राष्ट्रदुत

elebrated every year on October 19, International Gin and Tonic Day honours one of the world's most iconic and refreshing cocktails. The classic drink, made by blending gin with tonic water and often garnished with lime or herbs, has a rich history dating back to the British colonial era, when quinine in tonic water helped prevent malaria. Today, the day celebrates both tradition and innovation, as mixologists experiment with craft gins, botanicals, and artisanal tonics. Enthusiasts around the globe raise a glass, enjoying the perfect balance of bitter, sweet, and aromatic notes that make the gin and tonic a timeless favourite.



precise and psychological impact on

the adversary. The sixth termers led

the lower strings to redefine match

rules to a debacle. Appeals were

challenged to a forlorn controversy.

Blazer and Blues were achieved in

Athletics, Equitation and Sailing.

Strengthening in the initial terms

prought epistolary reminisces of

ancient adage, a folklore, that famed

the acronym of HCL or 'Hunter

Charlie Lima,' also called 'Hydro

Chloric Acid.' It was a group to

bring out young leaders and men of

mettle: thus fusing the tough times

that the cadets sustained and sur-

vived. Many volunteered to be a part

of ultra-marathons and the famous

Bakshi Cup to test their limits and

bring laurels to NDA. 'Tough times

never last, tough people do,' and so

did the cadets, who later performed

exceedingly well in their service

Commander

Cheetah, always a

Cheetah,' exhumed the

exhilaration of cadets

in a squadron named

inevitability of memo-

ries fading, stemmed

for a while by the pug-

marks they left behind

or were they pyramids? Salient mon-

uments to the gentlemen who no

longer tread the corridors of the

Squadron, it must have certainly

been charming to bask in the glory

King' Squadron, the Charlie

Squadron was commissioned on 2nd

January 1956. It was sponsored by

the State of Maharashtra which

donated approximately five lakhs for

was rechristened as 'Charlie' and

the cadets were known as

'Cheetahs.' The Squadron initially

formed a part of the Shark

Battalion, No. 3 in order after Alpha

Squadron, moving clockwise or anti-

clockwise: the third squadron was

always Charlie. In June 1997, it

became a part of No. 1. 'Tiger

Battalion. As the cradle of military

leadership, NDA has its own myriad

and peculiar ways of forging out

for a distinguished traditional feat

The cadets belonged to unique tribe

of rich pathos defined by its

antecedents and constituted an

inherited competency. They were

naturally groomed through rigors of

time and associated towards their

squadron for a lifetime. As they

underwent this extreme training,

trials and tribulations, their bonds

grew stronger. Over three years, this

indoctrinated hardiness trans-

formed them from naive adolescents

troop games and mental toughening

Foreign cadets outplayed in football

and boxing. The match strings had a

Cheetahs were famous for drill

to Cadets

Each squadron in NDA is known

iron men out of young boys.

its construction. Later, the Squadron

of vestervears. Erstwhile called the

Siddharth

The



Cheetahs had their idiosyncrasies. They were good in everything they enjoyed doing. Having cleared the All India merit and Services Selection Board, they possessed high Intelligence Quotient and good bearing. One could witness the ingrained ways of training round the clock that finally made a Cheetah! Every cadet was designated an over-study belonging to the third term, who in turn mentored him as his understudy. This association went far and long and played a major role in defining the upbringing of cadets. Even in deep slumber, the cadets could regurgitate the NDA prayer or the academic answers par excellence. The Sergeants officially handled the fourth termers while the Corporals were assigned the third termers. Together, they ran the squadron and were regarded as role models. Having completed Camp Rovers in IVth term, the cadets accomplished a milestone in training. As a Divisional Officer, one could faintly fathom the pulse and psyche of Sergeants and Corporal appointments who made the cadets go through a rhythmic routine of learning beyond the training hours.

Cheetah And Its Lair

↑ typical sight of the Battalion

area was of chaos and uproar.

Cadets were seen exhorting to

Squadron war cry that instilled

Josh. With their bikes lifted or

ting was never an issue. The

performing the most unheard of

front side rolls, the place and set-

for ignorance of rules. Ignorance,

Any spot could be a restriction for

in retrospect, was never a bliss.

not being upto the mark. Patti-

Order, a Chindit Order with loads

never ceased. It transited to an

online mode where they were

remotely passed orders whilst

ensuring the laid down protocols.

While Outdoor Training, Yoga and

Drill practice were delegated to the

Squadrons, classes took place on the

virtual and online mode. Exams too

were held physically in the

Squadron. Meals were akin to com-

munity meal provided to the

squadron ensuring social distanc-

ing. Apprehensive of the fallout of

COVID and its repercussions, the

cadets were too busy endorsing their

names in the contact list, just to

avoid the unduly effort to malign

their injuries. The contact list

spread like a wildfire. All a cadet

was to do is name the cadets he came

his tribe of known well-wishers to

Kondhava gate during COVID were

countless; housed in a cycle shed

and manned 24x7! The exclusive

Chandan trees were the most sought

after. NDA police was always on the

lookout for the racket played by

localities who had geo-tagging of the

trees. In the gloried business that

flourishes in the market, NDA was a

diamond mine. At times, BDOs and

SDOs, who were naturally averse to

movements, became hostile investi-

gators to record night footage and

brainstormed over performance of

cadets, achievers, appointments and

prospective game fixtures, march-

ups, Relegation Warning List and

training calendar to ensure compli-

ance and adherence to level playing

Back in Sudan, Battalion officers

sounds of tree cutting machines.

parade were common in Bairi

of bajri in the big pack.

#CHARLIE SQUADRON



crasies. They were good in every-

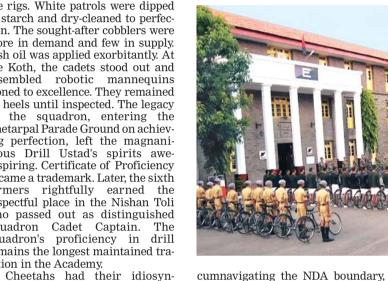
The squadron has since been known for a legacy in drill, the epitome of discipline whilst the most critical battle-winning virtue, ensur ing a soldierly mindset and lightning response to orders. 17th Course was the first to win the Drill Competition. This was an unsaid birthright and undisputed raison detre. Cadets were groomed to crack the Drill Square Test, the acid test of cadet, administered by the Adjutant. It was a tacit understanding and approach to accomplish the domain of expertise. From then on. the squadron worked tirelessly to achieve the most sought after trophy. The trophy was predominantly engraved with 'Charlie Squadron barring mentions of 'Mike Squadron,' an effect of its sister squadron. Drill competition was a season in itself. It marked the onslaught of a winning strategy, an insatiable lust for sustaining quest for the treasured possession and achieve superiority. The Cadet Sergeant Major took charge for the honest bearing, leaving the Company Quarter Master Sergeant Run dry for the surprised expenditure that led to bankruptcy! Low Medical Category cadets were optimally assigned administrative portfolios. Drill was practised through the rigors of time along the length and breadth of the corridors. The proficiency attributed to daily earnings and winning the hearts of sen-



iors. The event was solely manage by cadets and delegated to depart ments that challenged a business remains the longest maintained tradition in the Academy.

thing they enjoyed doing. Having cleared the All India merit and Services Selection Board, they possessed high Intelligence Quotient and good bearing. One could witness the ingrained ways of training round the clock that finally made a Cheetah! Every cadet was designat ed an over-study belonging to the third term, who in turn mentored him as his understudy. This association went far and long and played a major role in defining the upbringing of cadets. Even in deep slumber. the cadets could regurgitate the NDA prayer or the academic answers par excellence. Sergeants officially handled the fourth termers while the Corporals were assigned the third termers. Together, they ran the squadron and were regarded as role models. Having completed Camp Rovers in IVth term, the cadets accomplished milestone in training. As a Divisional Officer, one could faintly fathom the pulse and psyche of Sergeants and Corporal appointments, who made the cadets go through a rhythmic routine of learning beyond the training hours. It is this continuous indoctrination that augmented the holistic grooming of cadets that later helped them face the rigors of combat. Squadron appointments earned their tabs inside the four walls of the squadron office. Dossiers were thoroughly exhausting, vet painstakingly carried out for various divisions with due observations.

NDA is spread over an area of 7000 acres. Its periphery ran to the north of the Academy through hills and dale with tough undulating curves that naturally became ideal for navigation. Cadets ventured on long runs prior to camps and Xcountry to the famous Point 2475, which lay as a landmark to the many Control Points. Cheetahs faced Camps with grit and determination. the Directing Staff, not for trying to match up with cadets, but for cir-



without a compass! Adequate prepa-

ration credited the navigation for

reconnaissance of prominent way

points anticipated in Greenhorn and

Rovers. Control stores were never

used out of fear of misplacing. They

had a mugged-up and acknowledged

serviceability rattled by the Section Commander. Stores were insulated that became an extension of battle gear. Magazines were secured to perfection, being the point of least liability Later, the famous and infamous incidents of handling stores were depicted in drama during the Campfire, Morning PT was physically demanding wherein cadets exhibited competence through endurance. A typical sight of the Battalion area was of chaos and uproar. Cadets were seen exhorting to Squadron war cry that instilled Josh. With their bikes lifted or performing the most unheard of front side rolls, the place and setting was never an issue. The squadron never gave any room for ignorance of rules. Ignorance, in retrospect, was never a bliss. Any spot could be a restriction for not being unto the mark. Patti-parade were common in Bairi Order, a Chindit Order with loads of bajri in the big pack. Every Cheetah fortunate enough was called in KD shorts, white patrol iacket, black web belt, blue patrol cap, ridding patties and slippers! At times, the corridors, amidst an ongoing patti-parade, was a commo

CCTVs played a strategic reporting channel that marked attendance. ensuring adherence to orders. At times, suspicious movements of cadets observed under the illumination of black and white night vision cooked up stories for further investigation. From hourly reporting by defaulters to ensuring activities car ried out expediently, video recordings greatly helped in smooth func-

tion of traffic that knew no police!

Commander on parade braced up

any sight to a respectful reverence

warranting a situation that healed

Squadron

cadets. MES was graceful to account for frequent unserviceability of the epic LOTUS in the squadron. Both number and key locks played a significant role in safety of rooms and bikes of cadets. While few cadets possessed a master key, others were not lucky to find their rooms unlocked or bikes misplaced. Bikes were locked by the squadron orderthe CQMS. Contrary to science, the sound of footsteps, announcements and movements were faster than corridor lights. Chinese whispers announced the arrival of inspecting authorities. Open Door Study Period was an eerie of silence amidst an air of no movement. Cadets hallucinattheir precis. The alert and conscious focussed on grades and torches, while the rest found themselves reporting to the dreaded CSM. Such maestros were made to play music who eventually got a taste of their own medicine. Kit muster was inconclusive and questionable, yet effectively managed. Liberty cards was signed by aliases. While some cadets never got a chance to proceed on liberty, others strived hard to clear DST and earn the same; while the rest proceeded on paper, only to be Locked-in Cabin. Morning reveille was the bugle call. It reverberated the Academy to a fresh start. Soon thereafter, a commotion of activities commenced on the three floors, flanks and on the Ground Floor Central Lobby, either for a Flat, Drill or Double Outdoors. The junction of GFCL welcomed visitors, reported happenings and summoned the ignorant. From here, the duty cadet made announcements at the top of his voice, only to lose his Larynx, either by putting an effort or not meeting the expectations. While the junior cadets were

tioning and ensuring safety of

field. Apart from discussion on case studies, training calendar, tres passers, short-cuts, protocols, discipline and administration became the key highlights. The surrounding habitat was natural and colossal. ordered to report 'immediately,' sen-During dry summers, winds accentuated forest fires that were distinct iors were requested to carry on, in the dark. Leopard sightings were The brief COVID period was a period of varying momentum. habitation. Peacocks were common, However, the training of cadets was while civets burrowed high in ceillogical balance preserving flora and fauna and training teams ensured survivability of cadets by developing their sense of responsibility.

Bombay stadium was located in Pune. It witnessed a plethora of activities, congregation and marked the commencement for closing cere monies for the Bakshi Cup and Endof-Term activities, Tattoo and PT display. Passing out of the cradle of military leadership was regarded an achievement in itself, which is testimony to the guests and spectators who thronged to witness the POP in May and November each year. On one such occasion, the never-sohumble sixth termer submitted a requisition for inviting his entire village of 150, a matter of pride. And so did they, parents, well-wishers, from all walks of life, endeavoured to witness the grandeur of the majestic passing out. Squadron socials bid adieu to sixth terms with a nostalgic milieu, who were given stand-off with satirical anecdotes of the vestervears. Squadron officers. veterans and alumni graced the occasion. Master of Ceremony's script was duly vetted for a

respectable tone and tenor where

satires were censored and puns were The dining hall encompassed capacity with elegance. The most red were the staff, waiters and cooks who had profound pride and honour to serve the military pride. Cadets were made to run through the bill of fare, or simply the menu of the week. At the entrance to the dining hall flashed the number of days left to go home, or DLTGH, On entering the dining hall, was a 'Table for One,' "An empty table chair. The table set is small, for one, other squadrons as well. The rest is symbolizing the fatality of one prishistory. Parcels received at oner against his oppressors. The single rose displayed in a vase reminds us of the families and loved ones of comrades-in-arms who keep their faith awaiting their return. The red ribbon tied so prominently on the vase is reminiscent of the red ribbon worn upon the lapel and breasts of thousands who bear witness to their unvielding determination to demand a proper accounting of our missing. The candle is unlit, symbolizing the upward reach of their unconquerable spirit. The slice of lemon is on the bread plate, to remind us of the bitter fate. There is salt upon the bread plate, symbolic of the families' tears as they wait. The Glass is inverted; they cannot toast with us this night. The chair, it

is empty. They are not here." Each course congregated strength through blessings from the 'Sarva Dharma Sthal,' in unique human attributes that calibrated an offensive action for a lifelong bond. This contributed to an unwavering commitment to the furtherance growth and accomplishment of Squadrons and NDA. Leaders were born in this squadron who held the forte of Academics, PT and Camps At times, PT became a waterloo and the top brass witnessed the 'last attempt.' However, the fear of relegation and stay-back had its deterrence. The coveted banner for the overall best squadron in the Inter-Squadron Championship for the Autumn Term 2018 was presented to SCC Charlie Squadron by the Reviewing Officer, General Bipin Rawat, the then CDS, who also nailed from this Squadron. The SCC was epitomized for leading Cheetahs from the lowest position in the preceding term to acclaim the feat after forty and a half years. The aura of celebrated fete resounded and resonated the Academy like a centenni al World War victory march. No duty officer could ensure a lights out The veterans visiting

of the sustained drill trophy and the existence of the infamously nous Cheetah Well. Well. for its dried watery depth amidst its obscured and concealed location today had timeless pranks and prosecutors. The Well, by now, was covered with concrete and rusty leaves that bound the wellness of the Well in the epitaph of time. In the cradle military leadership, Squadron buildings stood the test of times. Faithful and staunch, strong vet narvellous, the Squadron firmly hoisted its monumental flag colours of Blue and Grey like splendid grandeur. The building was made up of granite stone with interiors of Burmese wood, and an edifice of marvellous epitaph waiting to narrate endless tales of heroism,

squadron believed in the birthright

into this night.

courage, and conviction. The orderlies maintained a timeless roster of cadets that no Training Academy Journal. Branch or the Alumni Association preserved. They could rattle out particulars of cadets long after their passing out to become commissioned officers. The orderlies not only maintained majestic epi taph ingrained art of calligraphy they also recalled appointments for each course. Mementos were revered in the Ante room. The orderlies could exactly point its era and course. 'Time Flies' was the most sought-after memento in the Squadron Time and tide did wait for none, however, the alumni profoundly looked for the roll of hon our to recollect moments of nostal

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

gia. While the older generation of orderlies belonged to Pashan. Ahire. Chinchawad and the adjoin ing villages of Satara and remotest of Maharashtra, and their lineage serving the Academy, the younger clan hailed from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Every term, they flavored in-house Biryani for a unique Squadron culture. Being stoic humble and polite, their obedience made them reliable and trustworthy. Purview to mishaps and adventures, they contributed whole heartedly to the fulfillment and furtherance of the Squadron However, they remained salient spectators and the unsung heroes. Γheir loyalty was embodied in the achievements of the Squadron. Each glory brought happiness as they too celebrated the accomplish ments of cadets. The connection with them truly signified humility and modesty in the humblest form. They brought nostalgic affection with visitors, reminiscing countless narration of tales that never cease to exist.

Everything that happened in the

Academy had a purpose, ease not being one of them. For the cadets of Charlie Squadron, there was a transformation from a Cimba to a Cheetah. A Cimba (Simba), in Swahili, means a Lion. They ran like one and lived to its name. They were their one hundred per cent in all training activities that tested human abilities. Later, their accomplishments in commissioning acade mies were proudly learnt. But like the proverbial blue sky, the sun too had been clouded by the discontinuity of this beautiful lane down where all our memories live. But still somehow, there remains a faint ring. Sometimes deep inside, there is a ring, as if the spirits of the people who have left for far off places still pervade the corridors of the Squadron. And this ring becomes a clamour, so sacrosanct that each note is cherished. And from the foggy mists of time the other courses appear, courses which have done their bit for the Academy, Battalion and the Squadron, and now, we behold the glorious Charlie Squadron.

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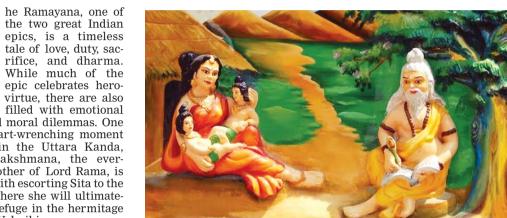


#PAIN

Abandonment, Agony And Sorrow

Lakshmana's Painful Duty: Taking Sita to Valmiki's Hermitage

the two great Indian epics, is a timeless tale of love, duty, sacrifice, and dharma. While much of the epic celebrates heroism and virtue, there are also episodes filled with emotional pain and moral dilemmas. One such heart-wrenching moment occurs in the Uttara Kanda. when Lakshmana, the everloyal brother of Lord Rama, is tasked with escorting Sita to the forest, where she will ultimately find refuge in the hermitage of Sage Valmiki.



Public Doubts and a King's Dilemma

A fter Lord Rama's victorious return to Ayodhya and coronation, his reign brings justice and prosperity Yet, all is not well in the hearts of the people. Despite Sita's Agni Pariksha, her trial by fire that proved her purity,

some citizens of Ayodhya

begin to whisper doubts about her chastity. This sentiment is captured in a powerful shloka:

> जनस्थानं तथा सीतां गृहीत्वा रावणः सुतः। कथं राघवपत्नी सा. शुद्धा स्यात् जनकात्मजा।

"Sita, having been taken to the forest by Ravana, how can she still be pure? How can she remain the worthy wife of Rama?" Though Rama never doubted Sita's integrity, he faces the harsh truth of being a king: public trust must be upheld, even at personal cost. Torn between love and duty, Rama makes the painful decision to abandon Sita and entrusts this heartbreaking task to Lakshmana

Lakshmana's Conflict of Loyalty and Sorrow

akshmana is devastated Sita is like a mother and sister to him. Throughout the exile and the war in Lanka, he stood as her guardian and protector. Now. he is ordered to abandon her, woman pregnant with

Rama's children. Still, bound by his unwavering loyalty to his brother and king, he agrees. The two set out on a chariot under the pretense of taking Sita to the

forest for a religious pil

Valmiki, Sita begins to sense the truth. When she questions Lakshmana, he breaks down in grief and reveals Rama's command. सीतेति विलपंतीं तां भ्रातरं रघनन्दनः। अश्रुपूर्णमुखीं दीनां गमयामास वै वनम।।

grimage. As they journey

deeper into the woods,

Lakshmana remains silent

overcome with emotion

Finally, as they near the

hermitage

"Crying out 'O Sita!,' her face drenched in tears, the desolate



Sita takes shelter in the peaceful hermitage, where she eventually gives birth to twin sons. Lava and Kusha. Raised under the sage's guidance, the boys grow up learning the Vedas, warfare, and the very story of their parents, told by none other than Valmiki him self, the poet of the Ramayana.

devotion.'

Valmiki's Hermitage

Sita's New Beginning

A s Lakshmana leaves her near the Tamasa River, the

revered Sage Valmiki appears. A

seer of divine insight. Valmik

recognizes who Sita is and wel-

comes her with open arms and

अभ्यागतां जनस्थानं वैदेहीं धर्मचारिणीम

वाल्मीकिः परया भक्तया सस्वयं

"To the righteous Sita who

arrived at his hermitage

Valmiki offered his deepest rev

erence and welcomed her with

Lakshmana: A Symbol of Sacrificial Dharma

peturning to Ayodhya Lakshmana is a man changed. The burden of his duty weighs heavily on him. His obe dience to Rama is exemplary, yet the pain of abandoning Sita remains deep within. धर्मात्मा सत्यसंधश्च रामो दशरथात्मजः।

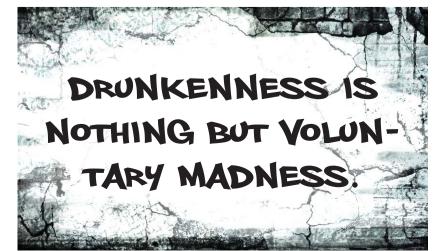
प्रियं चानुचरन्वाक्यं लक्ष्मणः प्रियदर्शनः?

"Rama, the son of Dasharatha was ever devoted to dharma and truth. And Lakshmana, always following his brother's com mand, was dear to all and beau-

An Eternal Message of Dharma and Grace

he episode of Lakshmana taking Sita to Valmiki's Ashram is more than a narrative event. It is a deep moral lesson about how even the noblest souls must endure pain when upholding their duty. Sita's grace in accepting abandonment. Lakshmana's agony in executing the com mand, and Rama's sorrow in choosing kingdom over love. each reveals a different face





BABY BLUES



GIVE YOUR DAD'S PHONE BACK TO HIM. HOW DID YOU KNOW IT WAS ME?









By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman