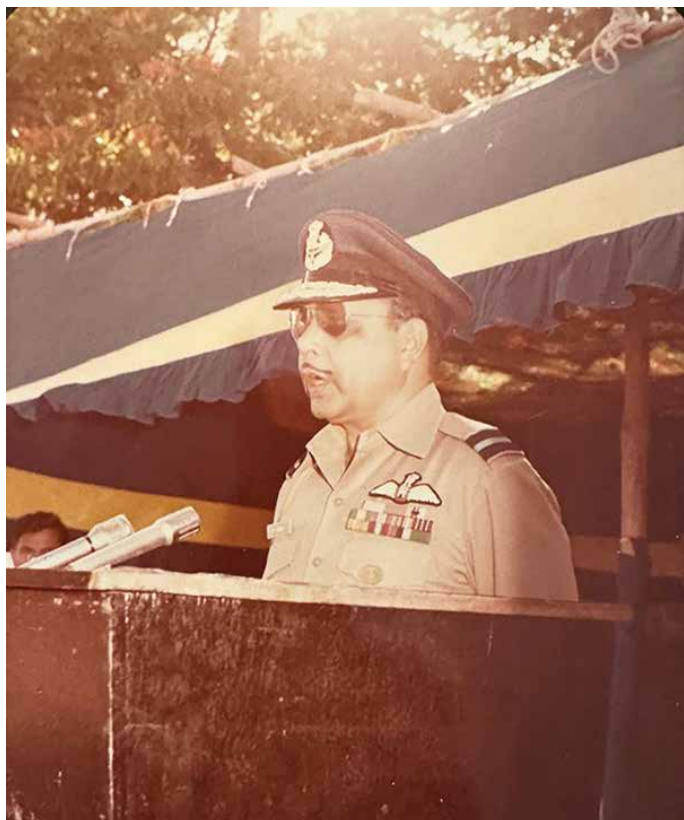


# Air Marshal (R) Harish Masand says... I learnt more than flying from them: JP Singh



*JP Singh*

The first time I met Air Commodore Janak Pratap Singh was when he was Joint Director Air Staff Inspections (ASI) in the rank of Group Captain in Air HQ (Vayu Bhavan) in July 1981. I had just returned from Iraq after a two year stint on deputation flying MiG-21s with 17 Squadron of the Iraqi Air Force which was essentially based in Al-Kut in a training role for young pilots. I use the word ‘essentially’ because after the start of the Iraq-Iran War in September 1980, we were moved to Baghdad for operating from H-3 air base, close to the Jordanian border in Western Iraq. I was posted to the Directorate of ASI as an Inspector with Air Commodore MSD “Mally” Wollen as the Director.

Almost immediately, ASI visited Hindon where I flew the Su-7 with the local Squadron commanded by then Wing Commander “Mian” Naqui. JP Sir, better known as “Japua” to his friends, was warm and friendly but kept a discreet eye on his latest young inspector, me, to ensure that the required standards were met. In this visit to Hindon, I think he was satisfied with the way I flew and conducted myself including the manner in which I tried to bring back my old friend, “Ben” Kuruvilla who was leading a 2 vs 1 sortie and had developed a fuel leak as soon as we started the situation. As the attacker, I saw this fuel leak



*JP Singh*

and immediately asked Ben to switch off the afterburner and head for home for a direct straight-in approach and landing. While Ben still ran out of fuel and had to eject while I was shepherding him home, JP Sir just gave me a pat on the back with a smile to show that I had been accepted in the ASI community.

Almost immediately after that, in between the annual inspection programme, he sent me off to Poona to do a few sorties on the MiG-21 Bis with 4 Sqn since that was the only version of the MiG-21 that I had not flown earlier. Apart from the M, MF and FL versions that I had flown in India, we were required to fly all types like the PF, PFM and many different combinations with different cockpit switches in each aircraft that existed in 17 Squadron of Iraq without any formal conversion or training. Soon thereafter, came a test for me in which I almost lost JP Sir’s trust but somehow survived because he took my word on what had happened and so conveyed it to the Director. The incident has been described in detail in another article that I published in VAYU on “Vaps” Nair earlier and available at <https://vayuaerospace.in/article/1034/air-marshal-r-harish-masand-says-i-learnt-more-than-flying-from-them-vaps-nair> but a brief recap would be in order to highlight JP Sir’s role and his technique