

**O**ur Second story in the series of 'Behind the Headlines' is the story of Suresh Karki, an Indian paraplegic soldier who despite his adversity became champion of Indonesia Open Para-Badminton Championship-2014. Paraplegic is a medical word for being paralyzed from the waist down who can't move his legs or anything below the waist, and has no feeling in those areas either. People usually get this condition because of damage to the spinal cord, which could result from a disease or an accident. In Armed forces, soldiers become paraplegic due to fatal injuries of automatic weapons under fierce encounters during counter insurgency operation or during aid to civil authorities on natural calamities or during internal security operations, in the harshest of conditions. These paraplegic soldiers are our unsung heroes who have demonstrated their courage and quest by their GRIT instead being called "Disabled People".

Suresh Karki, despite his paraplegic condition did not stop rather chose to work harder to equip himself against all odds and conflicts facing harsh realities and uncertainties by winning championship after championship and fetched a new dawn and rekindled hope into the lives of people-citizens with positive change in their mindset. ....Wiping the sweat from his brow, Suresh glances at referee, signaling for suresh to serve. His opponent attempts to test his backhand, suresh angles his racket and sets himself up for a graceful smash, spectators cheer, the match is over, "Game & Match" Suresh Karki, from India" announces the Indonesia referee. Suresh became champion of Indonesia Open Para-Badminton Championship-2014. The hard work with "Quest to Excel" continued and in 2017 Suresh won SILVER medal in 3rd International Paraplegic Badminton Championship, UGANDA. Suresh also excelled in basketball and led the basketball team as captain in Wheel Chair Basket Ball Championship in LEBANON and won the BRONZE medal. Currently he is Captain of Maharashtra State Wheel Chair Basketball Team and member of Indian Para- Badminton Team.



*National Wheel Chair Basketball Champions 2019.*

Suresh Karki, born in 23rd September 1974, in Beltar Tehsil, District Udaipur Gaighat, East Nepal, was enrolled into the Indian Army on 21st September 1995 as Infantry Soldier in 2nd Battalion The 9th Gurkha Rifles [2/9 GR] at the age of 20 years. He is an intelligent and mentally robust Indian infantry soldier with outstanding football skills. Professionally he was qualified in Anti Tank Guided Missile course as well as battlefield nursing assistant course [BFNA] and it clearly discerns his dependability and commitment as infantry soldier. He was part of battalion medical evacuation team deployed at Kokrajhar-Assam in counter intelligence operations, named "Operation Rhino". It was on 07th July 2004 an urgent message was received, task was to evacuate gunshot wounded soldier of neighbouring battalion to Army Base Hospital, Guwahati, Assam. At this time of the year Assam is reeling under floods. Team decided to cross the swollen Brahmaputra and travel through Goalpara, District, the broken roads, poor street lights and driving through muddy lashing rain, the Army Ambulance makes slow progress. Suresh checks causality and constantly guided the driver. After moving fifty



kilometer through difficult terrain, suddenly a civil truck from opposite side smashes the Army Ambulance, Suresh, thrown out of the vehicle sees his buddies crushed torso next to him. He felt wet sticky blood oozing from his lower portion of legs, he felt numbness and then nothing he went to unconscious condition. Suresh and causality were evacuated to Guwahati Medical college thereafter he was shifted to Army Base Hospital, Guwahati. He regained consciousness next day morning at Army Base Hospital, Guwahati, the first question he asked was about 'the wounded soldier' he was carrying and was much relieved to know the causality was discharged after initial first aid. After sometime Suresh again slipped back to unconsciousness. Suresh underwent three major surgeries in next three weeks and shifted to Command hospital Kolkata. At Kolkata he underwent three major surgeries and thereafter shifted to Command Hospital Lucknow in the department of rehabilitation.

With optimism that defines the Gurkhas, he gathers the courage and asks the Neurosurgeon; "Sirji When I Will Walk Again", Senior Surgeon turn towards him, put his hand on his shoulder and said, "BETA" (Son) your football days are over - his history sheet decipher a ace battalion footballer and good sportsman - we have to prepare you for Life On A "Wheel Chair" and you will be shifted to the "Paraplegic Rehabilitation Centre", Pune, Maharashtra, it is nice place .....we call your family, doctor added. Suresh for the moment goes back to his battalion days, dribbling balls from the goal areas in the inter battalion football championships, his face became pale & at the same time he loses his nerves thinking of all uncertainties to be faced by his immediate family, his five year old and two months old sons. He was shifted to Command Hospital Pune on 20th January 2005 and finally he was transferred to the "Paraplegic Home" Kirkee, Pune, {Maharashtra}, on 11th Nov 2005 where his training began to equip himself for life on a "Wheel Chair". With his determination and conviction, he converted his adversities into possibilities by learning computer skills and undergoing series of drills, trainings of life skills as well as training in badminton and basketball.



Suresh expresses his gratitude to the officers, Junior commissioned Officers and each and every soldier of his 2/9 Gurkha Rifles. He expressed that his battalion's concern & affinity rekindled hope, their regular visits to meet him inculcated strength that helped him to move ahead with positive mind and that was the driving force to shape his life, restore the dignity and fulfill his responsibilities. Suresh's wife Sunita Karki, rural girl from remotely located village in Nepal, demonstrated phenomenal adaptabilities, equipped herself and extended unconditional support. Sunita's commitment against all odds emulates a pillar that enabled Suresh to cross all adversaries and convert "Adversaries To Possibilities" and restore the dignity of Soldier and his family. His elder son is currently doing B.Tech [Mechanical] and younger son is studying in Class X in Pune. Suresh recollected his confidence, determination fortified when first time in January 2005 Colonel Anirban Datta came to paraplegic home Pune to meet him. His voice choked as he deeply expressed that

Colonel Anirban Datta, his motivation & his regular visits to him was source of inspiration, his professional counseling with unconditional support was instrumental in rewriting his story of life and restore his dignity in spite of being called "Disabled Person". As a Leader Colonel Anirban Datta carried the pristine values of Indian Army and traditions of our 2/9 Gurkha Battalion which has generated outpouring of genuine appreciation at all levels and required to be emulated by other officers. Colonel Anirban Datta, a second generation officer of same battalion, his father was awarded Vir Chakra in 1971 Indo-Pak War, is currently posted in Bangalore and before any major event or tournament he talks to Suresh.

Mental Pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common, invisible and also harder to bear. GRIT leads to positive mental health which significantly assists in dealing with challenges faced by the individual

physically, emotionally and socially. A positive mental health is capital of every society and a protective factor which Suresh's journey epitomizes. The Unit's [2/9 GR] stone rock stand behind Suresh defeated his sense of isolation, feeling of exclusion that was first step to inculcate in him the courage, determination and exclusion of depression. Colonel Anirban Datta's, vision, commitment and deep understanding as the Battalion Commander to put his feet into Suresh's shoes, articulately drawing strength of comradeship, focusing on social inclusion acted as force multiplier. At unit level, battalion was adjudged as the best battalion for successive two years, conferred with "Unit Citations" and off the parade Suresh emerged as Champion of Life. As a matter of fact, every person while holding some piece of information with experience, when align it with ground level actions can bring transformation making inclusive growth a reality and a cognizant society. It cannot go without saying that it is then need of the hour to carry out synergy of citizens with state apparatus so that everyone gets empowered to strengthen the Nation Building Process.

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He has conceptualized the Mission 'Ability Beyond Disability' in 2005 & operationalized it Pan-India as Nodal officer with Indian Army & Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment Government of India, aimed to strengthen Inclusive Growth & Development with an objective to reach the unreached, underserved & connecting rehabilitation professionals with those in need at their doorstep levels with a message & commitment "**People Matter Results Count**" & **Together We Can Make it Happen.**