parade ground, where the President would award the Colour, was transformed into a pristine showcase of discipline and precision. The base was repainted, parade ground resurfaced and



gardens and pathways manicured to perfection. The Presidential Suite and guest rooms underwent a thorough inspection, renovation and beautification thanks to the meticulous efforts of a dedicated group of volunteer spouses.

Extensive rehearsals became a way of life. The Ceremonial Guard and the Naval Band practised tirelessly to ensure every movement and note of the parade was flawless. Uniforms were inspected with exacting attention to detail, ensuring that everyone looked their best on the momentous day. The journey had undoubtedly been a challenging one but as the trainers can proudly say, it was done keeping the primary role intact with zero compromise on training.

As the day of the ceremony approached, the excitement among the personnel reached a

crescendo. Each member understood the significance of the event and the pride that came with receiving the President's Colour. Finally, the day arrived. The lush green base of INS Dronacharya stood in all its glory, ready to welcome the President of India, the Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces. Officers and sailors impeccably dressed in their whites were testament to the discipline and dedication that defined the unit. The veterans filled with pride stood even taller, knowing their years of dedication and hard work were being recognised and rewarded.

When the Samman Guard marched in to the tune of *Indian Fleet* to take post at the magnificent parade ground, it was undoubtedly a 'goosebumps moment' for the band of brothers: the 'Gunners'. This was the momentous occasion all gunners (from Seaman

II class to the Chief of the Naval Staff) had been longing for.

Hand-spun from the finest Indian silk and adorned on top with the National Emblem, the Colour was consecrated by the *Dharam Gurus* as part of the Pile of Drums ceremony. Then came the moment everyone had been waiting for – the President, flanked by the Chief of the Naval Staff, handed over the prestigious Colour to *Nishan Adhikari* Lt Cdr Deepak Skaria. As the President's Standard fluttered proudly in the sea breeze, a sense of unity, purpose and dedication filled the hearts of everyone present. The entire base echoed with applause and pride as the President congratulated the personnel of INS Dronacharya and expressed her heartfelt appreciation for the unit's unwavering commitment to the nation.

In the evening, the celebrations continued with 'The Gunner's Night', presided over by the Chief of the Naval Staff. The wardroom mess was transformed, with elegant decor and exquisite cuisine. It was a perfect blend of tradition and modernity, symbolising the unit's history and the aspirations of the future. Veterans were overwhelmed with nostalgia as they looked through archival albums. The evening was marked by speeches and toasts to the enduring spirit of the gunners' fraternity.



For the officers and sailors of INS Dronacharya, the award of the President's Colour was not just an acknowledgment of their achievements but a testament to the unit's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and excellence over the years. The President's Colour serves as a reminder of the unit's rich history, indomitable spirit and adherence to the motto, *Kuru Prahar Prathame* (Strike First).

To this day, whenever I catch sight of the President's Colour in the drill shed, it serves as a reminder of the singular honour it represents. INS Dronacharya has truly earned this prestigious recognition and will undoubtedly continue to play a crucial role in the growth of the Indian Navy by nurturing its future leaders.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Lieutenant Commander Pawan Kumar Nayak was commissioned in the Indian Navy on 1 January 2012. He was commissioning MRGO of INS Kolkata as a non-specialist. After his Gunnery specialisation in 2016-17, he has held specialist appointments onboard INS Prabal and INS Kochi. At present, he is serving in INS Dronacharya as an instructor.

THE GENESIS OF A WARSHIP

By Captain N S Mohan Ram (Retd)



In 1975, Cdr P S Das – who later retired as a Vice Admiral, FOCINC (E) – was posted as Deputy Director (Naval Plans) at Naval Headquarters. I was then working as Deputy Director (Naval Design) in the Directorate of Naval Design. Das and I had become friends in 1964 as young lieutenants in Bombay.

The two of us were in constant dialogue trying to work out feasible concept designs for ships to follow the Nilgiri class.

Our Naval Staff desired that the new ships should reach a knot higher speed than the 28 knots of Nilgiri class for operational reasons. They wanted the ships to carry surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), replace the 4.5" caliber surface gun by a modern quick-firing gun and operate the much larger Sea King helicopters. The Directorate of Naval Design carried out many feasibility studies with western-origin missiles like Exocet and gas turbine propulsion.

It was an era of acute paucity of funds. The western weapon packages were very expensive and unaffordable. There were also doubts about their availability due to geopolitical reasons.

A close friend of ours, Cdr Murugesan, a young Supply Branch officer, passed away tragically at that time after a sudden heart attack. The Navy

arranged a ceremonial funeral for him. Das and I, who knew the officer well, were designated as pallbearers. We travelled together in a coach arranged from INS India to attend the funeral. We shared sad reminiscences of Murugesan. Our discussions then turned to the follow-on frigates for the Nilgiri class, which were under consideration by the Navy then. Das bemoaned the fact that we had a British design but probably could afford only Soviet missiles, an impossible combination.

I had a wild thought. I asked Das, "Why don't we think of a larger ship based on the Nilgiri design, keeping western design philosophy and underwater weapons but fit Soviet missiles and radars on top?" Such a combination had never been tried before. *Prima facie*, the idea was absurd as it was then the height of the Cold War between the West and Soviet Union. To my surprise, Das seemed to be impressed with my idea. He asked me, "Mohan Ram, is it feasible? Can we do it?"

I replied candidly, "Das, yes, theoretically it is possible. If our Navy can obtain surface weapons, radars and design data from the Soviet Union, I am reasonably confident that my colleagues and I can try and design a ship around them. But how will you get our top brass

to countenance such an insane idea? Who will bell the cat?" Das replied, "Mohan Ram, don't worry. This is not the end of the idea. I will work on it with my superiors and come back to you."

Bless his heart, the enterprising officer convinced his Director and ACNS Admiral Barboza that the idea could work and floated a proposal for preliminary evaluation. Approval was accorded for DGND to carry out a design study. We worked on a layout with western underwater weapons and Soviet SSMS and SAMs, and carrying a Sea King helicopter with hangar. By making two hangars of unequal size (one for maintenance and one for just parking), I came out with a novel layout that could accommodate two Sea King helicopters without increasing the beam of the ship. We carried out the studies without any inputs from the Soviets by scaling up weapons from photographs in the *Jane's Fighting Ships* magazine. What we did was unorthodox and mad, but it worked!

In the meanwhile, I serendipitously discovered that the same Y-160 boiler/steam turbine power plant as in Nilgiri would be able to propel the bigger ship at 29 knots, due to a happy hydrodynamic combination. This would result in huge savings by use of steam machinery already developed in India for the six Nilgiri-class frigates.

The project was cleared by the PSOs after extensive discussions stretching over months.

The design study by DGND was approved. Scale model tests carried out at the National Physical Laboratory, UK, confirmed my counter-intuitive findings about the ship speed.

Work on codenamed Project 16 started in 1975 in DGND. I was appointed as the first project design officer, followed by Commander Whig and Commander Choudhry. The Indian Navy entered into negotiations with Soviet authorities for design and installation data of their weapons and fire control systems. The keel of the first of class was laid at Mazagon Docks Ltd (MDL) in 1977. The ship was launched in 1980. I was heading the Design Department of MDL when the ship was commissioned in December 1983.

With the design of Godavari, DGND (now renamed Naval Design Bureau) came of age and has since developed into a world-class design organisation. INS Godavari was the forerunner of India's progress as a major warship-building nation, which culminated with the commissioning of India's first indigenously designed and built aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, in 2002.

Big events start with small beginnings.

(Das rose to very high levels in the Navy, retiring as FOCINC (E). I left the Navy prematurely in the rank of Captain and moved to private industry and became the president of a major motorcycle company.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Captain N S Mohan Ram, VSM, FNAE, was a naval constructor in the Engineering Branch and was the first project officer of INS Godavari design. He took premature retirement to be absorbed in Mazagon Docks and later moved to senior positions in the private sector. He became President of TVS Suzuki Ltd (now TVS Motor) and worked till 2020. He has authored My Ships Sailed the Seas but I Stayed Ashore, a light-hearted and popular account of his naval career.

CHANGING DYNAMICS

WOMEN IN THE NAVY

By Commander Shveta Singh Bal

Across the world, the armed forces have long been perceived as a male bastion. This perception is rooted in historical and societal factors that have shaped the composition of the armed forces over the years. Historically, military roles were seen as physically demanding and required combat readiness, which led to the exclusion of women. Social norms and stereotypes also played a role in perpetuating the idea that women were not suited for combat or high-risk military operations. Additionally, concerns about the safety and wellbeing of women in combat zones were raised as a reason for their exclusion.

However, times are changing and there is a growing recognition of the need for diversity and gender equality in all sectors, including the armed forces. In recent years, significant efforts have been made to encourage the participation of women in the military. The Indian Government has taken several initiatives to facilitate the entry of women into the armed forces, such as opening up new avenues and combat roles for them.



Today, women are serving in various branches of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. They have been successful in breaking barriers and proving their capabilities in combat and non-combat roles alike. Women officers have been commissioned as pilots, naval air operations officers and in other specialised roles, shattering the perception of the armed forces as a male bastion.

These developments have been accompanied by changes in policies and infrastructure to accommodate the inclusion of women. Separate facilities and support systems have been established to address the unique needs of women personnel. Training programmes have

also been modified to ensure gender-neutral standards and provide equal opportunities for women to excel.

Changing role of women in the Indian Navy

The history of women in the Indian armed forces goes back to the pre-Independence era. Rani Lakshmibai led her troops during the first War of Independence. A full women regiment was raised by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in the Indian National Army under the command of Captain Lakshmi Sehgal. The regiment fought alongside other regiments of the Indian National Army against British rule. However, post-Independence, women were primarily limited to non-combat roles in the armed forces, such as medical, administrative and support services. However, over time, the Indian Navy has recognised the need to enhance gender equality and expand the role of women in the military.

Women officers in the Indian Navy are given equal opportunities in all aspects of the services. Their appointment is planned with the aim of best utilising their qualifications, talent, expertise, aptitude and experience gained during various tenures. In fact, the Indian Navy has the maximum percentage of women in its workforce among the three Services, at 6.5 per cent. At present, induction of women officers as Short-Service Commission (SSC) officers is open in the Law, Logistics, Naval Air Operations and Air Traffic Controller (ATC) cadres of the Executive Branch; in the Naval Constructor cadre of the Engineering Branch; and in the Education Branch. In addition, women officers are also inducted as Medical, Dental and Military Nursing Service (MNS) officers.

Till 1992, women officers were permitted to join in the Armed Forces only in the Medical Branch. In 1992, the Indian Navy took a groundbreaking step by inducting women as officers in the Education Branch and Law/Logistics cadre of the Executive Branch. In 1992, there were 24 vacancies to be filled on open merit for male and female candidates. Of these, 22 vacancies were filled by women while only two were occupied by men. Subsequently, ATC was also identified as an avenue for employment of women officers and induction of women in the ATC cadre started in 1993. Within four years of commencement of induction, by 1996, the strength of women officers increased to 71. The entry to women was opened in the Naval Construction cadre in 2001, the erstwhile Observer cadre (now air operations officers) in 2008, the Pilot and Naval Armament Inspectorate (NAI) cadre in 2017, and Sports, Musician and lateral induction to Provost specialisation in 2019.

Until 2019, women officers were being commissioned as Pilots and Naval Air Operations officers only for shore-based aircraft. However, to employ women on a par with male officers, women officers have also been streamed as specialist Naval Air Operations officers into active flying duties commencing 2020, wherein they operate from shipborne flights.

Diplomatic and foreign assignments were also opened to women officers in 2020 when one woman officer was appointed as Assistant Defence Attaché (ADA), Moscow, for the first time, in June 2020. One woman Air Operations Officer was also deputed overseas to the Maldives in September 2020, as part of a Dornier

aircrew for a period of one year. In addition, women officers were also deputed abroad for shorter durations as part of Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) and other engagements.

Further, women officers were appointed onboard warships on permanent duty commencing December 2020, on a par with male officers. Initially, women officers were posted onboard aircraft carriers, the Shivalik class, Visakhapatnam class and tankers. All major platforms of the Navy are now being equipped for appointment of women officers and sailors. These requirements are also highlighted during construction of new platforms for the Indian Navy. Also, 40 SSC women officers were granted permanent commission in December 2020.

In a landmark decision in September 2021, the armed forces opened entry to women cadets at the National Defence Academy (NDA). The first batch of 19 women cadets arrived in August 2022, including three women cadets for the Navy. With the beginning of women cadet entry at NDA and impending women cadet entry for permanent commission at the Indian Naval Academy in June 24, all the streams have been opened to women officers including hitherto male only specialisations of the Executive Branch.

That said, the decision with the most far-reaching impact in the recent past was the inclusion of women in the Agniveer scheme. The decision displays the commitment and readiness of the Indian Navy towards a gender-neutral Navy in the times ahead. A total of 273 women were part of the first batch of Agniveers that passed out from INS Chilka in March 2023.

A similar number has also been admitted in the second batch. The women Agniveers will be posted onboard naval ships, in naval air stations and on naval bases to perform duties alongside their male counterparts as equal shareholders in the 'Navy of the Future'.

Landmark events

Since the induction of women in the Indian Navy, women officers have displayed grit and passion while undertaking their duties. Many landmark events have been conducted and participated in by women officers. These include leading the Republic Day contingent of the Indian Navy; undertaking sea surveillance sortie by an all-woman crew onboard an Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft; circumnavigating the globe by an all-woman crew under Navika Sagar Parikarma; and raising awareness about opportunities for women in the Navy by conducting a 2,300-km car rally.

Navika Sagar Parikarma

Navika Sagar Parikrama, undertaken by Indian Navy women officers from 10 September 2017 to 21 May 2018, holds immense importance for several reasons. It was a landmark expedition in the history of the Indian Navy and a significant achievement for women empowerment in the armed forces. The expedition involved an all-woman crew circumnavigating the globe onboard the Indian Navy's sailboat, INSV Tarini. It was a remarkable achievement that symbolised the growing role of women in the armed forces, showcased the spirit of adventure and resilience, and strengthened diplomatic ties while promoting maritime awareness and

conservation. The expedition will continue to inspire and encourage women in India to pursue their dreams and break barriers in all fields, including defence and security.

The future

While considerable progress has been made, the representation of women in the Navy can still be enhanced. Currently, women constitute a relatively small percentage of the total strength of the Navy. Efforts are ongoing to encourage more women to join and actively pursue careers in the Service.

To further enhance gender representation, there is a need for continued advocacy, awareness campaigns and changes in societal attitudes. It is crucial to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes and promote a culture of inclusivity and equal opportunities within the Navy. Creating support systems, addressing concerns related to safety and work-life balance and providing mentorship and role models for aspiring women officers are also essential.



In conclusion, the representation of women in the Indian Navy has seen notable progress in recent years, with women breaking barriers and excelling in combat and non-combat roles. However, there is still work to be done to increase their participation and create a more balanced and inclusive military. By promoting equal opportunities, addressing biases and providing necessary support, the Indian Navy can continue to enhance gender representation and benefit from the diverse talents and capabilities that women bring to the armed forces, ensuring 50 per cent representation in the Indian Navy by 2047.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commander Shavitaj Singh Bal, an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College, Putrajaya, was commissioned on 1 July 2011. A specialist in Communication and Electronic Warfare, he has served as EWO Shivalik; SCO Kuthar, Kamorta and Shivalik; and instructor at Signal School. He has commanded INFAC T 82. He is currently Staff Officer (Communication & EW) at the Indian Naval Workup Team.

MISSION READY

OPERATION KAVERI

By Lieutenant Skandan Sridhar



When tasked with evacuating stranded Indians from conflict-torn Sudan and bringing them safely to the port of Jeddah in April 2023, the Indian Navy rose to the occasion with aplomb. Despite the limitations encountered during the planning process, thousands of Indians found themselves safe and secure owing to the efforts of the Indian Armed Forces.

This is the story of the heroic rescue operation undertaken by INS Teg, which was engaged in a regular deployment off the Gulf of Oman. Upon receiving the information about the stranded Indians in Sudan, particularly Khartoum (which was the worst affected), the diversion was made and planning started immediately.

The entire operation was kickstarted by the Skipper briefing the entire ship about the situation and preparations required to ensure that the non-combatant evacuation (NEO) was carried out in the most efficient manner. To take a detour to Port Sudan, which meant transiting through a longer route in the shortest possible time, entailed a particular rationing and fuel requirement that was in short supply. Precise and calculated planning ensured that the transit was done with just enough of the two being maintained and the same replenished on entering the port of Jeddah, which was the first port of call.

Operation Kaveri was not just a rescue operation but an assurance to all fellow Indians

that the country's forces would go to any extent to ensure their safety in dire times. In fact, there were many citizens whose countries failed to respond to their SOS signals. The entire operation was led successfully through the force of all levels of Command. Teg, in addition to two other Indian naval warships, was tasked to undertake the evacuation. Arrangements were made onboard to cater to all requirements of the stranded citizens, especially those of the elderly, ladies and children. A large part of the ship's company sacrificed their comfort for these five days with a common aim to get them all out safely and attend to their needs.

Various departments, amalgamated together, ensured the operation was completed in the shortest possible time. On orders from the Commanding Officer, a thorough temporary memorandum was prepared under the supervision of the Executive Officer.

The medical team (being the most critical) comprised the Principal Medical Officer (PMO) and two medical assistants. A thorough stocktaking of stores was undertaken to better plan expenses and cater for a larger-than-anticipated number of evacuees. Stores were segregated into multiple ready-to-prescribe kits for a large range of common and anticipated illnesses. With assistance of the Defence Attaché, Riyadh (as part of the OTR at Jeddah on 24 April 2023), sanitary pads were procured in anticipation of a large number of female evacuees. A six-member team was formed later as per FOST guidelines, followed by a 'refresher' capsule for the ship's company, throwing light on common illnesses that could be expected among the stranded citizens.

The evacuation was conducted in two trips between the port of Jeddah and Sudan. In the first leg, 297 were rescued and 288 in the next. The medical team treated various patients with ailments like fever, hypothyroidism, minor trauma, wounds and injuries as well as five pregnant women, ensuring their comfort went uncompromised in such an unprecedented situation. The entry of the evacuees was conducted in an organised manner, starting from a screening point established at the point of ingress. Everyone embarking the ship underwent thermal screening and was asked about any relevant/existing medical history.

Thereafter, they were divided into separate queues for women and men along with their children. This was followed by a document verification counter beside which a baggage search was conducted. Then, they proceeded onboard via the gangway placed at the quarterdeck and assembled on the helo deck. They were all prescribed anti-seasickness tablets for the journey. The sick bay and an additional first-aid post were manned 24/7 by the medical team to receive casualties, if any. One stand-by mess each was vacated and prepared for conversion into male and female wards and the OT/ICU was kept ready in the sick bay. Around 10 mess accommodations were prepared for ladies, children below 12 years of age and senior citizens.

The rescue operation was successful owing to the collective efforts of everyone onboard. The Executive Officer was overall in charge, with the Logistics Officer in charge of rationing and store management; Gunnery Officer the evacuation coordinator; EWO the liaison officer; ALO

(MSL) overseeing the reception team; MRGO in charge of the escort group and help desk; temporary duty officers (two pilots and one marine commando) in charge of crowd control; watchkeeping officers and Sub Lieutenant afloat officers undertaking photography and videography; and MCBM in charge of water points.

The Captain, along with various officers, boosted the morale of the evacuees standing in the queues by interacting with them. Many shed tears of joy, expressing their gratitude to their 'Guardian Angels' who had arrived just in time to get them out of an already intensified civil war, which was followed by the rousing chant of "*Bharat Mata ki Jai!*" As the journey to Jeddah began, movies were played on deck to keep them entertained and forget the rut they had been stuck in for the past few weeks. As they were disembarked, flowers were given to all the



ladies and children to acknowledge the strength and mental resilience they had displayed in such an unfortunate situation.

The air was replete with patriotism and a keen sense of gratitude among the evacuees for the motherland for coming to their rescue. If you listened carefully, you could hear those magic words resounding in their hearts: *Jai Hind!*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Lieutenant Skandan Sridhar was commissioned on 1 July 2019 and has flown 75 hours on Pilatus PC-7 Mk II aircraft during Stage 1 flying of AFA. He then opted for the Rotary Stream and got his wings on 18 December 2020. A second-generation naval aviator (his father was a Seaking pilot), he has 500 total flying hours to date. He has completed his BTech in Aeronautical Engineering from Manipal University in 2019. He is currently serving as Staff Pilot at INAS 321 FSS.

By Commodore K P Mathew (Retd)

The defence services offer exposure to a wide variety of experiences. I came face to face with such variety when appointed in command of shore establishment INS Trata in Mumbai in February 1982. This establishment had a history with a wide geographic spread across the city to go with it.

INS Trata housed the Naval Coast Battery. In the good old days, such batteries with their large calibre long-range guns protected the port from any intruding enemy ships. The coast batteries were originally a component of the Indian Army. In the 1960s, they were all transferred to the Indian Navy.

The Mumbai coast battery had large calibre guns at Colaba Point that commanded the entrance to the harbour, on the islands of Middle Ground and Oyster Rock that formed part of the inner harbour, and at Worli to the north along the coast. To logically sustain these islands, there was also a centre at Apollo Bunder with facilities for plying boats. The combined might of these gun batteries was to deter any seaborne intruder with evil intentions on Mumbai. Each of these locations, besides gun emplacements in fortified structures, also had semiunderground



structures as magazines or protected storage places for ammunition. There were also tall observation and spotting towers meant to provide the inputs to control the firing. The whole getup and layout were reminiscent of those in the movie *Guns of Navarone*.

By the time I took over command, the big guns had given way to missiles. Hence, INS Trata now sported a missile launcher at Colaba Point that could launch surface-to-surface missiles. Being compact, it occupied only a small enclosure. All the other real estate got put to alternate use or became relics of a bygone era with considerable land area spare and awaiting use. Middle Ground came to house the Naval Museum, Oyster Rock the navy detention quarters, Colaba Point a training centre, and so on. My appointment in command was

connected to the last – the interim training centre for the newly inducted Rajput class of destroyers for which I had got trained in the erstwhile USSR and served as commissioning crew.

This command was nothing like any of my earlier tenures ashore. It came with an earmarked bungalow within the establishment. It was a beauty in all respects – spacious, at a height overlooking the bay, lawn in front to nurse a tot and leisurely watch the vessels moving in and out of Mumbai, surrounded by large old trees full of birds whose chirping when they were in full flow could make one raise one's voice to be heard. Over the years, the spare buildings and sheds had been put to some unorthodox use as well, such as a dairy housing buffaloes and a piggery. There were civilians employed to look after both the dairy and piggery. The milk from the dairy was distributed by home delivery in the morning and evening and pork once a week.

While the primary focus was on the training charter, all these other activities and operations also demanded attention, often in a special or unconventional manner. The dairy and piggery output was never sufficient to satisfy the demand from the establishment's own personnel and those of the hierarchy above. It called for an intricate distribution matrix that could either be logically explained to those who could follow or end up thoroughly confusing the balance of the irate consumers. There were also the usual complaints on the quality of milk for which I ended up deputing an officer to the Aarey milk dairy to study and understand their system to ensure both optimum quality and regularly maintaining such a standard. After this exercise, a detailed circular was sent out to



explain the Aarey system and how its provisions had been adopted for the Trata dairy.

The piggery was also an interesting setup. The food for the pigs came from Hotel President. The vehicle from Trata made a daily trip to the hotel to collect leftover food. This was brought to the piggery for sorting, which consisted of separating the food from broken crockery and other inedible items. From the latter, cutlery and any other usable items were collected and returned to the hotel. The hotel thus had a regular food garbage removal system with retrieval of usable cutlery as a corollary while the pigs lived very well and fattened themselves on five-star food!

Being an old establishment, there were also many mysteries and folklore attached to it. One was that there was an underground and undersea tunnel passage leading all the way from the Commanding Officer's bungalow to the nearest island, Oyster Rock. To add spice to the tale was the fact that the bungalow had one section with wooden floorboards that emitted a hollow sound when stamped upon. The tunnel was meant to originate from below these boards. My curiosity sufficiently raised, it was decided to check out the existence of the tunnel. Due preparations such as means to check

breathing air quality, self-contained breathing apparatus and the like were arranged along with a team of volunteers. The floorboards were lifted clear to reveal a hollow space some 2-m deep with sand below it. Although a considerable quantity of sand was removed, only more sand and no tunnel could be unearthed. Thus, the existence or otherwise of the tunnel continued to remain a mystery.

A major event during my tenure was the practice firing of the surface-to-surface missile. As it was watchable from outside the missile enclosure, a sizeable crowd had gathered,



which included the who's who of the Navy in Mumbai and some with their families. The preparations, which were on for a week, culminated in me pressing the firing button when all indications were 'GO'. The missile took off from the launcher with a thunderous roar, spewing a trail of flame. The next we knew, at the adjacent building housing the missile control station, the roof had got blown off and we were looking up at open skies above. Subsequent technical investigations established that the blast shield provided around the missile launcher was of inadequate height with deficiencies in its design as well. While it was a case of getting shot while practising shooting at the enemy, luckily the launch did not score a

self-goal as all personnel in the building escaped unhurt.

Another experience that remains vivid is the fascination of children with what Trata had to offer. Our two sons were fortunate to get admitted to the premier school, Cathedral, a preserve, among others, of the mighty and well-heeled of Mumbai. Our boys used to get invited to birthday parties of classmates. These were major events that were held at palatial mansions, terraces of multi-storied residences or leading clubs with puppet and magic shows by professionals and other such trappings. They also ended up with carry-home gifts that were far fancier than the birthday gifts we could muster and send. Then, the turn came for the birthdays of our own boys.

We decided to use the unique features of Trata by organising events such as a treasure hunt through the labyrinths of the ammunition storage magazines and other structures along the mangrove-ringed periphery of the establishment, a 'feeding the buffalo' competition, 'petting the pigs' session, boat ride exploring the islands and exposure to .22 rifle firing at the range. The events became a much-talked-about hit among the kids, who in their cloistered lives in high-rises among modern



gadgets in the hurly-burly of Mumbai had never seen or experienced anything so close to nature, and as could be imagined through reading classics such as *Treasure Island*, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Captain Blood*. It led to requests from the school for study visits by whole classes to the establishment. This became a weekly feature when cavalcades of fancy cars carrying the children came to Trata for them to be put through the rounds of our unique assets. For these visits, the whole establishment was made

ready as for an inspection. For instance, the buffaloes were bathed and scrubbed clean. Each had a name tally strung around their neck with Laxmi, Gauri and the like written on them, all ready to be introduced to the young guests.

After more than a year of such a wide array of experiences in command of Trata, my turn to be a paper pusher at Naval Headquarters came about. The contrast could not have been starker – and there is another narrative to chronicle it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commodore K P Mathew, AVSM, an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, was commissioned in 1968. In his three-decade-long career in the Navy, his seagoing ship commands included requisitioned and converted fishing trawler Laxmi Rani during the 1971 Indo-Pak operations, cadet training ship INS Beas and Western Fleet frigate INS Vindhyagiri. Ashore, he commanded shore missile battery INS Trata in Mumbai and the Naval Academy in INS Mandovi, Goa. He took premature retirement from the Indian Navy in 1997.

By Commander Giridhara P Mallya (Retd)

INS Akshay (P-35) was the third of the 1241 PE class ASW corvettes commissioned in Poti, USSR (now in Georgia), on 10 December 1990. I was the commissioning EO of the ship and was fortunate to take part in her decommissioning ceremony in 2022 after her 32 years of service.

It was a momentous occasion to reconnect with the commissioning officers and crew and reminiscence about the olden, golden days. Some special memories are worth sharing.

Troubly bubbly!

On the second day of our stay, someone brought in a bottle of *shampanskoye* (Russian for champagne). We were all in a mood to celebrate but no one had a damn clue how to open the bottle. We placed it on the centre table in our hotel room and gathered around, animatedly discussing the ways to do it. Taking out the aluminium wrapper was the easiest part. The twisted wire on the cork stumped us. After a bit of twisting and turning, that too came out in a jiffy. As if on cue, the now liberated cork flew straight up along with the bubbly and shattered the big fat lampshade right above into several pieces. Though shell-shocked at first, we all burst into laughter at our stupidity. The incident was promptly reported to the OOD of the Poti naval base, who sent in the manager to assess the damage. She charged us a grand barrack damage of three roubles!

Lipton gate pass

Those were the final days of Soviet Union and



food shortages were commonplace. Our verbal instructions from a previous ship's crew included carrying a lot of 500-gm Lipton tea packs with us, which left us puzzled. Upon landing in Moscow airport, we quickly understood why. That 500-gm pack was our 'gate pass' through customs, immigration, et al! For example, if their customs were to examine each of the dozens of video cassettes we carried as per their rules, we would have missed our connecting flight. A pack of Lipton passed discreetly to the customs officer did the trick – he waved us past. Late to check in for the next flight? No problem; pass a pack of Lipton to the desk clerk and the whole crew was through in a jiffy.

Psst... *tovarisch, dollar est?*

Foreign consumer goods could be purchased in Soviet Union only on payment of hard currency. As a result, locals were on the constant lookout for US dollars and we were a good target. Though 1 USD was 0.5 roubles officially, dollar-crazy locals were ready to shell out 20 roubles for a dollar.

On our walkabouts in Poti, we were constantly pestered by people asking: Psst... *tovarisch, dollar est?* (Comrade, do you have dollars?) And if you were wearing Reebok shoes or Levi's

jeans, which were much sought after, they readily offered wads of roubles, irrespective of the size or how old they were!

Home passage woes

INS Akshay set sail for home on 17 December 1990 and straightaway ran into a huge storm in the Black Sea. We were tossed around like a cork, literally, and most of the crew, including yours truly, was down with seasickness. But thanks to our resolute Captain (then Lt Cdr and later VAdm) R K Pattanaik and a few other bravehearts, we managed to survive and make it to the next port of call, Varna in Bulgaria. Though the port was closed and the authorities first refused to let us in, a word with the Bulgarian Navy allowed us to be docked. People had hardly eaten because of seasickness and the *khichdi* prepared by the ship's cooks tasted divine at the end of it all!

Big B reigns supreme

We were tied up alongside Port Said, Egypt, waiting for our convoy to form up for the passage through the Suez Canal. I had gone ashore and purchased some cutlery and crockery items, which were a bit bulky. I asked the shopkeeper whether he could send them to the ship. He first refused but enquired where I came from. The moment I replied, he started jumping around, shouting 'Amitabh Bachchan'!



Band of brothers: (from left to right) Lt G Mallya, EO; Lt S Beecha, NO; Lt S Sood, ASWO; Lt Cdr Ravi, XO; and Lt H Datar, LO

He shook my hand vigorously, hugged me as I belonged to the same country and sent his boy carrying my stuff all the way to the ship! I later learnt that Big B has a huge fan following in Egypt. In 2019, almost two decades later, when I shook hands with him on the sets of *KBC* in Mumbai, I wish I had been able to tell him about this incident!

32 years later

When I was invited for the decommissioning, one of the things I remembered was a group photo of five of the commissioning officers relaxing in the hotel room in November 1990. I was determined to recreate the picture with the same set of officers 32 years down – old, mature, some retired and some having reached Flag rank! And so we did!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commander Giridhara Mallya was commissioned in 1985 as an engineering officer. His afloat appointments include EO Charag, Commissioning EO of INS Akshay, EO Nirdeshak and Cdr E INS Godavari. His staff appointments include INS Shivaji, IHQ MOD N in DND (SDG) and NDMB. He passed the 6th AMEC from IAT, Pune, parallelly picking up a ME (marine/mech) degree from Pune University. He was trained in Russia in advanced submarine technology while posted in DND (SDG) and was involved in the design of INS Arihant. He was commended by the Chief of the Naval Staff for outstanding work in submarine design while posted in DND (SDG). After retirement in 2007, he worked in Samsung Heavy Industries, Geoje Shipyard, South Korea, for close to 11 years, retiring as General Manager in 2018.

NOSTALGIA

THE RANI OF NANCOWRY

By Commander Harinder Singh Rawat (Retd)

Most naval veterans who have sailed into the harbour of Nancowry, situated in the Nicobar group of islands, would be familiar with or have met Lakshmi, the Rani of Nancowry. It was customary for the captain of the Indian naval ship that anchored in the beautiful harbour to call on her in ceremonial uniform and host her onboard.

Rani Lakshmi particularly loved drinking gin. On her visit to ships, she was invariably accompanied by her husband who had a cloth satchel hanging from his neck. It was believed that the satchel would be loaded with liquor bottles when they disembarked! Rani Lakshmi was actually the second Rani of Nancowry. It is said that despite being so far away from the national capital, she enjoyed direct communication with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. But before writing further about her, let's take a closer look at Nancowry harbour and its history.

A safe harbour

Nancowry is situated about 200 nautical miles (nm) south of Port Blair. It is among the second southernmost group of islands of the Andaman and Nicobar group of islands. This group of islands consists of Nancowry to the south, Camorta (Kamorta) to the north, Trinkat to the east and Katchal to the west. The 'magnificent landlocked' Nancowry Harbour, used by

European sailors since at least the 17th century, has been described as 'one of the safest natural harbours in the world'. The harbour was apparently used as a base for piracy. In 1868, the British Navy entered the harbour in some force, destroying suspected pirate ships.

The harbour is so large that the Naval Fleet, including the aircraft carrier, has been anchored here, leaving through the western entrance to avoid possible detection by the submarine of the opposing force, assumed to be lurking off the eastern approach of the harbour. Owing to the location of Nancowry island, its harbour and the availability of fresh water, coconuts, wild boar meat and domestic fowl, ancient sailors traveling from East to West would enter the harbour to 'stock up' before proceeding onwards to another long journey. It was tradition for the captain of visiting ships to call on the headman of the village. Over a period of time, the headman also came to be referred to as the 'captain' of the village. This tradition continues to date.

The Danes were the first European inhabitants of the island; the government of Denmark formally claimed sovereignty over Nicobar in 1755 and established a colony on Camorta island, close to where INS Kardip is now



situated. The main aim of the Danes was to spread Christianity and they encouraged a mission established by the Moravian Brethren of Herrnhut. The Danish colony, named New Denmark, was short-lived; the Danes found living here extremely difficult, most of them dying from malaria.

Later in 1886, this area, including the entire Andaman and Nicobar Islands, came under British rule. This continued until the declaration of the Independence of India on 15 August 1947. As these islands were visited by ships from different countries, the British Administration gave the Union Jack to one representative in each island with instructions to hoist the flag whenever they saw any ship entering harbour, to declare to visitors that they were entering British territory. It was during this time that the British Indian government bestowed the title of 'Rani' on Islon, a local woman, for services rendered by her to the government.

Islon and Emden

This is how it happened. During World War 1, German light cruiser SMS Emden caused havoc for the British Fleet; she was responsible for sinking probably the highest tonnage of ships during her commission. Emden was largely operating independently, capturing innocent merchant ships in the high seas, taking their coal, water and rations, and then sinking them.

Before World War 1, Emden was operating out of China. When the war broke out, she was tasked to

target British trade, especially in the Bay of Bengal. During her mission in Indian waters, Emden had no harbour for refuge. So she made up her requirements by raiding ships moving in and around the Indian coast, especially in the busy sea lanes, inflicting heavy losses to the British. Although the Emden's hunting grounds in the Bay of Bengal were not far from the Indian coast, the British were ignorant of her depredations. The Royal Navy had deployed several ships to look out for her, with no success.

Despite 14 British ships searching for her, Emden attacked Madras harbour on 22 September 1914. She closed in up to 3,000 yards from the port at night and fired around 130 shells on the oil tanks of Burmah Oil, which were within her range. A steamer was also destroyed in the harbour. This caused panic among the natives of the city and thousands left the city in fear of further attacks. Such was the fear that elders would frighten their children to come home saying, "Emden is coming."

Emden then decided to shift operations towards Burma and sailed towards Rangoon. On this passage, the ship entered Nancowry harbour. At that time, the villager designated to hoist the Union Jack was a girl named Islon. Though Emden had covered more than half the journey into the harbour, upon seeing the Union Jack and fearing there could be naval batteries along the coast, she turned around and left. Islon and the natives of Nancowry island had never seen such a ship before and were awed. Islon quickly took out



some paper and drew the silhouette of the ship. Then she sent some of her boys in the traditional boats called '*hoodis*' to the nearest British post in Car Nicobar. The message was then relayed to the chief commissioner in Port Blair, who passed on the information to the British Navy. This helped the British Navy to narrow their search for Emden.

Emden continued her raids right up to the Coco Islands with the British Navy in pursuit. Here, she was finally attacked by Australian cruiser HMAS Sydney on 9 November 1914. Emden ran aground to avoid sinking. Of the crew of 376 sailors and officers, 133 were killed during this action, while the rest were taken prisoners of war and later sent back to Germany. Emden's wreck was destroyed and finally broken up as scrap in the 1950s.

For her role in helping the Royal Navy close in on Emden, the British administration rewarded Islon with the title of Rani of Nancowry. Rani Islon had one daughter, Lakshmi, who inherited the title – it is this Rani that most naval veterans have had the pleasure of meeting. Rani Lakshmi died in 1989 and her only daughter Fatima took over from her. Following the removal of the privy purse by the Indian Government, while the Rani no longer enjoys privileges as before, she is offered due respect and courtesies.

Interestingly, the Rani of Nancowry always maintained a visitor's diary/book. Unfortunately, only the volumes with entries dated after the end of World War 2 are available—the earlier volumes were destroyed by the Japanese when they captured the islands during the war. In fact, there is a 16" gun lying abandoned on the southern tip of Trinkat island. The chief captain of the Nancowry group of islands, Mr Benjamin Paul, recollects how he had helped the Japanese transport this gun barrel to the island as a small boy—and remembers the cruelty of the Japanese to the locals.

Tragedy struck Nancowry again in 2004 when the tsunami struck the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The Nancowry group of islands were among the worst-hit, with most dwellings wiped out and thousands missing and presumed dead. I only hope the records and visitors' books were saved.

Having served as Commanding Officer of INS Kardip from 1994 to 1996, I have fond memories of my stay in the islands. I travelled a lot: by boat, ship, on foot and on the IAF helicopters from Car Nicobar. I rate my tenure and experiences in these islands as the best time in the Navy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commander Harinder Singh Rawat, Fifth Integrated Course, specialised in navigation and direction. He completed his watchkeeping on board INS Vikrant, came back as Direction Officer and finally as Commanding Officer when he was responsible for decommissioning the ship. He has served on board INS Delhi, Cauvery, Kirpan, Puri, Andaman, Ranjit, Vikrant and Cheetah. While commanding Cheetah, he took part in the first ever Indian naval participation in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force when he was deployed off Mogadishu, Somalia. He also commanded INS Kardip and was Officer-in-Charge FDN.

By Lieutenant Commander R K Mittal (Retd)

Around the autumn of 1977, I was a watchkeeping officer on INS Krishna (F46) when the ship had a change of command. The new 'old man' was an aviator and the assumption in the wardroom was that he would be more at home in an aircraft's cockpit than on a ship's bridge. However, he turned out to be not only a cool shiphandler but a seaman par excellence and slipped into his new role with masterly ease. Almost immediately after the change of command, we sailed to Tuticorin in company with Brahmaputra (F34) and Beas (F37) with an extensive and hectic exercise schedule. Shortly after our return to Cochin, we got some uplifting news. NHQ had scheduled Krishna for a much-awaited foreign cruise.

After a brief self-maintenance period, we departed Cochin for Colombo. As was normal, the ship was witness to some avian migration: one each Meteorological (Met) Officer, Intelligence Officer and Medical Officer and a brass band descended on the ship. Colombo was only some 350 nm from Cochin. The brief voyage, however, came with the allure of an overseas port. A short distance south of Cochin, the ship hit the turbulent waters of the Gulf of Mannar and the items in the officers' cabins and wardroom began answering the call of gravity. Numerous aftershave bottles shattered on the cabins' deck – the fragrance of Tabac mingled



with Sir and the unmistakeable bouquet of Brut comingled with them both.

Consequently, the officers' flat became redolent of an intriguing mélange of notes. The met and medical officers turned out to be extreme cases of seasickness and all the perfumes of the officers' flat couldn't sweeten the overpowering smell of breakfast that their queasy stomachs almost simultaneously deposited on the deck. The EXO ordered them both to their bunks and, tongue firmly in cheek, ordered the Gunnery Officer to prepare for a sea-burial should the worst happen. Due to deterioration of the weather, the Captain enquired about the Met Officer. When the EXO informed him of the Met Officer's condition, the Captain told the EXO that if the latest weather report didn't reach the bridge in 15 minutes, he would be constrained to request the Met Officer's "presence on board in Colombo". The officer shot out of his bunk, pulled on his uniform and was in the chart

house reading the barometer and the dry and wet bulb thermometers. Much to the amusement of the bridge watchkeepers, he beat the 15-minute deadline by a whisker.

We adjusted the ship's speed to arrive at Colombo shortly after 0800 hrs. I was the quarterdeck officer for port entry and departure. The band formed up on the quarterdeck and played marching tunes. As a well-honed team, we quickly made fast the ship. The ceremonial sentry in dress No. 2s with a gleaming rifle took position next to the ceremonial lifebuoy at the shore end of the gangway. The Indian Defence Advisor in sparkling whites with a gold shoulder cord was the first to board the ship. He immediately went to meet the Captain. The quarterdeck men under the watchful eyes of their chief put up the ceremonial awnings and the answer pennants for the official reception that evening. The EXO informed the Officer of the Day that the local military brass, diplomatic corps and civilian elite would attend the reception and the Indian High Commissioner (HC) would be the guest of honour. Various formal calls were made and returned in the forenoon. I saw some gunboats at a distance with green coloured flags on their ensign masts. The Intelligence Officer broke out of his reverie and very knowledgably informed everyone on deck that the Pakistani boats were on passage from China to Karachi and were in Colombo for bunkers and victuals.

The ship's quarterdeck glittered on a balmy Colombo evening. The Captain received all the worthies at the gangway. The burly Sikh gentleman in formal churidar and *bandhgala* with a petite wife turned out to be the HC. The reception was a rollicking success. Towards the end, the Captain gave a soul-stirring rendition

of *Que sera sera* – the evergreen from a Hitchcock classic earned him a round of loud applause. Shortly, the customary speeches were made and mementos exchanged. Thereafter, the band played the Sri Lankan and Indian national anthems, which signalled the official end of the reception. The order went out to the regulating chief on the wharf to have the HC's car lined up. The chief dispatched his No. 2 to get the car; when it didn't show up for some time the EXO asked the chief to check himself. It was the first and only diplomatic bump.

The chief brought the car keys and the news that the liveried chauffeur was slumped on the rear seat, passed out. The car smelled like a distillery and despite the chief's heavy-handed treatment, he was unable to rouse the chauffeur. It transpired that as the official reception progressed so did a chauffeurs' impromptu boozing soiree on the wharf. One chauffeur was said to have pulled out a bottle or two that were carried in a Rolls Royce's bar. The HC received the news and the car keys with the equanimity of a seasoned diplomat. The Captain and the EXO walked the HC and the petite lady to the car and the diplomat slipped into the driver's seat. The petite lady wrinkled her nose as she took the passenger's seat; all this while the chauffeur snored loudly at the back. What the diplomat wouldn't say, the squealing tyres of the Mercedes vocalised as the big car shot forward in a shower of gravel. The Captain, never one to let such minor blips bother him, returned to the ship and ordered a fresh round of drinks for everyone. Following that, the reception concluded.

The next day was off for me and all roads led to downtown Colombo. Sri Lanka made some captivating batik crockery. I purchased some,

and other knickknacks. The next morning, all the junior officers received creamy white gold-crested invitation cards for lunch at India House, Colombo. Each invitation was individually addressed and written in ornamental calligraphy. The EXO briefed the attendees regarding culinary diplomacy and their conduct.

We timed our arrival at the imposing India House to comply with diplomatic etiquette. A gleaming Mercedes was receiving the undivided attention of a chauffeur – sober as a judge. The face did not seem familiar; the erring individual had probably been shown the door. The HC and the petite lady were graciousness personified. The HC had many a tale to tell of lands far away and the captive young audience was an absolute boon for him. He held court sitting on an enormous chair and sipping beer from a tankard perched on his generous belly. The petite lady fondly looked on even as she bantered with the youngsters who were not fortunate enough to find room on the chairs that surrounded 'His Excellency'.

An elegant sit-down lunch followed, with the host and hostess at either end of the ambassadorial table. A large wait staff stood attentively at a discreet distance. The table dazzled with snowy linen, gold-trimmed service, candelabras and a formidable array of silverware. The officers successfully navigated



the challenges thrown by the multicourse meal and, at a cue from the hostess, rose and withdrew to an adjacent chamber for coffee and confections. Coffee over, the seniormost among us thanked the hostess and His Excellency and we took our leave.

Early the next morning, the ship's awnings were struck down. At the dot of eight, the colour guard presented arms, the band played the national anthem, and the colours were hoisted. Minutes after that under the gaze of the Defence Advisor and a Sri Lanka navy officer, an unberthing party let go the ship's lines and we were underway. The band had been instructed to play *Auld lang syne*. However, the band chief, a veteran of many a foreign cruise, espied a cluster of tricolour-waving overseas Indians on the wharf. With a renewed vigour, the band struck up, *Saare jehan se accha*. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw some hankies being pulled out and eyes being dabbed on the wharf. On that melancholy note, we set sail for home waters.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Lieutenant Commander R K Mittal is a communications and electronic warfare specialist and served onboard IN ships Krishna, Amini, Mysore, Vikrant, Udayagiri and Mulki. On premature retirement from the Indian Navy in 1992, the officer was absorbed into the Shipping Corporation of India. Subsequently, he sailed onboard bulk carriers trading worldwide. At present, he is a marine consultant based in Perth.

By Manju Rajan

In May 2022, I was invited by the CO of INS Gomati, Captain Sudip Malik, for the decommissioning ceremony of the ship. I was pleasantly surprised as I had kind of lost touch with the Navy after the demise of my husband, Commodore K M S Rajan, way back in 1990. I was touched that the Navy remembered me after so many years and took the trouble of finding out where I was, to invite me for the ceremony. This revealed the true naval spirit.

That one phone call took me back to the year when INS Gomati was commissioned in 1988 and my husband Captain K M S Rajan was the



Commissioning Captain. We had just returned in 1987 after spending one year at the Naval War College in Newport, USA, when Sunder got his posting to take over Gomati. He straight away plunged into action as the ship was to be commissioned. There were nine months to go as the ship underwent trials and was getting ready to sail on the high seas. It was like preparing for the birth of a baby and ensuring a safe delivery!

Well, Gomati was definitely our baby and the commissioning crew toiled to meet deadlines. Then, D-Day finally dawned and we all were euphoric when then Defence Minister



Capt Rajan reading the Commissioning Warrant



Pre-Commissioning briefing



Ready to set sail!



The commissioning crew and their families reunite

Shri K C Pant commissioned INS Gomati on 16 April 1988.

Gomati brought the families of the commissioning crew together and we enjoyed our camaraderie and fellowship. The two years spent on Gomati from 1987 to 1989 are firmly etched in my mind as I recall the wonderful times we spent in the Captain's Cabin, in the wardroom and on the deck, enjoying cocktails and dinners, *bara khana* and entertainment programmes, friendship and fellowship!

The families would wait with bated breath for the ship to come back from its trips, from other Indian ports and overseas, to see what it had brought back for all of us! As the CO's wife, I was thrilled to play the role of looking after the young wives when the ship sailed.

The decommissioning brought us together once again as many officers and their families took the trouble of making it for the ceremony. I was thrilled to see everyone after more than three decades and we spent an awesome two days together indulging in sheer nostalgia as we travelled down memory lane. Anecdotes were

exchanged and humour abounded as tales of some funny incidents were related. We all had aged but the spirit was intact.



Mrs Manju Rajan with last CO Captain Sudip Malik and Mrs Aarti Malik

That said, at the decommissioning ceremony on the evening of 28 May 2022, our eyes were numb with tears when we saw the commissioning pennant being brought down for the last time. An era of service had come to an end. Gomati truly lived up to her motto, 'Success is Born of Action', having served the Indian Navy for 34 glorious years. The memories of the time spent onboard the ship will always be fondly remembered and firmly etched in our hearts. Further, the hospitality of the decommissioning crew was awesome. Thanks to them, we have some wonderful memories to cherish!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Manju Rajan was born and brought up in the naval community – she is the daughter of late Commodore V S Arunachalam, who was Director of Naval Education. She was married to late Commodore K M S Rajan, who was the Commissioning CO of INS Gomati.

O CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN!

By Rear Admiral Susheel Menon

It was just a few months after I had assumed Command of INS Kolkata – The Bengal Tiger. The ship had emerged through an efficient and well-executed refit and within a few months had integrated fully with the Fleet, albeit with the usual initial hiccups (to be read as 'whipped into shape by Fleet Staff').

There was a reason every day to feel proud of the boundless energy, spirit and enthusiasm of the crew. A never-say-never attitude supplemented by a can-do spirit – as should be of a frontline destroyer of the Indian Navy. The professional pride, sense of purpose and selfless dedication of each member of the crew were palpable.

As part of various events leading up to Navy Day 2017, the ship was designated for 'Ship Open to Visitors' at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai. On most days, due to the prevalent security situation, it was very difficult for civilian visitors – without a known person in the Navy – to get access to the Dockyard. The general public of Mumbai quite enthusiastically waits for an occasion to visit and see for themselves the mysterious grey hulls that lurk beyond the high walls.

As we all know, visitor's day is not taken lightly on board any ship. It requires a fair amount of onboard administration, coordination with agencies within the dockyard and a working plan to make the visit a memorable one. The ship set to work a few days in advance, looking at visit and evacuation routes, safety



procedures, crowd control, souvenir counters, photo points, et al. Given the statistics of the previous year, we were expecting upwards of 3,500 visitors.

After much briefing and planning, the designated day arrived and Tiger Gate opened to let the visitors in. The rush at the gate, rapidly striding towards the ship, brought within us both a sense of trepidation and pride. Murphy was busy elsewhere and the day progressed well. Routes were not jammed, visitors were safe and happy chatter could be heard as people disembarked.

After surveying the deck for a few minutes at the initial stage and ascertaining that the Officer of the Day and his team were in full control, I went

back to my cabin to attend to a few other issues. Regular reports kept coming in about the progress of the day and all was well. After a couple of hours, I told my Staff Officer that I would be proceeding to deck to see if any arrangements needed to be tweaked as visitor volumes had gone up since the start of the day; also, I was keen to interact with some of the visitors. I stepped on the deck in my crisp white uniform wearing a sea-cap with the ship's crest emblazoned on it.

On the forecastle, I chatted with a few visitors, helped the guides explain the ship to the endless batches of visitors and generally walked around, feeling proud of the crowd that we had drawn. Definitely more than last year, I told myself, chest swelling a bit. Suddenly, a child looked at me and asked, "Uncle, you are the Captain of the ship?" With a sense of pride, I replied, "Yes, *beta!*" He then called his parents and yelled, "Baba, Aiye, Captain of the ship, Captain of the ship." On being thus recognised, if my chest could have swelled anymore, I would have floated out over the jetty.

This yell and shout set off a chain reaction and I was suddenly surrounded by people who wanted to shake my hand, thank me for my service, ask me questions, have my picture taken with them, exchange phone numbers – I got a quick glimpse into the life of a celebrity.

It's also exhausting; so, 45 minutes into my life of intense fame and recognition, I retired back to my cabin.

The chest was still puffed up, so I called my Staff Officer, the Captain's Steward and the Coxswain and gave them a lesson in how body language and attitude will identify you as a leader in a sea of people. As they mustered, I was extolling to them the effect of my 'gaze', 'gait' and 'gravitas' that had identified even to a child that I was the Captain of the ship. I must confess I went on for a bit – making my captive audience a bit uncomfortable.

Good, I thought to myself, they finally have seen a live example of how a *fauji* must command 'presence', after which 'respect' would follow on its own. I had finally driven the lesson home!

Being a good reader of minds, I could see that my Coxswain (the youngest of the trio on the receiving end that day) was hesitating to say something. So, the good Captain that I was, I thought I must provide opportunity for feedback. "What do you have to say?" I asked him. "Do you not agree that I was identified as the Captain of the ship, even by a child, because of my self-confidence and body language?" He stuttered, stammered, and eventually spoke up: "Sir, *aapke sea-cap pe bada bada likha hai – CAPTAIN.*"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rear Admiral Susheel Menon assumed charge as the Flag Officer Sea Training in May 2023 after relinquishing Command of INS Vikramaditya. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and was commissioned into the Indian Navy in July 1992. He has commanded four Indian naval ships – TRV 71, Kripan, Kolkata and Vikramaditya – and held key operational and staff appointments at the Western Fleet, Command Headquarters and Naval Headquarters. He is a graduate of the Command and Staff College, Indonesia, and the Naval War College, USA. He has also been a Directing Staff at the Naval War College in Mandovi, Goa. He holds an MPhil degree from Mumbai University in Nuclear Doctrine.

By Rear Admiral S S Rao (Retd)

The learned seafaring reader may be intrigued by the mismatch between the title of this small story and the accompanying photographs of Gzhel blue and white ceramic figurines, with folklore dating back to 17th-century Tsarist Russia. My story, which follows, is only four decades old but it is certainly a coffeepot full of mystery. Please read on.

Way back in 1983-86, I served in a coveted diplomatic appointment as a Deputy Naval Attaché at the Indian Embassy in Moscow. It was part of the Cold War era when the US and USSR, the two superpowers, snooped and eavesdropped on everything and anything belonging to the rival. Because of India's non-aligned stance and the Indo- Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, our relations with the Russians were very cordial and the strategic partnership between the two navies was at its peak. We had the largest number of officers and sailors posted across the constituent republics of the USSR, as part of commissioning crews, refit of ships and submarines, and undergoing various courses at different Soviet naval training establishments and dockyards.

We had our residence in flats 55-56 Sirpokovsky Val (pronounced 'Wall'), a multi-storied building for diplomats, with Soviet militia moving in and out of a small wooden sentry



post filled with a lone telephone inside, guarding the building at all times.

Day-to-day life with regard to availability of household items, with the exception of bread, milk, cheese and potatoes, was difficult as one was never sure whether an item you wanted to buy would be available in the market. The common practice was that if you spotted a queue in the market, you joined it and bought whatever was being sold. It may be fresh fruit instead of the chicken you were looking for. Kitchen utensils, clothes, shoes and Russian souvenirs also fell in the same category as far as availability was concerned. You could, of course, get all these items in government-run shops called *Beriyozka* (shops for diplomats where you paid in foreign currency instead of roubles) but this amounted to shelling out five to six times more than the normal market price.

As we were paid in three different currencies – Indian rupees, roubles and deutschmarks – *Beriyoza* were unaffordable for every purchase and thus one had to buy most household items from the Russian shops and stores.

My wife Rita used to buy Russian blue pottery and figurines, as a hobby, whenever she came across these in the shops. These appeared in the local market once in a blue moon and disappeared sooner than the day they were seen. Over the three years and few months of my tenure in Moscow, she had a sizeable collection of blue pottery figurines, flower vases, beer mugs, tea and coffee sets.

A couple of weeks before our return to India, she told me she had not been able to buy a blue pottery coffeepot and that her coffee set was incomplete. I said, never mind, and we forgot about it.

A few days before our return, as part of diplomatic and service practice, I called on the Chief of GTD, Lt Gen SA Nikolaief, the head of the Russian organisation I used to deal with, to pay my respects and say *Dasvidanya*. It was a

very cordial meeting over a few shots of premium Russian vodka. After a review of our working relationship over three years, larger Indo-Soviet cooperation and growth of our navies, and offering best wishes for the good health and prosperity of our families, political and naval heads, we exchanged small gifts and bid farewell to each other.

When I returned home that evening, I told Rita about my very encouraging meeting and gave her the gift packet to open. Lo and behold, it was a blue pottery coffeepot, which she had been so desperately searching for to complete her set. We were also shell-shocked to realise that the General could not have been privy to a small conversation between husband and wife unless our flat had 'listening walls'!

While we immensely cherish our diplomatic posting in Moscow, which provided us the opportunity to travel widely to some of the most beautiful cities in the Soviet Union and Europe, learn about different arts and cultures, and collect beautiful souvenirs, it sends a chill up our spines when we think of the listening walls we lived within for over three years.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commissioned in the Indian Navy on 30 September 1968 in the Supply & Secretariat Branch and an alumnus of Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Rear Admiral S S Rao, NM, VSM, held various important assignments such as Deputy Naval Attaché in Moscow during the Cold War era, CMP (V), DGM (Personnel) in ND(V), DSAQ at NHQ, MS(B) and CSO(P&A) in HQWNC (Mumbai) before his promotion to Flag rank. He also served in the ATV project and retired as Assistant Chief of Logistics in May 2005. After retirement, he headed a BPO and a deemed university in Haryana. He is also a Yoga Shiromani, Yoga Acharya and Yoga Bhaskar, with over a decade of teaching experience, particularly with underprivileged children. His current hobbies are numismatics, playing the piano and trekking.

IN A LIGHTER VEIN

THE PABT MYTH

By Commodore Medioma Bhada (Retd)

In early 1956, those of us who were declared selected by the Services Selection Board (SSB) in Bangalore for the 16th NDA Course were directed to proceed for our Pilot Aptitude Battery Test (PABT). Irrespective of the service we had opted for, we were issued a railway warrant for Dehradun.

In Dehradun, I failed my PABT but, having opted for the Navy, this setback did not bother me much. In NDA, I encountered similar setbacks, thanks to maths and science. I finally passed out with the 18th Course and owing to my academic record, much to my anguish and disappointment, I was given the Supply Branch. No amount of pleading could change that.

In 1961, whilst doing my supply midshipman's time on INS Talwar, the ship received a signal from NHQ asking for volunteers for flying, from all branches. Lt Cdr Ramachandran, the ship's Supply Officer, came to me excitedly and insisted that I volunteer for the flying branch as this could be the only way I could move out of the Supply Branch. Why he insisted on this is a story for another day. Suffice to say he was as keen to see me out of his branch as I was to get out of it. I read the signal with great enthusiasm but noticed an innocuous sentence at the end: "Those who have appeared for the PABT earlier and failed, need not apply." Seeing how keen he was that I volunteer, I did not mention my



earlier failure and assured him I would think about it.

I realised this was a godsent opportunity to get into the Executive Branch. However, that "need not apply" in the last sentence was bothersome. That's when the Machiavelli in me surfaced. I realised I had appeared for my PABT five years earlier in 1956 for the 16th NDA Course but had passed out with the 18th Course. The chances of records being checked that far behind at the time were remote. As for the last three words, they did not read "will not apply" nor "cannot apply", just "need not apply", which I interpreted as "could, if you want to". I discussed this with my colleagues, D K Sharma, Dibesh Bannerjee and Akheel Shaikh, who were aware of my earlier PABT failure. They were very cooperative though would blackmail me occasionally! That evening, I informed my HOD of my intention to volunteer for the flying

branch. My Captain, Commander Dang, was very pleased that one of his midshipmen had volunteered. An appropriate signal was sent to NHQ and a few days later, I was sent to Dehradun for my PABT along with a few other naval volunteers. I passed the test.

I got my Wings, albeit with a few hiccups, as was my wont. I qualified as a frontline pilot on the

Seahawk aircraft for carrier operations, both by day and night. I was a qualified flying instructor at Bidar and Hakimpet. And I commanded air squadrons and air stations.

So much for the credibility of the phrase "...failed in PABT, need not apply". I wonder if this is still in vogue.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commodore Medioma Bhada, an alumnus of NDA, was commissioned in the Indian Navy in 1962. A fighter pilot by profession, he participated in the 1971 Bangladesh Operations as a pilot in INAS 300 from INS Vikrant. He was a flying instructor at the Air Force Flying Academy and also on the faculty of the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC) in Wellington. He has commanded a naval air squadron and two naval air stations and was Director Naval Air Staff at NHQ. He has also commanded two Indian naval warships. He retired from the Navy on superannuation in 1994. On retirement, he joined the corporate world and held multifarious senior assignments, including director of a private air taxi operator, CEO of a chain of hotels and head of administration of a group company.

IN A LIGHTER VEIN

THE DUTY JINX



In the sixties and seventies, a duty staff officer used to be stationed at the Director of Naval Operations (DNO) office after working hours and at night. His job was to receive messages and signals sent to NHQ at night and distribute the urgent ones to concerned PSOs/directors. The duty roster of lieutenants and lieutenant commanders was maintained by DNO's office.

The officer would report to the DNO director's room at 1730 hrs and remain on duty till 0930 the following day. A staff car/jeep would bring his bedding and food from his home/mess. He would spend the night in a pallet bed in the director's office. There were frequent interruptions to his sleep at night with signals, mostly inconsequential. He entered them in a register kept for that purpose. A dispatch rider was at his disposal for sending important communications to senior officers. I guess with the improvement in communication, email, WhatsApp and Instagram, this archaic practice would have been discontinued now.

Whenever I was the duty officer, for some strange reason, there would be some crisis or other. The first time I was on duty, Pamban Bridge in Dhanuskodi was washed away on 23 December 1964 due to rough seas. On another occasion I was on duty, there was a serious clash between navy personnel and civilians in Visakhapatnam. The third occasion was a national calamity. Late at night, I got the message that Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had died of a heart attack at Tashkent at 2 am on 10 January 1966 a few hours after signing

a peace accord with Pakistan President Ayub Khan. I rang up CNS Admiral Chatterjee and informed him. I had to do a lot of phoning and sending dispatch riders that fateful night.

Seeing such happenings whenever I was on duty, the civilian staff at the DNO directorate came to the conclusion that I was jinxed as a duty officer. They used to get worried whenever my name came up on the roster.

Once when I was on duty, I received a strange, long and rambling telegram through normal P&T channels. It asked the Navy to arrest Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who was onboard Vikrant sailing to Laccadives (now Lakshadweep). The sender was an eccentric lady, the self-styled queen of Nabha (an erstwhile princely state), who claimed that that Nehru family had cheated her family. She was unhinged and permanently camped at New Delhi Railway Station. The telegram advised us to keep our uniforms white and pure by arresting the Prime Minister.

I telephoned VCNS Admiral Krishnan, who jokingly asked me if the lady had given any further instructions on what to do with the PM after arresting her onboard! I sent the telegram to him by DR.

Mercifully, that was the last time my name came on the roster, presumably because I had become too senior by then. India and the Navy were saved further embarrassment!

- *Captain N S Mohan Ram (Retd)*

By Rear Admiral Sushil Ramsay (Retd)

The Naval Regimental System (NRS) was established in 2010 with the aim to make the Service responsible to reach out to each and every naval ESM and their families (in case of demise of naval personnel, serving and retired). At its inception, there were serious misgivings among the veterans' community whether NRS was a good idea just because it was a very successful up-and-running model with various regiments of the Indian Army! However, over a period of time, the NRS has undergone several revisions and changes to suit the requirements of ESM, widows and next of kin.

Command Regimental System Officer

To take the mandate of the NRS to the doorstep of naval veterans, widows and family pensioners, Command Regimental System Officer (CRSO) are operating within four regions within the jurisdiction of their respective Command Headquarters. Over the years, CRSOs have grown from strength to strength and established their reach far and wide, despite being extremely shorthanded. Thanks to institutional support, commensurate infrastructure and resources have not been found wanting. Regular and very well-structured visits are undertaken to reach out to naval veterans staying in remote villages and far-flung towns and cities to attend to matters relating to their welfare and well-being.



CRSOs and the COVID-19 era

The COVID-19 era caused tremendous devastation in our lives. Veterans of all ages and their family members were greatly traumatised and medical and health infrastructure was stretched to its limits. Under such difficult conditions, CRSOs provided a ray of hope. With complete disregard to personal comfort and safety, they were mobilised 24x7 to provide relief and support to the extent possible with their woefully inadequate manpower and limited resources at their disposal. With their relentless efforts, they truly acted as Good Samaritans, coming to the rescue of grieving traumatised families by ensuring timely funerals for the departed souls.

Funerals and last rites

For the past few years, we at the Navy Foundation, Delhi Charter (NFDC) had been trying to evolve a system to provide immediate relief, succour and support to widows on the demise of our veterans. Based on the traumatic lessons learnt from COVID-19, the Station

Commander and Commanding Officer, INS India, and his able team appreciated our viewpoint, evaluated it in the right perspective and evolved an efficient system for making all the arrangements for a dignified and respectable funeral and last rites for the bereaved family. All this is made available through a single telephone call to OOD India, Commanding Officer India, Naval Provost Marshal and Regulating Officer.

TESTIMONIAL

“We want to express our profound appreciation for the dignified manner in which the arrangements were made and the funeral and last rites were performed for my late father. NFDC truly embodied the values of honour and respect that our esteemed veterans deserve. The attention to detail and the seamless coordination during this challenging time were exceptional. All arrangements were meticulously planned and executed by Team India under the dynamic leadership of the Commanding Officer, INS India. From the initial contact to the final farewell, every aspect was handled with great care and finesse. The entire process was conducted with a level of grace and respect that deeply touched our hearts. What struck us most was the sensitivity with which Team India addressed our needs and concerns and the entire team exhibited dedication and professionalism that provided our family with much-needed solace and succour.”

- *Avinash Banga,
Son of Late Commander P K Banga*



*Cremation with full military honours
for gallantry awardee*

Monitoring the health of veterans

The first measure instituted was monitoring the health conditions of retired naval officers and sailors admitted in Base Hospital and Army Hospital R&R. For this purpose, in consultation with DGMS (Navy) and respective Commandants of military hospitals in Delhi, the Station Commander instituted structured daily visits by a senior sailor to enquire and report the health conditions of all inpatients. This initiative again is extremely well-thought out as Commanding Officer, INS India, receives the First Information Report on the demise of a naval veteran, based on which the rest of the arrangements are made by Team India, including CRSO, in consultation with the bereaved family.

Veterans outside military hospitals

The information of other veterans not admitted in military hospitals is not always available to the Station Commander. All such cases when reported to Commanding Officer or OOD India are promptly acted upon, and all arrangements

made by Team India in consultation with the bereaved family. Incidentally, there are some stray cases that come to the direct notice of CRSO. In this case, CRSO, after due approval from the Station Commander, springs into action and ensures a dignified funeral and last rites. Fortunately, there is widespread dissemination of the Good Samaritan policy; consequently, there are practically no cases that have remained unreported and missed out.

Other welfare measures

At the new INS India complex, a complete floor has been earmarked as the MI Room with state-of-the-art medical equipment and testing facilities. The ECHS Polyclinic is well stocked to dispense medicines for veterans, including local purchase medicines. Regulating Staff is often seen making retired officers' identity cards and dependent family cards on the spot. Likewise, whenever required, suitable buses are provided to ageing veterans to travel in comfort from their residence to veterans' get-togethers and back home. In addition, veterans are made to feel welcome whenever they visit the INS India complex for their canteen requirements.

NFDC and Good Samaritans

At NFDC, it has been our endeavour to bid farewell to our veterans by way of dignified tribute and condolence messages through NFDC Broadcast. Thus, we have evolved a system to ensure seamless information flow on a real-time basis at both ends. We do not differentiate between members of NFDC and those who have not yet taken membership in terms of providing information on a demise promptly. NFDC compiles a comprehensive

condolence message based on the career profile of the departed soul. The same message is relayed to all Navy Foundation Chapters. We take pride in publishing the message widely, as a last nostalgic tribute to our veteran.

TESTIMONIAL

"The loss of a loved one is an emotionally challenging and distressing experience. Team India extended its support for my father's cremation, ensuring our family received assistance in paying honourable homage to the departed soul. It ensured the mortal remains were handled with the utmost care and respect, by providing a van at our disposal. They were brought home and the rituals conducted in a dignified manner. They organised a *pandal*, paying meticulous attention to detail, including coordinating with the cremation ground and arranging necessary supplies. Pall bearers in naval uniform added grace with ceremonial wreaths. In a thoughtful manner, floral arrangements were made for all to offer their last prayers before moving to the funeral pyre. I would sincerely thank Commanding Officer and Team India for all the support extended to our family. This compassionate support played a crucial role in allowing our grieving family to focus on the cremation ceremony without being burdened by logistical concerns. This ceremonial tribute was a poignant reminder of the genuine camaraderie and brotherhood within the Indian Navy.

- *Mohit Lohani,
Son of Late Commander C S Lohani*

In conclusion

INS India and we at NFDC have been flooded by positive messages received across the spectrum of beneficiaries, NFDC members and non-members who have received the facilities seamlessly extended by the Good Samaritans. In

fact, there has been a quantum jump for membership of NFDC among those who had never considered it prudent earlier. Further, NHQ has also tweaked the policy for membership of Navy Foundation Charters/Chapters, owing to which we are receiving a regular inflow of new members.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rear Admiral Sushil Ramsay (Retd) was commissioned on 30 October 1967 into the erstwhile Supply & Secretariat Branch. He is an alumnus of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington; College of Naval Warfare, Karanja, Mumbai; and College of Defence Management, Secunderabad. He has served as Command Administration & Personnel Officer, HQ ENC; Staff Officer to CNS; Naval Attaché, Embassy of India, Moscow; Material Superintendent, Visakhapatnam; and Director, Pay & Allowances and Pension, Assistant Controller of Logistics and Project Director (Personnel & Administration) HQ ATV. After retirement, he was Senior Editorial Adviser in a reputed defence publishing house and is currently deeply involved with the Navy Foundation, Delhi Charter (NFDC).

SUNRISE IN THE EAST

The Navy Foundation Mumbai Chapter organised a tour of 41 people to the Northeast. The adventure began on 30 October 2023 with many members going from Mumbai to Bagdogra by flight and joined by outstation members from Pune, Bangalore, Visakhapatnam, Vadodara, Delhi and Kolkata.

The itinerary, conceptualised by NFMC President Cdr Vijay Vadhera (Retd), included a visit to Darjeeling, Gangtok, Siliguri, Guwahati, Shillong and Kaziranga. Guidance for the tour was provided by Col Mani Gahatraj (Retd), an Army veteran and author. Cmde K S Rai (Retd), a veteran submariner living in Siliguri, also provided useful tips.

From Bagdogra, the veterans were taken in SUVs to Darjeeling, where the industrious Gurkhas happily provided their services. They witnessed the sunrise at Tiger Hill and the majestic snowcapped peak of the Kanchenjunga range bathed by the sunlight, sampled varieties of tea and Nepali cuisine, took a toy train ride by steam engine, and shopped! Moving on to Gangtok, they visited Baba Mandir, located at a height of 16,200 ft, in honour of Army jawan Harbhajan Singh, who was washed away in



Tiger Hill, Darjeeling

floods in 1968. They also visited the beautiful Tsomgo Lake with an altitude of 12,000 ft.

From Gangtok, the veterans came down to Siliguri and proceeded from New Jalpaiguri station to Guwahati by the Vande Bharat Express.

At Guwahati, they enjoyed a dinner river cruise on the Brahmaputra replete with music and dance. They moved on to Shillong, visiting the

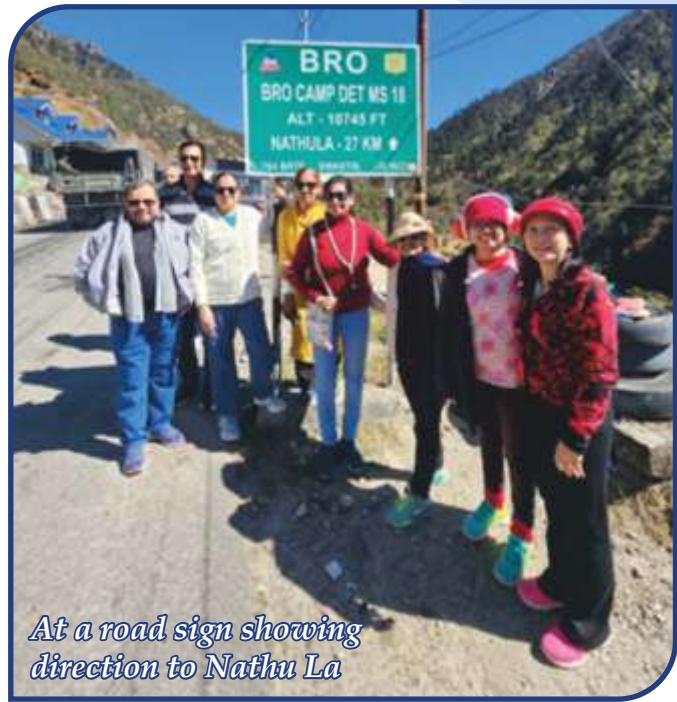


The Living Root Bridge

famous Kamakhya Temple en route. In the Shillong area, they partook of beautiful sights such as the Living Root Bridge of Meghalaya, where roots form bridges across streams. Other highlights included the Dawki lake, where they took boats to explore the natural beauty of the environs; the Mawsmai limestone caves; and the waterfalls of Cherrapunji, the wettest place on earth. Further, they visited the Don Bosco Museum, which is dedicated to the people and culture of the Northeast.



Jeep safari



At a road sign showing direction to Nathu La

From Shillong, the veterans travelled by road to Kaziranga, a UNESCO heritage wildlife sanctuary featuring the one-horned Indian rhino and other fauna like elephants, tigers, water buffaloes, deer, wild boars and a variety of birds. After a traditional Assamese lunch, they returned to Guwahati for the flight back home.



Dawki clearwater lake

By Belina K

Ageing graciously involves a shift in mindset. Quite a few names popped up when I started to consider this topic. I chose this quartet, based on my interactions and observations over the years. A thread that weaves them together is their humility, zest for life and eagerness to listen and understand a different perspective from those who are younger to them. Like many of us from the civil background, these ladies, too, stepped into the naval family over 40 years ago and adjusted to the new environment, sharing their home and hearth whenever the situation demanded. A common fact I noted is that all except for one did their basic education in Telugu medium, then moved to college and adapted to the English medium of instruction. Read on to know more about them

Mrs Ramalakshmi Gandikota

Mrs Ramalakshmi Gandikota started her schooling from Besant Theosophical High School in Madras and moved to Visakhapatnam for higher studies. She has been married to Cdr G Sri Rama Rao for 52 years and is blessed with two children. Armed with a B.Ed., Mrs Ramalakshmi has worked as a primary, middle or high school teacher wherever they moved and is open to learning even at 77. She can communicate in six Indian languages. When her husband was appointed COMCG East, Chennai, she encouraged the sailors' wives to showcase their talents and exhibit their handicrafts at an industrial exhibition.

How have you evolved as you have gotten older?

When I was young, I was into studies and hobbies. Later, I learnt to ride a cycle and scooter and to drive a car to be mobile. I also learnt yoga and swimming to be fit. I practise the Art of Living, participate in online chanting of *slokas* and sing *bhakti* songs to keep my mind tranquil.

What are some of the most fulfilling moments you've had?

Visiting my sick mother every evening after school when I was working at Siva Sivani Public School is one of those moments. Another was when I attended the President's Colours presentation ceremony to the Killers' Squadron in Mumbai on 8 December, on the Golden Jubilee of the 1971 war. Winning a first prize for dressing up as a Maharashtrian lady during an Anubhavi meet is also memorable. I learnt how to drape in 'kaashta' style online.



Have you developed any new interests to embrace the ageing process?

At the age of 60, I added another MA (Carnatic Music) degree and taught music to kids around me. I learnt to paint in different art forms like Warli, Manjusha and Godna. I also joined an online organisation, 'Embrace Hansa', for senior citizens.

Are there any particular challenges or joys you have discovered with age?

I like interacting with the younger generation and learning about technological advancements from them. I spend time with my grandchildren, Sneha and Samarth. My main challenge is maintaining the health of my spouse and I as we age.

Mrs Usha Kumari

Mrs Usha Kumari was born in Kasipuram, a village located 52 km from Visakhapatnam. She moved to Visakhapatnam for her further studies. She is married to Cdr B L N Rao for 46 years and has focused on raising their only child, Chitra, while holding a full-time job as a librarian. She is constantly upgrading her knowledge related to finance and urges women to be financially independent. At 71, it is impressive to note that she files her own taxes and can be approached for guidance.



What are the significant moments in your life?

I cherish bagging the first position in the Library Science course at Andhra University and my daughter's graduation from Harvard Business School.

How has your perspective on life changed as you have grown older?

It has changed by being less judgemental, trying to understand my own behaviour and focusing on increased empathy towards others.

What activities or hobbies do you find most enjoyable now?

I believe in giving and being helpful to others. I contribute whichever way I can. I enjoy gardening and photography. I make time to listen to self-enhancement talks and ponder.

Is there anything you would have done differently?

Two things come to mind immediately: I should have given more importance to teaching social skills while raising my daughter and to be able to say no to unhealthy relationships.

What are the challenges you face and how do you overcome them?

Forgetfulness and physical weakness! I introspect and try auto suggestion to keep going.

What is your take on physical appearance and self-worth?

Inner beauty is important. Self-worth will become stronger and clearer with age.

How has your perspective on relationships changed over time?

I keep my relationships and friendships alive, positive and strong by not having high expectations from anyone.

Mrs K V L Savithri

Mrs K V L Savithri, wife of Cdr K Y Narayana, was born in Vasanthawada, near Eluru. She had to change schools often because of the transfers of her father. She feels both her sons' professional accomplishments are due to the environment in the Navy, which was conducive to all-round growth. As a teacher, she added value to the lives of many children. And the stenography course she took fetched her a job at Greaves Cotton Company; she was the first lady ever appointed. An avid reader since childhood, she continues, even at 70. I admire her for the positive outlook she has when the chips are down and her ability to see humour in everyday things.



How has your sense of fashion evolved over the years?

I have been fashion conscious from my childhood. While I dress traditionally, I choose things that make me look contemporary. I find online shopping very useful at my age.

What activities or hobbies do you find fulfilling at this stage in life?

I enjoy reading about spirituality. I enjoy beautifying my house, especially the *pooja* room. The daily *pooja* and tending to the plants keep me energised.

What motivates you to make a diverse range of mango pickles each summer?

I have more access to facilities and resources than my mother and the desire to take her legacy for pickling forward motivates me. Even after undergoing coronary artery bypass grafting in November 1998, I made pickles the following summer with my cousin's help.

Are there any particular challenges or joys you have discovered in this phase of life?

The health issues of my husband and mine are the major challenges. I derive strength to overcome them with joyous experiences such as spending time with my granddaughters, be it reading books to them or listening to them read; or when they call me, "silly *bamma* (granny)"!

Mrs Nirupa Rani Kandula

Mrs Nirupa Rani Kandula, aged 68, was born in Rajamahendravaram into a highly educated family.



It is therefore not a surprise to see her acquire a PhD. If I were to start mentioning her academic and professional accomplishments here, I would cross the word limit set for each article! Her hard work won her the State's Best Teacher Award. And she was the founder Vice-Chancellor of Adi Kavi Nannaya University, Rajahmundry – the first woman vice-chancellor of a state university other than the women's varsities in the country. She is married to Cmde G V Ratnam and they have crossed the 43rd milestone together. They are blessed with a son who is an artist.

Has your perspective on life changed with age?

Change is inevitable. All that is to come will change the way something is seen right now. It's best to accept what comes without judging and be happy in the circumstances.

What are some of your favourite memories?

I believe the significance of a particular memory loses its charm as we grow older. A memory becomes a mere incident. When I see cows binging on plastic from garbage bins, I am reminded of an experience in my teens. My reading material was chewed up by a cow while I dozed off under a tree. A funny incident back then, but it is a matter of social concern now.

How do you stay emotionally healthy?

By exercising control over tongue and thought; keeping aside my ego for what I was and realising what I am now; and choosing to be polite and humane rather than opinionated and biased.

What advice would you give to younger generations?

Everyone wants to achieve happiness and peace. Do not be oblivious to the fact that happiness and peace are within and not in positions and possessions.

Are there any dreams or goals you still have for the future?

I wish to work on my thoughts, words and deeds by regularly questioning if I am true to my higher self. I wish for a magic wand that can turn the world into a beautiful place for all to live in with peace of mind.

Let us embrace the wisdom and experience of these inspiring ladies and celebrate the passage of time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Belina K is a podcaster; her Telugu podcast, Spark the Parivartana, can be found on the major streaming directories. A postgrad in Communication & Journalism, she was editor of Veerangana from 2010-13. She is a transition life coach, chocolatier and candle-maker. She has also been mentoring women and youth. Her focus has been skill development, education and integration of children with disabilities. She is married to RAdm K Ravikiran (Retd).

By Commander K C Misra (Retd)

In Visakhapatnam, where the waves do crash,
A foundation stands, a haven for the brave,
Where Navy veterans find a welcome splash,
And memories of the sea they proudly save.

In working years, their duty held them tight,
Their tasks and missions took the highest place,
But now in retirement's golden light,
They forge a new path, with newfound grace.

No rule books guide them, no SOPs in sight,
They've re-engineered life's business anew,
With self-direction, sufficiency, delight,
A breathtaking journey they pursue.

The Navy Foundation, Visakhapatnam's pride,
Unites the naval fraternity's kin,
In vibrant gatherings, side by side,
With laughter and camaraderie within.

They meet each month, the stories they share,
In Naval Coast Battery by the sea,
The waves provide a rhythm, calm and fair,
As bonds of friendship deepen, wild and free.

Conversations flow, with diversions grand,
From Navy tales to life's achievements bright,
In Sheet Bend Bar, they gather, hand in hand,
Embracing memories, both day and night.

In the civilian world, their worth's oft judged,
By neighbors' shallow measures, plain and stark,
But NFVC's embrace won't be begrudged,
They find a supportive circle, deep and dark.

Lectures by experts, knowledge to impart,
From the medical fraternity's wise domain,
ECHS and PCDA, with open heart,
Bring wisdom and guidance, time and again.

Updates on ECHS, a conduit clear,
Exchange of information, value untold,
Their special bonds, to one another dear,
Create kinship anew, as days unfold.

For blood is thicker than the water's crest,
Fond memories of Navy days gone by,
Through reunions, their spirits are caressed,
Their energy rejuvenates, reaching a high.

So let the Navy Foundation's flame endure,
In Visakhapatnam, where friendships gleam,
A haven for the brave, a love so pure,
Retirement's golden days, a cherished dream.

WELL VERSED

40,000 HOURS

By Lieutenant Commander Robin Tiwari

Over the majestic Indian Ocean,
where P-8I takes flight,
Safeguarding maritime boundaries,
soaring with all our might.
Wings spread wide, gliding through
boundless expanse,
Be it 40,000 ft in the sky or dipping down in
elegant stance.

With the aircraft's induction, the nation's
spirits soared,
It is 'Mission Assigned, Mission
Accomplished' every time P-8I roared.
40,000 hours of such operations in the air,
a tribute to the unit's dedication,
An adulation for P-8Is, with unwavering love
for the nation.

Through tempests and storms,
we navigate with skill,
Guided by expertise and a steadfast will.
Be it SARS, Vaccine Maitri or hunting subs in
the ocean,
The firepower onboard keeps the
enemy in commotion.

The sight of P-8I in the air always comforts
our force,
As an eye in the sky and the vision it beholds.

Multipurpose utility and sustenance
it does comprise,
Playing in the RF domain, providing
elements of surprise.

Traversing distant shores, undertaking
missions afar,
40,000 hours of safe flying, a unique
distinction star.
Yet beneath the glory lie countless
hours spent,
Maintenance, preflight, fighting skills,
with gusto and intent.

Safety being the central pelorus,
every SOP rehearsed,
For the trust in our brethren,
who work well versed,
We wear the responsibility
with valorous pride,
Being the gamechangers in the IOR,
taking our prominence in stride.

So here's to the P-8I, hero of the blue,
40,000 hours of flying,
a testament to continue.
It's just 10 years and we have tales to be told,
In the realm of azure skies,
our legacy stands proud to behold.

WELL VERSED

A BASTION OF VALOUR

By Lieutenant Commander Richard Johnson

In the realm where waves embrace the shore,
Where dreams set sail on oceans' roar,
Stands an emblem of valour, strong and free,
The Indian Naval Academy, a sight to see.

Upon the shores of Ezhimala it does stand,
A bastion of courage, across the land,
Where cadets aspire to touch the sky,
With every lesson learned, they fly high.

From all corners of the nation they arrive,
With hearts afire, determination alive,
In pristine whites, they march ahead,
Prepared to face the seas, the tears they shed.

Within these hallowed halls of grace,
Leaders are forged to take their place,
To protect the waters, defend the right,
With honour and duty, shining bright.

They learn the art of seamanship here,
Navigating through trials, with no fear,
Camping around the woods and valleys
Anchored in values that never wane,
The essence of honour shall always remain.

With the ocean's vastness as their domain,
They pledge to protect and never disdain,
Shielding the borders, guarding with pride,
Their courage and sacrifice side by side.

The Indian Naval Academy, a beacon so grand,
Instils in hearts love for ocean and sand,
In the waters they surge, with unity,
For they are the guardians of the sea.

Oh, let the winds carry this ode afar,
To honour the ones who bear the naval star,
In the annals of history, their names shall rest,
The heroes of the sea, the very best.

WELL VERSED

THE AGNIVEER ANTHEM

By Sub Lieutenant Ankit Kumar Giri



In the realm where waters endless sprawl,
A mighty force stands tall and raw,
With valour forged in waves they soar,
Indian Navy's Agniveer, its strength to draw.

Across the seas, their path they chart,
Protectors of our nation's heart,
Agniveer, ablaze with fiery might,
Guiding vessels through day and night.

Like the sun, their spirit ignites,
Burning bright in perilous fights,
From ship to ship, they stand united,
Courageous warriors, undivided.

In crimson dawns and azure skies,
The Agniveer's flame never dies,
With unwavering devotion they serve,
Defending shores with nerve and verve.

From coastal lines to boundless deep,
Their duty calls, their watch they keep,

Guardians of maritime domains,
Agniveer, bearing India's reins.

Through treacherous storms and tempests' rage,
They navigate, with skill and sage,
Unyielding, resolute and brave,
Agniveers' valour, the oceans crave.

In peaceful times or conflict's thrust,
They stand unwavering, a steadfast thrust,
Ready to defend, protect and shield,
With Agniveer, India's honour is sealed.

From distant lands to home's embrace,
Their presence is felt in every space,
Agniveers' wings, a shield unfurled,
They guard our nation, our precious world.

So let us hail their gallant stride,
Their sacrifices, their endless pride,
In the annals of history, they etch their name,
Indian Navy's Agniveer, forever aflame.

WELL VERSED MEMORIES

By Noopur Das

Memories are etched in my mind,
Of a life gone by, but one of a kind.
The good, the bad and the not so ugly,
Not faded one bit even today, I find.

Life in the NOFRAS,
The collective fun!
Running into friends,
You knew everyone!

The toddlers met up often,
Waddling safely in the park.
On merry-go-rounds, slides and swings,
For them life was a lark!

The kids went to Navy Children School,
And there was much to discuss,
For the moms who met in the morning,
At the stop for the school bus.

The kids loved it there,
A kinship they found.
At the movie theatre, pool, tennis courts,
Or some games around the ground.

Can't forget the coffee mornings,
Or the mess nights.
The formal dinner on ships,
Or with course mates in 'High Tide'.

Though we were never at a place for long,
And had the transfer pressure.
Going to Mumbai, Vizag, Cochin or Goa,
Will always be a treasure!

Even now after so many years,
The life we once lived,
Makes me smile often,
And cherish it as a gift!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Noopur Das is an army child and now a veteran naval wife. A forefront educator, she has been a teacher most of her life, most recently heading Daffodils, a preschool in Mumbai.

A WHITE TIGER PAR EXCELLENCE

By Rear Admiral Sushil Ramsay (Retd)



Born in Ambala City on 20 January 1936 in the family of Shri Roshan Lal Mehra and Mrs Shanti Mehra, Ashwani Kumar Mehra traversed over 87 years of his life's journey during which he was recognised as a man of good cheer, a friendly, helpful, humane person with a warm heart and great sense of humour.

Rise of the White Tiger

When he came of age, Sub-Lieutenant Ashwani Kumar Mehra joined the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy ex-10th JSW Course on 1 January 1958 in pursuit of his life's ambition to touch the skies. On joining the Flying Branch, he underwent extensive training and went on to hold every possible top-notch job a naval aviator could dream of. Most prominent among them were Senior Pilot INAS 310 and CO INAS 310, CO INAS 551, CO INAS 300, and Lieutenant Commander (Flying), INS Vikrant. To cap it all, during the President's Fleet Review in 1969, he was Squadron Commander of INAS 300, the White Tigers.

After his promotion to the rank of Commander, he was posted as Directing Staff at DSSC, Wellington, for three years. He was a popular figure among student officers as well as the faculty and a prominent member of the Staff College Armature Dramatics Society, or SCADS.

Sea commands

In addition to being a top-notch fighter pilot, he had a fair share of afloat appointments, beginning with INS Kuthar for watchkeeping duties and Commanding Officer of missile boat INS Chamak. Soon after his promotion to the rank of Captain, he was appointed Commanding Officer INS Arnala and Captain 32nd Patrol Vessels Squadron and continued as Commanding Officer INS Andaman and Captain 32nd Patrol Vessels Squadron from 26 May 1978 to 26 January 1980.

The INS Chilka story

I was appointed as the Supply Officer, INS Chilka. The commissioning team had assembled in Visakhapatnam at INS Circars II and used to shuttle between Vizag and Chilka to oversee the project. While on the one hand we were full of *josh* to take on the challenges that lay ahead, we were also apprehensive as the progress of civil works was woefully behind schedule. The biggest challenge was languishing construction work due to litigations involving civil contractors.

We received the news of Captain A K Mehra, VrC, appointed as Commanding Officer INS Circars II. He took over on 27 January 1980 at a time when Command Headquarters was pressurising us to shift to Chilka to speed up the

REMINISCENCES

"In end 1963, I went for the QFI course to Tambaram, where I was awarded the Chief of Air Staff's Trophy for 'Best in Flying'. I was then posted to 300 Squadron in early 1966, where I did my day and night Deck Landing Qualification (DLQ) sorties on Seahawks. In October 1971, I was at NHQ and was told to join INAS 300. I then learnt that others had also been recalled as the Squadron was short of experienced pilots. Vikrant, which had been under refit for nearly two years, was put to sea and her frontline squadrons re-embarked. Once 300 Squadron's strength was established at 15 pilots, we worked up off Chennai and Visakhapatnam and then proceeded to A&N Islands. On 2/3 December on passage towards East Pakistan, the aircraft were readied for battle. Our first strike was programmed for 1030 hrs and eight Seahawks were fully armed. The launch went off smoothly and all eight Seahawks got airborne with clockwork precision. During the first mission, only an ATC building could be damaged. Thereafter, Vikrant planned many missions to strike Chittagong and other ports. On a mission over Chittagong Port, I attacked a tanker berthed close to the oil storage tanks and soon after the run I took a photo of this vessel. When this was developed onboard, it showed the vessel was missed by a small margin. I was asked by Commander (Air) to proceed to Chittagong again. I selected only one bomb, to try later with the second. As luck would have it, the first bomb found the mark – I could make out from the yell from 'Duffy', my buddy from another aircraft accompanying me on the mission. Another Seahawk returning from another mission near Chittagong also saw the explosion and confirmed I had got a direct hit. This was the sortie that got me the Gallantry Award. In all, I flew nine missions; one to Cox's Bazar, one to Chalna/Mongla and the other seven to Chittagong."

works. So, immediately on taking over, he enthused us to shift to Chilka within a matter of weeks. In hindsight, that was indeed the turning point and we all began to work with great enthusiasm and zeal within existing constraints.

On taking over as CO, he hit the ground running. Under his vision, several unfinished construction works picked up pace and sanctions for essential services came in double quick time. Consequently, the largest basic training establishment of the Indian Navy was commissioned as INS Chilka within the short span of one year on 21 February 1981 by Shri Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, Governor of Orissa, in the presence of Admiral R L Pereira, CNS, and Vice Admiral M R Schunker, FOC-in-C, East.

This was his last and most magnificent milestone of his illustrious naval career. On the day of commissioning, while escorting the Governor to the Parade ground, Captain Mehra requested him to announce an annual grant of Rs 1 lakh for the welfare of sailors and civilian staff. Promptly, the Governor made a public announcement to that effect during his speech.



Vice Admiral H Johnson (Retd), seniormost naval aviator, remembers...

"I met Captain Ashwani Kumar Mehra shortly after he joined as a cadet since he was related to one of my course mates. Being very junior, he was always respectful but full of humour and cheer. On completion of his general service training, he opted for flying and qualified as a fighter pilot. He was posted to the Sea Land Squadron where he had a narrow escape when his aircraft ditched when he was flying as a co-pilot. The captain of the aircraft went down but Ashwani was rescued by some fishermen. Subsequently he was assigned to the Alizes and after requisite experience he qualified on deck. His first love, though, was to join the Fighter Squadron flying Seahawks. To my knowledge, he was the only Indian naval pilot who was both Seahawk and Alize qualified on deck. He was Senior Pilot in INAS 300 during the 1971 War; he carried out numerous successful sorties against shore targets and was awarded the Vir Chakra. Captain Mehra was no less effective in non-flying general service assignments. Undoubtedly, his crowning glory in a shore job was the commissioning of INS Chilka in the record time of just one year. Though he was certainly destined for higher ranks in the Navy, he opted for premature retirement and we lost a very fine officer and leader."

While seeing him off, the Captain enquired how the matter should be taken forward. The Governor suggested a meeting with the Chief Secretary. Unfortunately, the matter ended there as the bureaucracy overruled the Governor.

Even after commissioning, many important plans were still in the works. One major issue was stoppage of super-fast trains (such as Madras Mail, Coromandel Express and Konark Express) and attachment of additional railway bogies at the nearest railway station, Balugaon, for arrival and dispersal of under-training sailors and all naval personnel. I had prepared a Statement of Case for these and had planned to accompany the Captain for a personal meeting with the Divisional Railway Manager of South Eastern Railways in Calcutta.

At the eleventh hour, Captain Mehra could not go for some unavoidable reasons. So, he asked me to proceed alone and present the case. It was

a tall order for a Lieutenant Commander to meet such a senior official to pursue such a project! Other essential services, such as State Bank of India, post office, contracts/supply for fresh and dry provisions, kitting-up of under-trainee sailors and ship's company, naval stores, fuel, oil and lubricants and canteen stores, were all established well in time.

The last part of the project was the Wardroom Mess, which too was inaugurated by Vice Admiral M K Roy, C-in-C East, before I left for DSSC for my Staff Course.

End of innings

On completion of an illustrious 24-year career, he proceeded on premature retirement on 16 July 1982 and joined the Merchant Navy for several years to pursue his passion to be at sea.

Interestingly, all through his naval career, he had remained a happy bachelor. But he decided

Commodore Medioma 'Mike' Bhada (Retd), remembers...

"I have wonderful memories of my association with my friend and senior buddy, Shoni Mehra, a true officer and gentleman. During one of our embarkations onboard Vikrant with Captain Jal Cursetjee in Command, Shoni was in 310 flying the Alize and I was in 300 flying the Seahawk. For some reason, Shoni had not earned his Watchkeeping Certificate and he requested his friend Ahluwalia, the ship's NO, to get him permission from the Captain to keep watches after the day's flying, to enable him to get his ticket. Captain Cursetjee agreed and Shoni started keeping watches at sea. I then made the same request, which was also approved. When the squadrons disembarked, Captain Cursetjee signed both our Watchkeeping Certificates at the bar in the wardroom.

I was one of the fortunate ones who took along a typewriter for my Staff Course. Fortunately, my wife Ruby had done her course at Davar's Institute and was quite good at typing – a great help in the exercises. Shoni was a DS when I did my course. In one of my exercises, he wrote, 'Please congratulate your wife Ruby for her excellent Minor SDs.' Great sense of humour! It is sad that we could not meet up with him in his last few years of ill-health. Rest in peace, dear friend."

to get married when he was 47 years young! In 1983, when I was Commander (S) Angre, he came to our third-floor flat in 'B' Block one fine evening. When my wife Shirley requested him to sit down and have a cup of tea, he insisted she first come down. Shirley went down with him, where he sheepishly introduced her to Sarla, his newly wedded wife. Shirley was most pleasantly surprised and escorted the very shy bride upstairs.

Adieu, my Captain

It was indeed an honour that on 30 September 2023, I was closely associated with INS India to arrange a funeral with full military honours for Late Captain A K Mehra, VrC. In addition, I was the chief mourner at his last journey at the solemn parade.

Adieu, my Captain; rest in eternal peace!

TRIBUTE

ROLLY LEWIN, AS I KNEW HIM

By Commodore Ravi Sharma (Retd)

The message from Navy Foundation, Delhi Charter, routinely said: "With profound grief and sorrow we deeply regret to inform passing away of Commodore Roland Derek Lewin; Age: 85 years...." For those of us who knew him well, it was sad and disturbing though 'Rolly', as he was popularly known, had been keeping unwell for five years and more since he suffered a stroke.

Rolly was a year senior to me being from the 12th Course of NDA to my 14th. As we were from different Squadrons, I didn't know him then. Our acquaintance came about when we were posted as Divisional Officers at NDA in 1964-65. Rolly had just got married and I was a bachelor, but the naval community was small and close and we stuck together at social functions and wherever else.

I really got to know him well when we became shipmates on the old INS Trishul in 1967-68. We had just completed our respective specialisations and Rolly was appointed the Navigation Officer and I the Communications Officer of the frigate. We spent most of the day together on the Bridge and got along with each other splendidly. Rolly had a good appetite and the wardroom steward was instructed to bring up cheese and ham sandwiches and cocktail sausages with coffee every hour. I am a vegetarian but I must confess Rolly corrupted me to savour chopped ham and a piece of

sausage now and then! With Bunnay Suri followed by Jayanto Roy Chowdhry as the Gunner and Gulu Kumar the Torpedo and Anti-Submarine Expert, we combined to form a well-knit, proficient operational team that never let the ship or the Captain down. Rolly and I shared a love for music; in our spare time, we had songs like *Hey Jude* and *Black is black* blasting at full volume. Staid people like the Electrical Officer and President Wardroom Committee opted to stay out of the wardroom and have meals in their cabins at least one deck away!

Following Trishul, Rolly and I were together in Cochin at ND and Signal Schools, respectively, as Chief Instructors. For exercises, we were often called upon to assist Commanding Officer Venduruthy on his operational staff. I have elsewhere described how an exercise went hilariously wrong. Briefly, two units of the Cochin force that were to rendezvous at a position designated as RR (Romeo Romeo) could never meet throughout the exercise due to an encoding error in transmitting the RR coordinates. This resulted in the Bombay Fleet carrying out its task of attacking Cochin successfully, with the defending ships wasting their time desperately searching for Romeo Romeo. The morning after the debrief where the mystery of the elusive RR was solved,



Commodore R S Malia, CO Venduruthy, Rolly and I were at a basketball match. Commodore Malia came to the two of us and said, "You know, the rendezvous incident reminded me of Shakespeare's play 'Julius Caesar' where Juliet goes around searching for her lover, muttering, 'Romeo Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?'" All of us burst out laughing. Later, we discovered that Commodore Malia was an MA in English, so his remarks were probably not out of ignorance but deliberate to make us laugh.

After Cochin, we went our separate ways but were brought together for about a month on the team at NHQ looking into the Mysore mutiny. I was married by then and we were put up in Kota House along with the Lewins. That allowed Akhila and Marcia to get to know each other.

There would be a long gap before we could meet again. I was on the East Coast while Rolly was more on the West. Then, I went to Singapore and

our next and last meeting was in March 1988 when I came on leave to Delhi. Rolly was Director Naval Operations (DNO). I visited him in his office in the War Room. We talked about the good old days for a while before I came away.

Soon after, both of us retired. Looking at Rolly's appointments, I see that he commanded two frontline ships, Sindhudurg and Udaygiri; he was Fleet Operations Officer, Western Fleet; DNO; Chief Instructor (Navy) at Staff College, Wellington; and had graduated from the National Defence College, New Delhi.

He settled down in Bangalore and I, in Delhi. In 2017, Akhila and I went to Coorg and spent a couple of days in Bangalore. I spoke on the phone to Rolly who sounded low. He told me he was not keeping well as he had recently had a stroke. Time and space did not permit me to visit him. Now, I wish I had walked that extra mile.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Commodore R N Sharma was commissioned on 1 January 1960. He is a Communications and Electronic Warfare specialist and was Director Naval Signals in 1981-82. After serving as Squadron Signals Communications Officer on INS Trishul in 1968-69, he was the first Commanding Officer of the modernised ship in 1983-1985. His last naval appointment was Defence Adviser, Singapore (1985-1988), when he was also accredited to The Philippines.

TRIBUTE

TO JAKES SIR WITH LOVE

By Commodore Srikant B Kesnur (Retd)

The news of the sad demise of Vice Admiral P J Jacob, on 22 January 2023, invoked a strong sense of personal loss. The Admiral, fondly called 'Jakes' by friends and juniors, had retired, more than 20 years earlier, after a distinguished career that had seen him rise to become the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff. He was also part of the higher defence apparatus of the country for a few years after retirement. Much will be written on him by his contemporaries or those who knew him better. My association with him was limited to two separate phases of my – and his – life. The first was 34 years ago, on INS Ranvir, and the next over the past three years, in my capacity as a naval history maven. Therefore, I can't claim any close relationship but I daresay I was sufficiently acquainted with him to reminisce about a few issues.

I joined INS Ranvir in July 1987 within a few months of her arrival in India after commissioning. Consequently, most of the commissioning crew were still on board. We were three young sublieutenants sweating to earn our watch-keeping tickets and the officers and crew made sure we strained every nerve and sinew to get there. The business-like air, stiff stentorian atmosphere, particularly for the under-trainees, and the aura about SNF distinctiveness were still the dominant themes. It was good old-fashioned slogging and going through the grind – pushed, guided and goaded

by the ship's staff, all of whom were 'hotshots' in their field. There were also

many moments of fun and mirth. We had two skippers during our time, Captain (later Admiral and CNS) Madhvendra Singh (Madho) until December 1987 and Captain (later VAdm and VCNS) P J Jacob (Jakes) from December 1987 to July/August 1988, when we went for our next assignments. In December 1987, many among the first commission crew also changed; thus, we had a different set of officers and accompanying vibe along with the second commission.

I obtained my ticket in April 1988 but stayed on in the ship till July that year, thereby spending almost a year on board. While there are several wonderful memories of those formative times, I will make a brief mention of few. One was the contrasting management approaches of the two Captains. While Madho was thorough, knew his ship inside out and wanted to be in control of everything, Jakes believed in seeing the big picture and delegating everything else down the chain. Madho was a hard taskmaster; while being gentle and warm, he personally supervised every tiny detail. Jakes believed in letting the mid-level officers train the subalterns and in learning from the mistakes. Madho was classic Gunnery officer – starched dress, creased



uniform, tall and formidable, radiating an aura, evoking awe and intimidation in equal measure, leading from the front. Jakes was the cool Navigator – jovial, laid back, letting the team do its work. However, this did not imply that Jakes was casual or unconcerned about results. We continued doing well, be it in gunnery shoots or UNREP timings, hosting dignitaries or completing operational missions. Both the Captains were equally – and hugely – effective, but they exposed us to varied nuances and different styles of leadership.

Within a few days of Jakes taking over as the Commanding Officer, I was appointed as his Staff Officer (SO). Inwardly, I cursed. Not only had I no idea what the job entailed but I had just begun to get more comfortable on the ship. I believed in the dictum that one must keep maximum distance between oneself and any kind of brass (Cdr and above) and would much rather have 'chilled' in 'Studio 29' (Cabin 29) of the ship. But I need not have worried. Jakes smiled and disarmed me from the very first moment. His instructions were clear and his requirements few.

It was good to see him operate close hand. As SO I was asked to be around him by the EXO (Cdr Neilratan Tamhane) and while I was, largely, of no use to the Captain, I learnt a lot. Whether it was the requestmen and defaulters table or meeting senior officers, the close exposure helped to imbibe many good qualities. Possibly, Jakes himself believed that such exposure helps young officers, so he often had me accompany him even when I had nothing to do. These included many meetings at Fleet Office or at his relatives' place or an occasional pick up and

drop at the airport. The conversations were desultory; he was not at all didactic in approach, not wanting to teach (or preach) anything. It was simply talking about things all and sundry, about making me feel relaxed and easy. He would often ask innocuous things, like "Is my turnout okay?", just before entering Fleet Office. Sometimes, I would feel bold to say, "Sir, you probably needed a haircut", and he would laugh it off. I guess he just believed in making others around him comfortable.

The smile and laugh were not a pretence. He was nice in the most genuine sense of the term. He never spoke ill of anyone and would often say, "Madho has given me such a tight ship; I have no work to do." Such generosity about a predecessor is a rarity. He forgave mistakes easily and made sure that subordinates had a chance to make amends. I was to see this trait remain the same even in our recent acquaintance. He was always generous in praise of others and even where he differed with or didn't think highly of someone, he discussed them in a most gentle manner. I don't think I ever saw him angry, irritated or brusque.

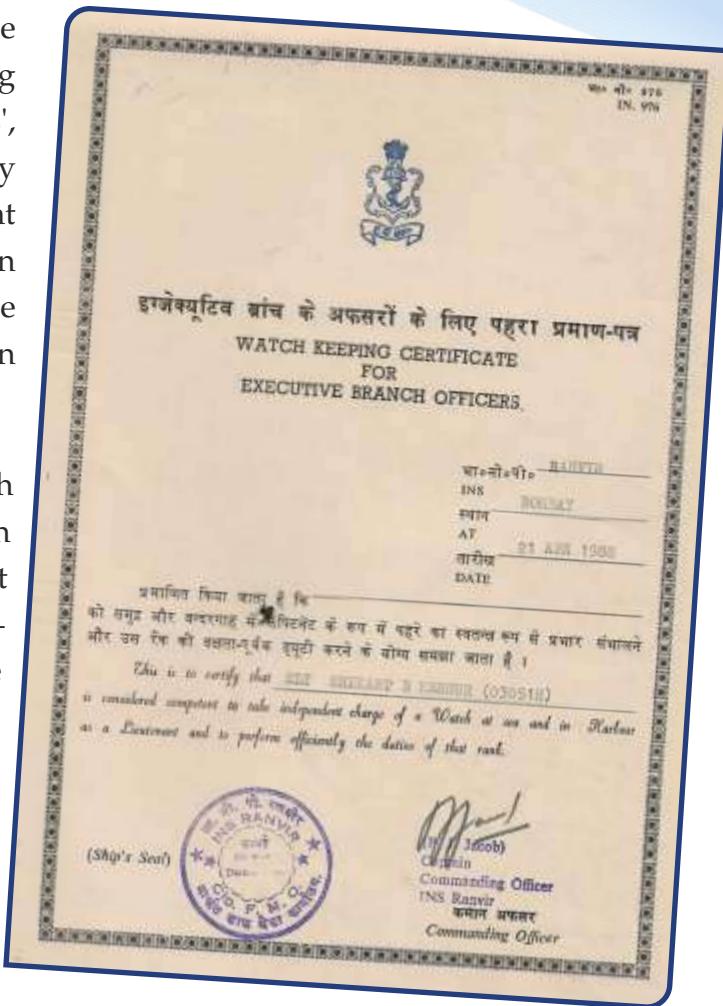
Only once, when I asked him about his 'modus operandi' and recipe for success in Command and I seemed earnest in my question, did he reply with equal seriousness. He said, "You must back and trust your team. Give them your full confidence but maintain a discreet oversight. And keep a track of the big picture. Eventually, only few things will matter and you must know what they are." It was a lesson I took and used as a mantra for my Command tenures too. At the same time, Jakes could be extremely observant about small issues. Once, when I

mentioned in a wardroom function that trainee officers don't get the 'proper' ship's crest during farewells or even the canteen 'complimentaries', he instructed the PMC to make necessary corrections. And he made it a point to be present for a long time during our stripe-wetting on promotion to Lieutenants and gave a nice speech, at my farewell, a few days later, in July 1988.

As was the manner in the Navy at that time with no Internet, email or social media, we lost touch when we moved to our next assignments. I met him, very briefly, a couple of times in between – once on INS Ganga in 1993 when he was the Eastern Fleet Commander and sometime in 2003 at Navy House in Mumbai during a dinner reception. Still, it was good to catch up with him and exchange notes. And he was just his usual self – smiling, witty, amiable and encouraging.

It was about three years ago that we reconnected again and this time our interactions were far more substantive. One fine day, I was surprised to receive a call from him and in his usual affable manner, he began, "Kesnur, I hope you have not forgotten your old Commanding Officer?" "How can I, sir" I replied, "you made my life miserable on Ranvir as your Staff Officer." And there was the familiar loud laughter from the other end. He had been reading my naval history-related articles on common forums and expressed delight at my passion along with words of encouragement and advice. That day we spoke for long, on many subjects Navy and life.

Thereafter, we stayed in touch, often talking on the phone and corresponding on WhatsApp. It, therefore, seemed natural to approach him to be



a panellist for a discussion on the 1971 War that we were hosting along with the Nehru Centre London. We were focusing on the operations in the Bay of Bengal with Vikrant as the centrepiece. He had been part of the operations as the second Direction Officer (D2) on board the flattop and, when requested, he readily agreed. Both he and RAdm S K (Gigi) Gupta were not just marvellous as panellists, essaying their part effortlessly, but also very patient with us during the rehearsals and the runup with our many demands. At the end of it, my cohost Amish Tripathi, Director of Nehru Centre London and celebrated author, confessed he had been completely charmed and impressed by his guests and awed by their humility despite their stupendous achievements.

Our conversations continued and he always had a very gracious way of conveying his views. He followed everything I shared with him. His last acknowledgement related to a New Year message I sent on 30 December 2022. I had determined to visit him during my next trip to Bengaluru. The short message bearing the sad news of his passing on the morning of 22 January put paid to that resolve. I must remain grateful, though, that I got the opportunity to reconnect with him.

Goodbye, Jakes sir. Go gently as was your wont in life. You will be remembered with great fondness and affection. I learnt much from you. And I will always cherish your signature on my watchkeeping ticket.

PS: Life has its share of surprises. I felt bad about not getting to attend his funeral in Bengaluru. In May 2023, while looking for the grave of Mrs Phyllis Pereira in the New Protestant Hosur Cemetery, I chanced upon the tombstone of Vice Admiral Jacob. I thanked God for this chance encounter and offered my respectful remembrance to my late boss.

Author's note : This obituary was written on 24 January 2023 in immediate response to the event and may be read accordingly.

OBITUARIES

RANK	NAME	NOK	DoD	CONTACT DETAILS
Lt Cdr	Santosh K Patro	Mrs Shibani Bala Patro (Wife)	20 Jun 22	Nehru Bazar, VPO Paralakhemund, Dist Gajapati Odisha 761200 Mob: 9480633032, 9967817107
Cdr	K Satish Shankar	Mrs Shandya Iyer (Wife)	14 Jul 22	8A, Jayanti Nagar, Main Road, Nanganal, Chennai Tamil Nadu 600061 Mob: 9246679592
Capt	Iwan K Joseph	Mrs Molly Mathew (Wife), Ms Anushka I Joseph (Daughter), Mr Allan I Joseph (Son)	18 Jul 22	Mrs Molly Mathew, 8637 SW 14th ST Pembroke Pines, Florida 33025 Email: moljoe76@yahoo.com Mob: +91-9543191824
Cmde	Sanjay Nirmal	Mrs Ritu Nirmal (Wife)	22 Sep 22	H 802, KDP Ground, Savanna, Rajnagar Extension, Near Gol Chakkar, Gaziabad UP 201017, Mob:9990529256
Cdr	Vinod Kumar Gawri	Mrs Nishi Gawri (Wife), Ms Divya Gawri (Daughter)	07 Sep 22	Mrs Nishi Gawri, 408 Athens, Prestige Acropolis, 20 Hosur Road, Next to Forum Mall, Bengaluru 560029 Email: nishigawri30@gmail.com Mob: +91-9008726522
Cmde	Rajaratnam Venkatesh	Mrs Premlata Venkatesh (Wife), Mr Vishnu Pravin Venkatesh & Mr Vijay Prashant Venkatesh (Sons)	11 Sep 22	Mr Vijay Prashant Venkatesh, 4269 Rexford Dr, Bethlehem, PA 18020 Email: vvenkatesh504@gmail.com Mob: +91-9082470898
Cdr	Mahesh Nagesh Nayak	Mrs Mina Nayak (Wife), Ms Malvika Nayak (Daughter), Mr Om Nayak (Son)	17 Oct 22	Mrs Mina Nayak, Anchorage, Santosh Nagar 2nd Cross, Opp Rajarajeshwari Temple Kuttar Padav, Munnar Grama, Mangaluru 575017 Email: mina.nayak099@gmail.com Mob: +91-8792709376
Surg Capt	Raveesh Kumar	Mrs Ruhi Gautam (Wife)	24 Oct 22	P-59, Anuj Vihar, Near Shankar Vihar, Delhi 110010, Mob: 9495748991
Cdr	Vinay Singh Thapa	Lt Col Pawan Thapa and Mr Prateek Thapa (Sons)	25 Nov 22	Lt Col Pawan Thapa, A-205, Aman Luxury Apartments, Aman Vihar, Sahastradhara Road, Dehradun 248001 Email: pawanthapa1981@gmail.com Mob: +91-7409234393
Lt Cdr	Vibin Dev	Mrs Baby T (Mother)	08 Nov 22	Kodakatt Vettilayil House, VPO Thaikkad, Desom Thrissur, Kerala, Mob: 9633361242
Cdr	Rajnish	Mrs Rekha Rajnish (Wife), Mr Vineet Kumar & Mr Vishal Kumar (Sons)	26 Nov 22	Mrs Rekha Rajnish, L-11, Sector-25, Noida 201301 Email: crajnish@hotmail.com/ vishalkmr@hotmail.com, Mob: 00971527408888

RANK	NAME	NOK	DoD	CONTACT DETAILS
Lt	Aayush Naithani	Mr Sudhir Kumar (Father)	27 Dec 22	Lane No 18, Rajeshwar Nagar Phase 2, Gujrara Mansingh, Canara Bank Sahastradhara Road, Dehradun Uttarakhand 248001 Mob: 6395928503
Lt Cdr	Jagdish Chandra Chaube	Mrs Keshabi Chaube (Wife), Mr Dhirendra & Mr Sushil (Sons), Ms Manju & Ms Bharati (Daughters)	30 Dec 22	Mrs Keshabi Chaube, M-118, Jalvayu Vihar, Sector-25, Noida 201301 Email: dhirendrac@gmail.com Mob: +91-9810280788/ 9212928188
Cmde	Atul Kumar Sinha	Mrs Lovely Sinha (Wife), Lt Cdr Abhijeet Sinha (Son)	18 Jan 23	Mrs Lovely Sinha, Villa No. 25 B, Jalvayu Villas Society, Jai Kisan Club Road, Opp. Airway Public School, Zuari Nagar, Goa, 403726 Email :abhijeetrulz@gmail.com Mob: +91-7841037780
V Adm	PJ Jacob	Mrs Salga Jacob (Wife), Mr Vivek Jacob & Mr Deepak Jacob (Sons)	22 Jan 23	Mrs Salga Jacob, 99 Lake Shore Home, Kai Konder Halli, Opp. Sarjapur Road, Carmelaram, Bengaluru 560035 Mob: +91-98455114624
Capt	Manjit Singh Gill	Mrs Satpal Kaur Gill (Wife), Captain (IN) Mahip Singh Gill (Son), Ms Tanvir Kaur Gill (Daughter)	26 Jan 23	Mrs Satpal Kaur Gill, F404, Jalvayu Vihar, Sector A, Hiranandani Gardens, Powai, Mumbai 400076 Email: mahip552@gmail.com Mob: +91-9585975054
Cdr	Bipin Bihari Ambastha	Gp Capt Ashish Ambastha (Retd) (Son)	28 Jan 23	Gp Capt Ashish Ambastha (Retd), SAIRAM' - House No. 79, 13th B Main, HAL 2nd Stage, Doopanahalli, Indiranagar Bangalore 560008 Email: ash_amby@yahoo.co.in Mob: +91-9844122592
Lt Cdr	Raj Pal Sawhney	Mrs Rajni Sawhney (Wife), Mr Rajnish Sawhney (Son)	10 Feb 23	Mrs Rajni Sawhney, C 1102, Exotica Elegance, Ahinsa Khand – II, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad 201014 Email: mansawhney@gmail.com Mob: +91-8447146424
Cdr	Ravindra Prabhakar Kulkarni	Mrs Rashmi Kulkarni (Wife), Ms Niketa Kulkarni (Daughter), Lt Cdr Soumitra Kulkarni (Son)	12 Feb 23	Mrs Rashmi Kulkarni, Flat No. 104, Harmony Homes, Sharda Colony, Kranti Nagar Pimple Nilakh, Pune 411027 Email : rashmikul06@gmail.com Mob: 7838753337
Capt	PS Virdi	Mrs Taruna Virdi (Wife), Ms Mehar (Daughter), Mr Eshaan (Son)	14 Feb 23	Mrs Taruna Virdi, C-103, Mohindin's Grandeur Apartments, Near Vishal Mega Mart, Dabolim, Goa 403711 Mob: 9168187755
Cmde	Phool Kumar Puri	Mrs Joji Puri (Wife), Mr Bharat Puri & Mr Hemant Puri (Sons)	25 Feb 23	Mrs Joji Puri, A-503, Jalvayu Vihar, Near SM Shetty School, Hiranandani Gardens, Powai, Mumbai 400076 Email: jojipuri41@gmail.com Mob: +91-9769291221

RANK	NAME	NOK	DoD	CONTACT DETAILS
Cdr	Kashmir Singh	Ms Simrandeep Bhullar (Daughter), Mr Harmandeep Singh Bhullar (Son)	22 Mar 23	Ms Simrandeep Bhullar, 115-Phase-1, Urban State, Jalandhar 144022 Email: simran.bhullar@gmail.com/ harman.bhullar@gmail.com, Mob: +91-6239947827 (Daughter) 360613655 & 9876730511 (Son)
Cdr (SG)	Vallath Divakaran	Mr VK Jayaprakash (Brother) & Mr Vinay Prakash C	26 Mar 23	Mr VK Jayaprakash, Sree Vihar, Post Office Junction, Chittur PG 678101 Email: jpvallath@gmail.com Mob: +91-9495089737
Cdr	CK Mahesh	Mrs M Geeta Chavan (Wife)	17 Mar 23	House No 219, DS Max Solitaire Apartment, Hormavu Agara, Bengaluru Karnataka 560043 Mob: 99202404731/8619256980
Lt	Surya Kanta	Mr Uma Shankar (Father)	19 Apr 23	GS Bhawan, Shakandev Nagar, PO Barbigha, Dist- Sheikhpura Bihar 811101 Mob: 9905018153
Cdr	Surjit Singh Pallha	Mrs Gurmel Kaur Pallha (Wife), Mrs Harkirt Kaur (Daughter), Wg Cdr G S Pallha (Son)	24 Apr 23	Mrs Gurmel Kaur Pallha, 3A 605, AWHO Gurjinder Vihar, Pocket P-5, Greater Noida 201310 Email: gspallha@gmail.com Mob: +91-9582461579/ 9695382012
Cmde	Sarabjeet Singh Puar	Mrs Kawal Puar (Wife), Mr Nirbhik Singh Puar & Mr Prabal Singh Puar (Sons)	30 Apr 23	Mrs Kawal Puar, Flat No. 351, Air Force Naval Officer's Enclave (AFNOE), Plot No. 11, Sector-7, Dwarka, Delhi 110075 Mob: +91-8743000351
Capt	V R Ramanathan	Mrs R M Valliammai (Wife), Mr R Saravana (Son)	11 May 23	Mrs R M Valliammai, G-006, Krishna Dwellington, Devi Nagar Main Road, LG Halli, Bangalore 560094 Email: manasafoods@gmail.com Mob: +91-9243494978
Surg Cdr	Sheshdev Mishra	Mrs Sunanda Dutta (Daughter)	28 May 23	Mrs Sunanda Dutta, 7 Row House, Killa Gaothan, Sea Coast CHS, Near NRI Police Station, Phase 1, Navi Mumbai (Belapur)-400614 Email: sumi0401@rediffmail.com Mob: +91-7042346180
Cmde	Krishnaswami Subramanian	Mr Sankar Subramanian & Mr Krishnan Subramanian (Sons), Ms Sita Nath (Daughter)	05 Jun 23	Mr Sankar Subramanian, 6 Highland Avenue, Highett, VIC 3190, Australia Email: sub@shrub.net.au Mob: +61 416 241 296
Lt Cdr	Chandra Shekhar Joshi	Mrs Poonam Joshi (Wife), Mr Anirudh Joshi (Son)	13 Jun 23	Mrs Poonam Joshi, R-4/48, Sahara City Homes, IIM Road, Lucknow 226020 Email: poonam_joshi82@yahoo.com Mob: +91-9792923639

RANK	NAME	NOK	DoD	CONTACT DETAILS
Cdr	Vickram Arvind Inamdar	Mrs Vandana Vickram Inamdar (Wife), Ms Vedika Vickram Inamdar (Daughter)	15 Jun 23	Mrs Vandana Vickram Inamdar, 506, Lantana Nahar Amrit Shakti, Chandivali Farm Road, Andheri (E), Mumbai 400072 Email: vandana.inamdar@gmail.com ivedika@gmail.com Mob: +91-9930012021/ 8879541904
Cdr	Muppavarapu Ramesh	Mrs Muppavarapu Padma (Wife), Ms Muppavarapu Vydehi (Daughter)	15 Jun 23	Mrs Muppavarapu Padma, Plot No. 12, Tirumala Enclave, Trimulgherry, Secunderabad 500015 Email: padma.vedanbathla@gmail.com Mob: +91-9885363511
Cdr	Sahil Sagoch	Mrs Shweta Sagoch	16 Jun 23	HNO 73, Sagoch Niwas, Lane NO 1, Sector B1, Post Laxmipuram Jammu 181123/ Alternate: E3/4, Sector E, Dolphin Hill Visakhapatnam 530008 Mob: 7063930515/9446493111
Lt Cdr	Vinod Kumar Mehta	Mrs Kusum Mehta (Wife), Mrs Bhavna Arora & Mrs Poornima Mehta Gnanapragasam (Daughters)	27 Jun 23	Mrs Kusum Mehta, J 19, Sector 25, Jalvayu Vihar, Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida 201301 Email: awskusum2014@gmail.com Mob: +91-9811036995
Capt	Deepak Sahu	Mrs Nandita Sahu (wife), Ms Mona Sahu & Lisa Sahu (daughters)	16 Jul 23	Mrs Nandita Sahu, GR L, Pawan Midway Residency, Sheela Nagar, Visakhapatnam 530012 Email : tellnandita@gmail.com Mob: +91-7702107788
Cdr	Krishna Pillai Kesava Das	Mr Keshav Ram Shanker Das & Mr Shyam Shanker Das (Sons)	17 Jul 23	Mr Keshav Ram Shanker Das, 16, Massey Street, Ascot QLD, Australia 4007 Email: cadogan7@bigpond.com Mob: +61407639094
RAdm	Baldev Raj Taneja	Mrs Sunita Taneja (Wife), Mr Archit Taneja (Son), Ms Rachita Taneja (Daughter)	24 Jul 23	Mrs Sunita Taneja, 4041, Tower 4, ATS Kokoon, Sector 109, Onkar Road, Gurgaon Mob: +91-9311089769/ 9990006614
Capt	Mohan Kutty	Ms Varuni Mohan	30 Jul 23	Ms Varuni Mohan, Flat G-E, Cassia Court, 91/5, Coles Road, Frazer Town, Bengaluru 560005 Email: varunimohan@gmail.com Mob: +91-9845167660
Capt	S K Moorthy	Mrs Thangamani Moorthy (Wife), Dr Purnima Aiyer, Dr Sujata Aiyer & Mrs Chitra Aiyer (Daughters)	07 Aug 23	Mrs Thangamani Moorthy, 402, Suman Tower, Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri (W), Mumbai 400053 Email: kmurti47@gmail.com Mob: +91-9004225013
Lt Cdr	Lal Bahadur Singh Shakya	Mrs Suman Shakya (Wife), Mr Ashish Shakya (Son), Ms Akanksha Shakya (Daughter)	22 Aug 23	Mrs Suman Shakya, B-703, Neel Empire, Plot No. 3A/4, Sector-25, Nerul, Navi Mumbai, Thane 400706 Email: shakya.sumanin@gmail.com Mob: +91-9869073395

RANK	NAME	NOK	DoD	CONTACT DETAILS
Cdr	Kailas Bihari Kar	Mrs Anita Kar (wife), Cdr Abhishek Kar (son), Mrs Shweta Kar (daughter)	27 Aug 23	Mrs Anita Kar, H No. N2/23, IRC Village, PO/PS – Nayapalli, Dist. Khordha, Bhubaneswar 751015 Email: abhiabk123@gmail.com Mob: +91-8943311103
Cdr	Bal Krishna Jayaswal	Mrs Krishna Jayaswal (Wife), Mrs Smita Kumar, Mrs Shuchita Sirsikar and Mrs Shveta Rattani (Daughters)	11 Sep 23	Mrs Krishna Jayaswal, C-58, Sector 2, Defence Colony, Dehradun 248012 Email: rattani2001@yahoo.co.in Mob: +91-8057695524
Cdr	Prem Kumar Banga	Mrs Preeti Banga (Wife), Mr Avinash Banga (Son), Ms Reetika Sapra (Daughter)	12 Sep 23	Mrs Preeti Banga, L-206, Sector 25, Jalvayu Vihar Phase II, Noida 201301 Email: preetibanga93@gmail.com/ avinash.banga@gmail.com, Mob: +91-9910880509
Cdr	K V Ramachandran	Mrs Nalini Ramachandran (Wife), Mrs Chitra Ramachandran & Mrs Revathy Ramachandran (Daughters)	15 Sep 23	Mrs Nalini Ramachandran, #164, Ferns Habitat, 7th Main, Doddanakkundi, Bengaluru 560037 Email: ramachandran.nalini@gmail.com Mob: +91-9880041520
Cmde	John Philip Carneiro	Mrs Georgina Carneiro (Wife)	19 Sep 23	Mrs Georgina Carneiro, A-88, Jalvayu Vihar, Kammanahalli Main Road, BBMP, Bengaluru 560043 Email: irenecarneiro_5@hotmail.com Mob: +91-95915 92127 / 98860 28264
Cdr	Geja Singh Chatha	Mrs Narinder Kaur (Wife), RAdm Gurcharan Singh (Son)	28 Sep 23	Mrs Narinder Kaur, Q-349, Sector 21, Jalvayu Vihar, Noida, 201301 Email: happyguru76@gmail.com Mob: +91-9837413807/ 8826623388
Cdr	Chandra Shekhar Lohani	Mrs Daya Lohani (Wife), Mr Rohit Lohani & Mr Mohit Lohani (Sons)	07 Oct 23	Mrs Daya Lohani, G59, Sector 25, Jalvayu Vihar, Noida, Gautam Budhha Nagar (UP) 201301, Email: mohitlohani@hotmail.com Mob: 9811000010
Cdr	Mohammad Ameen Jan Mohammad	Mrs Mehrunnisa (Wife), Ms Shabnam Ameen, Ms Farheen Ameen & Ms Nasreen Ameen (Daughters), Mr Mohd Anees Ahmad (Son)	15 Oct 23	Mr Mehrunnisa, C/o Mohammad Ameen, Persoheya, Gilouli, Gonda Uttar Pradesh 271202 Email: aneesahmad1995@gmail.com Mob: 738777137

RANK	NAME	NOK	DoD	CONTACT DETAILS
Cdr-At-Arms	C G Anthony	Mr George Anthony (Son), Mrs Monisha Johnson (Daughter)	02 Nov 23	Mr George Anthony, A45, Jalvayu Vihar, Kalyan Nagar, Bengaluru 560043 Email: bgeorgeanthony@gmail.com Mob: +91-9740311338
V Adm	R S Sharma	Shalini Sharma (Daughter)	Nov 23	Email id: shalinisharma79@hotmail.com
Cdr	P N Tickoo	Mrs Veena Tickoo (Wife), Cdr Prabhat Tickoo (Son), Mrs Geeta Tickoo Shetty (Daughter)	03 Dec 23	Mrs Geeta Tickoo Mob: 9833124014
Surg Cdr	Suresh Bhalla	Mrs Anita (Wife), Ms Ruchika Kumar (Daughter), Mr Rohan Bhalla (Son)	13 Dec 23	Mrs Anita Bhalla, 78 Navjeevan Vihar 1st Floor, New Delhi 110017 Email: anita_bhalla@hotmail.com Mob: 9650720876

NAVY FOUNDATION

DELHI CHAPTER

29th Admiral R D Katari Memorial Lecture

The 29th Admiral R D Katari Memorial Lecture was held on 19 January 2023 at Field Marshal Manekshaw Centre, Delhi Cantonment. Professor K VijayRaghavan, FRS, former Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India & Chairperson for the Prime Minister's Science, Technology & Innovation Advisory Council, and currently the Emeritus Professor at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, delivered the lecture on a unique theme, 'Understanding Brain, Mind and Artificial Intelligence'. There was an unprecedented response from both the serving and veteran community who attended the lecture. The fascinating interactive session led to very well-informed and deeply enthusiastic discussions.

CNS Interaction with Retired Naval Officers and Reunion Lunch

The annual CNS Interaction with Retired Naval Officers and Reunion Lunch, held on 12 February 2023, was a grand event with many new initiatives on display for the benefit of veterans and their spouses. In his address, Admiral R Hari Kumar, CNS, lucidly apprised the veterans of the growth and development track of the Indian Navy. He also lauded the visionary role and contributions of veterans to the evolution of the Navy as a combat-ready, credible, cohesive and future-proof force. He encouraged all retired and retiring naval officers to take membership of the Navy Foundation (NF) and encourage newer

generations to join the ranks of the Service. Further, he formally released *Quarterdeck 2022*, the latest edition of the NF magazine.



Naval Medical Centre, Chanakya Bagh

The *bhoomi pujan* ceremony was conducted and foundation stone was laid for the Naval Medical Centre (NMC) at Chanakya Bagh by the CNS and Mrs Kala Hari Kumar, President NWWA, on 30 April 2023. The NMC will house an extension counter of the ECHS polyclinic in Shahdara with a dedicated ECHS dispensary. This will greatly benefit the veteran community who will be able to avail all ECHS facilities as well as OPD services under one roof.

All-woman car rally

An all-woman car rally with the slogan 'She's Unstoppable' and tagline 'Soar High' was held over 12 days from 14-25 February 2023, from the National War Memorial, New Delhi, to the War Memorial, Longewala (Rajasthan), and back. The participants drove through Jaipur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Longewala, Jodhpur and Udaipur prior to returning to Delhi, covering 2,300 km. The car rally was flagged off by CNS virtually

and Mrs Kala Hari Kumar. It aimed to celebrate 75 years of Independence; showcase the contribution of naval women officers; motivate women to join the Indian Navy; pay homage at Longewala War Memorial; interact with naval veterans and families enroute; and conduct NWWA outreach as part of NWWA Day celebrations.



30th GCM-AGM

The 30th Governing Council Meeting and Annual General Body Meeting (GCM-AGM) of the Navy Foundation (NF) was held on 18 June 2023 at Naval Officers' Mess Annexe, Kota House, under the chairmanship of CNS Admiral R Hari Kumar, President, NF. The meeting was attended by former CNS Admiral R K Dhowan, besides office bearers and representatives of all 17 NF chapters. Highlights of the decisions taken:

- Single-window helpdesk to be set up at NAVPEN, Mumbai.
- 18th NF chapter authorised in Nagpur

- 31st GCM - AGM to be held in Visakhapatnam under the aegis of the Regional Governing Council (East) in 2024
- CRSO shall visit every district where naval ESM are present to provide requisite support
- The teething issues in migration to SPARSH are being addressed by proactive steps
- All NF chapters may have their own Twitter/X handles
- NF is to evolve into a multifunctional entity to undertake activities towards facilitating employment opportunities for veterans.

AGM, Delhi Chapter, 2023

The Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of the NF, Delhi Chapter (NFDC), was held on 23 September 2023 at Naval Officers' Mess Annexe, Kota House. The deliberations were followed by a Fellowship Lunch.

Admiral R L Pereira Centennial Memorial Lecture

In line with the Centennial Memorial Lecture series to honour late Admiral R L Pereira, the last event will be held on 12 January 2023 at Dr D S Kothari Auditorium, DRDO Bhawan. Former CNS Admiral V S Shekhawat has kindly consented to deliver the lecture. CNS Admiral RHari Kumar has consented to be the Chief Guest.

GOA CHAPTER

AGM 2022

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2022 of the NF Goa Chapter was held at the Officer's Mess, INS Hansa, on 8 January 2023, after a gap of almost three years owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following new committee members were elected: RAdm Philipose



Pynumootil (Retd) as Hon. President; Cmde Jerald Gonnsalves (Retd) as Hon. Vice President; Capt Ravi Shankar Sinha (Retd) as Hon. Secy; and Cdr V Ranjit (Retd) as Hon. Treasurer.

AGM 2023

The AGM 2023 was held at the Naval Officers Institute on 27 August 2023. It was attended by two former Chiefs of Naval Staff as Patrons, 62 members and 32 ladies. The proceedings were followed by lunch.



HYDERABAD CHAPTER

Navy Day band concert

As part of the Navy Day celebrations, about 100 veterans were invited by RAdm V Rajasekhar, Director DMDE, for a concert at Navy House in December 2022 and were enthralled by the Navy Band. The performance was followed by high tea, during which Director DMDE interacted with the veterans and their ladies.

Wreath-laying on Navy Day

Cmde Sudheer Parakala (Retd), President NFHC, laid a wreath on behalf of the veterans at Veer Sainik Smarak on 4 December 2022. The ceremony was attended by senior officers of the Navy serving in various organisations in Hyderabad.



Veterans' get-together

A get together was organised at RSI, Secunderabad, on 19 March 2023,



which was attended by large number of veterans and their ladies. President NHFC briefed the members on various issues pertaining to ECHS and SPARSH. Col Ramesh, Director Sainik Welfare, was also invited to address the gathering. He emphasised upon the need for all ladies to have an identity card issued by the Zilla Sainik office. A book authored by Cmde Harsh Bhargav (Retd) was also released on the occasion, which was followed by lunch.

CNS visit

CNS Admiral R Hari Kumar visited Hyderabad on 24 March 2023 and met the veterans over lunch at the Navy House lawns. He briefed them on various measures being taken to ensure

that they are not put to any hardship related to ECHS and migration to Sparsh.



Visit of COP and CPS

Chief of Personnel (COP) VAdm Suraj Berry and Controller Personnel Services (CPS) VAdm K Swaminathan visited Hyderabad on 2 May 2023. A large section of the veteran community attended the Station Reception held in their honour at Navy House. COP and CPS gave a patient hearing to issues facing the veterans and promised to resolve them.

Visit of COS, HQENC

VAdm Sanjay Vatsayan, Chief of Staff (COS), HQENC, visited Hyderabad on 19 May 2023 and interacted with veterans at Navy House.

Farewell to Director DMDE

RAdm V Rajasekhar, Director DMDE, superannuated from service on 30 June 2023 and

was accorded a farewell by the office bearers of NFHC over tea.



AGM 2023

The AGM of the chapter was held on 16 July 2023 at Vivekananda Hall in CDM. Many members and families in attendance. After a 2-minute period of silence as a mark of respect for departed members, the accounts were passed for the previous financial year.

Thereafter, the President briefed members on the proceedings of the GCM-AGM of the NF held in New Delhi on 18 June 2023. Cdr R K Giri (Retd), a volunteer with ECHS for nearly a decade, addressed the members on issues pertaining to non-availability of medicines and passing of reimbursement claims. New members were introduced to the gathering. The bonhomie continued during the lunch that followed.

KERALA CHAPTER

Lunch hosted by HQSNC

A lunch was hosted by Headquarters Southern Naval Command (HQSNC) for NFKC members and their spouses at the Southern Naval Command Officers' Mess on 27 November 2022. The Chief of Staff Southern Naval Command, RAdm J Singh, briefed the veterans on the status, activities and modernisation plans of the Navy.

Navy Week 2022

Members of NFKC and their spouses were invited by HQSNC to participate in various activities of Navy Week. Invited members attended the band concert, the operational demonstration as well as the 'At Home' function held at Navy House on the occasion of Navy Day.

Veterans' Day wreath-laying

The year 2023 kicked off with the Veterans' Day wreath-laying ceremony at the War Memorial, Naval Base, Kochi, on 14 January 2023. VAdm M P Muralidharan (Retd), President of NFKC, laid a wreath on behalf of the veterans. This was followed by breakfast at Sailors' Home for all attendees.



Anubhavi

On 21 January 2023, Mrs Madhumati Hampiholi, President NWWA (SR), hosted a lunch for the wives of NFKC members and honorary members of NFKC at SNC Officers' Mess. The ladies were briefed on various aspects of NWWA, which was followed by lunch.

Annual NFKC Scholarship Awards

The annual NFKC Scholarship Awards were presented by VAdm M P Muralidharan (Retd) to two students each from the SRV Government Higher Secondary School and the Government Higher Secondary School for Girls, Ernakulam, in the presence of other NFKC management committee members and the principals, teachers and students of the two schools. Cheques of Rs 10,000 each were presented to the students selected based on the recommendations of the principals of the two schools.



Get-together in Fort Kochi

A 'beer and biryani' lunch get-together was organised for members and their spouses at the Coast Guard Officers' Mess in Fort Kochi on 26 February 2023. The proximity of the mess to the Kochi Channel offered members a close-up view of ships entering and leaving harbour.

Outreach activities

On 3 March 2023, members of the management committee of NFKC visited the Government Old-Age Home in Thevara and the Cottolengo Brothers' Home for the Differently Abled. VAdm M P Muralidharan, President NFKC, presented a dining table with four chairs with essentials and eatables to the Government Old-Age Home in Thevara and 12 ceiling fans with essentials and eatables to the Cottolengo Brothers' Home for the Differently Abled.



Overseas trip to Vietnam and Cambodia

NFKC arranged an eight-day overseas trip to Vietnam and Cambodia, through the Great India Tour Company, for members. Fourteen members of NFKC, accompanied by their spouses participated. The team of 29 departed Kochi on 18 March and returned to Kochi on 25 March, after a very enjoyable trip. Highlights included visits to Angkor Wat, the caves of Halong



Bay in Hanoi, the Ho Chi Minh mausoleum and Parliament House, shopping and sightseeing in Saigon, visit to the Cu Chi Tunnel area and the underground bunkers.

Trip to Kodaikanal

NFKC arranged a three-day trip to Kodaikanal in which 22 members, accompanied by their spouses, participated. The team of 45 departed Kochi on 24 May and returned on 26 May. They visited Moir Point, the highest point in Kodaikanal, the Pine Forest, Guna Cave, Pillar Rocks and Kodaikanal Lake.



Lunch at Eagles and Birdies

Members of NFKC along with their spouses got together for lunch at 'Eagles and Birdies' at the Naval Golf Club on 16 July. Thirty-four members with their spouses and four honorary members attended. Many of our inhouse singers entertained the gathering with melodious numbers.

AGM 2023

The AGM 2023 was held on 6 August 2023 at the Southern Naval Command Officers' Mess, Kochi, with 82 members in attendance. The meeting was chaired by VAdm M P Muralidharan, President NFKC. The annual report was presented by Hon. Secretary Cdr Benny Mathews (Retd).

Election of office bearers for 2023-24

The current management committee elected during the last AGM in August 2022 was advised to continue for 2023-24. As Secretary Cdr Benny Mathews (Retd) and Cdr M Ravindran (Retd), Chairman Outreach, had submitted their resignation, Cdr A C David and Cdr P M Unnikrishnan were nominated in their place, respectively. Also, in the place of Cdr D Reginald (Retd), Cdr N Jayakrishnan Nair (Retd) was nominated as the Chairman Communications and Webmaster. The management committee for 2023-24 is President V Adm MP Muralidharan (Retd); Vice President Cmde P Suresh (Retd); Secretary Cdr A C David (Retd); Treasurer Capt Sanjay Soni (Retd); Chairman Outreach Cdr P M Unnikrishnan (Retd); Chairman Entertainment Capt Paul Abraham (Retd); Chairman Log & Pension Capt Muralidhar Nair (Retd); Chairman Communications and Webmaster Cdr N Jayakrishnan Nair (Retd); and Chairman & Editor *Reef Knot* RAdm S Madhusudanan (Retd).

Reef Knot

Reef Knot, the annual publication of NFKC, was released on completion of the AGM proceedings, by President NFKC VAdm M P Muralidharan, along with the Chief Editor RAdm S Madhusudanan and Co-Editor Mrs Bindu Anand.



Lunch hosted by NFKC

VAdm and Mrs Hampiholi were the Chief Guests at the lunch hosted by NFKC at the SNC Officers' Mess after the AGM. Other invitees included Flag Officers, Commanding Officers and Senior Officers of the Command.



Independence Day

Members of NFKC with their spouses gathered at the NFKC office on 15 August 2023. President NFKC led the celebrations by hoisting the national flag, which was followed by singing of the national anthem. This was followed by a morning walk from the NFKC office to Birdies, the Golf Course annexe of NOI, and breakfast.



Onam celebration

The Onam celebration was held at the Naval Officers' Institute on 10 September 2023. Mrs Madhumati Hampiholi, President NWWA (SR), was the Chief Guest.



The entertainment programme included a humorous skit, the traditional *Thiruvathira* group dance, *Chenda Melam* and *Pulikali* and a *Vallamkali* song besides an Onam medley, a popular Malayalam duet and a Kannada group song. The programme was followed by the traditional *Ona Sadya*.



MUMBAI CHAPTER

20th Soman Memorial Lecture

The 20th Soman Memorial Lecture was held in Mulla Auditorium on 7 January 2023. Guest Speaker VAdm Girish Luthra (Retd), Former FOC-in-C (West), spoke on

'The Indo-Pacific and the New Intersectionality of Geopolitics & Geoeconomics'. Chief Guest VAdm A B Singh, FOC-in-C (W), spoke to the veterans and briefed them about the developments in the Navy.



Veterans' lunch

VAdm A B Singh, FOC-in-C (W), hosted a lunch for the veterans and their families of Maharashtra on 7 January 2023 in IMSC. The 'meet and greet' session was followed by lunch.

2nd Veterans' Day Parade

The 2nd Tri-Services Veterans' Day Parade was conducted on 8 January 2023 and was flagged off by Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari in the presence of all Flag Officers of the three services. About



700 veterans and families participated in the parade, which was led by three wheelchair-bound senior veterans and gallantry awardees. After the 4-km parade, the felicitation function was held inside the NCPA auditorium, followed by breakfast in the foyer. The parade was filmed by Ananth Mahadevan and its bytes shall be part of a docu-film being produced by Ashwin Gidwani from AGP World.

Veterans vs. C-in-C team Sailing Race

The second edition of the Veterans vs. C-in-C team Sailing Race was conducted in WTC Mumbai on 9 January 2023. The Veterans Team, led by Lt Cdr Farokh Tarapore, won the J-24



yachting race 3-0. After lunch, the guests were taken on a boat ride to witness the race.

Veterans vs. C-in-C XI cricket match

The third edition of Veterans vs. C-in-C XI cricket match was organised on the forenoon of 22 January 2023 in Kohli Stadium. The C-in-C team won by a handsome margin, beating the veterans by 114 runs.



Vikrant Memorial at Mantralaya

The Vikrant Memorial was unveiled at Mantralaya on 12 January 2023, where Cdr Vijay Vadhera (Retd), President NFMC, and Arjuna Awardee Lt Cdr Farokh Tarapore (Retd) were also invited. Cdr Vadhera presented NFMC mementos to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.



Sahara ladies and octogenarian get-together

A Sahara ladies and octogenarian get-together was held in IMSC on 22 January 2023, in which about 120 senior members of NFMC participated. The meet-and-greet was followed by a small karaoke session. After a sumptuous lunch, a session of games was conducted.

Sam No Varunah Car Rally



Four veterans were nominated for each of the two legs from Goa to Diu and Diu to Bhuj. In the later leg, Cdr Vijay Vadhera (Retd), President NFMC (the youngest veteran participant at 72), Cdr Rajinder Dutta (Retd) and Mrs Meena Dutta participated from 15-19 April 2023. Prior to that, the rally was flagged off by C-in-C at Kohli Stadium on 12 April 2023. During the visit to the Old-Age Home in Jamnagar, Cdr Vadhera presented a cheque of Rs 10,001 to the home's trustee. The WNC chapter of the rally was very well organised and much appreciated by Mrs Kala Hari Kumar, President NWWA, who received the team of 40 serving officers, sailors, NWWA members and veterans in Jamnagar. The participants visited Somnath, Dwarka, Kandla, Naliya, Koteshwar and Lakhpat prior to terminating the 2nd WNC leg in Bhuj.

AGM

NFMC's AGM was held on 25 June 2023 at IMSC and attended by 187 veterans and Sahara Ladies apart from 125 spouses. It commenced with a 2-minute period of silence as a tribute to the veteran members who had left for their heavenly abode. Cdr Rajinder Dutta (Retd) was renominated for a second term as Hon. Secy. Mementos were presented to the veterans who had turned octogenarians. Two veterans whose

articles appeared in *Quarterdeck* 2022, Cmde Srikant Kesnur and Cdr Rajinder Dutta, were awarded Rs 5,000 each as an incentive for others to emulate. After the AGM and lunch, games and a session of karaoke were held.



Screening of *Veterans of War*

The docu-film *Veterans of War* by acclaimed director Ananth Mahadevan was screened in the chamber auditorium of C-in-C West on 10 July 2023. The C-in-C along with PSOs, producer Ashwin Gidwani, director Ananth Mahadevan, Cdr Vijay Vadhera (Retd), President NFMC, and Lt Cdr Farokh Tarapore, Treasurer NFMC, were present at the show. Later, the C-in-C felicitated the producer and director.

Monsoon Musings

The Maritime History Society (MHS) conducted its Monsoon Musings-2 Lecture on 1 August 2023 in Asvini Auditorium. Cmde Srikant Kesnur (Retd) spoke on leadership lessons gleaned from Indian naval icon Adm R L Periera and other luminaries. The lecture was attended by a large number of veterans.



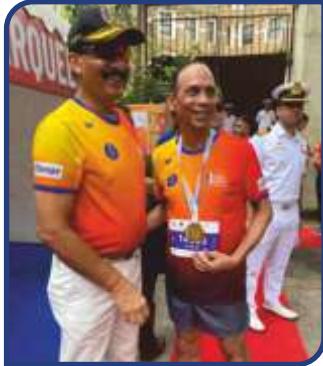
Felicitating octogenarians

Cdr Dinesh Kumar (Retd), committee member of NFMC in Colaba, presented the CNS Octogenarian Memento to Capt Shivdasani (Retd) at his residence in Churchgate on 1 August 2023; similarly, Cdr G C Rai (Retd), committee member in Kharghar, presented the CNS Octogenarian Memento to Lt Cdr H S Dhillon (Retd) on 9 September 2023 – pension is enhanced by 25 per cent upon crossing the milestone of 80 years.



Indian Navy Mumbai Heritage Run 2023

At the Indian Navy Mumbai Heritage Run 2023 conducted by WNC on 6 August 2023, NFMC member Cdr Dinesh Kumar (Retd) bagged the third position on the podium.



NMF seminar

The National Maritime Foundation (NMF) conducted the Italy-India Maritime Security Seminar at Asvini Auditorium on 12 August 2023, under the leadership of VAdm Pradeep Chauhan (Retd), Director-General, NMF. The event was attended by a large number of service officers and veterans.



Trip to INA

On FOC-in-C's suggestion, 17 NFMC members visited the Indian Naval Academy in Ezhimala from 15-18 September 2023. They relished their memorable visit to the training facilities of the Academy during the cadets' mid-term break.



NAGPUR CHAPTER

Formation of NFNC

The 30th NF Governing Council Meeting and Annual General Body Meeting (GCM-AGM) held in New Delhi on 18 June 2023 under the chairmanship of the Chief of the Naval Staff approved the 18th NF chapter in Nagpur. The decision was communicated to VAdm K O Thakare (Retd). A meeting to fill up forms for membership was held on 12 July 2023 at Hotel Majestic Manor, hosted by owner Cmde G S Kanwal (Retd). A second meeting was held on 15 August 2023 at Antar Bharti Ashram and was hosted by Cdr M M Hastak (Retd), who runs a charitable KG school and creche for underprivileged children there. The meeting decided upon the course of action to set up the Navy Foundation Nagpur Chapter (NFNC).

On 25 August, 21 veteran naval officers and two Sahara ladies met at Nagpur Army Officers' Mess and Institute (NAOMI) to formalise the setting up of NFNC. An ad hoc management committee with VAdm Thakare as President and four other members was constituted.

Engineers' Day Celebrations

VAdm Thakare, President NFNC, was invited as the chief guest for two Engineers' Day celebration functions in Nagpur. The first was at Suryodaya College of Engineering and Technology on 15 September 2023. The second was at the Nagpur local centre of The Institution of Engineers (India) on 4 October 2023 where President NFNC delivered a talk on the theme 'Engineering a Resilient Future: Building Stronger, Smarter, Safer'. Both occasions were utilised by President NFNC to spread awareness about the Indian Navy and encourage young students and engineers to join the service.



PUNE CHAPTER

Interaction with officers at NDA:
Hosted by VAdm Ajay Kochhar,
Commandant, National Defence
Academy



Wreath-laying at Seafarer's Memorial



Seminar on 'Strategic Challenges for India in the Changing Geopolitical Situations': Chief Guest & Keynote Speaker VAdm R B Pandit, C-in-C, Strategic Forces Command



Interaction with C-in-C West VAdm A B Singh, serving officers from the Navy, Army, Air Force and CDA (N)



Riverbank cleanup



Third Admiral Nadkarni Memorial Lecture



Inauguration of IMF Maritime Museum



Seminar on 'Present Challenges of Shipbuilding in India and Way Ahead':

Chief Guest & Keynote Speaker VAdm S N Ghormade, VCNS



AGM NFPC 2023: Cmde Malhotra (Retd)
nominated and handed over the reins to the new team after a successful tenure of 13 years as President. He was nominated as President Emeritus for his selfless service for 15 years.



Interaction with Sea Scouts & Guides: Chief Guest Mrs Shashi Tripathi, President NWWA (WR)



VISAKHAPATNAM CHAPTER

AGM 2022-23

A reunion-cum-AGM 2022 of NF Visakhapatnam Chapter was held on 20 November 2022 at INS Kalinga, Visakhapatnam. As the physical reunion of veterans and families could not be held for the past two years owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, this event was attended enthusiastically by a large number of veterans and families. Forty-one veterans of 105 members attended the meeting. In addition, 31 women veterans also attended.

The day commenced with paying homage at Shaurya Sthal at INS Karna. This was followed by demonstrations by the Marine Commandos. Thereafter, the veterans and families assembled at the INS Kalinga auditorium for the AGM. At the

outset, President NFVC VAdm V K Namballa (Retd) welcomed the veterans and cautioned them about the aftereffects of COVID-19 and advised them to be careful in crowded areas.

Hon. Secretary Cdr B L N Rao (Retd) presented his report. The highlights included the fact that

an oxygen concentrator was purchased from NFVC funds for the emergency use of veterans during COVID-19 times and that a meeting with PCDA (N) and NAVPEN was held on November 2021 to sort out anomalies in EPPOs, including non-receipt of ePPOs to veterans; corrections to ePPOs; date of demise of deceased veterans; disability pension not shown in ePPOs; and PPOs issued by Allahabad.

The audit of NFVC's account for 2021-22 was carried out by a reputed chartered accountant. The balance sheet was unanimously approved in the AGM, which was followed by discussions on general interest. After that, the election was held for the new management committee and the following were re-elected: VAdm V K Namballa (Retd) as President; RAdm T Sudhakar (Retd) as Vice President; and Cdr B L N Rao (Retd) as Hon. Secretary.



The vote of thanks was proposed by Vice President RAdm Sudhakar. On completion, the veterans and their families had lunch at the Station Mess of INS Kalinga.

COMMAND ACTIVITIES

EASTERN NAVAL COMMAND

High Tea on Navy Day

Veterans interacted with FOC-in-C East over High Tea during Navy Day celebrations at Navy House on 2 December 2022.



Sahara Milan & Navy Day Lunch

The Annual Sahara Ladies Milan and Navy Day Lunch was conducted on 14 December 2022 by NWWA (ER) in Visakhapatnam. Mrs Sarbani Dasgupta, President NWWA (ER), was the chief guest for the Milan, which was attended by over 100 Sahara ladies. Representatives from ECHS, INCS, SBI and the Naval Base ensured on-the-spot redressal of issues faced. The meeting concluded with fun games and a quiz.



Republic Day

Republic Day was conducted at INS Circars Parade Ground on 26 January 2023. A total of 30 veterans, including their spouses and families, attended the function.



They also interacted with FOC-in-C East over High Tea.

Sahara Milan

The Sahara Ladies Milan was conducted on 26 April 2023 by NWWA (ER). Mrs Sapna Pradhan, Sahara Group Coordinator, was the chief guest. The Sahara ladies interacted with NWWA members and the staff of CRSO, which looks after their welfare. There was also a session on Raja Yoga Meditation by the Prajapita Brahmakumaris of Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya.



Wreath-laying ceremony

On the 24th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, veterans participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Victory at Sea memorial on RK Beach, Visakhapatnam, on 26 July 2023.



Rajyoga meditation

On 26 April 2023, a Rajyoga meditation session for happy living was conducted by Brahmakumaris.

Swasth Nari, Sukhi Nari health camp

Swasth Nari, Sukhi Nari, a first-ever health awareness and check-up camp Sahara ladies was organised by NWWA (ER) with the help of CRSO, HQENC. The camp commenced with an awareness talk on women's health by Dr Ritika Bhanot, who emphasised upon the importance of routine health examinations for timely identification and treatment. This was followed by a talk on nutrition by dietitian Sitika Soni, who highlighted common ailments in women like osteoporosis, anaemia, diabetes, heart health and obesity.

Visit to Sahara homes

On 29 and 30 August 2023, Mrs Sandhya Pendharkar, President NWWA (ER), visited the Sahara homes at Nausena Bagh and 104 Area. This was her maiden visit after taking over as President. She interacted with the Sahara Ladies and reassured them of continued support from NWWA and the Navy.



COMMAND ACTIVITIES

SOUTHERN NAVAL COMMAND

Visit to INS Vikrant

To relive the erstwhile memories of INS Vikrant, a visit of naval veterans was organised on 14 January 2023 to the new aircraft carrier. Approximately 350 veterans and their families were conducted around the ship to see its key facets and features.



Anubhavi

The annual Anubhavi get-together in January 2023 saw the coming together of over 50 spouses of retired personnel, including 11 past Presidents of NWWA (SR). The 'Anubhavis' shared their memories and wisdom, inspiring the younger generation of naval spouses. The event included a vibrant cultural programme, followed by lunch.



AGM of NFKC

The Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of Navy Foundation Kerala Chapter (NFKC) was held in Kochi on 6 August 2023. Nearly 100 members of NFKC along with their spouses and officers of SNC attended the event. FOC-in-C

South VAdm M A Hampiholi interacted with the members, which was followed by lunch at SNC Officers' Mess.



Sahara

Held in October, the Sahara get-together for families of deceased personnel, hosted by Mrs Madhumati Hampiholi, President NWWA (SR), included a talk on financial prudence as well as info on pension and ECHS schemes with help desks set up to address grievances.



FOC-in-C (South) and senior officers also interacted with the families.

Periodic interactions

To address issues faced by naval veterans and Sahara ladies, regular interaction programmes are conducted by CRSO and Regimental State Units (RSUs) – Venduruthy, Zamorin, Dronacharya and NOIC (L&M) – at various districts in Kerala and the L&M Islands.



COMMAND ACTIVITIES

WESTERN NAVAL COMMAND

Sahara

NWWA (WR) held the annual Sahara Milan on 11 January 2023 at INS Tanaji, Mankhurd. Over 100 Sahara Ladies attended the event, which also featured help desks to address issues related to medical facilities, pensions, etc. Mrs. Charu Singh, President NWWA (WR), inaugurated Gharonda, a residential facility of 24 1BHK flats for Sahara families. VAdm Ajendra Bahadur Singh, FOC-in-C West, and other senior officers were also present at the event.



SGM and C-in-C interaction with NFPC

VAdm Dinesh Tripathi, FOC-in-C West, interacted with veterans of the Navy Foundation Pune Chapter (NFPC) at RSAMI, Pune, on 24 August 2023. He thanked them for their contributions and updated them about various ongoing operations, admin and HR activities, focus areas of the Navy and other initiatives concerning ESM affairs. He assured them of the full support of the Navy in resolving all issues related to SPARSH, ECHS and other matters concerning them. VAdm Ajay Kochhar, Commandant NDA, Cmde S Supradeepan, LOIC, NAVPEN, and Cdr Sravan Sekhar,

Command Welfare Officer, also attended the event as guests of honour. The interaction was preceded by a Special General Body Meeting (SGM) of NFPC to discuss and ratify its working rules.



8th Regional Governing Council Meeting

VAdm Tripathi, FOC-in-C (W), chaired the 8th Regional Governing Council (West) meeting of NF chapters under HQWNC on 9 September 2023. The Presidents of NF chapters in Bengaluru, Goa, Pune and Mumbai along with the newly formed Nagpur chapter and Zila Sainik Welfare Officer attended the meeting. The C-in-C assured the delegates of the Command's commitment towards ensuring the welfare of the veteran community. Various issues related to pension, healthcare and welfare were also discussed with favourable outcomes.



Anubhavi

NWWA (WR) hosted the annual Anubhavi gathering for wives of veteran naval personnel on 5 November 2023 at Navy House in Mumbai. Mrs. Shashi Tripathi, President NWWA (WR),

and committee members welcomed the Anubhavis and thanked them for their contribution to NWWA in times past. With the theme 'Forever Young' and a focus on sustainability, the event featured an eco-friendly show by the ladies of NWWA(WR), highlighting the beauty of recycled costumes, and distinctive decorative installations created through recycled materials by ladies, children and dockyard workers.



Lunch hosted by FOC-in-C (W) for veterans

As part of veteran outreach, VAdm Tripathi, FOC-in-C (W), hosted a lunch for veteran naval officers and their spouses on 25 November 2023 at IMSC. Over 800 naval veterans attended the event, which aimed to express gratitude to the veterans for their service to the nation and the Navy. It also allowed serving officers to meet and greet old shipmates, share past experiences, and discuss best practices for a combat-ready, credible, cohesive and future-proof Navy.

Several new initiatives by the Navy and WNC towards veteran welfare were also shared.



21st Admiral Soman Memorial Lecture

The 21st Admiral Soman Memorial Lecture was delivered by VAdm Shekhar Sinha (Retd), former FOC-in-C West, at Mulla Auditorium on 25 November 2023. Titled 'World in Disorder: India's Opportunity', the talk delved into the geopolitical flux across the world, emphasising the emerging challenges and opportunities for India. VAdm Tripathi, FOC-in-C (W), was the chief guest of the event, which was attended by serving and retired naval officers along with spouses.



READY RECKONER

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IHQ MOD (Navy) / DESA

Room No 004, Talkatora Annex, New Delhi 110 004
Tel/Fax : 011-21410476/82
 21410473 (G&W)
Whatsapp : 7428464442
Email : desa@navy.gov.in
Website : <http://indiannavy.nic/DESA>
IVRS : 1800-113-999
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Web Site : <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/navy/desa>
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(Post Retirement Death Insurance Extension Scheme)
E-mail : dnpf@navy.gov.in

IHQ MOD (Navy) / DPA

Tel : 011-21410541/49
Fax No. : 011-21410549
E-mail : dpa-navy@nic.in

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For all issues regarding pension

Address : Logistic Officer-in-Charge
 Naval Pension Office (NAV PEN)
 C/o INS Tanaji, Sion Trombay Road
 Mankhurd, Mumbai 400 088
Tel : 022-25075608/620/455
Fax No. : 022-25075653/25564823/25075621
Toll Free : 1800-220-560
E-mail : navpen-navy@nic.in

INBA

Tel : 011-21410785/23093781
FAX : 011-23013656
Mob : 9315796161
E-mail : dnpf-navy@nic.in / dnpf@navy.gov.in

ECHS (Navy)

Tel : 011-21411421
Mob : 9667325533
FAX : 011-23093196
Website : www.echs.gov.in
Toll Free : 1800-114-115
E-mail : echsdelhi@navy.gov.in

PCDA (Pension) Allahabad

The Senior Accounts Officer
Office of PCDA (Pension)
Draupadighat, Allahabad 211 014
Tel. : 0532-2421880/2421877
Email : cd-albd@nic.in
Website : www.pcdapension.nic.in

CDA (Pension) Mumbai

Tel. : 022-22751181
E-mail : pcdapension@nic.in
Website : www.pcdanavy.nic.in

PCDA (Navy) Mumbai

The PCDA (Navy),
No. 1, Cooperage Road, Mumbai 400039
Tel. : 022-22882166/22696139
E-mail : cda-bom@nic.in / pcdanavy@nic.in

Dept. of Ex-Servicemen Welfare,

Ministry of Defence

Tel. : 011-232792913
Fax No : 011-23792914
E-mail : secyesw@nic.in
Website : www.desw.gov.in

DGR

Tel. : 011-26192352/26192355
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Kendriya Sainik Board (KSB)

Tel. : 011-26188098
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गोदावरी तंडाराम - 500032 तेलंगाना, भारत। ई-मेल: bdldl@bdl-india.in वेबसाईट: <http://www.bdl-india.in>

Corporate Office: Plot No. 38-39, TSFC Building, (Near ICICI Towers) Financial District,
Gachibowli, Hyderabad - 500032, Telangana INDIA E-mail: bdldl@bdl-india.in Website: <http://www.bdl-india.in>