

What's Up, Campus?

Praveen Tyagarajan



From(L-R): Cadet Arockia Rexi F, Cadet CJ Jaisha Mol, Cadet I, Varshini V., Cadet K Niveditha and Cadet A Princy

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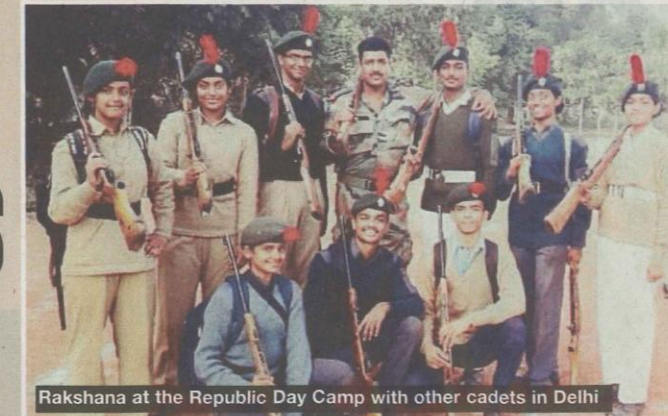
The grit and passion show on their faces. At no point of time, this feeling of 'Will I be able to do it?' creeps into their minds. They never complain about physical stress or sleepless nights they have, for, they're strong-willed about one thing — to serve the country. So, it wasn't surprising when they finally got their due recognition for their determination when they were invited to be a part of the 70th Republic Day parade at Rajpath in New Delhi, last month. They definitely made the city proud by being a part of the prestigious national event and some by even winning the Best Cadet gold medals. Now, as all of them are back in the city after a month-long camp and related events in the national capital and other places, we get chatting with them about their experiences of being in the uniformed services.

ONCE A DREAM, NOW, A REALITY

Yes, it was once a dream for her, but now, it has turned into a

reality for Cadet Rakshana Suresh Prabhu, a Psychology student of MOP Vaishnav College for Women. "The day I joined NCC, my seniors told me that I should participate in the Best Cadet (BC) selection camps for RDC. Finally, I got selected as one of the best cadets after attending 10 selection camps," shares Rakshana, who aspires to be an IAS officer. She adds, "Training for RDC starts in the first year of college and becomes intense in the second year. This phase is called 'Cadre', where the training starts from 7am

Meet these Chennai girls who want to serve India with grit and passion



Rakshana at the Republic Day Camp with other cadets in Delhi



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— RAKSHANA

and goes on till 5pm without any week offs. Following that is the selection camp. It lasts for 10 days, where the training starts at 6am and goes on till 2am." Ask her how she feels being selected as one of the best cadets, she says, "During the last training camp, it was made clear that only one cadet could represent Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Andaman Nicobar as the best cadet. Finally, I was the chosen one! When the result was announced that I would be getting the baton and gold medal as the best cadet of India from Tamil Nadu, I couldn't express in words how it felt then. The memory of that moment alone gives me goosebumps." BA Economics student from Stella Maris College and Naval Cadet I, Varshini V, believes that NCC is all about creating leaders and considers her



Cadet Rakshana Suresh Prabhu receiving gold medal from the Prime Minister



The entire student cadet unit in New Delhi

HOW THE REPUBLIC DAY CAMP (RDC) WORKS:

- Cadets are split into groups
- One group performs drills
- Another group engages in cultural activities
- The best cadets perform both — drill and cultural activities
- The selection criteria for the best cadets include written exam and interview apart from their proficiency in drills, cultural events and oration

elder brother, who is undergoing training in the Indian Naval Academy, as her biggest inspiration. She competed as the best cadet in the Senior Wing (SW) Navy of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Andaman. "Early morning warm-up sessions, visit to the Kalpataru, secret naps and line area preparations are the best memories from Delhi. Finally, our hard work paid off when my team received 11 trophies at the Republic Day parade," says Varshini. Another student from Stella Maris, Cadet K Niveditha, was a part of the SW Contingent that marched in Rajpath on the Republic Day. She competed as a Youth Exchange Programme Cadet. "The training in Delhi was given by drill instructors from the OTA and IMA. It was tough and rigorous. But now, I feel really proud that I could be a part of the RDC. I believe that this experience will shape me better to achieve my aim to become an IAS officer," says Niveditha. Cadet CJ Jaisha Mol from the same college has similar experiences to share. "It's a month-long camp in Delhi and reaching there doesn't mean the final game is done. There we had five selections processes to complete. I feel proud that I represented the University of Madras after clearing all the hurdles." Cadet

A Princy, who took part in R-Day cultural events, says, "I was actually selected for the Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat II Cultural camp held at Delhi from January 18 to 29. Before reaching there, I attended a selection camp at VIT Chennai. I was lucky that I cleared the test there to perform in Delhi."

THE CAMP IN DELHI IS A WHOLE NEW EXPERIENCE FOR THEM

According to the cadets, it was a completely different experience for them in Delhi, especially for those from south India. Says Rakshana, "We are not used to such cold climatic conditions, like in Delhi. Also, we were concerned about food and language. Our day would start at 4am and get over by 11pm." Cadet Arockia Rexi F seconds her and says, "As soon as we reached Delhi, we realised that our biggest barrier would be the extreme cold weather. Waking up at 4am when it was two-degree Celsius outside was a nightmare. But we didn't crib about it too much because getting there was a big dream for all of us."

GRAND OPENING TOMORROW

CHENNAI FOOD FESTIVAL

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