

A GLOWING TRIBUTE TO LATE RADM LUKTUK BY VADM MS PAWAR (RETD)

Shocked to learn of the sudden departure of RADM SM Luktuke (Retd) on 19 May 25 with no warning whatsoever.

Heartfelt condolences to the dear ones and his shipmates.

It was exactly 35 years ago in May 1990 that I happened to meet him for the first time when he reported to INS Magar at Vizag from DSSC Wellington and took over as the EO from then Cdr Chitaranjan Das (Submariner). I recall, he made a positive impact with his infectious enthusiasm, clarity of thought, good communication skills and all round professionalism. Magar being the only ship of LST(L) class, it was learning on the job for everyone and he adapted quickly. I was the NO onboard and had the opportunity to interact with him frequently. We were shipmates for about a month after which I left for NDA.

The next close interaction I had was in 2001 when I was the CO Mauritius NCG Ship Vigilant and he was the DGME at ND (Mumbai). Immediately after IFR 2001, the ship underwent a refit at ND(MB) wherein he was closely associated with repairs to shaftline. I remember spending considerable time with him along with my EO (then Lt V Ganapathy) discussing refit/shafting related matters. Once again, his clarity of thought, positivity, willingness to patiently listen and explain his point of view were exceptional. He would be quick to draw diagrams on the notepad and bring clarity to his perspectives.

Vigilant's shafting issues were exasperatingly vexed and had recurred within a year of repairs undertaken in 99/2000. I remember spending many nights (silent hours) with him and his team on the Bombay Dock floor and Engine Room during shaft line alignment by Piano wire, telescope and theodolite methods to check and recheck errors if any. After all, being a foreign ship, it was a matter of great prestige for the Yard and a repeat failure was not an option. I remember his passion, perseverance and personal involvement in the alignment of the flanges of shaft line and RG using gap-sag measurements as also the Plummer Block loading using the Jack slope method. Typically, all these were undertaken at night to reduce the effects of vibrations and expansion of joints/ ship structure due to heat during day. I observed that during those times, he was always positive and full of energy with a ready sense of humour bringing cheer to all. A true Leader indeed.

Another activity I recall is his presence during the in-situ boring of the Thordon Bushes in the Stern Tube and installation of Deep-Sea Seals. He was very cost conscious, and I recall his presence and contribution during the PNC chaired by GM (R), (late Cmde Champion) on behalf of the Govt of Mauritius, where in, we were able to significantly bring down the price. The ship got a good refit thanks to Capt Luktuke who walked the extra mile to help the foreign crew liaise with other departments in the Yard by his personal calls to relevant officers.

On the same floor as DGME office in the ICE Building, was located the Submarine Project Team (P75) headed by Cmde CR Das (former EO Magar). I and Capt Luktuke would often walk across to P75 office for a cup of tea and recall time as shipmates.

While he was in service, I had the privilege of maintaining a periodic telephonic contact with him. He was a great role model and ever ready with advice on matters personal and professional. He was great listener and a persuasive influencer.

There was hardly any interaction after he swallowed the Anchor but once again in early 2023, I got in touch with him and had him connected with the last CO of Magar- Cdr Hemant Salunkhe as the ship was to be decommissioned. We both wrote articles for the decommissioning Coffee Table Book. Two years ago, in May 2023 he attended the decommissioning ceremony of Magar at Kochi 06 May 23 and on return to Pune, telephonically narrated to me with much excitement, all the associated events.

Just a day before he passed away, I was mulling calling him. But alas, it was not to be!

RADM Luktuke will be dearly missed and fondly remembered by all those whose lives he shaped and touched. That particularly includes those who were privileged to be his students at DIAT Pune and Shivaji apart from many other shipmates of his 37 year glorious voyage.

VADM MS PAWAR (Retd)