

# Two Women Officers And The Idea Of India

It's an image for the ages. At the first govt briefing about the precision strikes against Pakistan-based terror hubs, Indians got to see a powerful snapshot of the way of life that Operation Sindoor was launched to protect. It was in two languages. Both sexes were represented. Flanking foreign secretary Vikram Misri were two soldiers, both women, one Muslim and one Hindu. Namely, Colonel Sofiya Qureshi of the Indian army and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh of

the Indian air force.

The particular heinousness of the Pahalgam attack lay in how it segregated the men and the women, the Hindus and Muslims, the tourists from the locals. The intention was crudely clear. To undermine one thing: Indian society's idea of itself as united and strong. Images of officers Qureshi and Singh told the world how steely, enduring and magnificent this idea of India is. It is possible that the press briefing left Pakistan as stunned as the

precision strikes.

The confident but sober disposition of the Indian women officers would be foreign, even offensive, to many in Pakistan. Deepening radicalisation hasn't just deprived women and men of autonomy there, it has brought fractiousness even to Pak army ranks. Their ability to defend themselves has been hollowing alongside what they are defending. In their determined hugging of an imagined past, Pakistanis have kept falling behind forward-

looking Indians. As a national identity gets trapped in fear, anxiety and hatred, everything that's attractive about it drains away.

The constitutionality that has arrested the communal arc in India has also enabled the kind of human flourishing that Colonel Qureshi and Wing Commander Singh represent. This inclusivity and excellence is the best part of us. This is what we are fighting to defend. It is pretty special not just in South Asia, but in the whole world.