

Palavi

Volume II, Edition I

December - January 2020



A Bharat Darshan Special

**National Academy of Defence Financial Management
Golibar Maidan, Pune**

**DEFENCE PENSION TRAINING AT PCDA (P),ALLAHABAD
(16th to 20th DEC. 2019) IDAS PROBATIONERS ,2018 BATCH**



Editor's letter

Kavya Tangirala



The Bharat Darshan edition is here!

On a journey across our country for three and a half months at a stretch, this All India Study Tour was a study of sorts. Before we embarked, the Darshan evokes an exciting feeling – one full of travel, of newness, the experiences waiting to be relished and of course, the lugging around of suitcases and planning weight limits in advance!

At the other end of this now, I can safely say that not only have we had a very comprehensive exposure to the various offices of our Department, we have also lived the length&breadth and diversity that India offers.

Just as our country stretches itself out so it may offer its people jungles, seas and mountains, DAD has moulded itself to cater to a variety of clientele. Dotted all across, we visited but a few of our establishments.

From the auditors shivering but strongly working to improve lives for BRO personnel in Durbuk, Ladakh to the big and old Pension office in Allahabad and on to the financial advice rendered to India's first tri-service command in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the sheer diversity in not only geographies, but especially in the content of work done by DAD that was the highlight of our tour. Of course, we are also now well versed with the art of formal group photographs and conversations!

I am delighted to present an assortment of experiences that the 2018 batch has enjoyed and shared in this special edition of Palavi. A few have recounted attachments of which they were group leaders, while others have drawn on learnings they have gathered over the long journey.

A small overview of our schedule has been included, for context. We are invigorated after this Tour – our association with the Department and pride in its work has only heightened.

The excitement that continues to sustain us, now in NADFM, is visible through the pages of this edition.

I hope you enjoy our stories, and happy reading!



NEW YEAR 2020 IN MUMBAI

- Photo by Sonal

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page No.

1.	A roundup of the All India Study Tour	1
2.	Training outside the classroom	4
3.	पर मेरा गुलिस्ताँ बना रहा !	6
4.	Learnings from Ladakh	7
5.	Air Force days	9
6.	Pension Module at PCDA(P)	12
7.	An attachment in the Islands	13
8.	अंडमान : स्वतंत्र भारत का “ काला पानी ”	15
9.	Photo Gallery	17

A ROUNDUP OF THE ALL INDIA STUDY TOUR

Kavya Tangirala



The tour commenced officially in the first week of November, 2019.

Border Roads Organization, with Project Himank, Leh from 8-16 November, 2019

With the BRO, we had the opportunity to visit 753 BRTF in Thiksey and 50 BRTF, Durbuk. Attractions like Pangong Tso and Shyok, along with Gurudwara Pathhar Sahib were also covered. **Indian Army, with 14 Corps, Leh & 8 Mtn Div, Kumbathang (Kargil) from 16-24 November 2019**

Our attachment commenced from 8 Mtn Div HQ in Kumbathang, Kargil, on route to which, we crossed Khaltse and the famed “moon-land” Lamayuru. Here, we were divided into three groups who were attached to Brigades in Drass, Kargil and Biamah. From here on, groups were attached to battalions and taken to forward posts such as GT-Top, Yellow Flower, Post 43 etc.

Amidst the mountains of Ladakh. Here, we arrived to spend a period of 17 days. The time spent in Ladakh and Kargil was very humbling. Not only did the enormous mountains and fresh rivers help put size in perspective, the interactions with people working for BRO and the Army here was eye-opening. We were able to build a rapport with those who hosted us and showed us with great enthusiasm their workplace and the *joie de vivre* with which they carry on their lives here.

The sacrifices willingly made by people for causes

larger than themselves was a lesson in empathy – these lessons were aggravated by the sub-zero temperatures and general discomfort accompanying it. However, there is something about nature’s tests that builds a resilience in us – we too carried on and embraced the beauty of this place with all its whims (temperature swings) and fancies (such gorgeous views!). Trips to places like Pangong Tso, forward posts near the LoC and the drives on steep roads all along was a remarkable time that will not be forgotten.



CENTRAD, New Delhi from November 25 to 6 December, 2019

After Ladakh, we landed in warmer plains, getting ready for official duties in New Delhi in the beginning of December. A hectic schedule of calling-on higher officials and dignitaries awaited us. The imposing structure of South Block and its many gates and corridors was our location for most meetings. We had the opportunity to meet all Secretaries in the Ministry of Defence, along with Hon’ble RM and Hon’ble RRM. We also made our debut as a batch in the CGDA HQ.



To be able to see their offices and how they conduct themselves, we got an understanding of what is expected of us as officers. This learning is crucial since not only does it widen our horizons, it also instills confidence. We heard many praises for the professionalism of IDAS officers. Moreover, continual

interactions with even the Armed Forces (3 service Chiefs and DG Coast Guard) helped build our communication skills – something that we have

employed everywhere after this trip! Of course, the “Brief on Training” and vote of thanks was memorized by everyone – needing only a small trigger for us to begin rattling off the sequence of our training.

Indian Air Force, with PCDA(AF) Dehradun and Vayu Bhawan, New Delhi from 7-13 December 2019

Our attachment with the Air Force was initially planned for only Delhi but our PCDA(AF) office called us to Dehradun. Here, the tall deodars and teak trees awaited us.

In Rishikesh, we stayed at a jungle camp, proceeded to witness the evening Ganga aarti and did white water river rafting over a stretch of 24km of the river. We then moved to Dehradun, where we were hosted by PCDA(AF) and visited IFA(IMA) along with FRI and IMA as well.

PCDA (Pension), Allahabad from 16-20 December 2019

We were hosted at Defence Pension Training Institute (DPTI), next to the PCDA(P) office. The one week consisted of classes in the morning and visits in the afternoon. We had a good look at the sections of this office along with new work – such as the Central Pensions Portal (CPP) and the digitization of old records along with processing of e-PPOs. All IDAS officers posted here welcomed us graciously and their enthusiasm was infectious.

A trip to Varanasi was also organized, along with visits to local attractions in Allahabad such as the sangam along with official visits to Air Force ED and Army Base Workshop.

R&D, with PCDA(Bangalore), DRDO, BEL and HAL,

Bengaluru from 23-27 December 2019

With the presence of DRDO clusters along with DPSUs like BEL and HAL, we got a view of the corporate side of government. With PCDA(Bangalore), we got an insight into their functioning along with the innovative IVRS project that they have developed.

We had a tour of the Electronics & Radar Development Establishment (LRDE) Lab of DRDO which develops sonars and radars along with a visit to the BEL complex where we saw the production center of EVMs

along with the Coastal Surveillance System (CSS). A trip to the HAL facility was fruitful as we saw (and climbed into) ALH Dhruv & Rudra as well as LCA Tejas. The best bit, though, was the RTC Southern Region here. Our stay was extremely comfortable in stylish and clean rooms with great food served in the mess. All we could want!

Indian Navy & Indian Coast Guard Organization, Mumbai from 29 December 2019 to 10 January 2020

We were hosted by PCDA(Navy). Although the attachment started off the wrong foot (hotel problems!), we were happy to be able to stay in Colaba and visit Navy organizations by day and walk around the easy-breezy streets of Mumbai by evening. We visited the IFA(WNC) office, along with Material Organization (Mumbai) and INS Hamla. A day at sea aboard the ICGS Samrat was also organized, which was a first for all of us. Here, the Coast Guard welcomed us onboard their

ship and graciously explained the functioning of a ship along with problems they face.



Our tryst with the seas continue, for we moved to Goa for one week. Here, we were with Sr. Dep. IFA(FOGA/FONA). We visited INS Hansa, the base for naval aviation where we visited the MiG 29K simulator along with a guided tour of a functioning IL-32. We also caught a sight of the MiGs in their air sortie. We also went to Karwar, at INS Kadamb for a day – but we missed catching INS Vikramaditya, for she was sailing the day we arrived. Lastly, we also saw INS Mandovi, where the Naval War College and MARCOS training school are situated. In between this, we did manage a few hours or the sunset by the beach!

Andaman & Nicobar Command, from 13-17 January 2020

Our last attachment that was added much later on, we were hosted by IFA(ANC) in Port Blair. The attachment included meeting the various component commanders – those of the Army, Navy and Coast Guard. We also called-on the CINCAN. A trip to Havelock island where we scuba dived, was also

organized. This was a great ending to our travels.

The experience throughout taught us not only about our country, its histories & geographies, but also about the Department. Its sheer reach and size – the service it accords to its clientele and the commitment with which its members do their work. This was heartening and inspiring. This trip also brought us, as a batch, closer – to spend time off-work as well as bring on the on-duty mode together, to face logistic hassles and flight delays along with inconvenient hotels; but ultimately to catch sight of a beautiful sunset/sunrise in Andaman or the cold mountains of Ladakh or take a freezing jump into the Rishikesh Ganga, we all did it together. We have now returned to stay at our Academy continuously for a period of time, for some peace. The highlight, of course, was the huge TA/DA claim that each of us filed – so many bills and boarding passes!

Ultimately, the spirit of *esprit de corps* is now well inside us along with memories and life lessons!



Playing cards and passing time in Leh!



TRAINING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Prem Kumar

"The world is the true classroom. The most rewarding and important learning is learning through experience, seeing and grasping with our eyes and mind."



This quote exactly sums up the objective of the All India Study tour of IDAS Probationers.

Travelling across our country, visiting various defense establishments, interacting with hundreds of people from various walks of life in the last three and a half months was such an enriching learning for us probationers of 2018 batch. In this edition, I am extremely delighted to share some of those valuable experiences. These were, in a true sense, training outside the classroom.

Can you live far away from your family for most of your life for at least thirty years? Can you pursue your work in avalanche prone areas and tough terrains all through your professional career? Can you do physically demanding work in temperatures of -20 degree Celsius? Can you see your new born baby after 6 months of its arrival in to this world? Can you attend your own father's funeral after three days?!! I have asked these questions to many of my friends. Their immediate reply was "Are you crazy, bro?"

Almost all the BRO (Border Roads Organisation) personnel we met during our attachment with Project Himank in Leh and Durbuk have gone through these exactly these tough phases in their life. It is hard to even imagine us in such situations. Isn't it?!

While reading this, some might think that these personnel are not working for free of cost and are getting paid allowances for their hardships. Yes, I completely agree. But can these monetary benefits (which, in the case of BRO, are very low) match their physical and mental hardships? The answer is a solid NO.

It really requires passion and strong willpower to continue pushing on, despite the hardships. The sad truth is that most of the common public is not aware of even the existence of an organization called



BRO. They don't have that identity as is enjoyed by the Army, Navy and Air Force. How many of us know that they suffer maximum casualties due to combined reasons of harsh weather, high risk work environment (working mostly in high altitudes)?

Irrespective of the lack of recognition from the public, they are delivering high quality outputs and do it with professionalism. Next time, when you are traveling by road in Leh, Kargil, North-East or any other roads by the border, remember the sacrifices of thousands of BRO personnel for constructing the beautiful roads you enjoy. That will be the biggest tribute to their marvelous work!

Our director, Mihir sir, once advised us during our induction training, "There is a person behind each file in front of you; remember this before taking a decision on that file".

We have realized the significance of those words during our BRO attachment! Our training outside the classroom was so perfect here that it sensitized us to the extent that we will do whatever we can in our official capacity as IDAS officers to lighten the life of these selfless souls!

Training outside the classroom continues.....



**Road work
by casual labourers
BRO Roads in
upper Ladakh**



**With our BRO
drivers in
Project Himank, Leh**



पर मेरा गुलिस्ताँ बना रहा !

Badime Krishna S.



रियासतें बदलती गयी,
कारवाँ चलता गया,
वक्त बदलता गया,
पर मेरा गुलिस्ताँ बना रहा...

नफरत फैलाई गयी,
मज़हब को उठाया गया,
भाईयों को तोड़ा गया,
पर मेरा गुलिस्ताँ बना रहा...

सरहदें बदली गयी
बँटवारे किए गए,
दस्तूर जलाए गए,
पर मेरा गुलिस्ताँ बना रहा...

दहशत फैलाई गयी,
धोका दिया गया,
गुमराह भी किया गया,
पर मेरा गुलिस्ताँ बना रहा...

जंग भी छेड़ी गयी,
खून बहता गया,
जवानों के छाती पर,
मेरा गुलिस्ताँ बना रहा...

--- कृष्णा बदीमे



LEARNINGS FROM LADAKH

Rahul Gaur



Our Army attachment started right after our attachment with Border Roads Organization in Ladakh. The attachment was with 8 Mountain Division in Kumbathang under 14 Corps,

based in Leh. We started our journey to Kumbathang on 16th of November through the Leh-Kargil highway. However, after 30 minutes in to the journey we were told that there was a no-movement order on the highway! Quite early on we got a taste of how this attachment was going to be.

In our tour of the HQ office of 8 Mtn Div, we were shown the rich legacy of this division which has earned the Div its soubriquet "Forever in Operations". We were briefed about the capabilities of the army in this area and challenges faced by our troops, especially due to adverse weather conditions. Issues related to procurement, payment and audit were also flagged. We were also given a presentation by Colonel AMC on precautions related to our health to be taken during our stay there.

For our attachment in brigades, our group of probationers was divided into 3 groups of 3 probationers in each brigade of Drass, Kargil and Biamah. Probationers were further sub-divided and taken to battalions.

In our battalions, we got the real exposure of forward posts and of meeting troops in such inhospitable terrain and climatic conditions. We were taken to forward posts and shown the amenities or facilities there, or the lack of it. Some forward posts were at heights of almost 18000 feet!

A great opportunity that the attachment presented

A great opportunity of this attachment lay in our interactions with not only officers, but with JCOs and Jawans

lay in our interactions with not only officers, but with JCOs and Jawans. They were very helpful and explained to us how these forward posts are manned during winters where the importance of winter stocking was emphasised. Troops in these posts stay there for almost 7-8 months without communication and survive on tinned food only. We

often heard that troops there not only fight against the enemy but the main challenge is one of fighting the climate. Staying at such heights for long duration of time leads to medical and health related issues.

The grievances of Jawans and Officers related to Pay and Account Offices of our department mostly concerned delays in payment of different allowances even when most received their salaries on time. This

was also related to late submission of bills by army clerks in most cases.

In turn, it came to light that there is a shortage of army clerks. Due to this, clerks are tasked with other work as well which affects the filing of claims. This largely leads to improper filing and delays. Proper training of army clerks on filing claims will ensure that soldiers get their dues on time.

A great opportunity of this attachment lay in our interactions with not only officers, but with JCOs and Jawans

Further, another cause for Jawans not receiving allowances is due to a delay in publication of D.O. Part II orders which thereby affects corps notifications. Thus, the basis for receiving allowances in the first place is missing and many a times, Jawans who are staying in forward posts for

7-8 months remain unaware of this. This leads to a largely negative perception of PAOs in the minds of



At Kargil War Memorial, Drass



At Yellow Top, Kargil at 12,800ft near the LoC

Jawans. There is a need to create awareness about various initiatives taken by the department in general and PAOs in particular.

Another problem faced by many is the remoteness of locations and lack of internet connections. Especially in forward battalions, this leads to slow movement of bills and files. Procurement though GeM is also not easy since connections are erratic and there are limited suppliers who are willing to furnish supplies here. In response to this, it is important that our department should attempt to process these files and bills as soon as possible because by the time these reach our offices, a lot of time has lapsed already. Flexibility in procurement rules for remote locations can also be explored.

Due to the terrain and climate, many uncertainties are prevalent here. We got a first-hand glimpse of this: we were stuck for two days due to no-movement orders owing to bad weather; our vehicles also broke down on two occasions. This exposed us to how



At 137 Battery, Ganasok

machines and vehicles face heightened levels of wear and tear here than in the rest of the country and how maintenance and upkeep is crucial. This will be useful for us while making decisions relating to procurement of such items in the future.

Lastly, officers and PBORs become very emotional when their claims are rejected or delayed by our offices. They contend that they are making great sacrifices for the country and such issues dents their morale – sensitivity and a sense of time and urgency are essential in dealing with issues of the Army.

The tough living conditions of our troops in remote locations across the country and the challenges they face in such hostile conditions are not just against the enemy but also against nature.

A feedback I received from many officers was that such army attachments should be conducted while as part of the career of IDAS officers, perhaps as a component of Mid-Career Training Programmes and not just limited to probation. This proposal can be looked into to impart greater sensitivity about issues of Army in IDAS officers.

This attachment was an overall exercise in empathy that will be utilized when we discharge our functions in the future.



At GT-Top, Handangbrok at 15,000ft near the LoC

AIR FORCE DAYS

C. Aarthi



First of all, apologies for not revealing the stories of Maryland as promised in the earlier issue. As this month subject matter revolves around Bharat Darshan, thought it would be appropriate to pen down the experience of our Airforce attachment which was a part of our 3.5 month study tour (of course it was skewed more towards the fun quotient!).

Nevertheless there is no dearth of interesting stories in this read too. The attachment with the Indian Air Force was for a week from 9th to 13th December, 2019.

For a change, our attachment started in the jungles and the waters of Ganga (the operational grounds of the other two forces – Army and Navy!) at the Aquaterra Jungle Camp on 7-8 December. Many thanks to PCDA (Air Force) Dehradun for organizing this.

On 7th, we stayed in a jungle camp in the foothills of the mighty Himalayas. The stay was arranged in very sophisticated tents and the whole ambience was serene giving us a feel of oneness with nature.

We reached the campsite around 2:00 pm. After a short period of recreation where we played football amidst the greenery and hills, we set off to witness the spectacular Rishikesh Ganga Aarti. The hour long Aarti was filled with absolute divinity and spirituality. Any effort to describe the experience

will fall short of it! On encountering the *panchabhoota*, the five elements, which form the basis of cosmic creation (land, water, fire, air and sky) in a single place along with the soul stirring sounds of the bells definitely takes you above worldly existence.

On returning from the Aarti back our campsite, little did we know that by the campfire we would develop a good bond of friendship with complete strangers from Australia, and that too students of high school! Many interesting conversations flowed across the table (in this case, the campfire), ranging from food to culture and sports along with education and general living conditions of the people of both countries.

These were young students from a public school in Australia, touring India for a month as part of their school curriculum. The interesting fact was that they had to travel without their phones, and with no contact with their family!

Nevertheless, the kids were having a great time developing camaraderie amongst each other and acclimatizing the beauty of the new country they were in. We were also surprised that they had diverse career preferences and many wanted to become proud farmers too!

The night ended with the satisfaction of meeting new people who were so different from us. We were also excited for the river rafting the next day.

On 8th morning, the cold bluish-green clear water of



Ganga was waiting for us! With all the protective gear strapped on and accompanied by lifeguards-cum-instructors, we set off for the expedition of about 24 km on the Rishikesh river with 12 rough white water rapids on the way. We were briefed about how to go about it, and how to protect and rescue each other in case of the raft capsizing, the probability of which, we were told, was less than 1%.

Least did we ever imagine that we will be in that least probable 1%!!! Yes! Our raft capsized on a particularly technical and rapid named 'Crossfire'. There were currents from various directions meeting at one point, creating a eddy-like whirlpool effect. As we were pulled into the water and pushed down because of the whirlpool in different directions, no one remembered anything except the breathlessness and cold waters along with the fear for life!

Thankfully, Mother Ganga spared us and everyone was rescued safe and sound, though many had seen the light at the end of the death tunnel!!! From here on, after our 'rebirth', we got back to rafting all the more stronger. We defeated many difficult rapids which came along the way with our team work and coordinated effort! We even jumped into 30 feet deep cold water voluntarily and enjoyed the adventure. So, the rafting turned out to be the highlight of our entire Bharat Darshan and Rishikesh will be etched in our travel memoirs forever!!

On 9th, we visited the PCDA (Air Force) office in Dehradun. A presentation on the organisational setup and working procedure of the sections of the office was done. After which, a sumptuous Pahadi lunch was the highlight of the day. We also visited the medicinal Sahastradhara and the long day ended with a formal dinner with the station IDAS officers where ex FA(DS) Mrs.Vandana Srivatsava graced the occasion.

We also visited Forest Research Institute and the IMA in Dehradun along with IFA (IMA) office. In the evenings, we would venture out for local street food exploration.

On the long drive to the Jolly Grant Airport, the Dehradun roads can be a soothing therapy for the heart and soul!

Once in New Delhi, we visited the PCDA (Air Force), New Delhi office on 12th. Here we were briefed on the functions of the office. We were told about the unique functions, such as:

1. Online Jet Fuel Accounting System(OJAS)

OJAS is an online portal which facilitates IOCL, IAF and PCDA to effectively maintain the workflow of Defence Offset Audit

In the afternoon we were taken to the Air Force Central Accounts Office (AFCAO) which centrally maintains pay & allowances of IAF officers, airmen and civilians of IAF.

We also paid a visit to the JCDA(AF) in Vayu Bhawan whose major function is as the pension sanctioning authority of IAF.

Our last day of the attachment on 13th, we visited to Hindon Air Force station – Asia's largest. Here, we experienced the C-130 J Simulator along with going inside an actual C-130 flight. We also saw the Helicopter Unit with Chinooks, Apaches and Cheetahs aside from learning about air traffic control units and the meteorological section of the Air Force station.

We were also briefed about their online inventory management system, IMMOLS in the Principal IFA's office.



What I ate in Dehradun!

A Pahadi thali with red rice and lassi



Berry tea at IFA (IMA)'s office



As seen from above, the one week was an enthralling journey fully packed with lots of learning, fun, adventure, friendship and loads of memories! See you all in the next issue with the fulfilment of my promise- the US diaries will continue, stay tuned!!!

Bun-tikki – Dehradun's street food

PENSION MODULE AT PCDA (P), ALLAHABAD

Dhanasekhar Rathinam



I am going to tell you about our wonderful experience we had during our attachment with PCDA(P), Allahabad.

We stayed at Defence Pension Training Institute, in the office campus, where the stay was nice and food was delicious. Our attachment was planned in a manner where we had classes in the morning and visits in the afternoon session.

Firstly the learning bit: the classes enabled us to get a holistic picture about defence pension. Since we learnt about it in great detail. On their significance for the defence forces, their proportion in the defence budget as a whole, the enormous task of disbursing them through the length and breadth of the country, various types of pensionary awards along with the ongoing digitization drives of existing pension payment orders (PPO) – we had interactive sessions with our IDAS seniors posted in the office.

The importance of Central Pension Portal (CPP) along with the entire process used to develop it was brought out. We even had an officer of the rank of Major General who gave us the services' perspective on pensions.

The visits were another remarkable aspect of our attachment! We visited the Allahabad fort, the inside of which is the location for the 508 Army Base Workshop. We caught a sight of the *sangam* of rivers Ganga and Yamuna in the background of the amazing sunset. Then we went on a boat ride onto the exact spot where the rivers mix – with birds all around. That was a breath taking experience. We visited the Air Force 24 Equipment Depot in Manauri, which taught us about the best practices in inventory management.

We also had the opportunity to visit Varanasi for a day trip. First, we went to Sarnath where the majestic Asoka Lion Pillar is preserved in the nearby Sarnath Museum. The actual site, with smaller *stupas*

along with the Dhamek Stupa where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon, is very well preserved while the museum houses countless pillars and delicately carved sculptures and other Buddhist relics. These are amazing archaeological marvels to see.

We also had a *darshan* at the ancient Kashi Visvanatha temple followed by the evening Ganga Aarti with a view from our boat on the Ganga river. We all gorged on some Kashi *chaat* relishing samosa chaat, *panipuri* and even *faluda* by the many alleys here. It was a long tiring day but we returned with loads of memories.

The attachment was very enriching and enjoyable!



Birds by the sangam



Sarnath, with the Dhamek Stupa



Varanasi by night

AN ATTACHMENT IN THE ISLANDS

Sainath Reddy



In the last leg of Bharat Darshan, as part of our tri-service attachment from 12th to 19th January, we visited Andaman & Nicobar Islands. It was not part of the initial plan, but was added later on and came as a pleasant surprise for all of us.

The Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) is the first and only tri-service theatre command of the Indian Armed Forces, based at Port Blair. It was created in 2001 to safeguard India's strategic interests in Southeast Asia and the Strait of Malacca and is commanded by the CINCAN (Commander-in-Chief, Andaman and Nicobar) – a three star officer. Currently, it is Lt. Gen. P.S. Rajeshwar AVSM VSM. Incidentally, we had met him earlier as part of our calling-on in New Delhi where he was the then Chief of Integrated Defence Staff.

As part of the attachment we visited the Army component and Naval component commanders, the Material Organization (Port Blair), Commander Coast Guard along with a sea sortie aboard the ICGS Rajtarang which was a memorable journey for us and also called upon the CINCAN.

Although we visited the island as part of our training attachment, we covered almost all tourist attractions in our free time.

Port Blair is the capital city of the island clusters and is busy like any other city. A few places worth visiting in Port Blair are the Cellular Jail and the Corbyn's Cove Beach. Cellular Jail is one of the most famous attractions of the islands. Here, we saw the jail cells in which freedom fighters were imprisoned and spent decades doing hard labour (such as producing oil from coconut husks from a press-mill).

We also witnessed the gallows where they were hanged and the cells where they were tortured. The jail also has a daily Light and Sound Show that takes us through the history of the jail. This trip served a grim reminder to all, of the testing times India faced during the 1940s and the courage and resilience of those who fought for freedom.

One day, we took a passenger ferry from Port Blair to the Havelock Islands. This island was the highlight of our whole trip and the moment we get down at the jetty, we were greeted with clear blue water and white sand. The Radhanagar Beach here, is the most beautiful beach I have ever been to. The water is perfect for swimming and the sand is so clean and soft! We played in the water for at least two hours.



Another memorable time we spent in Havelock was scuba diving. My wife accompanied me for this visit and it was a wonderful experience for both of us to dive together in the water and see a variety of fish and corals underwater. Although we did find some difficulty in breathing inside the

water, the scuba instructors helped us very well. Also, a lot of photos underwater were taken with the background of colourful fish and corals.

After our regular sessions in the day time in Port Blair, we visited nearby Ross Island and Wandoor beach in the evenings. Both are rich in natural beauty and we spent our evenings there with fresh winds from the sea. On the beach of Ross Island, the water is crystal clear, allowing us a great sight of the abundant corals and many colourful fish.

On the last day, we visited Baratang which is located between the Middle and South Andaman Islands. On a day trip here, we spent our time amidst the mangrove forest, walking through the limestone caves, and visiting the mud volcano. On way to Baratang, we experienced the lifeline of

Andamans, the huge vehicle ferries which carry vehicles across the waters between Nilambur Jetty at Middle Strait and Baratang. Special mention to be made here are the limestone caves where we witnessed everything from stalagmites/stalactites

to beautiful animal carvings to structures of Hindu idols of worship on the limestone walls.

Overall, it was an amazing trip. To conclude in one phrase, the trip is “never before & ever after”!



Sunset at Chidiyatapu



अंडमान: स्वतंत्र भारत का “काला पानी”

Sonal



भारत दर्शन के अंतिम चरण में हमें अंडमान निकोबार द्वीपसमूह जाने का मौका मिला।

बचपन की स्मृतियों में अंडमान निकोबार द्वीपसमूह की छवि भूगोल की पुस्तकों से उभरती है। भारत की मुख्यभूमि से अलग

समुद्र की विशाल जलराशी के बीच इन द्वीपों पर लोग-बाग कैसे होंगे और मुख्यभूमि से इतनी अधिक दूरी होने के बावजूद भारत इन पर कैसे अपनी शासन-व्यवस्था संचालित करता होगा, यह सवाल हमेशा ही विस्मित करता। बंगाल की खाड़ी में स्थित ‘अंडमान और निकोबार’ द्वीप समूह लगभग ७८० कि लोमीटर लंबाई में फैला हुआ है। ५७२ छोटे-बड़े द्वीपों से मिलकर बने इस केंद्रशासित प्रदेश में २०११ की जनसंख्या के आँकड़ों के अनुसार लगभग ४ लाख की आबादी निवास करती है। अधिकतर लोग दक्षिणी अंडमान में या कहें तो पोर्ट ब्लेयर के आस-पास ही रहते हैं। अमेजन के जंगली की तरह यह द्वीप समूह भी दुनिया की साँस चलाने की जिम्मेदारी निभाता है। इसका लगभग समूचा हिस्सा (लगभग ८६ प्रतिशत) वनों से ढका हुआ है और वर्ष के आधे दिनों में यहाँ बारिश जरूर होती है।

यहाँ का पर्यटन ले-देकर ‘पोर्ट ब्लेयर’ के आस-पास साथ-आठ द्वीपों पर ही सिमटा हुआ है। कारण यह कि एक तो इस द्वीप समूह का अधिकांश हिस्सा संरक्षित क्षेत्र के अंतर्गत आता है और दूसरे यहाँ दो द्वीपों के बीच समुंद्र हमेशा खड़ा मिलता है। पर्यटकों के लिए विशेष अनुमति की दरकार और आवागमन के साधनों की कमी समूचे ‘कार-निकोबार’ को उनकी पहुँच से दूर कर देती है।

मतलब कहने के लिए ही हम लोग अंडमान और निकोबार आए हुए हैं। वास्तव में हम लोग केवल दक्षिणी अंडमान ही घूमने आए हुए हैं।

अंडमान के प्रमुख पर्यटक स्थलों में सेल्युलर का नाम सबसे ऊपर आता है। यह स्थान न चाहते हुए भी हमें इतिहास में लेकर चला जाता है। सिर्फ जेल के इतिहास में ही नहीं, वरन अंडमान के इतिहास में भी। जहाँ इन द्वीपों का जिक्र पहली शताब्दी के आस-पास बौद्ध-ग्रंथों में मिलता है; और फिर चोलों के इतिहास में भी, जिसके बारे में कहा जाता है कि वह मलेशिया तक

फैला हुआ था। इनका जिक्र रोमन और अरबिक ग्रंथों में भी आता है। और फिर यूरोपीय नाविकों के दुनिया भ्रमण के इतिहास में ये द्वीप दुनिया के नक्शे पर उभरते हैं।

१४९८ में वास्को डि गामा के भारत आने से लेकर सत्रहवीं-अठारहवीं शताब्दी तक इन द्वीपों पर कई यूरोपीय शक्तियों का आगमन होता है। हालाँकि इनमें से कोई भी यूरोपीय ताकत यहाँ स्थायी रूप से बस नहीं पाती। एक तो इनकी भौगोलिक स्थिति ऐसी रहती है, और दूसरे यहाँ की जलवायु बाहरी लोगों को यहाँ बसने की इजाजत नहीं देती। यहाँ

रहने की सबसे जरूरी शर्त है, प्रकृति से सामंजस्य और तालमेल। वह पहले आपका परीक्षण करती है और फिर स्वीकार। जाहिर है, इसमें पीढ़ियाँ लगती हैं।

ऐसा नहीं है कि आप यहाँ आए आए और आराम से बस गए। और फिर सामरिक दृष्टि के अलावा इन द्वीपों से बहुत कुछ मिलने की संभावना भी नहीं थी, जिसकी तलाश में यूरोपीय निकले थे। तो इसलिए

जो भी यूरोपीय शक्तियाँ यहाँ आती रहीं, वे सब के सब, ‘आती के साथ जाती’ भी रहीं। और जिन्होंने टिकने की धृष्टता दिखाई, उन्होंने कुछ-एक सालों के बाद महसूस किया कि उनसे गलती हो गयी है।

अठारहवीं सदी के मध्य में डेनिश लोगों ने निकोबार में बस्तियाँ बसाने की पहली कोशिश की थी, जो सफल नहीं हो सकी। फिर अठारहवीं सदी के अवसान से पहले ब्रिटिश लोगों ने भारत के साथ-साथ इस द्वीप को भी अपने निशाने पर लिया। अंडमान में बस्ती कहाँ बसाई जाए, इसका सर्वेक्षण करने के लिए वर्ष १७८८ में आर.एच. कोलब्रुक

के साथ आर्चीबाल्ड ब्लेयर वहाँ पहुँचे। बाद में इसी ‘ब्लेयर’ के नाम पर अंडमान के मुख्य नगर ‘पोर्ट ब्लेयर’ का नामकरण हुआ। हालाँकि १८५७ के गदर होने तक यह द्वीप उपेक्षित ही रहा। लेकिन जब उस गदर के बाद आबाद होना शुरू हुआ तो यह आबाद होना एक ‘दंड भोगने’ के रूप में था।

आपनिवेशिक शक्तियों ने इसका इस्तेमाल एक ‘दंड द्वीप’ के रूप में किया। ऐसे नुस्खे वे इतिहास में पहले भी आजमा चुके थे। तो १८५७ के गदर के बाद लगभग ५०० क्रांतिकारियों को लेकर कोलकाता से पहला जहाज १० मार्च १८५८ को पोर्ट ब्लेयर पहुँचा। और फिर एक ऐसा सिलसिला शुरू हो गया, जो भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन के अंतिम चरण तक जारी रहा। लोग



सभ्यता के विकास से
कोसों दूर, अपने में रहने
वाली जारवा जनजाति
आज अपने अस्तित्व की
लड़ाई लड़ रही है।
सैकड़ों-हजारों साल तक
प्रकृति के साथ सामंजस्य
बिठाने के बाद आज
उनकी जनसंख्या २५० के
आस-पास है

आते रहे, दंड भोगते रहे, मरते रहे और खपते रहे। किसी को प्रकृति लील गई तो किसी को परिस्थितियाँ। और जिसने इन दोनों को चुनौती दी, उनको हुक्मरानों की क्रूरताएँ।

पोर्ट ब्लेयर से १०५ किलोमीटर उत्तर में बाराताँग नाम की जगह लाइमस्टोन गुफा के लिए जानी जाती है। इसके रास्ते में लगभग ५० किलोमीटर के संरक्षित क्षेत्र में 'जारवा जानजाती' निवास करती है। चूँकि यह जनजातीय क्षेत्र आम जनता के लिए प्रतिबंधित है, इसलिए पर्यटन उद्योग ने यहाँ जाने का रास्ता बाराताँग दिखाने के बहाने चुन लिया है। यहाँ का भूगोल कुछ ऐसा है कि सड़क मार्ग से बाराताँग दिखाने के बहाने चुन लिया है। यहाँ का भूगोल कुछ ऐसा है कि सड़क मार्ग से बाराताँग जाने के लिए आपको 'जारवा क्षेत्र' से होकर ही गुजरना पड़ता है।

जारवा जनजाति के उद्भय को नीग्री जनजाति से जोड़कर देखा जाता है। सभ्यता के विकास से कोसों दूर, अपने में रहनेवाली यह जनजाती आज अपने अस्तित्व की लड़ाई लड़ रही है। सैकड़ों-हजारों साल तक प्रकृति के साथ सामंजस्य बिठाने के बाद आज उनकी जनसंख्या २५० के आस-पास सिमट कर रह गई है। यह तथ्य कितना सालने वाला है कि बाराताँग का पर्यटन जारवा जनजाती के लोगों को दिखाने के नाम पर ही चल रहा है - जैसे कि चिड़ियाघर में कैद कोई जानवर हों।

उनके बारे में उपलब्ध जानकारी को किताबों के हवाले या फिर संग्रहालयों के भरोसे छोड़ दिया गया है। तो क्या यह इतना कठिन काम है कि इनकी विशिष्टताओं को आम पर्यटकों के साथ शेयर नहीं किया जा सकता है...? वहाँ जाने वाले सभी पर्यटकों को दो पन्ने की एक छोटी सी बुकलेट के सहारे ये सूचनाएँ तो उपलब्ध कराई ही जा सकती हैं कि सभ्यता से दूर उनका जीवन किस तरह से चलता है। मसलन उनकी रोटी, जो आज भी प्रकृति के साथ ही चलती है।

बीच में सरकार ने उसमें कुछ हस्तक्षेप किया था और उनके खाने-पीने के लिए कुछ बाहर की चीजें मुहैया कराई थी तो कैसे हालात बिगड़ गए। पता चला कि उनमें मृत्यु दर अचानक बढ़ गई। इस बाहर के खाने ने उनकी प्रतिरोधी क्षमता घटा दी और वे सामान्य बीमारियों में भी मरने लगे।

कपड़े वाली जरूरत भी उनकी प्रकृति ही पूरा करती है। मन किया तो पेड़ की छाल और पत्तियाँ लपेट ली और मन नहीं किया तो वह भी नहीं। अलबत्ता आवास को लेकर हाल के दिनों में कुछ अवश्य परिवर्तन आया है। सरकार ने घने जंगलों के बीच उनके लिए कुछ 'सेल्टर' बना दिए हैं, जिसमें वे रहने लगे हैं।

शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य की बुनियादी जरूरतों से अभी भी वे कोसों दूर हैं। सिवाय इस बात के, कि इधर के वर्षों में जब उनका कोई साथी गंभीर रूप से बीमार पड़ता है तो वे उसे सड़क के किनारे लिटा जाते हैं, ताकि सरकार उनकी मदद कर सके।

वैसे बाराताँग पहुँचकर लगता है कि 'मैगूव' के जंगलों के बीच पर यात्रा करना भी कोई कम रोमांचकारी अनुभव नहीं है। फिर उस सुप्त ज्वालामुखी को देखना भी, जिसमें अभी भी हलके-हलके बुलबुले फूट रहे हैं। और जब हम 'लाइमस्टोन गुफा' को देखकर लौटते हैं, तो उस दुर्भाग्य को कोसने की इच्छा होती है जिसमें यहाँ के पर्यटन उद्योग ने इस पूरे दिन के भ्रमण को 'जारवा जनजाती' के कपड़ों से जोड़ दिया है।

वैसे अंडमान की यात्रा उन तमाम जनजातियों की बात के बिना अधूरी ही मानी जाएगी, जिनका यह आदिम घर रहा है और जो आज विलुप्त होती जा रही हैं - 'ओंगों' से लेकर 'सेंटनली' तक और 'ग्रेट अंडमानी' से लेकर 'सोम्पेन' जैसी जनजातियों तक। ले देकर यहाँ पर निकोबारी जनजाती ही बची है, जिसकी उपस्थिती महसूस की जा सकती है। इनकी आबादी लगभग तीस हजार के आस-पास है और यहाँ पर जनजातियों के अधिकारों के लिए चलाए जाने वाले आंदोलनों में इनकी भूमिका को रेखांकित किया जा सकता है।

यह द्वीप-समूह आखिर किसका है और आज इस पर कौन काबिज है, यह सवाल तो खड़ा ही है। और इसी के साथ-साथ यह सवाल भी कि हम इसे परखने के लिए इतिहास में कितना पीछे जाना चाहते हैं।

यदि हम १९४७ से १०० वर्ष और पीछे देखें तो फिर आज के अंडमान पर बाहरी लोगों का वर्चस्व ही दिखाई देता है। लेकिन वहाँ पर सदियों से रहे भूमिपुत्रों के हाथों से यह समूचा 'द्वीप समूह' निकल गया है।

यदि अँग्रेजों ने स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन को कुचलने के लिए इसे 'दंड द्वीप' के रूप में नहीं बसाया होता तो इस द्वीप समूह की कहानी कुछ और ही होती। हालाँकि यह बात भी उतनी ही सच है कि देश और दुनिया इसी तरह से बनती रहती है, विकसित रहती है।

लोग एक जगह से उखड़ते हैं, और उनकी पीढ़ियाँ दूसरी जगह से उग जाती हैं। जाहिर है, इतिहास को वापस तो नहीं लौटाया जा सकता लेकिन उसे न्यायपूर्ण जरूर बनाया जा सकता है। आज हमारे सामने यह सबसे बड़ी चुनौती है कि वहाँ के मूल बाशिंदों को मुख्यधारा के साथ कैसे जोड़ा जाए और कैसे उन्हें अधिकार संपन्न बनाया जाए ताकि अंडमान "काला पानी" के अभिशाप से मुक्त हो सके।





JAI HIND



**With PCDA(AF) Dehradun
and ex-FA(DS)
Ms. Vandana Srivastava**



**Ready for
River Rafting
at Rishikesh**



**A view of
River Shyok
(Picture: Sonal)**



**Calling on COAS
Air Chief Marshal
RKS Bhaduria**



**A scene from
Mahabharat in the
IMA Mess, Dehradun**



**Catamaran
Sailing
at
Goa**

**Sunrise at Kala
Patthar Beach,
Havelock Island
(Picture: Krishna)**



**It's delicious!
By Wandoor Beach,
Andaman
(Picture: Sonal)**

**Three Musketeers in
chilly Ladakh**



**Speed boating
in Goa**

Team:

Kavya Tangirala, Editor-in-Chief

Manjeet Singh Sankhla, Editor

Krishna Badime S, Photo Editor

Cover photo of National Highway 1

by Sonal