

BY Moinak Mitra

HIS FLOWING MANE AND SPONTANEOUS one-liners to the toughest of daily occurrences in chaste English belie the fact that he's been behind bars for over 10 years, convicted along with six others on charges of kidnapping and extortion of a Saudi citizen. A student of the prestigious Hindu College, Delhi, with a post-grad degree in advertising and marketing from the hallowed Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies in Mumbai, Kaurik looks every bit a client servicing maverick who could have made it big on any account-if he hadn't landed up the way he did as the right-hand-man of Rajesh Goyal, superintendent of Prison 2, at Tihar Jail, the country's largest slammer bounded by 400 acres. That's right. The eyes and ears of Goyal, this lifer doesn't do just the usual filing duties but also takes calls when Goyal is out on his rounds and liberally doles out advice that the 34-year-old superintendent seems to lap up. Bottomline, MBA Kaurik is much more than a PA.

The free Legal Aid Cell in Prison 2 is run by Nirbhay Kumar, the son of a former joint commissioner of Delhi Police with an LLB from Delhi University, serving the death sentence in an infamous stalking and murder case. Kumar, convicted in 2006, has been in prison for over eight years and is an ace advocate for those inmates who cannot afford the high legal fees. In his endeavour to fight their cases, he's ably assisted by five other inmates with law backgrounds.

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It takes more than a business school degree to make the right decisions, says BCG's **Janmejaya Sinha**

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Men for All Seasons

Why is a clutch of ambitious HR professionals moving on to take larger roles in the business? **CD** investigates

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REALITY CHECK

At Tihar, professional inmates — lawyers, engineers and MBAs — are busy turning India's largest prison into a profit centre

PRISON BREAK

They may be in for sin but the options before jail authorities is mind-numbing. Of the 11,000-odd inmates at the sprawling Tihar Jail, slightly more than 7% are graduates. While the rest are pushed into vocational training and absorbed in prison industry, managerial activity in the confines of the steep prison walls pretty much rests with the staff and 'professional' inmates. Brijesh Kumar Gupta, director general (prisons), a heathen when it comes to the dreaded death penalty, would second that. "We have skilled inmates, like MBAs, engineers and lawyers whose services are being utilised to match their skills....this prison is completely run by inmates," he says.

At Jail no. 2, a 60-acre expanse that houses 1,050 convicts, including names that could send a chill down the spine, jail superintendent Rajesh Goyal seems to have a way with prisoners. After all, like the other nine jails in Tihar and their respective superintendents, Goyal has to have a way with the inmates he manages directly. But surprisingly, what makes this jailhouse rock are its inmates. From running the prisoner welfare canteen to the

educational, meditation and vocational programmes to the supervision of internal administration-prisoners go the whole hog, setting targets and achieving them on a daily basis. This parallel economy within Tihar notched up a Rs 11 crore turnover.

While segregation of prisoners (from first time to habitual offenders, terrorists etc) should keep the wandering mind at ease, rehabilitation is equally necessary to keep it busy. It is here that one gets to see a fully flourishing self-sustaining economy at work. Take, for instance, the Painting Section of Jail no. 2, where KG Rao, a murder convict, can be seen giving final touches to one of the minarets of the Taj Mahal on canvas. About six of his paintings have been sold for Rs 4,000-10,000 a pop. "I make about Rs 44 a day," he says, demonstrating the three-tiered daily wage the prison doles out to its inmates depending on their skills. While highly skilled people (professionals, like lawyers, engineers, MBAs etc.) earn Rs 52 the semi-skilled workers in the various factories and kitchens make do with Rs 44 each day. The unskilled workforce is also drawn into the productive cycle at Rs 40 daily.

Similarly, in the Computer Room next door, Rizwan Ahmed, was giving basic training to some of the inmates. "I'm a hardware engineer from Meerut University and have seen this computer lab grow from four to 10 computers in my six years in jail," says the 36-year-old lifer. Besides, a walk across to the tailoring unit is alive with the buzz that telco giant Bharti has pledged 40,000 pieces of school uniform next year for its Satya Bharti schools after placing a 10,000-piece order this year. Adjacent to it is the shoe-making unit where about 46 convicts are meticulously beating and crafting leather to manufacture Gola branded footwear for kids. "Workers' wages are paid by the company manufacturing these shoes and it also pays us 10% extra for prisoners' welfare," elaborates Goyal, exhibiting a clear structure to the win-win relationship.

At the nearby bakery unit of Jail no. 2, that employs 55 inmates, a Rs 1 crore investment over the years has reaped twice as much in revenues last fiscal. That's also largely due to Ramesh's prolific management efforts. An MBA from a southern Indian university, this lifer for kidnapping and murder, has transformed the face of the bakery — hygiene is paramount as gloved and caped workers operating sophisticated kneading equipment can be seen across the floor.

ON PAGE 2: JAILHOUSE...>>>

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PHOTOS: ASHWANI NAGPAL; DESIGN: SHUBRA

A view for the CORNER ROOM

It takes more than a business school degree to make the right decisions. The greatest managers develop an instinct for it

BY Janmejaya K Sinha

MOST PEOPLE, WHO JOIN organisations, especially after business school, believe their courses on cost benefit analysis will help them in decision making. It is true that most established organisations have some formal procedure to evaluate and take big decisions. They require some documentation, and while the quality and rigour of the analysis may vary across organisations, all decision formats would require an explanation of the logic and need for a decision. However, it would be a big mistake to believe that big decisions get taken simply by great analysis. Getting big decisions taken requires an alignment of the stars!

A good decision becomes clear only in hindsight. At the time it is being taken there are multiple perspectives around a decision based on the presented evidence, and in fact, a decision becomes a judgement call. Getting the decision maker to make the call requires that he or she is persuaded that it is a good call. To do this goes beyond decision templates and cost benefit analysis. It requires a nuanced understanding of the decision maker's world. This means understanding — what is the past history around the decision, what is the external context for it, what precedents exist in-house or elsewhere, what competitors are doing, who within the organisation supports it, who opposes it, where the decision needs to be taken, and who all will be present when the decision is discussed. This is the decision maker's world. Yet it is surprising how many senior managers neglect this decision preparation.

Let me expand on this. It is important to know the history around a decision. Has the decision been opposed in the past — if so by whom and why? Has a similar initiative failed before? If so, then it is important to clearly articulate the reasons why it makes senses now and not before. On the other hand, if a similar decision was taken recently, this needs to be highlighted as it will support the decision. The historical context can facilitate or frustrate a decision, it therefore deserves research.

The external context is as important as the historical context. The external context around a decision can be determining. With the current BP oil spill

imagine Obama approving offshore drilling around the US coast even if it is sensible to do so. Seasoned managers will delay taking up a decision if the external context is hostile for the decision to pass. Competitive actions can be a big aid in getting decisions taken too. Organisations are very sensitive to what competitors are doing and get galvanised into matching them even if inappropriate. Thus having such competitive information is very useful.

Likewise it is important to sidestep the organisational holy cows. One very wise politician-bureaucrat once told me in Indian politics, don't take on a rule in India as it can almost always be traced back to Gandhi or Nehru and you can never best them. But you can take on a rule's interpretation because you can definitely find things in the writing of Nehru and Gandhi that can support your point of view!

Getting the right constellation of voices to support the decision is the next test. Different executives have different weight in an organisation. It is important to understand this. Getting support lined up for a decision is important. If the person pushing a big decision is not influential, it would help for him "to get an organisational worthy" (every organisation has them) to support, if not champion, the decision. Of course knowing if an "organisational worthy" is going to oppose the decision is even more important before hand. If there is powerful opposition then it is critical to find people who can soften the opposition. This can be done by having people close to the opponent to work on him, or if this is not possible, to find another worthy to support the cause. Otherwise the decision odds are weak.

Finally it is critical to know where the decision will be taken. Will it go up to the Board or the Executive Committee and when. It is important to assess who will be in the room — their views and their individual chemistry. If the chemistry setting is wrong the decision may go awry because the decision maker may not take on one or other worthy or faction. Some times decisions that would have gotten taken fail to go through because of the absence of an important decision supporter at the last minute. Wise proponents delay a decision discussion in a hostile environment because a "no" is difficult to overturn later. Great managers develop an instinct for this, but unfortunately business schools do not teach this.

The author is Chairman Asia Pacific, BCG.

BY Devdutt Pattanaik

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS nature — wild and untamed. In the forest, animals are always afraid, afraid they might not find food and starve to death, and afraid that they may become food and be killed. Thus death lurks in every corner. Humans alone, thanks to the larger brain, are animals that can imagine a place where one does not have to struggle to survive, where one is not afraid of a predator. This is why, from the Bible, comes a thought to describe the Kingdom of God, "The lion shall lay with the lamb." This imagery is found in Hindu scriptures too, where in the hermitages of sages, one finds the goat safe in the company of tigers. This is heaven, a place where one feels secure; a place without a 'rat race'; a place that is not a 'dog eat dog world'.

Popular phrases indicate how people perceive the corporate world. It is equated with the jungle. Like animals, executives feel they have to compete in order to survive and thrive. In the markets, everything seems fair. Since violence is not considered an acceptable code of conduct, except by gangsters, the corporate world feeds on cunning. The more cunning, the higher up you seem to get in the food chain. No one likes being here. Everyone yearns for a piece of heaven.

In the Bhagavat Puran, heaven is visualised as the Raas Lila. In the Raas Lila, Krishna plays the flute and the milkmaids dance around him. But the scene takes place at night, outside the village, in the forest. The forest evokes fear. Night evokes fear. The milkmaids are away from the security of the village and family, and yet they feel safe and secure. They sing and dance around Krishna, who is neither their brother nor son nor husband. Neither law nor custom binds them. No one is obliged to be here. There is no duty or responsibility that binds them around Krishna. They do so of their own free will. They do not feel threatened. They do not feel under pressure. There is perfect harmony. Everyone forms a circle — equidistant from Krishna; there is no jealousy and envy. Each one feels that Krishna is giving them complete attention. In fact, the moment they feel possessive about Krishna or believe he should love them more than others, Krishna disappears, the forest re-appears, bringing with it darkness and the fear.

Raas Lila perhaps represents what people would like the ideal organisation to be like. Every employee feels safe and secure. Everyone feels they are fully appreciated. Everyone is giving their best. No one is jealous or territorial. There is warmth and affection all around. No one feels exploited. There is perfect har-

mony. For this to happen, the boss must be Krishna.

The gap between the fantasy of Raas Lila and the reality of the workplace is huge. Ikram hates going to office every day. It is torture. He is the senior vice president but he feels he is underpaid and exploited. He hates his boss and feels his team is useless. He feels powerless. Arvind is Ikram's subordinate and feels Ikram has a cushy job, with no real responsibilities, and that all the work is actually done by the rest of the team, himself included. It is Arvind who feels underpaid and exploited. Ikram's boss Richard also feels underpaid and exploited by his bosses. He feels Ikram has got it easy; he does not stand in the firing line before the directors who, in his opinion, are a bunch of mercenaries.

Richard can attempt to be a Krishna to Ikram. Ikram can attempt to be a Krishna to Arvind. But no one is trying. All three of them imagine themselves to be quivering frightened milkmaids waiting for the music of the flute. They don't realise that each one of them is capable of playing the flute.

Every human being is at once milkmaid and Krishna, yearning for the music and capable of pro-

SAFE IN THE FOREST



Each of us can contribute to creating a workplace where everyone feels secure, appreciated and nurtured

ducing the music. Krishna can be seen a theoretical construct, a goalpost embodying infinity that can inspire us. We can attempt to walk in that direction. The first step is recognising that we have the flute and everyone around us is eager for music. Being human, our tunes may not be perfect, but it is the thought that counts, a thought that is sorely missing in Ikram, Richard and even Arvind.

In the Raas Lila, Krishna makes music not for his pleasure but for the upliftment of the milkmaids. Through the sound of the flute Krishna is communicating his affection. Through it comes the assurance of security. It is an invitation to a world where one can do their best. The promise is fulfilled in the middle of the forest. Around Krishna, the menace of the night fades away.

Others may not play the flute for us. But we can play the flute for others. Raas Lila can be our vision statement. Eventually, we will get there.

The author is the Chief Belief Officer of the Future Group. He can be reached at devdutt@devdutt.com

Jailhouse Rock

FROM PAGE 1: PRISON...

IN FACT, THE RED-LETTERED TJ'S BRAND with yellow background, was born recently after a tie up with Delhi Khadi & Village Industries Board (DKVIB) for vending bakery products across the Capital. "We're now looking at stocking our products at big retail chains and have already forwarded proposals to the likes of Pantaloon's," informs Goyal.

Well, TJ's seem to be a familiar refrain across categories that come from the jail's factories—handmade paper bags, file covers, shirts, handkerchiefs, wooden gift items, pottery, mustard oil, candles, pickles — and the list goes on. The jail administration has even tied up with shoe designer Swati Mehrotra for a three-month course in shoe designing for prisoners. The shoes manufactured by the prisoners would be sold as TJ's under the SwatiModo label.

In October, the prison authorities even set up a vocational training institute. "Our main objective is to create skills in inmates so that they are rehabilitated after serving term," says Goyal. Courses in the institute range from one to three months. After completing the course, an independent body — Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) — holds exams. The results then go to the Ministry of Labour, which issues certificates to the inmates with no mention of Tihar in them. Already, 364 inmates have received such certificates.

In the confines of the high prison walls, there are no cell phones or currency notes. All that the inmates earn on a daily basis is disbursed every month to their bank accounts in the prison, which they get to encash in the form of vouchers handed over by the authorities. Of course, they may buy regular groceries and items of daily use from the welfare canteen or the Amul store in the premises.

By and large, all day-to-day maintenance is done by inmates, including gardening, plumbing, cobbling, ironing and tending the kitchens. Jail no. 2 alone has four certifications to its credit — an ISO 9001 for quality management, ISO 14001 for environmental management, ISO 18001 for occupational health and safety management and ISO 22000 for food safety; while Jail no. 1 has an ISO certification for a model 'mulajja' ward. Similarly, Jail no. 3, that houses the central hospital of the prison, has bagged ISO 9001 and the all-women Jail no. 6 corners a certification for a crèche where children can stay with their mothers up to a certain age.

Apart from all the humdrum, 'Green Tihar' has been a rallying cry of the jail authorities for a while now. The plan is obvious — a switch from non-renewable to renewable energy. Piped natural gas, solar water heaters, rainwater harvesting, biogas plants and the use of bio-gassifiers for industrial waste are some of them. "From CFLs, we're switching to LED lighting for further energy savings and also observing 'green hours' by not consuming power for three hours a day," says Goyal, as Kaurik dashes across the room to remind him of his next appointment. His indispensability to Goyal is obvious and almost on cue, he adds, "Prisons should be centres of reformation, not detention."

(Some name have been changed)
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Brijesh K. Gupta,
Director General,
Prisons,
Tihar Jail

REALITY CHECK



Rajesh Goyal,
Superintendent
of Prison,
Tihar Jail

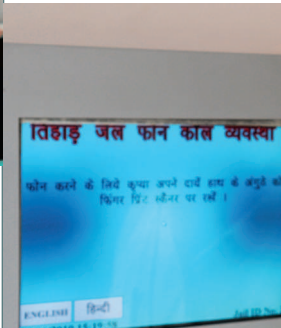


MEN AT WORK

From baking bread and painting canvases to carpentry, the inmates at Tihar Jail are all gainfully engaged in its various factories and workshops



PHOTOS: ASHWANI NAGPAL



Redemption House

Change is the only constant for this giant prison complex with a human touch

BY Moinak Mitra

Picture Rajesh Ranjan, better known as Pappu Yadav, in prison for the murder of CPI(M) legislator Ajit Sarkar, trying to reach out to his lawyer from behind the bars through video-conferencing. It's been a regular feature at Tihar Jail - the country's largest prison complex with more than 11,000 inmates - for over five years now. Inmates have access to video-conferencing through which their demands are extended by the courts. A studio in each jail connected to the various court complexes facilitates video-conferencing.

Managing the 400-acre Tihar Jail is akin to running a mini-city or township with its own set of rules, aimed at a productive alliance between the inmates and prison authorities. Alongside, a range of sophisticated security equipment, self-sustainable measures and an off-with-the-bureaucracy mentality only steels the resolve to make a difference by going it alone.

At Director General (Prisons) Brijesh Kumar Gupta's three-storied office adjacent to the Tihar Jail complex, the room is decorated by pottery and artifacts produced by the inmates and a large wall-mounted LCD television hangs from where he can monitor every nook and cranny of his jail through 249 carefully positioned CCTVs. "We have 11,000 inmates and 2,000 visitors come to meet them every day and so all security operations have to be technology-driven... we have CCTVs, X-Ray scanners, mobile phone jammers, biometrics..." he says.

For a penitentiary that houses 11,000 convicts, man-management takes on a whole new complexion. Even the housing requires careful planning. After all, criminals do need a watchful gaze. For Rajesh Goyal, Superintendent of Prison 2 at Tihar, segregation is the most single-most important management tactic within the prison premises. "If for any case I come to jail and am lodged with a terrorist, I have to face undue harassment... so we segregate inmates in such a way that first-time offenders are kept separate from habitual offenders," he explains. As for the women offenders, they find themselves in Tihar's Jail no. 6.

A first-look at any prison complex would reveal jails divided into wards, which are further sub-divided into barracks or cells. In Jail no. 2, barracks make up for about 75% of the accommodation for inmates. Again, wards are typically categorised into four heads in Tihar. While first-time offenders are housed in the 'Mulajja' wards, the general ward is a mix of convicts and undertrials. A special security ward for habitual offenders with three or more cases against them was set up last year, somewhere between a general ward and a high security ward. Inmates here are not allowed to step outside their ward. Finally, the high security ward is meant for hardened criminals who are not even permitted to step out of their cells, save for the twice-a-week half-hourly family meetings or the once-a-week 5-minute phone calls. "They are often terrorists or such hardened criminals that they are capable of brainwashing other prisoners into open rebellion," adds Goyal.

The segregation is further evident between the staff and inmates. Unlike decades ago when French serial killer Charles Sobhraj drugged the rank and file of Tihar to make good his escape, it will be impossible to even imagine such escapades today. About 1,000-odd personnel from the Tamil Nadu Special Security Force are deployed for checking and frisking of prisoners as well as the staff. Besides, CRPF and ITBP personnel are on constant vigil on the border of the jail, negating any chances of staff-inmate collusion. In addition to the 249 CCTV cameras, 233 more such devices are being rolled out. And apart from the existing cell phone jammers, more are in the offing and all would be upgraded to support the 3G platform.

Alongside security, the jail staff has the onerous task of improving the lives of inmates. This is where modern visitation chambers (mulakat rooms) to facilitate better communication between inmates and their families come in. No grilles in here, just transparent glass facades and a mike system to ensure better communication. Besides, inmates also have access to video-conferencing and the recently launched Tihar Inmate Phone Call System, which enables a prisoner to talk to his friends/relatives over the phone for five minutes a week. "Before making a call, the caller inmate identifies himself by putting his right thumb on a fingerprint scanner, which will be matched with the fingerprints in the system," explains Goyal, while prodding an inmate to demonstrate. As the inmate hesitates (he surely doesn't want to lose his precious five minutes of talk-time), Goyal pats him on the back and murmurs "We'll make it up to you."