

Not Just the Call of Duty



First days bring with them pangs of anxiety and a tinge of nervousness.

But, as Jasdev Singh Nandre set out to coordinate his first group training in Karjat, the only emotion he felt was excitement.

With 30 trainees under his wing, and 30 under his colleague Roshan Shetty, the training began with team building exercises, training sessions, and challenges. By 4pm, it was time for Jasdev's group to navigate a tricky trail through Karjat's greens. A tough challenge, their guide informed them. A member from the other team had fainted while completing this task, he mentioned in passing, eliciting a few chuckles and

sniggers from the others, but only concern and anxiety from Jasdev. These trainees were his responsibility.

He felt a strong sense of duty. With his mind now racing, imagining an array of scenarios, he whipped out his phone and tried to call Roshan. After a few frantic attempts, he finally got through and his concern only increased.

He was told that upon fainting, the trainee, Sankhodeep, had been rushed to the hospital. He was conscious, but coughing blood. The doctors had diagnosed him with a snake bite. Anxious, Jasdev sprang into action. Over bumpy roads, Jasdev travelled for many kilometers, one eye on his watch, one on his phone, waiting to hear from the other team. When he reached the hospital the day took a turn for the worse. The venom had spread; and the hospital had used up their last vial of anti-venom. Sankhodeep might not survive, Jasdev was told.

The night grew darker, Sankhodeep's face grew paler, but Jasdev's sense of duty only grew stronger. Sankhodeep's only chance of survival was in a hospital bed in Mumbai. And a hospital bed in Mumbai he would get.

Jasdev took charge and made all the arrangements as soon as he possibly could. In no time, an ambulance, an attendant with Roshan and Jasdev were on their way to Mumbai, taking Sankhodeep on the journey from death to life.

The drive had ended, the bumps hadn't. When they reached the hospital, they were informed that the hospital had exhausted its stock of anti-venom. Siddhartha Banerjee, Jasdev's manager and Jasdev took the initiative, driven by

adrenaline and a need to see the situation through to a happy ending. They rode in rickshaws through the city's labyrinthine lanes to look for the antidote.

They kept at it, hunting, asking, checking until 2:30am, when they finally returned to the hospital with the antidote. But, they were greeted with grim news. Sankhodeep's organs were failing and the chances of his recovery were slim.

6am, and the new day hadn't brought with it new news, but fresh bottles of anti-venom. 45 doses later, as the afternoon sun scorched Mumbai's streets, Sankhodeep started getting better, and as fifty-nine trainees made the journey back to Mumbai, Sankhodeep walked on the road to recovery.

Whilst battling his way through the hurdles and trials that came his way over what felt like an endless night, Jasdev had also procured the help of colleague Surbhi Srivastava to fly Sankhodeep's parents to his bed side, as Sankhodeep's mother sat by his bed, Jasdev could finally hand back the baton after fulfilling his responsibility. To this day, an unspoken bond ties him and Jasdev together.