

*Quick snippet from our conversation with Chief
Operating Officer, Capt. S.K. Bhattacharya.*



The professional journey of 12 years in completion today by our COO, OSS Air Management, brings into features of his valued functional and management acumen in the growth and progress of the company. His vision for the company and the strategic plans and guidelines ahead in the future to follow and transform vis a vis the existing crisis of pandemic across the country, are covered in the proceedings of his interview...an excerpts.

Team OSS Air: Sir... How adventurous had your Defence exposure been for three decades then later when you embarked upon Civil Aviation flying?

Capt. S.K. Bhattacharya: My Aviation journey has been fulfilling in all respects and has been challenging to the hilt. I started my career with Indian Air Force and have flown Chetak, Cheetah, MI-8, Mi-17, Mi-17-1V Helicopters of varied capabilities and for many missions including Anti-Insurgency, Anti-Naxal operations, Medical evacuations, Air Maintenance flights for supplies to the border units and for aerial combats and target destruction under extreme weather and challenging conditions. I have also flown similar missions for the Border Security Force. I have flown VIPs in Namibia, back in 1994-95.



“CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS DO PAINT A GLOOMY PICTURE BUT I FORESEE INDIAN AVIATION INDUSTRY HAS IMMENSE POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE GROWTH. MORE MARKET PENETRATION IS NEEDED, MORE AIRPORTS & AIRSTRIPS ARE NEEDED IN THE COUNTRY, AND FREQUENCY TO TIER II AND TIER III CITIES NEEDS TO BE INCREASED. AND IF YOU LOOK AT THE STATISTICS, A SIGNIFICANT CHUNK OF REVENUE FOR AIRLINES ARE COMING FROM TIER II CITIES, WHICH SIGNALS AT UPCOMING GROWTH POTENTIAL.

AT PRESENT, INDIA IS THE THIRD LARGEST CIVIL AVIATION MARKET DOMESTICALLY AND THE SEVENTH LARGEST IN THE WORLD AND OVER THE NEXT ONE DECADE, INDIA IS POISED TO BECOME SECOND OR THIRD LARGEST WORLD OVER, EVEN TAKING OVER THE UK. INVESTORS LOOKING FOR SHORT TERM GAINS, MAY BE WARY OF THE CURRENT CONDITIONS BUT LONG-TERM INVESTORS WILL REMAIN WELL ORIENTED FOR INDIAN AVIATION INDUSTRY, ENABLING THEM CHURN MORE PROFITS.”

CAPT. S.K. BHATTACHARYA

This is how, I embarked upon this exciting journey in the Aviation, post my Defence exposure, after 30 years, I came into Civil Aviation flying which is similar but with lesser challenges and in a more relaxed environment. The civil aviation also has its tense moments while catering to VIPs, EMS and Corporate charters.

Team OSS Air: Defence personnel are discipline oriented as this indeed in future experience them on to growth trajectory?

Capt. S.K. Bhattacharya: The important lesson from my enriching experience and journey with Indian Defence Forces is that 'Discipline' is what stands in good stead, and can really set you right on to the growth trajectory. Defined Goals or business objectives, pursued with unflinching discipline and carefully drawn strategic plan can make target hunting way too easy a task. But the twist in the tale is that we lack that discipline, leaving us amidst uncertainties and leading to failures.

Team OSS Air: Aviation Sector as like other industries has to bear the brunt of the Covid 19 pandemic, in terms of operational and revenue...your overview?

Capt. S.K. Bhattacharya: Undoubtedly, Aviation Industry is facing unparalleled adversities on account of the economic slowdown catalysed by this Corona pandemic. We are the first one to bear the brunt of a slowdown. But the recovery, especially for the Indian aviation industry, will not be a long-drawn process as there is sufficient domestic demand within the country, fuelling the fast-paced recovery by early 2023. Our Domestic Traffic had already reached 77.5 % of Pre-COVID levels by January'2021 with around 80% asset utilization & within 7 months after airliners resumed operations on 25th May, post Extended Lockdown last year.

Team OSS Air: The capital cost of Machine then the other overheads of maintenance and cost of carrying inventory besides the salary, ultimately results to difficulties in covering the marginal efficiency of the machine in terms of charter tariff?

Capt. S.K. Bhattacharya: Inefficient financial planning and rather incompetent market forces are the factors to be blamed for stagnant charter rates. A twin rotor costing around 7 million to 15 million USD or more with all the maintenance, spares, salary, airport charges, ever rising fuel prices and other operational overheads, getting marketed for about USD 2000 - USD 3500 an hour, doesn't make any financial sense to me, unless demand is in abundance and supply is scarce.

Team OSS Air: Investment in Aviation sector and the existing market dynamics of it carries enough potentials for return?

Capt. S.K. Bhattacharya: Average age of machines is around 16 years in Rotor Wings category and over the last decade, averagely about 95 new machines have been inducted into Indian RW fleet against de-registrations of about 60 helicopters, which is fairly a good number. Demand is surely going to pick up with increased diverse usage of Helicopters and not to mention, India is a country of elections, so market forces will take care of it in due course.

Current economic conditions do paint a gloomy picture but I foresee Indian Aviation industry has immense possibilities for future growth. At present, India is the third largest Civil Aviation Market domestically and the seventh largest in the world and over the next one decade, India is poised to become second or third largest world over, even taking over the UK. Investors looking for short term gains, may be wary of the current conditions but long-term investors will remain well oriented for Indian Aviation Industry, enabling them churn more profits.

Team OSS Air: Professional career in Aviation Sector for Commercial pilots for the fresh entrants' values bright prospects as for the tremendous growth foreseen in the future for the industry? Any diversification plans and initiating new aviation projects?

Capt. S.K. Bhattacharya: The projected growth rate of Aviation sector had been upbeat till Covid-19 brought it crashing down. Presently we are hopeful that the industry will recover to pre-Corona traffic volume by the end of the year. Hence the requirement of Pilots, Engineers and other professionals would again increase making career in the Aviation sector lucrative.

Moreover, Commercial pilots have to spend a huge amount of money to obtain their License, also the Companies have to pay for 'Type Training' which for the Agusta Westland 'Leonardo' Light helicopters is at least INR 45.0 Lakhs. Hence it is an expensive and time-consuming process which most of the Competitors circumvent by poaching. This has to be curbed by mutually respecting each other's domain and contractual obligations.

Team OSS Air: Any diversification plans and initiating new aviation projects?

Capt. S.K. Bhattacharya: As per few industrial analysis, over the next decade, collectively 100s -1000s more Commercial & Business jets and helicopters are going to grace the aviation industry world over, driving the demand for pilots and other aviation professionals. These numbers make us all heave a sigh of relief amid the current industry situations. Our organization is looking forward to induct four twin rotors, out of which two machines are expected to be active before Dec'2021. We are in the process of expanding our MRO footprints across the international boundaries in neighbouring states and we are working over many other aviation projects as well. We will proudly announce about our new ventures once some concrete developments take place.