



# Aussie Trishakti

January 2020

Volume 2

Issue 1



(Source: The Tribune)

**Congratulations to the 56 NDA Course!**



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### The Year that was and the Year ahead

The year gone by, in many ways, was the year in which we strengthened the foundations of the Australian Chapter of the NDA Alumni Association. The year 2019 saw us holding our first Annual General Meeting in Canberra; organising a domestic excursion; hosting several ex-NDA visitors during our quarterly social meetings; and releasing a well-received special edition of our newsletter on our alma mater. It was particularly heartening to get a DO letter from the Commandant, NDA acknowledging our sense of “ownership” and assuring us that no efforts were being spared to take the NDA to greater heights.

As you will learn from this Newsletter, 2020 promises to be a year of action. Plans are in place to go on an excursion to New Zealand, energise other sub-chapters in Australia, and help establish other overseas chapters. We are also liaising with the Indian High Commission in Canberra to write up Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs)/protocols for offering assistance to the next of kin of deceased veterans, hosting visiting dignitaries, and so forth. We will continue improving our website and newsletter.

It has been very satisfying to receive compliments on our work through emails, WApp messages and in-person whenever I have crossed paths with NDA alumni both in India and abroad. I have a great set of elected officials helping me run the NDA AA(AC). Including associate members, we are about 50 and the aim is to double our membership over the next two years.

Please keep providing us feedback and do get in touch should you have plans of visiting Australia. Wishing all NDA alumni and their families around the globe all happiness, good health and success in 2020 and beyond.

**Lt Col (Dr) Arvind K Sinha (Retd)**

E/46

President, NDA Alumni Association (Australia Chapter)



## EDITORIAL

### Have Alumni Newsletters become Archaic?

In this edition we alert you to NDAA(AC)'s plans for 2020, provide a summary of the activities undertaken since we released the last newsletter and share feedback received from Air Marshal IP Vipin, VM, who until recently was the Commandant, NDA. We also introduce you to Col Sneh Sharma (L/46) who liaises for us with NDA AA at Pune. The newsletter also contains contributions from our readers. The articles are on a range of topics: being married to ex-NDAs; the Prisoner of War table at the NDA cadets' mess; and challenges faced by families who migrate to alien cultures.

Special thanks to Ms. Ananya Kaswan, our Secretary's daughter and the siblings from Perth, Mrs. Padmini Saxena, Mrs. Prabhati Awasthi, and Mrs. Praveena Mittal for agreeing to write for us. Ms Ananya Kaswan's article is a must read for faujis with children trying to assimilate into a new culture. The article written by the three sisters too is a must read. It prompts us to reflect on how fortunate we all really are to have ex-NDA course mates who we can blindly trust.

We wanted to bring to you consolidated news from across the alumni chapters in India but were unable to do so because the chapters in India don't seem to be collating news at their end. They probably don't see any value in doing so. This makes us wonder whether the kind of newsletter that you are reading has become archaic. In these times when pictures and messages are WhatsApped in real time as events unfold, you may well find some of the content in this newsletter dated. Perhaps in the future we should confine ourselves to publishing special editions on specific themes that interest most of us and do away with periodic newsletters. Or might there still be some value in collating information from all chapters at least once every six months and keep everyone informed?

Do share your thoughts on the relevance of traditional newsletters. You can email us on [editor@ndaaaac.org.au](mailto:editor@ndaaaac.org.au) or upload your views here: <https://ndaaaac.org.au/contact/>

We are also in search of a topic for our next special issue. For one fleeting moment, we considered devoting an issue to whether a code of conduct for veterans was needed. But if truth be told, most ex-NDA officers that we spoke with rubbished the idea. We have no intention of giving life to an idea that deserves to be summarily buried. All the same, we do need you to suggest topics that might be worth debating in our upcoming special issues.

Given that most of us access the newsletter on our mobile devices, the newsletter's current format seems less than ideal. We will work on giving the newsletter a more contemporary look and feel. Please bear with us until then.

#### The Editorial Team

Maj (Dr) Samir Shrivastava (Retd), L/65 (Editor-in -chief)

Lt Col Ashok Ray Chaudhury (Retd), F/53 (NSW Desk)

Maj Rajiv Seth (Retd), D/59 (VIC Desk)

Cdr Amit Pratap (Retd), B/84 (ACT Desk)

Col Sanjay Chibber (Retd), F/46 (Editor-at-large, UK)



## SUMMARY CALENDAR OF NDAAA(AC) EVENTS: 2020

Date	Event	Venue/Communication
Sat 25 Jan to Mon 27 Jan	<b>Excursion: Domestic - 1</b>	Lakes Entrance Victoria
Fri 31 Jan	<b>Newsletter – Spring 2020</b>	Email & WApp
Mon 10 Feb to Mon 17 Feb	Call for and Finalisation of Agenda Items for Quarterly Committee Meeting (I/20)	Email & WApp
Sun 16 Feb	<b>Welcome Social Evening – Visitors</b> (Col S Chibber, UK Chapter Lead)	Residence: Lt Col AK Sinha
Sat 22 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Quarterly Committee Meeting</b> (I/20)</li> <li><b>Quarterly Social Evening</b></li> </ul>	Residence Vic: Maj OP Mohan Residence ACT: Residence NSW:
Mon 09 Mar to Mon 23 Mar	Call for suggestions and finalisation of Excursion Location Overseas Apr 2021	WApp
Sat 04 Apr to Sun 12 Apr	<b>Excursion: Overseas 2020</b>	New Zealand
Mon 20 Apr to Mon 04 May	Call for and Finalisation of Members joining Excursion Overseas Apr 2021	WApp
Mon 20 Apr to Mon 04 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmation of Interstate Members joining Annual General Body Meeting and Finalisation of Hosted Accommodation and Vehicle</li> <li>Call for and Finalisation of Agenda Items for Annual General Body Meeting 2020</li> </ul>	Email & WApp
Mon 11 May	<b>SOPs Release: Set 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcoming new Members</li> <li>Communication Guidelines (Emails/WApp/Letters)</li> <li>Demise of Members</li> </ul>	Website
Mon 11 May to Mon 25 May	Call for and Finalisation of Members joining Excursion <i>Domestic-2</i>	WApp
Sat 6 Jun to Mon 8 Jun	<b>ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING</b> (Attire: NDAAA(AC) Tie and Jacket)	Melbourne
5 Jul Week	<b>Excursion: Domestic -2</b>	<i>ACT advice awaited</i>
Mon 13 Jul -to Mon 20 Jul	Call for and Finalisation of Agenda Items for Quarterly Committee Meeting (II/20)	Email & WApp
Sat 25 Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Quarterly Committee Meeting</b> (II/20)</li> <li><b>Quarterly Social Evening</b></li> </ul>	Residence Vic: Lt Col AK Sinha Residence ACT: Residence NSW:
Mon 30 Jul	<b>Newsletter – Autumn 2020</b>	Email & WApp
Mon 03 Aug to Mon 17 Aug	Call for and Finalisation of Members joining Excursion <i>Domestic-3</i>	WApp
Mon 31 Aug to Mon 19 Oct	Call for and Finalisation of Articles for Special Edition 2020	Email & WApp
20 Sep Week	<b>Excursion: Domestic -3</b>	<i>NSW advice awaited</i>
Sat 31 Oct	<b>Newsletter – Special Edition 2020</b> (Tentative)	NA
Mon 30 Nov to Mon 07 Dec	Call for and Finalisation of Agenda Items for Quarterly Committee Meeting (III/20)	Email & WApp
Sat 12 Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly Committee Meeting (III/20)</li> <li>Quarterly Social Evening</li> </ul>	Residence Vic: Col SK Sakhuja Residence ACT: Residence NSW:
28 Dec week	Calendar-of-Events 2021 Release	WApp & Email
Apr 2021 (Easter Break)	Excursion – Overseas for 2021	TBA



## FEEDBACK



एयर मार्शल आई पी विपिन वी एम  
समादेशक

*Air Marshal I P Vipin VM*  
Commandant

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*Khadakwasla*  
*Pune-411 023*

NDA/16829H/Comdt/DO

06 Nov 19

Lt Col (Dr) Arvind Kumar Sinha  
President, NDAAA (AC)  
5 Healthcote Retreat  
Caroline Springs, Melbourne  
VIC 3023 (Australia)

*Dear Colonel Sinha,*

1. Greetings to all of you from India, and from NDA. Upfront, I convey my profound gratitude to you for sending us the compilation by NDAAA (AC) – illustrates the 'ownership' of NDA in each one of us. It also subtexts the impassioned impressment in the authors to see the best, and nothing but the best pass out from the Academy. Thank you very much. My aim and efforts sir, are to no lesser end state.
2. Most of the practical points suggested in the articles have already been implemented – in fact, even more!
3. I would not venture to catalogue here, the measures and steps taken by NDA to keep the training curriculum upto speed. But, I do want to assure you that the training is being guided keeping in view a future leader. The picture is not of a soldier standing guard with a rifle at a forward post, but a fully wired Combatant sporting high end technology in person, with options to tackle multiple threats. The leader certainly have to be miles ahead. We are conscious of this.
4. I am also conscious that a freshman cannot be loaded with so much. His ground needs to be prepared before we can sow. Given the varied backgrounds they come from, there is considerable groundwork that needs to be done to make them ready to assimilate service specific training. Please be assured that this is being done. The quality of training is also being monitored regularly. Yes, the bar will not be lowered.



5. May I invite all of you, as convenient, to visit the Academy, see for yourself the system in vogue. Also, enjoy the special air of Khadakwasla that breaths in bonding and camaraderie among the cadets, unparalleled elsewhere – means notwithstanding!

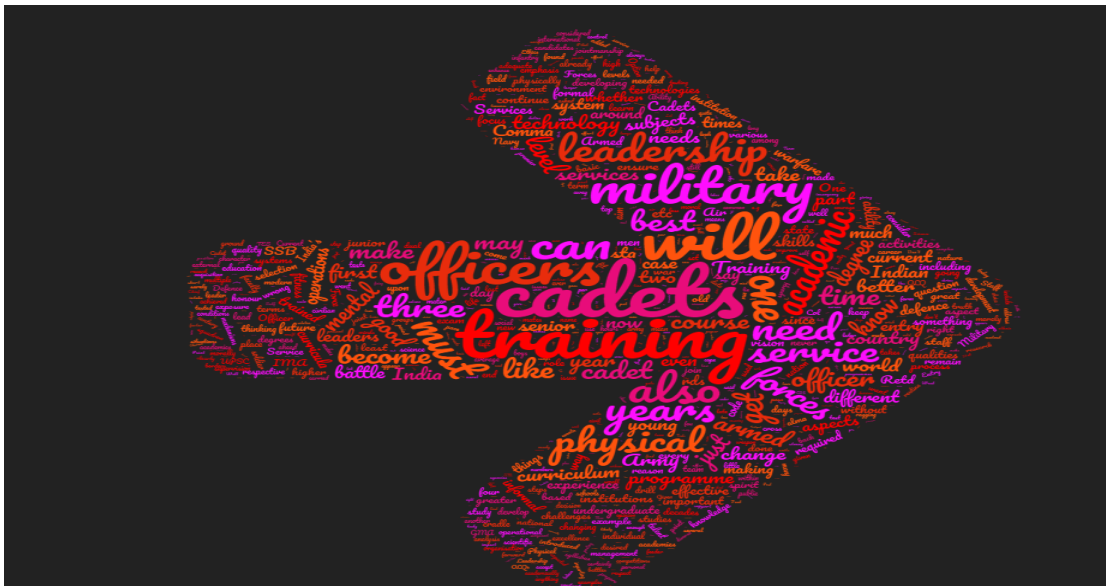
With warm wishes,

Yours Sincerely

Tipin

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Without exception, the special issue on 'NDA: The Road Ahead' elicited positive feedback from our alumni. The credit, of course, goes to the authors who contributed to the issue. Some of you wondered if any consensus emerged. Given the contributors' eclectic take on the topic, it would be invalid to claim a 'consensus' over any issue as such. Nonetheless, the special issue's word cloud (see below) reveals that when discussing the road ahead for the NDA, collectively the authors used words such as *cadets*, *training*, *officers*, *military*, *physical* and *academic* more frequently than they used other words. One could thus tentatively conclude that physical and academic training emerged as being equally important to the NDA curriculum. This, of course, is hardly surprising.



Word Cloud: Special Issue on 'NDA: The Road Ahead' (over 18,000 words) Words Ignored: 'National Defence Academy' and 'NDA'



## **ACTION POINTS: QUARTERLY COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Since releasing the last Newsletter in Jul 19, we have held two quarterly committee meetings -- one on 24 Aug 19 and the second on 16 Dec 19. The first meeting was held at the residence of Col SK Sakhuja, VSM, (47/H), with interstate member (Cdr A Pratap, 84/B) and international member (Col S Sharma, 46/L) joining via a video link. Our Secretary, Col Rajesh Kaswan (77/D) decided to tele-conference the next meeting obviating the need to travel and organise a venue.

The members are requested to take note of the following matters arising from the committee meetings:

**International Chapters:** Our alumni in the US and UK seek advice on establishing their chapters. Col J Maindiratta (40/D) has volunteered to take the lead to develop the organisational structure and operational procedures of the international chapters. Maj OP Mohan (37-38/I) may also provide inputs at the next AGM.

**Aus Trishakti Newsletter:** An Editorial Team with interstate and international members will be releasing at least two newsletters every year and special issues as required in response to member feedback. Special thanks to Col SK Sakhuja, VSM, (47/H) for taking the lead in establishing the Newsletter and releasing the initial issues and to Maj Samir Shrivastava (65/L) for taking the lead in releasing the special edition on 'NDA: The Road Ahead' and this issue.

**International Liaison Officer:** Col Sneha Sharma (46/L) has agreed to represent NDA AA(AC) at various forums in India and at the AGM held by NDAAA. A hard copy of the Aus Trishakti newsletter was distributed at the last AGM held in Pune. Presently, Col Sharma is progressing the issue of NDA Alumni I Cards for our members. Many thanks to Col Sharma for his help.

**Business Manager and Webmaster:** Col Nirmaljit Mann (71/K) has volunteered to be the first Business Manager of NDAAA(AC). His role will also extend to maintaining the NDAAA(AC) website. Cdr A Pratap (84/B) has agreed to help Col Mann in his Webmaster-related activities. Many thanks to Col Mann and Cdr Pratap.

**PRO and Policy:** Given Col SK Sakhuja's (47/H) vast experience as a PRO with three COAS, the committee approached him to accept the PRO role and to also form and lead a team of interstate members to develop various SOPs for us. Many thanks to Col Sakhuja for accepting this role.

**Conferences/Seminars:** An inaugural two-day academic seminar is being planned for 2021 (tentatively) with a focus on defence education, training and absorbing veterans in the workforce. Keynote speakers from various defence academies around the globe could be invited and research papers included in the Conference Proceedings.

**Excursions:** Each state (VIC, NSW, ACT) will try to organise at least one domestic excursion in 2020.

**Calendar-of-Events:** The Secretary, Col Rajesh Kaswan (77/D) will develop an annual summary calendar to enable members plan ahead. Col Rajesh has already actioned this (please see page 4 above).



## VISITS SYDNEY



L to R: Naval Attache to CNS, Lt Cdr Vikram Sihota; Lt Cdr Benny Manuel ,65/J; CNS Admiral Karambir Singh, PVSM, AVSM, ADC, 56/H; Col J Matthews, 53/C; R Adm B Worski; AM RNA; Maj Kittu Pillai, 54/D; Cdr Hemant; Capt (IN) M Rai, 90/A, DA, Australia.

Admiral Karambir Singh, PVSM, AVSM, ADC, the Chief of Naval Staff, Indian Navy visited Australia and New Zealand from 01 to 06 Sep 19. Rear Admiral Brett Wolski, AM of the Royal Australian Navy was the Escort Officer for the visit of the Admiral to Australia. The Admiral held discussions at the highest levels with the officials in the military and the Department of Defence during his visit. He also met the Indian Armed Forces officers settled in Sydney, over lunch in Darling Harbour.

Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain, AVSM, VSM, FOC-in-C Eastern Naval Command, visited Sydney from 10 to 12 Oct 19, to attend the Sea Power Conference. He was the Keynote Speaker in one of the sessions and panellist on another, along with Indo-Pacific Fleet Commander, French Navy Chief, RAN Chief and Fiji Navy Chief.



L to R: Lt Cdr B Manuel, J/65, Lt Gen PN Ananthanarayan, SM, Commandant, Infantry School, F/65

And below the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge you see our member from Sydney, Lt Cdr Benny Manuel, J/65 (in dark glasses) getting spiritual with his course mate, Lt Gen PNA Narayanan, F/65, SM who was on a personal trip.



L to R: Vice Admiral AK Jain ,AVSM, VSM, J/60 and Lt Cdr B Manuel, J/65

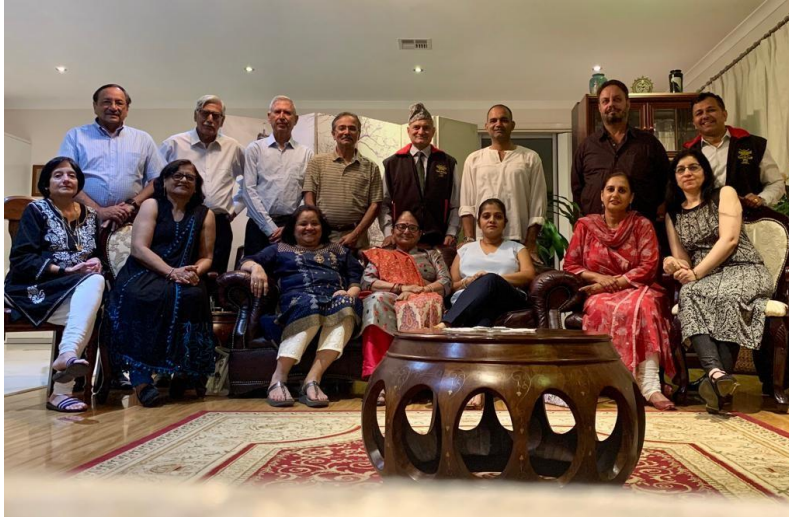
We look forward to more members from Sydney joining the NDAAA(AC) in the days ahead.





## SOCIAL EVENING CANBERRA

The inaugural social evening of ACT& NSW sub-chapter was held with much fanfare on 30 Nov 2019 at Canberra. The senior most member of the ACT, Col and Mrs Kashyap hosted



Standing L to R: Lt Col Y Kashyap, 32/D/B, Col J Maindiratta (Retd) 40/D, Lt Col B S Godara, 37/H , Lt Col AK Sinha 46/E, Col J Yadav, 45/46/J, Capt (IN) M Rai (DA), 90/A, Col Nirmaljit Mann , K/71, Cdr Amit Pratap, 84/B.

Seated L to R: Mrs Kashyap, Mrs Maindiratta, Mrs. Sinha, Mrs. Yadav, Mrs Rai, Mrs. Mann, and Surgeon Cdr Pratap (w/o Cdr Amit Pratap).

and bonhomie of the members at the social meeting, the highlight of the evening was the welcoming of our new member Col Jagdev Yadav, who was presented with NDAAAC jacket by the ACT senior member, Col Kashyap and introduced in detail by his NDA course mate, Lt Col Arvind Sinha. Yet another highlight of the night was a brief but heart-warming session of jokes and songs, which made the night even more memorable.

We look forward to hosting more such social evenings in Canberra and Sydney. Needless to state, all ex-NDAs in the vicinity have a standing invitation to join us.

the evening at their residence which was attended by eight members and their families. The Australia Chapter welcomed Col Jagdev Yadav (45/46/J), who came down from Sydney and the President Lt Col. Arvind Sinha, who especially travelled from Melbourne with Mrs. Sinha for the occasion. Also present was the current Defence Advisor at the Indian High Commission, Canberra, Captain Manish Rai (IN), 90/A.

Apart from the usual banter



L to R: Mrs Mann, Mrs P Yadav, Lt Col Y Kashyap, 32/D/B, Col J Yadav, 45/46/F and Lt Col AK Sinha, 46/E



## SOCIAL EVENING MELBOURNE

The third quarter's social evening was held on 28 Sep 19 at the residence of Wg Cdr Subba Raju (65/D). It was the largest gathering we have had with 14 members and 11 ladies attending. We were honoured to host a very senior member, Lt Col Charles Gordon (20/G) who joined us for a social evening in Melbourne for the first time. Among the 14 officers who attended were five associate members from India who were visiting their children in Melbourne: Wg Cdr DK Bhardwaj, Col P Bhandari, Col VK Sharma, Col Vipen Khullar and Col R Dadhwal.

Some contemporaries were meeting with each other for the first time since passing out from NDA. The bonding among officers from across courses was instant. Several tales were recounted about how it was at the NDA during "our times." The talks were incessant, and fun filled. The food was superb, spirits flowed continuously, and the hospitality of our hosts was par excellence.

We in Melbourne look forward to hosting as many ex-NDAs as we possibly can in our future social evenings. Please see the Summary Calendar of Events on page 4 and don't forget to contact us if you are likely to be in Melbourne around the Social Evening dates.



Standing L to R: Col R Dadhwal 57/H, Mrs. Shobha Singh (w/o Col SK Sakhujia), Mrs. I Mohan, Mrs. R Nayyar, Mrs. S Kaswan, Mrs. S Sinha, Mrs. Bhandari, Mrs. Bhardwaj, Mrs. A Panghal, Mrs. L Indukuri (w/o Wg Cdr Subba Raju), Ms. Lalita Menon (w/o Maj Shrivastava), Mrs. J Seth, Lt Col C Gordon 20/G.  
Sitting L to R: Lt Col AK Sinha 46/E, Lt Col AK Nayyar 59/I, Col P Bhandari 42/E, Col R Kaswan 77/D, Col VK Sharma 50/D, Maj OP Mohan 37/38/I, Wg Cdr DK Bhardwaj 34/A, Lt Col SS Panghal 80/I, Wg Cdr Subba Raju 62/D, Maj S Shrivastava 65/L, Maj R Seth 59/D, Col V Khullar 51/D.



## SOCIAL EVENING/EXCURSION

### USA & CANADA

Col Prakash T Joshi (42/H) has been liaising with us and is exploring options to formally establish a chapter in the US. We share below a write up about the activities in the US and Canada that he has sent us:

It all started as just an idea and became a much-loved reality soon. On migrating to the USA, I had a chat with Satish Alreja and we decided to try and locate our course mates. We were quite successful. Satish with help from Krish Bhatnagar booked and decided on Lake Anna near Washington. We thus met in 2018 for the first time and here are some pictures.



L to R: Birdie Bhardwaj (51 Reg), Prakash Joshi, Satish Alreja, K Bhatnagar, PD Kulkarni and Anil



Ladies L to R: Raka w/o Krish, Ashwini w/o Kulkarni, Madhu w/o Birdie, Minakshi w/o Satish, Mala w/o Anil Pande and Kunda w/o Prakash Joshi

Birdie who had come over from Canada volunteered to host and coordinate the next year get together near Toronto and did so in a beautiful resort Blue Mountains.



L to R (front row): Prakash and Kunda, Neeru w/o Raj Maan, Mahua, Rakesh Malik and Madhu w/o Rakesh Bhardwaj (Birdie) and Grewal and Jas.

The pictures above are from a course get together. Hopefully, Col Prakash Joshi will soon be organising NDA alumni getting togethers from across courses in the Americas – *Editorial team.*



## DOMESTIC EXCURSION

### Echuca and Swan Hill

Reporter: Wg Cdr Subba Raju (Retd), 62/D

Co-ordinators: Wg Cdr Subba Raju (Retd), 62/D and Lt Col SS Panghal (Retd), 80/I

**Itinerary:** Departure: Friday, 27 Sep19 | Arrival: Sunday, 29 Sep19 (2 nights, 3 days)

Dep	Date	Place	Arr	Date	Place	Stay
0900 h	27 Sep	Melbourne	1400 h	27 Sep	Echuca	Old Coach Motor Inn, 288 Ogilvie Avenue Tele: 03 5482 3155
1100 h	28 Sep	Echuca	1400 h	28 Sep	Swan Hill	Swan Hill Resort, 400-415 Campbell St, Tele: 03 5032 2726.
1200 h	29 Sep	Swan Hill	1900 h	29 Sep	Melbourne	Sweet Home



**Route:** Melbourne, Heathcote, Toollen, Elmore, **Echuca- Swan Hill**-Melbourne.

**Members & Spouses:** Lt Col & Mrs AK Sinha, Lt Col & Mrs AK Nayyar, Wg Cdr & Mrs Raju, Lt Col & Mrs SS Panghal.

**Echuca:** is a town on the banks of the Murray River and Campaspe River in Victoria, Australia. The border town of Moama is adjacent on the northern side of the Murray River in New South Wales. By the 1870s Echuca had risen to prominence as Australia's

largest inland port. Steam-driven paddleboats used to operate at this 400-metre long redgum Echuca Wharf, carrying goods such as wool, wheat, other grains, livestock and timber.



**Activities:** Upon arrival at Echuca the team settled on the scenic banks of Echuca Murray for beer & lunch (packed lunch prepared by Mrs Subba Raju), followed by siesta and local sightseeing in the city, ending the day with evening drinks and dinner. The next day the members lazed around on the historic wharf and posed a lot for the photographer (in fashion parade style), before setting off on a ride



on the Steamboat Cruise on the Murray river. Some of the members, for reasons unknown, had a feeling that they were sailing on the Titanic. After the sail, the team set course to Swan Hill.

**Swan Hill:** Swan Hill is a historic town also set on the banks of the Murray. It has a unique blend of history with a host of modern facilities. From the historic Pioneer Settlement, Regional Art Gallery, historic homesteads, numerous wineries and daily cruises, it is an excellent holiday destination. The Pioneer Settlement was



established at Swan Hill with the arrival of the Paddle Steamer Gem from Mildura. In this river town of the late 19th century, there are over 50 original and recreated buildings, including a non-denominational church, a working blacksmith's shop and a working print shop. The town is also home to a lot of tractors, many of which are activated daily. Its Kaiser Stereoscopic Theatre also operates daily. There are probably three or four such theatres in the world and the one in Swan Hill is the only one that operates daily.

**Activities:** The team set course for Swan Hill after a wonderful packed breakfast prepared by Mrs Rekha Nayyar; and arrived by afternoon at the Resort. With take away lunch, the team downed beer and other beverages in the park of the Resort. Siesta followed and the evening was spent with a stroll around in the Riverside Park next to the Murray. The members enjoyed the beautiful surroundings and natural features.





A courtesy call to Col Rajiv and Mrs Patney by Col Sinha resulted in a memorable evening for all at their residence. Listening to the lady about their move to Australia and the difficult times they went through, made some of us very emotional. Many of us could relate to their story. Although Col Patney is not an NDA alumnus, he treated us any spirited ex-NDA officer would have. The ex-armoured corps officer's hospitality was exceptional. We hope Col and Mrs Patney will give us an opportunity to reciprocate one of these days.

The next day members visited Pioneer Settlement, drove in vintage cars, dressed up in classic English dresswear and posed for photographs. Enroute the members also visited 'Lake Boga Flying Boat Base' which was a Royal Australian Air Force flying boat base at Lake Boga, Victoria, Australia during World War II. Closer to Melbourne, they visited a memorial near Mia Mia, commemorating the first Australian-built aeroplane. This is where, on July 16, 1910, pioneer aviator John Duigan became the first person to fly an Australian designed and built powered aircraft. He flew seven metres in his tiny aeroplane and was in the air for just a few seconds. Interestingly, our very own Lt Col Arvind Sinha was involved in overseeing setting up of this site as a memorial.



**Logistics:** The loading manifesto was compiled by Lt Col Arvind, which included beverages (Scotch, Moscato, soft drinks and beer cans, soda, water), eateries, chairs, table, disposable cutlery and napkins, thermos flask, tea bags (Wagh Bakri Tea-ready mix), packed food, pickles, etc. The planning catered for every conceivable item required for our meals including lemons, pickles, and salt and pepper.

**Entertainment:** We had carried our radio sets like Carvaan (500 pre-recorded Hindi songs), Legends, etc so there was always good music available. The bonhomie among the members and families was such that everyone had a wonderful time and enjoyed the company of each other. There was plenty of laughter all around.

Everyone talked about a repeat of such activities. Kudos to Lt Col Arvind Sinha for his attention to detail and putting together this wonderful trip!

**Cost:** An average of \$500 per couple for 2 nights and 3 days trip.



## MEMBER PROFILE

### Col (Dr) Sneh V Sharma (Retd): NDAAA(AC) International Liaison



Col (Dr) Sneh Vardhan Sharma was born on 12 Jul 1953 to Shri SR Sharma and Mrs Asha Sharma at Karnal.

He has been a brilliant student, a topper in academics who represented district school teams in hockey, cricket and athletics. He has been a President Scout and NCC 'B' Certificate holder. Sneh Sharma was selected for NDA while doing his Pre- Medical from Dyal Singh College Karnal.

Joining 46 NDA course was special. Sneh passed out of IMA as part of 55 Regular course and got commissioned in to 5 Sikh on 15 Jun 1975. 32 years' service since then has been eventful.

While serving with the battalion, Sneh participated in CI ops in Nagaland, served in Central India, deserts,

high altitude, LC, DCB and riverine terrain. He commanded 5 SIKH in Siachen – the world's highest battlefield.

Sneh has held some prestigious staff appointments. He has been GSO 3 (Ops) HQ 16 Corps, GSO 2, FORTRAN in Fortress HQ Andaman and Nicobar Islands, AMS at MS Branch, Army HQ and Col GS (Trg) at HQ 12 Corps. In instructional tenures, he was Bn Cdr and SI (Army) at NDA, DS in SC Wing at Army War College from where he was deputed to conduct Tac and SD leg of Technical Staff course at IAT Giri Nagar, Pune.

Sneh is an MSc from Madras University, MDPM & IR from Symbiosis and PhD in International Relations from University of Pune. His courses in the army include YOs, BSW, CIJW, MW, OPTC, JSC, SO's NBCW, DSSC and SC.

Sneh is married to Shashi who has an MSc degree in Zoology and BEd degree. She is a distinguished teacher. They have two children. Their daughter, Mrs Neha Sharma is Vice President and Branch Head, HSBC Bank at Juhu, Mumbai. Col Sharma's son, Maj Vibhu Sharma is an Engineer by qualification who chose to join the army and is serving in 5 SIKH, his father's battalion.

After superannuation from the Army, Sneh has been active in the education field. He headed MIT School of Government, the only institute in Asia which trains potential politicians. He has also been the Associate Director of MIT School of Management and approved Professor of HR and OB at the Pune University. He is currently serving as Director General, Amity Global Business School, Pune.

Sneh Sharma has travelled the entire length and breadth of India. He has also visited Western Europe, Middle East, Australia, South Africa, Canada and Thailand. He enjoys Golf, Bridge and *shayari*.



### **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in the articles in the following pages are the authors' own and do not reflect the view of the NDA Alumni Association (Australia Chapter). The copyrights of the articles are retained by the authors.





## Married to an-ex-NDA

Praveena Mittal, Prabhati Awasthi and Padmini Saxena

*“Up - up Juliet. Sorry mate Apaches are the champions. Well you can't deny the announcements of the Killers were the most melodious.”*

Our husbands could have been speaking Greek, but then they're all ex-NDAs, and they have a language of their own. We are three sisters and we grew up in a military family. Our grandfather served in the Second World War in the Middle East and our father, uncles, brothers-in-law all wore uniform. We are married to 3 ex-NDA faujis. Here are some snippets of our life and times.

### PRAVEENA

“He's my 'school type', “said my husband of two months when I enquired about an officer that we had bumped into at the officers' counter of the naval canteen. On seeing my confused look, he explained that 'school type' is National Defence Academy (NDA) jargon to mean that we were in the same school. After that I was to hear of several “types”. The meaning of some was obvious but others were outright bizarre. Among them: Squadron type, Place type, Class type, NDA special (train) type, Restrictions type, Singhad type, Enclosure type, M.H. type and so forth. It must have been the mid-nineties and my husband was sailing with Shipping Corporation of India (SCI). The SCI ship that he was on was berthed at the port of Madras. Late one afternoon a warship sailed in and neatly tied up on the wharf opposite. He sauntered over to the warship to check who the Commanding Officer was. You're RIGHT, he turned out to be a course mate. What a blast the two of them had, swimming and lavish teas at the Madras Gym and elaborate meals on board each other's ships. Much later after we had re-located to Australia, one evening my husband said to me excitedly that we would be going to Bunbury the next morning. When I looked at him enquiringly (meaning no work?), he said we'll be back in the afternoon. But that's a round trip of 400 kms. It turned out that a course mate's ship was calling at Bunbury and not going was not an option. So, we all took half a day off, packed a picnic lunch and the entire family arrived in Bunbury for spending about two hours there. In 2013 Sydney hosted the International Fleet Review. On her way to Sydney to participate in the review, an Indian Naval frigate called at Fremantle. Without consulting me, my husband invited the Commanding Officer and all officers home (nearly forty of them). By way of explanation he tells me, the ship is from the Eastern Naval Command and the Commander-in-Chief (you guessed it) is a course mate.

No course-meet was quite complete unless the course-mates had had a long discussion about their exploits that involved the 'Deputy' (short for the Deputy Commandant of NDA). The deputy was of course the redoubtable Cmde. Ronnie Periera. Forty-five years have elapsed since they passed out of NDA. I still get to hear how the entire academy cycled down to Rahul Theatre, Pune to watch the movie 'Patton'. When the cadets mounted their bicycles for the return trip, the Deputy re-enacted a scene straight out of the just concluded movie. A traffic policeman at a crossing failed to give way to the cadets' bike squads, the Deputy pushed the poor cop off his traffic island and took his place. He grabbed the cop's baton and then went ahead and stopped the vehicular traffic to let the cadets cycle on, all 1,500 of them. To this day when my husband has an early start the next morning, at bedtime we get to hear a LOUD, “Pay attention Alpha Squadron-lights out Alpha Squadron..... lights out Alpha Squadron”. But then he won't be ex NDA if he didn't do such things.



## PRABHATI

No one can match Faujis in charisma, panache and chivalry! I was merely nineteen, when my parents first broached the topic of marriage and I told them that my husband would have to be a Fauji! Along came the proposal from my now husband of 33 years. There were no dating sites, Facebook or Whatsapp. Even so in my opinion, a young and a dashing captain, the adjutant of his battalion, with two Sena Medals for gallantry under his belt, was not good enough! Until I learnt that he was ex NDA.

In our 33 years of marriage, there are so many happy memories, however the NDA connection stands out. Some events are unforgettable, an NDA course mate arrived for our wedding straight from the border and expected that he had to be provided with a suit. The midnight knocks from my husband's bachelor course mates, when we were newly married, demanding dinner and endless cups of coffee. I can never erase the memory of our children seeing their father weep when a course mate died during Kargil war. Another incident that stands out is when my husband was deployed in Kashmir and I was in Dehradun with two little children and had to move to a new house. I didn't know anyone in Dehradun. My husband gave me a telephone number of an officer I had never ever met, saying that he was a course mate. In sheer desperation I rang him up. Lo and behold, his wife took over the moving- house operations. A working party with four Shaktimans accomplished the move by that evening and for the next two days all meals arrived from his house.

At a mountaineering expedition my husband and a course mate encountered an avalanche. Due to poor visibility the course mate fell into a crevice and was badly injured. Due to the deteriorating weather it was decided to go back to the base camp for help. My husband however, declined to leave his friend and stayed in place. He eventually brought him out of the crevice and carried him to safety on his back. It was mission impossible, but determination and bonds of friendship work wonders. During Op Pawan my husband's team came under heavy enemy fire and suffered a casualty. A request was radioed for rescue chopper. As soon as the chopper closed in, there was increased fire from the enemy. Due to this the pilot decided to abandon the mission. The co-pilot however persuaded his senior colleague to press-on. There was no option, the injured officer was a course mate.

More recently, we travelled to Varanasi and Allahabad, our travel arrangements were at par with that of a visiting head of state. The suite we occupied at Allahabad could have been the presidential suite of Waldorf Astoria. The AOC-in-C hosted us for dinner, despite it being Airforce Day (you guessed it- the AOC-in-C was a course mate). I see my husband beam with pride in stating that his course has four Army Commanders, three FOC-in-Cs, 1 FOC-in-C equivalent and four AOC-in-Cs. The course has also had three NDA Commandants - one from each service. We have no doubt that a course mate will soon be a chief.

## PADMINI

Starting at the very beginning, my husband to- be was not just ex NDA but he was also born at the Military Hospital, Kahadakvasla. There was no way I could have married anyone else. The 59th NDA course is like family, no matter which part of the world we are in, these friends that my husband made as a 16-year-old will be the people we can bank on. It's the glue that unifies a group of men across religions, languages, regions and seniority. Squadron affiliations are even stronger. Woe betide anyone who criticizes Kilo Squadron.

I have witnessed the bond ex-NDA cadets share with their course mates. Several times we would land up in a completely new station on our travels through India and be assured of all comforts because there was a "course mate" there. I remember my husband's tenure at Leh,



when our children and I had to fly down in his absence. Two course mates from the air force flew the IL76 to and from Leh. We were given a conducted tour of the cockpit and ensured we had a safe passage in extreme weather conditions. It's only natural for the wives of course mates to forge a unique friendship. A course mate's wife took me under her wings when my husband went to Deolali for LGSC. She mentored me in looking after our newborn son. I still quote her to my daughter in law, imparting a lot of her wisdom!

While our son didn't join NDA as we had relocated to Australia. We did do the next best thing. Twenty-five years ago, he had the privilege of attending the NDA kindergarten. I have had such a wonderful life being surrounded by the love and affection of men from this great institution and acknowledge this band of unique men.

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L to R: Lt Cdr. RK Mittal, Col Atul Saxena, Padmini Saxena, Prabhathi Awasthi, Col. Pankaj Awasthi SM\*\*, Praveena Mittal

The three sisters live in Perth, Australia. All three work for the Department of Education, Western Australia. Praveena is married to Lt. Cdr. RK Mittal 46t/A. Cdr. Mittal is a Master Mariner and a Marine Consultant & a Flag State Surveyor. He heads the Indian Veterans' Forum, Western Australia and is the Indian representative for ANZAC commemoration. Padmini is

married to Col. Atul Saxena, Corps of Army Air Defence, 59 /K who works for the Government of Western Australia. Prabhathi is married to Col. Pankaj Awasthi, SM \*\*, 4 Para, 60/J who also works for the Government of Western Australia.

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## Should we be Commemorating PsW at the Cadets Mess?

Col Sidharth Seth, (Retd) 46/B

“A prisoner of war is a man who tries to kill you and fails, and then asks you not to kill him.”  
*Winston Churchill*

In 2014 I visited my alma mater, the National Defence Academy. Nostalgia overtook me and pleasant memories of the 70s came flooding back.

It is the visit to the Cadets' Mess and a new table 'In Remembrance of PsW' placed right at the entrance of the Cadets' Mess that I wish to focus on. I call it new as the table wasn't there in 1974 when we passed out. It is currently displayed as 'The Table for One: Eternal Wait for Soldiers Who Never Returned.' Hereafter I refer to the PsW Table as simply The Table.

The Table is on display to remind us of Indian prisoners of war (PsW) whose fate is not known, although legally they have been declared dead. It probably pertains to those who were PsW in the 1971 Indo Pak war. My wife and I spent some time reading the placard on the



Table. The pleasant smile turned solemn and we carried on appreciating the grandeur of the rest of the Cadets' Mess.

The same afternoon, at lunch, we saw a cadet, probably one of the Re-Test Types staying in the Academy during the vacations, explaining something about the Table to his visiting parents. The parents looked sombre and visibly moved. My wife and I exchanged glances and continued our meal.

In July 2018, I read an article on FaceBook by a dear friend and respected senior, from my NDA days, on The Table. It was an emotional article tending to pathos, solemnity. I couldn't smile after reading it, instead, it saddened me. I started wondering if a grim reminder of PsW has any place at the Cadets' Mess, more so at its entrance. A sad reminder that is viewed by the cadets at least three times a day each day of their training period. I strongly feel that the decision of placing the The Table in the mess needs to be reviewed and reversed.

To get the views of some other officers on the issue, I wrote to my course mates, to serving and retired officers from the units that I have served in and to an officer from the first NDA course, erstwhile JSW. A large majority seconded my view. Some just voted Yes or No. Most were emphatic: the table should NOT be there. A few though suggested status quo, not because they wanted the cadets to be constantly reminded of PsW but because they felt it would have been a considered decision to begin with and there was no merit in reversing the decision.

An officer, having served at the NDA or similar establishments wrote, "I know it takes long to change the status quo." He implied that it is best to let The Table remain where it was. A retired officer wrote, "Traditions should be created thoughtfully not on a whim. Many countries have this table chair as a tradition. *My view is our views as retirees do not matter!* This tradition should only have been instituted with extensive inputs from current and ex-NDAs and that, probably did not happen. Hence, I do not see it moving forward. All in all, not worth my energy either way." On a lighter note, status quo was favoured by some as its reversal could "displease the retired Senior Officer or his emotional spouse" during whose tenure The Table was positioned.

NDA is meant to train and instill confidence in our future officers to overpower the enemy and be victorious always. Portraying a scenario that shows one or more of our kin captured and imprisoned can potentially and sub-consciously diminish that feeling of confidence. FM Patton, in his address to the troops going to battle said "No dumb b\*\*\*\*\*d ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making some other dumb b\*\*\*\*\*d die for his country." The same sort of attitude needs to be instilled in the cadet's psyche. They should not be thinking of 'Capture-Torture - PW'.

The Table implies power of the enemy over our kin and by reverse logic, inability of our government to get the PsW back, as also a soldier's inability to return on his own. The Table is not a memory that honours our PsW *per se*, it is a constant reminder of our failure. It would be much better if the cadets were shown the movie 'Great Escape' at least once to reinforce that every captured soldier is duty bound to try and escape. In any case, there are many other ways to instill the confidence among cadets that their country and its people will never forget their sacrifice and give up on them.

Mental robustness, physical toughness and determination are the hallmarks of training at the NDA. Those who prepared the curriculum of training at the NDA did not explicitly include anything in it to prepare a cadet for being a PW. Without sounding callous, being taken PW is



against the ‘unofficial’ ethos and spirit of the NDA, 'Don't Get Caught', if you do, either get away from trouble by any means or pay the price.

At the risk of coming across as parochial, it is worth noting that memorials at the NDA are for Ex-NDA Officers. The Hut of Remembrance has the names of only martyred ex-NDA Officers. I'm not aware if there is any official record of the entry types of officers taken PW in the 71 war. It could well be that none of the officer PWs were ex-NDAs. Should we be commemorating PWs in general in the NDA Cadets mess?

It is pertinent to mention that our culture and ongoing research advocates that there should be no distractions, negative and depressing thoughts while having meals. The negative energy is believed to get ‘digested’ with the food. To the extent that such beliefs are true, an empty table, longing for the return of a prisoner, legally declared dead, right at the entrance of the Cadets Mess could potentially be detrimental to the growth and development of a young budding officer being trained to join our armed forces.

Today the children from nuclear families are more pampered and hence the effort to toughen them by methods such as displaying The Table may be counterproductive. The parents, if privy to The Table may visualize the worst; such de-motivation is surely not desirable. It may be worthwhile checking the record of those cadets who left the training midway. I feel that the dropout rate of cadets from squadrons using the main entrance to the mess would be higher than those using the side entrances.

Thus, no matter how one looks at it, The Table needs to go. This is my well-considered view, which a large majority of the officers whom I have surveyed appear to support.

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**Col Sidharth Seth (Retd)** joined the National Defence Academy with the 46th Course in 1971. He was commissioned in the Regiment of Artillery on 15th Jun 1975. After 33 years of service, he retired in 2008 and is now with his wife, Anjali, at Lucknow, India. He is busy motivating and training youngsters to join the elite Defence Forces of India and playing Golf.

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## **Challenges of migrating to Australia – the children’s perspective**

Ms. Ananya Kaswan

Packing up our possessions in endless sheets of newspaper into boxes with our father’s rank, name and address stencilled in is a familiar exercise for us Army kids. Moving from the familiarity and security of one cantonment to the next and making new friends who are virtually indistinguishable from the ones left behind is a shared experience for many of us. Booking a one-way ticket to Australia however to discover a life far away from the DSOIs and CSDs that we were accustomed to presented a unique set of challenges. Nothing in our experience had primed us for what awaited us.

Leaving behind a life of comfort and certainty to a chase a life full of exhilarating possibilities is exciting but also nerve-racking. Things that we take for granted can suddenly



seem out of reach. Getting to and from school in India isn't complicated. You get on an assigned bus or on an army truck that picks you up from your house and drops you to school right on time. Mum is usually home inviting you back to a hot lunch. Interestingly, most public schools in Australia do not have buses and children are expected to find their own way. This was very different to what we had learned watching American shows on Disney channel. With parents leaving for work before we got ready for school and returning hours after we had already finished our homework, a rather mundane aspect of school became a real challenge. My family was lucky to find a rental property close enough that I could walk to my school and drop my sister off to hers on the way. In addition to researching the school itself, looking up public transport or walking routes is important before enrolling in a school.

Apart from some obvious obstacles such as language barriers, there exist some subtle conflicts that children must overcome in their first year in foreign homelands. Bullying and racism is an issue in Australian schools and can add to the stresses of a transition period. Most of our peers at school are welcoming but there are a select few who may resort to using racial slurs to mask their own insecurities. If you have just come from India, chances are you have never heard the phrase, "curry muncher." It is a common anti-Indian phrase that I was fortunately immune to because I didn't know its meaning. If you cannot understand or pretend not to understand the hurtful intent of a phrase, then it cannot be used to hurt you.

It is imperative that there be open lines of communication within your family so that children feel comfortable discussing the difficulties they are facing. One way to assimilate more easily into the social hierarchy at school is to encourage children to make a mark around their strengths, whether they be academics, sport, music, arts or anything that can help the children make friends on grounds of common interests. A strong group of friends and a good rapport with teachers can help alleviate the unpleasant phase of being the "new kid" in one's school.

A unique aspect of our identity as army kids is fluidity. To be liked by the kids at our new schools and to fit in with a new group of friends, we adapt our identity to match theirs. This is a distinctive skill set that works to our advantage. However, as immigrants trying to assimilate into Australian social constructs, we can struggle with retaining our cultural identity. It is not uncommon to want to camouflage our 'Indianness' when trying to make friends who are not so Indian. Feeling ashamed of our cultural identity and simultaneously feeling guilty about feeling ashamed is a well-documented struggle amongst immigrant children. If there are a lot of Indians in your area you might struggle to break out of the bubble and make non-Indian friends. Conversely, if there aren't many Indians or other migrants you might find it difficult to find friends you have a lot in common with. Embracing the new and still maintaining our culture is a delicate equilibrium. But with time and experience the equilibrium can be achieved and maintained.

In India, a lot of our friends from school also lived in the cantonment area or close enough that you could just take your bike to their house after school. Kids in Australian schools are scattered in suburban neighbourhoods and you don't often see your school friends outside of school. Friendships tend to start with the school bell in the morning and finish with the one in



the afternoon, only to be resumed the next day. It is also rare for our families to interact with the families of our school friends. Therefore, connections outside of school become significant. Going to language schools, places of worship, attending cultural programs and pursuing friends and other migrants to build a community locally can benefit children and parents alike.

Leaving friends, relations, and pets behind is emotionally taxing. The first year of adjusting to new lives can take a toll on any immigrant family's mental health. As much as our parents shelter us from the harsh realities of uprooting our lives and starting afresh, watching our parents struggle to find fulfilling jobs and secure homes can be as stressful for us children as it is for our parents. This aspect often goes under-recognised. This is a phase that every immigrant family goes through and a degree of honest communication between parents and children helps. Spending time together as a family doing fun activities can be a real stress reliever and a great reminder to continue working towards making this leap of faith pay off.

The ability to adapt to new situations is something our army parents instil in us. With an aptitude for leadership, a strong work ethic and being able to connect with people of all different backgrounds you can approach your new life in Australia with an arsenal of skills to successfully overcome challenges and create a fulfilling life in a foreign land.

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**Ananya Kaswan** made the journey from Mount Abu to Melbourne in 2010 and started her schooling in Australia in Year 10. Initially spent the first two years in Melbourne with her mother and younger sister whilst her father was still serving in India. Almost like a rite of passage for Australian kids, she began working at Woolworths at 16 years and since then has gained experience at various part-time gigs. Currently she is in her final year of a Biomedical Science degree and is an ambassador for Monash University, passionate about making tertiary education accessible to children from migrant, refugee and lower income backgrounds. She is the elder daughter of Col Rajesh and Mrs Sarika Kaswan. In her free time she likes rereading books she has read a million times and baking cakes and other sweets.