

Gwadar Attack and Pakistan Army's Failures: Beyond The 'Foreign Hand' Excuse

By : Anju Gupta

Author is a security analyst and former Director General UP Police

Apart from serious domestic troubles on security, Pakistan does not enjoy good relations with most of its neighbours at the moment. The growing infrastructure for violence in the country does not augur well for the region.

On March 20, Pakistan security forces thwarted a complex coordinated attack on Gwadar Port Authority Complex in a two-hour-long battle and claimed to have neutralised all eight militants. Two soldiers were killed in action. The Majeed Brigade of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), claiming responsibility for the attack, stressed that their fighters had targeted Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Military Intelligence facilities. Less than two weeks ago, the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) ambushed a convoy of 10 military vehicles in the Kolwa town of Kech.

The Baloch insurgency in Pakistan has been gaining momentum for the past two years and insurgents can regularly breach the perimeter security of Pakistani military and paramilitary installations across Balochistan in bold, frontal attacks. The Gwadar incident is yet another big-ticket attack that points to the growing capability of armed Baloch groups. Meanwhile, the newly elected "hybrid" government in Pakistan seems to be following the decades-old policy of ruthless repression of Baloch populations, fuelling the insurgency to alarming levels.

Baloch armed groups, including the BLA, BLF, Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA), and the Baloch Republican Guard (BRG) created an operational umbrella alliance under the banner of Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) in 2018 to coordinate their actions on the ground. The BRAS have claimed over 612 attacks and over 600 casualties of armed forces in 2023, while the BLA alone has claimed over 247 attacks, including on 23 military installations and big attacks in Turbat and Gwadar. The BLA even briefly captured a facility in Quetta in 2023 and arrested and released troops after giving them a "warning".

Apart from economic deprivation and lack of political freedom, the burning issues in Balochistan have been the forced disappearances of thousands of men and extrajudicial killings of many of those reported missing. The community has lodged several protests in the past. However, Since November last year, Balochistan has seen fresh public movement on the issue of forced disappearances. This was triggered by the "encounter" of a 24-year-old Baloch man, Balaach Mola Bakhsh. He had been missing since October. Due to public protests and on the basis of a court order, an FIR was registered against counter-terrorism officials, but no action was taken by law enforcement officials.

Mahrang Baloch, one of the most prominent leaders of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, or Baloch Solidarity Committee, who had lost her own father in an extrajudicial killing became the face of women-led protests in Balochistan.

The women's group marched to Islamabad in December and staged a sit-in at the National Press Club. But, following repeated rough treatment by state actors, it called off the sit-in and returned to Quetta on January 23. In the middle of electioneering, the welcome rally for Mahrang Baloch and team was far bigger than any election rally by national parties. The Islamabad march by women has re-energised the issues in the minds of the population, civil society and armed groups.

The ill-treatment of women has led to a deadly round of violence by Baloch groups, who claimed over 92 small and big attacks between January 28 and February 6. The attacks included unprecedented mobilisation of over 380 fighters who took over control of Mach town and the surrounding areas for two days. They used 12 suicide bombers and claimed responsibility for 78 fatalities to troops in the Mach attacks alone. Calling it "revenge" for the torture of women folk, Baloch groups have now openly expressed readiness to "work with any nation against the common enemy for mutual benefit".

Balochistan and the Gwadar port are immensely important for Pakistan, especially for the army that has taken on the responsibility of making the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its end port, Gwadar, a success story for China's Belt and Road Initiative. Chinese President Xi Jinping has always maintained that CPEC is a part of his "vision". However, not just in Balochistan but also in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the forces have repeatedly failed to provide fool-proof security to the project for many years. Additionally, in February, after almost a decade, Pakistan approved work on the first phase of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline from the Pakistan-Iran border to Gwadar and has assured Iran of timely completion to avoid a huge penalty in arbitration.

The Chinese may, for now, continue holding the hand of the "all-weather ally" with respect to moving forward on CPEC and Gwadar port. However, in the larger scheme of things in the Indian Ocean region, given the grave security imperatives for Pakistan, the Gwadar port may not be able to compete with the Iranian port of Chabahar for business and trade.

Late last month, Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir blamed the Taliban regime for supporting the Baloch insurgency after repeatedly warning it against supporting the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) network. In January, Pakistan retaliated against Iranian airstrikes into Balochistan. Earlier this month, it mounted air strikes into Afghanistan, reportedly killing civilians while claiming the strikes were targeting the TTP. Apart from serious domestic troubles on security, Pakistan does not enjoy good relations with most of its neighbours at the moment. By continuing to point to the "foreign hand" for its own failings in securing the nation, the Pakistan army is an unlikely "partner of choice" for regional or global security considerations. The growing infrastructure for violence in Pakistan does not augur well for the region in the long run.

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Of Old And New Faces

By Zahid Hussain

The writer is an author and journalist.

The scene appeared surreal as Asif Ali Zardari took oath as president just a few days after Shehbaz Sharif returned as the country's prime minister. The two rivals are now tied in a marriage of convenience. The fragmented outcome of the elections has made it necessary for them to bury the hatchet. The new power-sharing arrangement illustrates the bizarreness of Pakistan's politics. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

The tentativeness of the new arrangement is palpable, with the PPP opting to sit out of the government while occupying the top constitutional position. The 19-member federal cabinet represented by five allied parties that was sworn in this week constitutes mostly relics of the past, evoking little hope of change.

Notwithstanding the induction of a few technocrats, they are mainly familiar faces in the cabinet, who have been in and out of government over the past three decades. Most of them were also part of the previous PDM administration led by Shehbaz Sharif. What is most significant, however, is the appointment of a new finance minister, who is a reputed international banker. The induction of Muhammad Aurangzeb marks the virtual dethroning of Ishaq Dar as economic czar.

For many, the decision to dump Dar and choose a technocrat as finance minister shows that the prime minister is emerging from the shadow of his older brother Nawaz Sharif. It is certainly a good omen for an economy in dire straits. Yet, the challenges for the new incumbent will be daunting. The country needs major structural reforms to put the economy back on track.

It seems the economy is on top of the prime minister's agenda, and rightly so. Shehbaz Sharif, in his first address to the cabinet, prioritised some of the measures his government intends to take to stem the rot. But it may not be that easy given the enormity of the prevailing crisis, which has been worsened by burgeoning domestic and external debt. There is certainly no quick-fix solution.

What happens on the economic front in the next few months will be a make-or-break situation for the tenuous coalition administration. The first job of the new finance minister is not only to secure the release of the last tranche of the IMF's \$3 billion bailout package but also to negotiate a \$6bn Extended Fund Facility, which is critical to stabilising the economy.

It will be the first test for a rookie finance minister with a background in commercial banking. It is not just about getting the IMF deal but also bringing down debts and expanding the revenue base. Hard times are ahead for the shaky dispensation.

In a curious development, Dar has been appointed the country's foreign minister. Nothing could be more bizarre than the decision to give the responsibility of running the country's foreign policy to a man with an accountancy background — one who also failed as finance minister. In our fast-changing regional geopolitics, the country needs an experienced hand to deal with complex diplomatic challenges.

Certainly, Dar is not the man for the critical post of top diplomat. This is the last thing the new government should be experimenting with. It seems that Nawaz Sharif, the PML-N supremo, does not want to let his most trusted lieutenant go. Being among the senior-most leaders, Dar would be the second-most powerful person in government. As in the past, he would also be the point man for talks with coalition partners.

While most other ministers are PML-N stalwarts with the portfolios they held in the PDM government, the choice of Mohsin Naqvi as interior minister is as much of a surprise as was his appointment as caretaker chief minister of Punjab more than a year ago. It is most intriguing that he is not a member of the PML-N or any other allied party but has been given one of the most powerful cabinet positions.

With rising militant insurgency in parts of the country, and worsening political tensions, the interior ministry has assumed great importance. It reinforces the widespread speculation that his appointment has been made with the blessings of the security establishment. Naqvi's links with the army leadership were much talked about when he was caretaker chief minister.

He also earned notoriety for the ruthless crackdown on the PTI in Punjab during his caretaker administration. The country's biggest province was virtually turned into a police state. Perhaps that is the reason for awarding him the top civilian security job. Naqvi's appointment to the key ministerial position also indicates the establishment's growing footprint on key government appointments.

His rise from media baron to a key minister in such a short span of time is baffling. Meanwhile, he is likely to remain chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board and stand for a Senate seat. One has to wait and see where he goes from this point.

This is only the first instalment of ministers inducted; more appointments may follow as the prime minister has to oblige all coalition partners to ensure the survival of his government. One can only hope that it is not as large as the previous PDM cabinet that had over 70 ministers, ministers of state and advisers, resulting in a massive burden for the exchequer. Despite the transfer of many departments to the provinces under the 18th Amendment, some of those ministries still exist at the centre, causing a huge drain on public resources.

More than anything else, the country needs political stability to be able to move forward. The question of legitimacy of the newly elected National Assembly will keep haunting the new dispensation. The use of brute force to suppress the opposition may further aggravate an already volatile political situation.

There is no indication yet of the government taking any step to bring down political temperatures. What happened in Punjab last week during the PTI protests is deplorable. Economy and governance are directly linked to political stability but that lesson has been forgotten by those in power.

Courtesy- Dawn Newspaper, Pakistan 13 March 24

India Joins Elite Club with Test of Agni-5 MIRV Tech Mission Divyastra

By Ravi Shankar

The Author has over two decades of experience in communications, print journalism, electronic media, documentary film making and new media.

Agni-5 missile, equipped with MIRV technology, enhances India's strategic capabilities in deploying multiple warheads independently to various targets.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) achieved a milestone with the successful maiden flight test of the Agni-5 missile, featuring the indigenous Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology. Named Mission Divyastra, the test was conducted from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha. Various Telemetry and radar stations tracked and monitored multiple re-entry vehicles, demonstrating that the Mission met its predetermined parameters, the Ministry of Defence stated in its statement. Announcing the first flight test of the Made-in-India Agni-5 missile with MIRV technology, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed DRDO scientists for developing this technology.

In a Twitter post, the Prime Minister hailed DRDO scientists for their efforts to develop this advanced technology. He said, "I am proud of our DRDO scientists for Mission Divyastra, the first flight test of indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology."

With a reach extending to 5000 km, Agni-5 is India's sole contender for the long-range Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) category. Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) are integral to its design. It features several re-entry vehicles, each capable of carrying 2-10 nuclear warheads. These warheads offer the flexibility to be designated for diverse targets spread across hundreds of kilometres or directed collectively towards a single location.

What is MIRV Technology

MIRV technology involves an Ex atmospheric ballistic missile payload containing multiple warheads equipped to target separate locations. An intermediate variant, the Multiple Re-entry Vehicle (MRV) missile, disperses multiple warheads without individual targeting. While this concept is commonly associated with intercontinental ballistic missiles carrying thermonuclear warheads, it is not exclusively confined to them.

The MIRV deployment can improve the effectiveness of first-strike capabilities for strategic forces and enhance the potential for greater target damage with a given thermonuclear weapon payload. Additionally, by releasing multiple warheads, MIRV technology functions like cluster munitions, decreasing the necessity for numerous missiles and launch facilities. The presence of MIRV also diminishes the effectiveness of an anti-ballistic missile system that depends on intercepting individual warheads.

India Joins Elite Club

India has joined the exclusive group of nations possessing Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology. Other countries in this elite club include the United States, Britain, France, China, and Russia, all of whom already employ MIRV-equipped missiles. The USA, UK, and France utilise MIRV technology on their Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM). China has incorporated MIRVs into its Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), while Russia boasts both MIRV ICBMs and SLBMs. According to an American think tank, Pakistan is also believed to have been experimenting with MIRV technology since 2017.

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Breakthrough in Semiconductor Fabrication: India's Path to Technological Self-Reliance

By Alok Virendra Tiwari

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The 'Make in India' campaign is fostering an environment conducive to indigenous semiconductor manufacturing capabilities.

India's semiconductor manufacturing landscape is undergoing a significant transformation due to recent strategic investments and initiatives aimed at strengthening the country's technological capabilities and economic resilience. These developments are landmarks in India's journey toward self-reliance in semiconductor production, a critical asset in the digital age. The 'Make in India' campaign is fostering an environment conducive to indigenous semiconductor manufacturing capabilities.

The recent greenlighting of major semiconductor projects, such as those led by Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd and Foxconn in collaboration with the HCL Group, signals a shift in India's approach to semiconductor manufacturing. These efforts indicate a resolve to reduce the existing reliance on imported chips and associated equipment. The Government funding, partnerships with global players, and the focus on advanced technologies like chip fabrication and packaging underline India's commitment to technological innovation.

The establishment of these units is anticipated to create a substantial number of job opportunities, directly and indirectly, thus significantly impacting employment generation in advanced technology sectors. The ripple effects are expected to stimulate growth across various industries, from automotive to electronics and industrial manufacturing, catalyzing economic development and fostering a favourable environment for innovation and research.

Under the 'Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem' initiative, the government is allocating up to Rs 76,000 crore in funding. Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd is collaborating with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp to establish a semiconductor fab in Dholera, Gujarat. This facility is expected to have a monthly production capacity of 50,000 wafers, requiring an investment of Rs 91,000 crore.

Additionally, Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt Ltd (TSAT) will construct a semiconductor unit in Morigaon, Assam, with an investment of Rs 27,000 crore. The Assam unit is projected to manufacture 48 million chips daily, catering to various sectors such as automotive, electric vehicles, consumer electronics, telecom, and mobile phones. Lastly, the CG Power Semiconductor unit will focus on producing 15 million chips for applications in consumer electronics, industrial machinery, automotive systems, and power equipment.

The government recently greenlighted three significant semiconductor projects amounting to a total investment of Rs 1.26 lakh crore as part of the 'Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem' initiative. One of the units, established by CG Power in partnership with Renesas Electronics Corp and Stars Microelectronics of Thailand, is set to be located in Sanand, Gujarat, with an investment of Rs 7,600 crore. Prime Minister Modi has emphasized that this endeavour is aimed at positioning India as a leading global hub in semiconductor production, instilling self-reliance in this crucial technological domain.

Semiconductors are crucial components in several technological applications, ranging from consumer electronics to industrial machinery. Countries such as the US, Japan, and China have prioritised the development of domestic semiconductor capabilities, in recognition of the strategic importance of this industry. Through this investment, India aims to increase its share of the global semiconductor market, forecasted to reach \$63 billion in volume by 2026. The planned construction of semiconductor plants within the next hundred days highlights the government's commitment to accelerating the development of indigenous high-performance computer chips and other semiconductor products with wide-ranging applications.

In keeping with the previously approved semiconductor manufacturing projects, Foxconn, a prominent electronics manufacturer from Taiwan, is reportedly seeking bids for the establishment of a semiconductor assembly and testing facility in India (OSAT). The proposed plant is anticipated to be set up in collaboration with the HCL Group, with an initial investment pledge of Rs 1,200 crore. Foxconn's subsidiary, Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development Pvt Ltd, is spearheading this effort and intends to invest \$37.2 million to secure a 40 percent stake in the joint venture. This marks Foxconn's entry into the Indian semiconductor landscape, following the termination of its previous agreement with the Vedanta Group. It's worth noting that both Vedanta and Foxconn have announced separate plans to build chip fabs in India.

The establishment of four major semiconductor units in India is a significant step towards creating a robust semiconductor ecosystem within the country. These units will contribute to India's capabilities in chip fabrication and the development of advanced packaging technologies, complementing the country's existing strength in chip design. The creation of these units is expected to result in the creation of approximately 20,000 direct jobs focused on advanced technology, while also generating around 60,000 indirect employment opportunities. This development is likely to have a far-reaching impact on various industries, including downstream sectors such as automotive, electronics manufacturing, telecom, industrial manufacturing, and many other areas. Tata's initiative will support the Indian Prime Minister's 'Make in India' campaign for electronics manufacturing, bolstering India's position as the world's second-largest producer of smartphones.

Overall, these initiatives demonstrate the potential for India to take a leading place in semiconductor technology and foster domestic expertise in key technological fields.

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Drone Warfare Lessons – Part 1

By Brig Hemant Mahajan, YSM

Author is M Sc, M Phil in Defence Studies. He joined IMA Dehradun in July 1973 and passed out as a Commissioned Officer on 15 June 1975. He commanded his battalion 7 MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY in Operation Rakshak in the most difficult areas of Poonch and Rajouri.

The use of drones in the Russia-Ukraine war, Hamas-Israel conflict, and implications for India: Lessons and Insights.

The Kalashnikov has long been the emblematic weapon of rebels/insurgents/terrorists the world over. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat never left his old "Kalash", given to him by Fidel Castro at the height of the 1970s' revolutionary spirit.

Half a century later, the drone could become the emblematic weapon of the weak against the strong.

"Setting the Stage: Introduction"

India has been deeply engaged in the advancement and deployment of drone technology, undertaking numerous initiatives to bolster its military capabilities, safeguard its interests, and counter potential threats in the evolving arena of multidomain warfare. Drawing inspiration from the demonstrated efficacy of drones in conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war, India stands to glean valuable insights and lessons.

"Supplying 31 MQ-9B Armed Drones to India: Strengthening Defense Capabilities"

Advancing the India-US strategic alliance, the Joe Biden administration has formally informed the US Congress about its decision to supply 31 MQ-9B armed drones to India. Valued at an estimated \$3.99 billion, the acquisition of these high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is poised to enhance India's capabilities in countering present and future threats. The proposed deal outlines the allocation of 15 Sea Guardian drones to the Indian Navy, while the Army and Air Force will each receive eight Sky Guardian drones.

These drones will significantly bolster India's maritime security and domain awareness capabilities. As both governments work out the deal's specifics and delivery timeline in the coming months.

Recognizing the critical importance of maritime security, especially in the face of a resurgence in piracy and targeted attacks on ships in the Red Sea by militant groups, the acquisition of these drones becomes paramount. Recent anti-piracy operations conducted by the Indian warship INS Sumitra, assisted by a leased MQ-9B drone, exemplify the practical application of this advanced technology.

"Hamas Utilizes Small, Tactical Drones in the Initial Wave of Attacks"

Hamas' recent attacks on Israel have surprised experts with their complexity and coordination, involving simultaneous linked and layered operations on land, air, and sea. While Hamas is a terrorist organization—and behaving like one—it is fighting more like a state army.

Small, tactical drones are a central factor in its proficiency, which the group deployed in sophisticated and multifaceted ways during the invasion. Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) constituted the first wave of attacks to eliminate Israeli observation towers, cameras, and communications. This initial challenge was meant to blind, deafen, and confuse the Israeli defense.

The group also dropped munitions from UAS on tanks, apparently well aware of how to target them for disabling, as well as soldiers and emergency responders. Swarms of drones were also deployed to attack naval vessels and energy infrastructure.

Alongside thousands of rockets, the group launched volleys of a new loitering munition—also known as a suicide drone—called the Zouari, named after the late Hamas engineer and drone pilot, Mohammed Zouari. Tactical armed drones were captured from felled raiding units that stormed across the border. Palestinian Islamic Jihad, one of Hamas' key partners in the region, even seems to be running a devoted drone operations room. Since the attacks began, from near and far, drones have been crucial for achieving strategic and tactical objectives.

None of these individual tactics with small drones are new. While many are citing lessons learned from combat in the Russia-Ukraine War, there are ample, earlier precedents from violent non-state actors. The list includes the Islamic State, Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ansar Allah (the official name for the Houthis in Yemen), al-Qaeda, the Taliban, the Haqqani network, many Syrian rebel factions, several Iran-sponsored terrorist organizations in Iraq, and more. In other words, Hamas didn't learn how to use drones from the Russians and Ukrainians; the Russians and Ukrainians learned how to use small drones from violent terror groups. One immediate implication of Hamas war is the demonstration of the prowess terrorists can attain with drones.

Following subtopics will be covered in the article: -

- Hamas' New Combined Arms Model with Integration of Commercial Drones
- Lessons Learned from Hamas' Utilization of Drones in the conflict.
- The Advantages of Drones in Conventional and Sub-Conventional Warfare
- A Comparative Analysis: Russian and Ukrainian Use of Drones in the Ukraine War
- The Increasing Use of Drones by Police and Law Enforcement Agencies
- Challenges and Concerns Surrounding the Use of Drones in Warfare
- Counter-Drone Technologies: Detecting, Tracking, and Neutralizing Hostile Drones
- The Future of Drones: Potential Utilization by Terrorist Groups in Warfare
- India's Initiatives and Lessons Learned in Drone Warfare
- Conclusion: Assessing the Impact and Implications of Drone Warfare

Hamas New Combined Arms Model with Commercial Drones

Hamas has employed two distinct strategies for use of drones: quantity and quality. They have been able to simulate a large-scale presence by utilizing small off-the-shelf drones, which was equipped with explosives and repurposed for warfare. Similar to the overwhelming number of rockets that managed to overwhelm the Iron Dome defense system. These commercial unmanned aerial systems (UAS) served as a cost-effective air force that was used for monitoring, harassment, and offensive actions against Israel.

Hamas is pioneering an unconventional approach by incorporating commercial drones into their combined arms tactics. In combined arms operations, various units with different capabilities work together, magnifying the impact of their attacks. Drones play a crucial role in this strategy, serving as a force multiplier. By employing UAS in conjunction with conventional forces and platforms, Hamas demonstrated its ability to field a multidimensional force against a more powerful Israel.

A significant portion of Hamas' capabilities can be attributed to the support it receives from Iran, which provides resources, doctrine, and training. Moreover, Hamas benefits from lateral connections with other groups such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza, Hezbollah in neighbouring Lebanon, and other Iranian-affiliated or anti-Israeli organizations.

The last time a terrorist organization introduced a new warfare model using commercial drones was the Islamic State. Commercial drones played a pivotal role in their strategic approach. The Islamic State utilized drones for propaganda purposes to assert its sovereignty, intimidate and recruit individuals, gather intelligence, conduct surveillance and reconnaissance,

coordinate combat operations in real-time, enhance targeting with other platforms, and execute weaponized attacks. Its legacy as a pioneer in drone warfare endures.

Hamas is now showcasing another innovative iteration that is likely to spread throughout the terrorist underworld. Consequently, its employment of massed and combined arms tactics with small UAS will be perceived as a winning strategy that many terrorist groups will seek to emulate. The task of countering determined violent non-state actors in irregular warfare is already difficult, and it will become even more challenging as terrorist groups continue to innovate cost-effective methods to wage war.

To be continued in next issue

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India is Proud of:

Pallabi Ghosh

Assam Woman Rescues 10,000 Girls from Trafficking



Pallabi Ghosh (32) grew up in Lumding, Assam, but would often travel to Kolkata, where her uncle lived. During one such summer vacation, her evening stroll was interrupted by the shouts of a man who had lost his daughter.

Albeit this was the first instance of child trafficking that 12-year-old Pallabi was encountering, she hadn't the slightest clue. But it caused her to sit up and wonder how children could mysteriously disappear in the blink of an eye.

From that moment right to this very day, Pallabi's life and career have been devoted to the single cause of rescuing children from being trafficked and giving them a better life. In total, she says she has managed to rescue 10,000 odd children by partnering with several organisations. And later on, she started one of her own — the Impact and Dialogue Foundation.

The English literature graduate circles back to the incident she witnessed in Kolkata in 2002, calling it the one that "altered her life". Pallabi was shocked.

Attempting to understand the children's fate, Pallabi began speaking to her parents, her friends and others around her. But no one seemed to have any answers. So, when she was in Class 11, she decided it was time to probe into the matter herself and went to the first place she could think of — the railway stations of Assam.

"The typical language here is Bengali, but strangely I noticed several children at the station were fluent in Hindi. I spoke to them, and they divulged that they were not from here but from Rajasthan.

I connected the dots together and realised I was seeing cases of child trafficking,”

When asked how they landed there, their response was unified. “We were lured into this with a promise of a better life”.

In 2012, she joined an organisation in Delhi that tackled such cases. As a research officer here, she was engaged in getting to the bottom of the many reasons for child trafficking and how they could bring in change.

One day, however, as the organisation was preparing for a rescue mission, the intervention officer called in sick and Pallabi offered to step in. This, as she would see, would significantly change the course of her life.

“The rescue mission was a success, and I realised how much I loved being someone who could bring change into these children’s lives,” she says adding that for the next six years, she continued in this capacity, rescuing thousands and giving them a new lease on life.

She realized, only rescuing the kids was not enough. It is crucial to rehabilitate them. She decided to start a foundation that would not only rescue but also empower these children,” she explains.

Since its inception in December 2020, the foundation has provided numerous girls, from areas of West Bengal, Assam, Bhutan, Myanmar, etc., with better lives.

Initially when Pallabi visited areas of Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, etc., to speak to the women about trafficking and get an understanding from them, they would shut the door. She decided, instead of interrogating them, she started conversing with them and what do. In a few weeks they were calling her for tea.

In the span of a year and a half, Pallabi managed to reach out to 75,000 odd women in the Northeast and educate these women about social evils through a bounty of programs, workshops, narratives and more.

Her happiest moments were when one of the village women would tell her they had managed to stop a child marriage or had noticed a child trafficking case and notified the police. In time, she also started a mapping program in Assam that would enable rescued girls to learn a skill and earn through it.

While young girls are engaged in skill building, the survivors of domestic violence who she rescues are inspired and empowered to take part in farm activities.

Moment of joy for Pallabi was when in 2019 of a girl who’d been trafficked and sold in Gujarat, was rescued and now studying to be a doctor.

One of the girls, Sita, who was 16 at the time she was rescued by Pallavi, says, “I have got a second life. I didn’t think I could ever be free again. But with the rescue done by didi, I was able to save myself and now aspire to study and educate people about trafficking, so nobody gets lured like I was fooled.”

But in spite of the monumental impact, Pallabi says there are miles to go.

“I always maintain I couldn’t have impacted 75,000 women if I had been insistent on podiums and properly executed events. I managed to create a huge impact only because I reached out to people personally, knocking one door at a time,” she shares.

Pallabi says, there are days I get threats because of the work I am doing. But then there are days, I get flowers from these girls. And that makes it all worth it.

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