

MINPA

हादसों से गुरेज मत करना, हादसे हौसला बढ़ाते हैं

Setbacks in life open new vistas that in turn open multiple opportunities for attaining higher equilibriums. In the dynamic environment of low intensity conflict grid, in particular the Maoist violence, this holds good more often than not. CRPF being the largest police force of the Union of India and tasked with internal security charter, carved out CoBRA -the specialized segment of the Force dexterous in Jungle warfare capable of generating a counter response against Maoist violence in order to finally neutralise them .In fact, it has evolved as a zero-risk force. When I say 'risk', it is not to be viewed in terms of the intensity of the threat but the existent response capacity deficit to mitigate that threat.

Minpa has long been the gateway to Naxal dominated areas in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. Between 2009-2020, more than a dozen attempts had been made by security forces to penetrate through Minpa and make head way in this heavily mined and IED prone area. The human terrain in this area has also been under total control of the Maoists. This has been a forbidden area for developmental agencies too. More than 150 soldiers have already made the supreme sacrifice in the process of attempting to regain these areas and set in a peace process. Amidst such a scenario, the battle of March 19, 2020 became a turning point when 17 DRG soldiers of Chhattisgarh Police were martyred fighting against the naxals. Even the 09 CoBRA teams in the vicinity of 2-3 kilometres could not put up an effective counter response, either by way of deceptions or by engaging in indirect combat. This setback led to immense resentment and introspection on the professional capabilities and the available logistical support. Even the level of synergy between various forces on the counter Maoist grid had become strained.

The whole episode led to various interventions at the apex level including detailed analysis of the entire chain of events. The local command failure at the cutting edge level culminated in affixing responsibilities and accordingly due action was taken. The managerial issues also did not escape attention. One set of augmentation focused upon improvement of electronic surveillance, image as well as communication intelligence, besides equipment and weaponry. The other set of response optimisation laid stress on the 'organic' aspects. Besides a damage control of the loss of trust between the Forces, it dealt with the issues of cohesive synergetic team building, moving command system along with a large number of small compact teams that could integrate and disintegrate as per the requirement. The chameleon and lizard tactics of deception as well as survival were now adopted. The battle of guns and the war of perceptions was further layered with the game of deceptions. These jungle warriors further learnt the art of collaborative skills in order to generate a conducive response with the generic skill-set of the local police, including the DRG, by also letting go of their self-built superiority

complex. The art of human terrain management took over the technology led geo-navigations that could set the direction but not their penetration and pace. Steering through the adversary's terrain had become more of a mind game. Resilience under a situation of scarcity of administrative resources, long spells of endurance in the midst of surprise guerrilla attacks or accidental traversing into the IED infested killing zones created by the adversary became a critical factor. All these aspects were addressed through a pattern of unlearning, relearning and refreezing operational exercises at the Kanker based training centre. The change in strategies to emulate a cat like invisible ambush, giving a false sense of freedom to the rats until there was a hundred percent surety of killing the latter; clandestine and well covered movement to the epicenter of the adversary and then fanning out to seek engagement with them for a definite win; all these aspects were well refined to make the final dent. Senior Commanders also focused upon the key enemy operatives and their echo systems.

At the top level it was amply clear that regaining of the grounds at Minpa and establishing a Forward Operational Base there at the earliest, would be the only befitting response at this juncture. Establishing control of this gateway to access the core areas of the adversary would be the final game changer.

Constant interaction with the troops, a well laid out strategy broken into small steps of progressive success gradually brought in the intrinsic operational drives. The 'ops-culture' that had become eclipsed by displaced goals resurfaced to create a winning situation. Resurgence was further ensured through placement of strong commanders at key points and providing adequate support to them in the core areas now became the guiding principle.

As Director General of CRPF I frequently spent time in the field in south Chhattisgarh. Besides seeking due integration with the apex authorities of the state in the overall scheme of things and granting conducive support of CRPF teams in building a cohesiveness amongst the teams, boosting their morale and rebuilding psychologically strong warriors was my key course of action there. Some commanders focus on what to do and how to do. We chose to focus on the people, the warriors and ignited their inner self on 'why' to do. I believe that if that inner zeal is ignited then they will quickly develop the sensibility and a clearer perception of 'what' and 'how'.

Shri Yogyan Singh, DIG CRPF and his team; Shri Dhruv, SP Sukuma and his teams decided to go ahead finally and reclaim the area. This Team 'Sukuma' eventually brought us success. At the apex level my job, along with the job of ADG Operations Shri Ashok Juneja was to facilitate them. My senior commanders at Chhattisgarh Shri Kuldiep Singh SDG and Shri D. Prakash, IG contributed their very best. A remarkable job was done by IG CoBRA, Shri K.K. Sharma by motivating the CoBRA team amongst whom he stayed for several days as their IG(Adm).

The efforts commenced from November, 2020.

Despite the innumerable attacks by the Maoist that could have been fatal, Team Sukuma remained undeterred and relentlessly pursued their goal with single minded determination. Finally, the CRPF camp was substantively established in Sukuma in January 2021. Republic day 2021 marked the unfurling of the National Flag along with the local populace who felt equally buoyant finally coming out of the clutches of Maoist perpetrators.

Mission Minpa has been the game changer. It is not merely the geographical re-marking of Minpa but a strong psychological resurgence of freshly enthused warriors of CRPF and the Chhattisgarh state police. 'Synergy' and 'resilience' remained the key vectors.

Sixth Sigma Analysis(SSA):

It primarily underscores that "If we can't admit our follies, we can never improve". Sixth Sigma Analysis is a powerful tool to succeed. It converts every failure into a greater opportunity for success. Those who do not fall, would never learn the art of bouncing back. And here is another catch; it is not material that you fell. But, what makes the real difference is that how many times you bounced back once you fell.

Without going back into the details of the episode let us concentrate on the SSA wisdom for us:

(i) Best SOP is no SOP:

In a dynamic operational situation, the Commander on the ground should decide how to beat the enemy at its own game. The navigation through administrative procedure reflected through S.O.Ps or guidance by distantly sitting commanders in a non-operational environment may not be so effective or rationalistic. Autonomous operational response capacity at the level of the smallest of teams on the ground is the feasible option.

(ii) Merger is The Basic Tenet:

Specialized well trained forces, despite all positives may fail as they may not be dexterous in the local confluence with geographical as well as the human terrain. DRG may not be well trained or disciplined, but possess the quality of knowing the local people and the place. They are motivated in their own way. Should a CoBRA Commander not see a huge opportunity in absolute assimilation owing to these very positives, rather than keep a distance in the name of training and discipline? In fact, these two factors are dynamic and must be aligned with the local geographic as well as human terrains.

(iii) Resilience is The Key to Succeed:

Considering the local operational environment, long time endurance, survival under a situation of scarcity, and hunger for success is a must. When translated into operative segments, it would mean physical toughening, mental strengthening, sharp shooting skills, with courage within and a feeling of pride in being a warrior.

(iv) Success is The Tonic for Warriors:

‘Kanker – Manthan’ clearly reflected upon the Naxal phobia at the level of senior operating Commanders. In a few cases that acted as an estoppel. They often forget that in war zones, being inactive is suicidal. Creating opportunities of success is the core job of Commanders. Historic wisdom indicates that eighty percent of the battle is first won on the table. How well we plan, How well we simulate various contingencies and how well we nurture a fighting spirit in our warriors is the magical formula for success. Success comes only when we give it our hundred percent. Anything below that is sub-optimal and constricts our going into the “auto mode” of success.

(v) A Cat Like planned Ambush Would Give the Winning Edge:

Hit and run is a suicidal tactic in the moist violence grid. Secrecy, surprise element and speed (SSS) are the essential habits we must evolve to taste success. Allow the mouse to dash and run asunder multiple times, scampering back

and forth, wait patiently for the appropriate moment and hit when sure of a definite kill. It is this that keeps the cat culture thriving and giving invaluable returns.

(vi) Rise Above the Number Game:

Urban reflections of law and order mode or administrative numerical calculation of break-even may not, rather will not, work in the ‘guerilla- battle’ situations. The ground rule of SSS as seen above, is then absolutely defeated. It is not just a numerical tug of war. It is in fact a mindgame-a game of trickery. It is a battle of deceptions. Similarly, we need to work at creating sharp shooters. Instead of focusing on the quality of shooting, we are actually only providing more heavy ammunition to the foot soldiers, increasing the burden they will have to carry on their backs. Again, it is a matter of a number game against all operational sagacity. More of the same is in itself a defeating idea.

(vii) The Fear of Civilians Getting Killed:

At times a perceived fear looms large while firing at the adversary, who uses the local Jan militia as their cover, a concern that a civilian could be killed. A Lack of legal cover is also often the point of concern. This needs to be tackled at the higher levels by ensuring due confidence and clarity.

(viii) Beat The Adversary at His Own Game:

IED has been a large challenge while traversing through the Maoist dominated terrains. CRPF too should master that while retreating or pursuing the naxals to a killing zone which has been earlier created for them. Isn't that fair enough?

(ix) Commanders' Concoctions:

Some concoctions need to be done by Commanders. Like QAT competitions, organise CoBRA team competitions in field signals, tell-tale sign identifications, jungle survival techniques and so on. How to identify our own troops in an operational area, enabling differentiation from the adversary. How to establish communication on the ground level where even a switch on and switch off would be noticed. Innovation and creativity emerge differently at different times only when we give it our hundred percent.

(x) Always Ask 'Sabak Ka Uddeshya Kya Tha':

This takes us back to the basics when we joined the training. Keep asking yourself the very purpose of our being there? Are we and our deliverables relevant for our goals. Can we differentiate between output and outcome? Do we have a progressive frame work to realign our bearings to the epicentre? Can we always draw a bigger line of success than our line of failure? Failures are actually the gateway to 'sustainable' success. And good leaders will in turn create more good leaders who know the art of realigning themselves in real time, at any given moment. In this 'No SOP game', when to adopt a chameleon approach or when to get into the lizard mode is to be quickly decided by an insightful prediction of the possible distracting moves of the adversary at any given point of time. 'Ours is to Do or Die', that is the oath a Warrior takes.

Sabak ka Uddeshya is to believe that anything happening in an Operational scenario is merely a challenge and not a threat. If there is no response capacity deficit, then there is no risk. One should feel from deep within that he is a true warrior and then take pride in that glory that envelops our within. Holistic assimilations will follow. The secret law of attractions inevitably works. If you don't believe, ask the 'Genie' who nurtures your belief.

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