



From the CGDA's Desk

This time I have turned up much before you could have expected. The reason is much has happened in this short span and I wanted to convey my thoughts before it slipped off my mnemonic cage with events upon events following each other in rapid succession. It is (almost) all about Pune and dedicated to this quaint city that I once inhabited and which today has grown – still growing – into a bustling metropolis, and on the verge of bursting into a megalopolis.

I went out on a visit to Pune to our cluster of offices and to Headquarters Southern Command. I'm indeed grateful to the two Principal CsDA, CFA (KGF), IFA (SC) and CDA (Training) that they heeded my word and didn't take the trouble to turn up at the airport to receive me; also, they didn't receive me with bouquets in their hands when we met. While the former is a sheer waste of time and money (burning petrol/diesel in their cars and adding to the overall pollution; we need to be eco-friendly, don't we?), the latter is a direct drain of public funds. A warm shake of the hand or a smiling namaste is doubtless more touching than receiving the visitor bouquet in hand in the airport's terminal building. That notwithstanding, I must admit I was deeply moved when I was handed over a spray of flowers from the PCDA(O)'s Garden of Eden (or so it felt!) the next morning before we got started on official discussion/presentation.

For me, going to Pune verily felt like getting back to a warm loving home. I worked in two offices [CDA(O) and CFA, KGF] and held additional charge of the third (NADFM) and immensely enjoyed every minute of the time I spent there. Pune is the cultural capital of Maharashtra; the denizens are courteous, warm and welcoming. It's been ten years since I moved out of Pune but it didn't feel that way. Not just the people I met, it was as if the streets, walls and buildings had a life of their own and were speaking to me. How inanimate beings assume animate instincts! When I spoke to a packed house in the DARC hall of PCDA (O), my mind travelled back in time a

dozen-odd years when I had spoken times without number in this very hall. I looked around, chockfull with emotion, my whole being filled with goose bumps, and my moist eyes (hiding behind my glasses) sweeping across men and women, many hogging the walls due to lack of seats. I don't know how I managed to speak, but I did. I did quite the same at CFA, KGF with identical memories and nostalgia, also at PCDA (SC). It felt good, it felt connected – to an extended family I loved so much when I was there, and still do – to be a part of them. It was hugely uplifting.

On July 11 Saturday morning, after a very cordial meeting with Lt General Ashok Singh, GOC-in-C, Headquarters Southern Command, I addressed a gathering of senior army officers. I conveyed our department's priorities, focus and initiatives on sundry issues like pension, e-PPOs, grievances, PAOs, as also the need to connect with other stakeholders in fulfillment of our common goals and objectives. I am happy to say that we connected well. There were issues to discuss and clarify. It felt good to go back to the days when, as CDA(O), I travelled to various stations to address huge gatherings of army officers to apprise them of their role in service delivery. It was edifying. So when I met with the IDAS probationers that very evening I was in high spirits, feeling young and restored and rejuvenated, and conveying vim and positivism.

In our commitment to transparency, though a day later than prescribed, the CGDA Headquarters office has uploaded the TA/DA expenditure of the first quarter of FY 2015-16. There seems to be some resistance to uploading it; a wrong format was used initially, whether by design or innocence I can't say (grant them their ingenuity!) nor can I still figure out, but in any case it was quickly found out and the wrong righted and details uploaded by late evening. Come to think of it, these are innocent information of legitimate official visits made out of public funds for official work – so why this hesitation or fumbling? I am fairly confident by now all our PCsDA/CsDA/PIFAs/CsFA/IFAs would have uploaded their respective details correctly in the correct form. To put things in perspective and grant it legitimacy, the CGDA Headquarters, as Caesar's wife, should take the lead and consider putting all travel details of the past years on the net. Let July 2015 be the month for uploading travel expenditures; and August 2015 the month for putting out details of office expenses in the public domain.

Cheers, be blessed – now and always!

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Sudhansu Mohanty