

Diamond Jubilee

1942 - 2002

# Sparklore

INS Valsura



1942 - 2002  
INS VALSURA



## The Authors



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*An artists impression of Electrical Technology School*



Admiral Madhvendra Singh PVSM, AVSM, ADC  
Chief of Naval Staff



## MESSAGE

1. On the momentous occasion of INS Valsura's Diamond Jubilee, I extend my warmest felicitations to the officers and men of this institution.
2. Over the years, the Navy has grown progressively from a fledgling service to a worthy defender of our strategic interests. This is exemplified in INS Valsura's evolution from an erstwhile Torpedo School to the premier Electrical Training establishment that it is today.
3. Valsura has been the bedrock of the Electrical branch, training the officers and men who man ships and dockyards. It is to the credit of the officers and men of the Electrical branch that they have kept pace with the sustained and rapid growth of technology over the past few decades. Their professional competence is testimony to Valsura's success in imparting quality training. Several friendly Navies have utilized its infrastructure to train their officers and men. Valsurians have thus distinguished themselves both at home and across the seas. This is enshrined in Valsura's motto "Tasya Bhasa Sarvamidam Vibhati". Its radiance illuminates everyone.
4. The continued readiness of our fleet ships' weapons, sensors and electrical / electronic equipment is a result of the dedication and professionalism of Valsura over the years. The constant threat to our national interests underscores the need to keep up this level of commitment.
5. I am sure that the present generation of Valsurians will continue to prove themselves worthy successors of a glorious past. I wish the Diamond Jubilee celebrations and related ventures all success.

(Madhvendra Singh)  
Admiral  
Chief of the Naval Staff

Vice Admiral Madanjit Singh PVSM, AVSM  
Flag Officer Commanding - in - Chief  
Southern Naval Command



## MESSAGE

1. On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of INS Valsura, I extend warm greetings to Valsura and the Electrical fraternity, past and present.
2. Valsura has come a long way from its origin as a Torpedo School in 1942 to metamorphose into a premier Electrical training establishment. A large spectrum of officers and sailors, including personnel from friendly Navies undergo training here. The passage of years has seen a quantum increase in the complexity of systems & technologies. Whether pioneering the concepts of Training Design and Evaluation or developing Computer-based training, Valsura has been the harbinger of change in the Southern Command.
3. Valsura has always been reputed for its vibrant ethos, which has been exemplified by the resilience displayed by Valsurians in facing natural disasters and constraints of manpower and material. Valsura has also lived up to its social obligations in providing succour to the less privileged sections of society by its outreach programmes, the most prominent of these being the project "Nai Roshni", the largest activity of its kind in the annals of the Navy. The Diamond Jubilee is an opportune occasion for Valsura and its alumni to rededicate themselves to the greater glories of the Service and the Nation.
4. I wish INS Valsura all success in the Diamond Jubilee activities and congratulate all Valsurians for their seminal contributions to the Navy over the years.

(Madanjit Singh)  
Vice Admiral  
Flag Officer Commanding - in - Chief  
Southern Naval Command





## Foreword

Incidents, personalities, actions, experiences and traditions form the life and blood of any institution. In the last sixty years, since 15 Dec 42, Valsura - the cradle of technology training for the Officers and Sailors of the Electrical Branch - has lived through many events, with scores of men passing through its portals and leaving their imprints on the sands of time.

'Sparklore', most appropriately titled by its authors, is a compilation of the historical aspects of Valsura and displays its rich heritage. Making for interesting reading, this book is enriched with a great amount of reasearch and captivating visuals. It shall take many who have been here down memory lane, catch the imagination of those present and kindle the sprit of the future generations.

'Sparks', which is out of current use in the Indian Navy, was once the informal mode of addressing the Electrical Officer, in line with 'Pilot' & 'Guns'. The term conjures up images of brightness, agility of mind and the crackle of a creative sprit. The radiance inherent in a spark is enshrined in the motto of Valsura - 'The light that emanates from here, illuminates the world'. It is this vision that every Electrical Officer and Sailor has striven for, to ensure that Valsura remains vibrant, alive, abreast and ahead of the latest in technology training.

Amongst the Services, Navy has always been at the forefront of technology. Within the Navy, unprecedented leaps in electrical technology and weapon systems have kept the Electrical Branch on its toes. But Valsura has shouldered the responsibility of absorbing this technology and imparting it to our manpower to meet all operational commitments at sea. In fact, we owe it to the pioneers of this establishment, and the Officers and Men who have followed them, to have built Valsura 'brick by brick' to endow it with a well planned infrastructure, an excellent training system and rich traditions.

'Sparklore' is being brought out to relive moments of the past and acknowledge the contributions of those who made it, what it is today. It also showcases the versatility, a natural trait of every Electrical Officer and Sailor at Valsura, as he tries to keep pace with technological change, without losing out on overall personality development. This publication documents the achievements of some of those Valsurians who have excelled in diverse fields. I do sincerely hope that the example set by those before us shall enthuse the coming generations to excel in their chosen fields and reach for the skies.

I thank the authors for having burnt the midnight oil to make this book possible in the time available. They have succeeded in their endeavour to produce a work that highlights the achievements of Valsurians, especially over the last decade, since 'In the Wake of the Swordfish' was published to mark the Golden Jubilee of Valsura.

The present commission of INS Valsura is fortunate to be a part of this establishment at this momentous time in its history. As we look back with satisfaction, let us also look ahead with optimism and determination.

"Vibrant Valsura is our Vision"

— Cmde NN Kumar



**A Young 'Old Man' Receiving the Best All Rounders Trophy**



## Note From the Authors

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Being chosen to be the authors of a coffee table book to be brought out to coincide with the Diamond Jubilee of Valsura made us feel proud and privileged. There was also a sense of slight apprehension as the book was to be of top notch quality and also had to match up to the track record of our illustrious predecessor, LtCdr (now Capt.) Sanjay Tewari, the author of 'In the Wake of the Swordfish'.

The archival system being what it is in the Navy, the task of gathering material for the book was indeed a daunting task. The pace of collating the book soon became feverish as articles had to be sought from past Commanding Officers, old records unearthed (literally and figuratively!) and photographs scanned. We also had to sieve through loads of information and in some cases different versions of 'history', to separate the wheat from the chaff and arrive at what appeared to be the truth. Our search for a publisher and layout designer took us to Ahmedabad and Mr Khagesh Patel was identified as the printer while Mr PC Suthar helped out with the design. Frequent trips by road and rail to Ahmedabad were made, ideas thrashed out between the two of us and deadlines were met with nary a conflict. Perhaps the fact that our sons were classmates and best friends, helped!

We would also like to place on record, our deep sense of gratitude to our Commanding Officer, Cmde NN Kumar, the guiding spirit behind this tome. His benevolent attitude coupled with his encouraging nature proved to be a major motivating factor for us.

At the end of it all, it was indeed an enriching experience for both of us. If we have been able to capture, in any measure, the true ethos and spirit of the fine establishment in which we are privileged to serve, we would have succeeded in our mission.





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## Preamble

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The sixtieth year of an institution's existence may perhaps not be the defining moment in its eventual history. But, the initial six decades certainly define its achievements and aspirations, its characteristics and capabilities and above all, its purpose and personality. Therefore, this Diamond Jubilee year could well be considered the bench mark occasion for a nostalgic review of land marks and mile stones on the road traversed thus far.

We have not attempted a year wise narrative of the sixty years completed nor have we endeavored to depict graphically the progress made. Our attempt has been merely to paint the over all picture with broad, brush strokes, leaving your imagination to fill in the rest, with the aid of the photographs, reminiscences, progress charts, growth profiles and assorted memorabilia that fill up the pages of this Diamond Jubilee commemorative volume.

The history of any institution is not to be found merely in the brick and mortar growth of its campus but more so in the successes and failures of the countless leaders and trainees who made Valsura their home over the years and laboured to make it a more meaningful and purposeful work place. In the ultimate analysis, all institutions, especially training establishments in the Armed Forces, function at two levels. The first and more obvious one is the material level where facilities and infrastructure are developed to improve training and keep its purpose focused. The less obvious and intangible level is one where the institution evolves its own special brand of work ethic and generates its own breed of ethos. This book now in your hands makes a humble effort at portraying that aspect of Valsura.

This then, dear reader, is no mere coffee table glossy to be glanced at and put away but a veritable treasure chest of the hopes and aspirations of the officers and men of the Indian Navy who have made Valsura the premier training establishment of the Silent Service.



## History Of INS Valsura

The first known application of electricity in the Royal Navy was in 1852 when an electric telegraph was installed ashore between the Admiralty at Whitehall and the C-in-C Plymouth. Nearly 18 years later, electric firing of ships guns using pipe type batteries was introduced. In 1875, for the first time, the electric dynamo saw sea service in a warship. In those early days, the main electric load was due to searchlights and general lighting. Searchlights were widely employed to detect torpedo craft. This and the fact that torpedoes depended upon electricity for propulsion and detonation, perhaps, led to the Torpedo Officer being nominated as the electrical genius of the ship.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Admiralty appointed an electrician at Portsmouth Dockyard to advise them on electrical matters and instituted a committee to look into the potentialities of this new form of energy. It was also during this period that for the first time four Naval vessels were equipped with communication equipment with a range of about 70 miles. Ships grew in size till they reached the "Super Dreadnought" class in World War I.



**HMS Dreadnought – One of the First Ships Where Electricity Was Widely Used.**

Since Naval guns were growing in size towards the 18 inch mark, they were extremely heavy and difficult to handle manually. It was only a matter of time before electric motors came to be used for training and elevating guns, for engine room auxiliaries and for ventilation.

The Second World War saw a sudden spurt in the use of electricity on board warships, with the institution of degaussing and other counter measures against magnetic mines, the intensive use of radio for communication and direction finding, the installation of early warning and gunnery radar, the development and the introduction of computers and fire control system.

The course of the war soon determined that torpedo training was very much required and as a consequence, electrical training. Since the Royal Indian Navy was modeled on the Royal Navy and the RN already had its Torpedo and Electrical School, HMS Vernon, it was natural that Torpedo training imparted would have to be on the lines of that at Vernon.



**HMS Pathfinder**

Next came the problem of choosing a suitable site. One of the basic requirements of a torpedo school was that satisfactory torpedo running should be possible near by. The best place in South India, Cochin, had already been taken by the Royal Navy. Accordingly a RN Destroyer on service in India, HMS Pathfinder was sent to find suitable alternate sites.





The survey found the sea area around Rozi Island, Nawanagar State suitable for torpedo running and depth charge firing. There was a sheltered fishing port, Bedi, nearby, where the torpedo boat could be berthed while Rozi was already a flourishing port used by cargo as well as passenger ships coming from Karachi and as far off as Aden and as well as other ports in Kutch.

Rozi port was also connected to Jamnagar by road and a railway, which ran up to the jetty. Another important consideration was the need for an establishment to give administrative cover to the combined operation base called 'Port F' at Khambalia, which was about 30 miles off Jamnagar.



**Jamsaheb, the Royal Patron of Valsura**

Consequently, the Government approached the ruler of Nawanagar State, Colonel His Highness Digvijay Sinhji Jadeja Saheb Bahadur, GCIE, KCSI, ADC, Jamsaheb, for land for setting up the new Torpedo School. The Jamsaheb not only readily agreed to part with 38 acres of land from his game reserve on Rozi

Island for the token rent of one Rupee per annum, but was also an enthusiastic supporter of the project.

The area selected for the School was on the Island of Rozi, which was uninhabited except for the Rozi Port. There were, however, some places of worship, mainly on the periphery of the island facing the sea. The main area was the temple of Rozi Mata, which gave the region its name.



**Rozi Mata Mandir, the Royal Deity of the Jam Royals**

Rozi Mata is the family deity of the Jadeja's, the ruling family, and is still cared for by them. The then Maharani, Gulab Kunverba Saheba, initially had some misgivings about letting the Navy use the land at the far end of which was the temple of their family deity Rozi Mata, but after Jamsaheb convinced her, she began to play an active part in the progress of the school.

Once the formalities concerning the land lease etc were worked out, it was left to the Pundits to find a suitable date for the foundation stone laying ceremony. How the Pundits stumbled upon 15 Aug 42 will remain a mystery forever, but the foundation stone was laid on this auspicious date by the Maharaja himself.

The emphasis was on speed as far as construction was concerned. The School was required to be ready in quick time if it was going to fulfill its role in the War.



**The First Few Buildings Coming Up**

So the construction activity started at a feverish pace and the first set of buildings were ready in just four months.

Although Valsura had to bear the fury of cyclone that lashed the coast of Saurashtra on 09 Jun 98, but still, if one walks around the present Old Area which was all that Valsura was in 1942, one can admire the imagination and foresight of those who designed the layout of the base. Each of the officers' houses stood on a spur of land, which gently sloped down to the water. The Wardroom was behind the Administrative Block in what is now the Garrison Engineer's office. Facing the Wardroom was a block, which housed the bachelor officers, while the CO's bungalow was a little further. This arrangement no doubt suited the Commanding Officer for he could keep an eye on the Wardroom every time he went up and down.

Commander MFB Ward, who got the RIN Torpedo School going in the Naval Dockyard, Bombay as an interim measure was the first Commanding officer of the establishment. He was very meticulous in his work and a hard taskmaster. He had clear ideas about running the establishment and had planned it in great detail, including the planting of trees, greenery etc. He also handpicked his officers for the first commission of HMIS Valsura.



**Cdr MFB Ward (Extreme Right) With Dignitaries During Commissioning Ceremony**

The first commission consisted of four Indian and seven British Officers. While the construction of Torpedo School was in full swing, the first batch of trainees known as ST 1/42 passed out at Bombay and joined their ships.

The name chosen for the new Torpedo School, Valsura, was derived from the combination of two Tamil words 'Vaalu' meaning sword and 'Sorrh' meaning fish. The choice of the name Valsura was considered appropriate because a variety of swordfish is actually found off the coast of Saurashtra, and Swordfish was also the name of a famous World War II torpedo carrying aircraft. The crest of the newly started school showed a swordfish placed amidst two crossed torpedoes and a mine with the Latin motto "*Valsura Semper Viret*", meaning "Valsura shall always be victorious".



**Crest of HMIS Valsura**

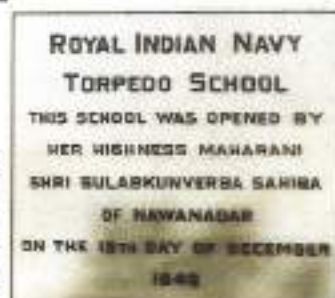


The commissioning of Valsura was fixed for Tuesday, 15 Dec 42. Two days prior to that eventful occasion, 150 sailors and 10 officers arrived to form the main commissioning party. At 0800 hrs on 15 Dec 42, the commissioning pennant was hoisted on the main mast and the colour guard gave "Present Arms" to the ceremonial white Ensign. Admiral Sir Herbert Fitzherbert, Flag Officer Commanding Royal Indian Navy, inspected the parade at divisions and took the salute at an impressive march past. The honour of ceremoniously opening the school was reserved for Her Highness Maharani Gulab Kunverba Sahiba of Nawanagar and was scheduled for 1730 hrs. The other dignitaries present at the ceremony were Lady Rachel Fitzherbert, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinlek C-in-C India and Lady Jessie Auchinlek. So while the world was being torn asunder by strife and devastation caused by a mad desire for power, in this remote corner of then British India, with the sea lapping quietly in the distance, a tiny spark came to life. This book 'Sparklore' is indeed the story of how that tiny spark has grown.



Foundation Stone  
Aug 42

Commissioning  
Ceremony  
Commemorative  
Stone Dec 42



In 1948, there was a proposal to shift the Torpedo School to the Naval Base at Cochin since it was located far away from other Naval stations and Cochin was being opened up as a training base.

However, the Jamsaheb was keen that Valsura continued in its present location. He, therefore, decided to seal the argument by donating another 600 acres of land on the same terms. The Jamsaheb was an influential person in the Government of India. He, therefore, ensured that Valsura continued where it was and in due course it changed from "Torpedo and Electrical" School to "Electrical School".



Crest of INS Valsura

When India became a republic on 26 Jan 50, the HMIS prefix had to be replaced by INS. The actual implementation took place a few months later on 01 Jul 50. Coincidentally, the then Commanding Officer Lt Cdr DHR Dadabhoy was promoted to Commander on the same day. He was the first Indian from the Indian Navy to command INS Valsura. A new crest had also to be designed since the existing crest did not reflect the true *raison d'être* of the Electrical School. The swordfish was, however, retained but it was shown leaping out from the sea with its head and a large part of its body above water, with three streaks of lightning emanating from its head. The motto was changed to "Tasya Bhasa Sarvavidam Vibhati". It was taken from the Upanishads. The English rendering of this motto is "The light that emanates from here, illuminates the world".





**Valsura  
Cinema as it  
came up**

Over a period of time, due to increased commitments in training, need was felt for more space for classrooms, equipment rooms, storeroom etc. Also, the wartime complement of officers and ratings was inadequate for training and administrative functions. The parade ground was also found to be small as the strength of the trainees increased. Hence, it was decided in late 50's that a new parade ground be constructed in front of the Digvijay block (present Electrical Technology School). Slowly, additional facilities like pump house, power supply unit, Family Welfare Centre, Sailors Institute, cinema hall, accommodation for sailors and officers families, Wardroom Mess, sailors block etc came up.



**Inliving  
Sailors  
Blocks as  
they came  
up**

The base slowly grew into a township and Valsurians felt the need for suitable educational facilities for their wards. The fact that Valsura was at considerable distance from Jamnagar town made it imperative that decent schooling be available within the precincts of the establishment. This led to the setting up of a Naval KG School, initially called Bal Vatika and also a Kendriya Vidyalaya.



**School  
for  
the 'Little  
Angels'.**



**The KV  
Valsura as it  
stands today**

The Indo-Pak conflict of 1965 led to the Navy acquiring a large number of ships of various types. As a result, there was a great diversity in the types of equipment in service. By end '79 most equipment was installed and commissioned in the Electrical Equipment School and practical training also commenced. To overcome certain drawbacks, the training department was reorganised with three schools, namely Basic Electrical School, Electrical Technology School and Electrical Equipment School, imparting training at various stages. By Mar 80, the Training Department became a closed loop system with the Training Evaluation Cell. In order to keep abreast with the advances and latest developments in information technology, a Centre for Advanced Training (CAT) was setup.



**Dhanvantri -  
The  
Sick Bay**

As the need for a committed medical facility was felt due to the burgeoning population of the base, a Military Hospital was also set up. This Military Hospital is now located in the Infantry Lines in the city and the erstwhile Hospital Barracks now houses the Victualling Store. A spanking new Sick Bay, which was designed to accommodate a complete hospital was commissioned in 1989. As this complex also housed the Naval Dental Centre and the Station Health Organisation, it provided the much needed succour to the dependent population as far as medical services was concerned.





Since then, Valsura has never looked back and keeping pace with the changing technology, it celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 15 Dec 92 with great enthusiasm. Admiral L Ramdas, the then Chief of Naval Staff was the Chief Guest. Various seminars, functions and adventure activities like All India Motor Cycle Expedition by staff and trainee officers were carried out. Also a Technology Museum was created to preserve the important artifacts and to maintain a link with the past and also to provide future generation an appreciation of the rapid technological changes the Navy had seen.

The establishment has over the last decade faced many administrative hurdles. The never say die spirit of the Valsurian however ensured that quality training continued to be imparted even while tough challenges – man made or natural, had to be weathered and surpassed. Be it the devastating cyclone that lashed the coast of Gujarat or the Kargil crisis or the deadly earthquake that shook the whole of Gujarat, the

establishment has bounced back and literally risen from the ashes like the proverbial Phoenix.

The final feather in the cap was when Valsura performed a remarkable 'Outreach' activity- the restoration of the earthquake ravaged Moda village and the construction of a new Navy Moda village in record time. This achievement of Valsura was recognised by the Navy when the Special Unit Citation was bestowed on the unit in Dec 2001, an honour normally reserved for operational units.

History stands mute testimony to the fact that this great establishment, which started on a modest and humble note on just 38 acres of land as a Torpedo School in 1942 has today grown into one of the foremost technological training institutions of the country sprawling over 500 acres. It is here that both man and machine who form an integral part of the war ships that defend our nation are moulded and it is here that the future of our great country is made secure.



1942 - 1967 : The First Quarter

Sparklore



## Historic Moments - Commissioning Ceremony



Ceremonial Guard of Honour Forming Up.



Inspection of Ceremonial Guard by Maharani



The Maharani Arrives for the Ceremony



Opening Address Being Read Out by the Maharani

## Historic Moments - Commissioning Ceremony



Welcome Address by Vice Admiral Sir Herbert Fitzherbert, FOCRIN



Address by Maharani From the Tower.  
Cdr MFB Ward is to Her Left.



The First Signature in the Visitors Book



Maharani with Garlanded Dignitaries





## How It Started



**Cdr MFB Ward, RN**

In the spring of 1942, I was sent to India to institute a torpedo branch, to design and site a torpedo Instructional School and take command of it in the first instance.

The Time table :-

- 03 Apr - Arrived Karachi
- 08 May - Provisional scheme passed by the Defence Department.
- 01 Jul - Temporary school started in Bombay with 40 men under training
- 15 Aug - Foundation stone of the Torpedo school at Rozi laid by His Highness, Jamsaheb
- 01 Sep - First batch of trainees passed out.
- 15 Dec - School opened by Her Highness the Maharani. The school covered 21 acres at that time and started off with 163 trainees.



**Cdr Ward CO With Vice Admiral Sir Herbert Fitzherbert FOCRIN,**



**Jamsaheb Having Tea With Cdr Ward**

Many difficulties had presented themselves, notably in choosing a site where torpedo running could be carried out satisfactorily. The best place in south India at Cochin was then taken by the Royal Navy and ultimately we decided on Jamnagar. There were many advantages in building in a native state, the greatest being that His Highness was from the first a friend and supporter of the School. He allowed it, even encouraged it, to be built on his game reserve at Rozi and the time table above shows the great speed with which we worked. Sir Edmund Gibson, who was the Resident of the Kathiawar States, remarked when he saw the school a fortnight before completion, " For months I have been trying to build myself a small shack in Dehradun and in ten weeks you have built a whole township!". Other difficulties were water and electricity supply but these were overcome by making our own electrical current and the Jamsaheb supplied the water. The name Valsura means 'Swordfish' in English, which we thought very appropriate for a torpedo school as it was also the name of the most famous Torpedo carrying aircraft of the time.

**Swordfish Aircraft With Torpedo**



This article was penned exactly ten years ago for the Golden Jubilee issue of Quarterdeck



## In My Time



Cmde KK Sanjana

One of the best innings of my naval career was spent in Valsura and I have many happy and some very funny memories. I recall one such anecdote which was quite unforgettable.

My personal Steno / assistant was a Mr Adhyaru. One day, he failed to turn up for work and we were wondering whether he was unwell. After half an hour or so, I got a call from a highly agitated Adhyaru from the police lock up and he narrated the turn of events in rapid fire Gujarati.

Shri UN Dhebar, the then Chief minister of the newly formed state of Saurashtra, was visiting Jamnagar that day from Rajkot. There was a big welcome laid on for him at the Jamnagar railway station and Adhyaru had gone along to take part in the 'tamasha'. It seems that some one in the large crowd had pulled at Dhebar Bhai's dhoti and Adhyaru who unfortunately happened to be close by was picked up by the police as the culprit. "Did the dhoti come off completely?", I asked curiously. He confessed that he was not sure as he had not been able to see! I immediately telephoned my friend Mohan Bhai, who was the Superintendent of Police, Jamnagar and vouched for Adhyaru's blameless character. He was released at once and we sent a vehicle to fetch a thoroughly shaken Mr Adhyaru to the office.



This article was penned exactly ten years ago for the Golden Jubilee issue of Quarterdeck





## Princely Valsura



RAdm KR Nair

On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of INS Valsura a proud and efficient Establishment of the Navy, it is my proud privilege as one of the oldest members of the fraternity to take you back almost half a century to what was a vastly different world. In May 1953, I was holidaying at Ooty staying at the Ratan Tata Hostel. A Junior Commander, I was selected for the prestigious Joint Services Staff Course in the UK. Going to the UK involved a most pleasant sea voyage of 18 days. Passages were booked for my wife and me by a P&O sailing mid June. A telegram arrived just as we were sitting down to lunch one day. It was from Naval Headquarters and read "You are appointed INS Valsura, Jamnagar as Commanding Officer. Report earliest to COMBAY for instructions. Balance of leave cancelled". A true bolt from the blue. Valsura those days was a remote little establishment, difficult to get to and almost cut off from the rest of the Navy. The command of Valsura was considered equivalent to being put out to graze, a gentle indication that you had "had it" in the Navy. Seeing the look on my face my wife reached for the telegram and reading it, burst into tears. Friends at the other tables gathered around thinking that there was some tragedy in the family. As I got ready to go to the railway station to book tickets to Bombay, Major Rathore volunteered to accompany me saying that his cheerful company would dissuade me from jumping into the inviting Ooty lake.

On reaching Bombay I met Commodore RM Taylor RN, Commodore-in-Charge, Bombay and the Administrative Authority of Valsura who was a stern-

looking Officer with a rugged weatherbeaten face. He bade me sit down. Without any formalities he got down to business. "There has recently been some unpleasant incidents in Valsura" he said. "Early last month, the canteen caught fire and two weeks ago the cinema has been gutted in another fire. The Board of Inquiry has, however, ruled out sabotage. There was friction between the Commanding Officer and the Executive Officer which ended up with the CO being denied entry into the Wardroom. All wife trouble really. I have been down there and sorted things out but the Jamsaheb who was in Delhi saw the Admiral and insisted on a change of command". "What has the Jamsaheb got to do with all this?" I burst out. Commodore Taylor did not answer for a long minute. He leaned back in the chair. His eyes bored into me. "Nair, Valsura is not Navy. It is Princely India. So you had better forget your rough sea-going ways and speech. Who is the Jamsaheb indeed? Why he is the patron of Valsura, gifted us the land and even built the damn place. Don't forget he has tremendous clout in Delhi. Actually he is a dear old boy, ex-Army as well. You will like him. I shall expect a report from you within fifteen days of your assuming command. Good luck". That was all the briefing I got. It took all of ten minutes. Typical Royal Navy!



Jamsaheb Addressing the Ship's Company





The journey to Jamnagar beyond Viramgam Junction on the metre-gauge Saurashtra State Railway was redolent of the past. The train made its leisurely way through several ex-Indian States. Arriving at the wind-swept platform of ornate Jamnagar Station I was met by the Supply Officer, Chetan Prakash. Neither the CO nor the XO was there. I pretended not to notice the slight.

As soon as we were seated in the staff car, an old Dodge sedan but shiny and obviously well-maintained, the driver uncovered the flag on the bonnet. To my query Prakash replied that the CO always flies the Senior Officer's Pennant even while in plain clothes. During our drive through the town, the policemen blew their whistles and cleared the way. In Jamnagar, the CO Valsura seemed an important person.



**Jamsaheb  
- A Wardroom  
Regular**

In the CO's bungalow, there was a costly carpet in the sitting room and a huge sofa set that could have seated an elephant - presents from the Jamsaheb. He sometimes came visiting and no MES chair could take his weight! The imported Frigidaire in the pantry may have been for his drinks.

Next day after the formality of assuming command, I hastened to the palace or the Jam Bungalow as it was called, to pay my respects to the Jamsaheb. HH Digvijaysinhji, Jamsaheb of Nawanagar and Rajpramukh of Saurashtra was a portly man. The huge moustache could not hide the gentleness of his baby-face. He spoke at length about Valsura and how it was his pride. In a typical semi-humorous manner he said,

"You are a little man, but I expect great things from you". He enquired courteously whether I had any objection to being his Honorary ADC. At the end of the interview, during which justice was done to a heady cocktail called White Lady, he promised to look after me and Valsura. That he meant what he said became evident on several occasions. I shall mention just one.



**Inspection  
by  
Admiral Pizey**

Admiral Sir Mark Pizey, C-in-C, Indian Navy - the designation of the post had not been down-graded to CNS yet - came to Valsura for his inspection. It was his wont to bring with him a team of Staff Officers from Headquarters, known jocularly in the Service as the "Pizeys Circus". They were all accommodated luxuriously in the Guest Palace. We in Valsura, worked like demons to make everything spic and span. The Divisions and March Past held in the morning won grudging praise from the Circus. "Not too bad at all" conceded the Admiral. With our chests stuck out we waited confidently for the Admiral's Rounds. The Flag Lieutenant rang up to say that the C-in-C would not be taking Rounds and we could stand down. What a blow - we were stunned and disappointed. Speculation ran riot. The Admiral had twisted his ankle, he had over-indulged on fresh oysters flown in specially for him etc. The mystery was cleared up that evening. Before the formal dinner at the palace the Jamsaheb beckoned me over and whispered "See what all I do for you. I took the Admiral off your back, didn't I? I took him out to shoot a crocodile in Ranjit Sagar". "Did he shoot it?" I asked. He winked conspiratorially, "There was no crocodile!" he said.





In Jamnagar, the civilian population in general and the Government officials particularly treated the Armed Forces with great respect and consideration. That liberty men preferred to wear uniform was itself a reflection of this. All the three Services were represented. There was the Saurashtra Brigade which included the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Rajputana Rifles known also as Napier's Rifles, a battalion in which the Jamsaheb was once a Company Commander. There was the Air Force Station where Fighter Squadrons came for their live weapon practice and then of course there was Valsura. Inter service relations were splendid. Contests in disciplines ranging from games and athletics to '*Pagal Gymkhanas*' were frequent. Officers and wives enjoyed the week-end cricket matches on the hallowed Jamnagar cricket ground which had nurtured cricketers like the legendary Ranjitsinhji, and sumptuous lunches laid out.

Every few months, always on a moonlit night there would be a swimming gala at the Balachadi swimming pool. Then bearers in Nawanager livery with flowing Rajput turbans would scurry around serving champagne ice-creams to swimmers and watchers alike. These bearers deserve a special mention. Whenever the Jamsaheb said "*Kaun Chhe*", which was often, one of these turbaned figures would materialize from nowhere to ask you what you would like to drink. Apart from Scotch there was the White Lady which I have already mentioned. Then there was a more fiery concoction that went by the name of Tigers Piss. "*Kaun Chhe*" became synonymous with drink. Brigadier Chand who most surprisingly was a teetotaler once asked me "Jerry, how many *Kaun Chhes* have you had?"

An anecdote concerning him may not be out of place here. Holi revelry was in progress. There was no messy coloured water and syringes, instead we pelted each other with shiny coloured balls filled with gulaal. The huge figure of the Jamsaheb in a white coat was the prime target and difficult to miss. Suddenly the Brigadier

shouted "Stand Clear" and came charging in much like a fast bowler. The ball went wide. When the shouts of laughter subsided the Jamsaheb remarked "Ah, Chand, drunk again!"

Space does not permit me to dwell on aspects peculiar to Valsura such as hoisting the Nawanager flag at the mast-head when the Jamsaheb was on board or turning out the duty watch to act as beaters for a partridge shoot. However, the reader must have by now gained an idea of what it was like in Princely days. It was not a case of all play and no work. Two batches of new-entry Electrical Officers passed out of Valsura during my short tenure. They were bright University graduates and came for familiarization with Naval Equipment. These University Entry officers were destined to become the backbone of the young Electrical Branch. They were the torch-bearers of the Navy's technical revolution. If I am proud of one thing, it is of my association with the Electrical Branch and I often thank the quirk of fate that pitch-forked me into Valsura.

There have may been an under-current of resentment at the command of Valsura being vested in an Officer of the Executive Branch as some of them had neither a real understanding of the problems facing Officers of the technical branches nor sufficient sympathy for their aspirations. It was therefore a matter of immense satisfaction that I handed over command to Captain NE Warner the highly respected senior-most Officer of the Electrical Branch.



## Close Encounters Of The Creepy Kind



Cmde NE Warner

On 29 Jul 44 , a small party of Electrical Lieutenants RINVR , including myself , reported at HMIS Valsura for a course in Naval Electrics. At first sight the Torpedo School brought to my mind, cinematically, the remote outpost of a far flung empire. Flanked on three sides by the dense scrub jungle of the game reservation and on the fourth by salt pans, the School was approached by a narrow road . Through the main gate one glimpsed a flag-staff, parade ground and grey stone hutments.



View of Valsura  
- circa 54

Mosquitoes swarmed, snakes abounded .My own close encounter with the latter was on the evening of the second day of our stay. One of our party and I decided to go for a ramble down the approach road. We had taken hardly ten steps from the main gate when we spied a large cobra in the middle of the road , glaring at us with his hood swaying , unmistakably signaling 'No Entry' . We took the hint, beat a hasty retreat and decided to ramble some other day.



Inauguration of the Digvijay Block (Present Electrical Technology School) From L to R – Cmde Chatterjee, Flag Officer Bombay; Admiral Pizey, CNS; Maharaja Jamsaheb; Capt Warner, Commanding Officer.

This article was penned exactly ten years ago for the Golden Jubilee issue of Quarterdeck





## Midnight Prowlers



**Cmde BC Chatterjee**

I felt on home ground when I took over command of INS Valsura on 02 Apr 62 as this was my third posting there. My first posting had been in 1951 as a young lieutenant when the entire establishment was confined within the old area under the command of LtCdr Dadabhoy.



**Vice Admiral Parry, CNS Being Introduced to Officers by LtCdr Dadabhoy, CO INS Valsura. From L to R - LtCdr Wad, Lt Chatterjee and Lt Ramnath.**



**Crocodile Shot by Cmde Chatterjee at Ranjit Sagar. From L to R - Cmde Chatterjee, Cdr Sandhu EXO, LtCdr Rawat First Lt and LtCdr Xavier.**

It was during LtCdr Dadabhoy's tenure that Valsura received sanction for posting of DSC personnel to guard its perimeter. The story goes that Valsura's power house attendant was once woken up at midnight by some hoodlums who demanded to be shown where the power house switches were. The attendant somehow got out of their clutches, ran to the guardroom and reported the incident. The CO was immediately informed and a search party sent around, but no one was found. Early next morning, the local army commander sent a large contingent of soldiers, at our request, to search the whole island, again without success. However, the matter was reported to Naval Headquarters and the government became all of a sudden acutely conscious of Valsura's security, with the result that orders for posting DSC platoons in Valsura were issued. It was later revealed that the power house attendant – the man really responsible for the arrival of the DSC contingent- occasionally suffered from hallucinations! In any case our debt to him should not be forgotten.



**Remnants of a Pakistani B-52 Bomber Which Crashed on the Outskirts of Jamnagar Town During 1965 Indo-Pak Conflict. Cmde Chatterjee is in Civvies (Extreme Right).**



1967 - 1992 : The Second Quarter

Sparklore





## Historic Moments - Silver Jubilee



Raksha Mantri Being Received for the Silver Jubilee



Inspection of Guard During the Silver Jubilee Divisions



Ladies Decked up for Silver Jubilee Ball



Section of the Audience Viewing the Cultural Programme During Silver Jubilee



The Present Jamsaheb (Second from Right) During Silver Jubilee Celebrations



Silver Jubilee Barakhana



## The Story Of The Mast

The Quarterdeck and the Flag mast are as symbolic to any ship as the National Flag and the Anthem is to any country. Hence, the history of the mast is in itself an important facet of the history of the ship.

The original quarterdeck and parade ground was in the centre of the Torpedo School with buildings on three sides. The quarterdeck had a wooden mast 47 feet high and the top mast had an upper arm and truck. The lower mast had a yard and a gaff.



The Old Flag Staff

The parade ground was found to be too small as the strength of the trainees increased and hence, it was decided in the late fifties that a new parade ground be constructed in front of Digvijay Block. In 63, the new parade ground was put into use and the mast and quarterdeck was required to be shifted to the new ground. However, it was felt that a 47 foot high mast would look incongruously small on the large parade ground and a higher mast was needed.

A case was put up for resiting the saluting base and flag mast on the parade ground in front of the main technical block. The length of the mast was determined to be 70 feet. Since the existing mast could not be lengthened and the one offered by Yacht Club, Bombay was not of the requisite length, the search for a suitable mast continued.

A surplus mast of total length 113 feet was then offered by INS Venduruthy. This mast consisted of a lower mast of 68 feet made of steel and an upper mast of 45 feet made of wood. The mast was dismantled and was

loaded on INS Dharini on 30 May 67 since other modes of transportation were not available. On arrival at Bombay, INS Dharini was put into refit. After considerable delay, the main mast and the lower yard, was received by Valsura in Jan 68. The upper mast and yard were not sent as they had decayed and were unserviceable. The top mast and yard were therefore fabricated using the ship's own resources and was erected with the help of Dockyard staff.



The Mast Being Erected

A list containing the names of persons associated with the erection the mast was made on a scroll, pushed inside a rum bottle and the bottle placed inside the mast.



The Mast as it Looks Today





## Valsura Vignettes



**Cmde Navin Chandra**

"Sir, I am going to be alone. My wife can't join me for another eight months at least. Maybe I could just stay in a cabin...?" Rear Admiral MP Awati, my Commander-in-Chief, standing tall and straight bristled at my suggestion. His chin jutted out. "You", he said in stern uncompromising voice "are the Commanding Officer of INS Valsura. There is no way you can stay anywhere other than the Valsura House". So that is how I found myself in the August of 1982, ensconced in the elegant Valsura House. The wisdom of the Admiral's diktat dawned on me only later when in my official capacity, I had to entertain large gatherings. The elegant furnishings of Valsura House, its sprawling lawns and its immaculately trained staff certainly helped to project the image of the Indian Navy.

One of my first tasks on taking over as CO, was to call on Shri BK Nehru, the then Governor of Gujarat. As soon as we were comfortably seated, Nehru, ever the impeccable host asked, "What would you like to have Captain?". It was a warm, sultry and throat parching day. I would have loved a tall glass of ..... But mindful of the prohibition in the state, I demurred. "Anything soft, sir" I said. "Soft? I don't expect service officers to go soft!" Nehru said with a twinkle in his eye. "But sir, the Prohibition...." The Governor retorted, "No Prohibition – not in the Raj Bhavan at least!". We had a drink all right but that did not really hit me. Something else did – just a few days later. A cyclone! Literally.

Within a month of joining Valsura, a huge cyclone hit the Gujarat coast. It left in its wake death and devastation everywhere – particularly in the city of Porbander. We worked as if we were possessed – to bring some glimmer of hope to the helpless and the bereaved, some succor to the hungry and the helpless. In all the sleepless exhausting hours we worked, I personally managed to glean a treasure. A lovely nugget of memory I cherish to this day – of the unique camaraderie that developed between the three services as we worked together in unstinting cooperation.



**Shri Madhavsinh Solanki, Chief Minister Gujarat with Cmde Navin Chandra CO During Navy Day Celebrations at Ahmedabad.**

One of the highlights of my tenure in Valsura was the Navy Week celebrations that were held for the first time in the city of Ahmedabad. We had planned Helicopter acrobatics, a band show, a parade – the works. I remember calling on the Chief Minister to enlist his support. He was extremely helpful. Not only did he call me inside, ignoring the waiting queue outside, he even told his Chief Secretary to give me all help. Imagine the envy of my Naval colleagues when I informed them that the state was providing me all support at state expense!



On D Day, Kankaria Lake was jam packed! So much so that we had to air lift the Governor to his place for the fly past. There was no way we could have driven him through the milling crowds.



**Naval Choppers in Action Over Kankaria Lake**

My tenure in Valsura coincided with the beginnings of computerisation in the Indian Navy. Certainly the clerical staff was reluctant to let these ubiquitous machines usurp their importance, but when they realised that the machine were in fact an aid to them and that their importance would perhaps only grow, they turned into eager beavers almost overnight. I remember an issue over which I was at loggerheads with the mighty HCL! The computers supplied by them were not working. I told them bluntly that I would throw their machines into the sea and get them black listed if they were not repaired / replaced immediately. Action came pronto.

They talk of Values and Traditions in the Navy. The hardest task befalls the Training Establishment that is where you get all the raw youth seeped in the often very questionable values of civvy street. During my tenure in Valsura, the civil scene was particularly bad - what with the Punjab problem etc. So what do you do? I distinctly remember the member of a press party from Bombay balking at the idea that my trainees were not allowed to go out of the establishment for the first six months. "Is this a prison camp?" he enquired with biting sarcasm "No!" I told him. "It is a nurturing camp where the trainees are cleansed of all the demeaning, damaging influences prevalent outside today, and where they are allowed to bloom into the mature, caring, sharing responsible citizens all human beings want to be". That was the end of the argument.





## The Loneliness Of Command



**Cmde S Shekar**

Dedicated to the competent and committed officers who served with me as my Heads of Departments, and thus my conscience keepers, during those challenging but satisfying days....in spite of the loneliness of command!

**Aug 87 :** The last few weeks have been frenzied and frantic to say the least – winding up my duties as Joint Director Submarine Acquisition at Naval Headquarters, a round of farewell parties, a day's trip to Valsura to be briefed by the incumbent Commanding Officer, and the inevitable part of a Naval Officer's life – packing one's belongings acquired over the years into those ubiquitous black boxes, booking the containers and the EVK for the car, wondering what to do with the dog, initiating the seemingly impossible process of obtaining School Transfer Certificates for the boys – the list is endless. As part of my equipping myself mentally for this assignment I sought the advice of many of my own Commanding Officers. The advice of one made an indelible impression on me. "Remember, son", said the Flag Officer, " Never display fear while in command. Because when a Captain is afraid, the look out on the bridge is afraid, the seaman who throws the heaving line ashore while coming along-side is afraid, the whole ship's company is afraid. And the only way not to display fear, is not to feel fear". Lord help me never to feel fear while I'm in command!!

**My first day in Valsura :** I've settled down in the Nilgiri Suite. Late in the evening I strolled down to the Guard Room. Unlike many of my predecessors, and I'm sure

many who will follow me, I have never done a stint in Valsura before. My last memory is that of being the Second Officer of the Guard at the Silver Jubilee celebrations, during my specialization course, and that was way back in 1967!



**Cmde Shekar as OOG II during Silver Jubilee Divisions**

Maybe it's a blessing in disguise – nobody knows me here, and I have no pre-conceived notions either. Maybe that explains why no-one recognized me when, late in the evening, I walked into the Guard Room. Anonymity does have its advantages. After all, while a ship is recognized by its boats, the first impression of an establishment is gained by its Guard Room, and it's a good place to start this important phase of my professional career.

**Sep 87 :** Days pass by at a frenzied pace. Briefings. Rounds. Presentations. Signatures. Getting to know the ropes. The first thing the EXO asks me is why I carry a telescope while on Captain's Rounds. I jokingly tell him that I'm a bit blind and this helps me to see distant objects better! Privately I tell him that it's a symbol of excellence and I feel the need to constantly remind myself to strive for the best.

**Jun 88 :** I have just settled in bed in my pajama and with my favourite crossword, when the OOD reports "Rounds correct". As I struggle with 4 Across, the telephone rings. It's the OOD again. At the nightly muster one of the DEEMPs is missing. I ask him to initiate a search. I am onto 15 Down. The telephone rings again. This time it's the EXO. They have found the missing DEEMP – hanging from an overhead pipe





in a toilet! "Are you coming over, Sir", the EXO asks. I reply in the negative even as I quickly change into something respectable, "You're the EXO," I tell him, "Take charge, and keep me informed". I unobtrusively join the small group of anxious but serious looking professionals gathered round the Baan block. The toilet door is brought down and the body lowered. The MO is already there. The authorities are informed. Virtually within an hour signals have been sent to HQ SNC and acknowledged. Next of Kin is informed. Arrangements are made through CO INS India in Delhi to have them flown across if possible. Funeral arrangements are made. Last respects are paid to a departed comrade. The legal machinery grinds on. All with the quiet efficiency of a Swiss watch. I offer a silent thanks to the professional organisation built up by my predecessors over the years, which can take life and death in its stride, with a human face, but adhering to the regulations at every step.



### **Comde Shekar with Pankaj Udhas, Renowned Ghazal Singer During Navy Day 88**

**Mar 89 :** I have now settled into the routine of a tightly run Naval establishment, that too one in the business of training. The whole machinery runs on its various well oiled cogs, right from the Annual Training Conference to the Instructor who actually transfers his experience and knowledge to the (hopefully) eager student. While all this is the well defined role of the Training Department, the running of the Base itself is a different ball game - to borrow an Americanism. Rain (I wish we had more of it) or shine, the routine has to go on. Captain's Rounds on Wednesdays, Captain's

Requestmen and Defaulters on Thursdays, Captain's Divisions on Fridays - these are the occasions when the thousands of the inmates of the Base feel the impact of that mysterious man who sits in the corner office of the first floor of the Administration Block!

It is on one such Wednesday, in the afternoon, that I am faced with two apparently independent pieces of information, but which are going to try my powers of decision making to the extreme. The first is a file, summarizing the progress of a particular batch of apprentices, and after analyzing the results, recommending for the Captain's decision, the name of the apprentice considered to be the most suited for the award of the Best All Round Apprentice of the Batch. I went through it meticulously, after all it represented four years of a youngster's inherent talents and hard work put in to embellish them. I had no difficulties in endorsing the recommendation of the Training Captain.... Apprentice X. The next was an investigation report from the EXO. There had been persistent rumours of a particular section of Apprentices being disgruntled and we had decided to ascertain the causes as well as to identify the ring leaders of the so called agitation. The EXO as usual had done his home work thoroughly, processed his findings through the well established process of Naval investigative procedures and put up the accused to "Captain's Report". It was Apprentice Y who had been identified as the instigator of what the establishment considered was an unjustified expression of discontent.

Imagine my dilemma when X and Y were one and the same! What made the need for decision making more urgent was that the Apprentices course ended on Thursday and their Passing Out Parade was scheduled for Friday. I agonized over the problem throughout the night and then decided to approach it with an open mind at the Captain's Table on Thursday.

At the table I carefully listened to the EXO as he methodically presented the evidence established by





him. It was irrefutable not only that the accused was the one who had master minded the planned agitation, but had also confessed to it. The Training Captain's assessment of the lad's consistent professional performance over the last four years sprang back emphatically to my mind, as also his impressionable age. I decided to give the benefit of the doubt to the youngster and put a few questions to him myself. Did he really understand the gravity of the charge? He did. Did he acknowledge the leadership role he had played in this whole messy affair? He did. Did he have any regrets for having behaved in a misguided manner? He did not!!! On the contrary, he felt that he was fully justified in what he had done, and not in so many words expressed the view that given another chance he would do the same all over again.

All what the Service stood for flashed before my mind. Yes, we needed professionalism of a very high order. But we needed that professionalism to be a combination of knowledge and devotion to duty, to develop an individual who, when and if called upon to pay the ultimate sacrifice, in the face of the enemy if the situation demanded, would unhesitatingly do so. This was the role of a Training Establishment - to polish the unformed mind of youth by instilling in it a sense of discipline, an unerring belief in authority, and then and only then give it the professional inputs needed to make one perform one's designated duties more effectively.

My mind was made up. If even in the formative stages of his career, we have a young man who had such definitive views on how the Service was to conduct itself, had no compunctions of taking the law into his own hands and he had excellent professional potential to back him up, we were looking at a dangerous and explosive combination for the future. I pulled out my pen, and with one stroke wrote out those four fateful letters on the Captain's Requestmen and Defaulters book - SNLR.

The news spread like wild fire. Some of the more cautious of my HODs advised me to reconsider my decision. What if the Apprentices decide to boycott the traditional Passing Out eve function? Or for that matter, supposing they reported sick en masse before the Passing Out Parade? How will we answer the CSO (Training) at Southern Naval Command? Can we not give him one more chance? I stood firm as a rock, in the belief that in the ultimate analysis there can be no compromise on discipline, and there was only one person who could interpret the word and its nuances - the Captain!

The administrative machinery took over. The young man left the establishment by the evening train, a possibly brilliant career snuffed out because of a visible and proven trait in character of rebelling against authority. The next Apprentice in line was adjudged the Best All Round Apprentice. The evening function went off without a hitch. As did the Passing Out Parade on Friday. Dharma had triumphed. Valsura moved on.

**Jul 89:** I am constituted Commodore. Almost two years in command as a Captain, and throughout this period I have had two more Captains to help me run the establishment. My mind goes back to the time when my appointment in command was announced. The C-in-C of Southern Naval Command had written an official letter to the Chief of Personnel at Naval Headquarters recommending that I should be given the acting rank of Commodore on assuming command, since the other two Services in station were headed by a Brigadier and an Air Commodore respectively. The matter had been referred on file to the VCNS (later to become CNS) who had responded - "We have selected Captain Shekhar to command Valsura. If it is now thought that he needs a Commodore's epaulettes to fulfill this task let us find a Commodore instead."

Nothing has really changed except that a Commodore's Broad Pennant now flies wherever a Senior Officer's



Burgee did! But my heart definitely goes out to the two mature Captains who have been by my side during this period, fully aware of the old Chinese proverb, "If two ride a horse, only one can sit in front!" I have had the invaluable benefit of their professional as well as personal advice when I needed it the most.

**Dec 89 :** My third Valsura Day, and the last as its Commanding Officer.

Change is in the air. My successor has been announced. A round of farewells. Emotions get the better of me as I address the Junior Sailors in their Dining Hall. I tell them something which comes from the bottom of my heart. When I came here more than two years ago, I knew that I was taking on a challenge, for which my superiors had thought me mentally equipped for. I knew that there was a professional job to be done, for targets to be met and objectives to be achieved. But what I had not known was that this job entailed finding a place in the hearts of men, by proving to them that I cared for them as much as I did for the job.

I decide that I will leave Jamnagar by train rather than by air. My Supply Officer suddenly realizes that there is an important job to be done at Ahmedabad, and decides to accompany me up to Ahmedabad, on my journey to Delhi!!

**My last day in Valsura :** The handing over Divisions are over. The books have been signed. One in number Valsura has been handed over in one piece. The ceremonial pulling out is done. And here we are gathered in Jamnagar railway station. The whole platform is flooded with humanity. The tailor master, the gardener, the teachers from Kendriya Vidyalaya, my old friends the Thackers – they are all there to supplement my comrades in arms and their families. Here and there I notice a moist eye – including my own! And as the final whistle blows, and the train prepares to steam out, one of the ladies comes up to me and in full view of the video cameras tells me –

"Commodore, you have been more than a good Commanding Officer, you have been a good human being! It has been a pleasure to know you. All the best!"

**Post Script :** More than a decade has passed since the above words were written. As I put them together once again at the request of the present Commanding Officer for publishing during the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee of our Alma Mater, I am struck by the thought that nothing earth shaking or spectacular was perhaps achieved during my tenure in command. But my memory goes back to the time when I was a young Commander in the Submarine Arm in Vishakhapatnam, and was listening avidly as a C-in-C was holding forth on what he considered the strengths of Valsura when compared to other establishments. Without naming them individually he mentioned that in many shore establishments, new Commanding Officers when they took over introduced sweeping changes and in the process demolished the edifice built up by their predecessors. But in Valsura, each successive Commanding Officer, built upon the bricks left behind their predecessors, thus expanding on the grand vision of the legendary Captain B R Singh. To that extent I was more than satisfied with my tenure in command.

More than that, I feel that we pulled together as a team for the greater glory of the establishment, the Branch, the Service and ultimately the nation. What better proof can there be of that, than the fact that of my HODs of that period, two have reached Flag rank (one is now commanding a Dockyard, and the other, himself assuming command of Valsura later, is now the CSO (Tech) of a Command), another is CSO (P&A) of a Command, a fourth has been nominated for the prestigious NDC, a fifth is commanding a hospital, and others who relocated in civil life are all doing well, continuing to contribute their mite to the common national goal.





## Golden Memories



**RAdm S Mohapatra VSM**

Service before Self – the majority of us accept this phrase in word and spirit at the cost of family comfort and conveniences. So was the case with me when I had to move to command INS Valsura. A so called prize appointment – if you have no college going children! In my case, the appointment came at a time when my elder son and daughter had to be dispatched else where for college education. My younger son was in ninth standard and had to shift to the KV in Valsura in his crucial tenth standard.

Lot of things had to be settled but we are used to doing them quietly – or as a smart Naval officer, leave some of them for the good lady to arrange!

My predecessor Cmde Jaitly (now VAdm ) whom I had known very intimately asked me to come on 27 Dec and take over on 28 Dec 91. Many activities were lined up for me in Valsura from the time of arrival till dinner – a typical service tradition to fix the person in his slot as soon as possible.

The morning parade to welcome the new Commanding Officer was held in the traditional Naval way. After the parade, we retreated to the CO's office. We started chatting on a variety of issues while waiting for the wreath laying ceremony, the next event in the schedule. "The Golden Jubilee for the establishment starts from next week and that will keep you busy", reminded Cmde Jaitly. "Oh yes, we had just stepped into Valsura in 1967 when the Silver Jubilee celebrations were on". The Raksha Mantri Sardar Swaran Singh was the Chief

Guest and many other dignitaries like Vice Admiral AK Chatterjee, (the then Chief of the Naval Staff), Rear Admiral RS David (the then Flag Officer Bombay), Rear Admiral BR Singh (the then ASD) and the senior most serving officer of the Electrical Branch, Commodore Wad (the then DEE) and many others were present. I recollected the words of Cmde KR Ramnath, (then Commanding Officer) that Valsura was the oldest among all the establishments in the Indian Navy and had reached marriageable age! (In service one becomes eligible for married accommodation only after attaining 25 years of age indirectly implying 25 as the marriageable age).

After seeing off Cmde Jaitly at the airport, I came back straight to the office and called for an HOD's meeting. Amongst all other issues, the Golden Jubilee was also discussed and 30 odd major activities spread over the whole year ending with the grand finale on 15 Dec 92 were identified for Golden Jubilee celebrations. The first one was the inauguration of Sea Cadet Corps by Vice Admiral H Johnson, then FOCINC West. Capt Ravi Ahuja gifted a few cadet class boats during the inaugural ceremony for training of the cadets.



**Vice Admiral H Johnson with Sea Cadets on Inauguration Day.**





Valsura did not have a Sailing Club. This triggered the desire in me to start some sailing activities. Cdr Ramachandran and Cdr Kothuri were keen enthusiasts and started off by sailing in the salt pans. They found that the depth in the salt pans was not sufficient. They shifted their activities to Naya Bunder area. There also, it was too difficult to maneuver through the restricted and shallow channel. After a number of such experiments, we selected a site adjacent to the ship repair yard and started sailing from the shore. This place also turned out to be very risky – boats frequently capsized and there was difficulty in casting off. There was no place for safekeeping of the boats at the site and we had to carry the boats up and down from Valsura which itself became a major exercise.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Soon the idea dawned to make a boat shed approx 100ft in to the sea from high tide line having storage place for the boats and open space for rigging and a ramp to lower the boats into water. The State government was approached to lease an area in the sea for this purpose which materialized without much delay. The sea bed in Kutch has about 5/6 feet of mud which has to be removed for the foundation to have support of hard ground, but that didn't deter us from our venture. Stones and rubble were filled from the shoreline. The masonry work used to begin the moment the tide receded and had to stop one hour before flooding. The building, the ramp and the platform were ready within four months.



**Aerial View of Watermanship Training Complex**

Literally it was like a two storied building with one storey filled up with stone, sand and cement. Most of it was done by 'Shramdan'. A bamboo bridge was subsequently constructed from the shore for easy access during high tide. The Commander-in-Chief was appreciative of our efforts and resources were sanctioned. We added a number of boats and held many expeditions.



### **Inauguration Ceremony of the Watermanship Complex**

Thus emerged a major facility for Watermanship training for Valsurians as an offshoot from establishing the Sea Cadet Corps. Mind you, the possibility of sailing activity in Saurashtra region was ruled out by experts in the past (as per records available in the files). The money spent was miniscule compared to the magnitude of work – the age-old dictum "Where there is a will, there is a way" came true.

The other Golden Jubilee activities like the Defence Ministers visit, Inauguration of Valsura Gas Agency, All India Motor Cycle Expedition of 12000 kms, hosting of Services Weight Lifting Championship, making of documentary films on Valsura both by Doordarshan and Films Division, bringing out a special issue of Sainik Samachar and facelift of the establishment went off smoothly. The major activities slated for the final day ie. 15 Dec 92 were Inauguration of Technology Museum, release of First Day Cover, release of book on Valsura "In the Wake of the Sword Fish", Golden Jubilee concert, Inter Services band display in the parade ground and Golden Jubilee Dinner.





LtCdr S Tewari (now Capt) who was the author of the book was sent to Delhi on 04 Dec 92, as the printing press was located near Jumma Masjid in Delhi. He was instructed to sit in the press and do online editing so that the book would be ready by 13 Dec 92 for him to carry it back by 14 Dec 92. Just when the composition work had begun the Babri Masjid demolition took place on 06 Dec 92 and the whole of Jumma Masjid area came under curfew. Most of the shops were closed and poor Lt Cdr Tiwari had a harrowing task of convincing the security forces about the urgency of his task. The initiative of the officer not only in writing the book but ensuring its timely completion under such difficult circumstances is really praiseworthy.

Creation of a Technology Museum depicting the history of Valsura was another formidable task. The museum was to be housed in the building where Valsura was born. This building in the old area was in a precarious state previously housing the Military Hospital and subsequently converted into a scrap yard. The building required extensive repairs and a lot of thinking had to be done in identifying and acquiring the exhibits and bringing them up to a presentable state. In fact, when Admiral Sukul, the Captain Commandant visited Valsura in October, he had commented, "By no means can the Museum be made ready by 15 Dec". However, thanks to the heroic efforts of Cdr Nilkund and his team, the Technology Museum was ready well in time.



Admiral Ramdas CNS With Father of Khukri Martyr

An event during the celebrations which left everyone touched was the ceremony involving the next of kin of all the officers and sailors of the Electrical Branch who had laid down their lives in the 1971 war. I still remember the father of one of the EARs, a man from Rajasthan who had the desire to see his son in the Navy, which he did. His mind was however not affected by his son's demise. In fact he wanted his other son to join the Navy too.

To further aggravate the situation caused by the unfortunate Babri Masjid demolition, the Indian Airlines went on strike from 10 Dec 92, making air travel to Jamnagar next to impossible. The travel plans of a large number of VIPs got affected and they could not make it. However, the serving officers coming from Delhi boarded the aircraft of the CNS and could hence attend the function. About 150 out of the expected 300 /400 invitees reached Valsura on the final day and all activities went off smoothly as per schedule.

I will end by saying :

**"There is no thrill in easy sailing  
when the skies are clear and blue,  
There is no joy in merely doing things  
which anyone can do,  
But there is some satisfaction  
that is mighty sweet to take,  
When you reach the destination you  
thought you'd never make".**



1992 - 2002 : The Last Decade

Sparklore





## Historic Moments - Golden Jubilee



Admiral L Ramdas, CNS Taking Salute at the Golden Jubilee Divisions



CNS at the Technology Museum



Members of the INS Valsura All India Motor Cycle Expedition



Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia Performing at INS Valsura



## Historic Moments - Golden Jubilee



Cutting the Golden Jubilee Cake



The Golden Jubilee First Day Cover



Release of First Day Cover by CNS



Three Ex COs Meet During Golden Jubilee.

From L to R - Cmde P Jaitly, Capt NE Warner and Cmde S Shekhar.





## Valsura Braves The Cyclone



**RAdm Balachandran NM VSM**

"Valsura is the greenest patch of the otherwise arid Saurashtra region and it is the bounden duty of each of us to preserve this.....". These words spoken by me in my address to the Ship's Company only a couple of days earlier at the divisions were ringing afresh in my mind even as Valsura was bearing the brunt of nature's fury in the form of horrendous cyclone that hit Saurashtra on 09 Jun 98 – one of the worst in recent history. Unlike the East Coast of India where cyclones are normally expected and people are familiar to their devastating nature, Saurashtra region experienced such a catastrophe last only in 74 and on a much less intense scale.

As people went to bed on 08 Jun 98 in Valsura, they could hardly guess what it would be like, when they woke up the next morning. Even as people sipped their bed tea they could not sense the gravity of the storm that was brewing. The wind speeds peaked to 180 kmph by 1100 hrs. Asbestos sheets were flying like saucers, twisted mass of steel was all that could be seen of communication towers, trees were uprooted, radar antennae displaced... it was an unbelievable sight! The freshly harvested salt from the neighboring salt pans got lifted and settled all over – every leaf dehydrated beyond recognition. By 1500 hrs the wind speed dropped and one could take stock of the devastation that was left behind.

All this while, the time tested procedures that are inherently instituted in the system to deal with emergencies like this, were being put in place. Power



**COMCEN Tower Bent Beyond Recognition**

supplies were switched off in time, the families were being warned to remain indoors, water was being conserved, emergency parties detailed to contain damage and strategy worked out to assess the damages and prioritise the restoration efforts. It was an immense relief to learn that there were no casualties or injuries to anyone. Every inch of road was blocked with trees, electric and telephone poles entangled in cables, rubble – the task ahead looked daunting. Restoration of power supply looked like a distant dream, water storage situation was grim with no hope of early supply from the Jamnagar Municipal Corporation/Army and a large number of buildings were damaged to a point where they were not habitable. Large store houses with valuable stores were roofless exposing their contents to the open sky and destoring and securing them was to be done on a war footing to prevent further damage from the impending downpour. The huge cumulonimbus clouds that were looming large on the horizon were threatening to compound the woes.

Was it strange coincidence or was it the machinations of providence that I was to celebrate my wedding anniversary in accompaniment of such bolstering thunders, gales and turbulence! Instead of keeping a date for the exclusive candle lit dinner with my spouse Indira, I found myself, as a sentinel, chairing an





emergency meeting with my dynamic HODs – well albeit, again under candle light by default – at 1900 hrs! It was brief – everyone knew the magnitude of task that lay ahead. All that was needed, was coordination, speed, resource management, prioritisation of works and above all the “Will”. Only one aim was set – “The cyclone is a thing of the past, we shall emerge stronger”.



### Devastation Wrought by the Cyclone

The true character-be it of an institution or an individual is brought to fore in times of crisis. As the restoration work began, there must have been endless nagging thoughts in everybody’s mind as to when and how the establishment would return to normalcy – or even if it ever will. But then, it was a litmus test for the naval value system– that is dynamic and is ever inspiring and has stood the test of time.

All training had to be suspended. Day and night, groups of people – officers, men, civilians – all were rubbing shoulders to clear the roads, remove rubble, supply the rationed water door to door, repair equipment and assess damage. The Technical Services Department had the most unenviable task to resume water and power supply and to plan and execute all works. Electrical power supply from the Gujarat Electricity Board (GEB) seemed like a distant dream, what with every pole broken and cables entangled, mass of useless metal.

The Garrison Engineer who rightly foresaw the crucial requirement of poles launched a midnight operation to lift over 300 poles from the nearby factory before the GEB positioned their inspectors at all factories in Gujarat to ensure that poles were supplied only to GEB. The power station now totally roofless housed the generators, which were covered with a layer of salt that got litted with the wind from the neighboring salt pans. Technicians slogged relentlessly to breathe life into the generators that were to sustain the entire base till restoration of normalcy. The efforts paid off when the first generator roared to life in less than 48 hours – to provide power supply for essential services like pumping water, communication and command and control etc.

Concurrently, aid to civil authorities was being extended as necessary. Be it speedy dispatch of fire tenders to douse the fires at nearby groundnut oil extraction units, or for rescue of a merchant vessel adrift off Sikka or dispatch of Medical teams to ESSAR Project site – everything was being done in a professional manner.

The Logistics Department too had their hands full. With the roofs of Naval Store and Victualling Stores blown away, the immediate task was to retrieve the damaged stores, shift them to safety and at the same time, continue to keep the galleys going to feed the personnel who were now not on academic pursuits but engaged in manual labour.

Rain or Shine, nature is an integral part of Valsurian’s daily life. Even in its ferocious manifestation, nature with all its facets has a place or concern in everyone’s heart. All the uprooted trees were gently replanted and nurtured. Desalination of affected areas of greenery was

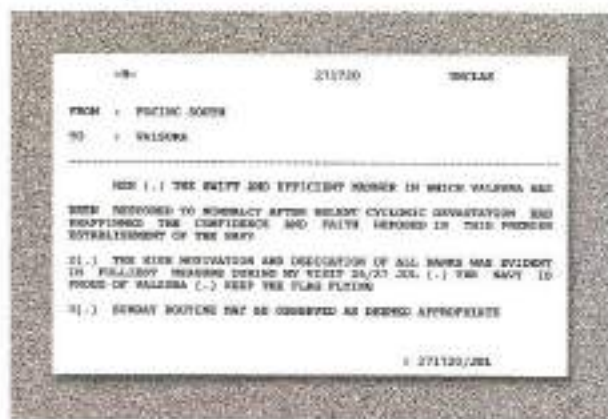




undertaken. The birds around Valsura, which formed a feast to the eyes of every visitor, had suddenly vanished. The dead bodies of scores of pelicans and others were strewn all around and it was a heart rending sight. New nesting mounds were made to support good breeding next season.

Such was the pace of restoration activity that training recommended on 15 Jun 98 – barely four working days after the devastating and debilitating cyclone. When the Raksha Mantri visited the establishment on 13 Jun 98, the base was already well on to the path of recovery. So much had been accomplished in so short a span of time that what emerges is the soundness of the existing value system, the ability to bounce back in a crisis, to emerge stronger after a catastrophe and all that through

*esprit de corps*, team work, camaraderie and dynamic leadership at all levels. The speed and quality of recovery can be gauged by the fact that the establishment went on with its scheduled events like conduct of Software Engineering Seminar, the ISO 9000 certification etc within a few months after the devastating cyclone.



### Message from C in C After Cyclone

When I read this message to the Ship's company whom I fondly remember even now, I was indeed overwhelmed and charged with emotional sentiments. Sixty years ago someone coined a motto for HMS Valsura when it was the Royal Navy's Torpedo School – "VALSURA SEMPER VIRET". It seems only too apt to understand its meaning even now – "VALSURA SHALL ALWAYS BE VICTORIOUS".



Radar Antenna Damaged After Cyclone



Radar Antenna Restored



## Creating History



**Cmde TS Ganeshan NM VSM**

It was the warm, late evening of 08 Aug 98. The mixed feeling of seeing off my son that night for higher studies in USA was given a sugar coating by the news that my name is being processed for appointment as CO Valsura. The last glimpse of Valsura having been the passing out in Oct 72, the establishment's present profile was hazy in my memory. However, my friend (an ex CO Valsura) told me that it would be a memorable appointment. It indeed was!

With the National Defence College course completion on 04 Dec 98 and with the taking over scheduled for 28 Dec 98, there was enough time for retuning myself for the new 'calling'. It was a wonderful winter morning when I took over. The base was clean, green and beautiful. Perhaps none knew then that, it was the beginning of a training programme on 'disaster management'. On the first night of taking over, at around 2000 hrs, distinct sounds of hooting of a large number of personnel in the direction of in-living junior sailors area made my hand impulsively go to the phone for OOD only to be replaced back with the memory that those were indeed the sounds of the famous, friendly jackals of the Rozi Island !!

The command from 28 Dec 98 to 03 Apr 02 was indeed memorable, eventful and a challenge completely testing the spirit, resilience and team work of every Valsurian. Little did I realise the tremendous sequential 'Administrative Challenges' and surprises that lay ahead as I approached the mike during the 'Dining in' function. As I was about to speak, the DLC rushed

with the signal intimating the unscheduled change of Command for the Navy, the first of the many surprises.

The year 99 dawned reminding us that, by the law of 12 years average for the region, drought cycle was due. This became evident with the lack of rain till early September and we braced ourselves with contingency plans. End September brought little relief giving time to plan for the dreadful summer of 2000. End 99 also saw an active western front with the nation at war over Kargil.

With Kargil behind us, Gujarat and Valsurians took the summer of 2000 – the last summer of the century – head on. The Government declared it "Drought of the Century".



**Valsurians Queue up For Water**

Valsurians rose to the occasion with Training Dispersal, water management with purchased water, drilling 35 bore wells and installation of hand pumps all over the base. Preparation was also made to save every drop of water as and when it rains by way of rainwater harvesting pits through civil works and massive check dams around the base through 'Shramdan'. All overhead tanks were plugged and used as storage tanks and the swimming pool was also used as storage tank. All this was to ensure at least 30 days of water security in case water could not be bought. All through, the Valsurians including the families and civilians battled together with an extraordinary sense of understanding, responsibility and resilience. The efforts of the Training





Division in managing the dispersed training with regular rotation of course material/instructors was mind-boggling. The efforts of Medical Department and Station Health Organisation to ensure zero contamination and hygiene upkeep of base/personnel were commendable. With rain coming in August, the base turned green once again with all check dams filling up. With effective rainwater harvesting, the fresh water bulb below the Rozi Island expanded and more hand pumps started yielding fresh water. Then the New Year and the new century dawned.

The base settled down to a comfortable winter and looked forward to a quiet 2001. The beautiful sight of pelicans, flamingos and painted storks brought cheer to one and all. But, little did we know that our final test of resilience and determination was round the corner. The H hour, the hour of reckoning, was 0840 hrs on the Republic Day soon after the parade. As soon as I entered 'Valsura House' after the parade, in No.1 uniform with the ceremonial sword still in my hand, the tectonic plate movement commenced and an earthquake of Richter scale 6.9 by Indian standards and 7.9 by International standards struck us. When the bone-chilling earthquake shook Gujarat, we were trying

hard to stand erect, all officers and men still on the parade ground and many of the families/children assembled in KV/NKG for the flag hoisting ceremony to follow. The quake lasted a full 45 seconds. With everything breaking down thereafter, I made two calls on the cell phone before I went around the base. One call was to my home to tell them I am safe and the next call was to the CINC to tell him that I am still alive and in command and therefore no new CO is required!

There were extensive damages to all buildings and the aftershocks during the subsequent weeks kept many in tents pitched all around the base. But true to Naval tradition, Valsurians rose like a phoenix and lent a helping hand to the nearby villages and hospitals. Then came 'NaiRoshni' the project to rebuild and relocate the earthquake ravaged village Moda as 'Navy Moda'. With the help of Centre of Science for Villages (CSV), a NGO, in a record 111 days a near township was created with 110 houses, school, community centre, shops and asphalted roads. NWWA Valsura played a stellar role in rehabilitating the village ladies and motivating the families for relocation. The Governor of Gujarat, Shri Sundar Singh Bhandari inaugurated the new



The Navy Moda Village