



# LESSONS FROM THE SEA

*An excerpt from the book  
**JUST ANOTHER LIFE***

**L**ife at sea was always busy, involving decision making and people management skills. Yet taking the right decisions and bringing out the best in people are what I enjoyed most. In this regard, before I became captain myself, I learnt much from my superiors. In fact, I learnt even from those who were not my superiors. On a ship, you learn to wear your ego lightly. I worked with different kinds of difficult people. Some were proud, some ignorant, some who thought they knew everything, and some who were downright mad. But I always learnt from each. I believed that from some people you learnt what to do and from others you learnt what not to do. It was as simple as that.

If the captain watched everyone, everyone watched him too. As master of the ship, a captain was

expected to maintain the highest standards of professionalism and excellence. He was judged by how he managed the crew, navigated the ship, and handled cargo. He had to know his job thoroughly and command respect. His leadership skills had to be of the highest order. I found that humility, good listening skills, and a willingness to learn made for good leadership skills. The ability to manage people's expectations and motivate them to perform at their best was key to effectiveness. I was naturally good at motivating people. I did not do it by calculation. I did it more out of the conviction that there is no substitute for motivation. After all, you cannot get high-handed, reprimand people, and expect them to give off their best.

I do not remember losing my temper on the ship. Even in the face of grave provocation, I tried to maintain self-control. When you lost your temper, you showed people disrespect and they, in turn, lost respect for you. As a leader, you were always dealing with different kinds of people. You had to manage them by attitude and demeanour. People did their best, I found, when the leader brought out the best in them.

Treat people with respect!

That was my mantra. If a subordinate came home, it would never make me rank conscious. I would show him the respect due to another human. On the ship, however, a respectful distance was necessary. How is this distance to be measured? That is matter of fine judgment. One had to be mindful of never correcting people in public. Doing so privately was always advisable. It was important to help people keep

their sense of self-worth—and, in doing so, finding meaning for oneself.

Life with the SCINDIA kept me happy.

I never really thought of leaving them. Many fellow captains joined foreign companies, lured by high salaries, sometimes four times more than they earned. But, in time, two concerns slowly began to cloud the horizon: One was on the home front, where Joan began to feel that both she and the children would benefit more from my permanent presence at home. The other, of course, was the very future of SCINDIA.