

Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examinations Centre, Pune.

Celebrating journey of its alumnus on account of Tridashakpurti Varsha 2025-26 (30 years of establishment)

Shri. Rahul Nangare

- Presently working as Commissioner of Customs (Adj), Delhi under the CBIC, Dept of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.
- (IRS-C&IT), 1999 Batch & JPCEC - 1996 Batch
- M.A (Social Studies), B.A
- Masters in Public Finance, GRIPS, Japan
- Previously served in Maharashtra, Punjab, Delhi, London under various responsibilities.



Rahul Nangare, an Indian Revenue Service (IRS-C&IT) officer from the 1999 batch, has served in some of the most interesting tenures and places around India and abroad. Currently, Rahul is posted as the Commissioner of Customs (Adj), Delhi under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Dept of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.

Born and brought up in Pune, Rahul's journey into the civil services was deeply influenced by the unique educational philosophy of Jnana Prabodhini Prashala, which instilled in him a desire to make a difference beyond conventional professions. His career reflects a fascinating evolution of India's tax administration and a dedication to facilitating trade, curbing illicit activities, and serving the nation at both policy and ground levels.

Early Foundations and the Call of Public Service

Rahul's formative years were spent at Jnana Prabodhini Prashala in Pune, where he studied from fifth to tenth grade. It was during his time there, specifically between eighth and tenth grade, that a distinct thought began to form in his mind: to pursue something different from the typical paths of becoming a doctor or engineer. This nascent idea was nurtured by the

school's unique approach to education, which encouraged different ideologies and critical thinking. His teachers and interactions within the school environment reinforced the notion of doing "something different".

The decision solidified by the tenth standard: Rahul was determined to pursue the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination. This ambition was a natural offshoot of Jnana Prabodhini's teachings and its motto: "Motivating Intelligence for Social Change". Rahul believed that civil services would be an ideal avenue to align with this motto. He was further inspired by senior Jnana Prabodhini alumni who had already become civil servants, such as Avinash Dharmadhikari (1986 batch IAS officer, who had also taught at his school), Rajiv Ranade, Sunil Dadhe, Sadanand Date and Waman Parkhi. This pervasive atmosphere of civil services within Jnana Prabodhini strongly influenced his career choice.

A Bold Educational Choice and Family Support

With his sights set on UPSC, Rahul made a crucial academic decision: he chose to pursue Arts after tenth grade, rather than Science. This was based on an understanding, though later perceived as slightly flawed (as Maths and Physics graduates began to dominate UPSC by then), that Arts subjects would be beneficial for civil services preparation. Despite scoring well in his tenth-grade exams and receiving the National Talent Search (NTS) scholarship, he opted for Arts solely with the intention of pursuing UPSC.

This unconventional choice met with initial resistance from family members, relatives, and acquaintances. Their common reaction was to question why he would "waste" his potential by not pursuing engineering or medicine, arguing that one could still attempt UPSC after becoming an engineer or doctor, thus keeping other career options open. However, Rahul's resolve was firm: he was committed to UPSC and nothing else. Crucially, his parents stood firmly behind him, believing in his intelligence and determination. The strong support from Jnana Prabodhini, including figures like Vivek Sir, was a significant factor that reassured his family. This collective encouragement led everyone to accept his decision, confident that he would succeed.

Following his eleventh and twelfth grades, Rahul completed his Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree at the Sri Satya Sai Institute of Higher Learning in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh. Throughout these five years (11th, 12th, and BA), his singular focus remained on preparing

for civil services while excelling in his BA studies. This dedication bore fruit, as he was awarded a Gold Medal in his BA. Recalling a recent encounter with a former teacher from Puttaparthi, Rahul shared that even 30 years ago, his teachers had recognized his talent and dedication to UPSC studies, highlighting his consistent focus and single-minded determination. This early motivation ensured that he remained committed to his goal, avoiding distractions and studying diligently even when it was known that one could pass BA with less effort. He passed his BA in 1996 and returned to Pune. Rahul gives great credit to his education at Puttaparthi for shaping his personality and giving firm grounding in human values. The simple but profound teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba such as “Help ever Hurt never”, ‘Love all Serve all’, and ‘Work is Worship’ had a deep impact on him, which he tries to emulate in his life.



Rahul receiving Gold Medal for B.A from Sri Sathya Sai Baba on 22 November, 1996

At Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examination Centre

Upon his return to Pune in 1996, Rahul found himself in a fortuitous situation: the Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examination Centre (Competitive Examination Center) had just been established in 1995 by Vivek Sir and Savita tai. He instinctively knew that he wanted to rejoin Jnana Prabodhini for his further preparation.

Rahul faced a significant dilemma at this point. Despite five years of focused UPSC preparation during his BA, he recognized the difficulty and time commitment required for the examination. At 20 years old and with just a BA degree in hand, he considered pursuing an MBA to secure alternative career options, should UPSC not work out. However, Vivek Sir provided crucial guidance, advising him against an MBA. Vivek Sir emphasized that Rahul

had already invested five years of hard work and possessed the confidence to succeed in UPSC. Instead of an MBA, Vivek Sir recommended joining a new interdisciplinary MA (Social Studies) course at Pune University, which would provide a Master's degree while being directly relevant to UPSC studies. He cautioned that an MBA would divert Rahul's complete focus from UPSC. Rahul found this advice compelling, realizing that the MBA felt like an "escape route". So, despite scoring very high marks in the Maharashtra MBA CET exam, he chose to enrol in the MA (Social Studies) program at Pune University, fully committing himself to UPSC preparation alongside his MA.

Rahul made his first UPSC attempt in 1997, during his second year of MA, at the age of 21. He successfully cleared the prelims but could not clear the mains, thus missing the interview call. In his second attempt, after completing his MA in May 1998, he cleared the examination and became an IRS officer in 1999. He credits Vivek Sir's encouragement for enabling him to clear the civil services and become an IRS officer at the young age of 23.

The role of Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examination Centre (JPCEC) was paramount in his success. Rahul described it as a "Godsend" in Pune, providing an intensely focused and inspiring atmosphere. The center was characterized by sincere students, highly motivated and encouraging staff (Vivek Sir, Savita, and teachers), and continuous, personalized monitoring of each student. This supportive environment meant he never felt the need to go to Delhi or Mumbai for coaching, nor did he feel disadvantaged by not being there.

The Kendra, despite being newly established, had a clear vision: it prioritized providing high-quality study material but consciously avoided "spoon-feeding". Instead, it focused on teaching essential skills for competitive examinations, such as planning, strategic thinking, time management, and identifying individual strengths and weaknesses. The general studies inputs were excellent and constantly updated by Sir. The teachers were experienced and taught with genuine affection, reflecting Jnana Prabodhini's non-commercial approach. This spirit of genuine care, aimed at seeing their students succeed and become "karyakarta adhikaris" (activist officers), deeply resonated with Rahul, who himself was a Jnana Prabodhini alumnus.

These two years of intensive preparation (1996-1998) were entirely dedicated to UPSC studies within the Jnana Prabodhini's competitive exam centre and its study hall. He specifically lauded the excellent interview preparation provided by the Kendra, which

included video recording of mock interviews, detailed feedback on body language and communication, and group discussions among students. This focused approach significantly contributed to his high interview score of 210. Rahul also scored well in essay writing, attributing it to the practice and feedback received at the center. He concludes that Jnana Prabodhini's Spardha Pariksha Kendra (JPCEC) played a "very significant contribution" in his journey, and he was very lucky to be "in the right place at the right time".

His optional subjects for UPSC were Political Science and History. He noted that while Political Science was somewhat scoring (he scored 328 out of 600), History was generally not (he scored 296). He acknowledged that Maths and Physics optionals often yielded much higher scores (400-500). However, humanities subjects provided an advantage in General Studies and essay writing, which was always a strong area for him, ensuring he cleared the examination.

A Career in Customs: From Inspector Raj to Facilitator

Upon clearing UPSC in 1999, Rahul's first and second choices were IAS and IPS respectively. He deliberately excluded the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) as he preferred to work within India. IRS was his third choice, and within IRS, Customs was his third preference, and Income Tax as his fourth. The choice between Customs and Income Tax was made after a discussion with Rajiv Ranade Sir, a senior IRS (Income Tax) Officer, who advised him that though both are good services but Customs may be preferred as it offered more variety, despite Ranade Sir himself being an Income Tax Officer. Rahul always felt that he would enjoy IRS Customs if he got it, and it turned out to be a good choice.

Rahul joined the National Academy of Customs, Excise & Narcotics (NACEN) in Faridabad in January 2000 for his 1.5-year training. The academy has since been renamed the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics (NACIN) after the introduction of GST, and has recently shifted its campus to Palsamudra in Andhra Pradesh. During his training, Service Tax, a relatively new tax introduced in the year 1994, was also part of the curriculum, hinting at future developments in the service.

Rahul's training coincided with a significant transformation in the revenue services, largely influenced by the 1991 liberalization, privatization and globalization. Before this, the prevailing mindset was "Inspector Raj," focusing on creating stringent rules to prevent tax

evasion and apprehending offenders. The underlying assumption was that everyone was a potential evader and so rules and regulations should be strict. However, after 1991, a new paradigm emerged: one of trust and encouragement for honest taxpayers with focus on simplification and rationalization of Tax laws. The training at NACEN emphasized this shift, consciously preparing officers to be "facilitators" rather than "inspectors". This fundamental change in mindset was crucial for officers to contribute effectively to the nation. Rahul consistently applied this facilitator approach throughout his career.

He observed significant technological advancements during this period, such as the introduction of the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system and other online systems around 2000, which rationalized customs processes. More recently, the Risk Management System (RMS) has become a core component, allowing for self-assessment of most cargo and minimal physical intervention. The biggest change, however, was the implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) eight years ago, which unified Central Excise, Service Tax, and various state sales taxes into a "One Nation One Tax" system. While the initial year was challenging, with technical glitches and concerns about revenue, the system eventually settled, and the industry now largely gives positive feedback about GST. Rahul views GST as a "fundamental change" and a "milestone" for India's federal structure, as it brought states and the center together to make decisions through the GST Council based on consensus.

During his training at NACEN, Rahul distinguished himself by being selected as the Best Probationer and was awarded the Finance Minister's Gold Medal, a highlight of his time there. The 1.5-year training included not only academics but also extensive physical and extracurricular training including at the BSF Academy, encompassing activities like shooting, horse riding, swimming, and march pass.

Navigating Challenges and Embracing Specialization

Rahul's first posting was in Nagpur as an Assistant Commissioner of Central Excise Division in June 2001. This was his first experience as a head of office, a significant responsibility. The experience was highly positive and provided valuable learning opportunities, including navigating initial mistakes and understanding how to interact with staff. Crucially, Nagpur taught him the importance of thoroughly reading files and having deep knowledge of the law, rather than relying solely on superficial information or subordinates' accounts. He learned the importance of seeking guidance from seniors and received good support during this period,

enabling him to independently manage his Central Excise Division. After completing this Division posting, he also got well rounded experience of the Service as he got to work in the Preventive (Anti-evasion) Wing in the Central Excise Hqrs and on Customs side as Deputy Commissioner of Customs at Inland Container Depot (ICD), Nagpur.

His strong performance in Nagpur, especially in the Preventive Wing led to his next posting in Nashik in 2005, where he joined Central Excise Intelligence as Deputy Director. This was considered a "big boost" in his career. He realized early in his service that he had a natural aptitude for intelligence and investigation work. He learned extensively from both his seniors and experienced colleagues, including superintendents and inspectors, who had years of field experience.

One particularly memorable experience in Nashik highlighted the pressures inherent in intelligence work, which often involves searches and raids, and dealing with political interference. In one case, which involved a border district connected to powerful political figures, Rahul faced significant pressure, even from Delhi. However, he received unwavering support from his senior officer, the Additional Director General (ADG) in Mumbai, who emphasized working honestly and correctly. Rahul reflected that the opposing party, despite their attempts to exert pressure, eventually acknowledged his integrity and honesty in performing his duty. This experience reinforced the importance of working properly, honestly, and completing tasks quickly, which builds confidence in one's work and earns respect from others.

This laid the foundation for Rahul's extensive specialization in intelligence and investigation. He spent a total of five years in DG Central Excise Intelligence (Nashik Regional Unit and Mumbai Zonal Unit) and later four years in the Customs Overseas Intelligence Network (COIN) posting under the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) in London. He noted how one opportunity often leads to another, especially when one performs well.

Over his 20-year career, Rahul has witnessed significant changes in intelligence and investigation work.

- **Technological Shift:** The most notable change is the move from reliance on human intelligence to technology-driven methods, including big data analytics, data

warehousing, and data mining, along with advanced risk management systems. Vast data both domestic and international data, is now readily available for analysis.

- Tech-Savvy Workforce: Officers across all levels are now more "tech-savvy," with many holding B.Tech and M.Tech degrees, which greatly benefits technical intelligence operations.
- Increased Transparency: The service has become more transparent and accountable, with installing CCTV cameras, streamlined processes for taking statements, issuing search warrants, and making arrests etc. This has largely eliminated harassment and ensured that cases are handled professionally.
- Recently body-cams have been provided to the Customs officials manning the Airports for better transparency and accountability.

Policy Making at the Core: Under Secretary, CBIC

Following his successful tenure in Nashik, Rahul was selected as an Under Secretary in the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in the Ministry of Finance. This was a deputation to the Ministry, lasting for approximately three and a half years, starting in 2005. Initially, Rahul was hesitant to accept the posting as his wife had just been transferred to Nashik, and he felt sad about leaving DGCEI and Maharashtra. However, his senior officers encouraged him, highlighting that his selection was a recognition of his good work and an opportunity for significant exposure at the Ministry level.

The Delhi posting proved to be highly successful and enriching, providing Rahul with all-India and policy-level exposure, significantly broadening his scope of work. He realized the immense potential to bring about larger results in the field through policy changes. He observed that many requests from industries and trade were not properly examined, leading to unresolved issues. Working with positive-minded seniors, he focused on analysing these requests, examining their pros and cons, and determining the best approach for implementation. This involved extensive work, including working day and night and on weekends, to gather feedback from industries and Commissionerates across the country.

Rahul found immense satisfaction in laying a strong foundation for policy-making. He witnessed how his efforts, starting from the ground level of analysis, translated into actual changes in acts and rules that were appreciated by trade, industry, and field officers. This experience greatly boosted his confidence, showing him that his work, even starting from

scratch, could make a significant difference. He emphasized the importance of hard work, continuous study, and most importantly, being polite and not arrogant. He strongly believes in the Jnana Prabodhini teaching of being a helpful officer rather than an authoritarian one. He felt proud of genuinely bringing about positive changes, however small in his immediate field, that had a broader impact.

Core Values and Navigating Service Politics

Rahul reflected on the psychological impact of working under pressure, especially recalling the Nashik incident where he faced pressure from Delhi. He asserted that the main principle for handling such situations is to ensure one is doing nothing wrong, performing duties honestly and with hard work. This fundamental integrity helps one handle all situations, including dealing with juniors and seniors, and builds a strong reputation that discourages false accusations.

A deeply ingrained lesson from Jnana Prabodhini that guided him through service politics was the complete absence of divisive identities such as caste considerations during his schooling. He shared a personal anecdote where his relatives advised his parents against sending him to Jnana Prabodhini, a "Brahmin school," fearing he, being from the Dhobi (non-Brahmin) community, would not adjust. However, he emphasized that he never even heard the word 'caste' during his six years there, nor at the Spardha Pariksha Kendra. He asserted that once one enters service, such politics may exist, but he consciously chose not to engage in them and deal with colleagues as well as public without being influenced by these identities. For him, his identity is that of an "Indian Officer of India," not defined by narrow identifications like religion, language, region, or caste. He stressed the importance of taking everyone along, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, and avoiding being "too much of an officer" (Afsari Dikhana). These principles of honesty, integrity, and inclusiveness guided him throughout his career.

Further Growth and International Exposure

After his tenure as Under Secretary in Delhi, Rahul was posted as Joint Commissioner of Customs at Nhava Sheva (Jawaharlal Nehru Port) from 2009 to 2012. In between, from September 2009 to October 2010, he pursued a one-year Master's in Public Finance at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in Tokyo, Japan under the scholarship

from the World Customs Organisation. He had a second stint at Nhava Sheva from 2016 to 2017 as Additional Commissioner of Customs. Rahul highlighted the invaluable experience that he got by studying for Masters in Japan and encouraged all young officers to look for such opportunities.

His experience at Nhava Sheva, India's largest port (handling 30-40% of India's Customs revenue), was marked by initially negative perceptions of corruption and delays. However, Rahul and his seniors focused on problem-solving and ensuring prompt clearance of goods, emphasizing that goods should not be held up. He gained a reputation for being approachable and finding solutions to people's problems. He highlighted that even years later, trade and industry members still fondly recall his helpfulness and problem-solving approach. This experience reinforced his belief in being a "facilitator" rather than an "inspector". During his second stint, he also contributed significantly towards improving India's ranking in "Ease of Doing Business Across Borders" by reducing clearance times with implementation of new policy of Direct Port Delivery, which was a major national focus at the time.

Rahul also recounted handling import consignment cases at Nhava Sheva, where errors in classification led to incorrect duty payments. Rather than aggressively targeting importers, he systematically explained the errors, leading to the importers accepting their mistakes, paying the correct duties and penalties, and learning from the experience. This approach, focused on explanation rather than harassment, contributed to quick case completion and was a valuable learning experience in handling cases professionally.



Rahul delivering Valedictorian Speech during the Convocation Ceremony at GRIPS, Tokyo.

Following his successful first stint at Nhava Sheva, Rahul returned to the Directorate General of Central Excise Intelligence (DGCEI) in Mumbai as Additional Director for four years (2012-2016). His work there primarily involved preventing Central Excise and Service Tax evasion. This included using human intelligence (informer-based information) and analysing vast amounts of trade, industry, and service tax data to identify potential evasion. A key aspect was replicating successful cases across different regions and on an all-India basis. Inter-agency cooperation was crucial, with close coordination with Income Tax and banking sectors, sharing intelligence for follow-up actions. Rahul emphasized the importance of an open-minded approach to inter-agency cooperation, sharing information rather than guarding "turf," which ultimately leads to better and more sustainable cases.

London Deputation and Return of Stolen Artifacts

Breaking from his previous preference against overseas postings, Rahul applied and was selected for a deputation to London as the First Secretary (Trade) at the Indian High Commission, serving for four years (2017-2021). The selection process considered his policy and intelligence experience, excellent appraisal reports, and interviews that assessed his ability to balance diplomatic and customs responsibilities.

His role in London was multifaceted:

- **Trade Facilitation:** Assisting Indian industries looking to enter the UK market and facilitating UK trade in India, acting as a liaison between government departments of both countries.
- **Diaspora Engagement:** Actively interacting with the large Indian diaspora in the UK, attending social events and festivals on behalf of the High Commission and organizing community events at the High Commission. He is particularly happy and proud for having started big Maharashtra Day celebrations at India House in 2019.
- **Customs Liaison:** Collaborating with UK Customs, which led to the signing of a significant Customs agreement during his tenure, an achievement he cherishes and intelligence sharing and liaison with other agencies and embassies. He played an important role in multiple seizures of cigarettes, illicit medicines and smuggled luxury items both in India and the UK at various airports and ports.

A particularly impactful aspect of his work in London was his involvement in anti-smuggling operations related to Indian artifacts. He received intelligence about stolen Indian idols and artifacts being sold in the international market. Working closely with the Art & Antique Unit of the Metropolitan Police Department (Scotland Yard) in London, he helped crack numerous cases over four years. This involved establishing that the artifacts were stolen from India, obtaining First Information Reports (FIRs) filed in the 1960s and 1970s from India, and providing them to UK officers for cross-verification. This was followed up by numerous meetings and e-mails to convince present owners of the correctness of our claim, outline the process of return and take care of their indemnity/ anonymity needs etc.

The first case was restitution of a 12th century bronze Buddha idol stolen from Nanlanda in 1960s. This idol was handed over to the High Commissioner in a grand ceremony on the 15th of August 2018. Rahul had good fortune of personally showing it to the then Finance Minister Sh Arun Jetley along with senior CBIC officials. Rahul recounted another deeply moving case involving the return of Ram, Lakshman, and Sita idols. These four idols, including Hanuman, were stolen from a small village temple in Tamil Nadu in the 1970s. Rahul received information about the Ram idol being with a dealer in London. Through the Metropolitan Police, he contacted the dealer, held meetings with their lawyers, and obtained the original FIR from the Tamil Nadu Police. After cross-referencing photos and confirming the match, the dealer voluntarily admitted that they not only possessed the Ram idol, which we were pursuing but also possessed the Lakshman and Sita murtis. (The Hanuman idol was identified at the ACM, Singapore, and separate efforts were initiated for its return).



Rahul and other officials during the restitution of the 12th century Buddha statue.

The dealer, acknowledging the mistake of acquiring stolen idols, returned the three deities. A grand ceremony was held at the Indian High Commission, attended by the High Commissioner, and senior officers of the Metropolitan Police. The High Commission had invited a priest from the London Tamil Sangham temple for performing Puja. This elderly priest was overwhelmed with emotions on seeing the murtis and almost wept, stating that he belonged to the same region on Tamil Nadu and had darshan of these murtis in the original temple in the 1970s and felt so blessed to perform their puja at the High Commission before their return to India. Upon their return to India, the idols were received by India's Cultural Minister at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) office in Delhi, then by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu at his Camp Office, and finally returned to the village in a grand procession. The idols are now revered and worshipped with great fanfare, particularly during Ram Navami. Rahul described this work as a relatively smaller part of his responsibilities at the High Commission, but one that brought immense joy and satisfaction. After coming back to India, Rahul always wanted to go to that mandir to have darshan of Ram Lakshman and Sita. This wish came true on Dussehra day this year when he could visit the temple in the coastal district of Nagapattanam in Tamil Nadu and had darshan with his family. The priests and the locals welcomed and felicitated them and thanked Rahul for his role in bringing their Gods home.



Rahul with other High Commission officials, The Metropolitan police officials and the Priests performing welcome ceremony of Ram, Sita and Laxman statues

Comparing Indian and UK Customs operations, Rahul noted several differences:

- Self-Assessment and Intervention: UK Customs operates with a much higher level of self-assessment and almost zero physical intervention, relying predominantly on

intelligence. India has progressed significantly in this area but still has room for improvement.

- Technology Adoption: UK officers fully utilize technology, and India is catching up.
- Hierarchy: The UK has a more informal hierarchy, where even senior officers are addressed by their first names, unlike the more formal "Sir" culture in India.
- Cooperation: There is significant cooperation between UK Customs and Indian Customs, leading to successful joint operations and seizures of contraband like cigarettes and medicines.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rahul played an important role in the Vande Bharat Mission, the initiative to repatriate Indian citizens from around the world. All officers at the High Commission were fully dedicated to this task. Rahul was responsible for a specific sector in North India. For 15-20 days in May 2020, they worked round the clock, with virtually no sleep, coordinating with India (where it was daytime) to ensure flights were fully booked and those with the greatest need (children, pregnant women, the sick, and the elderly) were prioritized. This was a "massive task" for the entire Ministry of External Affairs, not just London. Similarly, during the second major Covid wave in early 2021, the entire High Commission was geared up in sending Oxygen concentrators and cylinders, ventilators etc from the UK to India on war footing. Rahul expressed pride in his contribution in both these efforts.



Rahul and other officials celebrating Maharashtra Day at High Commission of India, London

Winning the Presidential Medal for Specially Distinguished Record of Service-

Another highlight of Rahul's career was when he won the Presidential Medal for the Specially Distinguished Record of Service for the year 2019. He received this award from Hon'ble MoS for Finance (Revenue) Sh. Anurag Thakur on the 27th January, 2020. The citation given along with the Medal read as follows;-

“ From the very beginning he has been an outstanding officer and he won the Finance Minister's Gold Medal for the Best Probationer of the 52nd batch at the end of the IRS training at NACEN, Faridabad. He has done Masters in Public Finance in 2009-10 under the scholarship from the WCO at the National Graduate Institute of Policy Studies, Tokyo where he was chosen as Valedictorian at the Convocation Ceremony.

He has worked very diligently in the Central Excise policy wing as Under Secretary in the Board. He has very wide experience in the Intelligence field having worked for more than five years in the erstwhile DGCEI, first as Deputy Director, Nasik and then as Additional Director, Mumbai. During his stint at DGCEI, he contributed to the detection of 516 cases in Central Excise involving duty of Rs.2840 Crores and recovery of Rs. 396 Crores and 1142 cases in Service Tax involving Duty of Rs. 7369 Crore and recovery of Rs. 1634 Crore.

In his present stint, he is working very closely with law enforcement agencies in the UK and other EU countries. He has contributed to huge seizures of cigarettes in India and internationally totalling more than 52 million sticks, and seizure of illicit medicines of more than 1.5 million tablets. His inputs about air passengers has resulted in recovery of more than Rs. 5,5 Crores. His contribution towards protection and restitution of India's cultural heritage in past two years is particularly noteworthy including the restitution of the 12th Century Budhha Idol.

His consistently exceptional performance in each of his postings makes him a worthy recipient of the Presidential Certificate of Appreciation for Specially Distinguished Record of Service.”



Rahul receiving Presidential Medal for the Specially Distinguished Record of the Service from Hon. Shri. Anurag Thakur, then Minister of State for Finance.

As noted above, this award is not given for any single achievement but for a wide spanning excellent career. Rahul notes that though one does not work hard and with dedication to win any award. But when all the efforts and sincere work put in over the years gets appreciated, it feels special and it also gives added motivation to perform even better in the coming years.

Frontier Challenges: Commissioner of Customs, Amritsar

From 2021 to 2023, Rahul served as the Commissioner of Customs in Amritsar. He described Punjab as a challenging area to work in, especially given its border with Pakistan. Farming takes place between the fences on both sides of the border, making it difficult to completely stop smuggling.

- **Drug Smuggling:** A major concern is cross-border drug smuggling. Customs, the BSF, Punjab police, and NCB (Narcotics Control Bureau) are always vigilant and have booked numerous cases.
- **Khalistan Movement Support:** The cross-border support for the Khalistan movement creates a "difficult scenario," but Indian agencies, including Customs, are actively tackling it.
- **Drone Smuggling:** The rise of drone-based smuggling (of arms, drugs) in the last few years is a new challenge. While the Border Security Force (BSF) is the primary agency on the border, Customs is involved at ports and preventive stations, along with the Punjab Police and defence forces. Rahul noted that while it was a significant

problem initially, India is now "better equipped" with technology and response capabilities, enabling BSF jawans to shoot down drones or jamming them.

Rahul feels that the highlight of his stint in Amritsar Customs was the biggest drug case of his career with seizure of 102 kilograms of heroin that arrived from Afghanistan (via Pakistan) in a truck carrying mulethi (liquorice roots) at the Integrated Check Post (ICP) Attari. ICP, Attari was always on alert since there have been many attempts of smuggling in the past. When he took over as Commissioner, he made it a point to personally visit ICP, Attari frequently. He put stringent SOP in place so that the mandated 100% X-Ray scanning and physical examination is done properly. This strict regimen yielded results as this case was initially detected by the officers doing the X-Ray scanning. They found irregular images indicating that contraband may be concealed in the cargo. On receiving this information, Rahul reached ICP immediately and took charge of the search and seizure operation. All the officials worked very hard throughout the night to extract the heroin from the artificial cavities created to conceal the heroin. At the same time various teams were activated for the follow up investigation and the importer was arrested in Delhi on the same night. Rahul's previous experience with the inter-agency cooperation came handy in this case as he made it a point to share the details of investigation with all agencies such as NCB, Police, BSF and NIA. This information led to wider investigation throughout India including in Gujarat, UP, Delhi, Punjab and Haryana. After a few months NIA formally took over the case and their investigations unravelled a much wider network resulting in multiple arrests including the masterminds and more importantly, cracking the financial trail. Rahul has presented this case in various forums to showcase the importance of inter-agency cooperation and coordination.



Rahul with the officials of Amritsar Customs after seizing the 102kg heroine consignment at Attari border, Punjab.

A New Role: Custodian of Enemy Properties for India

After his tenure in Amritsar, Rahul was appointed as the Custodian of Enemy Properties for India, a role he served in for two years, before returning to his department as Commissioner of Customs (Adj), Delhi. The concept of Enemy Property emerged in 1962 during the war with China. It dictates that if a country is at war, the properties of its nationals within India should be taken over by the Indian government. This was extended after the 1965 war with Pakistan to include properties of Pakistani nationals who had moved to Pakistan but held property in India. While these properties had been in government custody for decades, a disposal scheme was introduced only in 2017, followed by a policy and rules for their disposal in 2018.

There are approximately 13,000 such properties across India, with the highest concentration in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Maharashtra (including Mumbai). When Rahul joined in 2023, no disposal had occurred yet. During his tenure, a significant number (over 200) of properties were disposed of, generating 160 crore rupees in revenue. These properties are auctioned through MSTC and the revenue earned is transferred to the Consolidated Fund of India. Additionally, the office facilitates the acquisition of these properties by central or state government agencies for various purposes. Rahul takes great satisfaction that the work of disposal of properties started for the first time during his tenure and has progressed very well. He hopes that the disposal work continues in coming years so that revenue generated through their disposal can be used in national interest.

Peeking into the Future

With over 26 years of service and about ten years remaining, Rahul reflected on his future aspirations. He desires to continue contributing at a high, all-India policy level, especially in areas related to "Ease of Doing Business," leveraging technology, and risk management. His passion for intelligence and investigation also remains, and he would welcome any future responsibilities in that field. Beyond these, he expresses a strong interest in contributing to the training of new officers, believing that his extensive field experience can be highly beneficial in guiding them.

When asked about difficult experiences or challenges, Rahul candidly admitted that they are an inherent part of the service. He emphasized that as long as one is doing his by the rule book, is honest, and does not compromise, one can handle challenges, including complaints

and pressures, which are "part and parcel of the job". He stressed the importance of facing challenges correctly and ensuring one's work is always in order. This advice, he shares with young officers from Jnana Prabodhini, urges them not to dwell on "why me" but to seek consultation from seniors, find their own path, and embrace the reality that difficulties will arise.

Finally, Rahul offered his perspective on the future direction of Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examination Centre, having witnessed its 30-year journey from a "small sapling" to a "large tree" with officers across India, its states, districts, and even in foreign services. He suggests several key areas for future focus:

- **Networking and Collaboration:** Bringing together existing officers and fostering connections with other academies (Customs, Income Tax, Mussoorie) to infuse Jnana Prabodhini's values of being a "karyakarta adhikari" (activist officer) and making officers more effective.
- **Mentorship:** Leveraging retired officers and seniors as mentors.
- **Critical Thinking:** Continuing to emphasize critical thinking through workshops led by Vivek Sir and Savita Tai, moving beyond "spoon-feeding".
- **Support for Non-UPSC Aspirants:** Creating a support system for talented students who, due to the tough competition, are unable to clear UPSC, helping them find other avenues to utilize their talents.

Rahul expressed his desire to contribute to these initiatives in the coming years, confident that Jnana Prabodhini will continue its journey with renewed vigour. His career stands as a testament to the transformative power of dedication, integrity, and the foundational values instilled by institutions like Jnana Prabodhini.

Role of Family

Rahul acknowledged the important role his family has played in his 26 years journey in Service. His wife Swati Karmarkar Nangare was officer of 1998 batch of Maharashtra Finance & Accounts Gr. A Service till she resigned in the year 2011. Rahul feels that having been a senior officer herself, she understood the pulls and pressures that he may have been facing in his official work. She always stood by him during the tough phases and was always supportive of him. Abrupt transfers especially from Nasik to New Delhi within few months of coming to Nasik and with their first child being just 4 months was the most challenging situation they faced. But luckily for them it all worked out well as Swati got posting as APS

to the then Cabinet Minister Sh. A.R. Antuley. She quit her service so that she can dedicate more time to their two children and to pursue her hobbies and other interests. Rahul feels that this was a blessing in disguise because if she was still in Service, he may not have applied for foreign posting. He also praises his children Raghav and Indira, who had to change multiple schools in multiple cities but they adjusted with all the changes without any complaint. His daughter who is presently in 11th class is in her fifth school in the fourth city! However, he feels that the wide exposure that they have got will help them in their future life. It also has its other benefits like both have developed a liking for learning various languages. They picked up reading and writing Punjabi/ Gurumukhi during their stay in Amritsar. Rahul hopes that the transfers and changing schools helps them in developing well rounded personalities.

Photo Gallery



Rahul and wife Swati, kids - Raghav, Indira along with Dr. Vivek and Dr. Savita Kulkarni at his residence in Amritsar.



Rahul with family having Darshan of repatriated murtis at the Mandir in Nagapattinam



High Commissioner felicitating Rahul in the farewell function at India House, London.



Rahul with Vivek Sir & Savita Tai



At the Alumni Get-together - Delhi 2025
Left to Right: JPCEC Alumni Shri. Anandrao Patil (IAS) - presently Addl Sec. Min. of Education, Shri. Prashant Lokhande (IAS) - presently Joint Sec. Ministry of Home Affairs, Dr. Savita & Dr. Vivek Kulkarni and Shri. Rahul Nangare. All 3 Senior Mentors of JPCEC Officers Network.



An old memory of the Delhi Officers get-together. (Left to Right) Dr. Vivek Sir, Shri. Ajit Joshi (IAS) - presently Addl Sec. Dept. of Rural Development, Govt of Punjab. Shri. Makrand Khetmalis (IAS) - presently M.D State Warehousing Dept, Govt of Haryana. Shri. Rahul Nangare, Shri. Santosh Vaidya (IAS) - presently Principal Secretary, Dept. of Finance, UT of Jammu & Kashmir & Dr. Savita tai.



Rahul with Dr. Savita, Dr. Vivek Kulkarni & Dr. Raghunath Mashelkar, renowned scientist & President of Jnana Prabodhini Trust.



A candid moment of laughter - Rahul & Santosh during Delhi get-together.



Field visit to Japan Customs office during GRIPS studies.



Rahul & Officials presenting the Buddha Statue to the then Finance Minister Late. Sh. Arun Jaitley.