



The diver gestured to his dive partner to come towards him. He had spotted something hidden in the reef and wanted to share the sight with his partner. Through the clear blue waters he could see her hesitating. In this underwater environment, sign language was the only way to communicate. He gestured towards her again and finally she relented, gliding towards him and settling down next to him. He held her hand and guided her towards a cove in the coral where, resting at the bottom, was an eight feet long nurse shark. He could see her eyes open wide in terror, but gestured to her to calm down and gently proceeded to pet the shark on its head.

When back on board his 40 metre yacht, his partner was exhilarated at the experience. "What an experience!" she said. "I agree" he replied, "and you know what? Of all the places in the world, it's here that Mrs. Dean's words make the most sense to me... I just experienced Harmony."

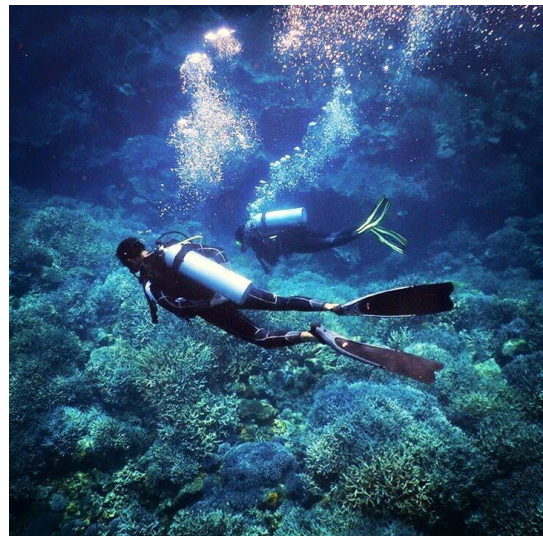
Sunil Bakshi is what you get if you mix a bit of Indiana Jones, Jacques Cousteau, Steve McQueen and J.D Rockefeller together, along with probably a few more! While most heroes are born out of adversity, Sunil has always created his own destiny. And yet, while Sunil has powered through even the most difficult times with such effortless ease, his path hasn't always been an easy one.

Sunil's parents were from west Punjab and came over during the partition. Like many at the time, they had to start their life from scratch. But that didn't prevent them from sending their son to what they believed was the best school that they could find, AVM Santacruz.

Sunil was always an all rounder. He excelled in academics, in sports and was very popular in school. And he credits a great deal of it to his teachers. "Mrs. Pandit and Mrs. Shobha Dean instilled values in me. They encouraged free thinking, expression and the exchange of ideas. In fact, as a child, I had a lot of energy. They channeled my energy productively and taught me to give 100% to all my endeavours. Hard work and discipline did the rest", he says.

After securing distinction in the ICSE board exams, he went to St. Xavier's college and then to UL Lafayette to do his industrial engineering. Upon completion of his education and return to India, Sunil set his sights on what was to become one of his many accomplishments, his family business.

Bax counsel was a small family owned firm based in Mumbai, providing quality control and assurance to the oil and gas industry. But Sunil had a much bigger dream -- to take his company to the forefront of the oil and gas industry not just in India, but across the globe. And his competitors were, well, some of the biggest names in the oil and gas industry such as Lloyds Register LR, Bureau Veritas and DNV.



Undeterred, with sheer determination, self-belief and through sustained efforts, Sunil steadily grew his small company into a multinational with offices in the UAE and the United states in a span of only about 12 years!

A water baby all his life, Sunil had always been a swimmer and diving enthusiast. He was among the first batch of divers in India who got certified in 1996. However, the lack of diving opportunities within India disappointed him greatly. “People talk of how good scuba diving is in places like Thailand. I always thought we should be able to showcase what a great diving experience the Andaman Islands can offer. And here we were - with nothing” he says. And this gave him his next mega idea – to build his own yacht so that divers from across the world could enjoy the beauty of Indian waters!

The "Infiniti" is the result - 40 metres long with 4 decks and 15 bedrooms, it can house 40 people at a time in any part of the world.



“I was looking for an ocean going vessel that would be compatible with my vision for a dive ship but nothing on the market came up to mark. So instead of compromising, I set about building one from scratch myself! I had never built a ship before in my life, but I was fortunate to have an excellent team with me. It took us sixteen months of tremendous hard work and 1.2 million dollars, but we built a very good ship” he says, with a twinkle in his eyes and a broad smile on his face. “And the proudest moment for me was when we hoisted the Indian flag on the ship’s mast. India had its first registered dedicated diving vessel!”

Did he have any challenges along the way, we ask him. “Oh yes, there were quite a few. But I managed to take care of them. Mrs. Dean always told me to always work hard, be disciplined and add value to whatever I do. She had the faith that, one day, I would achieve something wonderful in life. I just wish she was alive to see me today” he says, in a voice filled with nostalgia and gratitude.



So what is Sunil’s secret to a successful life? He candidly replies, “Compassion, kindness, co-existence and sprezzatura, that’s how I live my life. I learned all that at school.” We get the first three, but sprezzatura -- “what’s that?” we ask him.

“Oh! It means that one should be so skilled at their craft that when someone sees us at work, they should

think what we do is effortless." he replies. "Mrs. Dean taught me that" he adds, "I live my life on those words." Inevitably, it demands the setting of high standards and dedicated practice.



Sunil has explored uninhabited islands, turned his small family owned company into a multinational, built his own yacht and proudly calls the clear blue waters off the Andaman Islands his home. His vision towards pioneering diving in India is now complete. He now takes new as well as experienced divers to explore the marine life in the Andaman Islands and couldn't be more satisfied with life.

"How did you manage to do it all so quickly and easily?" we ask him.

"Sprezzatura", he says with a smile.