

TAKING FLIGHT

Vice Admiral Vinod Pasricha has penned the glories of the Seahawk Squadron in a riveting book, *Downwind Four Green*

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

ON May 12, 1965 two Seahawks were launched from INS Vikrant amidst much secrecy. Their mission - to ensure that two aviators reached in time for their wedding ceremonies for which they had both been granted a day's leave! Both arrived at their respective venues - Mumbai and Bangalore - within minutes of the muhurat and were flown back next morning to rejoin the squadron with war clouds hovering overhead.

On August 12, 1964, a sailor Ajit Singh did what no one had dared before him - or after. Despite never having learnt how to fly a jet, he took off on a Seahawk when no one was around to fulfill his dream of becoming a fighter pilot. When he could not land, he came down with it on water and miraculously survived. Though court-martialled, his deed went down in the annals of the history of Seahawks.

These are just some of the many incredible instances narrated by Vice Admiral Vinod Pasricha in his *Downwind Four Green*, a book dedicated to naval Seahawks aircrafts, that makes it such a compelling and riveting read not just for those associated with the armed forces but also for the layman. And that precisely is the purpose for which the retired officer, who was also the first naviator, put pen to paper to come out with the 400 page book this

year.

Another reason was to fulfill a promise he had made to the squadron he had commanded when the Seahawks flew their last sortie in 1978. "I promised

them that one day I would capture the glory of the squadron in a book. In fact I presented them

with a blank book - that is just a cover- and promised to fill it up one day," says the Vice Admiral who then went about collecting precious information

about the Seahawks for many years.

However due to the demands of the service, it was only after retirement in 2002 that he could finally manage to put it all together.

"This is the only book in the country giving the full history of a naval aircraft. The Seahawk was the most magnificent of all aircrafts and the mainstay of the

Indian Navy front-line attack for two decades. It was part of four navies - Indian, British, German and Dutch. Of all the naval chiefs of staff, only three were from naval aviation and all three were from the Seahawk Squadron, so I also call this a lucky aircraft," says Vice Admiral Pasricha, his passion for the Seahawk as evident from his words as it is from the fact that he has decided to sell his book only online to avoid pricing it exorbitantly as demanded by publishers and book stores. "I want this to reach people, not make a profit out of it. In fact, I have even explained in great details and in layman terms the flight of an aircraft," adds the naval officer who has till now published 1000 copies of the hard bound volume.

Other than handling his book printing and sales - he has just dispatched an order for 50 books to England - the 69-year-old officer also continues to take sorties at the Hadapsar Gliding Centre even now. This despite an iron rod that was inserted in his leg after a scooter accident in 2005. "I took a three-year break after that but am back in the pilot's seat now," he smiles. Guess it's not for nothing that all Seahawk aviators were labeled tigers.

SANDEEP DAUNDKAR

The real
cool dude

