

**Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examinations
Centre, Pune.
Celebrating journey of its alumnus
on account of
Tridashakpurti Varsha 2025-26
(30 years of establishment)**

Dr. Dhananjay Ghanwat

- Presently serving as DIG, Assam Police (as of June 2026)
- Indian Police Service - 2010 Batch
- JPCEC Batch - 2003
- M.B.B.S - Grant Medical College, Mumbai - 2002 Batch
- MSc in Science & Technology Policy under International Chevening Scholarship - 2018 Batch
- Worked across Silchar, Sadiya, Udalgiri, Baksa, Dima Hasao, Tezpur, Guwahati under different responsibilities.



Dhananjay Ghanwat, a 2010-batch IPS officer of the Assam cadre, has exemplified excellence both as an aspirant and as a public servant. While his journey as an aspirant reflects unwavering dedication and perseverance, his career as a police officer showcases a remarkable blend of passion, compassion, foresight, and a systemic approach to public service.

Early Life and Education

Dhananjay's early life began in Baramati where he studied from first to fifth standard. A pivotal shift occurred when he attended Sainik School Satara for standards six through ten. This institution played a crucial role in shaping his early aspirations, as it routinely prepared students for the National Defence Academy (NDA) entrance exams conducted by UPSC. This early exposure to the UPSC framework, coupled with the

proximity of his school to the Satara SP's residence, brought him into indirect contact with public service. He vividly recalls Late IPS Ashok Kamte, the then SP Satara, frequently visiting their school for sports events. Kamte Sir's personality and the overall aura of the Police force made a lasting impression, though at that stage, it was mere curiosity rather than a definitive career aspiration.

Following his secondary education, he pursued pre-university studies (11th and 12th standards) at Nira, a small town in Baramati Taluka. In 1997, he secured admission to MBBS at Grant Medical College, Mumbai, from where he graduated in 2002. It was during his internship in 2003 that his interest in competitive examinations solidified. This period marked a transition from a purely academic focus to exploring avenues for public service.

His academic journey did not cease with his medical degree. Demonstrating a commitment to lifelong learning and interdisciplinary knowledge, he subsequently pursued MDPM, PG degree in Police Management from Osmania University and the National Police Academy between 2011 and 2013. More recently in 2017-18, he completed an MSc in a new subject, 'Science & Technology Policy' in the UK. He also received a prestigious International Chevening Scholarship from the Govt of UK. This diverse educational background underscores his unique blend of medical knowledge, administrative acumen, philosophical grounding and a deep interest in policy and technology.

Meanwhile, his father worked in the Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB), and his mother was involved in Marathi literature. He got married before his selection into civil services, and his wife, Mrs Shalaka an ME in Computer Science, currently works from home as a Data Scientist for a multinational corporation (MNC). This background highlights a supportive family environment and a personal life that evolved alongside his professional ambitions.

Civil Services – On the Way

The journey towards civil services was not a straight path but rather a gradual evolution shaped by various influences. While Sainik School provided initial exposure to UPSC, the true spark was ignited while in college. He notes the significant role of peer groups and collegiate environments in fostering civil service aspirations, particularly mentioning institutions like COEP and Fergusson in Pune, BJ Medical College and Sardar Patel College in Mumbai, and certain colleges in Nagpur, which consistently produce successful candidates from Maharashtra. He recalled that Grant Medical College, his alma mater, lacked a strong culture of civil service preparation, and there was no immediate senior guidance or inspiration. Notably, it was a pre-information revolution era and not too many candidates from Maharashtra aspired for CSE in those times. This initial lack of direct mentorship meant that he had to find his own way, often with "zero focus" on civil service preparation during his initial graduation years.

Initially, his academic focus was on medical studies and on pursuing post-graduation in a sought-after stream like cardiology or neurosurgery, or even going abroad, as was common among his peers. However, he harboured a love for reading outside his curriculum. This habit led him to Shashi Tharoor's articles as a UN civil servant. Articles in the Times of India, followed by Dr Tharoor's magazines and books, deeply impressed him. Lacking internet access at that time, he resorted to cyber cafes to gather information, eventually discovering Tharoor's path through the UN Civil Service and, by extension, the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), which involved representing India abroad. This early exposure to the IFS, while not immediately acted upon, planted a seed of interest.

A crucial turning point came during his internship in Pune. He met Dr. Shilpak Ambule, IFS, a recent selectee from the 2003 batch, who had studied at BJ Medical College. Their meeting in a canteen was unexpected but serendipitous. Upon learning of his interest in IFS and his admiration for Shashi Tharoor, Ambule Sir enthusiastically encouraged him. Ambule Sir, also from a medical background,

suggested he consider Medical Science as an optional subject, which he initially did, along with Zoology. This interaction was pivotal, as it provided direct guidance and validation for his nascent civil service ambitions. It was also through Ambule Sir and other friends that he learned about Jnana Prabodhini and its guidance programs, which were crucial, given the limited information available at the time. He emphasises the importance of timely answers to initial doubts and the availability of guidance centers in shaping one's journey.

The UPSC Labyrinth: Challenges, Changes, and Triumph

His journey with Jnana Prabodhini began in 2003, during his internship, which he describes as a "casual" start where his "dreams were still taking shape". His initial attempt at the UPSC exam was a misstep, as he gave it "unnecessarily," resulting in a wasted attempt. He admits this was a mistake, highlighting the lack of structured guidance prevalent at the time compared to today's highly organized preparation systems. His academic record prior to this was unblemished; he had consistently achieved top ranks in school till medical college. This initial failure was therefore a significant "setback," the first major one he had encountered.

A key challenge was the disconnect between the style and format of his medical training & education and the demands of the UPSC exam. While his college focused on clinical-oriented studies, the prelims involved MCQs, a format he was not accustomed to. This led to his initial prelims failure. It was then that he learned about the SIAC (State Institute for Administrative Careers) exam and he went to SIAC Mumbai in 2004. This exposure gave him some confidence and also prompted a critical decision regarding his optional subjects.

A chance encounter with another doctor from BJ Medical College, Dr. Vijay Pingle, who had also cleared UPSC and got selected to IAS, led to a profound shift. Dr. Pingle suggested Philosophy as an optional for Prelim as well as Mains by giving him a Logic subject book to explore. This led him to change his optional subject to Philosophy while retaining Zoology as a second option. This illustrates his

open-mindedness and willingness to adapt based on expert advice, even when it meant deviating from his initial passion.

In 2005, clearing prelims, i.e. the first level of the exam through Philosophy, he appeared for the Mains exam. Despite performing well in all subjects, his score in one paper of Applied Philosophy was notably low, which cost him the call for the interview by whiskers. This was another significant "setback," forcing him to reflect on his previous "wrong attempts" and commit to a more systematic approach. He realized the importance of understanding the Mains exam thoroughly after experiencing it firsthand.

The period between 2006 and 2007 brought further challenges. Due to family difficulties, which he describes as typical for middle-class families, he had to take up a job at ONGC as a Medical Officer. This meant he could not dedicate himself fully to UPSC preparation, leading to him missing two attempts entirely. This was a "very big" break in his preparation, creating a "wavering" period where he considered returning to his medical career, especially given the pressure from classmates who were completing their post-graduation.



An old photograph of Dhananjay from his days as a Medical Officer at ONGC.

However, he never truly gave up on his civil service dream. As family issues settled, he secured a teaching position at a Medical College in Pune. He got married during this period in 2008. With these personal milestones achieved and a more stable

environment, he decided to give one last, focused attempt. This calm and deliberate approach led to his success in the 2009 Civil Services Exam, making him an IPS officer of 2010 batch. The decision of opting for Philosophy in his own words, changed his life in multiple ways.

Reflecting on this extended journey, he characterizes it as a "zero regret journey". He emphasizes that prior to UPSC, he had never experienced a significant failure, but only "successes". The 5-6 years of preparation, especially while juggling with a demanding job as a Medical Officer, required immense "mental fortitude". He highlights the common dilemma faced by aspirants when they get a job, often losing the motivation to continue preparing. His own experience, though, was different: he felt he had "no choice but to give the last attempt" and "never gave up mentally".

His key insights from this period include the importance of prioritizing problems, cultivating patience, and, crucially, avoiding peer pressure and comparisons. He stresses that "each person's journey is completely different". He learned to trust his own decisions and avoid regret, recognizing that choices made in the past were the "best" at that moment. This profound reflection underscores the psychological battle inherent in such a long and arduous preparation process.

JPCEC: A Family, Not Just a Coaching Center

His association with Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examination Centre (JPCEC) extended far beyond his initial UPSC preparation, becoming a lifelong connection. He notes that "this has come as a larger family", maintaining warmth and affectionate relationships, unlike the more commercial and competitive environment often found in some other coaching centers. He highlights the "zero tension" atmosphere at Jnana Prabodhini, where students enjoyed sharing knowledge and supporting each other. This peer-to-peer learning, where students would spontaneously teach complex topics to their peers, not only fostered confidence but also unknowingly prepared them for interviews. He recalls the long mesmerising sessions by Dr. Vivek Kulkarni Sir, which were filled with pure wisdom, managerial insights and immense positivity.

A distinctive feature of Jnana Prabodhini, which left a lasting impact on him, was its focus on "social awareness and sensitivity". What initially felt like mere entertainment during excursions, such as visits to social reformers like Popatrao Pawar and Anna Hazare, later proved invaluable. These interactions exposed him to the realities of grassroots work, the patience required to unite people, and the understanding that success doesn't always require formal education or power. This holistic approach to personality development for civil services instilled a deep sense of social responsibility, which he now actively supports by contributing to such institutions. He acknowledges that civil service exams are "not about rote memory and writing" but rather a "test of personality".

JP family which has been his “cradle of civil service preparation” continues to be his “Gurukul for in-service and social-moral discussions”. He values the JP mentor group concept where Dr Sadanand Date Sir - IPS and Shri Pramod Phalnikar Sir - IPS were his service mentors. He also has taken keen interest in guiding and hosting several batches of JP student groups visiting North-East and in Delhi. He loves participating and contributing through various meaningful JP social groups and meetings such as Medical group during COVID, Consultancy Action group etc. He met and found several of his close friends-for-life at JP and revered self-less teachers like Ponkshe Sir, Vivek Sir and Savita Tai.

Training and the North-East Cadre: Embracing Challenges

His training at the SVP National Police Academy (NPA) in 2010 was "fantastic". He praises the NPA for its ability to transform diverse individuals from various social and economic backgrounds into a cohesive, uniform force within a short 10-month period. A notable initiative he recalls is the ‘Pre-Dinner Talks’ (PDT), where accomplished individuals from different fields would engage in open discussions with the trainees, providing valuable exposure. The NPA also organized ‘exposure trips’, taking trainees to different villages, and even to socially vulnerable areas like red-light areas, in plain clothes to observe "visible crime" and cultivate empathy. These experiences profoundly shaped his understanding of society and the practicalities of policing.

Upon selection, he got the Assam-Meghalaya cadre as per his preference order. This decision was driven by a belief, instilled in him by his Sainik School background, that he should work in challenging regions. The example of Sandeep Kadam, an IPS officer from the 2005 batch whom he had visited in the Naxal-affected Palamu district of Jharkhand, further cemented his desire to work in difficult terrains. Kadam's experience showed him the "scope" for impactful work in such regions. His relatives initially reacted with alarm, suggesting he quit and open a hospital instead of serving in remote places like Assam, due to concern, however they later came to appreciate his decision.

He consciously chose a "developing state" like Assam, believing he could "contribute" to its growth story, rather than working in an "evolved" administration like Tamil Nadu or Rajasthan. He saw the North-East as a region with immense potential for growth, aligning with his desire for meaningful impact.

First Posting - Assam

His first posting was in Silchar as an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP). He fondly remembers the rare opportunity to act as personal security officer to the former president Dr APJ Abdul Kalam who was visiting NIT Silchar along with Dr Prakash Amte. After Silchar, he moved to Sadiya as an SDPO (Sub-Divisional Police Officer), a challenging, interior place which is more than 600 Km further northeast from Guwahati, near the Dhola-Sadiya a.k.a. Bhupen Hazarika Bridge, then under construction. He recounts the stark difference in infrastructure and development, describing the travel from Baramati to Sadiya as a "time travel" experience to an earlier era of Maharashtra. Despite the infrastructural challenges, he was deeply touched by the warmth and hospitality of the local people, who would invite strangers into their homes and engage in genuine conversations. This personal connection with the community fostered a deep sense of commitment.

Field Experiences

His postings in Udalguri and Baksa proved to be the most challenging, throwing him

into the heart of volatile insurgency and law & order crises. In Udalguri in 2014, he faced severe problems related to the NDFB (National Democratic Front of Bodoland - an armed separatist outfit). A particularly harrowing incident occurred on December 23-24, 2014, when 76 tribal victims were massacred by Bodo militants. Though not in his district, the incident's fallout was immediate and intense. His primary challenge was to prevent retaliatory "blood for blood" attacks by the tribal community against the Bodos. He engaged in relentless negotiations, even evacuating innocent Bodo families, their livestock, and belongings, despite the immense emotional charge of the situation. During this tense period, he even faced a direct attack from an individual wielding a scythe, which was bravely intercepted by his Bodo PSO, who suffered a hand injury. He spent ten consecutive days in the area, negotiating, eating, and sleeping there, showcasing his dedication. This incident was a test of his temperament, police training, art of negotiation, tactics, knowledge of local terrain-customs-language, patience and leadership. Through intelligence led planning, he quickly identified the troubled and vulnerable hotspots and the persons. He chalked out the strategy to deploy limited forces there with frequent patrols and also made use of the good people from the community to restore peace. Notably, there was not a single adverse incident in Udalguri area, which was an island of peace during the trouble-torn and emotionally fragile times.



One from the Jungle Ops - Dhananjay (first from left) along with colleagues from then naxalite affected forests of Assam.

Another critical law & order situation in Udalguri involved a rape and murder case of a tribal girl, where an enraged mob attempted to lynch the accused from another community. Dhananjay rushed to the civil hospital, where the mob had gathered, some even with large stones ready to smash the head of the accused. His immediate reflex was to physically intervene and prevent the lynching, pulling the accused to safety. The situation escalated as the crowd surrounded the hospital, armed with kerosene and petrol, threatening to burn it down. Staffed with just four police personnel, he engaged in protracted negotiations, promising strict action and ensuring justice. Any wrong or under-confident statement by Police would have led to vandalization, arsoning of the entire hospital, which also had other admitted patients. He even resorted to a clever deception, pretending the accused had died and then secretly transporting him out in an ambulance, while the mob chased an empty decoy vehicle. This quick on-the-feet thinking allowed the accused to be secured and an example of rule of law being upheld. Further, he personally supervised the case, leading to the swift conviction of the accused as per law. Such incidents show immense fortitude, courage and diplomatic skills as per the situational demand. His training of quickly identifying the trouble makers from the mob, isolating them, profusely assuring the crowd and warning them of the wrong consequences of their rowdy behaviour was put to test. He recalls that personal reputation of impartiality and honesty comes to rescue at such testing times.

In Baksa, where he served as SP Operations, he faced direct threats from militants. He and his team camped in basic temporary accommodation in Manas jungles for up to a year. Unwelcomed to the terrain by the militants, once his team intercepted a credible intelligence that the NDFB militants were planning to target him in next 48 hours. This was followed up by intense operations, culminating in the capture of the militant commander named Santosh Kherkatary along with weapons. What could have been a medal-winning encounter was dealt with very remarkable patience, restraint and professionalism by Dhananjay instead of vengeance. This decision proved critical: Kherkatary, under interrogation, eventually led them to a cache of 12 kg of RDX, enough to devastate "half the district" and other important intelligence. This incident

powerfully demonstrated the value of human rights and the ethical imperative of policing over immediate, violent "solutions". Kherkatary, who initially expressed no fear of death, later became cooperative. Now lodged in Guwahati Central Jail, he even calls Dhananjay fondly as his "Apa" (father), for giving him a chance of life. This further inspired other militants to surrender and choose the path of non-violence.

A deeply emotional experience in Udalguri was the rescue of a kidnapped child in 2014. Using basic mobile tracking techniques, his team successfully rescued the child from United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) militants. The child's grateful family, who had struggled to have a child for years, offered the police team under Dhananjay some reward money, which he refused, emphasizing that their actions were a duty, not an opportunity for personal gains. This refusal initially caused disgruntlement among his team, but he explained that such acts should not be seen as "favors" and that genuine satisfaction comes from helping, not from monetary rewards.

Independent SP-ship: Navigating Politics and Corruption

His posting at Dima Hasao in January 2016 marked his first independent SP-ship, a role where "the buck stopped" with him. The initial three months were dominated by the Assembly Election management, a challenging period given the region's history of militant activity, including an earlier incident where an election observer's vehicle was fired upon. Just on his 13th day in Dima Hasao, a bomb exploded outside his official residence at 1:15 AM. Despite the personal nature of the attack, he handled it professionally, relying on the support of his seniors, who advised him to stay indoors, suspecting it was a trap.

In Dima Hasao, he confronted a dangerous nexus of militants (DNLA) and corrupt political elements. He initiated a stringent campaign against overloading by cement trucks, which had led to numerous accidents and deaths. This brought him into direct conflict with powerful interests, including local politicians and very senior bureaucrats. He recounts an incident where a police officer was assaulted in a market, and an influential politician intervened, demanding the release of the accused. He

firmly refused, explaining that allowing such an act would erode police authority and public trust. He even reprimanded the powerful politician, knowing he was likely being recorded, demonstrating his resolve.

His uncompromising stance in Dima Hasao, where he proactively enforced the law even in seemingly minor cases (like checking for sales tax compliance in markets or overloading the cement trucks), led to his transfer within eight months. He believes this was a direct consequence of his actions, illustrating the challenges of maintaining integrity without proper strategy in a 'settled' environment. A very senior bureaucrat even warned him that such actions could lead to personal stress and "suicide," referencing a past case. While he rebuffed the warning, he informed his DGP resulting in the senior bureaucrat himself diffusing the situation, ultimately leading to his transfer to the State Intelligence Department's Cyberdome project. This, he reflects, was ultimately "the best thing to happen," as it allowed him to pursue his interest in technology. In the hindsight, he thinks that the system is so diverse that it has a crafted role for everyone in the ecosystem.

He also thinks that with more experience, comes better strategy to handle the pulls and pressures of this system, without generating much enthalpy. Another example of his firm handling pressure but dealt with through a more diplomatic approach was an incident in Tezpur (May 2022), his last district assignment before central deputation. The local Electricity department had registered a case against a fraudulent businessman for electricity theft worth 3.5 crore rupees. While he was on the run, pressure advice came from a locally influential person demanding stopping of the pursuit of the accused, citing his political affiliation. Unlike his initial reactions in Dima Hasao, he responded calmly but firmly, asserting the law. He diplomatically offered the mediator to make the fugitive surrender in lieu of his bail and with the political credits to the politician in front of the media and public. This confident approach, honed by experience, ensured that the law prevailed, with the politician later approaching him amicably in a public event, acknowledging his principled stance. These experiences underscore the importance of setting clear boundaries and standing firm against undue pressure.

The Decibel Experiment: A Community-Centric Approach to Noise Regulation

One of the enduring challenges in policing is enforcing laws that run against deeply ingrained social habits and cultural practices. In many parts of India, weddings, festivals, election celebrations, and community events traditionally continue late into the night with loud music and public gatherings. Added to this are the commercial interests of DJs, sound-system operators, hotels, and event organisers. Expecting police patrols alone to change such behaviour often leads to conflict rather than compliance.

In his first district as Superintendent of Police, Dhananjay viewed the issue largely as a problem of enforcement and often felt frustrated when violations continued despite regular patrolling. Over time, he realised that the challenge was much deeper than policing alone. Therefore, in his second district, he experimented with community awareness programmes in collaboration with NGOs, conducting outreach activities in residential colonies, colleges, and public spaces. While these efforts helped generate awareness, they did not produce the desired behavioural change. Police teams continued to face resistance, arguments, and occasional political pressure whenever they attempted to enforce noise regulations during celebrations.

But the breakthrough came in his third district when he shifted the focus from the consumers of the service to the providers. Dhananjay and his team began holding regular meetings with DJ operators, sound-system vendors, band owners, and fireworks suppliers. Instead of merely warning them, they explained the rationale behind the law—its impact on children, elderly citizens, patients, animals, and the environment. They also familiarised the providers with legal provisions, court judgments, and penalties for violations.

As compared to the initial two approaches, this time their enforcement strategy was equally practical. Rather than engaging in confrontations with large crowds at night, police teams documented violations and initiated action against the vendors the next day by temporarily seizing equipment. The temporary loss of business created a strong

economic deterrent without unnecessary public conflict.

Over time, the vendors themselves became partners in enforcement. They began informing customers that music beyond the permitted hours would not be possible. As compliance spread across the market, public behaviour gradually adjusted. The experience reinforced a valuable lesson: lasting law enforcement is most effective when it combines awareness, accountability, incentives, and community participation rather than relying solely on coercive action.¹

Taking a Break: MSc in Science & Technology Policy

After his tenure at Cyberdome, Dhananjay went for pursuing a Master's in the UK in 2017. His decision to pursue an MSc in Science & Technology Policy in the UK was driven by a personal inclination away from traditional law & order policing, towards his "first love," science and technology. This personal motivation, combined with the momentum from his work on Cyberdome, led him to apply for the Chevening Scholarship.

He secured admission to Cambridge, Edenborough and Sussex Universities. As per the advice of his S&T Guru, Dr Vijay Bhatkar Sir, he enrolled for MSc (Science & Technology Policy) course at Sussex University. The course included public policy studies and an elective in Security Technology. As a part of his academic writings, he authored a paper on crowd control technology, exploring ways to minimize harm while maximizing impact (e.g., non-lethal offensive smells). This interdisciplinary approach highlights his practical application of scientific principles to policing challenges.

¹India Today

https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/up-wedding-dj-noise-kills-140-chickens-case-filed-in-sultanpur-2903528-2026-04-30?jd=V2_1116444863309991&utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=taboola_news&dc_data=1381593_samsung-news-india&cex=false&origin_referral_type=app&exp=gulte-ec&response.session=v2_93b4c3a6c96dc7c27811bc06c2b9f220_acda3b41378db7a5e3a5765bba2e8f8eead32a8ddc8b3725b6c58b65bdde2dc7_1777511991_1777511991_CNawjgYQ6lxwGLnHh9eOqPX8TSABKAQwZziY0QpA3I8QSKPx1gNQod0VWAFgAGifmZyRhcyBjL4BcACAAQCIAQA&ui=acda3b41378db7a5e3a5765bba2e8f8eead32a8ddc8b3725b6c58b65bdde2dc7&response.id=b6203962d5916e2cc83360400446b744_90716bf563168c9c1025aadb6c62818e2



Dhananjay during his Master's studies in Science and Technology at the University of Sussex as a Chevening Scholar (2017–18).

A key academic engagement was his participation in the "STP Challenge" at the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), where participants had to propose science and technology-based solutions to global problems. His initial ideas revolved around crowd control and traffic regulation. However, his evolving concept was "Precision Policy Making" - a dynamic, real-time approach to policy formulation, contrasting with the static nature of traditional policies. He illustrated this with an example of dynamic parking prices in London, similar to how hotel and airline prices fluctuate.

This dynamic policy-making concept eventually led to his dissertation topic: "Precision Policymaking in Indian Agriculture using AI & Bigdata", specifically "Dynamic MSP" (Minimum Support Price). He challenged the static nature of India's MSP, arguing that a single price for 127 agro-climatic zones, with varying input costs, production, and market conditions, was illogical. His innovative idea was to develop an algorithm that would incorporate three types of data sets:

- **Nature-related:** Weather, soil, light, water etc.
- **Biology-related:** Crop health, yield forecast, weeds, pests, bacteria, viruses etc.
- **Economics-related:** Agricultural input prices and market prices at every *mandi*, land & labour costs, packaging, transportation etc.

This algorithm would then forecast prices and even suggest optimal crops for farmers to grow, thus making policy "agile and adaptive". This unique study garnered significant interest, leading to presentations at events like the India International Science Festival in Kolkata (2019) and discussions with central government figures like Ramesh Chand, especially in the context of farmer protests. This academic detour not only deepened his understanding of policy but also equipped him with a new lens through which to view and solve complex societal problems.

The Cyberdome Project: A Vision for Modern Policing

The Cyberdome project stands as a testament to his vision for integrating technology and innovation into policing. Its genesis was somewhat accidental, stemming from his work in Haflong, a town in Dima Hasao district of Assam. While there, he utilized network analysis of Facebook data and Call Detail Records (CDRs) to track and locate a fugitive from the SIMI jailbreak, who had sought refuge in his neighbouring district. This successful intelligence operation, garnered recognition from his own DGP, leading to an unexpected briefing with the then Chief Minister of Assam. The CM, keen on leveraging technology in policing, gave him an "open challenge" to study and propose solutions for modernizing Assam Police Cyber.

This provided him with a unique opportunity: he was given a posting with no other charter of duties but to focus solely on this project. He embarked on an extensive research tour across India, visiting premier police institutes, army, intelligence agencies, technical research organizations, and engaging with the private sector and institutions like IIT Guwahati. He notes that this was a rare privilege for an officer, demonstrating the government's commitment to the project. His detailed reports, presented after three months, thoroughly impressed the government, leading to further support.

The Cyberdome project is not just about technology; it was about institutional reform and building a self-sustaining ecosystem. His vision for Cyberdome was revolutionary for traditional policing:

- **Separate Cadre:** Instead of merely providing laptops and basic training to existing police, he proposed a dedicated, specialized cadre of trained cops with provision of academia-industry collaboration.
- **Government PSU (Company Format):** The idea was to form a government Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) whose sole client would be the Assam Police. This company would operate with a 400-strong workforce, mirroring a corporate structure with divisions, managers, and a shop floor.
- **Comprehensive Cyber Intelligence:** This included Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), cyber operations and systematic, methodological forensic data analysis from seized mobiles and laptops. The goal was to use big-data analytics to solve crimes proactively.
- **Integration with Existing Systems:** The project aimed to integrate with existing initiatives like the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS).
- **Training and Recruitment:** It involved developing three types of training courses, recruiting fresh talent from IT backgrounds, and determining their remuneration.
- **Revenue Generation:** Crucially, he envisioned a self-sustaining model where the Cyberdome would generate revenue. This could be achieved by leveraging police data (e.g., law and order situations, tourism data for hotels, background checks for private companies), offering services for a fee. This concept led to the "Assam Seva-Setu" project, which is now operational.
- **Academic and Industrial Collaboration:** The Cyberdome aimed to be a hub for PhD students and interns, offering them certificates and practical experience, drawing inspiration from successful models in Chandigarh and Gurgaon. This provided a crucial platform for youth talent, reviving ethical hacker clubs at IIT Guwahati and engaging students in real-world problem-solving.

He acknowledges the challenge of sustaining individual initiatives within a bureaucratic system, where projects can die with an officer's transfer. His intent with

Cyberdome was to create an "institutional body" that would continue to receive funds and operate, ensuring longevity regardless of who was at the helm. He advocates for open platforms for such initiatives to foster peer learning and healthy competition, citing organizations like BPR&D (Bureau of Police Research and Development) that promote sharing of best practices. He strongly believes in "participatory democracy," where citizens, especially youth, are given a stake and opportunity to contribute to governance. He continues to be a voluntary member of Micro-Mission on Communication & Technology by BPR&D and a life member of Assam Science Society.

Leadership in Crisis: COVID-19 and Combating Agitations

His posting to Dhemaji in December 2019 placed him in a major hotspot following the CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) protests in Assam, which had seen police firing and five deaths in Guwahati. The protests suddenly shifted government priorities, and he was dispatched to Dhemaji, where he successfully brought the situation under control within five months.

Then came COVID-19, presenting a new set of challenges that he tackled with innovative solutions:

- "COVID Sentinel" Project: He initiated this innovative project of community call centre to manage the pandemic's impact. During the lockdown, he mobilized 700 community volunteers, including teachers, housewives, and shopkeepers, who had never met each other.
- Community Groups: These volunteers formed WhatsApp groups to reach out to patients. Given the district's diversity, they communicated in 10-12 local languages.
- Structured Engagement: Each volunteer was assigned 10 patients and made daily calls using a structured conversation format, feeding data into a simple Google Form.

- Back-End Support: He established an IT team and a training team to manage data, assign patients, and train new volunteers.
- Holistic Patient Care: The project provided support for moral, mental health, and financial issues. It identified needs for ration and other supplies, arranging doorstep deliveries.
- Virtual Counseling: Psychologists and psychiatrists offered virtual counseling for mental health issues, and tele-medicine services were also provided.
- Self-Perpetuating Volunteerism: Patients, upon recovery, often became volunteers themselves, expanding the network and fostering a strong sense of community.



Dr. Dhananjay, SP Dhemaji, leading the COVID-19 vaccination drive from the front and inspiring trust among citizens through his medical expertise.

Beyond the pandemic, he addressed the root causes hindering business and development in Assam:

- Terrorism: While this is now largely contained, its historical impact deterred investment.
- Agitations/Blockades: Frequent and prolonged blockades by student unions (like AASU, AJYCP) disrupted economic activity.
- Extortion ("Chanda Culture"): The practice of demanding subscriptions amounted to extortion, further discouraging businesses.

He focused on the second challenge: combating agitations, particularly those affecting large infrastructure projects like the Lower Subansiri Hydro Power Project (NHPC). This project, conceived in 1984 for energy security, had been delayed for 40 years due to relentless protests, legal challenges, and politically motivated activism by student leaders. He contrasted this with China's rapid development, attributing India's delays to its inability to overcome such resistance.

In Dhemaji, in March 2020, he implemented his "Trishul Formula" against a sudden "bandh" called by the AJYCP.

- Legal Innovation: He swiftly used the less used Section 152 of the CrPC to issue notices to the organizers, bypassing the need for a magistrate.
- Strong FIRs: He personally drafted comprehensive FIRs with 12 sections, targeting not just the immediate disruption but also broader issues like pollution from tyre burning.
- Damage Assessment: He obtained a written assessment from the Deputy Commissioner, stating that the bandh caused Rs 2 crore rupees in damages, issuing a notice to the organizers to compensate in person for public property destruction.
- Contempt Notices: He pre-drafted contempt of court notices, citing High Court rulings against bandhs.
- Strategic Isolation: He strategically divided the two protesting organizations, isolating the primary agitators. This relentless legal pressure forced the national leadership of the student union to intervene, eventually leading to resignation and expulsion of the adamant student leader from his position.
- Institutionalization: The "Trishul Formula" was then circulated by the DGP across Assam, becoming a standard procedure for dealing with bandhs, significantly reducing such disruptions. This initiative, which he calls an "innovation" and a "case study" at the NPA, had a direct positive impact on the economy.

His subsequent posting to Tezpur in May 2022 saw him continue his firm, but measured, approach to maintaining law and order, reinforcing his reputation for integrity and effectiveness.

Central Deputation: A Broader Canvas

After his impactful field postings, he moved to Guwahati as DIG (Modernisation) in May 2022. This role, initially viewed with apprehension due to his distance from "numbers and math," proved to be "fantastic" and "enriching". He gained invaluable experience in budget making, spending, and audit compliance, areas traditionally associated with the IAS. He managed two full budget cycles, dramatically improving budget utilization from an average of 55-58% to a historic high of 92.5%. This involved "scientific budget making," equitably distributing funds across districts, including remote ones, and ensuring accountability. His DGP openly supported his efforts against corruption, ensuring every rupee was utilized effectively. This success even led to an unexpected offer for a Finance Secretary position before his central deputation.

His arrival in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Delhi, where he began his central deputation in August 2024, brought him into a different bureaucratic environment. He describes Delhi as a "very professional place" with a "rule-based" system, less susceptible to vested interests or local politics, unlike state administrations. The presence of officers from all parts of India fosters diversity and professionalism.

He highlights a key aspect of his current role: the expansion of his understanding from "internal security" to "national security". National security, he emphasizes, is a much broader concept, encompassing food security, financial security, and even intellectual threats like urban Naxalism, which originates in universities and infiltrates corporate sectors. He contrasts this with his previous roles of tackling armed Maoists in jungles, stating that the challenge of ideological subversion is equally complex. The unifying thread across all his roles is national security, which now provides a comprehensive framework for his diverse experiences.

Support of the Family

Dhananjay feels that he has been immensely lucky in getting unwavering support from his entire family and also friends, throughout his journey. His maternal grandfather had a great influence in his early days of Sainik School, which also gave him patriotic and disciplinary values. Support of his parents was exceptionally crucial during his Civil Services preparation journey. His father continues to be his personal role model for social service through administration. He also proudly acknowledges the career sacrifice by his wife, Shalaka who had to give up her budding career as a software engineer in Pune, when she shifted to remote Sadiya, which not only had no internet but even the electricity supply was for only 4 hours. She became a part of Assamese society over a decadal journey and single handedly managed the home front, allowing Dhananjay to devote a greater part of his time in the service of the nation.

Medals and recognitions

Dhananjay has an inner ascetic approach for the rewards and recognition bestowed on him. His services have been recognised by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt of India with '*Police Special Duty*' and the '*Internal Security Police Service Medal*'. DGP of Assam Police has conferred two *commendation two discs* on him. Additionally, he has received '*Chief Minister's Outstanding Service Medal*' for services in crisis situations.

Reflections on Change and Future Vision

Dhananjay reflects on the "tremendous" changes witnessed over his 15-year service, particularly in the North-East. He recalls Guwahati's transformation from a city where all shops closed before sunset to a thriving hub with riverfront development, luxury hotels, and a visible increase in tourism and youth aspirations. He takes inspiration from the rural youth, some of whom, like electricians from remote areas, he helped connect with opportunities in solar energy, transforming their lives.

However, he also expresses "concern" with the recent news picture about the contemporary Maharashtra society and polity, his home state. He feels that the tri-fold legacy of Maharashtra of that of Saintry tradition, Contribution of chain of social reformers and courage and valour by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj will somehow show the light.

Globally, he notes that India is a "very fast transition state," with strong systems evolving (e.g., New Education Policy, growing economy). However, he expresses concerns about India's over-reliance on foreign technology and its lack of indigenous innovation. He criticizes the pervasive influence of global tech giants (Google, Meta, Starlink, Microsoft) and even Chinese adversaries, asserting that India's digital footprint is extensively monitored, as evidenced by Edward Snowden's revelations.

He acknowledges India's tolerant society and positive responses to crises but insists that "bureaucratic reforms are absolutely necessary". He emphasizes the need for India to lead in science and technology adoption, focusing on patents and leveraging its talent.

His vision for the future is rooted in these observations:

- **Agile and Adaptive Bureaucracy:** A shift towards data-driven, outcome-based, transparent, and meritocratic governance.
- **Technological Leadership:** India should lead in S&T, particularly in areas like genetics and innovation studies.
- **Youth Talent Management:** Tapping into the potential of India's youth is crucial to avoid a "dividend loss".
- **Applied Policy and Bureaucracy Interface:** Focusing on practical solutions at the intersection of policy and administration.
- **Public-Private-Academic Partnerships:** Encouraging collaboration to bring diverse expertise into governance. He envisions a "conscription" model for civil services, where young professionals contribute their skills, even for reduced pay, to gain valuable experience.

- **Specific Focus:** Public Health: Drawing from his medical background and experience in Assam, he is keen on tackling vector-borne diseases including malaria, dengue and Japanese Encephalitis through proactive measures, community medicine principles, and technology.

JPCEC in Future

He sees Jnana Prabodhini as a unique institution that has maintained its core values of commitment and nationalism, unlike the overtly commercialized and often negative coaching industry, especially in Delhi.

His key recommendations are:

- **Scale Up:** Jnana Prabodhini needs to expand its reach beyond Maharashtra, particularly to Delhi and other major cities. The competitive exam market in Delhi is massive but dominated by commercial interests that often exploit students and compromise ethical standards.
- **Maintain Core Values:** The institution must continue to prioritize ethical grounding and national commitment over mere coaching. This is crucial for shaping future civil servants who uphold integrity.
- **"Catch Them Young":** Focus on aspirants at an early stage to instill strong values and ethics, as they are the immediate future of civil services.
- **Foster Partnerships:** Jnana Prabodhini should actively collaborate with national training academies like NPA, LBSNAA, and FSL to provide value-based education.
- **Continue Critical Thinking:** The institution should continue to emphasize critical thinking, as it is a crucial skill tested by UPSC and vital for effective public service.
- **Post-Product Collaboration and Networking:** Leverage its strong networks to collaborate with serving officers, fostering a continuous learning and improvement cycle.

- **Embrace Continuous Improvement:** Always ask "what more can we do for the nation?" reflecting a commitment to innovation and societal contribution.

In essence, his journey is a powerful testament to personal resilience, intellectual curiosity, and a deep-seated commitment to public service. His experiences underscore the complex interplay of personal ambition, societal challenges, technological advancements, and the enduring need for ethical leadership in bureaucracy. He envisions a future for India where agile policies, technological adoption, youth engagement, and robust institutional reforms lead to a more just and prosperous nation. Recently, he has been experimenting with Nishkam Karmayog at workplace, which he thinks is applied spiritualism.

Photo Gallery



Dhananjay & son Sarvadnya with Dr. Vivek and Dr. Savita Kulkarni



Dhananjay, wife Shalaka & son Sarvadnya with Vivek Sir.



Dhananjay as ASP Silchar with Former President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam during his visit to NIT Silchar.



Dhananjay with other officials receiving Hon. PM Shri. Narendra Modi during his visit to Assam.



Dhananjay as SP, Dhemaji leading an awareness drive at Mental Health Camp in Dhemaji.



Dhananjay was awarded 'Chief Minister's Outstanding Service Medal' for services in crisis situations.



Dhananjay (second row - extreme right) with Dr. Vivek Sir, Dr. Savita Tai and JP Family members at Maharashtra Sadan, New Delhi



Dhananjay during an interaction session with JP's interview batch 2016-17 along with Dr. Vivek Sir, Dr. Savita Tai and Late. Vivek Ponkshe sir.