Celebrating the Goodness of Milk

National Milk Day, observed on January 11, celebrates the vital role of milk in nutrition and health. Commemorating the birth anniversary of Dr. Verghese Kurien, the father of India's White Revolution, the day highlights milk's contribution to protein, calcium, and overall wellness. It encourages people to include milk and dairy products in their daily diet, promoting stronger bones and better immunity. Schools, farms, and dairy cooperatives often organize events to raise awareness about the benefits of milk, sustainable dairy practices, and the importance of supporting local farmers, making it a day to honour this wholesome, everyday beverage.

Why Armies Parade !

Sweat is the most visible yet least acknowledged foundation of military parades. Soldiers train relentlessly for weeks and months, enduring physical strain that tests endurance, precision and perseverance. While drill refines posture and movement, its innate purpose is to develop the capacity to perform accurately and consistently under fatigue. History repeatedly demonstrates the decisive value of such conditioning. Roman legions drilled daily, marching long distances in formation with full equipment.

Brig Preet Pal Singh, AVSM, VSM (Retd)
(Widely published analyst on security, international relations and geopolitics)

Military parades are often mistaken for mere ceremony, yet they are amongst the oldest and most solemn military traditions. Each year, millions across India watch the Republic Day Parade, as pride and quiet joy spread nationwide. Beyond the marching columns, its enduring strength lies in bonding citizens across regions, languages and generations in a shared sense of identity and belonging.

Parades have sustained because the fundamentals of conflict remain unchanged. Parades train soldiers, test units, build cohesion, reinforce morale and signal power. At their core lie three pillars of Sweat, Synchrony and Spirit. These are not abstract notions but operational necessities. Armies that mastered them endured longer, fought more cohesively and triumphed more often. Military drills institutionalise these qualities in peace so that they emerge instinctively in war.

Sweat is the most visible yet least acknowledged foundation of military parades. Soldiers train relentlessly for weeks and months, enduring physical strain that tests endurance, precision and perseverance. While drill refines posture and movement, its innate purpose is to develop the capacity to perform accurately and consistently under fatigue. History repeatedly demonstrates the decisive value of such conditioning. Roman legions drilled daily, marching long distances in formation with full equipment. This discipline enabled them to arrive cohesive and battle-ready, often overwhelming less organised adversaries.

Greek victory parades were not mere spectacle; they affirmed a military system that valued discipline and collective order as highly as courage. Centuries later, Napoleon Bonaparte applied the same principle. His Grande Armée trained relentlessly, enabling rapid manoeuvre and sustained campaigning across Europe. Parades and reviews in Paris reinforced endurance, conformity and cohesion as qualities that allowed French forces to outmarch and outfight opposing coalitions.

#ARMY DAY

> Synchrony is the essence of military effectiveness. It transforms individuals into formations and formations into armies, converting discipline into decisive combat power. A parade demands exact coordination amongst hundreds of individuals responding uniformly and instantaneously to command.

This soundness remains unchanged. Parade training forces soldiers to maintain discipline under fatigue, making discomfort a normal operating condition. A parade thus becomes a controlled trial of hardship, exposing weaknesses long before they surface in battle.

Synchrony is the essence of military effectiveness. It transforms individuals into formations and formations into armies, converting discipline into decisive combat power. A parade demands exact coordination amongst hundreds of individuals responding uniformly and instantaneously to command. This precision is not cosmetic; it is collective discipline. Wars are rarely won by individual brilliance alone but by coordinated action, where units move, fight and support one another seamlessly. Drill trains soldiers to subordinate personal rhythm to collective rhythm, replacing instinct with cohesion. History is unequivocal, when formations break, defeat follows.

Military parades imbibe discipline by building instinctive responses to command, preserving order under stress. Large-scale parades also signal organisational capacity, reassuring citizens and deterring adversaries by demonstrating a coherent instrument of state power.

Sweat and synchrony alone do not win wars. Armies also require spirit, which is the moral force that sustains soldiers when casualties mount, resources thin and victory appears distant. Parades are among the most effective tools for cultivating this intangible yet decisive element. Spirit arises from identity, tradition and shared purpose. Colours, standards, martial music and ceremonial drill connect soldiers to their units' lineage, the sacrifices of predecessors and the values they defend. Spirit transforms obedience into commitment and endurance into resolve. Through repeated ceremonial affirmation, parades reinforce the moral backbone that sustains armies in crisis.

Across history, parades have strengthened the bond between armies and states. From Roman triumphs and European musters to modern national reviews, they tested readiness, projected authority and signalled cohesion. In the modern era, parades have conveyed resilience, organisational strength and civil-military connection without militarisation. India's tradition of ceremonial display predates the modern Republic.

Ancient kingdoms conducted structured troop reviews to demonstrate discipline and authority. Mauryan accounts describe organised military musters, while medieval durbars and reviews reinforced hierarchy and cohesion. The colonial period formalised parade culture through cantonment drills and reviews. Independent India inherited these traditions and transformed them, recasting parades from symbols of imperial power into republican affirmations of unity, constitutional values and national identity.

India's ceremonial calendar opens with Armed Forces Veterans' Day on 14 January, honouring service and sacrifice and reaffirming the bond between the nation and its soldiers. This period also includes the Army Day and Republic Day Parades, reflecting the armed forces' professionalism and diversity. Held increasingly beyond the capital, these ceremonies bring the Army closer to the people, while the Republic Day Parade continues to unite millions in shared pride and national identity.

India's Republic Day Parade is among the world's most multifaceted, blending military strength, cultural expression and technology into a single national narrative. Months of preparation culminate in precise coordination on Kartavya Path, reflecting command capability beyond ceremony. Sweat, synchrony and spirit flow through every movement of the parade, giving it meaning beyond display. It ultimately reaffirms that the armed forces serve the Republic and its people, fostering trust and respect.

In an age of cyber warfare and drones, the relevance of parades is often questioned, yet war still depends on disciplined humans operating under stress. Parades test endurance, coordination, command responsiveness and morale, while also signalling deterrence and reassurance. No parade by itself wins a war, but no army that neglects discipline and cohesion prevails for long. A military parade is therefore not mere spectacle, but a disciplined expression of military power that, through sweat, synchrony and spirit, builds endurance, unity and resolve which are the enduring foundations of military effectiveness.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

A Chenda Melam performance adds rhythm and ceremony to an Army Day 2026 build-up evening in Jaipur.

COAS Gen Upendra Dwivedi and Mrs. Sunita Dwivedi appear on an AORTA initiative, visual encouraging organ donation ahead of Army Day 2026.

The Indian Army Symphony Band performs during Army Day 2026 build-up programming in Jaipur.

"At Home" on Jaipur's Streets

Lt Gen Manjinder Singh meets Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari during Army Day 2026 build-up engagements in Jaipur.

My father was a Wing Commander. Growing up, he taught me to watch the armed forces in a particular way: not as theatre, not as background music for nationalism, but as a discipline you can smell when you step into an army area, the whiff of air, stiff and upright and regimental. He took me, as a teenager, to see things that made the military real before it became symbolic: tent pegging, Beating the Retreat, and-much later, the 26 January parade in Delhi. Years pass, cities change, but the feeling returns: the same posture inside the body, as if the spine remembers before the mind does.

AWWA Regional President Mrs. Barinder Jit Kaur joins Lt Gen Manjinder Singh and Dr. Preeti Bakshi during Army Day 2026 build-up engagements.

Best Performance.

CAPTURED CAR FROM THE WAR (KNOW YOUR ARMY DISPLAY) AT BHAWANI NIKETAN.

Pushpendra Bhargava
(Owner of Jaipur Inn)

They call it "At Home" when the Army returns to familiar ground. Not because the ground is easy, but because it remembers.

Jaipur has always spoken that language.

Not in slogans, but in texture: the crispness of a salute seen from too close, the clipped syllables of 'yes, sir,' the way people instinctively straighten their backs when a column moves past. As a teenager, I didn't have words for it. I just knew that stepping into the army area changed the air. It smelled, oddly and unmistakably, of discipline. In the first week of January, that feeling returned in an unexpected place: not on a parade route, but in the quieter corridors of care.

A hospital that feels like a garrison of gratitude

On 5-6 January, I found myself inside that kind of memory at the Military Hospital in Jaipur, where a mega medical camp for veterans was underway. The scene wasn't loud. No marching band, no grandstand. Just the steady choreography of care: people moving from desk to desk, reports being stapled, names being called, a chair scraping back, a small nod that said *haan, ho gaya, it's done.*

In a city that knows how to celebrate spectacle, this felt like a different kind of ceremony.

I met Narendra Singh Shekhawat, Honorary Naib Subedar, with his wife, both visibly lighter after hearing their reports were normal. I also met Col. Sanjeev Patyal and his wife. They spoke with a simple happiness about Jaipur hosting the Army Day Parade, less about the show, more about the closeness: citizens getting to see the Army up close in their own city.

A civil orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Manan Agarwal (Mahatma Gandhi Hospital), was part of the camp too, a reminder that 'service' isn't one uniform; it's a chain of people doing their part.

And then, there was Dr. Komal, recently commissioned, smiling when asked whether her parents were happy with her choice, happy with the service she is giving to the nation, to the Army, and especially to veterans. The smile stayed with me because it wasn't a performance. It was a young person's quiet certainty.

This is where my own lens comes in, and it begins at home.

My father was a Wing Commander. Growing up, he taught me to watch the armed forces in a particular way: not as theatre, not as background music for nationalism, but as a discipline you can smell when you step into an army area, the whiff of air, stiff and upright and regimental.

He took me, as a teenager, to see things that made the military real before it became symbolic: tent pegging, Beating the Retreat, and-much later, the 26 January parade in Delhi. Years pass, cities change, but the feeling returns: the same posture inside the body, as if the spine remembers before the mind does.

That's why the hospital corridor mattered. Because it's easy to cheer for a parade. It's harder, and more honest, to notice the quieter infrastructure behind the cheering: veterans being looked after, wives holding reports, doctors who speak gently, and the careful dignity of ageing bodies that once carried the weight of younger risk.

A city of forts that still understands service

Jaipur's romance is usually told in stone: forts on ridgelines, courtyards washed in light, the geometry of old power. But the city's other inheritance is less architectural and more embodied, the long memory of service.

Some people carry that memory in family stories. Some carry it in medals. Some carry it in the way they talk about the Army as 'our boys' (and increasingly, our women too), with a possessiveness that is actually tenderness.

One of the most striking voices I heard came from Jagdeep Singh, a Jaipur publicist, who spoke not in abstractions but in lineage, medical service stitched to military history.

"My grandfather Lt Col Gurbaksh Singh DSO was the first Indian Commandant of the Military Hospital in Jaipur. He had the distinction of being the commandant in 1946 which was pre-independence. Earlier, he was the Medical Officer of the 1st Jaipur Infantry. He won the gallantry award in WW II. There is a bust, a gallery and an auditorium in his name in the hospital." That's Jaipur for you: the parade route might change, but the city's habit of remembering does not.

Bond: The real theme of 'Army in the city'

Leading up to Army Day, Jaipur has been watching the Army in multiple registers, not only as force, but as presence. If there is a single word that keeps surfacing across the lead-up calendar, it is not 'power.' It is a bond. One thread in the notes is the South Western Command cycle rally (9-16 December 2025), ending with a flag-in at the Jaipur Military Station, an image of endurance turned outward, towards citizens. And there was something quietly radical about its image: two women cycling 800 kilometres, turning endurance into a civic message. Not just soldiers moving through terrain, but the armed forces moving through civic life, asking the city to come closer. Asha Malviya, speaking about that expedition, framed it not as a personal triumph but as a bridge between uniform and citizen. "The Cycle Expedition organized under the South Western Command was not just a journey for me, but a proud and significant milestone in my overall cycling expeditions so far… The primary objective of this expedition was to enhance awareness about our border areas, honour the unmatched courage and sacrifices of our soldiers, promote women empowerment, and strengthen the bond between the Armed Forces and the common citizens."

Even her phrasing, 'strengthen the bond,' does more work than a hundred adjectives about pride. It suggests that the parade is not the only point of contact. The real story is: how does a city learn to host, rather than merely watch?

There was the Honour Run too, under the theme "Ek Daud Veeron Ke Naam," a civic ritual where the city's fitness culture and the Army's memory culture briefly overlap, and you see families, veterans, and young runners share one moving narrative.

A blood donation camp, the event was held under the theme 'Donate Blood, Salute the Nation,' highlighting the Armed Forces' commitment to humanitarian service and welfare. And then, on 5 January, the Symphony Band at JKK, music doing what it always does best: making discipline sound like beauty.

#ARMY DAY

A flag-off moment at the Honour Run, where Jaipur's runners, families, and veterans share one public salute to service. "EK DAUD VEERON KE NAAM."

When a veteran speaks, a city listens

A note shared by General Shankar Roychowdhury (PVSM), the 18th Chief of Army Staff, put the personal and the institutional in one frame.

"The first Army Day parade took place on 15 Jan 1949 in recognition of Field Marshal Cariappa taking over as the first Indian COAS. I am happy that the Army Day parade is being held in Jaipur this year. For me, Army Day has immense personal significance - I am proud of our Army and its unwavering focus on maintaining its standards, traditions and warrior ethos. I remember speaking to the soldiers at Army Day events of the honour of protecting our country and keeping its borders and our fellow citizens safe and secure."

There's a sentence in there I keep returning to: standards, traditions, warrior ethos. Three pillars that can read like a slogan, until you watch them expressed as care in a hospital, as endurance on a road, as music on a stage.

The quietest salutes are sometimes the most honest: Jaipur's old world inside the new

Jaipur's romance is usually told in stone: forts on ridgelines, courtyards washed in light, the geometry of old power. But the city's other inheritance is less architectural and more embodied, the long memory of service.

And sometimes, that memory shows itself in a single scene, because someone who was there wrote it down plainly.

In his reminiscences from Army Day Parade 1958, Brigadier A. P. Bhargava (Retd.), writes:

"As a Lt commands a troop of three tanks, I was detailed to take part for Army Day and Republic Day parades with our Sherman tanks of WW II vintage."

"The salute was taken by the Army Chief Gen K S Thimaya."

"After the parade tea was laid on for those officers and jawans who took part in the parade as also invitees, mainly Army veterans. The Chief and other senior officers spoke to the gathering."

"Late HH Bhawani Singh, then Capt Adjutant of the President Body Guard, was present in his Paratroopers uniform superimposed by the PPG attire also mingled with the audience."

"Veterans from the Rajput Regt. and Rajputana Rifles, some of them sporting large silver moustaches, were there. When Capt Bhawani Singh came to greet them, old traditions and loyalty came in play. Each one of them knelt down to touch his feet in reverence."

"I came away proud to be a member of the Indian Army."

Modern uniform. Ancient gestures. Parade drill followed by tea, followed by a moment of reverence that belongs to Jaipur's deeper vocabulary of loyalty, where service, family, and history sometimes overlap in ways the city doesn't even notice it's performing.

This is not an argument for nostalgia. It is a reminder that Jaipur carries multiple layers at once, some civic, some familial, some institutional, and the uniform moves through all of them.

Even on paper, the range matters: running, donating blood, listening to music, these are not the language of intimidation. They are the language of belonging.

And sometimes, pride arrives without any big words at all, just a sentence written after the day is done.

"I came away proud to be a member of the Indian Army."

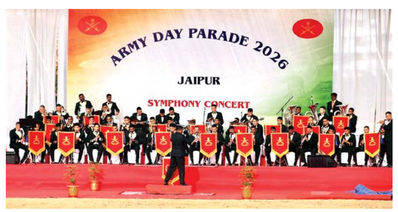
No fireworks. No choreography. Just pride, earned, internal, and steady.

That's the version of pride Jaipur understands best: not the loudest one, but the one that can sit quietly in a waiting area, beside a veteran and his wife, while the city prepares to salute.

Walking out of the hospital that day, the Jaipur winter had that familiar bite. The air was clear enough to make the city look sharper than it usually does, walls, trees, people, all slightly outlined. And I thought, with a sudden tenderness, that surprised me. I wish my father were alive for me to show him this tribute to the Army, the one I have learned to see through his eyes. Not the loud tribute. The real one. The one that smells, faintly, of that regimental whiff of air, carried not by slogans, but by care.

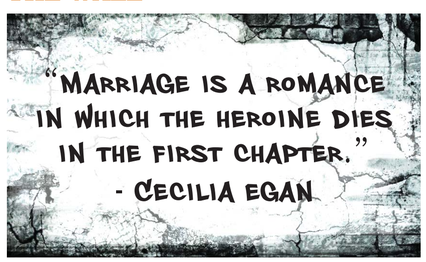
rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

VICTORY CELEBRATION AFTER THE HONOUR RUN.



The Indian Army Symphony Band performs at Bhawani Niketan as part of the 'Know Your Army' build-up programme in Jaipur.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman