



“ Every Indian makes us feel proud of India. Their love and respect for armed forces humbles us.”

Brigadier Maini and Mrs. Maini

Know Thy Neighbour

Aug'23

100 FF, Block 5B

Neighbour> Hello Mrs. Maini! How are you? Please tell us about your life journey, your stay in Eros Garden and how you have seen Eros Garden grow and evolve over the years?

Mrs. Maini> Fine, and you? my life journey has been full of joy and happiness. Had a wonderful childhood, went to a prime educational institution, married a Gentleman soldier, and a good friend and life companion. Coming to your next question, well... we have been here in Eros Garden for about 31 years. We have seen this place grow from its initial stages to a place buzzing with all facilities and activities - A pleasant journey all the same!

Neighbour> And... If you were the President of Eros Society, what will be the first 3 things you would do?

Mrs. Maini> Firstly, I would not like to be the President of RWS. However, hypothetically if I was, my priorities would be: (1) Neat and Clean-Living Environment and Good Quality Drinking Water. (2) Removal of all Encroachments particularly on Footpaths around the area; and (3) To resolve issues among the RWS, Builder and MCF for the overall welfare of the Eros Garden.

Neighbour> Sir, Madam, coming 27th September, you will be celebrating Diamond Jubilee of your marriage, what according to you is the secret of a happy married life?

Mrs. Maini with a smile> Love, Faith, Respect and Care for each other.

Neighbour> Sir, you are 86 years old; a retired Brigadier from Indian Army, someone told me that soldiering is in your blood. Is that right?

Brig. Maini> Yes, now soldiering is in our blood, and it is so deeply rooted particularly in my life that I wonder even death may not be able to separate it from my soul. In my extended close family, about 30 family members have served the Nation by being part of Defence Forces.

We three brothers, our children including sons and sons-in-law have been part of it. Even today, my Grandson-in-law is a serving Officer at high altitude of 13,000 ft. In the family we have members who are Gallantry Award winners, this includes my young grandson-in-law.

This way, soldiering and ethos of defence forces have become part of our DNA, our blood...

Neighbour> Who is a Good Soldier? What are the qualities of a good soldier?

Brig. Maini> Every Soldier, from a Sepoy to a General, has their own roles to perform. It is not about being good or bad. Therefore, because of difference in their roles, their respective trainings are also different.

Officers are trained at NDA/ Indian Military Academy to imbibe the qualities of leadership, with emphasis on physical fitness and mental alertness and being a gentleman first and officer next, that is why the cadets under training at IMA are called GC (Gentleman Cadet).

Motto for every officer is engraved in Golden letters in the Hall of Chetwode And it reads as, ***"The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time. The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next. Your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and every time."*** This is known as the "Chetwode Motto" and is the motto of the officers passing out from the academy. We all live by this motto throughout our service.

For a Sepoy, the training is oriented towards Physical Fitness, Proficiency in Handling Weapons

with a very special emphasis on discipline and obedience of orders. For all soldiers two highly important aspects are: (1) Strict Discipline, and (2) Motivation to serve the Country. The regiment or the unit itself, soldier is serving is not any less important, it is the 'Izzat'/ Pride of the unit that makes the soldier lay down his life.

During war a leader must be fearless and must lead from the front by setting personal example; as appropriately cited by Talleyrand, a French diplomat, "I am more afraid of an army of 100 sheep led by a lion than an army of 100 lions led by a sheep".

Neighbour> You have participated in wars and survived ambushes. Were you not afraid?

Brig. Maini> Though took part in all the operations of 1962, 1965 and 1971 but I never faced any deadly ambush as such. If anyone says he does not have fear then either he is lying or he is a fool... I can tell you from my personal experience that initially in war, you are scared but after few bullets pass by, missing you and as the time passes raining bullets, artillery shells landing next to you or passing over your head makes no difference!

Neighbour> Sir, is there a relation between – a country, war, politics, economy, industry, business, truth and life? If so, what is it? And is war a man-made evil? Or is it an inevitable natural phenomenon? Or a necessary chaos?

Brig. Maini> It is a difficult question to answer. All these are correlated and thus constitute reality of a country. There is a price for peace and there is price of war, that every nation has to pay. Certainly, war is the most expensive option and this option should only be exercised as the last resort.

Having a strong military might or nuclear deterrent certainly helps maintain peace against external aggression. A country cannot survive without safe and secure borders, Invading and expansion of empires has existed for centuries, therefore a strong military might or deterrent is a must not withstanding the costs involved.

Neighbour> From 1993 to 2022, India has been world's largest importer of weapons, as per reports of SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), Sir, why it has not deterred our neighbours from misadventures? Many civilians see this as wastage of tax money and not as investment in safety and security in nation like ours, where about 82 crore citizens need free ration from Government to survive? How would you reply such discontent?

Brig. Maini> Good weapons are necessary to win a war and it is important to invest in defence. It may look to be a dead expense but it is necessary to keep the country safe and secure so that industry and all other nation building sectors and their activities can progress unhindered leading to economic growth and peace.

We are importing weapons because we failed in making our own weapons even though we had all the brain and resources. Result of not equipping Defence Forces with modern weapons and equipment is well known to all of us as we suffered a major debacle in 1962 Indo China war!

Neighbour> They say, "No Justice, No Peace", What do say? What is peace according to you?

Brig. Maini> First you tell, what is peace for you?

Neighbour> For me, refuge in God is peace.

Brig. Maini> In case of a nation - Peace is safety and security from both from internal disturbances as well as from external aggression. For external threat we need strong military might and for internal peace we need good governance and an effective police force.

Neighbour> Brig. Maini, do you believe in God?

Brig. Maini> Yes, I do. For me Faith in God or method of connecting with Him, or prayers are personal matters and choice. My wife prays and practices the way she likes and I do my own way and we have no conflict whatsoever. We don't believe in man-made rituals. Our common belief is that God resides within us and all His creations.

Neighbour> And you Mrs. Maini, do you believe in God? If yes why, if not why not? What do you think is the biggest proof for existence of God?

Mrs. Maini> Yes, I am a very firm believer in God. It is purely a matter of Faith. Every life itself is a proof of His existence!

Neighbour> How do your friends describe you two and those who are not your friends, what do they say about you two?

Mrs. Maini> Simple, Sincere and Dependable!

You will have to ask those who are not our friends to know what do they feel about us!

Neighbour> What are the things that one should do as part of our routine life for a happy, healthy and long life?

Mrs. Maini> Be physically and mentally alert by involving in activities that keep these faculties well oiled, wear a smile, be kind and generous and be contented with whatever God has given. Spend time in remembering God. Last but not the least be well organised and follow a regimented routine.

Neighbour> Sir, do you watch TV, Films, News?

Brig. Maini> I browse through Newspapers but we do not watch TV News. We do watch an odd decent TV serial sometimes. I think social media is also damaging the national fabric. Recently we saw a Punjabi movie, "Honeymoon". It was a light and hilarious movie.

Neighbour> Any favourite actor(s)?

Brig. Maini> In today's generation of Hindi Film actors, no one in particular but from yester years, Devanand. However, I do not like idol worshipping of film actors or idolising cricketers as our Indian social habit.

Neighbour> Brigadier Maini, what bothers you in India of Today?

Brig. Maini> I consider four professions - Teachers, Judges, Doctors and Soldiering very noble because of humanity and nobility in them.

Unfortunately, profession of Teaching and Medicinal Practice have become greedy, overly commercialised and consumerist.

Although Jurists and Soldiers have not yet become victims of politics but there has been a considerable political infiltration into these noble domains.

Politicisation of these domains certainly erodes their integrity and effectiveness as a national instrument.

Neighbour> Today violence and abusive behaviour is increasingly normalised. Starting from movies such as Dabang, High Josh of Uri Surgical Strike to current rise in political and religious extremism and revenge political cries of Bharat Mata Raksha Army, aur Gau Mata Raksha Dals... Is this patriotism you believe in? If not, what is/was your patriotism?

Brig. Maini> This is No Patriotism! This is a very crooked political misuse of spirit of patriotism. It is unacceptable stupidity and it is an engineered disturbance in our society. This is disturbing internal peace in the country. Patriotism is a commitment to serve the nation and not divide the nation for political gains.

Neighbour> Why are you proud of India? Who are the Indians that make you proud of India?

Brig. Maini> Every Indian makes me feel proud of India. Their love and respect for armed forces humbles me. A 2022 global survey on social trust in armed forces showed that Indian armed forces top the survey on trustworthiness, with 67%. This respect for defence forces humbles me and makes me proud of India.

Neighbour> Sir, you have lived situations and circumstances which civilians don't go through. As common ordinary people we do many mistakes, course corrections, punitive actions, repentance etc. Let me ask you, Sir, have you done anything that you regret?

Brig. Maini> No regrets. I don't get involved or interfere in what other people do. I live my own life and mind my own business.

Neighbour> And who is the most unforgettable person you have met and why?

Brig. Maini> Honourable Ex. President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. I have worked with him for two years, in monthly meetings on a defence project as user representative when he was Director DRDL.

I found him a very unassuming and humble scientist. A vegetarian, who ate very basic simple food. He was a genius brain, who started his career as a newspaper guy then rose to become Principal Scientific Advisor to Government of India and finally a much-loved President of India.

Another person is Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, one of India's greatest military leaders lovingly called "Sam Bahadur".

Neighbour> Brig. Maini – What would be your advice to Eros Community members?

Brig. Maini> Live like an extended family, loving polite and sensitive to the needs of your neighbours. Be kind to everyone around.

Neighbour> Mrs. Maini, which is your favourite word in English or Hindi and why?

Mrs. Maini> One Word would be, "Enjoy" – Enjoy every moment, Sada Khush Rahao!

Neighbour> What is your email address or WhatsApp? If anyone wants to connect with you.

Brig. Maini> ashwanimaini41@gmail.com

Neighbour> Thank you both, Brigadier Maini and Mrs. Maini, for your valuable time. And Brigadier Maini, for 28th August, please accept my early wishes, Happy Birthday!

Brig. Maini> Thank you.

#End of Conversation



Some Good thoughts, compiled by Brig. Maini

*Zindagi zinda dili ka nam hai,
Murda dil bhi kiya khak jia karte hain*

You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. Don't keep looking for the meaning of life, live it with zeal and you will know that it is beautiful and single biggest source of happiness.

Life is not a problem to be solved, but is a reality to be experienced. Experience it to realise how beautiful it is. Instead of ignoring our present situation and waiting for a future, we should focus on the present and experience it.

There is never a dull moment during life. you will never be any more alive than you are now at this very moment, so live it to its full and enjoy. Don't keep looking towards future only which more or less is hypothetical in nature, instead focus on your present moment which is a reality. I am a firm believer of this - in Punjabi "Guzre te mitti pao"- a key to happiness. My own life has not gone as planned, but cribbing about the past would lead me nowhere. Life is about living so live it with full zeal and zest and make the best of it. No one knows what the future holds for him, everything that is to happen will happen so why fear the unknown.

Love is crucial to happiness. Basically, one should be a nature lover, and love all His creations with equal passion. Romantic love as also love of and for family and friends is an important ingredient of happiness.

Life is beautiful yet it is not a bed of roses. It is full of ups and downs, yet it is full of happiness, fun and joy. Life is a mixture of happiness and sadness, success and failure, comfort and pain, encouragements and frustration, , love and hate. Life is not perfect yet it is the most beautiful gift of the God.

There are plenty of books on the subject, plenty of Gurus have been lecturing on this. The whole world is running around to find "how to be happy ".

Let us look at some of the things that can contribute to making this Zindagi Gulzar:-

Be always well dressed and well groomed - a legacy left by my Dad and Mom.

A morning walk/ jog and or exercise preferably in open environment in a garden makes the whole day happy.

Use light, bright and pleasing colours both for your house interiors as also for your personal attire.

Well lighted and ventilated house is a pleasure for larger part of life.

Always bear a smile on your face.

Be liberal with the use of words like Please, Sorry and Thank you.

Pick up a healthy hobby and pursue it with vigour.

Listen to music, the type that you like preferably that lifts up your spirit.

An interest and love in gardening and flowers acts as a booster dose for happiness.

Keep the most loyal friend, a doggy, at home it adds to your happiness no bounds.

Eat healthy and wholesome food that you like and enjoy.

Go for holiday to new places, be it mountains or beaches, anything that gives you happiness.

Be a dedicated member of the family, for happiness there is no better place than " Chajju da Chubara "

Last but not the least,

Life is a journey not a Destination.

Ashwini Kumar Maini, July 2020