

The day I got out of the Ganga Nursing Home, after being wrapped by a POP bandage around my entire trunk as a last ditch treatment to avoid spinal surgery for my L4-L5 disc prolapse, the call letter for the physical endurance test at Madurai, for the post of Inspector of Central Excise arrived. I had to carry the POP for 45 days, whereas, the test was scheduled in 15 days. Desperate not to lose the coveted job at any cost, I decided neither to reveal the condition nor take any postponement.

It was a 1.6 km fast walk and an 8 km cycling. One Superintendent and two Inspectors under the supervision of an Asst. Commr were in charge of the whole proceedings. We were summoned at a stadium for the fast walk and with a XXL shirt on my XXS frame, I could successfully camouflage the POP drum and managed to walk the distance in time. But the real impediment was the cycling. We were asked to hire a cycle from a nearby shop, which I did. But however hard I tried I could not get into the cycle with the plaster on. Watching me struggling, the Inspector in charge of the test came to assist me and while doing so he contacted the plaster and was awestruck. I had no option but to confess. That was the most crucial moment. Easily he could have exposed me and debarred me, which could have been the end to my career. On the contrary, he decided not to escalate this issue to the Asst. Commr (as he was supposed to be a terror) but went on to certify as if I had completed the test successfully, in time. To me, at that crucial moment he exercised his discretion and compassion.

This is just an instance from my personal experience to showcase that, from then on till date, I had seen many such benevolent characters in

the Inspector / Superintendent cadre. Within framework of law, these characters go all out to help the assesseees, with their prudent discretion and ultimate compassion. Somehow, I always had a deep feeling that this cadre, though being the foot soldiers, are the true face of the department. This Diwali, many of my ex-colleagues have been promoted as Assistant Commissioners and are conferred with the coveted Nobel IRS, which they richly deserve. With compassion in their DNA, I am very sure that, they all would glorify the department as the real IRS.

Wishing them all of them good luck.

Godspeed and God bless.