

Vol XII Issue-2 (Bi-Annual) | September 2018

# The Rimcollian



(Newsletter of the Old Boys Association of Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehradun)

## RIMCOLLIAN SUMMITS EVEREST





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# Contents

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## Concept & Design

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## Printed at

Om Printers

## Photo credit

The cover photo & several  
other pictures in this issue  
are courtesy PIB, IAF, RIMC,  
www.bharatrankshak.com



## ROVING EYE

KHALIFAS AND JAZZOS	8
NOTES FROM THE NILGIRIS	12
THE RIMCOLLIAN TUSKERS	16
RIMCOLLIAN REUNION LUNCH AT HYDERABAD	18
RIMCOLLIANS GET TOGETHER AT GUWAHATI	18
RIMCOLLIAN REUNION AT VIZAG	20
REUNION 2018 — MUMBAI CHAPTER	21
MANIPUR RIMCOLLIANS	22
PUNE RIMCOLLIAN GET TOGETHER	22

## COURSE MILESTONES

BATCH OF 1964: WE FOUND A NEW REASON TO CELEBRATE	24
50@50 REMINISCES	26

## ACHIEVERS' GALLERY

A PROUD MOMENT	30
RIMCOLLIAN SUMMITS EVEREST	31
THE IAS JOURNEY	32
OF IDEALS AND PERFECTION - ADJUTANT @ INA	34
CITY DOCUMAKER CHOSEN FOR HOLLYWOOD SUMMER SCHOOL	35
THE NDA POP MAY 2018	36
FROM DOON VALLEY TO BANJARA HILLS	38

## BOOK REVIEW

PAVILION: RECORDING SPIRIT OF FAIRPLAY	40
CALL OF THE TIGER	42

## NOSTALGIA

ONE WHO FLEW UNDER YAMUNA BRIDGE	43
THE COLONEL IN OUR TIME	48

## TRAVEL NOTES

THE KAILASH MANASAROVAR YATRA	50
THROUGH THE STATE OF A NATION	54
RIMCOLLIAN SPIRIT FUELLED NORTH EAST DARSHAN	57
EUROPE MUSINGS	60
INDIA'S DESERT MAN: JAGDEEP SINGH KAIRON	64



## Looking Forward



**Air Marshal Prasad P Reddy**

**Dear Rimcollians,**

Many of you would remember the extremely well organized 96th Reunion in March this year. However, the event was preceded by the tragic demise of the former editor of the Rimcollian magazine, the late Brig Chander (aka Charlie) Thapa. In search of an editor, the ROBA executive committee decided to entrust me with the onerous responsibility of stepping into Charlie's big boots, supported by an editorial committee to do the hard work. Actually, Maj MS Bedi had conned me into it when my defences were down after a few beers in the Pavilion during the reunion.

The transition from Charlie Thapa to the new editorial committee has been sad, sudden and disruptive. Not having the literary skills of Charlie Sir, we members of the new committee decided to make the magazine broad based and collaborative, touching Rimcollians from all walks of life. Hopefully, we have adequate talent collectively, to produce a reasonably good magazine. We wait with bated breath for the bricks and bouquets!! Your criticism, encouragement and suggestions will help us improve.

To ensure significant bonding with desired continuum and to represent all vintages and genre of Rimcollians, some of the more regular columnists have been inducted into the editorial team. Apart from me, we have Cde N Joseph from the Navy, Colonels Sanjay Kannothe and Shailender Arya from the Army and Chiranjit Banerjee from the civvy street. At the back end, it remains business as usual with the tried and tested trio of Vipin Khanduri continuing to be responsible for processing the inputs from School even as Sidharth Mishra has kindly consented to continue managing the layout, printing & related logistics. We will also continue to lean on Maj M S Bedi's fund raising acumen to sustain the magazine.

Our objective is to blend experience with youth to make for a more representative coverage and cover topics of interest to all Rimcollians. To this end we have introduced an "Achievers" section to highlight achievers from both the Defence and Civil walks of life. We have also tried to lay emphasis on reminiscences from the past. I sincerely request all Rimcollians to participate actively and help raise the literary standards as well as funds (through advertisements), especially in view of the fast approaching Centenary. We will soon have to start working on the 'Centenary Coffee Table Book'.

My team and I hope that a wider base of columnists from as many locations as possible - whether it is cantonments/ air stations/ naval bases or training establishments will contribute. On the civilian side, we are hoping to connect with far larger numbers in India and abroad, especially in Canada, US, UK & Malaysia where our Old Boys are making a mark. In fact, we have a story 'A Colonel in our Time' by Marcus Pradhan from UK, in this very issue. So, keep them coming.

Ich Dien

15th August 2018

**Air Marshal Prasad P Reddy (retd)**

## MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT



President ROBA

एयर चीफ़ मार्शल बी एस धनोआ  
पक्सिसेमे अतिसेमे यूसेमे वासेमे एडीसी

*Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa*  
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1. Greetings to Rimcollians and their families. The past half year has been a mix of good and bad happenings amongst the Rimcollian fraternity and that's the way life goes on.

2. The loss of our beloved Hony Editor of our society the biannual magazine 'The Rimcollian' created a void to the reunion fervor. We are grateful to Air Marshal PP Reddy (Retd), former Hony President ROBA to have accepted the editor's mantle and carry forward the biannual publication of the magazine. I also hope all of you will take a few minutes to share your favourite times at RIMC and contribute to 'The Rimcollian'.


3. I am delighted to inform you that in the recently graduated 134<sup>th</sup> NDA Course Ex RIMC Cadets Akshat Raj and S Islam received the President's Gold and Silver medals respectively. In addition, Sub Lt Rishav Saha of Indian Navy stood first in the order of merit in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Course at IOTC, Kochi.

4. In less than four years from now, we would be celebrating our Centennial Celebrations. I urge all of you to be more proactive in this regard and assist the office bearers of ROBA in constituting various sub-committees for their successful implementation and execution.

5. I also request all Rimcollians to contribute to the Centenary Fund for a successful mega event in March 2022.

WISH YOU ALL HAPPY DUSSEHRA AND DIWALI.  
MAY GOD BLESS THE RIMC, RIMCOLLIANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.  
JAI HIND.

03 July 2018

  
Air Chief Marshal  
Chief of the Air Staff

# MESSAGE OF SECY ROBA

**Group Captain Deepak Ahluwalia**  
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*My dear Rimcollians,*

1. Updation of the ROBA directory and ROBA Website is in process. Those of you who have not yet sent in your details may please provide with the following information at <vspundir@yahoo.com>

First Name	Premature Retirement-
Surname	Business-
Nickname-	Married-
College Number-	Permanent Address-
Section at RIMC-	Present Address-
Course joined with-	Present Appointment-
Course Passed out with-	Decoration
Course joined NDA with-	Permanent Phone Number-
Course passed put from NDA with-	Current Phone Number-
Service joined-	E mail id-
Corps/Regt/Arm –	Name of Wife/e mail/number-
Didn't join NDA-	Name of children-
	Siblings at School-

2. It is also requested that any changes occurring in future in particulars may be intimated to ROBA Cell, RIMC and Delhi immediately for updating.

3. I would also like to apprise the Rimcollian brethren about the minimum contributions to be given by the Rimcollians for the betterment of the alma mater, which are enumerated below:-

- |  |                            |   |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| (a) ROBA Membership Fee                      | - Rs 3000/-                | } One time subscription.<br>Any additional voluntary contribution<br>are welcome.<br>*upto 31 Mar 2019. |
| (b) ROBA Trust                               | - Rs 5000/-                |   |
| (c) Magazine Fund                            | - Rs 2000/-                |   |
| (d) Centenary Fund                           | - *Rs 30000/-              |   |
| (e) Cadet Contingent fund (for needy cadets) | - any amount (as per wish) |   |

4. All Rimcollians are requested to pay their dues. Donations as above are exempt-under section 80G of Income Tax. Kindly pass on the information to Rimcollians of your course and those who are living around you.

5. We would be celebrating the Centenary Anniversary in less than four years from now. In the AGM held in Mar '17 and Mar '18 volunteers were requested to form various sub-committees. The message was posted on rimcollians@yahoo group also. Regional Secretaries are requested to be proactive and mobilize fellow Rimcollians for active participation in planning and coordination of the mega event. **We can only do it together.** Generation of funds is vital. Towards this endeavor too, it is my humble request to please come forward with ideas and suggestions.

*Warm regards,  
Long live the fraternity.*

**ICH-DIEN**

*yours sincerely,  
Ahluwalia*

# SCRUB TYPHUS A RARE BACTERIAL INFECTION THAT KILLED GEN JAGGI

One of the Indian Army's senior-most serving officers, Lt Gen PS Jaggi, AVSM, passed away in Delhi on April 8, 2018.

As condolences for the general poured in from defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Army chief General Bipin Rawat, sources revealed that he had contracted a bacterial infection through an insect bite which resulted in multiple organ failure.

The illness, known as Scrub Typhus, is considered to be a rare disease in the country and rarer in the army, an army hospital official said. Lt Gen Jaggi was in the ICU for two weeks before he passed away.

What is scrub typhus?

According to reports, scrub typhus is an extremely rare disease that had killed several hundred people in Assam during World War-II and had seemingly disappeared from India since.

The disease which is normally spread through mite or a rodent bite presents very similar symptoms to those found in other illnesses like dengue, typhoid, severe pneumonia and multi-organ dysfunction.

While scrub typhus is easy to cure if the antibiotic reaches the patient in the early days of fever, the difficulty in spotting cases of scrub typhus makes diagnoses of the illness extremely difficult and in most cases, patients are diagnosed too late.

Since the 1990s, there have also been signs of a re-emergence of the disease in India.

As of now, most cases of scrub typhus are being reported from Himachal



**Lt Gen PS Jaggi**  
Ranjit 1971-76

Pradesh, Mizoram and Tamil Nadu. A few cases have been reported from the capital as well.

### Mystery deaths

Health care professionals have been worried about the rise of the disease in India, especially in the last decade.

Times of India had reported in 2011 that a mystery fever had taken hold of Alwar's Rajgarh and Raini areas causing the death of 60 people. Experts at the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Sawai Man Singh Hospital had been in the dark for 15 days before concluding that the mystery fever was actually scrub typhus.

During the Gorakhpur tragedy that claimed the lives of over 60 children in a hospital in Yogi Adityanath's constituency in Uttar Pradesh, it was widely speculated that the cause of the deaths was Japanese encephalitis. However, a government-backed study later revealed that scrub typhus and not Japanese encephalitis was the probable cause of death.

In Kolkata, according to a survey conducted by a private hospital in 2017, scrub typhus turned out to be the second most frequent infectious disease in state after dengue in that year.

While the number of cases may have been lesser than dengue, the report found that the mortality rate of scrub typhus patients was much higher.

### Severely neglected

Despite the growing prevalence of the disease across India, a 2013 report published by The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene revealed that it is perhaps the single most under-diagnosed, under-reported and severe illnesses in rural Asia.

Citing data from the World Health Organisation, the report claimed that one million cases of scrub typhus occurred each year, causing more deaths than dengue.

It also added that post the re-emergence of this mystery disease, cases were frequently spotted in India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Micronesia. ■

(Courtesy: The Print)

## ○ Editor, My Editor — Remembering Chander Thapa

— Sidharth Mishra



Brig (Retd) **CS THAPA**  
Pratap 1964-68

It's now close to six months that Brigadier Chander Singh Thapa all of a sudden called it a day. The memories of my association are coming gushing back as I settle to finalise the printing of September 2018 edition. Despite being a professional writer it took me good 13 days before I could pen my thoughts on the humongous loss. I don't know what took me so long. Probably the suddenness of the event.

As usual, whenever I would start for Dehradun from Delhi, which happens around eight to 12 times a year, a call would be made to Brigadier Chander Singh Thapa about having left on time. So was a call made on the morning 11th March 2018. He did not pick the phone. I thought maybe he was on the golf course, and he would certainly call back, as he always did. Crossed Meerut, crossed Cheetal, the call did not come. Very unusual; I called back, not once but twice but no response. Then called up his better half Mrs Vibha Thapa. She said that he came home last evening feeling giddy from the golf course and sweated profusely next morning and has been admitted to hospital with very low blood pressure.

By 3 pm, I was at his bedside in the hospital, he smiled and said "don't talk about it. I don't like reporting sick". Satisfied that he was OK, I went back to my lodging at the school and started to settle. Around seven, got the numbing call that he was gone. Since then I have been unable to come to terms with this loss. I attended his "tehrevi" and felt very angry with him for having left us groping for what next?

Though I had met him at my school alumni reunions off and on, it was after I launched The Pioneer's Dehradun edition in 2007 that I came to know Brig Thapa closely. I remember he asking for some space to write something in the newspaper. I discouraged him, probably did not want another fauji's copy to edit, saying, "Please write but if you can on something other than army, strategy, nuclear arms or terrorism."

He came back with a story how he had captured a leopard on the Indian Military Academy (IMA) golf course when he was posted there as battalion commander in the late 1990s. It was such a wonderful story, it had to be carried. Thereafter I gave him a regular column titled "Mount View". The column became very popular making our common guru at

Rashtriya Indian Military College, Mr LN Thakur quip, "I knew him as a good runner in the school, when did he become a writer?"

Yes indeed he became a writer that too a prolific one. His books 'Gorkha: In Search Of Identity' and 'Gorkha: Society & Politics' are extra-ordinary works. He slowly grew into some kind of an ideologue for the Gorkhaland Movement. We joined hands in the publication of our alumni newsletter The Rimcollian and in 2013 he was to gladly take charge from me as its editor, a position which I had held for 15 years, more under 'duress' from school veterans. But he added a rider while taking over that I would continue look after the magazine's production.

"How can I miss on the opportunity to use your professional talent," he had said at the Cafe at Subroto Park, where the handover took place in presence of then alumni secretary Group Captain Prabhat Kumar. He used his services network to widen the news collection base and with his coursemate Maj MS 'Appi' Bedi arranging sufficient funds, The Rimcollian today is undoubtedly the best alumni newsletter in the country.

The association with him only turned stronger with passing time. We together launched the hugely successful Camphor series of books, with him standing as the gallant underwriter to the publisher to cover the costs if the books did not sell as many as anticipated. Every time that a new Camphor book was unveiled, he would call my wife Dipti to compliment her for the cover. The latest of the series, 'Pavilion' stands testimony to his personality. Two days before he passed away, he had phoned to tell me, "Don't think too much on what would be the theme for next Camphor book. I have already thought about it, in fact have already written my piece."

I have not had the time to go back to Dehradun to search his desktop for the article. What a painful job it would be to do. His enthusiasm for writing and reading soon got him space in other newspapers, magazines and journals. He would always be keen to collaborate for the projects my think tank Centre for Reforms, Development and Justice would undertake. In fact he did a commendable job when we did a project for BP Koirala Foundation on 70 Years of India Nepal Relationship.

His best, however, is still to be published -- the

## ○ Editor, My Editor — Remembering Chander Thapa

work we did together on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He could manage to do all this while looking after his extended family, demolishing his old house in Dehradun and building a beautiful bungalow, marrying off his younger son Abhay, visiting his older son Uday for long vacations, attending to social calls and of course regularly trumping one and all on the golf course. Despite such myriad commitments, he never missed the deadlines for articles; in fact always managed to beat the deadlines.

He was fit as a fiddle and kept advising me on how to reduce weight. As I was remarking at his 'teherevi' to Col Arun Mangain, another close friend of Brig Thapa, "My reasons for coming to Dehradun seem to be drying up." So it has happened in the past six months. I am glad that Col Mangain sent a message in the evening that day, "Dehradun aate rehna." But without Brigadier Chander Singh Thapa, Thapa Sir to me, Channi to his relatives, Chander to friends and Charlie to his buddies, Dehradun would not be the same. Sir Take Care And Bless Us, As You Always Did.

### Dehradun Veteran, Brig CS Thapa passes away

By Lt Col BM Thapa (Retd)



**B**rigadier CS Thapa (Retd) was a veteran and settled in Dehradun with his wife, Vibha. Brig Thapa passed away on 11 March 2018 due to a massive heart attack.

He belonged to a family of soldiers, with six straight generations of father and son in the Army. In the first generation, Jai Singh, an officer of the Gorkha Army, surrendered with 300 soldiers to the British at Almora, and was subsequently appointed Subedar.

In the second generation, Subedar Jiwan Singh served in 1/3GR. In the third generation, his grandfather, the late Lt Col Bhim Singh Thapa, served with 2/3GR and was awarded the Military Cross in the First World War and was honoured with the King's Commission, as well in 1919. In the fourth generation, all the sons of Bhim Singh, eldest, Mahamin, then his father Puran, Kakas, Padam and Hariom, all served the Second World War and two - his father, the late Lt Col Puran Singh Thapa, and Lt Col Padam Singh Thapa, came home with MCs.

In the fifth generation, his elder brother, ex-Capt NS Thapa joined the Emergency Commission. The Brigadier and his cousin, Col Jayant Thapa, SC, joined the forces, with

Jayant being awarded for gallantry. In the sixth generation, his niece ex-Capt Rajshree Thapa, joined the Army Education Corps, while his son Lt Col Uday Singh Thapa continues the military tradition and joined his father's regiment is the same armoured corps, thus Jai, Jiwan, Bhim, Puran, Chander and Uday make six generations of soldiers and Puran; Chander and Uday make three generations from Indian Military Academy as well. His second son, Abhay, having done MBA, is doing well in the corporate sector.

The Brig was a great golfer and a prolific writer. A few of his famous books, 'Gorkha', and 'Gorkha in Settlement of Identity', were much liked by readers. He remained an active member of the 'Bhartiya Gorkha Parisangha' and contributed a lot. He was a great asset for the community as a pillar of strength and as a most intellectual person.

A few days ago, he rang up from Ahmedabad and informed me about his arrival in Doon Valley, being a close family friend of mine.

The entire Ex-Services fraternity of Doon Valley pays homage and may God give strength to the bereaved family to bear such a great untimely loss of the young Brigadier.

*Lt Col BM Thapa (Retd), is Senior Vice President, Dehradun Ex-Services League.  
He can be reached at Email: brijmeera@gmail.com*

# KHALIFAS AND JAZZOS

The 96th Founder's Day Celebrations

— Sqn Ldr **VINOTH VANYA**

**12th Mar 18**



## THE ARRIVAL

It's been twelve years that I had passed out from RIMC but the memories are fresh as the morning dew on the flowers at the War memorial. This was my first reunion and the first reunion is always special. While entering the school from Thimayya gate and through the President's Drive, the picturesque Martyr's Memorial made me nostalgic. I had entered the portals of RIMC more than a decade back and was on my way to the GSLR with my parents in "Vikram", my trunk having items

mentioned in the "Joining instructions" sent to us.

After filling the forms at GSLR, my Section Master Mr DN Thapliyal introduced me to my Cadet Guardian, Cadet Ashish Malik and said "yeh betaaa..., tumhara khayal rakehega." Little did I know that the word "khayal" will have many synonyms associated with it which I would discover subsequently during my stay in the school.

Time has flown .... as I now arrived for the 96th Reunion at the Cadets Mess

where I received the college magazine "Regalia." Since, there was a big line of Rimcollians who were carrying out their Arrival formalities and some paying their dues of ROBA (I could see the terror of ROBA Sec in some of their eyes with Centenary celebrations around the corner) ....I, thus, decided to utilise my time with the college magazine in one hand and tea shares on the other.

I must say that the magazine had the same appeal as it had when I was in school, smelling fresh as if it had just

been out of the printing press ready to be served with hot and sweet memories of 2017. When I was going through the magazine, Page 08 of Regalia took me by surprise when I read the words “Khalifas” and “Jazzos” juxtaposed to 181 and 182 course.

Wow....when have names been associated with the courses...I wondered. NDA had the tradition of having course names associated with the squadrons that you belonged but course names weren't there during my time in RIMC. The observation may seem trivial compared to the myriads of changes which have occurred in RIMC since I passed out...but the names made me wonder with awe when I shifted my gaze from Regalia to the reception counter. It then rang a bell....

Khalifas or the leaders or the senior Rimcollians with rich experience were the old boys like Gen VN Sharma (Retd), Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, Lt Gen BS Negi, Air Mshl C Hari Kumar, Air Mshl B Suresh and other distinguished Rimcollians who were there mingling with the Jazzos or the not so old boys like us and sharing their experiences of the school.

It was a sight to be seen as everyone was curious to know the standings of their section, meeting fresh faces and relishing their times at the school. The lunch saw the metamorphosis of these Khalifas and Jazzos into the cadets of their years chatting and treading into the past with other Rimcollians.

The next event was the Hockey match and the Jazzos wanted to play with the cadets and rejuvenate their memories of holding the sticks. The fit Khalifas on the other hand led by ROBA Secy Gp Capt Deepak Ahluwalia were there early, charging at the hockey kits and wielding their sticks on the ground with the same ease as they were in RIMC ready to take the cadets by surprise.

It was a close fought match (some Jazzos finally got a chance to get into the ground courtesy ...Lt Cdr AS Sandhu, the referee). The Rimcollians finally gave way to Rimcos and the cadets won by 1-0. It culminated with tea and everyone retired back to their places to gear up for the Boxing finals.



## Hockey Trophy



## The Boxing finals

True to the spirits of boxing .... Before the punches are delivered, the clashes of cheering reverberate through the arena. The adrenalin is pumped into the boxers before the bout starts, to make sure that the boxers are high with testosterone of “section spirit” when they land the first blow at the opponent.

As usual, the scores were close and it will be the finals and the cheering which will make the difference in the section winning the coveted Boxing trophy. The Rimcollians and their family thronged the arena with everyone geared up to see the josh and spirit of the pugilists. The bouts were fought with ferocity and technique with the Shivajian pugilists emerging victorious.

The whatsapp messages though read, “Looks like the Shivajian socks has affected the other sections psychologically in the ring....nevertheless they won!!!” It was followed with prize distribution and Commandant's dinner where the “Old Monk blended with great pride” in refreshing the memorable experiences which the rimcollians shared with each other. The cadets were motivated to work hard and continue the feat of holding the RIMC flag high during the interaction by Rimcollians during the dinner.

## 13th Mar 2018

The sweet chirping of birds' heralds the morning of RIMC. The much awaited scotch eggs were in breakfast and



Wreath Laying Ceremony

everyone assembled near the war memorial for Wreath Laying after that.

General Body meeting in the Bhagat Hall was held thereafter with Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa presiding the meet. The Rimcollian Marcos presented a memento to the school to inspire the cadets to join Navy and finally become one of them. Various teams for the Centenary meet were formulated and agendas were discussed towards celebration in 2022.

The venue thereafter shifted to the Pavilion wherein cricketers were practicing in the nets while the others were enjoying the Horse Riding, microlight show and “the beer.” Children and cadets too enjoyed the show as the microlight like a Santa Claus gifted “chocolates in parachutes” amidst the cricket match. Needless to say, as the tradition goes the Rimcollians gave way to Rimcos and the cadets won.

After the lunch at the Cadet Captain’s lawn, the hobbies were visited which terminated by everyone proceeding to Thimayya hall for the



cultural evening. It reminded me of the days when we too as cadets were pushed really hard for the morning and evening practices by Mr CS Vishwakarma to make sure that the events put up at the Reunion are of high standards. It was always fun during the practice sessions as the “Entertainment team” had a different bonding of its own (we could

bunk section toughening sessions many times on this pretext).

I remember in my Class I A, once I had paired up with Cadet Pawan Bharadwaj in a drama that had to be enacted in English and had scenes from Mahabharata. I had volunteered to act just because Mrs Shakuntala Mamgain (better half of Col Arun Mamagain, the



The Cricket Cup

Commandant during our time) had promised that all those who participate will be treated with chocolate cakes in the evening. I had memorised all the tough poetic stanzas in English just because of those yummy cakes.

The Cultural evening was in the Thimayya auditorium and the evening saw two eminent Chandraguptians addressing the gathering – Air Chief Mshl BS Dhanoa and Air Mshl Hari Kumar. They inspired the gathering with their “josh talk” and urged Rimcollians to excel and make the alma mater proud. The cadets then sang, danced and delivered a spectacular show. If that was not enough, Chandragupt section was also declared the “Champion section” and the cadets led by Cheetah Rimcollians made sure that Cadet Captain’s lawn and mess had only the war cry of “Cheetah bhi kaun hi jeeta, ...cheetah jeeta, cheetah jeeta.”

From there on, the rimcollians moved to the anteroom and the cadets to the pavilion. As usual, some of the cadets skipped the gathering at pavilion and were dancing to the tunes of DJ in the anteroom, learning the art of socialising as it’s been a while that “socials” have been conducted in the school.



The Science Exhibition

ROBA dinner started at about 2200 hrs and a special mention of contributions and people who had flown overseas to attend the meet was given. The dinner ended with coffee and tipsy pudding which was an icing on the cake of these two memorable days. Many Rimcollians thereafter went for an evening walk visiting dormitories, kit rooms, college hospital, obstacles course, Academic block and places they wanted to be when they were a cadet of this prestigious institution.

The NDA god was also worshipped as and when the Rimcollians ringed the school bell kept near it to revive the past.

The two days of reunion ended soon and if it weren’t for the spouse and kids, the Rimcollians would have continued to be outside anteroom for some more time.

As the early morning of 14th Mar was fast approaching, I just remembered a slogan during our time which said “What did Gen Sharma say, Ranjit section leads the way....” However as I was about to sleep, I could hear from the background that this time there was a modification- “What did Air Chief Marshal Dhanoa say, Chandragupt section leads the way.”

Three cheers for RIMC and Ya Ya Chandragupt. ■

# NOTES FROM THE NILGIRIS

— Col **SHAILENDER ARYA**

The Nilgiris are a perfect place for the Rimcollians. It is one of the rare places whose lovely weather often reminds of the pleasant Dehradun days, the sporting facilities are plenty, the competitors fierce, the liquor is inexpensive (the word cheap has gone out of fashion along with shops like Cheap Tailors), and the possibilities are aplenty for an excellent work-life balance. Nilgiris is also one of the only few places in India which has a genuine spring, as in Dehradun. Hence the Nilgiris are generally well populated by our tribe; over a dozen in every Staff Course, a few in the faculty, many transients and few (not to mention apparently affluent) like Capt (IN) P Nitin and Col Ravi Maira who are owners of lovely villas which dot the outskirts of Coonoor, Wellington and Kotagiri. Among these various shades of the Nilgiris Rimcollians, the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC) Rimcollians are the main conspirators behind all the activities here, trying to fit-in their social engagements on the lean days - the weekends when the assignments are negligible and no examinations are looming large.

Many Rimcollians also come to the DSSC to deliver lectures or as guest speakers in various seminars. They proudly sport Rimcollian tie to the auditorium, rather than their regimental or squadron ties. Their stay here is typically short, just about two days, but more often than not, we manage to meet up over tea, or organise a small get-together. Another new category of Rimcollians are now frequently visiting the Nilgiris. They are the Rimcollian parents of many young girls, and a few young boys, who have taken admission in the Lawrence School, Lovedale. The family tradition of being in a boarding school must continue, the school may be different.

Plus, with no girls yet in RIMC, there is not much of a choice for the girls.

The last group is of the Bangalore Rimcollians. Many of them are members of the Wellington Gymkhana Club, and they make their yearly pilgrimage to the Nilgiris, generally in the summers. It is their 'Great Escape' from the snail-paced traffic of Bangalore, the burning lakes and too many techies around. They can be spotted with cameras, a leisurely pace, a contended face and bright clothes, though they are no longer fooled by homemade chocolates or the myriad varieties of Eucalyptus Oil with strong smells and magical healing properties.

Let me start with the DSSC faculty. The senior-most Rimcollian here has been Brig MG Jacob, the occupant of a lovely colonial Bungalow named Rose Bank. Another illegal occupant of the lawns of this house was a bison named Tyson, but his grazing did not disturb Brig Jacob from his mountain cycling, or reading in the veranda. The others in the faculty were Capt (IN) Asheem Mital, Col Shakeel Ahmad and Col Shailender Arya. Capt (IN) Aseem Mital has been here for last few years, but is now heading towards the sea, in command of a big ship with a dangerous sounding name. Col Shakeel Ahmad kept a houseful of hundreds of exotic plants, creepers and flowers but is soon heading to a staff appointment in Central India while Col Shailender Arya is heading for the HDMC at Secunderabad. However, the tribe never decreases, and we had Col Abhijeet Tembe, from the Gorkha Rifles and Capt (IN) Amit Sood, a submariner joining us in early 2018.

Col Abhijeet Tembe, with his Gorkha Rifles crew-cut is expected to keep the discipline and the seriousness, while the quiet submariner, Capt (IN) Amit Sood, is expected to keep the calm,

even if the waters above are choppy. In addition, Col Anup Kumar Tiwari is joining us after completion of his course at Secunderabad, Col Rajneesh Mohan moves from the icy mountains of Ladakh to the much gentler hills here, and Col Rakesh Nair is joining us from the corridors of South Block in New Delhi. Col Sanjay Kannothe, who left last year, was expected to join us in the Nilgiris after completion of the Higher Command Course in Indonesia, but the capital has pulled him.

The officers attending the course were a spirited lot. All three services were represented. We had Cdr Sreehari S, Ranjit, 1993-1998, Maj JS Samant, Shivaji, 1995-2000, Maj Abhishek Tyagi, Pratap, 1998-2003, Maj Subeg Singh Dhindsa, Ranjit, 1997-2001, Sqn Ldr DS Jayara, Chandragupta, 1997-2001, Maj Rakesh Verma, Shivaji, 1995-2000, Maj Aditya Sood, Chandragupta, 1997-2000 and Cdr Alok Kumar, Pratap, 1996-2000. The first get-together of the course was conducted in the Wellington Gymkhana Club on 22th July 2017. It was a Sunday lunch with officers proudly sporting their Rimcollian ties, blazers, scarfs and lapel-pins. Brig MG Jacob made sure that there is no India-Pakistan divide among the officers and the ladies - the officers separately sipping their beers and the ladies comparing notes in another corner on how their husbands abandon them in the Rimcollian meets for their course mates.

Many smaller get-togethers took place, mostly during the visit of Rimcollians to the station, and then it was time for the annual March get-together. It was organised on 10th March 2018, on another Sunday in the evening. Among others, it also had Mrs Dutta along with her husband Col Dutta attending. Mrs Dutta taught in



The March 2018 Get-together at the WGC

the school in the early 2000s. This get-together had two RIMC cakes, though both delicious but with ‘Ice Dien’ written rather than the ‘Ich Dien’ on one of the cakes. This minor SD mistake was soon obliterated, consumed, and removed from the face of the earth. A few get-togethers were organised during the annual Staff College tour to the various locations in January 2018. Most of us met Col and Mrs DH Parab at Ahmednagar, and visited the school which they are now running, with their Rimcollian son Ricky Parab assisting them. The school is aptly named ‘Col Parab’s Academy’, and we were quietly whisked away from the official lunch to meet the Parab family by Col V Jacob Kurien, who was posted at Ahmednagar. Three of us from the DSSC also met Col VY Gidh in Kothrud, Pune at his house, and Mrs Gidh cooked a delicious Maharashtrian dinner for us.

At Devlali, Col Mainik Deb, ably

**A FEW GET-TOGETHERS WERE ORGANISED DURING THE ANNUAL STAFF COLLEGE TOUR TO THE VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN JANUARY 2018. MOST OF US MET COL AND MRS DH PARAB AT AHMEDNAGAR, AND VISITED THE SCHOOL WHICH THEY ARE NOW RUNNING, WITH THEIR RIMCOLLIAN SON RICKY PARAB ASSISTING THEM**

assisted by a Rimcollian 2IC, Lt Col Tanmay Pant, hosted a dinner for all the DSSC Rimcollians in his Regiment’s Officers Mess. Their cooks got a crash course in making Scotch eggs and pancakes, and came out with flying colours. The final get-together of Wellington took place at Mansarovar, the charming house of Capt Asheem Mital on the ‘Snob Hill’, a name given due to its proximity to few of the houses of the biggies being located here. It’s a very picturesque location with Jacaranda trees in full bloom, the aroma of Scotch eggs and a little nip in the air. This last get-together on 14th April 2018 marked the end of an academic year in the Nilgiris, until the next course joins in early June 2018, with a fresh set of Rimcollians.

Many other impromptu gatherings were organised. The Rimcollian faculty got together for a dinner with Lt Gen CP Mohanty when he came to Wellington in July 2017 to deliver a talk. Another

dinner was hosted for Col Amreesh Gunjan who visited Wellington on a coveted official duty. Col Arindam Saha came from CDM Secunderabad for a management capsule and met many of us. Two Naval Rimcollians; Capt S Guru and Capt Kahlon came from New Delhi to deliver a talk and were met by the Rimcollians of the faculty. Col Vaibhav Aggarwal visited Wellington in March 2018 from New Delhi, a small home-coming for him as he was earlier posted here in the faculty. A few of us also met Gp Capt AG Bewoor who delivered a thrilling talk on Operation Cactus Lily to the DSSC in April 2018. He was the Commanding Officer of the squadron which in IL-76 aircrafts spearheaded the airlift to Male in 1998, with him flying the leading aircraft from Agra to Male.

A tea-party, incidentally hosted by the guest himself, was conducted for Capt (IN) AKK Reddy in March 2018, when he was here for admission of his elder child in Lovedale. The Naval Rimcollians are leading as far as the children in the Lawrence School, Lovedale are concerned. Apart from Capt (IN) AKK Reddy, we have Capt (IN) Asheem Mital whose both daughters are in Lovedale (which explains his rather longish stay in the Nilgiris) and Capt (IN) Sumantha Roy. The Army is not far behind with the children of Col Amit Kumar and Col Sushil Minhas recently taking admission. Mrs Chandra Joshi, our Physics teacher at the RIMC for many years in the 1990s is now teaching at Lovedale, and endeavours to join us for the Rimcollian get-togethers, along with her husband, Col Joshi.

It was a proud moment for all the Rimcollians when the Air Chief visited DSSC in March 2018. Gp Capt Deepak Ahluwalia, our energetic ROBA Secretary, assisted us to organise a get-together with him in spite of a very tight schedule. ACM BS Dhanoa and his wife hosted all Rimcollians for a sumptuous tea-party in The Pines, the Staff College guest house on 15th March 2018. A Rimcollian cake with intricate ostrich feathers design was



The 'Ice Dien' Cake and the Air Chief



**A RIMCOLLIAN CAKE WITH INTRICATE OSTRICH FEATHERS DESIGN WAS AGAIN PREPARED. THE SPELLING OF 'ICH DIEN' WAS CORRECT, BUT IT WAS ALLEGED THAT THE CAKE COLOURS TOO CLOSELY RESEMBLED THE SECTION COLOURS OF THE SHIVAJI SECTION**

again prepared. The spelling of 'Ich Dien' was correct, but it was alleged that the cake colours too closely resembled the section colours of the Shivaji Section. The Air Chief has been a Senior Instructor and Chief Instructor (Air) at Wellington in the earlier years, and has a strong Wellington connection.

Some more Rimcollian quirks and musings. I received 'Pavilion', the latest book in the Camphor Series, along with some complimentary copies as a contributing author. I gifted one, and lend another two for reading. The copies which were lent now occupy pride of place in some younger Rimcollians book shelves. The Rimcollian wall and table calendars were procured centrally for all the Wellington Rimcollians. The calendars are indeed very well researched and designed, with the immense contribution of Rimcollians in the



At 'The Pines', Wellington with the Air Chief

1947-48 War as the theme, but that's not the story. On the WhatsApp group, Cdr Sreehari 'volunteered' to organise the collection. Incidentally, 'volunteering' is a cardinal sin as taught in a certain school in the Doon Valley. In spite of being senior-most among the officers attending the course, *les affaires des calendriers* has not been resolved till date – who has whose calendar, who has paid up, or otherwise, remains a big mystery.

Another cycle in the Nilgiris came to an end. The mystery of the Rimcollian calendars shall remain unresolved like the Aarushi murder case. The Wellington days stories shall be included in the endless in-my-times-talks of the Rimcollians who have been here. They shall be little spiced-up of course. About half a century back they could have boasted of shooting a wild boar, but now some squash medals

**ON THE WHATSAPP GROUP, CDR SREEHARI 'VOLUNTEERED' TO ORGANISE THE COLLECTION. INCIDENTALLY, 'VOLUNTEERING' IS A CARDINAL SIN AS TAUGHT IN A CERTAIN SCHOOL IN THE DOON VALLEY. IN SPITE OF BEING SENIOR-MOST AMONG THE OFFICERS ATTENDING THE COURSE, LES AFFAIRES DES CALENDRIERS HAS NOT BEEN RESOLVED TILL DATE – WHO HAS WHOSE CALENDAR, WHO HAS PAID UP, OR OTHERWISE, REMAINS A BIG MYSTERY**

shall do. Brig MG Jacob hangs his spurs in June 2018 and retires from the Army. Tyson, the bison, as well as the Pedal Pushers Club of the Staff College shall miss him. The plants of Col Shakeel Ahmad shall miss the climate of Wellington (some flowers may suicide) as much as he shall miss the gymnasium and his thick books on Operational Art. Capt (IN) Asheem Mital shall possibly not get another house like the Mansarovar, with a manicured approach road and leafy by-lanes, at least in this rank. The Rimcollian officers who attended the 73th Staff College shall not get this charming balance of academics, outdoors and socialising, unless they are back here in the faculty. In fact, all is well in these blue hills, except it is too far from Dehradun. From as south as it generally can be in India, Long Live RIMC! ■

# THE RIMCOLLIAN TUSKERS

— Lt Cdr **NIKHIL PRABHUNE**

Almost 3000 km from Dehradun, the Rimcollians at Kochi celebrated the 96th Founder's Day on 12 March at the same time as school this year. Hitherto the Gods own country get together was held 2/3 weeks after 13 March to facilitate Rimcollians attending both Dehra Dun and Kochi. It was first planned for 25 March, but there was a clarion call from a large number of young Rimcollians who were on operational billets and were likely to miss the end March get together and our self-styled secretary of Rimcollian Tuskers Cmde Joseph was forced to relent to the popular call and shift the date to 12 March. As a result, our Dream team of veterans from Thiruvananthapuram were unable to attend the Kochi get together and had one at "the Ever-green city of India."

The event was much awaited amongst the Rimcollians at Kochi (for the March one is always organised bigger than the other get togethers). The event was earlier planned on-board INS Sarvekshak under the command of Capt Peush Pawsey but because of his commitments the venue was shifted from the planned venue to Cmde Simon Mathai's Fort. The perfect weather, the picturesque sea shores of INS Dronacharya and the high spirit of all generations of Rimcollians made the evening a memorable one.

The proceedings began with remembering Late Brig C S Thapa (Retd), an eminent Rimcollian who passed away recently. Cmde N A J Joseph and Cmde Simon Mathai spoke of him as the epitome of an idol, role model and a soldier. Cdr Raju Mathews (Retd) spoke fondly about him, narrating memories from school and his achievements as an avid sportsman. We all offered our heartfelt condolences and remembered him for being a true Rimcollian, a mentor and a gentleman.



Standing Row: Lt Col PK Satish Kumar (Retd), Wg Cdr Mohan Chand (Retd), Brig K V M Nair (Retd), Col Subhash Nair (Retd), Cdr S Viswanathan (Retd), Fg Offr N P Revi (Retd), Cdr M S Mahesh (Retd)

Sitting Row: Mrs Anu Kumar, Mrs Mallika Chand, Mrs Suchitra Nair, Mrs Sudha Nair, Mrs Parvathy Viswanathan, Mrs Parvathi Revi, Mrs Mini Mahesh

The occasion was graced by the presence of senior Rimcollians and the ladies, Brig S Vijay Kumar (Retd) (1952-57: Ranjit, who changed his departure to Bangalore by a day to attend) being the senior most. His youthfulness and the presence of other senior Rimcollians like Mr Balakrishna (1953-56; Ranjit), Maj Gen P Rajagopal (Retd) (1960-1965; Shivaji) and AVM Hari Mohan (Retd).

The welcome address by Cmde N A J Joseph and self-introductions broke the ice. As 'nice' as the Rimcollians tried to be in their introduction, there was always someone in the audience to prove the narration as false and made sure the gathering knew the original version of the stories. Mr Balakrishna and Maj Gen P Rajagopal took a trip down the memory lane, and the other gentlemen followed suit. Cdr Raju Mathews did manage to inspire the youngsters with his persona throughout the event. During the course

of events a short presentation was screened highlighting the numerous feats achieved by our fellow Rimcollians. Cdr Sanjay Nandal (Retd) (1978-83; Pratap), Capt V Maniktala (1979-84; Shivaji) and Cdr CM Verghese (Retd) (1981-1986; Ranjit) being contemporaries of Cmde Joseph and Cmde Mathai at school – the banter among them and stories recounted during introductions were particularly juicy and exciting. And Cdr M B Prakash (1984-1990; C'Gupta) followed suit.

As the late comers poured in from their respective offices, the room was filled with anecdotes echoing from all the corners of the room about mischievous pursuits during school days and they continued to go on until the mouth-watering Scotch eggs were served with Scotch. The host for the evening Cmde Simon Mathai NM was assisted by his team of gunners which included Lt Cdr



Nithun Gopinath (1995-2000; Ranjit) and Lt Cdr Deepak Suhag (2003-2007; Shivaji) who made sure that all arrangements were in order.

The maximum commotion in the event was caused by Lt Cdr Yogesh Tiwari, Lt Cdr Hemprakash Chamola, Lt Cdr Sawan Kalyan, Lt Cdr Nikhil Prabhune and Lt Cdr Arvind Paul all belonging to the 163 Course, who were undergoing various Naval Specialisations Courses at Kochi. Lt Cdr Rishiraj and Lt Cdr Sudhanshu continued their humorous and amusing discussions of Pratap Section which never really reached conclusions. This time the junior lot were saved the cross questioning by the ladies as time was a premium but the ladies too chipped in with their share of memories particularly Mrs Rita Mathew and Mrs Priya Singh; The other ladies Mrs Rajagopal, Mrs Jenny Joseph, Mrs Rosemary Mathai, Mrs Maniktala giving knowledgeable grins and Mrs Renu Chamola and Mrs Monalisa along with the kids wondering what the hullabaloo was all about.

Post the humorous introduction and chatter session, the ceremonial cake was cut in the traditional manner by Brig Vijay Kumar (the eldest Rimcollian present) and SLt Anmol Rawat (the youngest Old Boy), thus marking the 96th anniversary of our Alma Mater. The children who were in a world of their own were more excited at the cake cutting and the video film. The group photograph followed the cake cutting ceremony and was an event in itself as the shots were demanded from varied angles and of all possible permutations of course groups, section groups etc.

While many young Rimcollians were away due to pressing commitments, Cmde and Mrs B K Mohanty who coincidentally were at Kochi for the Signal School Diamond Jubilee celebration made it to the Get together. An inspiring feat for they had just driven into the base an hour prior to the function and it was wonderful to see the contemporaries reminiscing about the old times. Mr C A Joseph our history teacher, Cmde B K Kumar (Retd), Capt H S Sandhu, Cdr Ashok (Retd) were others at Kochi who missed out due to prior commitments.

The spread of delectable dishes consisting of traditional RIMC English course were awaiting the raid by the

younger brigade after what seemed like a never-ending round of drinks. The Scotch eggs kept pouring in until we realised there was no reason to charge and very soon our focus shifted to the appealing Coffee Pudding. The sumptuous dinner did manage to tantalize everyone's taste buds. Soon the moment came for everyone to bid farewell and it was time for hugs and goodbyes. One could feel the nostalgia in the air but at the same time everybody was high spirited at the end of it all. As Rimcollians bid adieu, everyone looked forward to the next meet but at the same time promising to keep the flag always flying high. ■



**Standing Row:** Lt Cdr Nithun Gopinath, Lt Cdr Hemprakash Chamola, Lt Cdr Nikhil Prabhune, Lt Cdr Sawan Kalyan, Lt Cdr Arvind Paul, Capt V Maniktala, Lt Cdr Yogesh Tiwari, Cmde Simon Mathai, Cdr Raju Mathew (Retd), AVM Hari Mohan(Retd), Maj Gen P Rajagopal (Retd), Cdr Sanjay Nandal (Retd), Lt R P Singh, Cdr CM Verghese (Retd), Cdr M B Prakash, Cmde N A J Joseph, Lt Cdr Rishi Raj

**Seated Row:** Mrs Renu Chamola, Mrs Jenny Joseph, Mrs Priya Singh, Mrs Rita Mathew, Mr Balakrishna, Brig S Vijay Kumar (Retd), Mrs Radhika Rajagopal, Mrs Seema Maniktala, Mrs Monalisa, Miss Rianna Mathai, Miss Nitya Maniktala, Mrs Rosemary Mathai

**Kneeling:** Lt Cdr Deepak Suhag, SLt Akhilesh Gupta, Miss Lavanya Maniktala, Miss Ann Mary Joseph, SLt Anmol Rawat, Lt Cdr S K Sudhanshu

# RIMCOLLIAN REUNION LUNCH AT HYDERABAD

— Col C ARVIND

The Hyderabad Rimcollian reunion lunch was organized at RSAOMI Secunderabad on 11 Mar 2018. The following Rimcollians and ladies attended:-

● Cdr B Dayanand Raju	RANJIT	1957-62
● Major PT Choudary	RANJIT	1958-62
● Maj Gen & Mrs Rajendra Singh	RANJIT	1958-62
● Lt Gen & Mrs KS Rao	PRATAP	1959-63
● Mrs Gossain W/O Maj Gen R Gossain	RANJIT	1959-63
● Lt Col P Rangarao	RANJIT	1959-63
● Wg Cdr & Mrs AG Thadani	PRATAP	1960-64
● Mr VAP Reddy	SHIVAJI	1960-64
● Air Cmde & Mrs M Ramakrishna	SHIVAJI	1960-64
● Col & Mrs PVK Choudhary	RANJIT	1960-65
● Wg Cdr BLN Raju	RANJIT	1961-65
● Brig Vinay Sagar	RANJIT	1964-68
● Col M Varada Raj	PRATAP	1964-68
● Col & Mrs C Arvind	SHIVAJI	1965-69
● Mr & Mrs PK Madhav	CHANDRAGUPTA	1965-69
● Col & Mrs NK Jha	CHANDRAGUPTA	1971-76
● Col & Mrs Raajan Chopra	SHIVAJI	1973-77
● Col Dhiraj Ramanand	RANJIT	1987-93
● Sqn Ldr & Mrs L Binoy Singh	CHANDRA GUPTA	1999- 04
● Sqn Ldr Umang Nautiyal	SHIVAJI	2000-04
● Sqn Ldr Mrityunjay Dhar	CHANDRAGUPTA	2000- 05
● Sqn Ldr & Mrs V Sudheep	SHIVAJI	2001-05
● Sqn Ldr & Mrs Ashish Sharma	SHIVAJI	2001-06

● Sqn Ldr & Mrs Gautam	CHANDRAGUPTA	2002-06
● Sqn Ldr & Mrs Siddharth Rawat	RANJIT	2002-06
● Capt Manasvi Shukla	SHIVAJI	2007-11
● Col & Mrs Ashish Vasudeva		

We were honoured to have Mrs Krishna Choudhary W/O Late Lt Col PAR Choudhary, also attend the reunion. C m d e KV Subramaniam,- RANJIT 1959-63, Mrs R Madhav Rao W/O Late Maj Gen Madhav Rao, and Col & Mrs RN Balagopal PRATAP- 1959-63, fell ill with viral infection and had to drop out at the last moment. Wg Cdr Unni Kartha- RANJIT 1962-66, not having his wife here to remind him, also missed the get together.

The Hyderabad Rimcollian Association has been organizing



# RIMCOLLIANS GET TOGETHER AT GUWAHATI

— Brig MOHIT GANDHI

It all started as a message on the North East Rimcollians WhatsApp Group posted by Col Ritesh that he was moving out and would be in Guwahati from 14-17 April indicating that he would like to meet Rimcollians at Guwahati. I messaged him that we could have dinner together while we organized a get together for all Rimcollians around Guwahati after ascertaining a suitable date later.

I soon received a message from Gen Peru that he would be in Guwahati on 14 April (not sure if by design?) and if we could schedule a get together on 14th. That set the ball rolling with more Rimcollians signing up for the event. Initial reservations of 14 April (being Bihu – the Assamese New Year) actually helped as two Rimcollians belonging to Guwahati but posted elsewhere were in station and could attend.

The get together was held in the Officers Mess of 1 ABW and was attended by the following Rimcollians:-

Ser	Name	Section	Years
(a)	Brig N Deka	Shivaji	1956-60
(b)	Col PP Agarwala	Chandragupta	1963-67
(c)	Col Ranjan Dutta	Pratap	1963-67
(d)	Maj Gen PN Anantha Narayan	Chandragupta	1975-79
(e)	Mr. Viswajit Pathak	Chandragupta	1975-79
(f)	Col DS Bhattacharya	Chandragupta	1980-85
(g)	Brig Mohit Gandhi	Pratap	1981-85
(h)	Col WJK Singh	Chandragupta	1982-86
(j)	Mr. Marjit Singh	Chandragupta	1995-99
(k)	Maj Himanjan Sarma	Shivaji	2003-08

The other Rimcollians who could not make it due to some prior commitments on being out of station or were indisposed were Ramdas Kakati, BK Choudhary Col RTC Gohain, Jaideep Saikia and Tanmoy Baruah.

the get together regularly every quarter and also whenever outstation Rimcollians come over. Generally lunch is organised on a Sunday so that senior/ elderly Rimcollians coming from far off locations in Hyderabad can commute with ease. Serving Rimcollians also find the Sunday lunch convenient to attend. A

conscious effort is also made to invite the wives of Rimcollians who are no more with us. Transportation is also arranged for these ladies as and required. Among the serving Rimcollians this time, the young Air Force Rimcollians who stole the show with their large numbers. ■



The Hyderabad Rimcollian GTG at the RSI

The get together had some solemn moments with Mr Viswajit Pathak requesting a minute's silence in honour of Rimcollians who passed away recently that included Lt Gen PS Jaggi and Brig CS Thapa.

Col Ranjan Dutta narrated a hilarious incident from the times when they 'maroed' five chickens from a Section Master's house. Gen Peru narrated an incident when he as the Assistant Adjutant at NDA was successful in manipulated an imminent withdrawal of a Rimcollian to merely a relegation. The ladies were as spirited and were rather happy having married Rimcollians with their high sense of duty (to their wives too) and their wonderful 'Rimcollian Spirit'.

The 1 ABW band played some haunting melodies. The weather gods blessed the gathering with very



hospitable weather. Dinner had the traditional Scotch eggs along with grilled chicken and the mandatory tipsy pudding. It was wonderful catching up

with fellow Rimcollians. The NE WAG will update you of our next get together as it happens. Meanwhile, greetings from Guwahati. 'ICH DIEN'. ■

# RIMCOLLIAN REUNION AT VIZAG

— Lt Cdr **KARAN TYAGI**



As the school celebrated the ninety sixth founder's day, the old boys at Vizag got together on 17 March and celebrated the annual event in customary style. The senior most old boy at Vizag, Rear Admiral V Srinivas, NM, Flag Officer Submarines, hosted a fabulous dinner at his residence to commemorate the occasion. A total of twenty five Rimcollians attended the get together.

As usual, Capt Manish Sain led the way in planning and arranging administrative support, with Cdr Divyendu Sharma and Lt Cdr Amrit Kumar ably doing the ground work. The Admiral's house was elegantly

decorated and arrangements were made to make the area look like the grand old 'Pavilion.' A selfie corner too was set up, courtesy Mrs Suman (w/o Lt Cdr Rakesh Kumar). The highlight was however, the cakes made by the effervescent Mrs Sonia (w/o Cdr Divyendu Sharma). One depicted the timeless ostrich feathers of the Prince of Wales insignia and the other had a white chocolate model of the RIMC War Memorial on top.

As Reunions go, the evening wasn't without its fair share of cheering and jeering. With the greenhorns of Chandragupta section declared

champions, the rest of us took solace in pulling each other's legs. The well documented Pratap Shivaji rivalry, the unique cheering techniques of Ranjit section and the stinking kit rooms of Shivaji section were some of the hot topics which were deliberated upon with increasing ardor. Time glided by smoothly and after everyone had had their fair share of Scotch eggs, we got together for a group photograph. The eventful evening culminated with Mrs and Rear Admiral Srinivas thanking everyone accompanied by the customary toast to our Alma Mater. ■



**Standing left to right:** Lt Cdr Pranay Chandra with son Ansh, Lt Cdr G Francis, Lt Cdr Rakesh Kumar, Lt Cdr Himanshu, RAdm Vennam Srinivas FOSM, SLT Tanmay, Capt M Sehgal, Capt Manish Sain, Cdr AK Singh, Capt Nitin Parvataneni, Lt Cdr Amrit Kumar, Slt Ravi, Cdr Divyendu Sharma, Cdr BM Bulle  
**Sitting left to right:** Lt Cdr Vishal Sharma, Lt Cdr Anvesh Murti

# REUNION 2018 – MUMBAI CHAPTER



**Sitting L - R :** Lt Cdr Kaushik, Cdr Parimal Verma, Cdr Amit Kothawade, Aman Siwach, Lt Cdr Sandhu (Retd) Cdr Pankaj Sharma, Cdr DK Singh, Capt Supradeepan, Capt DV Rana, Anshuman Mohapatra, Cdr AK Sharma, Cdr Shrawan Kapila

**Standing (L-R) :** Maj Gen Khurshed Balsara (Retd), Cmde Ashok K Aukta, Cdr DS Deshwal(Retd), Col Umesh Thakur,(Retd) LtGen Gurbaxani (Retd), Mr Rinchen Wangdi, Brig Raj Manchanda (Retd), Maj Gen Soli Pavri (Retd), Cmde Inderjit Singh(Retd), Capt Atwal, Capt Santosh Kumar, Mr Vallath Chandrashekar, Maj Gen Gajendra Prasad, Capt Anoop Chauhan, Capt Abhimanyu Mehrotra,(Retd), Cmde Sundeep Verma, Cdr Sumit Sinha

**Holding banner -** Lt Cdr Ruchir Khajuria (Behind Col Umesh Thakur) and Lt Cdr Kaushik Kanigo (right of Capt Anoop Chauhan)

Re-union – 2018, Mumbai Chapter, was organized at the Army Officers' Institute, Sagarmatha, Colaba on 24 March. The get-together was attended by most Rimcollians from Mumbai area exceeding sixty with few absentees from the fleet ships that were away on the call of exigent duties. Most Rimcollians were accompanied with their better halves while we saw strong participation from younger generations as well. Rimcollians from across the military and civil spectrum graced the occasion.

Lt Gen (Retd) MA Gurbaxani was the senior-most of the attendees. The proceedings commenced with the mandatory registration process at the dedicated counter to enable updates on Rimcollian database nurtured over past editions of Re-unions by successive organisers. Latest presentation on

achievements of school for the past one year, as presented by Commandant at RIMC during Re-union '18 was also covered at the venue by Cdr Shrawan Kapila, who was fortunate to attend the school Re-union this year. With loud cheers from the attendees on the presentation slides, inter-section spirit-de-corps was also customarily inevitable setting the party tempo on a high of vivacity and exuberance amongst one and all.

The customary Rimcollian cake-cutting by the senior-most and junior-most of the attendees was followed by address of the gathering by Lt Gen (Retd) MA Gurbaxani. While applauding the achievements of the school and its superlative performance during its glorious history, he also exhorted the Rimcollian fraternity to remain closely connected to the cause of venerable

Rimcollian spirit through regular participation at get-togethers and contribution towards Platinum Jubilee (centennial) celebrations slated in 2022. Few salient issues encompassing ROBA policies were also touched upon by Gen Gurbaxani. The proceedings culminated in a fine luncheon adorned with the delightful Scotch eggs meticulously prepared for the occasion followed by a vibrant group photography with seasoned amateurs from across age groups. Considering the boisterous mood, the event descended deep into the afternoon kissing the gentle rays that characterize the typical spring of Mumbai. Au revoir was the usual refrain as the Rimcollian brethren departed only to converge once again, planning of which has already gained momentum !!! Re-union calling.....Viva RIMC. ■

# MANIPUR RIMCOLLIANS



## PUNE RIMCOLLIAN GET TOGETHER

— Col **VIJAY GIDH** (Retd)



The Pune Reunion was scheduled to be organized at the Pune Sub Area Officers Mess on 25 March 2018, since many of the Rimcollians from Pune were due to visit Dehra Dun for the Reunion this year. However, due to administrative reasons the venue was later

shifted to the Composite Signal Regiment Officers Mess, located next to the RSI. The credit for the spadework this year goes to my RIMC classmate Col Priotosh Deb (Retd), duly supported by Brig Mohit Wadhwa and Maj Anand Bahuguna who were recently posted in the Command

Headquarters. This was the first time in the recent past that the meet had to be organised outside a unit not commanded by a Rimcollian!

It was a warm Sunday afternoon when we assembled at the Officers Mess and the mercury in Pune was almost crossing the

40 degrees mark. But the AC rooms, chilled beer and Rimcollian spirits ensured that it was a memorable event. We had a fairly good gathering of 48 officers and 35 ladies with the special feature again this year being the presence of 15 cadets from NDA, it being mid-term break.

Among the veterans and distinguished Rimcollians, we were fortunate to have the elder of the Mohite brothers, Capt HA Mohite but missed his younger brother Col SA (Minni) Mohite, who passed away in September last year. They were in Kitcheners Section in 1930-40s and though in their 90s, they always made it a point to attend. We had Maj Gen PD Sherlekar and Cdr RS Huja, who were in RIMC in the 1940s.

Among the others present were Lt Col JD Desai, R Adm PD Sharma, Maj Gen IN Luthra, Cdr KS Karandikar, Gp Capt AG Bewoor, Capt (IN) Paradkar, Cols DH Parab and AK Bakshi. It was nice to meet AVM SN Deshpande, who is now posted in Pune apart from the regular attendees. The Rimcollian officers posted as Instructors in NDA were in full strength except for Sqn Ldr Kumar Gaurav who was away with the NDA Squash Team for the Bakshi Cup.

We were glad that Mrs Rajwade, w/o late Maj Gen MR Rajwade and Mrs Bewoor, w/o late AVM KG Bewoor could attend the function. We missed the presence of Mrs Bewoor, Joglekar and Purandhare who would regularly attend till some years back. Gens Yash Malhotra, AR Raikar and Rajan Aney were unable to attend due to prior commitments.

While lunch was being laid, it was the right time to conduct the proceedings. The important achievements of our cadets in school, NDA, IMA and NAVAC were highlighted. Among the Old Boys, the achievements of those Rimcollians who had distinguished themselves in all spheres was briefly touched upon. Lt Gen ST Upasani had recently left Pune to take over HQ Dakshin Bharat Area on 01 March. The news of Shivaji Section winning the Boxing Cup received the maximum cheers (and jeers too) from the audience. Among the achievements of our Alma Mater; it had been a Red Letter day for RIMC when it was awarded the GOC – in



– C Central Command Unit Citation for its sterling performance over the years. RIMC had entered the Limca Book of Records by creating a national record for maximal contribution of officers in the Indian Armed Forces since its inception in 1922. V Adm Bimal Verma, CINCAN inaugurated the Sea Harrier presented to RIMC during his visit on 02 February 2018.

The excellent quality of the Rimcollian Newsletter owing to the efforts of late Brig CS Thapa was appreciated by all. The latest edition of the Camphor series – Pavillion which is a compilation of experiences of Rimcollians of how sports shaped their lives, was a big hit among all present, particularly the NDA cadets. The theme for the Rimcollian calendar this year – Kashmir (1947-48 War and the contributions of Rimcollians) was liked by all as a source of inspiration for the young generation. The College magazine Regalia has grown over the years and all present were glad to go through its rich contents.

Capt HA Mohite surprised everyone when he showed us the copy of Government of India, Defence Department letter of 30 June 1936 addressed to his father, Capt AR Mohite regarding admission of his son Hambir Mohite to the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College in August 1936.

All Rimcollians were requested to forward their Achievements Profile to RIMC for keeping the same in their Dossier maintained in Archives. The fact that the ROBA directory and personal

profile of Rimcollians is being updated was explained, and all present were requested to forward their details to Wg Cdr V S Pundir / ROBA. The highlights of RIMC Centenary Celebrations in March 2022 were briefed. An appeal from the Hony Secretary, Gp Capt Deepak Ahluwalia regarding the necessity of all non-members contributing for ROBA, ROBA Trust and Centenary Fund was stressed upon. Lastly, those Rimcollians who were not members of the Rimcollian Yahoo group started by late Wg Cdr VG Kumar were informed of the necessity of joining this vibrant group.

Many Rimcollians had passed away during the past one year. While the Pune Chapter will never forget Col SA Mohite, the Rimcollian fraternity will surely miss Maj Gen Virendra Singh and Brig CS Thapa for their die-hard Rimcollian spirit.

The menu for the lunch was unfortunately minus Scotch Eggs and Topsy Pudding but nevertheless was delicious and relished by all. The cost factor and civilian caterers this time were the primary reasons for the same.

Finally there was a loud cheer for RIMC. By the time we realized that the customary group photograph had remained to be taken, most of the senior Rimcollians had left by then. Like all good things have to come to an end, we departed with some fine memories of the wonderful time spent, looking forward to the next meet planned in the salubrious climes of Lonavla by Capt (IN) Anoop Chauhan on 20 Sep 2018. ■

# BATCH OF 1964

# WE FOUND A NEW REASON TO CELEBRATE

— Col **PARTHA ROY** (Retd)



The lunch at the Tavern, Mussoorie

**W**e met once again in Dehra Dun half a century after walking out of the hallowed portals of the school, some of us to continue front rolling in NDA and some of us to veer out to untested pastures in “civvy street” (sic). That was 1968. We were perhaps the only batch which met and backslapped each other 50 long years after joining the school as well as leaving school during the Rimcollian Reunions of 2014 and now in 2018.

This madness would not have happened without the single minded,

persistent and continuous needling of dormant old souls all over the country by a person called Maninder (Appi) Bedi and ably seconded by Raj (Pappu) Manucha and Sanjiv Tandon. This actually started a year back when during the 2017 meet Appi almost instructed everyone, “ We are meeting next year again for the occasion of fifty years of leaving school ....let’s start getting after the sleepyheads now itself !”. We decided to even rope in some of the rogues from the pre and post 64 batches. More the merrier. Then started the mails at

constant intervals from Appi with the magic words “Sonewalon Jaag Jao !!”

And so on 10th of March we swooped down on Doon and checked into MJ Residency, a homely hotel in the midst of the now bustling capital city, courtesy the logistics management of Pappu whose house is just a few steps away . It stood to logical reasoning that a high tea be forced upon him, his only option was to say yes! Ratna was her usual wonderful hostess as was her charming daughter Rohini. This was followed by Dinner at DSOI where old



The batch at the Old Boy's Dinner

friends came together. While Maninder, Sanjiv and Salil Bhalla, all three lonesome souls, came from Delhi, Balbir (Billoo) Dhillon surfaced from nowhere (actually Jalandhar) with his better half, amiable daughter and handsome little grandson. The three Bongs came from Kolkata - Utpal Roy, Shakti Banerjee with Sujata and pretty daughter Sara, and the 'Jat' Biplab Mazumdar with Rupa. Moti Pradhan, Sariputta Wangdi and yours truly arrived from Pune with their better three-quarters with Tulika, Wangdi's pretty daughter in tow. Let's face it all our daughters are pretty and ladies of substance! Tulika was to become our official photographer and keep a hawk's eye on her father! No binge drinking! Uday Chitnavis came accompanied by Vidya from Nagpur. Birender (Biru) Sinha from Mumbai with his talented wife and Yash Rawat with Kusum joined us from Vadodara. Tripti Srivastava, wife of Late Amrish (Doc) Srivastava too came along to be with us till 11th. Pradeep Gurung from Siliguri joined us on 12th March. And not to forget Pradeep Negi, the mischievous local. We were fortunate to meet our old masters Mr L N Thakur and Mr R C Chaturvedi too. If we did become good human beings in life then they were some of those who conspired to make us so. Our

respects to them and to the ones who are no more with us. There were quite a few who could not come due to various reasons beyond their control. They were missed this time, maybe some other time.

The morning of 11th took us to Mussorie and Landor followed by a sumptuous lunch at "The Tavern" accompanied by an event that is appropriately named "Beer Flow". We

WE CAME BACK TO THE HOTEL ROOM AND AFTER A BRIEF SNOOZE RENDEZVOUSED ON THE TERRACE OF THE HOTEL FOR ANOTHER DINNER ARRANGED TO PERFECTION BY THE THREE MUSKETEERS, APPI, PAPPU AND SANJIV. LAISHRAM JOYCHAND SINGH FROM AMBALA JOINED US HERE. THIS TIME THE THEME "WHISKEY FLOW"

came back to the hotel room and after a brief snooze rendezvoused on the terrace of the hotel for another dinner arranged to perfection by the three musketeers, Appi, Pappu and Sanjiv. Laishram Joychand Singh from Ambala joined us here. This time the theme "Whiskey Flow". The bonhomie was

suddenly punctured when we were jolted by the heart breaking news of our batch mate Chander (Charlie) Thapa's most untimely passing away that very evening. Charlie, as we all knew him, was an icon of indomitable spirit who did so much for the school. His life story will fill many pages of any write-up. It was perhaps providence that brought us together this time to bid Charlie a tearful final adieu at his home before he was taken to the abode of the Gods at Haridwar, for the final rites. He will be sorely missed. We stand in grief with Vibha and her sons.

On the 12th it was the usual registering, boxing, Commandant's dinner and then on 13th the cricket match, lunch, old boys dinner - don't want to get into all that in greater detail as it will be chronicled elsewhere in this magazine. While all this was going on some of us had the temerity to go to the archives and see our old records kept for posterity with loving care by the school. All our misdoings are there! And most of us sheepishly refused to allow the better halves and daughters to have access to all that!! Let secrets lie in dormancy till the end of time. And thus ended yet another rocking Rimcollian reunion. Let this go on; let this thrive; let this bring us together always and every time. ■

# 50@50 REMINISCES

— Col M B SAXENA (Retd)



Some of the Golden Gang

Come the Ides of March and its pilgrimage time for the blue blooded Rimcollians to head for RIMC. This year (2018) was a special event for the ten (of the original twenty) living and kicking “Detabbed Dynamites” of the class of January, 1968. It was a tad more than 50 years ago on 19th January that 22 young pre-teens joined the RIMC with trepidation in their hearts but a smile on their lips at all times. In later years, they learnt to “wipe that smile” whenever the situation warranted. One such situation was when we were de-tabbed in our final term and sent home for a brief vacation to ‘repent’ for standing by one of our course mates who proved his section master wrong by reaching two star status.

For the past one year, there had been passionate debates, brainstorming and howls of dissent on edifying this momentous occasion and to also do something worthy to display our collective gratitude to our Alma Mater, for making us what we are today. While

for a few of us, it was reaching the pinnacle of the needle shaped services hierarchy (two three star Generals and one Air Marshal) others had very satisfying tenures in education

management, finance and banking. While some others had plunged into farming, running schools for the underprivileged and generally enjoying retirement as it ought to be.



Rimcollianas at Jaypee Manor



Meet the Golden Gang

Reunion 2018 for the Detabbed Dynamites (turned “Golden Gang”) began as almost always with the traditional rendezvous at Vippan and Sneh Chibber’s residence in Dehra Dun where our commemorative T shirts (graphically described in the pictures that adorn this column) that our Bangalore Bandits (PP Reddy and CB put together) were distributed to the 60 year young Old Boys. The bonhomie generated by the “Baalak Hanuman” (yours truly) of the gang was the launch pad for the next three days that were spread over Mussorie and Dehra Dun. Those who showed up at Vippan’s residence were Rakesh Nandan (the lone triple promotee of our course), PP and Anuradha Reddy, Gurkirat Singh, Ravi Gulati with his son Krishna, CB and Shirin, Nanjulla and me. NJ Singh was to join us on 12th while late Satyanarayan’s wife, Kalyani and daughter (Soumya) fetched up en-route to Mussorie. Incidentally, it was a no show from Ranjit while Shivaji took the honours with as many as four participants followed by three from Pratap and two from Chandragupta.

Sneh was the quintessentially warm hostess who was joined by her son,

Varun and his newly minted Canadian wife, Meghan, who has taken to India like fish to water. Vippan’s mother was there to wish the gang many more anniversaries. Our special night was planned in Mussorie. We broke journey at the Unison Girls International School (en route to Mussorie) for lunch, thanks to Vippan who is the project head of the school. Their Principal, Ms Veena Singh, hosted us to a sumptuous lunch overlooking the billiard table top like lawns of her official residence. Incidentally, RIMC cadets (lucky scoundrels) have a ‘Social’ with Unison Girls, thanks to Vippan and Ms Veena Singh. At this pit stop, we were joined by Kalyani and Soumya, the wife and daughter of our dear departed course mate, the late Lt Cdr Achanta Satyanarayana, who had flown in from Hyderabad to add to the cheer.

Soon we were off for our final destination, Jaypee Residency Manor for the “Class Hungama & Gadar” that was marked by anecdotes, real and imagined followed by much song and dance with F & B struggling to keep pace. The ladies were not to be outdone as one can see in their group picture. As the evening wore on, the decibel level got stronger. The

resident band played a few impromptu numbers when we trooped into the dining area which was quickly converted into an impromptu dance floor by the “Rimcollianas” who were making some really nifty moves that had other diners awestruck. Soon the other diners joined in as the saying goes ‘If you can’t beat them, join them’. We very much missed not having Sangeeta (Nandan’s endearing late wife), Binoo (Gurkirat) who was down with a gym induced injury and Suman (Gulati) who had important errands to run in London, in our midst. But Anuradha (Reddy), Shirin (CB), Sneh, Nanjulla (my better half) and Kalyani/Soumya made up for them along with the young and elegant pairing of Varun and Meghan together with Krishna.

RIMC beckoned the next day. Not a minute of the back to back schedule of events was to be missed after all! Rakesh chose to billet himself in the dorms to get a taste of the old days while the rest of us checked into Ramada on Chakrata Road to insulate our wives from the “gadar” of the dorms. After devouring the signature cucumber sandwiches during the hockey match, we hurried back to change into formals for the rest of the evening. The

# COURSE MILESTONES



The Golden Gang with their families at the Martyrs' Column

far better equipped young boxers on display exhibited better technique than we did but I daresay our josh was no less. The next morning's breakfast spread even motivated the "completely vegan" Kalyani to try out a Scotch egg but it was a photo finish (as usual) to make it for the sombre wreath laying at the martyrs' column as the eye popping goodies on the table continued to hold us back. The ceremony was solemn and graceful as always. We were privileged to have the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Chief Marshall B S Dhanoa, in attendance for the second year in a row. I hope our luck with the Air Force in terms of chiefs continues unabated! The stick orderlies were precise and immaculately turned out. However, the usually precise helicopter pilots veered off from the column resulting in the flower petals falling away from the target which caused some disappointment.

Then was the customary group photograph where photographers (our ladies and children) seemed to have outnumbered the objects (Old Boys)! This is a phenomenon that is going from strength to strength, the wider participation of our families. Since it was

our 50th year we had brain stormed over an agonizing six months about how we should contribute to RIMC. A slew of ideas were thrown up ranging from the inspiringly innovative to the absolutely absurd. Finally, the sage advice of the former ROBA President among us (P P Reddy) was heeded to. Accordingly, we presented a collective cheque to the ROBA Trust. Our next appearance was at the cricket pavilion in our anniversary themed midnight blue T shirts accentuated with golden ostrich feathers that drew loud applauses from across all generations of Rimcollians. Ever since, CB has been flooded with inquiries about sourcing this product. At last count, a dozen batches are in touch with the vendor in Bangalore who was Reddy's recommendation. There were subtle inquiries if the "Golden Gang" were indeed the same as the "Thirteen Terrors"! We had a hard time dispelling this doubt that was lurking in the minds of many of the younger Rimcollians. To put it in perspective, the terrors were all from Chandragupta. How is that for punching above one's weight?

Our pride knew no bounds when our collective effort and camaraderie was

lauded by the CAS both during the cultural event on 13th evening and soon after at the ROBA dinner in that we seemed to have set a unique trend by establishing a theme around our course landmark. We received a standing ovation from all the diners in the mess which was a first for many of us. Between the eleven (DP Das chipped in though he was in Germany celebrating his first grandparenthood) of us, we contributed Rs 5.50 lacs.

All of us are senior citizens for almost two years but we retain an element of youthfulness thanks to having kept good health. Some of us are very regular participants at the Reunions held in RIMC and elsewhere that has allowed us to establish and maintain contacts across generations. Happily, all of us are reasonably financially comfortable and lead rather contented lives as grandfathers (Rakesh Nandan, Aniruddha Chakravarty, CB, D P Das and self are the privileged ones, so far) that adds to our bonding. On behalf of the Golden Gang, I wish our preceding and succeeding courses many similar milestones. ■

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## A PROUD MOMENT

— Sqn Ldr **K VINOTH VANYA**

The C 17 Globemasters are the latest addition of “heavy lift aircraft” in IAF inventory. These large military transport aircrafts were developed initially for the United State Air Force (USAF) from 1980s to 1990s by Mc Donnell Douglas. The aircraft performs tactical and strategic airlift missions, transporting troops and outsized cargo, HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief), medical evacuation and airdrop missions. Boeing, which merged with McDonnell Douglas in 1997 later, continued to manufacture the C-17s for export customers following the end of deliveries to the U.S. Air Force. Apart from United States, C-17 is in service with the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, UAE and India.

The Air Force Squadron based at Hindan, UP hosts these majestic aircrafts since 2013. In the initial pool of pilots, there were two Rimcollians selected to train at US Air Force base, Altus - Sqn Ldr L Binoy Singh (2102/C) and Sqn Ldr Prateek Tomar (2138/P). After a gap of three years, few more Rimcollians were posted in the squadron making a total of six Rimcollians in the squadron at a time - a proud moment for the fraternity



indeed. The following were the flyboy Rimcollians in the squadron:-

- Sqn Ldr L Binoy Singh 2102/C
- Sqn Ldr Prateek Tomar 2138/P
- Sqn Ldr Mrityunjay Dhar 2171/C
- Sqn Ldr AS Hundal

2239/R

- Sqn Ldr K Vinoth Vanya 2249/C
- Sqn Ldr Varun Agrawal 2277/P

Never have there been so many Rimcollians at a time and hence we decided to capture this wonderful moment on the lens and share with the community. Three cheers for RIMC !!! ■

# RIMCOLLIAN SUMMITS EVEREST



Abhishek Ashu Kankan and also the second Rimcollian to successfully lead an expedition after Brigadier Darshan Khullar, under whose tutelage Bachendari Pal had summited.

Col Sarfraz Singh unveils the Rimcollian Crest on the Everest

The team under Col Sarfraz Singh who is also the first Director and Principal of NIMAS had earlier climbed Mt Gorichen (6488 M), Mt Trishul (7120 M) and Mt Lobuche in Nepal as part of Mt Everest expedition preparations. Col Sarfraz now plans to scale Mt Vinson in Antarctica followed by Mt Denali near Alaska. He is an avid mountaineer who has already climbed a total of fourteen peaks including the highest peaks of Asia, Europe, Africa and South America. Col Sarfraz was in RIMC from 1991 to 1995 in Shivaji Section. Sporting excellence incidentally runs in his family. His father Col Balbir Singh has been an outstanding hockey player, an Olympian and a coach of the national hockey team. Upon their return to India, Col Sarfraz and his team was felicitated in the capital by the Raksha Mantri in June 2018.

A mountaineering expedition to Mt Everest was recently conducted by National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS) located in Dirang, Arunachal Pradesh. In this expedition, eight climbers including six Army personnel successfully scaled Everest from the South-East ridge on 19 and 20 May. The expedition was led by Col Sarfraz Singh,

a Rimcollian, of 6 PARA. He along with his team scaled Sagarmatha in their maiden attempt. The expedition team under him achieved success by not only putting all members on the summit but by also bringing them back safely without a single casualty, a rare feat for a large group.

He is the second Rimcollian to summit the peak after Commander



The NIMAS Team meeting the Raksha Mantri in New Delhi

# THE IAS JOURNEY

— SIMRANDEEP SINGH



As DC Leh - Facilitating Airlift of 250 NIT Students

I was in RIMC from May 1998 to May 2003, as part of the 153rd course. My grandfather, a retired JCO from the Corps of Signals, wanted me to go to the RIMC. However, my father and I always wished a career in Civil Services. Academically, I was an above average student in the school. I cleared NDA written examination and thereafter my SSB from Bhopal as a naval cadet, but did not join the Academy. Instead, I pursued my graduation as a student of Geology & Geography in Jammu University. These subjects were particularly chosen with an eye on the larger goal of clearing the Civil Services exam at an early age.

The preparation for the UPSC began from the very first year of the graduation program. In the process, I topped in

graduation in Jammu University in May 2006. Since my age permitted me to take the first attempt of the Civil Services only in May 2007, I thought of joining a Coaching Center in Delhi. For one year, it was serious preparation of 12-15 hours of study a day. In fact, during that year I went into complete hiding with absolutely no contact with any friend or relative. The year 2007 was spent in clearing different stages of the Civil Services examination - Preliminary in May; Mains in October-November and the viva in April 2008. Finally, on 16th May, 2008, UPSC declared the result and I cracked it, securing 52nd rank in the all India Merit list. The IAS is one of the three All India Services (AIS) in the country which in other words means that the officers are

recruited by the Union Government but they are required to serve under the State Governments.

I was allotted to the J&K Cadre. The training began at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussorie, in September 2008. The state of Uttarakhand has had a special place in my life as I spent the best seven years of my life in this hill state - five years in RIMC at Dehradun and two years in Mussorie. In LBSNAA, I discovered that I was the youngest officer in my batch. The journey in IAS in the last ten years has been very satisfying and fulfilling. J&K is an extremely difficult cadre for obvious reasons. The only good part is that it provides abundant opportunities to



Announcing the result of Lok Sabha Election-2014 for Ladakh Parliamentary seat

meet and interact with Rimcollians. I also believe the Civil Services have a huge role to play in establishing good governance in the State.

I have, in the last ten years, served at various field and staff appointments. I started my journey as SDM, Nowshera in Rajouri District in 2010. That's the first posting for any Direct Recruit IAS Officer (as SDM). Later, I served as Deputy

Secretary in the Civil Secretariat in the General Administration Department. From 2013 to 2015, I served as District Magistrate of Leh and from 2015 to 2018, I served as District Magistrate of Jammu. In both these field postings at Leh and Jammu, I worked very closely with the Security/Defence forces. Particularly in Leh, where the 14 Corps of Indian Army is located, we worked in

close synergy to resolve all longstanding issues. Some of the issues which were unsettled since 1962 could see the light of day. I always believe that close coordination and healthy relations between the civil administration and the Armed forces are very important for the good of both sides.

In fact, at Leh, the then Army Commander of Northern Command, Lt Gen DS Hooda and the then Air Commander of WAC, Air Marshal SS Soman, conferred their Commendation Cards and Citations upon me, which I believe was a rare honour for a civil servant. Currently, I am posted as Chairperson of the Services Selection Board of J&K, which is mandated to carry out recruitments at group C and D levels for all departments in the state. The values and leadership inculcated at RIMC have enabled me to work sincerely and fearlessly. So far, I am enjoying every bit of the job as I still maintain the energy and enthusiasm of a young cadet or an Officer Trainee. Another heartening development post my selection has been the entry of nearly eight-nine Rimcollians in the IAS/IPS/IRS cadres. I personally wish to see this number growing. I hope other Rimcollians also view this trend as a positive development. ■



Receiving the PM at Jammu University

# OF IDEALS AND PERFECTION - ADJUTANT @ INA

— Lt **BHUPENDRA CHAND**

All those who have been through the grind of Academies can veritably connect to the one person who ensured they passed out a different person – the Adjutant, a phonetically-cute synonym for the more direct ‘dandpaal’. His quirks, his idiosyncrasies and every (un)spoken word that shot from his mouth was more than potent to support or dismantle their peaceful universe. For those of us in the navy, it is quite common to relate ‘Adjutant’ to the NDA although our very own Indian Naval Academy which has evolved and grown into Asia’s largest Naval Academy follows the same traditional hierarchy where the Adjutant plays a lynchpin role. Ask any naval cadet, and he would go on ranting about how the Adjutant rides his charger on the parade ground, how he addresses them and enlivens the parade before the POP; mere facts that transgress words and convey the larger picture – the need to have role models like ‘the Adjutant’ at ab-initio academies.

The Nat Geo documentary on INA was centred around the thoughts and experiences of the Adjutant, as was very well evident. Is it fortuitous then, that the Adjutant at the INA happens to be a Rimcollian – Cdr Gaurav Rana (145th Course Ranjit Section). Having mentored naval cadets term after term he stands as a true icon for all of them and will be remembered throughout. He has been the much needed fillip to a young INA which is now well established. Here’s wishing him good luck to continue performing this challenging task so well and churning out future naval leadership in the brilliant way that he has done till now. ■



# City documaker chosen for Hollywood summer school

Sagi Sree Hari Varma directed FIFA World Cup documentary

**B. MADHU GOPAL  
VISAKHAPATNAM**

Sagi Sree Hari Varma of Visakhapatnam, who had successfully directed the documentary 'Go Mordovia' last year, for the FIFA World Cup 2018, has now been selected for a summer school programme in film direction being conducted by the USC School of Cinematic Arts in Hollywood.

"My documentary 'Go Mordovia' was screened several times ahead of the FIFA WC 2018, which opened on Friday. I was invited to watch all the games and would have happily stayed back in Moscow till August this year but I could not afford to miss the golden opportunity of joining the summer programme in Los Angeles from June 24," Mr. Varma told *The Hindu*. "The summer course enables me to interact with senior professionals from the film industry in Hollywood besides giving me a chance to look for possible opportunities there. Though I have plans to do a few projects in Moscow, my immediate plan is to join the summer course," he said.

**Fully-funded project**  
Mr. Varma, who was selected



Sagi Sree Hari Varma at the VGIK Film School in Moscow.

to make the documentary, had developed the concept and directed it while the cast and crew of the film were Russians. A 25 days workshop, making of the documentary and travel expenses were fully funded by the Ministry of Culture, Government of Russia.

He had filmed an interview with legendary actress Sridevi in December for promoting Indian cinema in Russia. Mr. Varma had done his schooling at Sri Prakash

Vidya Niketan in the city before moving to RIMC, Dehradun. He completed his B.Tech at VTU, Bengaluru, in June, 2017. His father S.V.S.N. Raju is a Deputy Executive Engineer in the Visakhapatnam Urban Development Authority (VUDA).

#### How it started

"When I was doing my engineering course in Bengaluru, I worked as a volunteer for the People for Animals (PFA), an NGO. I made a

short video clip on 'animal welfare' and sent it to animal rights activist and Union Minister Maneka Gandhi. She liked the clip and suggested that I make a full-length documentary," he recalled.

"I have plans to make a documentary in Moscow on World War II. I am researching on the subject. I have already learnt reading, writing and the basics of Russian language during my nine-month stay in Moscow," he said about his future plans.

**Editor's Note:** Sagi Sree Verma is talented film-maker, probably first from the school. He has a long way to go and bring many a laurels to the school.



CNS congratulating DCC Lulu Lourembam a Naval cadet

# THE NDA POP MAY 2018

— Col **VIJAY Y GIDH** (Retd)

The President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind took the salute at the 134th passing out parade at the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakvasla on 30 May 2018. The bi-annual passing out parade, a somber occasion, was especially more poignant this time, as the Subedar Major Drill of the NDA, Subedar Major Rajeev Kumar Rai had died of heart attack while conducting the parade practice only a few days prior. A veteran of service in the Siachen, Kashmir and the North East, Sub Maj Rai was posted to the Academy since October 2014. In tribute to him, the cadets were resolved to put up such a show as had never been witnessed on the Khetarpal parade ground, named after its most illustrious alumni, posthumous Param Vir Chakra awardee, young Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal.

- |   |
|---|
| <b>1. BCC Akshat Raj</b><br>President's Gold Medal        |
| <b>2. ACC Md Sohail Islam</b><br>President's Silver Medal |
| <b>3. CSM Tomthin</b><br>Comdt's Special Prize            |
| <b>4. Cdt Abhay Singh</b><br>Blazer in Riding             |
| <b>5. Cdt Onkar Dalvi</b><br>Blazer in Riding             |

In addition to Blazer in Riding, 03 Blue & 07 Half Blue, Best in PT and 18 Merit Cards have been awarded to Rimcollian Cadets in various disciplines.

As the Rashtrapati alighted from the horse drawn carriage, he was received by the Commandant, Air Marshal IP Vipin. At the far end of the parade ground, 854 cadets wearing white patrols were lined up in their squadrons on either side of

the Nishan Toli, bearers of the President's Colours, conferred earlier on the Academy by President Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy in December 1978.

Standing tall, right in front was their sword-bearing leader, ACC Mohammad Sohail Islam. As he sprung to attention on arrival of President Kovind at the Quarter Deck, the commentary paused. The chatter of the parents and siblings of the cadets graduating that day and the Pune gentry, who make the way up to Khadakvasla twice yearly for the spectacle, fell away. A hush fell over the ten thousand odd spectators. After his reverberating word of command for a general salute, sword in hand, Sohail Islam marched up to the dais to report the Academy present on parade for inspection by the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Thereafter, Islam



BCC Akshat Raj receiving the PGM



ACC Mohd Sohail Islam winning the Silver Medal

mounted the ceremonial jeep alongside his Supreme Commander for the circuit of the parade ground as the Rashtrapati inspected the smartly turned out cadets. Islam then led the parade in its march past, doing an electric 'eyes right' while lowering his sword in salute as he strode past the Quarter Deck, followed by the squadrons.

A total of 344 cadets of the 134th course, which included 238 from the Army, 26 from the Navy and 80 from the Air Force graduated from the Academy. These include 15 cadets from friendly foreign countries Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Lesoto.

Addressing the passing out cadets, President Ram Nath Kovind who is the first President after APJ Abdul Kalam to review the parade, said "The armed

forces in India truly represent the country's pluralism and ethos. The armed forces are a symbol of excellence and dedication for the entire country. A soldier or an officer in uniform, irrespective of whether he or she is from the Army, the Navy or Air Force, evokes admiration and trust everywhere in the country. Today, you become role models for our young people, guarantors of our peace and prosperity and guardians of our nation".

Reminiscing his recent visit to the Siachen glacier, Kovind said "the soldiers and officers posted there made him proud. The President expressed his condolences over the recent death of NDA's Subedar Major Drill a few days ago. You (cadets) owe your professional credo to the NDA that has groomed you into leaders". He asked the cadets to

cherish the late Sub Maj Rai who trained you for this ceremony.

Chief of Naval Staff, Adm Sunil Lanba, who is also Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, Southern Army Commander, Lt Gen DR Soni, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, Lt Gen Satish Dua were present for the parade. Battalion Cadet Captain Akshat Raj won the coveted President's Gold Medal for standing first in the overall order of merit, while Academy Cadet Captain Mohammad Sohail Islam bagged the Silver Medal for standing second, both being Rimcollians. The Kilo Squadron bagged the prestigious Chiefs of Staff Banner, for being the Champion Squadron of the Academy.

On a personal note, after the parade, it was nice to meet BCC Akshat Raj and ACC Sohail Islam during the High Tea at the Salaria Square opposite the Sudan Block. Akshat, whose father is a government teacher, hails from West Champaram in Bihar and is set to become a first-generation Army officer from his family. Sohail, son of an ex-serviceman from West Bengal, wanted to continue the legacy of serving the Army as per his father's wishes. They both attributed their success to their parent's support and the guidance of their instructors. The duo have shared a "friendly rivalry" right from the days they came together as cadets in RIMC. Akshat and Sohail were good friends and competed hard against each other at the RIMC, and later at the NDA. Akshat was the all-India topper in the NDA entrance exam 2015. The passing out course consisted of 12 Rimcollian cadets, of which 7 were from the Army, 4 from the Navy and 1 from the Air Force.

One Master and 20 cadets from the RIMC attended the Commandant's Parade on 28 May, as part of their visit to Pune and Mumbai. After the parade, the RIMC cadets interacted with some of the NDA cadets, apart from visiting some of the training facilities in NDA. When asked about the parade and visit, they said they were really impressed and were fully motivated to join the NDA and Armed Forces. ■

# FROM DOON VALLEY TO BANJARA HILLS

— KARAN MOR

**M**y life post RIMC has been quite off beat. It has been quite a journey from the idyllic Doon Valley to the urban and fast-paced Banjara Hills of Hyderabad, the upmarket commercial district of the twin-city. Having passed out from the RIMC in 2000, I joined the National Defence Academy but left due to foreseen yet unavoidable circumstances. I then went on to pursue my hotel management from the Army Institute of Hotel Management at Bangalore, a four year degree course. At that time, the course was really happening, plus didn't seem like too much studies!

Being from RIMC, and everybody knowing about it, life was relatively easy as I didn't have to go through the whole razzmatazz of so called 'ragging'. The only time the seniors tried acting funny with our course-mates, they were put in place rather soberly by me and two other Georgian course-mates. We were the tough guys! Life was a breeze for the next four years as very early I realised that what was common fare in the school was actually equivalent to outstanding outside. Of course initially civilian life was a bit of a shocker, but turning things around didn't take much.

Having done equally well both inside and outside the academic circle, I was fortunate enough to get selected for the Management Training (MT) Programme by the ITC Hotels. Every young hotel management graduate aims at getting through one of the MT programmes of the top hotel chains. However what was most satisfying for me was that after seven rounds of interviews (which in all honesty felt like 22 SSB Bhopal), my final selection round in Gurgaon was presided



by the who's who of the chain and they all knew about the school! It was evident in the interview as when I mentioned the four letters (RIMC) the crack of gentle smiles on their faces was advance acknowledgement of my first naukri.

Having worked with the ITC for about three years, I moved back to Hyderabad, which also happens to be home. I joined a three star property in its project phase as its Operations Head but was soon asked by the owners to take

over as the General Manager (GM) because the hotel had gotten off to a great start while the multiple GMs before me but could not really keep up with the pace and the zeal of the young staff that was recruited by me. Though it was a mid-sized 60 room property, we made sure that they were always on 90 per cent occupancy with heavy food and beverage turnover and since it was closer to the cantonment, it was visited by the Faujis and civilians alike.

The year 2010 was the watershed year for me. After three years of being at my A-game, I got bitten by the "Entrepreneurship ka Keeda". With meagre savings, a sizeable loan from a relative and a partner in tow, after lots of ups and downs, we opened our first venture called Urban Asia. It was a rapid start. Our first major recognition came from India Today in July 2011 where Urban Asia was rated as the 3rd best restaurant in the city. Three more awards later, in 2014 we opened our next restaurant Eat India Company, an Indian fine dine in the same building, which was again very well received by the market. The Eat India Company in its very first year of operations won the Times Food Guide Award for the best Indian restaurant.

Then came the real game changer in in early 2016 in the form of Tiki Shack – Rooftop bar which absolutely changed the way Hyderabad partied and also fetched us the Best Dive Bar in India from the India Night Life Awards, and of course a lot of acclaim around the south. Since then we have opened four more restaurants and clubs and a big metro station food court project with Larsen and Toubro is on its way in its initial phase. Today, eight Times Food Guide Awards and almost 15 other awards later, the two that I hold closest to my heart are:

- The Who's who under 35 and the Top 3 restaurants by India Today.
- Restrauteur of the Year 2018 award by Times Food and Nightlife Awards.

This may all look very glamorous from the outside but the journey from being a modest employee to leading a

## SIMPLY HYDERABAD

Cover Story



### INCREDIBLY INDIAN

Karan Mor, 31

EAT INDIA COMPANY

Ever since the quirky Eat India Company opened three months ago, Karan Mor has been ecstatic and not without reason. The buzz began even when it was merely a board hung outside and the place was still getting done. But with a name like that, it's no surprise people were curious. His only rue is the extra 17 kgs he gained as a result of constantly sampling dozens of rich delights dished out by chefs from Delhi and Lucknow who were roped in for the restaurant's refreshingly different take on North Indian cuisine. "A guest compared our butter chicken to that of Gulati's in Delhi, which is the ultimate, according to me, at least," says Mor. "We wanted to ensure it's not the same commercial paneer tikka and butter naan fare. That can get pretty boring."

**SOME LIKE IT HOT** Eat India Company has caught on for its subtle flavours and a firm no-extra-spice policy. Enter melt-in-the-mouth Tandoori broccoli kebabs and Aloo firdousi, an indulgent snack of dry fruits stuffed in potato hulls. **AT** Eat India Company, Road No 36, Jubilee Hills

Karan Mor at  
Eat India Company

400 strong family of associates working alongside me has been anything but easy. From cleaning toilets, waiting tables, doing dishes, pairing vegetables, suffering abusive guests to sleepless nights and working exceedingly long hours – it has been one roller-coaster ride. Of this hard-won success, a huge chunk of it is owed to the school. Traits like discipline, compassion, empathy, hard and smart work, street smartness, the ability to converse with and convince every strata of people, decision making and most importantly being level headed

is something the school tried to imbibe in us on a daily basis. I guess that's what makes most Rimcollians not only successful but also great human beings as well. I am enormously proud of my schooling and wear it with all humility on my sleeve (quite literally, for all those who have seen the Rimcollian tattoo).

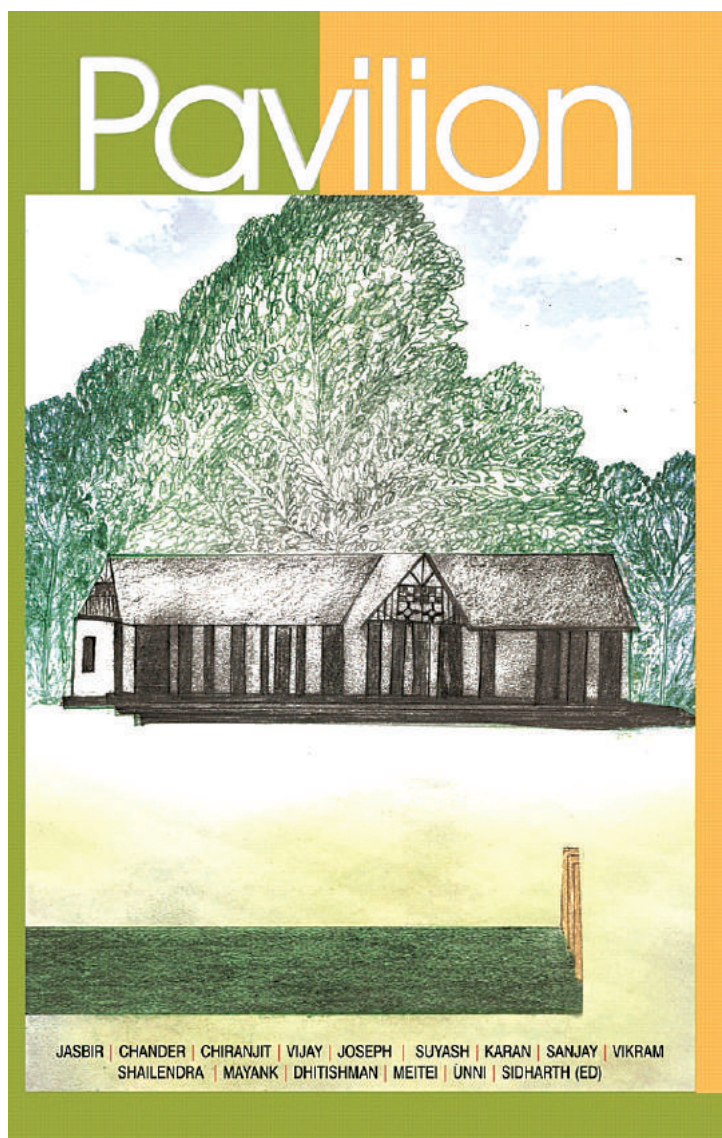
Lastly, I wish to thank my parents for sending my elder brother Col Saminder Mor, SM to RIMC and to Saminder for paving the way and inspiring me to join the school, and making me the man I am today. Three Cheers for RIMC!!!

# PAVILION RECORDING SPIRIT OF FAIRPLAY

— Col **SHAILENDER ARYA**

The Pavilion is the sixth book of the Camphor series of books which commenced publication in 2013 with the Camphor Avenue. Since then a much-awaited book is printed every year, and there are plans to culminate with a grand tenth book during the centenary celebrations of the RIMC in 2022. The theme of Pavilion was games and sports in RIMC, a topic close to many hearts, as sporting deeds have traditionally made up better part of the lovely years in Dehradun. In many ways the sixth book is also about the sixth sense, the extrasensory perception not internally originated, which many Rimcollians possess in plenty when on the playing fields. They can instinctively recognise the direction the game is taking, sense the to-be-hits and the misses, and thus play accordingly to be in the winning team. But the book is not only about sporting excellence and record-breaking by the alumni; the bench-warmers, the cheering party leaders, and the overenthusiastic rabbit string players are adequately covered. Another highlight of the book is its enhanced length and the multiple contributors. The book spans fifty long years of sports in RIMC and is the longest book from the Camphor stable till date with 156 pages and 19 contributors.

The book commences with an excellent backgrounder on the origins of the Camphor series and the journey so far by the editor, Mr Sidharth Mishra. The piece is aptly titled 'A Stroll Down the Camphor Avenue'. Mr Sidharth Mishra, much like the movie director Subhash Ghai who loves making a guest appearance in his own films, makes another contribution later in the book titled 'Monkey Found His Troop'. He writes about the early eighties in the school, the now-lost game of 'mugger', his X-country travails, and number of small tales on athletics including on the healing properties of a pain relief cream named Dr Sloan's Liniment which was initially meant for horses. He concludes with a mention



about the intrinsic sense of fair play among Rimcollians.

It is followed by a preface by Col Dilip H Parab, the longest serving RIMC Commandant from 1991 to 1997, and himself an excellent sportsman. Brigadier Jasbir Singh in his narration 'Up, Up and Away' focuses on the cross-country competition for the juniors in 1962 and the inter-section athletics championship of 1963 including his record-breaking high jump. The next contributor is Brigadier Chander Singh Thapa who has written 'Life and Sports Venues Outside the School'. Sadly Brigadier Thapa is no longer with us and this was his last contribution to the Camphor series. He has described his life by a series of sports related events and incidents, effortlessly weaving them around his growing up years in the Doon Valley and beyond. The story also reflects his love for sports and all things outdoors.

Mr Chiranjit Banerjee follows up with an eloquent 'Sporting Sensations of Rajwada' covering a wide canvas of the sporting legends of RIMC from his time in the school. He describes them quite vividly as a combination of their life on the playing fields as well as their personalities off the fields. Colonel Vijay Yeshvant Gidh in his 'Punching all my Life' has focussed on boxing, a sport closely associated with the RIMC. It is almost a rite of passage in the school to don the boxing gloves. Colonel Gidh covers his life in the ring in the RIMC and the NDA, and the related experiences like meeting Mary Kom. The next contributor is Commodore NAJ Joseph. He has titled his piece as 'Life – the Big Game', covering the various college level athletic events, the much-awaited district athletics of Dehradun, some gymnastics and hockey, and finally the impact of sports on the personality and character development.

Brigadier Suyash Sharma in his 'Being a sport' commenced with table tennis, his attempts at boxing, and his excellence at the racket games, particularly squash. However, he concludes his narration with the effects too much of outdoors, some mountaineering included, may have on the body, thus prompting him to switch over to a much gentler golf in the recent

years! The next piece 'Sports in My Life' is by Mr Karan Bamba, wherein the author outrightly confesses that sports and him never went together but still builds up a wonderful narration of his early RIMC days including some 'toughening up' tales, his growing up in cantonments and the later life in the civvy street, while keeping a safe distance away from any form of strenuous physical activity.

Colonel Sanjay Kannothe in his 'Leather, Willows, and What They Taught Us' describes his forays in swimming and boxing, and the lessons the playing fields imparted on the young minds of the boys. Possibly the sports converted Rimcollians into gracious losers and equally magnanimous in victory. The next piece 'The Far Pavilions' by Colonel Shailender Arya describes the sporting scene in RIMC in the early nineties, both on the fields and off it. His narration is interspersed with amusing incidents, few ghost stories and some adventures of the cheering team in the Doon School, our arch-rivals from eons. He has dedicated this story to his Rimcollian course mate, Wing Commander Mandeep Singh Dhillon, a cross-country champion. Colonel Vikram Kadian in 'The Rabbit String' talks about the incredible spirit of the Rabbits who played with such enthusiasm and fervour that the opponents were subdued without much sporting skills by determination alone. Later, while facing a challenging situation while commanding a Rastriya Rifles Battalion in troubled times, he successfully applied the spirit of RIMC Rabbits to overcome insurgency and man-management challenges in the Kashmir Valley.

The last few pieces are from the flyboys. Perhaps the editor placed them towards the end as a sort of flypast concluding a magnificent book. Wing Commander Mayank Kanungo has dedicated his story 'The Big Bull' to the memory of Colonel YK Gautam whom he describes as a Rimcollian, mentor and friend. His story revolves around boxing in RIMC and NDA, his hesitant beginnings and the subsequent self-discovery, the guidance and the support from then Captain YK Gautam, and an

unusually tough boxing bout in NDA. The next piece 'The First Few Blows' by Wing Commander Dhitishman Hazarika covers his squash journey, the glorious cricketing days of the fabled RIMC XI team of late-nineties and the spirited happenings in the boxing ring.

The epilogue of the book has been written by Major YS Meitei. He has named it as 'Turning a Soldier into a Mature Human Being'. He writes about his days as an Assistant Administrative Officer at the RIMC, his love for sports and the lively sporting scene in RIMC in those days. The last story, or rather the 'Afterthought', is a wonderful and humour-laced narration by Wing Commander Unni Kartha. Titled 'A Story I Would Not Write' is about his adventures in the school. Only a few adventures relate to games and sports, the rest are manifestations of an over-creative and energetic mind at work, often bumbling, sometimes successful and invariably light-hearted. The last chapter titled 'Old Fox' by Brigadier Raj Manchanda, one of India's legends from the squash courts, is about the game of squash. He received the Arjuna Award in 1979-80 and was the uncrowned king of the game for over a decade, winning various championships and tournaments. He also inspired a generation of Rimcollian squash players.

Each generation of RIMC had its set of sporting heroes. Many of them have been mentioned in this book. A few have been mentioned by many, they went on to become actual legends and acquire national fame. Apart from the sporting heroes, almost every Rimcollian has a story to narrate of his experiences, victories and defeats on the playing fields. Some of these persuasive stories have been written and found a place in the Pavilion. These stories are illustrative of the entire generation of the boys then present in the school. Thus, this book is more of a representative rather than an exhaustive volume. Hard-bound with a lovely sketch of the RIMC pavilion drawn by Mrs Dipti Mishra, the book is a cherished possession which can be read, reread and fondly displayed. A must buy for all Rimcollians, sport fans and the readers with interest in all things Dehradun. ■

# CALL OF THE TIGER

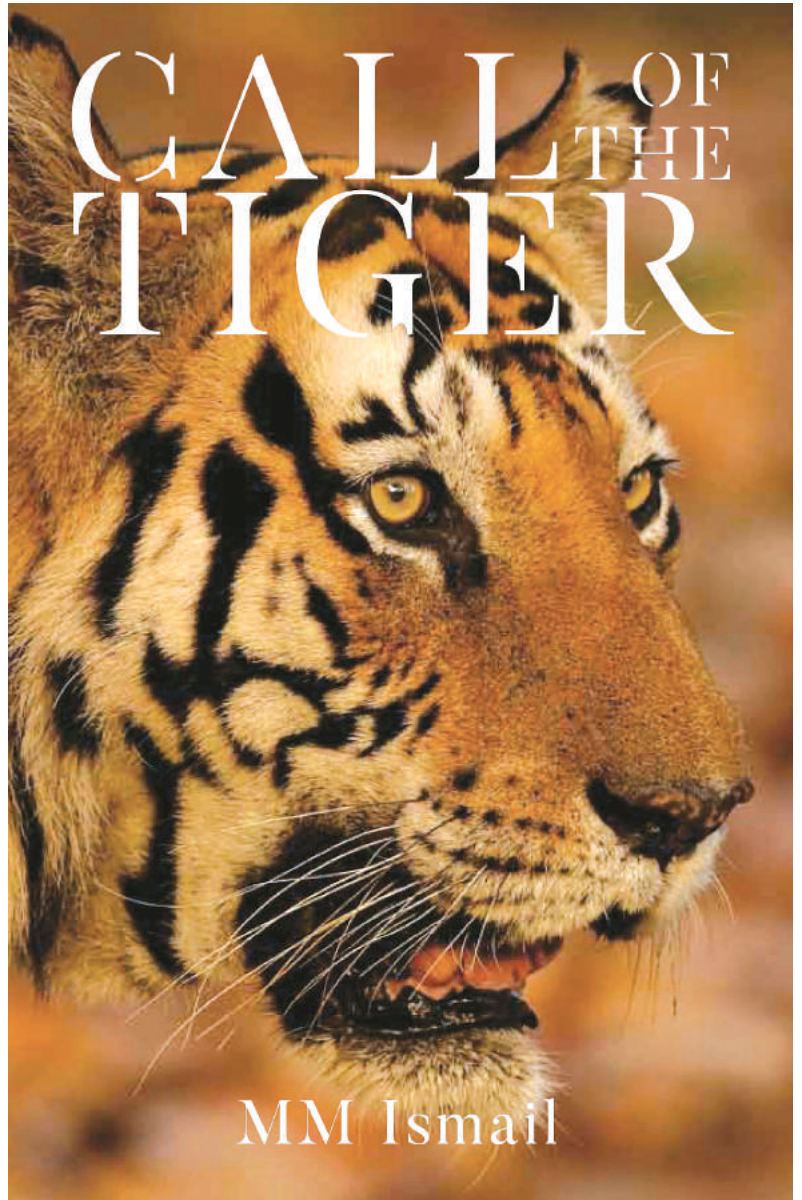
Crime stories are usually written, read and enjoyed by those who are not concerned with crime or its detection, and in recent years a large number of tiger and other shikar books have been produced on the same lines. This book however is refreshingly different. The author is one of the old brigade, who were prepared to work hard in the forests and pit their wits against the animals on relatively equal terms.

There are no heroics or tales of massacre. The reader, quietly, but often tensely, accompanies him on his excursions. All the ventures do not produce adventures, nor are all successful, as is true in real life. But the stories, with their background of natural history and shikar knowledge, hold your attention, and are no less interesting than those in which five shots are placed in the heart of the charging tiger.” - Hugh Allen, author of *The Lonely Tiger*.

First published in 1964, ‘Call of the Tiger’ by Lt Col M.M. Ismail comes at a time when the era of hunting has receded into history, leaving books like it to provide a glimpse of days past. Set in the 1950s, these gripping tales serve as a reminder of what the forests of Central India were like when wildlife was more plentiful and widespread than it is today.

Lt Col MM ISMAIL (1915 – 1992) spent much of his childhood in the erstwhile princely state of Balrampur (UP), where he acquired a love of the jungles and a taste for shikar, shooting his first leopard at the age of 11 and his first tiger at the age of 13. He joined the Indian Army as an officer in 1941 and served in Burma, with the 14th Punjab Regiment, during the Second World War. In 1948, post-independence and partition, he transferred to the Gorkha Rifles, followed by what he liked to call “the normal run of staff and regimental appointments”.

On retiring from the Army in 1965, he settled on a mango orchard, with his wife Rosanna, close to the jungles he loved. Like many shikaris of his generation, who were also the first to notice the rapid disappearance of both wildlife and habitat, he was a staunch conservationist in later years. His two sons



Jeremy Patrick Rashid Ismail and Steve Muzzafar Ismail are Rimcollians. While Colonel Jeremy settled down at the orchard after commanding his regiment, Brigadier Steve is presently head of training at the Indian Military Academy. ■

*Courtesy: Natraj Publications*

# ONE WHO FLEW UNDER YAMUNA BRIDGE

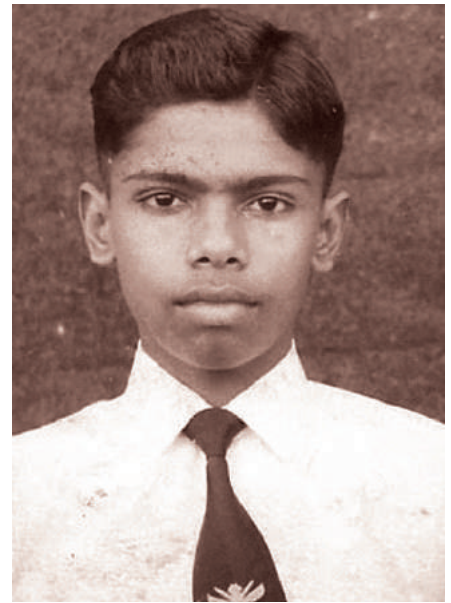
Flight Cadet Balan Menon was the one who flew under the Yamuna (Curzon) bridge in Allahabad. Balan Menon, a Rimcollian, passed away on 24th April 2018 at 1630 hrs, due to respiratory complications, at the old age home in Thumba, Trivandrum. He was considered an aviation genius even though he was dismissed for hijacking a HT-2 for his first solo. "A man with a brilliant mind, determination and undying passion for aviation, a maverick who lived by his own rules of right or wrong, never afraid to explore frontiers of science and technology far ahead of his peer group, a man who could have achieved fame and fortune but didn't care; he has left us quietly." ~ Wg Cdr U G Kartha

The year was 1964, a year and a half after India suffered the humiliation of being defeated in its short conflict with China. Even though, the conflict was limited, the lessons of the conflict were too painful to be ignored. The armed forces, in their plans to prevent the recurrence of such a situation, embarked on an ambitious expansion plan. The Army raised new divisions, the Air Force got out some of its mothballed aircraft and raised new squadrons. At that time the dream was to build up a fleet strength of 45 Squadrons. IAF had to train a large number of pilots in the shortest possible time frame. The primary inflow for Pilots' Courses was from NDA. This was inadequate for the proposed expansion. To rapidly augment the recruitment, there was additional large scale induction direct from civvy street.

Bamrauli which was with the Civil Aviation Training Centre was taken over by the Air Force and a Pilots' Training Establishment (PTE) was set up. Experienced pilots and Auxiliary Air Force Pilots were pulled out of Squadrons and assigned to train new recruits in the art of flying. The typical arrival from NDA reported to the Pilot Training Establishment (PTE) Bamrauli which was 12 km from the city of



Ex-Flight Cadet R.B. Menon, seen here after his exit from the Air Force. He subsequently did his Private Pilots License.



Allahabad. Allahabad is known as the city of 'Triveni Sangam' or the convergence of three rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswathi. At Bamrauli, they were required to learn flying and go solo on the HT-2 Trainers. The flying syllabus at PTE consisted of a total of 50 hours of flying. On completion they were sent for intermediate training to the erstwhile Air Force Flying College at Jodhpur to

continue flying training on the T6G Texan and Harvard Aircraft before being split into Jet/Transport/Helicopter streams for the final stage of their training before they were commissioned as Pilot Officers.

A pair of HAL HT-2 trainers, which formed the backbone of the IAF basic flying training for more than three decades.

The ab initio Flight Cadets had their



A pair of HAL HT-2 trainers, which formed the backbone of the IAF basic flying training for more than three decades.

first taste of flying in the venerable HT-2 aircraft which was the basic flying trainer at that time. The HT-2, the first indigenous aircraft to go into production, was powered by a Cirrus Major engine. The aircraft resembled the De Havilland Chipmunk trainer of the Royal Air Force. More than 110 of these of these fully aerobatic tandem seaters were built to equip flying training establishments and Flying Instructors' School at Tamabaram, Madras. HT-2 with its pronounced 'swing' characteristics was difficult to handle on take off and landing. Trainees 'swinging' wildly off the runway after landing was a common sight at PTE. Instructors of old days used to say, "In those days, it was easy to find out who could fly and who could not. If one could handle the HT-2 well, then obviously he is suitable material for further training."

Arriving there one fine morning in 1964 were the air force cadets who had passed out of the 25th Course of National Defence Academy. They constituted the 94th GD(P) course for pilots. One of the eager students in the batch was Flight Cadet R.B. Menon, or Balan as he was known. He was a bright

cadet, whose childhood dream was to be a pilot in the IAF. Right from the days he joined Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC) at Dehra Dun in 1956 his sole passion was aviation. Even as a teenager he was a regular contributor to the 'Model Aircraft' magazine published from the UK. He was also adept building extremely intricate model aircraft. His understanding of aerodynamics was also superb. It was only natural that Balan had been described as "A unique sort....superbly confident of his flying skills."

Each Flight Cadet was required to undergo dual training with the instructor for approximately 12 to 15 hours of flying in the HT-2. At that time, if the instructor judges the trainee as 'Fit For Solo', he is sent for a 'Solo Check' with the Flight Commander, CFI or another A-2 Category instructor. For most pilots the transition from the 'ground' to flying would be smooth due to the care and attention of the instructors. However many fall by the way side because of lacking the essential skills that go into the making of a pilot. Such flight cadets are either sent home or to 'Ground Duty'

branches of the Air Force or into the 'Navigators' branch.

Balan started out with an instructor who was on temporary duty for a month. Balan was a natural pilot and started off on a good footing. By the end of his first three hours of flying, he was confident enough to go solo. But the instructor did not want to risk sending a cadet on his solo after just three hours of flying time. So Balan continued his training. After logging six hours, he was still not cleared to go solo by his instructor. In aviation there is an old maxim that 'Overconfidence Kills'. His instructor was Sqn. Ldr. Vohra, an experienced instructor with many hours on Spitfires and Tempests. He probably wanted to dampen Balan's sense of overconfidence. He decided to hold him back for some more flying hours and stated that Balan needed to undergo more hours of training before he could be put up for a 'Solo Check'. And at about this time, Sqn. Ldr. Vohra was transferred out.

It was here Balan lost his heart. He wanted to go 'Solo'. The refusal of his first instructor to allow it and subsequent change of instructors left him dejected. It



took almost another month for the second instructor to come in, and by that time Balan's flying had deteriorated. The second instructor was puzzled that Balan who had started off very well, was now showing degraded performance. To diagnose the problem, Balan was again shifted; this time to the senior most instructor. By that time, Balan started suffering from "instructor block", where he was unable to concentrate and fly well during his 'dual' sorties.

Visions of being pronounced as unfit for flying seem to jeopardise his long cherished dream of becoming a 'pilot'. What made Balan even more frustrated was, that deep down he knew that he had it in him. Given a chance he had the ability to fly solo. But somehow when it came to the crunch, he was not able to fly properly during 'dual' sorties.

Things came to a flashpoint when the stipulated fifteen hours of training in the HT-2 were completed. Balan flew 'Solo Check' with the Chief Flying Instructor and did not do too well. The CFI was puzzled by this poor performance even though he knew that Balan was a natural flier. His verdict was that Balan was not yet ready to go solo. But he did advise

**BALAN DECIDED THAT IF HE WERE TO BE IN THE INDIAN AIR FORCE, HE WOULD ONLY BE THERE AS A PILOT. SO BALAN DECIDED TO TAKE MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS. IT WAS A PARTICULARLY CHAOTIC PERIOD IN PTE DURING THOSE DAYS. THERE WERE MORE THAN 250 CADETS UNDERGOING TRAINING AT THAT POINT OF TIME**

Balan to approach the review board with a request for an 'extension of flying hours' before re-appearing for another 'Solo Check'.

But Balan decided it was no good. Even if the review board cleared the additional hours of instruction, his 'Instructor Block' would be a tremendous impediment to his improving his performance in the air. And the hard fact stared him in the face was that he had flunked his solo check. The prospects of a Ground duty job now seemed to loom large on the horizon. For a Cadet who has enrolled in the flying stream, to be suspended from flying training and rehabilitated to a ground job would have been the ultimate despair. Balan decided that if he were to be in the Indian Air Force, he would only be there as a pilot. So Balan decided to take matters into his own hands. It was a particularly chaotic period in PTE during those days. There were more than 250 Cadets undergoing training at that point of time. Intensive flying from dawn to dusk was the norm. Aircraft and aircraft noise was everywhere. It was really difficult to figure out who was flying which aircraft and when and with whom.

One fine morning in April 1964, a cadet scheduled to go solo in an HT-2 arrived at the duty officer's office to report that his aircraft had already taken off. Someone had used a false call sign, started up the aircraft, taxied out and had taken off. Or to put it mildly, someone stole the aircraft for an unauthorised flight. Panic phone calls flashed across the airfield. Emergency calls to different locations and radio calls to airborne aircraft were given. Ultimately it was identified that the aircraft was pinched by none other than Balan Menon himself, who with the help of a couple of friends identified an aircraft and appropriated it for an unauthorised solo. So here he was finally in the air, all alone by himself for the first time in his life. Balan knew that when the time came he would have no problem at all in flying the aircraft solo. Now he familiarised himself with the controls. The realisation that his unauthorised flight would end in a court martial with the consequences of his being grounded was frightening. But brushing his thoughts aside, he decided to make most of what could be his last flight.

He spent about half an hour getting a feel of things. Most of the flying he elected to do was low level flying. Slowly his confidence in his abilities crept back. He headed along the river Yamuna towards Allahabad. At that time of the year, when summer hold sway, Yamuna transforms into a tiny stream was full of sand banks. There was one bridge across the river called Curzon bridge. As he approached the bridge, he pulled up and over the bridge, carefully observing the behaviour of the aircraft at low level. He pulled up the aircraft to a higher altitude and practised more flying. Meanwhile at the Air Traffic Control at Bamrauli, all hell was let loose. Aircraft in the vicinity were informed of the wayward pilot and the HT-2. A senior instructor, Sqn. Ldr. S.K. Kaul (later Air Chief Marshal) was flying one of the HT-2s at that time. They were told to look for the offender in the runaway aircraft. They did not have to try hard.



ACM SK Kaul, was forgiving about Balan's act

**A SENIOR INSTRUCTOR, SQN. LDR. S.K. KAUL (LATER AIR CHIEF MARSHAL) WAS FLYING ONE OF THE HT-2S AT THAT TIME. THEY WERE TOLD TO LOOK FOR THE OFFENDER IN THE RUNAWAY AIRCRAFT. THEY DID NOT HAVE TO TRY HARD. BALAN FLEW BACK TO THE AIRFIELD AND BEAT UP THE AIRFIELD AT LOW LEVEL IN SEVERAL PASSES. BY THIS TIME, TWO OTHER HT-2S WERE ON THE SCENE, AS WAS A HELICOPTER FROM THE HELICOPTER TRAINING UNIT WHICH WAS ALSO AT ALLAHABAD**

Balan flew back to the airfield and beat up the airfield at low level in several passes. By this time, two other HT-2s were on the scene, as was a helicopter from the Helicopter Training Unit which was also at Allahabad. As they approached the airfield, Balan broke away and went towards the Yamuna river again. He was chased by the HT-2s and the helicopter. The two HT-2s now caught up with Balan's HT-2. Sqn. Ldr. Kaul flying in one of them, made several radio calls to Balan asking him to land back at the airfield. All his coaxing seem to fall on deaf ears.

Now the strange formation of three HT-2s abreast of each other with a helicopter slightly behind them made its way up over the Yamuna river. The HT-2s were flying about 30-40 feet above the river bed. The Curzon Bridge loomed ahead in the distance. As the bridge loomed bigger and bigger on the wind screen, Kaul eased back on on his stick and flew over the bridge. The other instructor in the third HT-2 did the same. But Balan did just the opposite. He eased the aircraft even lower and pointed his nose at a point between two piers of the bridge. Then a touch of rudder to align his flight path and there he was...flying below the bridge. Many citizens of Allahabad who chanced to be on the on the bridge at that time watched in total incredibility. Balan Menon had pulled off his first "under the bridge" flight. Amazement turned to relief when the chase pilots saw that he had emerged on the other side without any mishap. But relief turned to horror when they observed Balan pull up some distance from the bridge and go into a turn re-aligning himself to fly under the bridge once again in the opposite direction!

It was on an impulse, that Balan decided to try and repeat the feat. This time it was slightly difficult, as there was a sand embankment that would come in the way of approaching the span. But Balan accomplished the tricky manoeuvre. He precisely flew over the sand embankments and slipped under the bridge span again. With a feeling of elation and happiness,

he pulled up. A little more practice flying and he flew back to the base. His first attempt to land from his first solo flight was slightly bumpy. The aircraft bounced after landing on the runway. Balan slammed the throttle forward and carried out a standard 'overshoot' procedure. The second circuit, approach, flare out and a 'kisser' landing was impeccable.

Naturally, the Indian Air Force was not amused by Balan's epic flight. He was placed under arrest and a court of inquiry was held. To nobody's surprise, including Balan, he was declared as "unfit for government service" and discharged from the IAF. Sqn. Ldr. Kaul, who tried to talk Balan into landing back at the airfield was forgiving and appreciative of Balan's flying. But in the face of this blatant case of flying indiscipline there was nothing he could do to help Balan. Balan found himself on civvy street again. What actually made him to throw up his dream of becoming a pilot in the IAF to such a whim?, Balan admitted that he was barely out of his teens at that time and was seething under the stigma of "under performance". His judgment may have been impaired, but the point was proven that he had it in him to go solo. At no point of time did Balan want a career in the air force that was not a flying job. And there was no way he could have talked his instructors into allowing him to go solo. After moving out of the Air Force, Balan pursued his flying career. He completed his private pilot's licence from the Kerala Flying Club, where he noted wryly that he flew his first "legal solo". After finishing his PPL, Balan later migrated to California in the United States and settled down there. Sqn. Ldr. S.K. Kaul went on to be decorated with the MVC in the 1971 War. He retired as the Air Chief in 1991.

At the setting up of the Air Force Academy in 1971, all flying training shifted to Dundigal/Bidar in the south. Cadets are still suspended from the training courses as unfit for flying. But very rarely were they ever chucked out for being overconfident. Nobody has

**AFTER MOVING OUT OF THE AIR FORCE, BALAN PURSUED HIS FLYING CAREER. HE COMPLETED HIS PRIVATE PILOT'S LICENCE FROM THE KERALA FLYING CLUB, WHERE HE NOTED WRYLY THAT HE FLEW HIS FIRST "LEGAL SOLO". AFTER FINISHING HIS PPL, BALAN LATER MIGRATED TO CALIFORNIA IN THE UNITED STATES AND SETTLED DOWN THERE. SQN. LDR. S.K. KAUL WENT ON TO BE DECORATED WITH THE MVC IN THE 1971 WAR**

ever flown under a bridge since then either at Bamrauli and Dundigal. And as Balan himself recalls, "In hindsight it was a rare experience. It is unlikely anyone will be put in such a position...and fly under a bridge twice on his first solo, even though it was unauthorized.."

"As long as there are mountains, Adventurers will climb them..

And as long as there are bridges, Aviators will fly under them....."

## NOTES

1. Menon had two of his friends helping him out in this caper to get the HT-2. They helped him scan the flying program and identify an aircraft that was not booked for flying. Some last minute changes in the roster saw another cadet coming

and surprising Menon as he was strapping himself in. But Menon persuaded the Cadet to report the aircraft missing after he had taken off.

2. The entire episode of flying under the bridge is not as reckless as it may seem in the first place. Balan Menon states that it took some planning. "Those days we trained at both Bamrauli and Phaphamau, an old WW II field. We had to cross that bridge everyday by truck to and from Phaphamau. It is a rail-cum-road bridge and we spent many hours stuck in traffic. One day I saw the builders plate and got the dimensions! 15 spans of 212 ft! No height of course. I didn't think it took all that much flying skill to fly thru an envelope of 212 feet width. It is about the same width as a runway. Only unknown (factor) was height...it was always early morning or late evening when we crossed the bridge. Shadows were too distorted to judge height and that was something I would have to deal with...but then from 'hour one' every student pilot has been 'flaring and holding off' prior to touchdown thus experiencing ground-effect. Anyway I felt convinced about mission feasibility."
3. Wg. Cdr. V.G. Kumar makes the following observation, "During 96th Pilots' Course, Flt. Cadet Sudhesh (or Sudhir) Pal was sent solo with barely an hour and a half of dual flying to his credit. His instructor was Flt. Lt. H.M. 'Herbie' David. If the same instructor had been flying with Balan, probably Balan would have gone solo within an hour."
4. Acknowledgements to the late Wg. Cdr. V.G. Kumar for germinating the idea of this article and his effort in reading and revising the article to perfection and Ex-Flt Cadet R.B. Menon for extending his co-operation and patience in answering our innumerable queries. Inputs also taken from <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/IAF/history/1950s/1209-under-the-bridge.html>

# THE COLONEL IN OUR TIME

— MARCUS PRADHAN



The 14th of April was a very special day for us. Not that it was Dr Ambedkar's birthday, but hockey season was finally here after the doom and gloom of boxing; it was time to shine again. Not that we did not shine, but boxing wasn't our strongest suite. Also, we had managed to snatch the championship from Ranjit who had been far too used to wearing their lanyards on their right. It was a clear sunny Saturday

except this day, we had no PT or classes and a nice ceremonial buffet lunch was to look forward to. Cola & peanuts, butter chicken, naan and palak paneer were on the menu. It was one of the happiest days of my life.

The section was called in "Bada" part at half six. An extra hour of well-deserved sleep. One of us would have had the random honour of sleeping in the hockey field right in front of

section, in a sleeping bag just so that we had first dibs on it. We were on the other hand the exception. Junior dorm was under renovation and we had been exiled (to our delight) to the Quest, away from the lottery giving seniors in the section. It was one of the bungalows that I understand used to be the church and where, we as second & third termers had been housed for the duration of the works. It also saved us

from sleeping on the cold wet grass on the hockey field.

Half sleepy, we sat at the edge of our beds till the designated dorm cadet reported our parade state. All ready and equipped, we waited until “Chhota” part woke up then south block, who then reported to 4A. The senior cadets did not join us till we were all warmed up and ready in the field. Anyway, some of us did not have hockey sticks and if I’m not mistaken, Adil\* was asked to pop down to Ranjit Middles to get a few hockey sticks. Ranjit at this point were still grieving their loss of the Arjuna Tank, and they had more or less accepted that hockey wasn’t their cup of tea. Still a bit groggy, Adil disappeared for his first lottery of the day.

Adil appeared about 10 mins later and excitedly said that all of Ranjit Middles had been locked up. When he peered to look into the dorm, all 18-20 of our fellow Ranjities were huddled up into six beds that they had joined together. Something was definitely not right here. Anyway, Adil managed to wake someone, grab a few sticks and then ask why they were huddled together. ‘Please cadet’ (for the first few terms, juniors got away with just calling their seniors ‘cadet’. It was not until the following term, we were ordered to address the seniors using cadet and their first name. We had to learn the names of every cadet in the college).

‘Please cadet, Col Houghton was on the parade ground last night. We saw him. He was on a horse. He was on the beams. He then saw us watching him, and he screamed. We shut all the doors and put the beds together. Col Houghton was here last night!’

PV Mohan laughed it off. His missing front teeth told us of his exploits with hockey. As the only senior cadet awake at that time, he took a swing with his hockey stick with full force. PVM was known to be bit of a nutter. He’d randomly start taking a hockey shot (with the ball) in the dorm whilst we all sat there quietly. We all laughed it off, and out we were on the field.

Lunch was extra special. Standing. And we had guests from IMA, the

commandant & Mrs Mamgain. It was not out of the blue for the commandant to start asking you questions. Sometimes about food. Sometimes about life. He once made Sharyf & I recite the diarrhoea poem on stage during the morning assembly. He told off the whole college when he saw how shy some of the cadets were, that they wouldn’t even go and ask the girls from Welham’s for the time.

This time it was about last night. ‘So I heard some of you saw Col Houghton’. We all smiled. ‘Sir, I’m sure they’re up to something Ranjit section’ There’s always something happening there!’

And then there was Chinmoy. A crowd had gathered around Chinmoy Choudhury. He was talking to Mrs Mamgain. He was not from Ranjit so we had a good reason to believe him. I’m sure he had been preparing for his

**‘PLEASE CADET, COL HOUGHTON WAS ON THE PARADE GROUND LAST NIGHT. WE SAW HIM. HE WAS ON A HORSE. HE WAS ON THE BEAMS. HE THEN SAW US WATCHING HIM, AND HE SCREAMED. WE SHUT ALL THE DOORS AND PUT THE BEDS TOGETHER. COL HOUGHTON WAS HERE LAST NIGHT!’**

boards, so frequenting the academic block in the dead of the night was not so uncommon.

‘Nope, he was real. It was cold and late, and I may have been sleepy. I was walking back and right in front of the beams, I saw him. At first, I saw a horse and then I saw a man with a moustache. He had a starched moustache. I wished him a good evening, thinking it was the com. But no, when I looked at him his skin was white as a bedsheet. Swear, I’m not lying it was Colonel Houghton! He

just looked at me cold. I ran towards Ranjit section and entered the dorm. I could not breathe! It was Colonel Haughton’

**Prashant Pandey added.**

‘Yes ma’am. We saw it from the dorm. He was screaming. He was on the beams. He started swinging from the beams, it did not feel natural. Then he saw us, gave out a sharp scream and got on his horse. I asked the cadets to lock up the dorms. It was him. We all thought it was a story, but it was him – the Colonel and his horse!’

The whole college was talking about Col Houghton now.

‘The commandant had to send one of the Saabs to the stables to check if any of the horses were missing. They were all there.’

‘Yaar, it was Taru party man – in bedsheets and all. How do you think Col Houghton could do second class beams at his age yaar? Come on!’

‘I think it was the PT Saab, he probably rode at night to scare the cadets’

Lunch was perfect. The naans to die for.

We never got to the bottom of Col Houghton’s sighting. It was Friday the 13th after all. We were just happy that hockey season was here and then the long waited summer holidays. Not to forget the green mangoes which were now in season?

Through the next few terms we came across the weird happenings in the Quest, or the story of the pavilion ghost who was locked away in the room beneath the pavilion. Once a while when as a section, we’d be made to run around the pavilion at n’o clock at night and that would make us a run a little bit quicker. Or the tall lanky ghost who seemed to follow Manuj Jindal & Ajay Vashist, who were trying to sneak into the academic block late for the evening preps, pretty sure that could have easily been Mr Tyagi, the Duty Master for the day. But Col Houghton and his horse, that will remain as another one of the countless stories from college; I will be sharing for the rest of my life! ■



# THE KAILASH MANASAROVAR YATRA

— Air Marshal **PP REDDY** (Retd)

It was always on my mind since I was a fifteen years old in RIMC: to trek to Manasarovar, the mystical, ephemeral, shimmering lake beyond the Himalayas. I was fond of geography, incidentally well taught by Mr RC and developed an early itch to travel and trek. I managed to do the mid-term treks to Gomukh, Yamunotri, Hemkund sahib and the Valley of Flowers during my time in School. As much as I tried, the opportunity to trek across the great Himalayas to Kailash mountain in Tibet, the abode of Shiva and Manasarovar lake, source of Rivers Sutluj, Bramhaputra, Karnali and Indus, was elusive. It was 40 years later that my wife and I were selected by the Ministry of External Affairs, to

undertake the trek through scenic Kumaon, along the Kali river valley, across Lipu Lekh pass with the first and only batch of yatris in June 2013. A bus ride through the foot hills of Himalayas, covered with deciduous forest, welcomed by Kumoani folk music, folk dances and hospitality brought us to Darchula, a quaint town on the banks of the rapid, dark, ferocious Kali river, bordering Nepal. After some last minute shopping, and a short Jeep ride to the sylvan Narayan Ashram Tawaghat Dam, the yatris paired up with their porters and mule. Soon we were stepping out with great anticipation and exhilaration on a narrow track hanging on a mountain ledge with

overwhelming vistas, riot of colours accentuated by flowers.

As we trekked to Shikha village at 6300', the skies opened up and rain started. It didn't dampen our spirits as we were blissfully unaware of the massive tragedy taking place in the adjacent valleys of Garhwal and Kedarnath. We faced land slides, falling rocks, washed out tracks and bridges along with the torrential rain. We met charming and hardy people of Kumaon with their ready smiles, men mostly playing cards and enjoying 'Chagti', home made rice wine, women working in the terrace farms, cooking, washing and being home makers. There are the ever present tea shops in the villages, which sell



food, Chagti, clothes, condiments, toiletries etc and double as warm, cosy pubs for the locals. The villagers have discovered new wealth in the forest: apart from the herbs and medicinal plants, they now hunt for a fungified caterpillar 'Ersa Gumbo' believed to have aphrodisiac qualities, sold at exorbitant prices, probably to Chinese. On the way I met Parvati Devi, a widow in her early forties from Shikha village, who was off on a two week hunt into the mountains to look for 'Ersa Gumbo'. In spite of working on her small piece of land where she grows wheat and potatoes while bringing up three children all on her own, she was extremely cheerful, full of energy and a "can do" attitude.

We continued to trek in the rain, covering close to 20 km a day, negotiating steep climbs and descents from Shikha to Gala and Budhi, altitude ever increasing. We passed through Rungla top (10000ft) and walked carefully along ferocious Kali river on a narrow ledge. We were lucky

not to be snatched away by the overflowing torrent speeding by at 100 km per hour. We paid our respects to the 100 odd Yatris including Protima Bedi who died in a land slide at Malpa in similar rainy weather as we were facing. From Budhi to Gunji, we had to negotiate a steep climb to Chialik pass at 12000 ft after which there were lovely meadows with green grass and wild roses in white and pink colours.

Then came about a period of uncertainty, when finally news of unprecedented floods and large number of deaths in Garhwal reached us. Part of Darchula and some of the track which we had walked along Kali river was washed away. Our baggage was held up due to land slides and a lot of Yatris were reluctant to cross over to Tibet in the cold weather without warm clothing and the rations they had brought along. Some of them had a preconceived notion bordering on abhorrence that food in Tibet would be non vegetarian and cannot be consumed

during the yatra. As the return route was cut off, we waited for four days at Gunji, a picturesque village at 11000 ft with phenomenal view of the Annapurna ranges. My wife and I explored the area around the village, climbed up to the temple on the nearby hill and ate delicious stuffed parathas in the village tea shop. The fresh and crisp air and the icy water from the melting glaciers was a welcome change from the pollution of Delhi. Some of us met Shri Mohan Singh Gunjial, Padma Shree, who climbed the Everest four times and found him and his wife to be very pleasant and humble hosts who gave us valuable advice on high altitude trekking.

All this while, we were under the care of Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam, who had camps along the way with small dormitories, separate for men and women with basic toilet facilities. Half a bucket of hot water was a hard earned prize if you could tend a wood fire out in the open till your water got heated. The food was 'Satvik', a staple diet of cold chapatti, dal, potato and rice with a little variation. Though on a religious yatra, performing Bhajans and prayers in the morning and evenings, grabbing food, seats in the bus, better beds and dormitories with little regard for queues, senior citizens and ladies was prevalent among the yatris. Lack of consideration for others was evident from the late night noisy sessions, wasteful use of the limited water. My personal take on this kind of behaviour we see amongst Indians world over is 'population pressure': we are so engrossed in struggling for daily basic requirements that we have little consideration for other human beings. But the long treks through



# TRAVEL NOTES

the changing flora and fauna, snow clad mountains, flowing streams, waterfalls, flower carpeted meadows made you overlook these irritations. Gunji was surrounded by coniferous forests and the villagers ploughed their fields with Yaks and helped each other sow potatoes and wheat.

At last the mules carrying our baggage arrived, with their bells chiming, lifting the mood of the Yatris. ITBP declared the track to Lipulekh pass negotiable although there were landslides and 4-6 ft snow on the higher reaches. I had decided to walk the whole route though there was an option to ride a mule. The going got tough as we climbed beyond 14000ft in the cold weather and driving rain. There were no trees at this altitude and very little oxygen to breathe. From Gunji we went through Kalapani, the source of River Kali and on to Navidhang where we saw the beautiful OM parvat, its natural shape clearly depicting 'OM'. The meadows were full of flowers, including 'Thistle', the national flower of Scotland. The ascent to Lipulekh pass started in the dark at 2 AM in the morning so as to make it to the border at the top by 9 AM Chinese standard time, which is two and half hours ahead. No track was visible but there were some markers to show the way and ITBP soldiers guided us through the snow. We were not aware and didn't appreciate the steep slopes, deep valleys in the dark. Each footstep in the deep snow had become a daunting feat, with the lungs gasping for every molecule of oxygen. Most of the Yatris rode their mules to avoid the strain. Finally, as dawn broke we reached Lipu Pass at 17500 ft, overwhelmed by the sheer magnificence and beauty of the snow clad Himalayas, lit by early morning sun and overlooking the Tibet plateau.

The Tibetan guides, including two charming ladies who were nimble and sure footed, helped us down the steep snow bound mountain on the Tibetan side with ropes. Since Indian porters were left behind we carried our own baggage and just about managed not to topple down the sheer cliffs. Some of the Yatri suffered from high altitude sickness and vomited but they recovered once we climbed down from the pass. Consider the age, 26 to 69



years and the sedentary life style of many Yatris, it was an astonishing example of human endurance, determination and hardiness that everybody made it across into Tibet. Four kms later we were picked up by a bus and taken to Taklakot (Burang in Chinese), the biggest town in that part of Tibet, south of Mansarovar. The guides were sitting on the engine just as we do in India and helped us through the immigration and customs.

Taklakot, a small town at 13000 ft, had clear blue skies and a single street full of cheap Chinese goods, a hundred small Chinese restaurants and several Tibetan handicraft and jewellery shops. On the lone main street, there were well dressed, beautiful Tibetan ladies and a lot of SUVs. The town had a cliff on one side with several caves and Buddhist temples. I was told that there were Buddhist prayer wheels along the main street a few years back, which have been removed by Chinese government on the pretext of widening the roads. The Tibetans continue to be deeply religious and several functioning Buddhist temples (Gompas) still exist but off the beaten track. After a day's rest at Taklakot, we were taken to Darchen, 120 km north via Rakshas Tal where Ravana is believed to have meditated and given a boon by Shiva. At Darchen you could buy Chinese clothes, curios and Tibetan handicrafts including prayer wheels, pearl and bead necklaces. The lady yatris had a great time browsing and buying. That evening we had the first glimpse of the snow bound South face of Kailash peak. We started the Kailash

parikrama at Yamdwar, 7 km from Darchen. The story goes that Yamraj comes through Yamdwar, to collect you when your time is up! Going around Yamdwar and stepping through it won't keep you from dying but it is supposed to help you overcome the fear of death. A 21 km trek through the desolate but colourful landscape devoid of vegetation took us to Deraphuk at 16000 ft. Enroute, we had a clear view of the west and north faces of Kailash. When I reached Deraphuk and saw the complete Kailash mountain, emotion overtook me and I prayed for peace and enlightenment with tears in my eyes. That evening we climbed a further three km up the steep mountain to 'Charansparsh' (approx 18000') at the base of the northface of Kailash. The north face was a sheer cliff of black volcanic rock with a glacier at the bottom, resembling a shiva lingam.

Next day we set off on the toughest part of the yatra, a 19 km trek through the Dolma La pass at an altitude of 18200ft. The east face of Kailash mountain was magnificent in the morning sun as we climbed up to Dolma La pass. Several Tibetans including ladies were doing the parikrama (circumbulation) as well and some were covering the whole distance lying down prone. The non Buddhist Tibetans (Bonpos) do the parikrama anti-clockwise. The Kailash mountain is revered by Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Bonpo religions. Incidentally, is yet to be scaled. Two British climbers failed to summit and the Chinese Govt, realising the religious significance of the mountain has



prohibited scaling of the peak. The climb to Dolma La pass was tough and I was at the end of my stamina bank, ready to give up when a batch of Tibetans girls encouraged me to carry on. They also warned me not linger at the pass to avoid high altitude sickness. They put some colourful prayer flags at the Pass and pointed out Gaurikund lake to me, which looked like a green emerald in the white snow. Parvati, Shiva's consort is believed to have bathed here and the water is believed to have mystical power. Many yatriss collected water from the lake. On completion of the days trek, we spent the night at Zun Zhui at 15000 ft. Next day after a short trek of 6 km we completed the Kailash parikrama and a bus took us to Qugu (Tugu), a monastery and rest house, on the banks of Mansarovar lake. This was part of the Mansarovar parikrama, 80 odd kilometres, done by bus.

Mansarovar is so magnificent and ethereal, that it is difficult to describe. In the two days we stayed near her, Mansarovar revealed its beauty and glory, changing colours turquoise, blue, green, orange, yellow, red depending on the time of the day and light available. It is a live lake at 15200 ft, reflecting the deep blue sky, teeming with fish, ducks and weeds and the water is sweet and refreshing. We all took the holy dip in the freezing water and performed our prayers. The sunset was a burst of colours with a glorious double rainbow on one side, a view not of this world. At night the stars were so clear that you could almost touch them. Before dawn, some bright stars on the northern

horizon would reflect in the lake and look as if the gods were descending into the lake. Everybody collected water from the lake to take home. There were wild asses, musk deer and yaks on its banks.

Since all good things must end, we started the return journey after eight days in Tibet, having completed the Kailash and Mansarovar parikrama, lighter in body by 6 kg and mind even lighter, at peace with myself and a glow on my face (some wrinkles had actually disappeared) and Shiva within me (Shivoham). Back in Taklakot, having successfully completed the Parikrama, I, my wife and Goldy, a flamboyant 69 year old artist (incidentally son-in-law of actor Om Prakash) decided

to try some local brew and fare. Our lady guide, Dinky, introduced us to a nice family run restaurant where the hostess, wife of the local policeman, picked fresh vegetables from the market and prepared mouth-watering vegetable noodles right in front of us. We enjoyed the meal accompanied with a bottle of beer for a princely sum of 50 yuan or 500 rupees. On our way back we stopped at Gen Zoravar Singh (1786-1841) memorial. As a General under King Gulab Singh of Jammu he conquered Ladakh, Baltistan and part of Tibet. He later died near Taklakot after a hard fought battle and even today the Tibetans respect his bravery. The Memorial itself is a conical pile of rocks with Buddhist prayer flags.

We crossed the Lipu lake pass on foot into India and reached Gunji after a 24 km trek. Since the tracks to Darchula were washed away by the rain and floods, the ever efficient and glorious Indian Airforce airlifted us in the indigenous Advanced Light Helicopter ( Dhruv) to Darchula, sans our baggage, from where a bus brought us back to Delhi. I am sure all of us were extremely happy to have completed the mother of all Yatras successfully and safely, thanks to KMVN, ITBP, IAF, Burang (Taklakot) Tourism dept, Chinese Foreign affairs Dept and MEA. ■





# THROUGH THE STATE OF A NATION

— MANUJ JINDAL

*(The writer is a trainee IAS officer. In this write-up he recalls his experiences of Bharat Darshan, the education trip undertaken during their stay at the LBSAA, Mussoorie)*

In the ancient Hindu Samkhya philosophy, the word “darshana” carries the meaning “that which explains the whole”. The “darshan” in Bharat Darshan truly exemplifies this and serves the purpose of unfolding various layers of “whole” complex tale that is India. It cannot be summarized simply as a journey of thousands of miles on rails, roads, airplanes and boats. It has been an internal journey of many moving and enriching cerebral experiences. It has been a mammoth political, cultural, social and economic exposure. Most importantly, it has been a lifelong learning about endless possibilities and innovations that are



found across contrasting land that is India.

The first key lesson in this journey was about patriotism and professionalism in organizational and individual life. The Indian Army exemplifies both of these. The presentations by top Army officials and visits to the forward border posts showcased the importance of continuous training and technical expertise that this institution has developed. From establishing standards of procedure (SoPs) for handling counter-terrorism operations, border infiltration, to organizing free classes in welfare schools for local Kashmiris, the visit to the Army



in Kashmir showcased the multiplicity of roles it has taken up with much grace for the larger national cause. The enormity of various operations by the Army in areas beyond the uninhabitable heights of 13,000 feet also demonstrated its logistical expertise that can out-match operations of large private operators such as Amazon and Flipkart. A well designed, organized, structured and a well-led organization is key to attaining ground level success. Army exemplifies this and some of its best practices can be studied for application even in the civil administration.

Leaving behind fond experiences with the uniformed officers, we witnessed firsthand, the work and responsibilities of fellow officers at the district level. The historical town of Jhansi had much insight to offer from an administrator's point of view – the classification, codification and management of land records, the district

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treasury, the running of the SDM's court, design and implementation of various governmental programs, and the coordination of district administration with other agencies. Such herculean is the task managed by a handful of officers! It was the untiring teamwork and coordination among the concerned authorities that made all this possible. Open communication channels, managing the morale and technical competence of subordinate officers was a key aspect of SDM's job on a daily basis. It provided a brief peep into the various hats worn by the district administrator.

Also, it was here that the profound meaning of justice delivery dawned on me. Free and fair access to justice is the last constitutional shield for an ordinary citizen. It is the court of SDM, DM and other such executive magistrates that are first line of defense in preserving and delivering justice to thousands of citizens. This has become even clearer

# TRAVEL NOTES

during first few weeks of Phase I training at the Academy, where lessons in law are imperative to functioning efficiently and effectively in the field.

In 2015, almost 300 million citizens lived on the margins of poverty in India. Almost 30% of these belong to the various tribal groups spread across the country. Our visit to the tribal fringes in Rajnandgaon district of Chattisgarh opened a new window towards the facets of tribal life. In central India, extreme poverty and Naxalism are two debilitating conditions that reinforce each other. These have plagued much of tribal areas in this region. However, persevering development efforts by the local and state administration in health, nutrition, education, and livelihood have brought much relief to the area. We witnessed that innovative interventions such as the common service centers have the ability to create entrepreneurs and develop a virtuous ecosystem of integrated development activities in such areas.

The Assistant Collector also made the visit special by making a detour and bringing us to the Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya. This university is truly an oasis of creativity with over 30 courses in various art forms such as music, painting, dramatics, dance, sculpting and so on. Teachers and students belonged to various nationalities and transformed this rather dry area into a reservoir of artistic excellence. Concerted efforts to set up such centers, albeit at a smaller scale at district level, could rejuvenate the artistic heritage of India in many ways. It could serve as a model project worthwhile exploring in the years to come.

As we moved to urban areas for the next leg of our travel, the disparities of tribal India and the newly emerging urban India could not be more contrasting. The new India we visited in Hyderabad and Bangalore is teeming with endless possibilities of wealth creation, young tech-savvy entrepreneurs competing for their rightful place at the international level, and cutting edge science and technology projects being developed in glassy towers

and sprawling modern campuses. The Internet of Things center at NASSCOM headquarters in Bangalore is working on projects such as the “Smart Cradle” and many others. These technologies could serve as forces that leapfrog poor outcomes across various sectors such as health, education and so on in backward areas. The key reason behind successful nurturing of such innovative work has been the freedom to pursue what Steve Jobs had famously called crazy, stupid ideas. As a young administrator to-be, I believe that facilitating such innovative forces could be an opportunity in the field as well.

THE INTERNET OF THINGS CENTER AT NASSCOM HEADQUARTERS IN BANGALORE IS WORKING ON PROJECTS SUCH AS THE “SMART CRADLE” AND MANY OTHERS

Another such force that is working as catalyst of change in the country is NGOs (non-governmental organizations). We were able to witness firsthand the work done by NGOs in two diametrically opposite but interconnected fields – Prajwala in the prevention of sex trafficking and forced prostitution and Janaagraha in citizen centric urban local governance. What was common among these NGOs is that they have been able to develop a rather deep understanding and expertise of citizen issues at hand. Coupled with a strong network of volunteers who work tirelessly for the cause they are promoting, these largely self-sustained organizations help bringing democracy and citizen advocacy to the field. Channeling this “jana” movement or “janbhagidari” is another aspect to the role of the administration. These NGOs serve as the

living proof of directing such energies creatively.

The wholeness of an Indian experience cannot be complete without witnessing its spiritual ethos. The cities of Trichy and Thanjavur are believed to be homes to over a thousand temples. The entire economic, political and cultural foundation of these ancient cities has been built around various monoliths such as the Brihadeshwara temple, the Ranganathan Swamy temple and many others. Historically, these temples served as houses of tax collection, land revenue management, and seats of establishing political legitimacy. Today, they act as centers of religious and spiritual rejuvenation. These temple administrations have adapted themselves to such modern functions required of these institutions. They have developed expertise in crowd management, pilgrim welfare, coordination with city administration for integrating local economy with tourism and serving as centers of preserving art forms such as dance, music, prayers and literature. The Thanjavur temple administration was a case in point. This administration routinely organizes haats and fairs for exposing the local craftsmanship and artists to tourism. This has generated livelihood options and helped in seamlessly advancing the rich tradition prevalent here.

Bharat Darshan’s true essence is not about covering the length and breadth of this monumental country. It’s about plunging into the depths of thoughts, cultures, ideas, people and practices that make the zestful soup that India is. Just as an adept chef adds the final touch of salt to bring a dish together, this journey across India has served as a catalyst that can deepen understanding of my country. However, I wouldn’t hesitate to say, that much needs to be learned, uncovered, and I need to travel much more in my own cadre and rest of India, as and when I get the opportunity. Even a lifetime isn’t enough for this magnificent country of ours! ■

*(Manuj Jindal is from 156 RIMC (2000-2005); and 2017 batch of the Indian Administrative Service)*

# RIMCOLLIAN SPIRIT FUELLED NORTH EAST DARSHAN

— CHIRANJIT BANERJEE

Among the more regular features at Reunions in Dehra Dun is our redoubtable course mate (93rd RIMC) Lt Col Mahendra Bahadur Saxena (Sax – though he has another term of endearment that is confined to only his “chaddhi buddies”). He probably travels a longer time to get to Doon Valley from Tura (incidentally Meghalaya’s second most populous city) than does another usual suspect from a more distant location, Ravi Gulati (London based). Sax and his equally energetic wife, Nanjulla, sent both their boys to RIMC (Lt Col Ajay & Sqn Ldr Akshay, now in the Army & Air Force respectively) which speaks of their overflowing Rimcollian josh more than mere words. It was a long-standing crib of Sax & Nanjulla that none of us had reciprocated their spirited gesture by visiting them in Tura. Finally, the two of the most wanderlust stricken of us, Lt Gen Rakesh Nandan and I bit the bullet and decided to look the effervescent couple up. We also decided that since we were going that far, we would try and connect with as many Rimcollians as we could in Meghalaya and Assam.

In anticipation of the heady days that were to follow, Rakesh and I converged in Kolkata on 11th December (2017) and regaled each other with RIMC anecdotes late into the night before the journey in the pristine surroundings of Tollygunge Club as Shirin looked askance. Thanks to Rakesh, we could rise and shine soon enough the morn after and make it in the nick of time for the Guwahati flight. The first (among many) surprises that greeted us at the airport was Sax being there in person to receive us. There is no warmer feeling than being met by your host when you are staring



Tura catch up of 93rd RIMC

into uncharted territory as Tura was for all three of us. The six-hour drive felt like a breeze as school days’ episodes flew back and forth. The customary mid-way break for Assamese ‘Lal chai’ was a welcome one.

Nanjulla was there for us at the gate of “Asha Baree” (do you actually need a translation?) along with Akshay’s software engineer wife, Manisha (on a sabbatical) with her chatty daughter, Shyla, in tow. The Sangma (Sax has had to cede his surname to his children in conformity with the matriarchal Garo custom) boys have obviously taken a cue from their Mom and Dad and married girls from right across India’s vast cultural canvas. Ajay’s wife, Niyamat, is a Sardarni who happens to be the daughter of a 49th course NDA mate of ours (Brig Jasbir

Bawa – regrettably not from RIMC but with all the sterling qualities of head and heart that Rimcollians usually exhibit even though he went to Modern School, Delhi) while Akshay dived deep into the south to locate Manisha, a Telugu. Following the traditional silk scarf welcome, the guys got down to the serious business of demolishing the tribal pork dish that Nanjulla had curated so painstakingly in a flash. Vindaloo has competition in Meghalaya for sure.

Over the next two days, we soaked up some wonderful sights, sounds and smells of Meghalaya which may have been even more serene were the state not election bound which had led to the environment being pock marked with incongruous graffiti. If at all there was the odd pregnant pause, Shyla lit us up with her innocent wit. Rakesh did not



Misamari mini Rimcollian get-together

miss his early morning walks despite our late-night gigs and insisted that Sax and I follow him on his infantry like uphill marches. Those arduous climbs only served to whet my appetite.

Early on 15th Dec, all three of us were fondly seen off by Sax and the Sangmas after three nights of peerless hospitality. We promised to be back and with a bigger paltan (are the other 93rd guys listening?) At Guwahati, Rakesh peeled off and headed for Shillong while we broke journey en route to Misamari. We were already in the extended zone of Maj Gen Peru Anant's hospitality as we were met at a cantonment by a LO who organized our night long stay most efficiently. Sleeping in a pre-fabricated room was a whole new experience.

Early next morning we were up and away to Misamari. Large parts of the road were not the best (in retrospect, Meghalaya roads were almost world class) but we endured the roller coaster drive in the belief that there would indeed be undiluted fun at the end of the

tunnel. Some other Rimcollians who had visited Gen Peru earlier (Grass Reddy, fellow resident of Bangalore, being among the most vocal ones) had been effusive in their appreciation of his hospitality which had already raised expectations.

Misamari is no more and no less than the sprawling, picture perfect cantonment. Without the military presence, it would struggle to find itself on the map. What caught our ears as we drove into Gen Peru's fief were the loud speaker lined roads that were abuzz with Bollywood hits. It did not quite occur to me to ask the General what might have been the strategy to regale the entire cantonment with lilting music! Would it have to do with showcasing our soft power that the Chinese can never match?

Our itinerary had been thoughtfully chalked out by Peru well before we arrived but there were some welcome twists that one had not anticipated. The first was the silver jubilee (marriage) celebrations of his deputy (on the day we

arrived) that lasted till the wee hours of the next morning and may not have even stopped if Peru and Mrs Aparna Ananth had chosen to continue burning the dance floor with their deft moves. Shirin's next day was made when Aparna deployed a whole platoon of ethnic sari vendors that had Shirin in a state of ecstasy as she also had Mrs Ravi (spouse of Col Ravi of ASC who has since relocated to Bangalore) to drive a hard bargain in the local language for her. The next unscheduled pit stop (for me) was when I was hijacked by some of Peru's officers to a virgin picnic spot on a near dry river bed which had an absolutely breath taking ambience with some heavy duty speakers adding to the fun. They did not even attempt to wean Shirin away having sensed where her priorities lay.

The evening was dedicated to meeting and greeting Rimcollians in the vicinity, some of whom had come all the way from Guwahati, Tezpur and Jorhat. We did not let the early start of the next day come in the way of bonding on scotch eggs that



On the Rhino trail in Kaziranga

would have done both Thaple and Padam Singh proud. Aparna's elegant touch was all over the venue that boasted of a tree house as well.

The next port of call was Kaziranga. Peru's office had worked overtime to billet us into one of the better rooms in the state government guest house despite it being peak season. As we neared the end of the five-hour drive, we noticed a few rhinos in the swampy marshlands

along NH 129 which was only a precursor to what we were to experience later. Shirin and I detoxed that night after almost ten days of hurricane partying ever since we had landed in Kolkata on 6th December to attend the global alumni get together of a foreign bank that both of us had worked for earlier in our careers.

I would prefer to keep our rhino sighting experience short as some animal

lover friends were quick to sensitise me to the sheer agony that the elephants are subjected to when carrying tourists. Yes, we did come within leg shaking distance of this one horned wonder but I wish (in retrospect) that there was a less painful and intrusive way to foray into their backyard.

Thanks to Peru & Aparna, we experienced the proverbial red carpet wherever we were in Assam. We shall await the opportunity to reciprocate. The one disappointment was not to have met Mrs Baruah, the spouse of fellow Pratapian, the late Nirmal Baruah (94th RIMC) as she was away from Guwahati.

Even though we had several friends nudging us to be back in Bangalore towards the year end, we chose to break journey in Kolkata on our return from Guwahati since we had another Rimcollian event to attend – the wedding of my senior (85th RIMC/Ranjit) Joy Prakash and Deborah Mondle's daughter, Pratiksha. Mondle Sir had warned me of dire consequences if I gave the wedding a miss when we met in his favourite watering hole in Kathmandu earlier last year. Conscious of his prowess in the boxing ring, I pencilled my engagement diary very boldly. The last time that Shirin and I attended a church wedding was also that of a Rimcollian's daughter and yet another Ranjitian (WG Cdr Kurian Cherian). It just occurs to me how diverse the Rimcollian fraternity is.

Shirin will bear testimony to my planning majority of our vacations around locations where Rimcollians are. We even survived a vegetarian spread on New Year's Eve in Singapore in the company of a much younger but vegan Rimcollian (no prizes for guessing) which kind of blasphemy for an Epicurean that I am. I have to commend my wife for putting up with all the inbred, fraternal revelry that is de rigour when incorrigible Rimcollians meet. But over the years, she has come to be missed more by my school buddies than me if she at all skips an event. As Gen Chinu would say, Shirin is a complete Rimcolliana! We look forward to bouncing more Rimcollians in the years ahead. ■



# EUROPE MUSINGS

— Col **SAMAR SINGH PUNDIR**

## STONEHENGE - KEEP A STONE'S THROW AWAY

It is sold as all things in England, as an architectural wonder and it is the most popular screen saver, where with a sleight of hand or say like a heap of stones... sorry boulders!! is passed as a stepping stone to history!!

When the Egyptians gave us the pyramids and Greeks gave us the coliseum and well before India gave away literally hygiene and sanitation in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, the pagans gave us well stone henge.

A full day away from London! that is one day itinerary in a costly day 5 day trip to see stones!! the only positive being the mustard fields of the drive through, Salisbury plains like in DDL!!

If you are an Indian you can stopover at Winchester and see the Gurkha Museum, small but beautiful, well kept in a beautiful quaint town, but purely Stonehenge, you copped it mate!!

When the road takes a turn the monument is right ahead!! The

underwhelming size is like a punch in the solar plexus!! You feel like telling the driver to turn around but gentlemen it's the charge of the light brigade!! No questions asked you March ahead!!

When you dismount you have a beautiful museum, clean facilities and costly food!!

You still want to turn away with a quick photo!! But the smart keepers are aware of such smart tactics and have a carefully planted forest shielding Stonehenge so like Liddell hart you have to get to the other side of the hill!!

So with a frown you dish out £ 17 and curse yourself, for the careless visitor he will add an additional £ 3 and you won't be any wiser so as an English speaker read the fine print and leave the spending to the Chinese tourist!!

So you get into a bus he gives you an audio guide and there you are!! Two haphazard boulders mounted atop each other !! The same way one did in

academy with another bloke atop you and a cycle for good measure!! You feel like kicking yourself feel like banging your head against the boulder, grudgingly u do your perambulation!! Avoid eye contact with your spouse at this stage, for it was your idea!!

Follow the Chinese, whose mobs make a mountain of the whole stone thing and pose for photos! This with a nation which boasts of the Great Wall!!

Or the American who will fly a small drone and broadcast it live to folks back home!!

PS: If you are from the land of Buddha and have seen the Buland Darwaza or the Taj or marvelled at Charminar etc etc!! Well you ought to be sheepish for being pushed by the White man into this forgery!! You need to get your head checked!! Wear a helmet lest you are tempted to bang your head against the 2 m high boulders!!!

## INDIAN FOOD IN A FOREIGN LAND



A visit to UK guarantees good Indian food if you knew where to go. A quick reckoner for beginners, an Indian restaurant with local clientele, was likely to serve you baked Indian whole wheat bread and pulses steamed in water and Indian curry' and it's likely to taste the way it sounds!!

Thus in one bold brush negating all the efforts of one Mr C Columbus who wasted his youthful years looking for spices in an exotic land. But if one saw Indian clientele in an India restaurant, that's the place to be, you'll get Dal, Roti with all its tastes and flavours and there are many Bangladeshis and friendly neighbours who in their free time contribute to the Pak fund and hold rallies when our leaders visit UK but

proudly call their restaurants 'The Great Indian Restaurant'.

In Lyon in France we booked and went to an Indian restaurant called 'Le Penjab' right on the banks of the Rhine and next to the French Supreme Court, run by a Venerable Sikh Gentleman!!

Entering the restaurant there was the cream of French society avoiding the hoi polloi and I could make out some judges too, with the way they were examining the Mega Tandoori Rotis and not knowing what to do with it.

And others slicing Butter Chicken with their forks and knives and one could make out, it was the same painful thought which was dawning on them as it did on Napoleon on 18 June 1815 at Waterloo.

Anyways my sixth sense said that this was not the place to enjoy Indian Food, if this gentry was to see me dipping my Roti in the Dal, they would cringe in agony. The owner was kind to shoo me away by insisting the wait would be an Hour. So one did the next best thing head to the, 'The New Delhi' close by.

We were greeted by a Bengali waiter chewing a betel nut displaying layers of accumulated juice on his once white teeth.. truly felt like home.

The New Delhi looked like a typical DTDC restaurant in Mr Luttans read Lutyens Delhi. Indian tourism posters on the walls of The Taj, tigers and elephants. On one whole wall was a great map of India, the type which was painted in 47 and found in an attic in 2017. The

# TRAVEL NOTES

owner, an old man, greeted me and engaged me in small talk and talked of India as if he had landed in the previous flight, nice to see people who kept touch with home. He was all sugar and spice, I ordered my food quickly lest I got diabetes with his sweet, small talk.

While I feasted on a wholesome Indian food in days, he heralded us with stories of India, but mostly they were stories straight from some Propaganda, now could make out, he was a friendly neighbour, rudderless and without moorings, making a living out of New Delhi but himself was from Lahore, though he didn't dare admit it in front of his local clientele. I also found how naive, and shallow his knowledge was.

In all his earnestness he actually talked of the temples and secular credentials of his home land. What World was this guy in?

Not able to digest his diatribe and at the same time relishing his food and hospitality, my mind wandered to Marlin'spike hall and Viola like captain Haddock, I found the answer, to counter this host only one potion would work and I quickly ordered a large Laphroaig on the rocks.

With the ember drink and the nectar down my gullet and having consumed the greater part of the meal and now not faced with the existential threat of my bread being snatched it was time to wax eloquent on India and break the

man's myths.... anyway I left him aghast with his myths broken, only reinforcing what he knew deep down and didn't want to face, his condescending tone also gave way to more respect, used to tourists who were clueless, who would listened to his lopsided monologue for a decent meal.

Anyway for the Defence Of India and for bursting his oversized ego, I paid 80 Euros for a meal which my calculation said was only 60. Anyways, too proud to back down I majestically paid ... by now he had also joined us and having imbibed the nectar was more magnanimous and mellow. We parted with a long handshake, what's 20 euros for the country, I guess!

## SWACHH EUROPE



See I am not Nirav Modi who spent his growing years in the salubrious climate of Belgium or part of the South Delhi privileged circle who get on the next Virgin flight to Paree' to beat the heat....or. Err....when-well feeling the heat.

Needless to say for a first time traveller to Western Europe so experiences were well rather basic and comical. Having

confined and ensconced myself to India and having visited neighbours without visa and hostile reception on a few occasions and seeing my map reading skills inadvertently too it was a pleasure to go invited for a change. Well been there, done that earlier to UK, among others and a few friendly neighbours and Middle East, Europe was exotic as I envisaged.

When I had reached Heathrow, I was greeted by a 6 feet tall coloured lady who despite sitting on a high chair still looked down upon me. She had her reading glasses dangling at a precarious angle and was none too pleased to see me enter Her Majesty's domain. My clear, crisp English and smart dress made no impression on her whatsoever .. finally she asked me

what was the purpose of my visit?

I wanted to blurt like Christopher Columbus would have to a Red Indian , I come to Conquer England my fair lady..... I wonder if Christopher did that to the nearest Red Indian and if he understood his Italian , but I meekly submitted, for Tourism Madam!! she wasn't impressed and probably had seen worse so she let me pass.

Well, Charles de Gaulle CDG airport, was well different, without as much as raising her head the blonde uniformed lady, stamped my passport, now it was time for me to get worried was this part of a greater game plan all my senses were alert!!

This sort of entry you don't get even into the Vasant Kunj DLF mall Delhi also, where also the guard weighs you as if the visitor is a serious customer or there to enjoy the AC.

Anyways finally I was in Mainland Europe and felt like Marco Polo, Columbus put together.

So my travails to Swatch Europe began in earnest. The welcome in CDG was good, touts hawking taxis felt like home. Experience of Delhi said go for the regular taxis. The toilet was good and free, a great leveler.

It was the last of the king of good times....

A drive from CDG to Ivry Sur Seine traversing through Paris was an eye opener, there was trash in the dividers, the driver did not wear a seat belt and there were homeless below the fly overs. It's a different issue that they were in Quchep tents, well fed and clothed but homeless alright. Motorcycles whizzed in the slowest lane with helmets on but in Belgium and Netherlands helmets were thrown to the wind!!

Toilets in Paris were seriously lacking, still did not see anyone doing their business in the open. Public toilets in the road leading from Louvre to Champs Élysées had one toilet which was closed.

So 8 Euros in a cafe eating crepes' permitted use of one. Lesson learnt. As you went on the highways to Brugges in Belgium a visit to a toilet in a fuel station costed a Euro!! A facility which comes for free in India.



In Germany the same cost was reimbursable on the purchase if any. At least in Germany the toilets were hygienic and an auto wash followed each use. In Italy, they had not found use of toilet seats and decided to do away with it. India seemed Swachh any day.

One found beggars in Malls in Lyon, well dressed and smart, beggars, in Paris on the metro and Eiffel Tower models being sold on the road sides by immigrants.

The cars on the road included Alfos and Wagon R, the same as in India. In Germany, traffic was disciplined and in Italy they believed in wizzing past changing lanes, without indicators, still better than India though.

Driving in Europe was cool, unlike UK where cameras and monitoring made it a concentration camp, in Europe people still followed rules without the monitoring.

The bus tour wallah, Indian was everywhere, competing and not giving space to the Chinese, but Indians beat them to it, in Brugges and Amsterdam and held

ground in Interlaken and Jungfrauch too, when the city was shut in Inte -Laken the Indian tourist was still buying his fridge magnets in shops run by our brethren and open till midnight.

However South of France, Monaco and Montreaux in Switzerland were devoid of masses of tour operator tourists.

So was Europe more swachh then India, definitely no!! Lot of things we take for granted in India come at a cost, there was trash everywhere but there were no heaps of trash..

People silently stood in queues for use of a toilet ... no toilet for miles but still nobody going it in open.

Left one wondering whether India lacked Development or Discipline? The roads in India and our super highways can compete with Autobahns, some are even better for e.g. the drive from Lucknow to Agra onwards to Noida is world class... however if we removed the rude, Indian driver from our roads , well .....

Food for thought nevertheless!!

# India's Desert Man

## Jagdeep Singh Kairon



Not many of us know that in December 2014 Jagdeep (Horsy) Kairon became the first Indian Man to join the 4 Deserts Club. Which means he joined a select few who have run 250Kms across The Sahara, The Atacama, The Gobi and The Antarctica. A whopping 1000 Kms across the most brutal terrain.

He recently completed his 10th ultra marathon (250Kms race) and his 3rd Gobi desert race. He has also completed Patagonia 250 Kms and also ran 250 kms from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap through the jungles of Cambodia. A Shivajian (114 course), Jags was NDA blue in cross country and Riding & Polo and a Blazer in squash. He later joined the elite 1 Para (Special Forces).

When asked why does he do these mad races..he says old habits die hard. He recommends these races to anyone who loves the great outdoors and seek solitude in nature. He says that for him its a personal journey and he does a mental detox away from all the trappings of city life no phones, ATMs- nothing just camp life and seeing a new country the way it is best seen - on foot.

Apart from the cultural aspects, which are priceless, be it sharing a Shisha with a Bedouin in the Sahara, or



praying at the black glacier in Patagonia, gulping copious amounts of fermented horse milk beer with mongol horsemen and above all carrying the Tricolour across the finish line. Jagdeep wishes

more Rimcollians to join him in these races because he feels that they already have the mental make up that is required for endurance running. ■

—Sidharth Mishra

# LAST POST

RANK & NAME	Yr at RIMC	Section	Date
Brig CS Thapa	1964-69	PRA	11 Mar 2018
Lt Gen PS Jaggi AVSM	1971-76	RAN	08 Apr 2018
Cdr PB Chowdhury SC, NM	1955-60	PRA	Apr 2018
Mr R Balakrishna Menon	1956-60	RAN	24 Apr 2018
Mr Santokh Singh Chopra	1936-42	ROB	03 May 2018
Col Anil Kant Sharma	1968-73	SHI	27 May 2018
Mr Peter M Will	1941-44	WAV	10 Dec 2017



# Driven by Expertise Led by Commitment



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