

Dilip Donde

Captain **Dilip Donde** (born 26 September 1967) is a retired [Indian Naval](#) officer and the first Indian to complete a solo, unassisted [circumnavigation](#) of the globe under [sail](#). From April 2006 to May 2010 he planned and executed Project 'Sagar Parikrama' which involved constructing a sailboat in India and then sailing it around the world. He was the hundred and ninetieth person to complete the journey solo.[!]

Service/branch: Indian Navy / Clearance Diver

Rank: Captain

Awards:

- Shaurya Chakra
- Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award
- MacGregor Medal
- Maritime Achievement Award

Sagar Parikrama

The voyage was the first of the Indian Navy's project Sagar Parikrama, initiated by late Vice-Admiral Manohar Prahlad Awati (Retd). Capt. Donde started his circumnavigation from Mumbai on 19 August 2009 and finished on 19 May 2010. During the nine-month-long circumnavigation he stopped at four ports and was at sea for 157 days. Donde volunteered to undertake the project for the Indian Navy in 2006. Over the next four years he built a boat with an Indian boat-builder, trained himself and sailed solo around the world with four stops en route.

The vessel

The boat used in his circumnavigation as part of the Sagar Parikrama project was the Indian Navy Sailing Vessel INSV Mhadei, custom built by the Indian Navy. The 56-foot Van de Stadt 'Tonga' design sloop was built as a wood core epoxy construction by Mr Ratnakar Dandekar at his boat yard Aquarius Shipyard Pvt Ltd on Divar island in Goa by Ratnakar Dandekar. The boat was handed over to the Indian Navy on 12 February 2009 and named after the river Mhadei, the original name of the Mandovi River in Goa.

Solo circumnavigation

The requirements to qualify for solo circumnavigation include:

- Starting and finishing in the same Port
- Not passing through any Canals or Straits that would necessitate outside assistance or motoring
- Crossing all meridians at least once
- Crossing the Equator at least twice

- Traversing at least 21,600 NM
- Rounding the three great capes viz Cape Leeuwin, Cape Horn and Cape of Good Hope

Donde recounts his story in his book, *The First Indian: Story of the First Indian Solo Circumnavigation Under Sail*.^{[8][9]} He left Mumbai from the Naval Dockyard on 19 August 2009 at 16:30 after being flagged off by Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sureesh Mehta. He crossed, from West to East, the Indian, Pacific, Southern and Atlantic Oceans, covering over 23,000 nautical miles, rounding Cape Leeuwin in Australia, Cape Horn in South America and Cape of Good Hope in Africa. The journey took 273 days and was completed on 19 May 2010.

On 22 May 2010, he was given a ceremonial welcome in Mumbai by the then Vice President of India, Mohd Hamid Ansari. Ansari stated, "Donde has shown that skill, determination and courage can achieve what is considered to be immensely difficult, if not impossible." Dilip Donde became the first Indian to complete such a journey.

Mentor

Dilip Donde mentored Lt Cdr Abhilash Tomy and headed the shore support team to plan and execute Sagar Parikrama 2, the first solo nonstop circumnavigation by an Indian. He subsequently trained several young naval officers, most recently the all women naval officers team that completed Navika Sagar Parikrama.