

Life Beyond Disability

Our first story in the series is based on the real life experience of an Indian armed forces ex-servicemen, who has actively participated in counter terrorist operation while in active service at Hotel Taj- Colaba, on **26/11/2008**, MUMBAI TERROR attack named OP BLACK TORNANDO. He suffered fatal injuries while fighting with the armed Pakistani terrorists in that operations and was awarded SHAURYA CHAKRA-Gallantry on 26th January 2009 by the supreme commander of Armed Forces “The President of India” for displaying intelligent planning with raw courage while engaging the armed Pakistani terrorists which ultimately saved the precious lives of citizens who were kept as hostages. He was invalidated [Boarded out from the active service based on expert opinions of Medical Board] with sixty percent permanent disability [60%] at the age of 32 years due to fatal injuries suffered while actively serving the nation in most outstanding manner epitomizing his actions and deeds as pinnacle of Karma.

South Africa “**IRONMAN**” African Championship at Nelson Mandela Bay, at the finish line, stretching up his both hands holding with Indian Flag, a veteran-ex-servicemen Praveen Kumar of Indian armed forces crosses the finish line with championship clock disclosing **FINISH= 14: 19: 37 on 15th April 2018**. Praveen Kumar an ex servicemen who has served in the Indian navy as marine commando [MARCOS] was awarded SHAURYA CHAKRA- Gallantry on 26th January 2009, for displaying exceptional courage, in the face of armed Pakistani terrorists during counter terrorist operation at Hotel Taj- Colaba, on 26/11/2008 MUMBAI TERROR attack. Praveen Kumar was point man of MARCOS team who tactically led the group towards the holed up terrorist who were engaged in a killing spree. He quickly navigated his team to chamber hall wherein approximately 150 hostages had taken refuge. His quick and intelligent appreciation of situation with complete disregard to his personal safety he entered the adjoining room which was unlit where the terrorist were hiding. In the ensuing firefght he was first hit with gunshot on his left ear followed with three gunshot on his lungs and upper chest from the terrorists, despite being fatally injured he displayed raw courage with nerves of steel and continued

to engage the terrorists which compel them to run away from an exit to upper floor room leaving behind their rucksack containing ammunition, grenades, explosives, dry fruits and other essentials for survivals and finally he got collapsed due to huge loss of blood. The exit of terrorists prevented them from entering adjoining hall where around 150 hotel guests were held up who were subsequently rescued to safe places. At the age of 32 years he was invalidated [Boarded out from the active service based on expert opinions of Medical Board with sixty percent permanent disability (60%)] from the active service of Indian navy on July 2017. He suffered fatal injury in Taj Hotel Colaba- MUMBAI Terror Attack, i.e. - Counter Terrorist Operation named “Op Black Tornado” [Mumbai Attack 26/11/2008-India]. Praveen Kumar has not only created history to become the first Indian Armed Forces veteran [ex- servicemen] to be conferred with **IRONMAN** title in African Championship with sixty percent disability while competing in open category.

His subsequent journey as young 32 years of disabled soldier from November 2008 till he boarded out from service in July 2017, brings out factual narrations of real life experiences surrounded with uncertainties, he has connected uncertainties



with realities and conquered it by aligning his strength with real life experiences. He faced avoidable conflicting policies far away from ground realities, virtually unrealistic. The simple narration of facts corroborates the same, it discloses that he sustained fatal injury in Nov 2008 in Mumbai Terror Attack counter insurgency operations and conferred **Shaurya Chakra Gallantry on 26th January 2009** but his entire services career progression benefits, accrued entitlements were seized due to want of “Battle Causality Certificate” which was finally granted only on June 2017, merely one months before boarding out from services on July 2017. A discipline-outstanding gallantry awarded soldier became the victim of circumstances within the Government & Policy makers functioning, may be unintentionally or within the vintage framework of system and still continuing. At one end the Praveen Kumar “Real Hero” undergoing one after another medical surgeries without any financial assistance and support from the state or parent organizations in civil hospitals, during his entitled services leave, on the other side the deep sense of solidarity and anguish expressed jointly by state apparatus with celebrities, common citizens under mega events regularly organized on every subsequent year of **26/11/2008 with Forgotten Heros**. He lost his place and dignity within his organization and gallant soldier denied his services rights at right time and made to serve under his juniors and finally boarded out under unrealistic vintage routine systems against his outstanding professional zeal demonstrating true commitment and devotion to duty under abnormal situations with pristine values of soldier **“The Nation First”**.



This “IRONMAN” African Championship comprises of three back to back events commonly called an Ironman Triathlon and is one of a series of long-distance triathlon races organized by the World Triathlon Corporation (WTC), consisting of a 2.4-mile (3.86 km) sea swim, a 112-mile (180.25 km) bicycle ride and marathon 26.22-mile (42.20 km) run, raced in that order and without a break with a limited time of 17 hours to complete. It is widely considered one of the most difficult one-day sporting event in the world. The route takes athletes along the coast at Marine Drive, delivering

sweeping views of the ocean and the rugged coastline along a marine protected area, before moving slightly inland at Sea view on an undulating scenic countryside section, which is considered as most wildly beautiful and historically significant areas of the world. The run course brings athletes closer to their fans and friends than ever thanks to four loops along Marine Drive and the event’s famous crowds of 80 000-plus spectators. The Ironman World Championship has become known for its gruelling length, harsh race conditions, and Emmy Award-winning television coverage. Praveen Kumar a true committed, disciplined soldier while in service and as a veteran, proved his abilities beyond disabilities and successfully converted **“Adversaries To Possibilities”**. As a teenaged simple Indian rural youth, he joined the Indian navy with a commitment to serve the Nation. As a citizen-veteran he is the shining example of the indomitable spirit that the Armed Forces inculcate on him with deep sense of responsibilities. He suffered series of bullet injuries which resulted in his permanent disability and he was invalidated from the active services. But this debilitating injury failed to destroy his quest-spirit and resolve to become a first armed forces services personal be as serving or as veteran to achieve the title of *WORLD IRONMAN Championship on April 2018 merely in less than one year of his medical board and administrative orders for invalidation from active services on July 2017 due to sixty percent permanent disability.*

Soldierly Deeds; necessitates behaviour that is sometimes contrary to natural human instinct, same Indian as soldier responds beyond the call of duty and that makes him unique and charged with unlimited liability. Be in “War or Peace” the Indian Armed Forces is the last resort of the Indian State at all emergencies including national calamities. Nation bestows faith on the Soldier who is a common citizen and shapes him into the finest professional with deep sense of responsibilities. Every citizen is “Soldier” with moral binding to serve

the nation, that inculcate the responsibility to discharge the same in “Soldierly” manner: By bringing out this stories we hope to raise some awareness of the Unknown Committed Indians’ services to the NATION. It is only through sustained effort in disseminating correct, unprejudiced facts about the incidents past, present and future that the public at large as well as policy makers will continue to acknowledge that there is urgent need of continuous process of reforms that demand citizens’ synergy with state apparatus to make inclusive growth as reality with great debt owed by the Citizen - Nation to the Men in Arms.

Tapash Chatterjee, is a veteran and decorated Indian Army Officer, columnist of “Behind The Headlines” & Social Entrepreneur.

He has conceptualized the Mission ‘Ability Beyond Disability’ in 2005 & operationalized it Pan-India as Nodal officer with Indian Army & Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment Government of India, aimed to strengthen Inclusive Growth & Development with an objective to reach the unreached, underserved & connecting rehabilitation professionals with those in need at their doorstep levels with a message & commitment “**People Matter Results Count” & Together We Can Make it Happen.**