

Valourisation of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

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'Valour consists in the power of self-discovery'----

Ralph Waldo Emerson.

World over humanity is in a constant state of change, wrought upon by changes in fortunes, places, circumstances etc. Change though inevitable and not desired by people, may be forced by circumstances. Most of the changes that impinge upon the human race in a positive manner are often the end results of few iconic individuals who had the might to shape generations of population after them.

Goaded by their personal acts of sacrifice, valour and the like these icons of humanity should be branded in the psyche of general populace by the ruling dispensation in myriad ways of which there is no dearth of. One such novel way of branding the acts of valorous deeds and sacrifice of the countrymen is pitchforking its armed forces towards that goal that remain under the shadows in a democratic set up. Taking a cue of the above facet, our PM in a recent act last month decided to rename 21 islands of Andaman & Nicobar with the names of 21 PVC awardees.

The 'Parakram Divas' (valour day) i.e the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose has been immortalized by the Modi government by this renaming exercise of 21 islands of the archipelago for posterity. The largest group of islands has been named after the first PVC awardee, the second largest after the second awardee and so on. The Andaman & Nicobar group of islands had a crucial role to play in our independence history. It was here that the national flag was unfurled for the first time, leading to the establishment of the first national Government. These islands were made by the British government as a place of exile (kalapani) for the freedom fighters of our independence movement to stymie the voice of freedom from the yolk of British oppression. At the center of such incarceration was the symbolic 'Cellular jail' which had the freedom fighters of the league of Veer Savarkar in its recesses all chained and riveted to their cells. However hardships never deterred them from their paths of righteousness and in fact strengthened their resolve on the contrary. It was this historical fact of significance and association of this group of islands that prompted the GOI to name 'Ross island' as 'Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose' island way back in 2018. The other two islands namely 'Neil Island and 'Havelock Island' were named as 'Shaheed Dweep' and 'Swaraj Dweep' respectively. Way back in 2018, a section of Netaji's family felt that while the center renamed 3 islands of Ross, Neil and Havelock it didn't resonate Netaji's desire and decision to rename the entire archipelago as such.

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Major Somnath Sharma Lance Naik Karam Singh 2nd Lt. Rama Raghoba Rane Naik Jadu Nath Singh CHM Piru Singh Shekhawat Capt. Gurbachan Singh Major Dhan Singh Thapa



Subedar Joginder Singh Major Shaitan Singh CQM. Abdul Hamid Lt. Col. Ardeshir Tarapore Lance Naik Albert Ekka Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh 2nd Lt. Arun Khetrapal



Major Hoshiar Singh Naib Subedar Bana Singh Major Ramaswamy Parameswaran Captain Manok Kumar Pandey Naib Subedar Yogendra Singh Yadav Riflemen Sanjay Kumar Captain Vikram Batra

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gone to these islands and hoisted the tricolor on 30th December 1943. Hence this region became part of a much larger idea for a free India few years later. But still the family of Netaji felt that the GOI should have renamed the entire cluster of islands in 2018 itself. Hence the decision of the present dispensation to rename the major islands of this archipelago after the PVC awardees of the armed forces. The importance of attaching a physical entity to an important personality, event or a place has the mesmerizing effect of galvanizing the population of a nation to action. It goes without saying that public participation in an event of national importance has to be equally gargantuan in nature with the later having such USP to its credit that it unhinges the national mood to that of a national euphoria. Readers may well agree with me that such actions of renaming of islands will goad us to the path of self-discovery. Till date these islands carried the names of British people that carried no sentimental value, separated as it is by the vast expanse of Bay of Bengal /Indian Ocean from the mainland.

But with the present action of Modi Government a sense of closure and nearness will be developed between the mainland and the archipelago. With names like Banais land, Salaria island, Dhansingh island, Shaitansingh island etc a tourist landing from mainland India

will immediately get connected to his roots thus dispelling the notion of time and space wrought about by the oceanic waters of Bay of Bengal and the Indian ocean.

This renaming exercise may be termed by the opposition parties as a publicity stunt to garner public support and playing to the gallery. Be that as it may, these opposition entities forget to turn the leaves of history and take their minds back to the world history when in the summer of 1940, i.e 22 June 1940 to be precise after the fall of France Adolf Hitler made the French sign the 'Armistice treaty/surrender treaty in the famous railway wagon 'Compiegne wagon' at Paris. It was the same rail wagon which the French had used to make the Germans sign the humiliating treaty of surrender after the 1WW. It goes without saying that though symbolic in nature, the renaming exercise is too on the same lines, primarily goading us Indians to a path of self-discovery. As has been said by the famous American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson-- 'Valour consists in the path of self-discovery. These renamed islands are a path of self-discovery for us Indians for here was the sun which shone for the first time on the terra firma of a free India acting as a beacon of hope for the rest of the country.

(The writer is a retired army officer)

It was an evening dedicated to valour and sacrifice of those who showed exemplary courage in the face of death while fighting for their Motherland. **Purnima Sharma** reports the launch of 'India's Most Fearless 3 -- New Military Stories of Unimaginable Courage and Sacrifice' at an event that brought together three services chiefs of India

"The soldier above all others prays for peace, for it is the soldier (and his family) who must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war" - American general, Douglas MacArthur.

Starting with a quote by the celebrated American general, India's Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari set the tone for an emotionally charged patriotic evening this winter in the national capital at the launch of 'India's Most Fearless 3 -- New Military Stories of Unimaginable Courage and Sacrifice'. The book is an ode to the valour and supreme sacrifices of the men in uniform.

Braving not just the cold winter evening of New Delhi, but also a huge traffic jam around New Delhi's Connaught Place area, personnel from the Armed Forces, their families, veteran officers, and the Capital's literati gathered at IGNC (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts) recently for the launch of 'India's Most Fearless 3 -- New Military Stories of Unimaginable Courage and Sacrifice'.

Written by Shiv Aroor and Rahul Singh, and published by Penguin, the book is a tribute to the valor and sacrifice of the Indian soldiers.

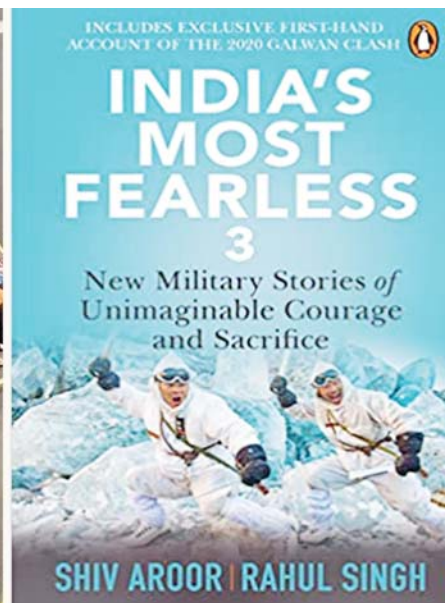
It also includes an exclusive first-hand account of the 2020 Galwan clash.

The book was released by the Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Pandey, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Radhakrishnan Hari Kumar and Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari in the presence of IGNC's Pratap Anand Jha, Ehsas Woman of Delhi Nilima Adhar Dalmia, the editor of the book Millie Ashwarya, and Anindita Chatterjee, executive trustee of the Prabha Khaitan Foundation.

Says Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari: "I compliment the authors for a fascinating narration of well-researched and documented stories."

"The Indian Armed Forces symbolize courage, valor, and sacrifice," he says.

India's most Fearless A TRIBUTE TO OUR BRAVEHEARTS



The success of the India's Most Fearless trilogy, according to him, is a testimony to the fact that people are fascinated by the exemplary courage of our Bravehearts in uniform.

"Their stories not only offer a glimpse into their indomitable spirit and daredevil actions in the face of overwhelming odds but will also serve as a source of inspiration for many future generations to come," Air Marshal Chaudhari goes on to say.

Calling it an exceptionally good book, Admiral R Hari Kumar says: "All its stories are wholesome with the authors talking extensively to families, fellow officers, friends of the martyrs, etc. rather than letting them just be an account of events."

He mentions the two vividly written naval stories in the book highlighting the challenge of the seas as an operating environment that not many are aware of or understand.

Admiral Hari Kumar cites examples of sea blindness which is an endemic disease since peo-

ple live mostly on land and not on the sea. So there is a constant need for people to be aware of what it has to offer and the challenges it throws up for soldiers.

He says there is a need for people to be aware of the perils of going into a cyclone for rescue operations, the nuances of ship handling in rough weather, the challenges of diving into the sea and picking up survivors during rough weather, and even at night.

"All that has been covered in great detail in the book. More such stories need to come out to not just stay alive in the collective memory of readers but also to instill feelings of patriotism and national pride among them."

Talking about stories from the different arms of our Services including one from the Medical Corps, General Manoj Pandey, says the book encapsulates the courage and sacrifices of the intrepid soldiers in a simple, readable yet

lucid manner.

"The USP of the book lies in the fact that it gives us a vivid account of what our soldiers endure 24x7 through the year, while also giving insights into what their families have to go through."

And then it was time for a panel discussion on the book between the three chiefs, the authors, and Nilima Adhar Dalmia who confessed to being "mesmerized by the book and weeping on almost every page".

Talking about the most glorious moment of his illustrious career, the Air Chief recalls the time he was flying a Mig 29 aircraft when its canopy flew off in mid-air. It was a combination of skill, intuition, and training that got him out of that perilous situation. Not only did he manage to land his aircraft back safely but even he too escaped unharmed.

The sea must never be treated lightly but always be treated like a challenge, says Admiral Hari Kumar. "The way you overcome these challenges is what makes you grow from strength to strength. That is why I always tell my men -- to always be prepared for whatever is lurking beneath even when the going seems good. For, that's when the unexpected and the unpleasant can strike."

When asked about how he motivates and keeps the fire burning in his soldiers, General Pandey reminds the culture and ethos of the Army that centers around the three concepts of Naam, Namak, and Nishan.

While the first is about honor and the need to always keep the name of your unit and regiment flying high, the second focuses on loyalty -- to your Nation, to both your National and the Regimental flag. The third, Nishan, is to wholeheartedly identify with your unit, your Regiment, and your Nation. "And all this comes from a feeling of camaraderie and spirit, and the feeling and knowledge that there's someone who will look after my family in case I perish," he adds.

The authors, Shiv Aroor and Rahul Singh, shared their overwhelming experiences while writing the stories of our Bravehearts. They also called on the stage the family members of some of the martyred soldiers who have been featured in India's Most Fearless.

To a standing ovation, Mandeep -- the brother of Lance Naik Sandeep Singh, Prakash -- an army veteran and brother of the Galwan hero Naik Deepak Singh, Mrs and Col KP Singh -- parents of fighter pilot Grp Capt Varun Singh and the parents of Major Mohit Sharma walked up to the dais - it sure was a moment that touched many a heart and left many in the audience misty-eyed. (IBNS-TWE)