Overcoming Crisis in Leadership

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Brig (Retd) K Kuldip Singh

Foreword by
Dr. Karan Singh

1998
MANAS PUBLICATIONS
New Delhi - 110002 (INDIA)

MANAS PUBLICATIONS
(Publishers, Distributors & Exporters)
4819/XI, Varun House, Mathur Lane,
24, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj,
New Delhi-110002 (INDIA)
Ph. : 3260783, 3265523, 2919762, 2523865
Fax : 011 - 3272766 & 2927854
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First Published 1998

ISBN 81- 7049-096-0

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Typeset at
Innovative Processors
New Delhi-110 002

Printed in India at
Print Perfect, New Delhi
and Published by Mrs. Suman Lata for
Manas Publications, 4819/XI, Varun House,
Mathur Lane, 24, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj,
New Delhi-110002 (INDIA)

Dedicated to

The great Indian Soldiers
who symbolise the nation's integrity
and a promise for a brighter tomorrow

Foreword

The quality of leadership is always critical to the progress of a nation as it moves towards achieving its shared goals. This is more so at this crucial juncture in our history, when we stand poised between a disintegrating past and an indeterminate future. Fifty years back, in the wake of the euphoria of Independence, people eagerly joined together to build a new nation and bring about social and economic change. The process of development during the past five decades have stirred up winds of change that have unleashed social turmoil in our nation. The unrealised hopes and dreams of the people have made them restless. In a society in transition, like ours, the quality of leadership that we provide ourselves assumes paramount importance.

Leadership is a continuum, stretching from family, community to nation. In our national polity, the armed forces have an important space. Since Independence, they have been repeatedly called upon to defend our territories not only against external threats but also from internal subversion. In creating a secure environment for stability and growth, the Indian Army along with its two sister Services have played an important role. While its history is replete with saga of glory and sacrifice, its leadership has to realise that there has to be a paradigm shift in its focus to reorient itself to the new role, and that too in a rapidly changing social and economic climate.

This treatise by Brigadier (Retd) K. Kuldip Singh is a timely effort. It analyses certain crucial issues facing the Indian Army and also provides an insight into the impact of external social changes on the morale and professionalism of the armed forces. It is a blend of extensive research and analysis, livened up with author's personal recollections and anecdotes. The author has served the Indian Army

with distinction for 34 years, and has held sensitive command and staff positions as well as important instructional assignments. His hands-on experience of counter-insurgency operations, from Nagaland and Manipur in 1963 to Jammu & Kashmir in 1989-91 and Punjab in 1991-92, has provided him a keen insight into the new role that the Army has been called upon to play.

A study of the various aspects of the Indian Army's functioning should be of interest to all those who are concerned about a vital arm of our polity. In this meaningful study, the author has addressed some of the critical problems and has come up with innovative and pragmatic suggestions. While doing some plain-speaking, he has delivered a refreshing message on certain core issues that are linked to the larger one of our national security. I am sure the book will be read with interest not only by those directly involved in our defence structure, but also by the wider audience of concerned citizens.

15 May 1998 Karan Singh

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Preamble

Man, as a psycho-physical being, is most at home with nature. Left to himself, he is averse to any types of codes or restraints on his natural instincts. Yet, man alone is the rational and ethical being, concerned about social harmony. To this end, he is, by and large, prepared to accept and abide by dictates of the code of morality, for greater harmony in the society. The essence of value-oriented Indian philosophy is to exercise self control, by subordinating one's lower instinctive nature to the higher values, which have been evolved over millenniums of human experience and accepted as a way of life, most suited to human physical, psychological and spiritual needs.

The classical Indian philosophy could not retain its true ethnic touch, after the West came in, leading to certain deviant trends in our pristine culture. The present-day ethics of the Indian society is not compatible with the typical Indian way of life, but shows streaks of the western influence, resulting in a pseudo culture of opportunism. This has brought about a psychological crisis in the common man, as to his choice, between what is expedient for short-term gains vis-a-vis the indigenous value-based ethos, where self is always subordinated to the larger good of the society. The period of over half a century, as a sovereign independent nation, has not helped resolve the crisis of ethics in the Indian society; it continues to grope for a national character, based on a clearly defined code of ethics, which an Indian can proudly claim as his own, and which could safeguard his honour and ensure a healthy growth of society. The present-day youth are vulnerable to the alien influence, because they are not fully conscious and proud of their own heritage. Caught in the whirlpool of fast-paced existential activity, with little time to pause and ponder, we continue to hope that some method will emerge out of madness,

resulting in re-crystallisation of our own ethical values, to work as a model for the society.

It is natural that the absence of a model code in society should find its reflection in the military ethos as well, which India inherited from the Britishers. From a mercenary British-Indian Army, which loyally carried the flag of its master in all major conflicts of the world, besides consolidating the colonial empire in the Indian sub-continent, the growing years since Independence, have witnessed a series of wars, where its performance as a combat force has varied from a disaster in the 1962 Sino-Indian war, to the Indo-Pak war of 1971, where Indian military could redeem, to an extent, its lost credi-bility, which was made convenient because of a bigger muddle in the opposite camp. Regrettably, the Indian Army seems to be relapsing into the 1962 syndrome. With over a generation gap, since the country's combat forces were put to a war test in 1971, a new crop of senior hierarchy has come up, whose war time experience is at best limited to a sub unit level. With the market-place values threatening the traditional ethics of professionalism and self-sacrifice, the non-professional mediocrity has a field day, to go places, and to usurp the higher hierarchy. The large scale employment of the security forces in the counter-insurgency operations notwithstanding, the ongoing longish peace-time interlude since the last war, seems to have brought about a sedative complacency in the Army's state of preparedness for war, and injected the tardy values of 'self before the organisation'. This warrants a serious introspection.

The changing socio-economic environment in the country is threatening to take its toll, by gradually distancing the service ethos from its traditional values. We seem to be losing track of the cardinal principle of human philosophy, 'If you get the values correct, the other things will fall into place'. Therefore, shaping of values and perceptions must take precedence. Unfortunately, neither any thought seems to be given, nor any measures are known to be taken, to nurture and restore the traditional values. What used to be an unwritten convention for the top brass, to take every opportunity, to reiterate importance of the service values, by personal examples, talks or through personal notes, has become a thing of the past.

In this state of transformation, the erosion in service values may not show cracks during peace or no-war-no-peace ambience, but unless some firm and positive corrective measures are taken to restore the professional service ethics, the system will not be able to

withstand the pressure of a future war crisis. While India's potential adversary, across the western borders, nurses a spirit of vengeance and is unlikely to miss an opportunity to settle its score of 1971 defeat, the adversary in the North will continue, in foreseeable future, to retain a capacity to strike at will against India, whenever the situation demands. Besides, the divisive elements working within the country get encouragement from the confusion obtaining in the national polity and the resultant bluntness of the sharp edge of its security forces.

The armed forces are the mainstay of the nation's integrity and sovereignty. It is the collective responsibility of all citizens in the country to help sustain the service ethos and the highest state of preparedness for war. The gravest threat to an effective military machine and service values comes from the common man's lack of awareness of the military matters, which bear directly on his personal security and freedom. In the backdrop of the Indian heritage of an honoured soldiery, in which the *Kshatriya* (soldiers) always had an exalted status, the soldier has come to be treated as a sacred cow, resulting in a stuporous belief in the society that all must be well in the military. As no system can be effectively self-corrective in the absence of an outside mechanism to test professional efficiency, the dilution in professionalism and values in the military is bound to perpetuate and attain acceptability. What is worse is that in this state of confusion and ignorance, we seem to have acquired a self-deluding sense of well-being.

The element of Indian military, which anyone can be proud of, is its stock of soldiery and junior leaders. The soldier material joining the forces continues to be one of the best in the world, and makes up for the inadequacies of its leadership. Even the junior leaders have, time and again, proved their class, in all wars and the long drawn low-intensity warfare in the disturbed border states of the country. It is the unparalleled quality and performance of the rank and file and junior leadership in the past which have brought the nation glory and sustained the military image of valour and sacrifice. Their share of sacrifice in all wars speaks volumes of their patriotic spirit and dedication to service, though the same could not be always said about the senior leadership.

A critical look at the handling of major operations and other developments during the last about two decades involving military forces, namely, the so-called Samba spying scandal, Operation Blue

Star, Indian Peace Keeping Force operations in Sri Lanka, Operation Rakshak, the increasing incidents of men turning their guns against their officers, as observed by *'India Today'* dated 30 June, 1997, in its article 'Murderous Backlash', and a number of recent court cases, eliciting adverse comments by courts, on an arbitrary functioning within military, would give a discerning reader an impression that all is not well with the military professionalism and its morale behind the projected facade of military discipline, which reflects poorly on the senior military hierarchy. The recent incidents of gross insubordination, bordering on mutiny, by a section of the Indian Air Force, have exposed the sordid skeleton in the closets of the country's top politico-military leadership, which calls for a soul-searching exercise.

Man being what he is, wars will continue, as it is hard to conceive a future without a conflict. With ever increasing complexity and prohibitive costs of waging a war, those whose business is its management, assume a more important role in our society than ever before. It is, therefore, important to formulate a clear idea of what society looks for in its professional armed man. To recognise what we need, demands an understanding of what we have. It requires a journey into the past, into the very roots of the Indian culture, and a critical look at the setup we have today, to be sure that it foots the bill.

The classic saying, "The worst threat to a country comes from its indigenously produced group of military sycophants", demands prudence on the part of every citizen to look for the foreboding indicators, if any, of a threat to its security, and take corrective measures, before it is too late. Understandably, proliferation of sycophancy and supremacy of mediocrity are not the bane of military alone. This is a national phenomenon. In the ambience of sycophant mediocrity ruling the roost, it is indeed refreshing to come across a forthright , self-respecting and an inspiring leader in the military, bureaucratic or political hierarchy. As if the most have forsaken their fundamental right of self-esteem and projecting an honest point of view, instead of being a silent spectator or a mute yes-man. Those who have no stomach for a differing point of view, are invariably a vast majority in any establishment. Therefore, only a miracle could help a naturally forthright man to go a few notches up in the ladder of the hierarchy.

In loyalty to the service, for having provided me a proud patronage for over 34 long years, I have felt impelled to put down

my observations and views on the service ethos, as I perceived. What inspired me to undertake this awe-inspiring subject for writing was, firstly to share with readers, particularly from the civil stream, who are not acquainted with military matters, certain topically crucial issues pertaining to the services, and secondly, to reflect and identify, what I believed, was the serious malaise, which must be rectified before long. In order to make the package comprehensive, without becoming copious, I have endeavoured to give readers a brief insight into the crucial manpower related issues, culminating into a proposed structure and size of the Army, and how the police forces fit in the ambit of the country's security. Thereafter, having dwelt on the core issue of the book, i.e., 'crisis in leadership', I reckoned, giving glimpses from personal experience of command would add flesh to the bones.

Since the aim of this work is to have a clear perspective of the weaknesses, the good that prevails and sustains the organisation is not being touched on. Needless to reiterate that the spirit behind this exercise is my faith in the matchless quality of our soldiery and the belief that unless the national interest is supreme in all our considerations, there will always be hiccups in the propriety of our acts and values. The portrayal of not-too-bright a picture, which follows, may not come as a total surprise to an informed reader. Even otherwise, while there is no reason for the reader to feel dispirited, there is undoubtedly a cause for concern for the obvious degradation in the service values of 'professionalism' and 'service before self'. With a belief that indigenous problems require home-made solutions, for which one need not look for an exotic prescription bearing relevance to an outlandish diagnosis, I proceed to share with the readers my thoughts and beliefs on some of the crucial issues, pertaining to the armed forces, in an earnest bid to keep on my services to the cause of the Army one was privileged to serve.

I acknowledge, with profound gratitude, the spontaneous encouragement I received from a large cross-section of kind friends and (former) colleagues, with whom I discussed the various issues addressed in the book. I cannot but gratefully mention the names of Generals KS Khajuria, SK Sarda, RPRC Naidu, Chandan Nugyal, Madan Kandal, Brigadier Jagat Jamwal, Colonels Prakash Singh, Sudarshan Solaria and Ramesh Raman, who were kind to give me much of their time and helped me in refining my thought process, on various service matters, in the long discussions I had with them.

The initial massive typing effort provided by Jay Seelan was a remarkable work. And finally, the enthusiasm and ready response of young publisher, Vivek Garg, helped me immensely in giving final touches to this venture of mine.

My grateful heart also goes to son Vikram and daughter Vandana (Rinku), who throughout provided me all the strength and support in this venture. It was heartening to find how discerning and involved Vikram was in his quietly scribbling apt pencil remarks on my drafts. What touched me most was Rinku's cheerful acceptance, in her usual spirited way, to sit for long hours, every now and then, on her computer to edit and print out fresh drafts, which never seemed to end. To top them all, I cannot adequately thank my wife, Renu, for her ever being my strength all through the long years of our togetherness.

Pathankot, India K Kuldip Singh

Part I

Indian Army : A Perspective

- Rank and File
- Officer Cadre
- The Standing Army
- Voluntary National Service

One

Rank and File

RECRUITMENT POLICY

The ancient Indian social order was divided into four 'varnas' (castes), in which the elite *Kshatriyas* joined the armed forces. They not only constituted the state's soldiery, but also ruled the state. Thus, soldiering was deemed a noble profession, a call to one's supreme duty. However, with the British entry into India, they gave a mercenary colour to the soldiery, and selectively designated certain classes as martial, which was basically designed to reward those classes/regions which had come to their rescue in times of the grave crisis in 1857, against the revolt by the Indian troops. The concept of 'martial classes' had otherwise no other rationale. Thus, after 1857, the enrolment was, by and large, made from selected areas and classes, with a large Indian population being kept out of it.

The Goal of All-India All-Class Based Recruitment

The current recruitment policy is based on recruitable male population (RMP) of each state. The RMP constitutes those persons who meet the qualitative requirement for recruitment, which is reckoned as 10 per cent of the male population of each state. The RMP percentage formula has, however, remained an unfulfilled dream because of the existing class composition of the majority of arms, namely, Infantry, Armoured Corps and Artillery.

A brief definition of the various class compositions, in force in the Indian Army, is as follows: 'Single Class' implies those units which entirely comprise personnel belonging to one region, religion or class. 'Mixed Class' are units having personnel based on fixed percentage from specific regions or classes. 'All Class Zonal' implies units having personnel from one zone. Finally, 'All Class All India' are those units comprising personnel from all parts of the country, without any fixed proportions. As regards the current status of the various class compositions in the Army, it may be noted that in Infantry, 75 percent constitute 'Single Class' and 'Fixed Class', and only 9 per cent are 'All Class All India' basis; Armoured Corps have 50 per cent 'Fixed' and 'Mixed' classes and the remaining 50 per cent are 'All Class All India'; Artillery have 46 per cent 'Single' and 'Fixed' classes and 54 per cent 'All Class All India' basis; Engineers are organised on compatible zonal basis and Signals and other services are 'All Class All India' based.

After Independence, the country avowed the policy of gradually transforming the system of recruitment to all-India all-class based, to give an equitable representation to all states and regions. However, efforts to give it an all-India all-class based profile have failed, because of sentiments attached to the concept of single or fixed-class based regiments, which have existed for over a century. The regions/ classes dominating representation in the fixed and single-class based large segment of the Army naturally resist its conversion into all-class all-India composition, because it amounts to losing a substantial opening for employment of its youth.

A table based on the last national census, which gives the percentage share of each state, to subscribe to the country's enrolment in the Army is given at Appendix attached. It will be seen from the table that contribution to the country's soldiery, by a large number of states, is lower than their due share, though some other states are subscribing four to five times their population-based share. This issue has remained unresolved, because the single or fixed-class composition of the majority of regiments in the Army, necessitates enrolment only from those areas, to which troops of those regiments belong to. For example, enrolment for regiments, like Dogra, Sikh, Maratha and Jat, etc., has to be done from areas where these classes come from. Besides, the under-developed physical and educational standard, obtaining in the other states, results in weak response and poor selection, which further compounds the problem of their

representation in the armed forces. Thus, the concept of preferential fixed-class based recruitment, initiated by the British, has continued.

The concept of single or fixed class regiments has denied to the armed forces, to an extent, a truly national representation, because from certain regions recruitment is far below their share. After Independence, with a view to broad-basing the recruitment policy, all new Regiments namely, Brigade of Guards, Mahars, etc., which were raised on all-class all-India basis, have acquitted themselves with credit, no less significantly than any other regiment, having one class or fixed class composition. In the past, steps were initiated for gradual conversion of the existing class-based composition of the Army to all-India all-class based, but abandoned because the modality to achieve this change was not well conceived, resulting in confusion and on-ground problems in implementation. For example, in mid-80s, an experiment to raise units, by mixing sub units from different regiments, led to serious functional problems. Firstly, the donor units had tried to pass on their none-so-bright rank and file, particularly when the new unit was being raised as part of a different regiment. Secondly, a sub unit as a whole, has a greater problem of adjusting in a new unit, having majority from another regiment, which led to inter-group frictions. On the other hand, units raised by pooling or recruiting individuals on all-class all-India basis have proved a better success. Besides, for ultimate changeover to the broad-based composition in old units, when decided to be implemented, the prudent course would be to gradually provide relief on all-class all-India basis, of those proceeding on retirement or discharge from service.

Gorkha Enrolment

Enrolment of Nepali Gorkhas in Indian Army gives another curious angle to the problem of intake in the armed forces. There are seven Infantry Regiments (37 units) which have been drawing most of their intake from Nepal, under an Indo-Nepal-UK Tripartite Treaty. The popularity of Gorkhas as combat soldiers had also got them on the roll of British Army, having four regiments of Gorkhas, which are now in the process of being wound up. Gorkhas, as doughty fighters, have a universal recognition. However, notwithstanding the favourable effect of the Treaty on Indo-Nepal special relationship, it is a matter for consideration whether to continue indefinitely with the British legacy of preferential recruitment from Nepal, when a large unemployed population of Indian domicile Gorkhas, who are widely

settled in the East, North-East, North and North-West regions of the Himalayas and Shivaliks, are as good a soldier stock as their Gorkha brethren from Nepal, or for that matter, any other Indian. No gainsaying the sensitivity of the Indo-Nepal friendly relationship and India's deep-felt gratitude for the great services rendered by the Napalese Gorkhas in safeguarding its sovereignty, we have to be extremely circumspect in review or taking stock of the matter. Perhaps, the answer lies not in outright stoppage of recruitment from Nepal, but to gradually increase representation of Indian Gorkhas to constitute 50 per cent in the Gorkha units, which at present predominantly comprise Nepali Gorkhas. This will also generate larger opening and promotional prospects for the Gorkha rank and file which is rather stifled at present.

ENTRY EDUCATION STANDARD

Hardy Rural vis-a-vis Educated Urban

Before addressing ourselves to the question of entry education standard for recruitment, it will be worthwhile to touch on certain aspects relevant to the subject. Firstly, besides an individual's acquired standard in formal education and physical fitness, the sum-total of personality extends to the character qualities, ingrained by virtue of his environment of upbringing, which bear crucially on his responses in combat. Whereas a deficiency in pre-enrolment formal education can be compensated through an organised education after recruitment, the character inadequacies are hard to make up. Therefore, a system with no arrangement of screening a candidate's psychological or character potential, cannot be allowed to be over-influenced by his mere education qualification. Secondly, in India's context, there is a danger in accepting a belief held by some Western analysts of war, that technological proficiency can substitute hardy-hood, bravery or the spirit of sacrifice. If superior technology alone could win a war, the US Army would not have had a bloody nose in Vietnam. Nor could one draw an inference that the lessons of the Gulf war against Iraq have a universal application. Thirdly, poor education facilities in the countryside leave much to be desired, to enable the rural youth to harness their potential and compete with their urban-based counterparts. It will, perhaps, take another generation or so before education in rural India can get organised well. There is, therefore, a danger in prematurely tilting the selection-system for enrolment in favour of the urban youth. Lastly, the

system should take a total view of the candidate's background to include his education standard, trainability potential and the organisational support for post-enrolment education. Therefore, prudence demands that the thrust should be to further streamline organisational facilities to make up deficiency in the entry education, if any, so that the soldierly stock is not missed out.

Matric Entry

The recent introduction of matric entry in Indian Army, even for general duty trades of the combat arms and services, has given a different complexion to the quality of soldiery. Evidently, upgradation of the entry education standard has found merit, in view of the improved literacy standard in the country, which ought to find reflection in military. The protagonists of introduction of matric entry rightly believe that for handling of more sophisticated weapons, being introduced in the services, higher educational standard is warranted. The need for such selective higher standard, for technical trades in the Services, had already been appreciated, accepted and has been in vogue. However, the eternal role of the Infantry soldier 'to close-in and destroy the enemy', or that of a gunner at the gun position, or in a tank in assault, place a higher premium on certain soldierly character qualities, than higher educational standard.

It will, however, be naive to underplay the importance of formal education in realising the inherent potential of a man. It is to this end that an organised system of adult education exists in the Army. Principly, there is merit in introducing higher educational standards for enrolment, even in the combat arms and services, as long as this change does not rob them of the veritable soldierly stock from the rural areas. The experience after introduction of matric entry, so far, shows that in implementation of this policy, we have gone awry, by over-centralising the recruitment process, resulting in a larger percentage of the rustic rural candidates getting eliminated in the written examination, in competition with the urban-based youth, who do better, as they have comparatively better facilities for education.

History of warfare has proved that the rugged and spartan environment of growth of a youth (in rural areas) has a lot to contribute to his ready response to duty and physical and mental endurance in combat. I believe, 'The more the remote and under-

developed area one comes from, the better soldier he proves'. The experience in Vietnam, Ethiopia, Somalia and currently Afghanistan has proved that a people deficient of properly organised formal education, without worthwhile structural support for training and administration, could wage an intense war for decades, effectively using state-of-the-art missiles, aircrafts and other modern munitions of war. Therefore, without discounting the value of formal education in the Army, what we need is a balanced thrust on achieving better education standard by judicious sprucing up the post-enrolment education within the Army without sacrificing the quality stock for soldiery from rural areas.

A Case Study

That the qualities required in combat, are different from the peace-time qualifications of formal education and social grace, is illustrated by an example of one Audie Murphy of US Army, who, at 21 years was the highest decorated soldier of Second World War, credited with killing 240 Germans. One of the nine living children of a poor share cropper labour, he was working as a farm labour when the war came to his rescue, and he got enrolled, after having been rejected on a few occasions. The same Murphy, suddenly became a national hero, to an adoring public and even Hollywood. But grand old Murphy once again found himself out of depth, after retirement, to manage his post-retired life. When he suddenly died in an accident, he was found to have been in a terrible mess, being under heavy debts and also the blemish of having been charged for a murder. Near home, there are many examples of war heroes having made a mess and proved a failure in their retired life.

The old saying that 'those whose conscience pricked deeply never made great warriors' brings home the imperative quality of single-minded bravery, spirit of sacrifice and the killing instinct, which have little to do with one's conscience or educational standard. The question is not of a brute force, but willingness to obey, stay and fight which will continue to be relevant in combat, whatever be the type of warfare, particularly in the Indian context. In fact, complexity and vaster destructive potential of future war(s) will demand far greater sacrifice, dedication and ready responses from the armed forces. Simple and rustic rural background, a breeding place for all war heroes in the world history, naturally generates the cardinal combat values of bravery and sacrifice for the call of duty, where killing for

the cause is considered a virtue, and which no amount of education or social refinement can bring about.

Trainability Potential

Born in remote rural areas does not imply absence of potential or trainability for realising their intellectual potential, given a chance. One has known some of the finest instructors, specialised in the skill of instructionablity in handling weapon systems, who were *'Shahi Anpar'* i.e. without any formal education. Rural youth who constitute about 80 per cent of the country's youth, and cannot hope to get a reasonable job in the civil stream because of their lower standard of education, have a respectable outlet in the security forces, where they foot the bill, as far as the 'qualitative requirement' is concerned. Also, the services provide them an excellent opportunity for growth and joining the national mainstream, which bestows on them social respectability among their folks, when they revert to the roots after retirement. Furthermore, a rural-based soldier is found to be more contented with life vis-a-vis his higher educated urban-based counterpart, because with matric or higher education, aspirations of a man rise and soon he feels frustrated and demoralised when he finds that fulfilling promotional aspirations is mighty difficult in the pyramidal structure of the Army.

Roman History : A Page

History of soldiery in the Roman empire brings out an interesting lesson. For a long time, covering the glory of Roman empire, main intake in the Roman Legions was from the rural small-land-holding peasantry, known for their perseverance and loyalty to traditions and the state. When, one Marius took over as head of the state, he effected a number of military reforms; one of them was to change the preferred source of soldiery, from the rural peasantry to urban unemployed youth. The experience brought out that after effecting change in the source of soldiery, while the urban unemployed youth also fought fanatically and won many wars, their primary motive was seen to be booty. The urban youth proved to be popular mercenaries, though their loyalty to the traditional values and the state could never be taken for granted.

A Ready Soldier Stock

India's unemployed urban youth is also mostly drawn from the rural areas. However, once a young man has spent sometime in a city, he

sheds his natural cloak of simplicity, ready-sense of obedience and pristine ruggedness. The rugged and spartan upbringing generates certain inherent qualities in a young man which make him more suited for his combat role; whether it is his ability to tackle unforeseen situations, arising in the dreary jungles, hills, deserts or acquiring physical and mental endurance to live in the extreme conditions of difficulties, or his natural sense of loyalty, obedience to elders in the family hierarchy, and a host of other desirable traits which are *sine qua non* of soldiery. Therefore, it may not be prudent to overlook this aspect of the soldiery in the combat arms, lest we should regret it in the next war, when it comes.

Under the present dispensation, certain concessions are given to the underdeveloped remote areas, but these are mostly applied to the border areas, and not to many other remote areas which are, in many cases, worse under-developed. Perhaps, there is a need to place a moratorium on such across-the-board upgradation of the educational standard for enrolment for the combat arms or general duty soldiers of other arms and services, till the quality of education in remote areas is adequately developed. In any case, due to a serious shortfall in meeting the enrolment quota in the past, certain dispensations in educational standard had to be allowed to some underdeveloped areas. Therefore, the concept of the matric entry has not been found practical, as the countryside is not yet prepared for the change. Instead, we need to further streamline adult education in the Army through better organised schools in each station/formation to provide the less educated youth full opportunity for growth of their potential.

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PREFERENTIAL ENROLMENT FROM BORDER AREAS

Fighting Best for Home and Hearths

There is a veritable case for according preferential recruitment share to all border states and regions of the country. It is a universal truism that a man fights most fanatically for his own home and hearth. Further, it is an asset in a combat unit to have some sons of the soil from the border areas, where they are deployed. A look at the Indian map would show that the states bordering a hostile neighbour have the highest potential of internal disturbances. Even the North Eastern states, not directly bordering with a hostile adversary, have been disturbed for a long time because of the outside interference. The elements of society which become an easy tool of exploitation in

the enemy hands, are the unemployed youth. Therefore, larger share of enrolment from these border states would go a long way in not only providing employment to the youth, but also an operational advantage to the units deployed in the border areas, to have among their ranks, some men operating in the familiar areas. In any case, the border states being the farthest away from the centre of the national mainstream, deserve special consideration for enrolment.

While deciding the preferred share for border states, their sensitivity and strategic importance will have to be taken into account. Certain states/regions which do not directly touch the border line but due to proximity, constitute the strategic rear in a future war scenario, should also be given due consideration for preferential recruitment. Further, the states falling on the sensitive apex corners of the national frontiers should merit higher preferential recruitment. The best way to merge youth of the sensitive border states in the national mainstream, is to enrol them in large numbers in the military and paramilitary forces. Regrettably, not enough has been done in this regard. For example, it would have been a good idea to have raised separate Arunachal Scouts and Sikkim Scouts, based on indigenous youth, for border surveillance and management of their respective border areas. The effect would not be the same as supposedly achieved by deploying Assam Rifles, as some would contend. It may also be a good idea to raise exclusive BSF or CRPF battalion, as an incentive to rehabilitate BODO/ULFA or other insurgent groups on surrender, as was done to absorb the surrendered Naga hostiles in the late 60s, by raising two exclusive BSF battalions.

The proposed preferential enrolment in the combat-arms from rural areas does not envisage accepting low grade stock. Of the stipulated standards for enrolment, a candidate has to compete in merit in the standards of medical fitness and physical toughness. A small concession, proposed to be given in the entry-education standard, is a trainable factor, for improvement after enrolment.

DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

To cover the vast spectrum of education in the armed forces, ranging from elementary education of a soldier to the higher and specialised studies in the defence-related fields, there is a need to have a separate defence university. With the quality of entry education standard available in the countryside continuing to be poor, in spite of the

recently raised higher stipulations, and the brighter of the lot not opting for defence services, we need to gear up the organisational capacity to meet the present and future requirements of the armed forces. It is not acceptable to find a soldier wanting in his skill to handle weapon systems or combat situations on account of an inadequacy in his basic education or training. On the other hand, we need to keep abrEast with the state of the art in technology, as also to cater for higher defence and other related studies for all ranks, particularly the senior hierarchy. Further, there is a need to have an exclusive defence university in the country to provide training facilities to those (civilians) aspiring for formal education in military matters, so that we have knowledgeable media personnel and Public Relations Officers (PROs) with requisite understanding of the military set up and functioning, which is a serious handicap at present. Not many universities in the country have ventured into research and infrastructural support for defence studies. Nor is there any central agency to coordinate at the national level, the research, development and specialised studies in the vast range of defence related subjects, being pursued by various universities and other organisations separately.

A separate defence university can fill-in the existing gap in coordination of the national effort not only in the matter of defence studies, but also take in its ambit the research and development set ups. Besides running station/formation-based schools and colleges for defence personnel, it could run courses in specialised fields for all ranks including senior commanders, to enable them to keep abrEast with the modern technology, security perspective and art of warfare, so that men and leaders get specially trained in their job-related fields. The defence university can further fulfil the long felt need of a 'think tank' and act as a mother source for suitably specialised expertise in the fields of technology, and qualified analysts of the contemporary and futuristic art of warfare. The accomplished alumnae of the university can thus fill suitable slots within the ambit of the security forces, as also facilitate the process of civilianising certain portions of jobs within the defence services, to effect savings, as discussed later.

THE PROBLEM IN ESSENCE

Even though the shortcomings of the system of enrolment and composition of Army, which we have inherited from the British, stare squarely into our face, we have been too slow in modifying it, to suit

it to our peculiar indigenous imperatives. Firstly, armed forces are the only organisation where ethics of secular national integration is firmly observed, in letter and spirit. In spite of the varying areas of origin, there is a common yardstick for their enrolment, and after enrolment, a common language for instructions and working within military. We could do well to further enlarge the scope of national integration by encouraging larger enrolment from the areas which are not adequately represented in the Army. To this end, we may either raise some new regiments dedicated to the deficient states, or review the share of various states for enrolment, and give suitably larger share to the less-represented states.

The time is not yet ripe to shift the base of recruitment for combat arms from rural areas. For this, some weightage be given to the candidates who belong to remote areas, besides giving them a concession in the educational standard. On the other hand, post-enrolment education system need to be geared up further to make up for the poor education standard in the country-side, for which having an exclusive defence university can play a positive role. The urban unemployed youth are already rubbing their shoulders in the national mainstream; it is the rural youth who are away from the mainstream and are short of educational qualification to compete with their peers in the towns and cities. Therefore, one way to exploit the inherent potential of rural youth, and to make available an opening for their joining the mainstream, is to accord them preferential enrolment, particularly those belonging to the border states. By granting preferential enrolment to the rural stock, a great contribution is also made to the human resource development, without letting the interest of the armed forces suffer in any way.

The present concept of enrolment leaves much to be desired in its cost-effectiveness and overall coordination. Over the period, during the British Raj, a number of regiments were raised, under different names, with nearly common class composition and the same recruitment areas, but each regiment had a separate training centre and enrolment set-up. There is a strong case for combining some of the regiments having common class-composition and recruitment areas, thus effecting a large saving. Similarly, there is scope for saving on account of recruitment and training of other Arms and Services in the country - there are 27 different regiments/groups in Infantry alone which could be zonalised for training and recruitment.

The police and paramilitary forces, which had always used the Army physical and educational standards, as basis for their enrolment, have lately raised their standards higher than the Army's. The across-the-board raising of entry standards, by the police and paramilitary forces, does not seem to be well-conceived and warrants rectification. The military experience of combat-related jobs has proved that higher education or physical standards *perse* contribute little to an individual's higher performance in combat. We should, therefore, be circumspect in succumbing to the lure of ceremonial considerations.

APPENDIX

(Refers to Page 20)

STATE WISE PROFILE OF RECRUITABLE MALE POPULATION (RMP)

BASED ON CENSUS - 1991

S.N	State/Union Territory	Total Population	Total Male Population	Recruitable Male Population	RMP % and share of recruitment
1.	Rajasthan	44005990	23042780	2304278	5.2462
2.	Haryana	16463648	8827474	882747	2.0098*(+)
3.	Himachal Pradesh	5170877	267467	261747	0.5959*(+)
4.	Chandigarh	642015	358614	35861	0.0816
5.	Karnataka	44977201	22951917	2295191	5.2255(-)
6.	Kerala	29098518	14288995	1428899	3.2532
7.	Lakshadweep	51707	26618	2662	0.0061
8.	Goa	1169793	594790	59479	0.1353
9.	UT Mahe	33447	15516	1551	0.0035
10.	West Bengal	68077965	35510633	3551063	8.0487
11.	Sikkim	406457	216427	21643	0.0493
12.	Orissa	31659736	16064146	1606415	3.6573(-)
13.	Bihar	86374465	45102091	4520208	10.2911
14.	Madhya Pradesh	66181170	34267293	3426729	7.8017
15.	Punjab	22281969	10778034	1077803	2.4538 (+)
16.	J&K	7718700	4014100	401410	0.9139 (+)
16.	Uttar Pradesh	139112287	74036957	7403696	16.8561
17.	Tamil Nadu	55858946	28298975	2829898	6.4429
18.	Andhra Pradesh	66508008	33724581	3372458	7.6781(-)
19.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	280661	154369	15437	0.0351
20.	Pondicherry	774338	392565	39257	0.0894
21.	Maharashtra	78937187	40825618	4082562	9.2948

(Contd...)

(Contd...)

S.N	State/Union Territory	Total Population	Total Male Population	Recruitable Male Population	RMP % and share of recruitment
22.	Gujarat	41309582	21355209	2135521	4.8620
23.	Daman & Diu	101586	51596	5160	0.0117(-)
24.	Dadara & Nagar Haveli	138477	70953	7095	0.0162
25.	Assam	22414322	11657989	1165799	2.6542(-)
26.	Meghalaya	1774778	907687	90769	0.2067
27.	Arunchal Pradesh	864558	565004	46500	0.1059
28.	*Nagaland*	*1209546*	*641282*	*64128*	*0.1460*
29.	Manipur	1837149	938359	93836	0.2136
30.	Tripura	2757205	1417930	141793	0.3228
31.	Mizoram	689756	358978	35898	0.0817
32.	Delhi	9420644	5155512	515551	1.1738

Legend

A. (+) Contributing more than RMP share.

B. (-) Contributing less than RMP share.

C. Recruitment from remaining states is more or less equal to RMP share.

Two

Officer Cadre

The Intake

To manage the third largest standing military in the world (approximately 1.2 million), the officers strength in Indian Army alone is over forty-five thousands, for which the intake is from the regular and subsidiary cadres. Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC, at Dehra Dun) with entry at class VII, National Defence Academy (NDA, at Khadakwasla, Pune) with entry at 10+2, Indian Military Academy (IMA, at Dehra Dun), with graduate entry and the technical graduate entry constitute the regular cadre entries. The Officer Training Academy (OTA at Chennai) trains the subsidiary cadre officers, namely, Short Service Commission (SSC), special entry for women officers, Regimental Commission Officers (RCO), and Special List (SL) Officers. While the regular cadre and SSC cadre entries are drawn from open civil stream, the RCO, SL and Army Cadet College (ACC at Dehra Dun) are exclusively from the Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) and Other Ranks (OR) of the services. Interestingly, the system does not provide for graduated promotion from the rank of JCO to an officer, for example a Subedar Major, the highest rank as JCO, does not get promoted as regular officer, though there is a provision of granting him Honorary ranks of Lieutenant (Lt) and Captain (Capt).

It is understood that a proposal is under consideration to combine the SL and RCO entries and call it Special Commission

Officers (SCO), with some marginal change in the terms and conditions of service, which is unlikely to bring about the desired substantial improvement, as envisaged in the subsequent paras.

With the popularity of military service, as an occupation, having taken a dip from '60s onward, the problem of deficiency in the officer cadre in the Army has been growing, which has taken an acute dimension, particularly during the last about a decade, as evident from the following data (percentage of deficiency given within bracket) :1984 (15 per cent), 1987 (17 per cent), and 1995 (25 per cent). With the economic liberalisation in the country, during the recent years, having opened more lucrative avenues in the private sector, the defence forces have further gone down as a job-choice of the youth.

In my last tenure at Army Headquarters, I was once approached by a senior official, for postponement of date for Services Selection Board in respect of a candidate. I readily accepted the change of date, since as a policy, we were accommodative, in this regard. However, before leaving the line, the gentleman on the other end, mentioned non-chalantly, that the candidate concerned had also received an interview call for the job of assistant sub inspector in a state police, hence the preference to go through the selection process for police first. Needless to say that I cancelled the offer for change of dates after hearing this, but it is a sad reflection of the standing of defence services as a job-choice in the country, which warrants concrete measures to improve things.

Noteworthy Findings of a Study

To give the reader an idea of the cross-section of the occupation and income group of the parents/guardians, who are sending their wards to the armed forces, in Tables '1' and '2' below are given extracts from a study, carried out by the Indian Defence Institute of Psychological Research, Ministry of Defence, India, giving a profile of the optees for NDA/Indian Air Force during the period 1989-91.

The following tables provide an interesting insight into the profile of optees and their induction in the officer cadre of Indian military. Firstly, it is unbelievable that wards of military personnel, all told, are contributing a mere representation of 8.5 percent of the total number of candidates for the armed forces. Out of the military representation, Junior Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks (OR) contribute a large share. The highest chunk comes from amongst the

lower middle class employees and small business community who still find armed forces as an attractive profession for their mediocre wards. Even among the lower middle class, the brighter ones seek more lucrative jobs. Farming sector from rural areas makes the least contribution of only 5.2 per cent of the candidates.

TABLE 1

BACKGROUND OF CANDIDATES
The Occupation of Father/Guardian

Occupation	National Defence Academy (NDA) (Pass %)	Fighter Pilots (FP) (Pass %)	Army Educational Corps (AEC) (Pass %)	Ground Duty Operations Control (GDOC) (Pass %)	Overall (Pass %)
Military	13.50 (45.71)	12.51 (29.21)	03.72 (34.78)	07.15 (15.50)	08.53* (30.37)@
Private	08.12 (39.29)	09.14 (18.15)	07.88 (20.42)	07.83 (07.22)	07.07 (18.49)
Civilian (Govt service employees)	43.81 (32.33)	44.43 (14.05)	38.55 (12.79)	41.68 (06.53)	39.41 (14.73)
Others (Professional services, Law, medicine, teaching etc)	21.36 (33.03)	13.82 (14.72)	22.06 (07.71)	16.63 (06.24)	17.76 (14.22)
Business	06.27 (30.19)	07.37 (10.04)	08.88 (08.51)	08.25 (04.60)	07.77 (10.59)
Farming	05.28 (20.90)	10.68 (04.46)	15.68 (02.17)	14.87 (02.42)	12.15 (04.30)

TABLE 2

Income Group of Father/Guardian

Income Level (Rs.)	NDA (Pass %)	F(P) (Pass %)	AEC (Pass %)	GDOC (Pass %)	Overall (Pass %)
999 & Below	06.11 (19.35)	14.61 (05.79)	18.13 (03.33)	19.98 (02.30)	15.66* (04.61)@
1000-1999	13.87 (23.86)	23.92 (10.94)	20.63 (07.33)	23.36 (04.62)	21.27 (09.32)
2000-2999	18.64	24.26	21.38	23.38	22.38

(Contd...)

(Contd...)

Income Level (Rs.)	NDA (Pass %)	F(P) (Pass %)	AEC (Pass %)	GDOC (Pass %)	Overall (Pass %)
	(27.27)	(11.98)	(11.31)	(05.38)	(11.70)
3000-3999	21.60	19.00	19.46	16.15	18.54
	(32.48)	(17.94)	(13.20)	(08.03)	(16.98)
4000-4999	13.80	08.19	09.71	07.43	09.22
	(33.14)	(20.97)	(12.06)	(10.22)	(19.39)
5000 & Above	25.34	10.02	10.28	09.18	12.55
	(50.39)	(32.98)	(23.16)	(14.13)	(32.90)

* per cent of representation

@ per cent of selectees

The other revealing conclusion of the study is that the lower middle class, having an income bracket ranging from Rs. 1000 to 3000 per month, constitute the largest group of optees for the armed forces officer cadre. Interestingly, overall, even the lowest income group (below Rs. 1000) opt for this profession in larger number than the highest income group, i.e., Rs. 5000 and above. This, however, does not imply that with the absence of response from amongst the so-called elite of the society, to send their wards to join military, the officer cadre is seriously missing on quality intake. A study in the US Military indicated that the higher educated enlisted men from the middle class added to problems of group cohesiveness. It only sadly reflects on unpopularity of the armed forces amongst the well-to-do segment of the society, which stands out in contrast with the values in the earlier times, when the well-to-do youth purchased ranks for sheer spirit of it. Evidently, the concept of well-to-do or nobility has undergone a change, with materialism playing the key role today.

Managing Officer Cadre Intake

Unless there is a change in policy, to cut down our standing forces, the total strength of the officer cadre may enlarge, in about a decade, by another about 10-12 thousand, which would naturally warrant higher intake, not only to meet the increased annual wastage, but also to make up the large existing deficiency in its cadre. The main problem in the intake is the subsidiary cadre which is designed to keep the regular cadre-base narrow, to mitigate the problem of large wastage and supersession, inherent in the pyramidal structure of the services. Of the existing Army's annual intake of 1850 officers, the

regular cadre provides only about 1000, the rest come from the subsidiary cadre. The root cause for poor response in respect of the subsidiary cadre is its far-from-attractive terms of service. The youth prefer to opt for a lower grade civil job, having an element of permanency, rather than venturing into the military subsidiary cadres, where the element of risk and uncertainty are high. We have been trying out various subsidiary entries, by applying trial and error methods, and stumbling to mid course corrections. For example, the recent increase in the percentage of regularisation of Short Service Commission Officers in the Army, improved response from the mainstream, though marginally.

Vast Potential

The entry which has a tremendous potential and unlimited resource for the junior leadership is the Regimental Commission Officers; but again, in our formulation of the terms of service for this entry, we erred initially, in keeping the service and age bracket too narrow, wherein an individual could only reach the rank of Captain. Under this constraint, the individuals preferred to stay back in the unit, so that they could serve longer and could rise to the rank of Subedar Major, rather than opt for Regimental Commission Cadre.

I recall my visit, sometime in 1989, to the unit which I had commanded. I was delighted to meet one Shubh Karan, whom I had known as a promising young soldier in my previous unit. After getting Regimental Commission, Shubh Karan was posted to the unit I was visiting. The commanding officer praised the versatility and potential of Shubh Karan, which I was also impressed to observe during the visit. About three years later, when I happened to visit the same paltan again, I was sorry to see that Shubh Karan was not in the same old element, and even the Commanding Officer mentioned that Shubh Karan was not his usual self. On privately meeting Shubh Karan, it was revealed that an ill-conceived and anomalous restriction on employment of Regimental Commissioned Officer, was upsetting Shubh Karan, as under this, an RCO was not entitled to command a sub-unit (Company etc), even as Captain, whereas, a regular commissioned 2nd Lt could be given this command. Naturally, this was a serious functional problem in a unit which created a class amongst class in the officer cadre. On return, this anomaly was brought to the notice of the concerned authorities at Army Headquarters for modification of the terms of service to allow

Regimental Commissioned Officers a broader service bracket and entitlement to command sub-units.

An Unfounded Prejudice

Certain ill-founded legacies of the British *Raj*, in the matter of officer-men equation, have continued. The Britishers had a prejudiced belief that an Indian could never be an officer, which delayed the pro-cess of Indianisation of the officer cadre for over 150 years. The same sort of prejudice is, by and large, held now by the officer cadre against the potential of a JCO or OR to be an effective officer. The rationale, for such prejudice against the men has the same basis as '*Gora Saab*' (white officer) had in his prejudice against the Indians, namely, the latter's handicap in quick adjustability to the officers mess culture and their problem to communicate in English.

In the post-independence era, the continuing mania for English has tilted the balance in favour of the urban-based youth, and done a lot of damage to the traditional professionalism in the officer cadre, as evident from the following extract from the aforesaid study by India's Defence Institute of Psychological Research.

BACKGROUND OF CANDIDATES

TABLE : 3
Medium of Instructions at School of the Candidates

Medium of Instruction	NDA (Pass %)	F(P) (Pass %)	AEC (Pass %)	GDOC (Pass%)	Overall (Pass %)
English	91.56	75.32	70.27	57.28	70.84*
	(36.55)	(17.96)	(12.90)	(08.57)	(18.65)@
Non English	08.44	24.68	29.73	42.72	29.16
	(09.35)	(05.14)	(05.59)	(02.94)	(04.29)

TABLE : 4
Urban/Rural

Variable	NDA (Pass %)	F(P) (Pass %)	AEC (Pass %)	GDOC (Pass %)	Overall (Pass %)
Urban	84.89	77.62	76.80	79.34	79.34*
	(35.48)	(16.07)	(11.95)	(06.89)	(15.78)@
Rural	15.45	22.38	23.20	20.66	20.66
	(27.55)	(10.39)	(06.68)	(03.38)	(09.42)

* per cent of representation
@ per cent of selectees

in spite of various handicaps in the rural areas, the potential of the rural youth for military services is no less. Perhaps the majority of selectees among rural youth were studying in English medium schools. This is, however, a fair indication as to where the leadership potential lies, which must be developed and realised. To this end, a media blitzkrieg is warranted to reach out to, and educate the rural youth.

Not that knowledge of English is an anathema to military leadership qualities, but surely, by attaching such an undue importance to the knowledge of an alien language, for an individual's acceptability as a potential leader, we are denying ourselves a vast potential of leadership, amongst those, who are handicapped in this regard. It was heartening to note that this anomaly had been appreciated in some autonomous/private sectors. I am told that for selection of candidates for the National Law School at Bangalore, in the written test, they provide a concession of 10 marks to those candidates who have studied in non-English medium schools. I feel, such a concession could be given for all Central Services' Entrance examinations.

The data pertaining to NDA entry for the Army, for the corresponding period, was not much different from the pattern of the above study tables. From the above, it is apparent that the selection system for entry into the officer cadre of the armed forces, inherited from the British empire era, has yet to be fully Indianised to enable picking the best from amongst all segments, truly representative of the country's diverse and secular profile.

The inadequacy of the system also stands exposed from the fact that a large number of its rejectees from the Emergency and Short Service Commissions have risen, in stiff competition, to hold the top-ranking assignments in the Administrative and Police cadres, which could not have been possible if they were wanting in leadership potential. Ironically, most of their peers selected for absorption in the Army could not rise beyond the rank of Major.

Looking Round

I remember visiting National Defence Academy, on a passing out parade in 1985, where I happened to meet the Chinese Military Attache in India. From our conversation, it emerged that there were no direct commission entries in the Chinese Army; all types of commission was through service in the ranks. Surely, the Chinese

Army has never been found wanting on account of leadership, and has produced some of the finest generals, who rose from ranks. It may further interest the reader to know that the thrust on democratisation set in the Napoleon's citizens Army, soon resulted in the glorious French Army having half of its newly commissioned officers from the ranks. Even in the large number of Indian state forces, in the pre-independence period, the majority of the officer cadre rose from ranks. Thus, history has validated rank and file as the main source of its officer cadre.

Hidden Human Potential

Human history has proved, time and again, that a situation of crisis throws up natural leadership qualities, which may be dormant and unrecognised during peace time. The British playwright, JM Barrie, tells the story of a ship-wreck of a wealthy aristocrat English family on a voyage, where the butler took control of the crisis situation and displayed rare leadership qualities. The master, his family members and others on the voyage obeyed the new-found leader in the crisis situation, till the ship was extricated back to the mainland. Ironically, when the crisis was over, the 'crisis leader' was reverted to the job of butler and the proposed hand of the master's daughter withdrawn. In the history of Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, for the famous leadership feat in the battle of Hunza, in the Nineteenth Century, Naik Nagda was awarded the highest gallantry award. Nagda had taken control of the crisis situation, when a large-sized offensive against Hunza Fort was held up, with heavy casualties, where he came out with a brilliant plan and led the force to the historic victory.

The intellectual and writer Robert Schuller writes about an interesting study, carried out by a big industrialist in the United States. To assess the potential of creativity and leadership of the bottom-rung of his large establishment, he called the ten lowest paid, untrained and uneducated workers, gave each a luxury leather chair in a posh office, and told them that each one of them had the capacity of creative planning and was capable of taking big decisions on the industry. He, thereafter, addressed certain specific problems of the industry and asked them to jointly deliberate for possible solutions. It is amazing that these raw and untrained heads came up with some viable solutions which had remained elusive for long to the elite board of directors.

In early 80s, while I was away in a field area, my wife happened to attend a wedding reception, where a politician-looking gentleman, with a scrubby beard, approached and greeted her with *'Jai Durge'*, a form of greeting of my old paltan. When he asked my wife if she recognised him, she regretted her inability. Pleasantly, he turned out to be my *ex-sahayak* (batman), about 10 years earlier, when I was a Company Commander. After retirement, he had joined politics and was an effective Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of his state. It is only a matter of an opportunity coming in one's life.

Losing A Good Leadership Base

Evidently, any prejudice against the potential of OR cadre is ill-judged and against the interest of the organisation. It is this prejudice which is denying us the direct entry regular commission from Other Rank which was in vogue earlier. Till about 60s, a soldier could apply for direct regular commission after about a year of service in the ranks. Thus, a good officer material could always catch up with his direct entry counterpart from IMA or NDA, by joining the ranks, at the cost of one or two years delay. With an ill-conceived increase, in the stipulated service to five years in the ranks, for the ACC entry, we made sure that by the time an ACC entry cadet got commissioned, he was minimum 26-27 years old. Thus, rarely he rises even to command a unit. Earlier, one had known very capable senior general officers, having risen from the ranks; which has been denied to the organisation, in the present system. An argument against lowering the service period, stipulated for ACC entry, is that the rejectees from the civil stream for direct commission will find this as an alternative route to get commissioned. So what? If a young man is prepared to rough out as a soldier and then get commissioned, it should be a feather in his cap. He will certainly be a better stock and more dedicated than the type of response we are getting these days. It is understood that recently the stipulated service limit for ACC entry has been decreased which may take time to show results. However, the annual quota of this entry continues to be inequitably paltry.

By improving the scope of direct entry commission through ACC, we shall improve the quality of intake in the rank and file. It used to be quite common in 50s and 60s to see sons of even officers joining ranks, with a view to getting commission. It is not the case now. We

need to change our attitude and there shall be no dearth of subsidiary cadre in the Army. Overall, the quality of officer cadre will improve too.

Liberalise Commission from the Ranks

I see no reasons, why an Army of one million strength cannot produce one thousand suitable potential junior leaders to join the subsidiary cadre every year. It comes to 'one man in one thousand' in a year. The problem is only in our wrong priorities and incorrect attitude. We tend to forget history very fast. In 1947, when the Britishers suddenly left, there was a total void in the leadership cadre of each unit. Overnight many JCOs and OR were elevated to be officers. A long-drawn war was at the threshold. They all did a commendable job, as evident from the history of 1947-48 war.

From the above, it is apparent that the solution to our subsidiary cadre lies in liberalising grant of commission from amongst rank and file. A minimum of 50 per cent of the officer cadre must come from the ranks. In fact, we could scrap the SSC entry for the subsidiary cadre, because what we get through this entry, is that segment of youth who did badly academically, were not selected for the regular cadre entries, or any other career of their choice, and had opted for military after exhausting all other options. Even while in service, uncertainty after the mandatory period of tenure, keeps them unsure of themselves. On the other hand, by liberalising commission from the ranks, we shall get a contented and dedicated lot. However, we need to modify the terms of service to allow them about 20-25 years commissioned service with a small percentage (say 10 per cent) of the outstanding officers among them, to rise to command units. We could also keep for them an outlet of staff assignments, being currently used by SL cadre of officers.

What is critically desired in this regard, is to give the soldier a sense of pride in being a soldier amidst his peers in the civil stream. He should not be brutalised, by using him as an unskilled labour, in non-professional and demeaning petty jobs, like cutting grass in cantonments, doing the work of house-maids and made to live in pathetic conditions of hygiene and sanitation. His personal honour and self-confidence have to be nurtured so that he has no serious problem in adjusting as an officer.

AN AGED ARMY

Youth Inspirits Men

The next serious problem facing the Army is its aging profile, particularly of the officer cadre, which has been deteriorating over the period. Till 60s a matriculate joined NDA and was commissioned at the age of 19-20 years. Likewise, the IMA direct entry (Intermediate) also got commissioned at about the same age. Educational standard for the NDA entry, which constitutes the main regular entry, was raised to class 10+1 in 70s and later upgraded to 10+2. This has added two solid years in the youth profile of the Indian military, which is highly detrimental to its efficiency. The damaging effect may not be discernible during peacetime, but it ought to be appreciated that human faculties of endurance and enterprising spirit are at their peak till about 20. In the case of fighter pilots, special service group (Para Commandos) and troops deployed in extreme cold climate, this aspect is most crucial.

I remember, when I took over command of a unit, I was about 36, which was rather late then, by the earlier norms, as till early 70s, an officer took over command of a unit at the age of about 33 years. Till mid-30s, one is still in his optimum state of physical fitness for combat-related and training activity. After 40, the degradation sets in fast. Therefore, command of a combat unit must finish before one is 40.

I had completed the minimum command tenure, before the paltan was due to move to a difficult high altitude area, and the posting order of my relief had been received. I protested through a letter and a personal interview with my Colonel of the Regiment and had difficulty in persuading him to agree to postpone my posting out, till the paltan had settled down and spent a minimum of six months at the next location in the high altitude area. From hind-sight, I can see that, interalia, what reinforced my resolve, not to desert the unit at the time of its move to a difficult area, was also my natural crave for an enterprising experience of command of the unit in a high altitude frontier , because I still considered myself in a good state of physical fitness, matching my innate itch for the challenging extended tenure of command. I am not too sure, if my response would have been the same, if I was more than 40, which is the present-day age profile of the Commanding Officers.

Graduation at a Heavy Cost

The basic consideration for extending upper age limit, for entry into the services, was to enable the cadets to get graduation degree before commissioning, for which the pre-commission training institutes were affiliated to one of the Indian Universities. Since 15 years class-room period is an essential requirement before graduation in the country, the military services were asked to raise the NDA entry to 10+2. I happened to be on staff at the Army Headquarters (mid 80s), dealing with the pre-commission training in the country, when the proposal to upgrade the entry to 10+2 was under consideration. We resisted the proposal to increase the entry age and suggested that, to ensure that cadets continued to pass out at a younger age, the award of the graduation degree be delayed by a year; instead of getting the graduation degree at NDA, it could be awarded before they were commissioned at IMA or other Service academies. This proposal was accepted by the University Grants Commission (UGC), after a number of meetings with the UGC Chairman, which I attended. Somehow, the proposal for award of graduation degree at the NDA level was mooted again (after I had left Army HQ), and accepted by the Chiefs of Staff Committee and introduced.

Ironically, one of the main arguments in support of graduation, before commissioning, was to improve employability of the officer cadre after retirement. A sad irony that the aspect of youth profile had been over-looked and the country was prepared to risk fitness of its military force, because it could not assure security after retirement, which is earlier than their counterparts in the civil stream. Amazingly, the armed forces failed to fully appreciate the dilution in the quality of intake caused by introduction of 10+2 entry. While at class X or XI, a fair proportion of the bright candidates also opted for the armed forces, because no other worthwhile openings were available at that stage; after class XII only those candidates who had exhausted their chance to join the more attractive streams, did opt for defence services, as the last choice.

As mentioned earlier, the human physical efficiency is at its prime at one's teens, stretchable to around 20; that is why the thrust to identify and channelise youth, well before they reach their teenage, for optimum results in any sports field. If soldiering is a profession, which calls upon an individual's equally sound physical and mental faculties, then losing out the optimum potential, even by a year, is a serious hazard, which no nation could accept.

Rank and File

It is the same story in respect of the age profile of rank and file, which has also witnessed an upward trend. In an apparent clash of interests between the desirability of a youthful profile and the welfare consideration of granting him longer colour (active) service, the policy makers have evidently been influenced by the latter, resulting in a progressive increase to over three times in the colour service of a soldier. For example, prior to 1965, a soldier had seven years colour service and eight years reserve liability, which has now increased to a colour service of 20 years and above.

What takes the cake, in this context, is the much talked of proposal in the recent past, of across the board increase, by two years, in the retirement age of all ranks. Such proposals are very tempting and convenient to any serving man, but the ramifications are not far to see. Interestingly, the senior hierarchy in the Services were found to be more enthusiastic about the proposed extension and had made a comprehensive case for its acceptance by the Government; though, the junior leadership seemed more pragmatic in their approach to the subject. The effect may not be perceivable while taking an isolated view, but viewed in totality, it should stand out very clearly that delaying the entry stage of the officer cadre by two years and extending the colour service of other ranks, is not as simple as it may seem, but has its serious ramification of getting the combat soldier, the sub-unit/unit/formation commander that much older.

Rudyard Kipling's lines, *"Nations have passed away and left no trace/ And history gives the naked cause of it/ one single, simple reason in all cases/ They fell because their people were not fit"* have an eternal relevance. The point at issue is whether the nation can allay the anxiety of the officer cadre and the rank and file in respect of their post-retirement rehabilitation, so that they are not unduly worried about acquiring special qualifications, for a second vocation, after retirement, or seeking extended colour service. There can be many other ways to improve the academic standard and other qualifications by on-the-job training and other specialisations.

Given the national will and sagacity, the vast potential of officers and men in uniform can be judiciously appropriated by lateral adjustment in a large number of other central/state services, with consequent benefits to both sides. In any case, with the type of challenging jobs performed, the imperatively ingrained devotion to duty and effective management of men and material under his

rank and appointment. The upgradation of ranks upset the balance of work ethics. The worst sufferer was the job at hand. Prior to the cadre review, the concept of second-in-command was only at the unit level; there was no deputy or second-in-command at the brigade or divisional level.

Rank Dilution

The redundancy of creating additional higher ranks would be evident from an incident, pertaining to a division deployed in Nagaland-Manipur. The Army Commander was scheduled to visit the divisional headquarter, for which the programme, including a sequence for operational briefing, had been finalised: topographic orientation by General Staff Officer Grade 2 [GSO2(Ops)], intelligence picture by GSO 1(Intelligence), deployment of troops and operational plans by Colonel General Staff (Col GS), followed by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) to highlight certain important issues. The Deputy GOC, on realising that he also ought to be exposed to the Army Commander, called Col GS a day before the event, and conveyed his anxiety. On being recommended that Dy GOC might take on entirely or a portion of the Col GS part, the former felt the time was not enough for him to get fully in picture about nitty-gritty of the contingency operational plans. Ultimately, the Dy GOC chose to take on the part of topographic orientation on the sand model. This is how the cadre review has degraded the rank structure and damaged the functional efficiency at all levels.

Another malaise caused by the cadre review was inflation, though marginal, of the officer cadre strength. A research carried out by the United States Army, as to the reasons for its poor showing in Vietnam war, revealed, (a) decline in cohesion was directly proportionate to the growth of the officer corps, (b) too many officers, too much rank, too low quality. The same study brought out that during the second world war, the German Army had the officer-men ratio, which was the lowest in the world (2.9 per cent), yet, when it declined further in 1944-45, there was no adverse effect on its battle effectiveness. Curiously, the US Army officer-men ratio rose from 9 per cent in second world war to 17 per cent in the Vietnam war.

Officer to Men Equation - Indian Army

In the case of Indian Army, the officer-men ratio comes to about 12 per cent after including the JCOs in the leadership cadre. This is on

the much heavier side. Even by taking away the JCOs, the ratio has a scope of reduction. After all, the British-Indian Army units were commanded, for centuries, merely by three commissioned officers each, and that too in an alien land where wars never seemed to end. We, therefore, ought to go in for quality and not quantity. The main thrust of the cadre review has been on creating larger number of senior officers (Colonel and above) slots, which has evidently taken its toll in the functional efficiency of the Army. The unfortunate spin-off effect of the inflation in rank, is a mistrust in the capacity of junior officers, JCOs and NCOs to perform their bonafide duties, and degrading senior officers to take on the lower rank assignments and responsibilities. It seems that the decision to go in for cadre review was also motivated by personal gains of those involved in the decision making.

We need to arrest and reverse the process of dilution set in by the cadre review. One of the ways to reduce the number of regular officers is to civilianise a (substantial) portion of the officer cadre, in that, induct a large number of civilian officers, recruited through TA (Territorial Army), to take on numerous compatible assignments in the static establishments and higher headquarters. On a broad estimate, thus, it should be possible to reduce the regular officer cadre by about one third of its present strength, without cutting out any essential assignment. An apprehension that the regular cadre would lose some peacetime slots, may not be tenable, because for the resultant reduced regular officer cadre, there would still be adequate popular slots.

UNDERSTANDING THE NUANCES OF MILITARY PROBLEMS

Bridging The Politico-Military Communication Gap

There are certain genuine problem areas and inadequacies in the conditions and terms of service of the officer cadre and the rank and file, for which a worthwhile and lasting answer can be found only if the top political leadership and the bureaucracy have the capacity to truly appreciate the peculiar hazardous conditions of service of a soldier, which are not easy to compensate. Nor is it possible to fully appreciate the nuances of the service conditions, unless one has been exposed to these. To this end, there is a strong need to inject in the country's top political and bureaucratic hierarchy, some service officers, serving or retired. The existing problems, to a large extent,

can be attributed to the wide gap between ground realities and perception of the decision making political and bureaucratic body.

The corrective thrust should aim at lateral move of officers between bureaucracy and service HQ, besides inducting suitable ex-servicemen in the political and other decision-making hierarchies. To this end, selected officers from the Ministry of Defence should have had a tenure at the Service HQ or a higher formation HQ before they come up to the level of Joint Secretary. Similarly, service officers should be posted to the Ministry of Defence at various levels.

What's more, there is a need to provide adequate representation to suitable ex-servicemen in the political hierarchy, as also other elective bodies. For example if the field of acting, art, journalism etc., could entitle one's nomination for the *Rajya Sabha* (Upper House), there should be no dearth of retired soldiers of high merit to be inducted into *Rajya Sabha*. Similarly, it should be a good idea to induct through special reservation, suitable ex-servicemen at state level assemblies/councils and lower elective bodies, down to village level *Panchayats*.

It is strange that through a deliberate act, the defence personnel are kept out of the higher defence planning. While there is a railway man in the Ministry of Railways, a policeman in the Ministry of Home and so on and so forth, there is a distinct dividing line *(lakshman rekha)* between the Services HQ and the Ministry of Defence. This attitude of the powers that be, where the soldier is treated as a *persona-non-grata* in his own affairs is bound to have adverse spin-off effect on soldiers' acceptability in the rest of the society. This is unfortunate both for the soldiers and the nation. No good comes out of this ill-advised ostriched policy. We shall do well to address this problem on two planes. Firstly, institutionalise certain structural provisions to provide direct link between the professionals (service heads) and the political leadership, which does not exist at present. To this end, the much talked about and long-awaited institution of National Security Committee (NSC) must be expedited. On the other hand, the long-felt inadequacy in joint planning between the three services must be removed by creating a joint services HQ under a Chief of Defence Staff, as in vogue in most of the foreign armies.

Regrettably, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) reorganised in 1955, for the basic role of coordination with other ministries on defence matters, has assumed the role of a superior headquarter. The defence

secretary acts more like a chief of defence staff (CDS), and principal advisor to the Government, over the services chief's heads, resulting in a chasmic gulf between the professionals and the political leadership. Nor has any heed been paid, it seems, to the following subtle observations made by the Administrative Reforms Commission, which examined the functioning of MOD in 1967, "The subordination of military to the civil power should (not) be interpreted in a bureaucratic sense. There is the factor to consider seriously of duplication of work which constitutes a waste, both financial and in terms of talent and time. Such duplications occur mostly in the name of coordination . . . . and it contributes little except delay." We could close our eyes to these problems at the cost of the organisational functioning and effectiveness.

Utilising Vast Potential of Ex-servicemen

It ought to be acknowledged that when a soldier retires (an OR in his mid-30s, a JCO in his mid 40s and an officer at 50-52), he is at his optimum state of professional efficiency and has a vast potential for utility to the society. With his ingrained values of discipline and duty correctly channelised, he can be a force multiplier in galvanising the human resources of the rest of the society. He can be a good influence wherever he stands.

Needless to mention the salutary effect of the above said proposal on the decision-making process, particularly in matters pertaining to security in the country, beside helping, to an extent, the large fraternity of the ex-servicemen to join the mainstream. An argument that ex-servicemen should compete with the rest and come up on merit, is not totally without substance. Some ex-servicemen, though a negligible number, have made a mark in the political arena. However, it must be appreciated that the defence personnel take a long time to adjust to the game of the world, outside the protected and isolated environment, in which they have spent the prime of their lives. The most with merit and high values are too rigid to be easily acceptable, thus the society is denied their valuable services. Retired personnel from civil services including police/paramilitary forces do not have this disadvantage, because throughout their service they have been in the midst of the mainstream.

Military Uniqueness

It is a fallacy to equate military with any civil cadre, as the former has a unique role of total commitment and liability which may lead to

making supreme sacrifice of one's life. Since the conditions of service are totally different, the military has to be treated as a separate cadre, for special and suitable compensation, for the peculiar hardships and privations suffered by the soldier. The approach of the military services to seek parity with the civil cadres has done the former a great harm, as there can be no comparability between the obligations of a serviceman and his service conditions vis-a-vis any of the civil services. If a commanding officer of an infantry battalion was Lieutenant Colonel, there was no rationale to upgrade it to the rank of Colonel, just because paramilitary forces had upgraded their rank structure. The Services ought to have insisted on removal of parity and similarity in the badges of ranks, and the assumed equation of police and paramilitary forces with the Army ranks, which has created confusion and degraded the uniqueness of the Army rank structure. Therefore, whatever be the background to the confusing similarity in rank structure between Army and police forces, not only a moratorium ought to be placed on the police/paramilitary forces' aping the rank structure or uniforms of the Army any further, but also to remove the existing similarities in the badges of ranks between the two. A unit Commander is the unit commander, whether Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel. In the British Raj, the District Police Chief was called Captain, which did not mean that he was equivalent of an Army Captain. In his own district, he might have been equivalent to a unit commander (Lieutenant Colonel), for which he did not have to wear the badges of ranks similar to Lt Col. Like the existing distinction between the three military services (Army Navy and Air Force), the police forces ranks should also be structured differently. Further, flying of car flag and use of starplates is a peculiar war-time requirement of the Army, which the police forces should not be allowed to imitate.

Three

Restructuring and Downsizing The Standing Army

Historical Perspective

In the West, till 16th Century, combat units were raised in the event of war, and disbanded after it was over. However, with the subsequent increase in the scale and frequency of wars, particularly in view of the wars for religion, the raising, disbanding and re-raising of armies was found to be inexpedient and uneconomical. Thus, the concept of having a standing combat force was adopted by some states. The concept of standing armies, however, did not take firm roots till about mid 18th century; in peacetime, Army continued to be considered an 'honourable prison', wondering what to do with time.

Before 18th century, there was no professional officer corps. It was only after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, in which the German military efficiency was demonstrated, that the then practice of purchase of ranks started getting questioned. Prior to that, in the British Army, for example, the cost of captaincy was £ 2400 and that of Lieutenant Colonel £ 7000. Till the end of the 19th century, views on purchase of ranks were divided. A large section of the elite were drawn by the lure of officership in the Army, as it not only enhanced

social status, but also satisfied the innate itch for enterprise and patriotism, for which one was prepared to pay a price. Till about a century back, officer cadre in most of the armies were largely semiprofessional or mercenary. The lure of leading men, chivalry and patriotism were so strong that the officer cadre had refused reforms for higher pay for over 150 years. Duke of Wellington, for example, had strongly opposed substitution of, what he called, the officer cadre who were men of substance, by the mercenary Army.

In the Indian context, prior to the era of Moghul rule and Western influence, armies were raised for campaigns and disbanded thereafter. However, each state, owing allegiance to the higher state or emperor, was obliged to produce a specified number of soldiery for war, for which it had its own arsenal and a nucleus of standing force, maintained during peacetime, which constituted the anchor for national mobilisation for war. A peculiar feature of the Indian soldiery was that all able-bodied Kshatriyas were obliged to join armed forces, though youth from other sections of society were also attracted and joined forces. The officer cadre came mostly from the ruling class(es). What attracted Indian youth to the profession of soldiering was a social and moral obligation on their part to take up arms, to defend the nation, the spirit of patriotism and enterprise, besides the social status attached to it. It was the British era which gave a mercenary touch to service in the Army, from whom India inherited the existing basic military structure.

Imperatives for a Standing Force

With 50 years' recent experience as a sovereign state behind us, we do not seem to be clear yet, as to our perception of external threat and a viable national strategy to meet it. From a strategy emanates the force level we require, to act as a dissuasive or deterrent force against the potential enemy(ies). Admittedly, no strategy can be sacrosanct; it requires continuous updating, depending upon the prevailing situation. Nor, in matter of threat perception, can there be a fixed template or an absolute answer. However, it is imperative for a nation to continuously update and define its security perspective for the next about 20 years and lay down the organisational capabilities, expected of the armed forces. To this end, study of contemporary art of warfare is essential, as theorised by Noble Frankland, who said, "War, like a disease, has to be studied for three reasons, viz. one, in the hope of preventing it, two, if it occurs in trying to survive it, three, for understanding society, which is influenced by past wars and

militant spirit of mankind." Therefore, those whose business is to prevent and manage war, must fully understand it, to be able to take balanced decisions.

That "Budget drives strategy and not vice versa", attributed to Mr. Dick Cheney, a former Secretary of Defence of the United States, may be relevant to that country, where concept of security is largely a matter of adventure or playing the role of world policemen and not a question of nation's survival, as is the case with India and many other countries, whose economic development is closely linked with secure borders. Therefore, subject to meeting the needs of a realistic national security scheme, a developing democratic country, like India, can ill-afford the luxury of maintaining a standing force-level, which could be perceived as transcending its veritable defence needs, at the cost of nation's economic development. Having fully met the security imperatives of the realistically evolved national strategy against the perceived threat, the nation has to earnestly get down to its economic and social development, without dissipating its limited resources in scams, political jiggery-pokery or in maintaining its large armed forces on alert, on peaceful borders, where there is no immediate threat.

In a developing country, expenditure on armed forces is at the cost of economic development. Professor E Benoit of Columbia University has carried out a research on 45 developing countries, to establish how their economic development was directly related to defence spending. India is already lagging behind in realising its economic potential; a large segment of the populace continue to live below poverty line. Therefore, for prudent utilisation of the paltry resources, the country ought to lay down time-bound goals, both in economic growth as also for its security preparedness.

India's Security Parameters Drawn up on Independence

It may be relevant to recall that on independence, India's concept of defence envisaged to maintain a standing Army of 2 lakhs with a backing Territorial Army (TA) reserve of about 1.4 lakh, which was changed in 1962 to an enlarged standing Army, because of the unforeseen imperatives of war. However, in spite of the security conditions having relatively stabilised since the 70s, the mainstay of India's security has continued to be based on its plenitude of standing combat manpower, which is, regrettably, at the cost of its modernisation.

Prior to 1971, threat to India was visualised from three hostile borders i.e. from across the borders with the West and erstwhile East Pakistan and Tibet (China). With threat from East Pakistan having disappeared and the northern borders having turned relatively peaceful, rationally, Indian forces should have been reduced. On the contrary the standing forces have increased and the potential of TA reserve has decreased after 1971, with apparently no serious thought being given to reduce the standing Army. Logically speaking, we cannot modernise a large-sized standing force, which eats more than 65 per cent of the defence budget, for its pay, allowances and maintenance, leaving a paltry share of only about 5 per cent for its modernisation and innovations.

TA reserve constitute one-third of the British armed forces. However, in India's case after 1962 , the growing increase in the standing combat force has led to considerable reduction in attention to the TA reserve. At present, the TA reserve potential has been reduced to 32000, which constitutes a mere 3 per cent of India's standing Army.

A Pragmatic Perception

In the world arena, there are no permanent threats or enemies, even though there may be (permanent) potential threats. Nor is it cost-effective to maintain a red-alert state of preparedness, at all times, on all fronts. In a scenario of possible collusive threat, from more than one front, sagacity demands that we politically degrade or hold off threat on one front, while addressing ourselves with concentrated force to the other. Having stabilised the situation, in our favour, we could then divert our main attention to the second front. In this regard, Liddell Hart gives an apt piece of advice, "In a campaign against more than one state or Army, it is more fruitful to concentrate thrust against the weaker partner than to attempt the overthrow of the stronger in the belief that latter's defeat will automatically involve collapse of the other."

India's northern adversary does not seem to have any immediate design to escalate situation on the Indo-Tibetan border, say for the next about a decade and a half, because she has her own compulsions and priorities of its economic development and modernisation of forces. Apparently, China has higher priority concerns to resolve issues with Washington, Moscow and Tokyo. India does not seem to figure in her immediate priorities. She seems to have realised the

futility of military adventurism at the cost of economic development. Of the 2.5 million armed forces, it is understood to have already demobilised one million during early 80s, and has plans to further reduce it by another half a million of the standing forces, by the end of the century, with a corresponding modernisation process set-in, to retain the effective cutting edge of the forces.

Contrary to the Clausewitz's conviction that superiority in numbers becomes every day more decisive, military analysts today are veering to the concept of maintaining smaller vis a vis larger-sized combat forces and believe, as observed in the book 'War and Antiwar', that lean and mean company groups can deliver a bigger bang for the buck. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that in a future combat environment a brigade group may be able to do what a divisional sized force did. What adds greater might to the combat power of a force are certain intangible factors, namely, its ability to wrest initiative, efficient intelligence and communication network, superior training and weaponry, rather than sheer numerical superiority. All modern armies of the developed or developing countries maintain small standing forces, with a large reserve potential for mobilisation. Russia is in the process of demobilizing a large portion of its standing Army. Only India and Pakistan don't seem to let up their obsessive thrust on maintaining out of proportion large standing forces.

Quality (not Quantity) Men and Material

Logically, till about 2012-15, India is left with a potential threat from adversary across the western border alone, which is and shall continue to be an underdog in any future Indo-Pak conflict. We as a people are prone to thoughtlessly granting exaggerated capabilities to even an underdog adversary, not out of pragmatism, but out of a sense of insecurity. It is time we develop faith and confidence in our own potential and capabilities, as a powerful nation of the region. What India needs, in this context, is not a manpower-oriented superiority and an all-time operational alert, along the borders, but to retain, instead, a potent deterrent capability, preferably of a superior technology-riposte and mobilising armed forces at a short notice, for inflicting punitive damages, unacceptable to the adversary. India needs to show strong will and confidence in its vast potential, and evolve an effective strategy, with long-term objectives, instead of panicking into fire-fighting and dissipative actions or plans. In essence, the philosophy of operational preparedness should aim at

the quality soldier (not quantity), on ground, whose training, equipment and morale give him moral ascendancy over the adversary. Having done that, the priority should shift to technological innovations which afford a technology and weapon-system superiority in a future encounter. The priority in technology should be accorded to new weapon-system and state of the art technology in space and missile warfare, nuclear superiority and deeper surveillance capability which act as a potent force-multiplier and to the enemy, a deterrence. From the standpoint of comparative cost-effectiveness, a missile-based defence is known to be much more economical than the manpower-based one. There is, therefore, merit in getting a quick move on the indigenous research and production of the various missiles already in the country's pipeline.

Utilizing Peace-time Interlude

Historically, peace has only been an interlude between two wars. A nation obsessed by its last war ends up planning and preparing for the last war, and is seldom prepared for the next war, which is bound to be different from the previous one(s). John Downey has given a pertinent piece of advice, in this regard, "Military is second only to religion, to the extent to which, in peace, it must question its tenets and beliefs; in war, it is second to none, in its need for strong and easily interpreted doctrines". Thus, value of peace lies in its affording an opportunity for the military to study contemporary warfare, rehash its strategy and to go full-sail in preparing itself for the next encounter. Preparedness for the next war is best ensured by proper modernisation of the combat forces, during the ensuing peacetime. The limited resources preclude affordability of both maintaining a large standing military, as also keeping it suitably modernised. Nor does war afford a nation the luxury of unlimited interlude of peace, to enable it to modernise at leisure for the next war.

As a nation, we are so myopic as to connotate security only in terms of maintaining a large standing Army. As if any suppression in its strength would compromise security, people are wary of considering any cut. No wonder, the recent press news about the Army's reduction by 50,000 in its manpower was promptly denied; as if they had stirred up a hornet's nest.

The choice is between maintaining a large standing Army or effecting a discreet reduction in the standing forces to enable due

process of modernisation. A dispassionate appraisal of the Indian security imperatives shows that the only way to garner resources for modernisation of its armed forces is by reducing the standing forces. There is a distinct feasibility and advisability of reducing our manpower-oriented operational-alert posture, both along the northern and western frontiers. The military history has amply proved, that it was always a superior generalship and a technological superiority which carried the day, and not a physically larger standing force. If it was not so, Germans would not have dared venture war(s) with the rest of the world, and almost brought the rest on their knees; nor would the Israelis have survived till now.

As regards operational security during peacetime, it may be realised that by having majority of troops continuously deployed, in their battle positions, in the most rugged and inclement areas, the wear and tear of equipment and inadequacy of training facilities for the next war, take a heavy toll. The present state of critical deficiencies in the unit equipment and weapons is alarming, which is bound to persist, because India's indigenous infrastructure, to provide weapon and equipment back-up support, seems to have been out-matched by the heavy rate of wear and tear, the existing deficiencies and needs for modernisation. Hard training could compensate for many shortfalls in a combat force; but if meaningful training is also inadequate, as is the case with the Indian Army today, it could portend a disaster in the next encounter, unless some corrective measures are taken with dispatch.

Defensive Safe-Playing Psyche

In the absence of a clear national security perspective and strategy, the operational concepts and plans get generally oriented to perception of the senior-most forces commander(s). Thus, the plans are, by and large, personality-oriented, depending on perception of the top brass. With the majority of forces committed on defensive role, along the frontiers, the senior commanders, assigned the defensive or ground-holding tasks, tend to deliberately exaggerate the threat perception, to justify their bids for additional resources, mostly far in excess of their legitimate operational needs, because of their own sense of insecurity and attitude of playing-safe. This results in over-ensuring and over-cautious plans, with unwarranted excessive diversion of resources for ground-holding or other defensive tasks, at the cost of earmarking adequate uncommitted reserves, to bring victory and achieve viable results, when the balloon

goes up. The time-proven axiom that "A commander is as strong as his reserves and not what he has committed on ground", is conveniently forgotten. It is a sad reflection of a nation's playing-safe attitude which gets manifested in the military commanders' safeguarding their own tenures, without catering for the essential war effort to make victory possible in the next showdown. The potency of a plan does not lie in what has been deployed on ground holding or defensive tasks, but what has been held back uncommitted, to be unleashed when the opportunity comes.

Rarely does one learn from history. If German blitzkrieg overran the Allied forces in 1939-40, it was not on account of its superiority in number or equipment, but a superior strategy, which stunned and overpowered the Allied. For example, against the German western borders, the Allied had uniformly deployed over 120 divisions, to defend the Maginot line and north of it, with only 22 divisions held as reserve. Against this, Germans committed 95 divisions, with the northern and southern sectors held thinly, and the major portion of the forces (over 45 divisions) concentrated to hold the central sector, opposite Ardennes, which, as we know, was the heart of the blitzkrieg thrust line. The main German punch lay in their holding back another 42 divisions uncommitted as reserve, which turned the tables against the Allied.

Peacetime Operational Parameters

Before analysing India's war and peacetime requirement of troops, let us see as to what should be the concept of operational preparedness during peacetime. Essentially, India's national security, which hinges on a reactive and not proactive mode, warrants a forward-looking concept of defensive operations, to achieve the following, during peace or no-war-no-peace scenario :

(a) Effective surveillance along the borders and intelligence about the enemy's capabilities and intentions, to enable a pragmatic threat perception.

(b) Continuous updating of operational plans and preparation of defences and back-up infrastructure.

(c) Quick mobilisation of troops to take up battle positions, at a short notice, ahead of the enemy's ability to launch offensive.

(d) Retain a potent strike force, as uncommitted reserve, for offensive tasks, aimed at speedily achieving strategic objective(s), in the event of war.

Within the above said conceptual parameters, the aim of armed forces should, in substance, be to deter war, for which troops do not have to be kept deployed in their front-line defences, throughout and entirely during peacetime. Instead, they could be located in depth areas, from where battle positions could be taken up at a short notice.

Interestingly, along the Indo-Tibet border, while the Chinese have left the entire border security to the care of a few units of Militia (paramilitary), with a negligible presence of regular troops (only two brigade groups located well in the depth) in Tibet , on the other side, Indians have deployed a force equivalent of about five divisions along the watershed battle positions, besides the border scouts and paramilitary forces which is a highly questionable and unwarranted strategy. India has a marked advantage over the adversary in the matter of lines of communications and proximity to the mainland, which provide the former greater ability to mobilise resources in a shorter time-frame, vis-a-vis the Chinese, whose lines of communication are far too long and tedious. It is understandable that India has still not got over its 1962 disaster syndrome, and therefore, not inclined to take chances on its Northern borders. But, the object of pragmatic thinning of troops from the border is to enable them to pay greater attention to training, preparation of fortifications, development of infrastructure and modernisation of the forces, without compromising security.

Since the outcome of a short and intense war will depend on how well the operational plans are conceived and fully implemented, without leaving any loopholes in preparedness on ground, discretion demands that instead of deploying troops to hold defences during peace interlude, they should be judiciously utilised to improve their operational and logistic infrastructure, trained and equipped for the next war. Positioning large-scale troops in their battle positions, when the situation does not warrant, denies their availability for improvement of infrastructure and defences, besides heavy costs of their maintenance in such difficult remote areas, and the avoidable wear and tear of the equipment. During peacetime deployment in the tough and inclement weather-beaten areas, troops have to fight a battle for survival, leaving a very limited time or effort to develop infrastructural base and to prepare defence fortifications. Therefore, while we should continue preparations of the defence fortifications and improvement of habitat, roads, tracks, helipads, airfields, logistic base, industry etc., only a minimum essential number be deployed on the watershed for surveillance. Units could carry out operational

alerts for a duration of four to six weeks each once or twice a year, and kept concentrated in depth areas during the remaining period. Similar should be the pattern along the Western borders.

It may be appreciated that the Indo-Pak boundary line, including the cease-fire line in J&K has been clearly defined and both countries are obliged to honour it, as per the 1972 Shimla Agreement. Therefore, a doubt in some minds as to the sanctity of the cease-fire line (CL) or Line of Control (LOC) is only reflective of their muddled thinking and sense of insecurity. Nowhere in history has a country allowed itself to be bled by a proxy war, for such long (50) years, and, yet to be defensive in its policy. In inter state relationship, it is the strength which is respected, and not a policy of surrender. Therefore, within the parameters of safeguarding the nation's territorial integrity, what we need is a pro-active policy along the CL and LOC. Once the message is sent across that any violation of the border, however insignificant, shall be severely rebutted and penalised, the adversary will dare not create situations, where she could invite the opponent's wrath. It is not a question of brow-beating or frightening a neighbour, but to put the fear of the Lord into a menacing blusterer. This is how Israeli security has proved inviolable, even though it faces much larger threats and challenges. 276136

Essentially, border surveillance during peace, is the responsibility of police forces, solely raised for this purpose. However, somehow, the Army has felt impelled to get involved in this role, leaving little time to train and equip itself, for a conventional war. In its classical role, Army is only meant to fight against an external threat or a conventional war. During peace, Army is supposed to train and refit for the next war. The Indian concept of a warrior also caters for his comfort and welfare during non-war period as expounded by an old Indian saying " *Veer bhogya Vasundhara*" (warrior enjoys the worldly luxuries). Well, if soldier ought not look for cushy jobs or uninterrupted peace tenures, he must not, at the same time, be pushed around, doing other's job, at the cost of his own. This calls for a fresh and dispassionate re-look to examine as to how the various paramilitary/police forces fit in the national security scheme, both against external as also internal threats, before we come to a suggested template of the standing Army.

PARAMILITARY FORCES

To have an idea of the size of India's Central Police Organisations (CPOs) and the annual expenditure on each, an extract from the

Annual Report 1996-97, prepared by the Ministry of Home, is tabulated in Table 6.

TABLE 6

CPO	Strength (Personnel)	Expenditure (Rs. lakhs) 1995-96	1996-97 (up to Sept. 97)*
BSF	181403	52716.44	56548.64
CRPF	166198	93226.29	54389.50
AR	52223	31751.00	8934.65
ITBP	30369	7091.61	11439.49
NSG	7360	1757.09	1858.33
CISF	96567	17777.38	21185.66
IB	—	8280.75	
NPA	—	181.20	

* The expenditure for 1996-97 covers a period of six months only.

As evident from the Table below, Police and paramilitary forces (PMFs) in India suffer from the plethora of multiplicity in the agencies created for performing common tasks of internal security and law and order. With each state having its State Police, Armed Police, and most of them having raised their own Rapid Action Commando units, the confusion of multiplicity of agencies is confounded with the superimposition of a large number of Central PMFs in dealing with the same tasks. Besides the Central Reserve Police Force(CRPF), raised for the purpose of maintaining law and order in the country, and the Border Security Force (BSF), designed to guard the nation's frontiers during peacetime, there are a number of other agencies operating under the domain of Ministry of Home namely, Assam Rifles(AR), Indo-Tibetan Border Police(ITBP), National Security Guards (NSG), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) etc. Each operates in a tightly separated compartment, with little or no organic inter-face with the other.

At Cross Purposes

Each PMF runs a separate establishment for its own recruitment, training, communications, logistics and even a separate intelligence-collection network, resulting in a top heavy set-up and a large avoidable duplicated over-head expenditure. This is not only an unwarranted drain on national exchequer, but also results in functional problems of confusion, waste of effort and an unhealthy rivalry amongst them. With the raising of Rashtriya Rifles (RR), to

operate under the Army, a long-felt gap between the Army and para military forces has been filled, for undertaking counter insurgency and other non-military tasks, as also to prevent frequent disturbances of Army units, at the cost of latter's preparations and training for war. However, it is bound to have created confusion and duplication in the role of RR vis-a-vis BSF, as the latter is also supposed to operate in conjunction with the Army, both during war and peace.

Coordination with Army

Border surveillance, during peacetime, as stated earlier, is best left to the PMFs, namely BSF, ITBP and AR for which these forces have been raised and organised. Queerly, the BSF which was raised in 1965, as an adjunct of the Army, for peacetime surveillance and protection of the borders, has mostly got embroiled in the internal law and order, which is basically the organisational role of the CRPF. With its ever increasing involvement in the state police tasks, the BSF has deviated from its primary organisational role of border protection. Further, because of the dichotomy of its operational role under the Ministry of Defence, and its organisational control by Ministry of Home, there are serious functional problems in its fulfilling the role of border security.

Experience reveals that for smooth functioning of a paramilitary force, in conjunction with Army, it should be officered wholly or partly by Army officers. In fact, on raising of the BSF, Army was required to provide it the officer cadre, which Army could not afford entirely, at that stage, because of their own shortage of officers. Initially, only senior officers were provided by Army, namely, commanding officers and above, but gradually, this force has come to be officered entirely by the BSF and IPS cadres, with none from the Army. Till about ten years back, the Commandant of BSF Academy was always an officer from the Army which is no more the case. In addition, a large number of Emergency and Short Service Commission Officers from the Army were absorbed in the BSF in 60s and 70s which lent the Army ethos of training and functioning to the BSF. Even that link has petered out, resulting in a gap and functional incompatibilities in fulfilling its role, with or under Army.

Proxy War, a Trend

With the costs of conventional war having become prohibitive and detrimental to a nation's economic development, of both the victor

and the vanquished, war as a means to achieve political objective(s) has, of late, become more and more unpopular. States find it more expedient and economically convenient to wage instead, a low-intensity proxy war, aimed at causing wide-spread administrative and developmental disruptions, political cession and instability by infiltrating in the target-area, large-scale mercenaries/agents and munitions of war. India has been a target of such foreign-abetted warfare for a long time. The borders are, therefore, no more a conduit for smuggling domestic goods alone. Nor are any borders safe or totally peaceful. Even in smuggling, weapons and other war-related equipment are most lucrative. Smuggling across the borders has, thus, acquired a direct bearing on national security and, therefore, border management, particularly along the sensitive frontier(s), is more relevant to the Ministry of Defence and not Ministry of Home. The elements of Ministry of Home dealing with smuggling, may be associated with the border-managing forces. However, in certain peaceful border areas, devoid of military presence, border management may be left to the paramilitary forces under Ministry of Home.

The other aspect which needs to be clarified, to avoid confusion, is that Ministry of Home, along with its police forces should be responsible only for maintaining law and order in the state. The moment there are signs of militancy/insurgency, Army must intervene to nip the evil in the bud. Experience shows that delay in military intervention in situations of militancy/insurgency only complicated problems. In other words, Army has to be organised and trained for its dual role of dealing with both the conventional and low-intensity warfare (militancy and insurgency). This would take away the responsibility of planning and conduct of counter-insurgency operations from Ministry of Home, which could concentrate its efforts on developmental and other activities to bring insurgency under check.

Cost-effective Structure

For better effectiveness and to avoid wastage of effort, all agencies organised for border surveillance, during peace, should be under Ministry of Defence, and those raised for law and order, and for internal security, be placed under Ministry of Home. Though each force should have the ability to undertake the dual tasks, pertaining to the other ministry, the sanctity of its organisational role, for which

Needless to mention that the RR will have to be expanded, to take on the static tasks of protection of vital areas, in depth of the combat zones, as also for defence of the sensitive border line during peace. AR and ITBP could be retained as exclusive wings of the RR.

While the nitty gritty of operational requirement of PMF for each sector/theatre can be worked out separately by a study, by mere grouping together various PMFs under exclusive heads of 'border protection' and 'law and order' roles, we would have effected a large saving by cutting down fat and the redundant overhead costs. By clubbing these forces, as recommended in the Table below, approximately half of the expenditure on overheads and other redundant establishments could be saved, besides improving its functional efficiency.

TABLE : 7

RATIONALIZING COMMAND AND CONTROL OF POLICE FORCES

Border Surveillance (Under Ministry of Defence)	Law & Order (Under Ministry of Home)
Rashtriya Rifles	Central Reserve Police Force
Assam Rifles	
Indo Tibetan Border Police	Border Security Force
	National Security Guards
	Central Industrial Security Force

STREAMLINING RR AND TA SET-UP

RR has Filled the Gap

In RR we have a lightly armed force, trained and organised for undertaking counter insurgency, border surveillance and other defence-related tasks, as an adjunct of the Army. Its role and organisation do not remain paramilitary in character; therefore, any contention to put it under the Ministry of Home, on the plea that it is a paramilitary force, is perverse and should not be entertained. Analogically, RR is like Territorial Army (TA); both have to operate under Army.

The initial problems of impinging on the Army's resources of manpower and equipment, to raise RR, have been mostly overcome, through Government sanction for the additional resources. However, much remains to be desired on the matter of streamlining the manpower and equipment policy for RR. Firstly, RR unit should retain flexibility in organisation, to be compatible with the intensity of insurgency, in the area of its deployment. Since the security forces' commitment for counter-insurgency, protection of the vital points/ areas and lines of communications will be of a varying nature, we should plan to provide manpower for RR through the process of TA. Depending on the intensity of commitment, the RR units can be authorised add-ons. Needless to mention that through TAisation of RR, we would have effected large savings. Understandably, TA setup will have to be geared up to fulfil its back-up support role for RR.

TA, An Effective Concept

As regards effectiveness of TA, to take on the enlarged role in the national security matrix, it may be recalled that the spirit behind Indian Territorial Act, passed in 1920 was that a TA unit should be able to take on most of the war-related roles of a regular Army unit. In fact, TA units formed a major portion of the British and Commonwealth armies during the first and second world wars. Therefore, it is a fallacy to consider TA units inferior to regular units. TA units have performed with credit in all types of roles, in the nation's second line of defence, in all wars and counter-insurgency operations. Their glorious performance in the current Operation Rakshak in J&K, has been found to be matching the performance of regular Army units. And, this is in spite of the fact that a TA man gets his initial recruitment training of only one month in his unit, against about a year spent in the initial training of a regular soldier, in an elaborate and large establishment of training centres in the Army.

A TA soldier has a liability of attending two months training camp every year, to refresh his skills in handling weapons, and performing other tasks. During the period of 10 months of disembodiment in a year, he gets no pay or any other help to sustain himself. He is entitled to get pension after 15 years of embodied service, which enables, as seen from record, only about 15 per cent of the TA personnel to earn pension. Therefore, on the whole, the saving to the exchequer will be tremendous.

Experience has shown that the TA man is not only responsive to the annual calls for training or any other operational commitment, but also shows great enthusiasm in discharge of his duty, because on this depends his being selected for absorption in the nucleus of permanent staff, maintained in each unit, or in the event of embodiment for special training or operations, other than the annual training camp. It is also seen that because of the problem of unemployment, there is no dearth whatsoever, of finding suitable volunteers for TA. The country also has a vast resource to provide local levies to meet a war-related requirement, even on temporary basis. Availability of a large scale levy, in the countryside, in response to any war-related need, is a big national asset for security.

Combining RR and TA for Effect

From the aforestated, it is evident that by combining the concepts and the existing infrastructures of RR and TA, we could relieve a large portion of the regular Army from latter's commitments during the period of peace or no-peace-no-war, namely, counter-insurgency operations, border management and other static roles. With better training and management, we could also entrust the RR-TA combine with the holding role, with the provision of add-ons for heavier weapons and equipment, to convert into regular units/formations, in the event of war.

However, before we enlarge the role of TA, we shall have to provide a fillip to the TA man's self-esteem and sustenance during the period of disembodiment. Firstly, to be able to fulfil the enlarged charter of tasks, a TA soldier would have to be embodied for about four to six months a year. Secondly, during the period of disembodiment, he must be paid a special allowance to enable him to sustain his health and morale, for which a minimum allowance equivalent to half his basic pay must be authorised. Thus, with about one-fourth of a soldier's salary and other expenditures, we could have a trained and motivated reserve in wait, to take on the soldier's job at a short notice. Even with the existing terms of service, which are extremely poor and wanting, no TA unit has faced any problem for annual mobilisation or special mobilisation for a special operation or war. Therefore, apprehensions in this regard, if any, are not based on facts.

It is heartening to see how Indian society as a nation exhibited spirited response in the event of each national crisis or war. The

concept of mobilisation of reserves for war has worked well the world over, there is no reason why it should not work well in India too. Coming to the question, whether we should call this subsidiary force as TA or RR, as mentioned earlier, the raising of TA dates back to the colonial era. The name itself (TA) is not truly suggestive of the enlarged charter of the tasks which are recommended to be taken over by this force. In its present set-up, TA seems to be a low profile organisation. Therefore, it may be a good idea to merge it with RR, which will provide it the desired boost. Director General RR will be better placed to effectively coordinate the entire gamut of training, administrative and operational activities in conjunction with the Army.

SUGGESTED STRUCTURE AND FORCE LEVEL OF THE ARMY

In consonance with the progressive and developed nations in the world, which maintain small standing armies, India's thrust should shift to keeping up a smaller but modernised combat force, duly backed-up by a well geared mobilisation scheme, rather than sustaining such a large standing Army. A build-up leading to war shall invariably have a gestation period, particularly in the context of the Indian sub-continent, which should afford time to mobilise national resources for war effort.

It may be reiterated, at the cost of repetition that downsizing Army in no way entails a depreciation of concern for national security. Nor does it suggest any downscaling of the budget allocation for defence. The proposal is aimed at better management of resources, within the operational imperatives of national security. It is a reflection of national pride and confidence of Israel in its mobilisation process for war, that in spite of being surrounded by hostile neighbouring states, and in the midst of a perpetual threat of an imminent war, its war machine is kept in a state of suspended animation, to be activated only when threshold of the imminence of war is crossed. Therefore, the merit of downsizing Indian standing Army and gearing up its mobilisation scheme cannot be overstressed.

While details of the operational requirement of each sector/ theatre could be further refined, a suggested broad template of India's war and peacetime requirements of the holding and strike (reserve) forces is given in the Table ahead.

(Contd...)

Holding Role		Theatre Reserve		Army HQ/Strategic Reserve	
Corps HQ	Divisions	Corps HQ	Divisions	Corps HQ	Divisions

TABLE : 8

PROPOSED FORCE LEVEL ON MOBILISATION FOR WAR

Holding Role		Theatre Reserve		Army HQ/Strategic Reserve	
Corps HQ	Divisions	Corps HQ	Divisions	Corps HQ	Divisions
		Eastern Theatre			
1	3(Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim)	1*	2	1*	2
		-	-	-	-
		Northern Theatre			
1	4 (J&K)	1	3#	1@	3+
		Western Theatre			
1	4 (Punjab & Rajasthan)	1	2#	1@	3+
		Southern Theatre			
1	2 (South & South-West)	-	-	1@	3+
		Summary of Wartime Requirement of Forces			
4	13	3	7	4	11

* Dual-tasked for counter insurgency as also for operations in Western and Northern theatre.

@ Dual-tasked for other theatres.

\+ Including one-armoured division.

\# Including two to three armoured brigades each (equivalent of an armoured division) held as theatre reserve.

PEACETIME PROFILE OF FORCES

Manning Pattern During Peace

During peacetime, the manpower status to be achieved, over the next three to five years, should be :

Holding Forces	:	The holding role to be taken over entirely by TA, with each unit maintaining 50 per cent of its strength as embodied, at all times except during the period of annual collective training/operational alert when 100 per cent unit strength will be embodied. The Army command and control, planning, training and logistic setup to be retained to support the TA forces.
Theatre Reserve	:	Manned by 100 per cent regular troops at all times, available for instant employment for any unforeseen eventuality.
Strategic Reserve	:	Manned by 50 per cent regular troops and the other 50 per cent by TA, embodied only for about three months in a year for collective training and operational alert. TAisation will apply only to the rank and file. The command and control, planning and logistic staff to be retained on permanent basis.

On a broad estimate, the peacetime regular standing Army will be reduced to one third of the existing force level. The process of TAisation is likely to bring down the existing expenditure on regular combat manpower to half, thereby permitting utilization of the savings for modernisation and better upkeep of the forces.

Other Key Features

(a) The basic object of the proposal is to improve operational preparedness through modernisation of the Army by downsizing the standing force to 50 per cent of the existing strength, over a period of the next three to ten years. However, enough reserve of weapons and equipment will be retained moth-balled, within the Theatre/Sector, for issue to additional troops on mobilisation.

(b) Conceptually, the proposal envisages shifting the core thrust of troops' allocation from holding role to the reserve role; in that, a minimum of two-thirds of the total Army to be assigned the theatre or strategic reserve tasks. Only one-third of the total force to be committed to the ground-holding role.

(c) The proposal presupposes restructuring the paramilitary forces, into the distinct roles, i.e., for peacetime 'border protection' under Ministry of Defence, and internal security and law and order under Ministry of Home.

(d) In the ground holding posture at unit and upward levels, the major portion of troops is to be held in depth, committed or uncommitted, with only a small portion deployed on the front line, for effective surveillance and causing attrition on the enemy, before the defensive posture in the threatened sector can be readjusted and stabilised. The primary aim of the defensive posture should not be limited to denying loss of own territory, but to soon carry battle into the enemy land, and to inflict such punitive damages, so that he dare not venture any aggressive designs again.

Four

Voluntary National Service

Self-discipline, The Basic Requisite

In spite of a rich cultural heritage, abundance of natural resources and with over half a century since Independence, Indians have yet to organise themselves into a cohesive society, where a common man could intrinsically pride himself on his national character. Unless the truly indigenous imperatives of national character, namely patriotism, spirit of sacrifice and dedication to duty find reflection in the attitudes and conduct of the larger sections of the citizenry, we shall continue to grope, without clear direction. Essentially, self-discipline constitutes the basis of other values of national character. Therefore, the nation has to find ways and means, to afford its youth, an opportunity to discipline themselves. To this end, a short tenure ranging from three to seven years service for youth, in the defence services, on a voluntary basis, should produce the desired results.

Experience the world over has shown that defence service may not be popular as a profession, but a short tenure, with adequate incentive, is highly popular, even among the youth of elite sections of the society. This would also help the Defence Services overcome their long standing manpower deficiency, particularly in the junior rung of the officer cadre, as also to cut down substantially the pension liability to defence personnel.

National Will

A number of proposals, regarding voluntary national service (VNS), have been debated from time to time. What is required is a national 'will' to introduce VNS scheme, initially as an experiment, say for five to ten years, before it could be further refined. One could pick up a lesson from experience of some other countries, in this regard. Israelis are rightfully proud of the healthy impact of national service on their society. With the USA's policy of conscription having drawn strong public disapproval in the light of Vietnam war, they modified it into a voluntary service, with the option of taking up military service either on a short term or on permanent basis. The incentives offered, even for the short tenure service, were so lucrative that the best of youth in the society were attracted. For example, an optee for short tenure has wide acceptability for compatible jobs in the other public or private sectors. Besides, during service the optee gets vast opportunities for specialised training facilities at government expense in the best of institutions, which otherwise would have been beyond his reach. With the result, the defence services have once again become attractive and draw good response in the USA. In the Indian context, its discriminatory policy of denying the short service commission officers, interalia, the provision of study leave keeps it from making it popular amongst the youth. Provision of study leave must be liberalised even for the short-tenure defence personnel whose higher educational accomplishments will be a national asset, both during service and after.

The essence of the proposed voluntary national service is to contract the size of the standing regular Army, by inducting a substantial intake of short-tenure optees, who are channelised laterally into the civil streams of paramilitary forces and other public sectors after completion of their voluntary service tenure. The short tenure voluntary service should be three to five years in the case of officers, and seven to ten years in case of other ranks, excluding the training period in case of both.

Main Features of the Proposal

A proposal for the voluntary national service is understood to have been prepared by India's defence planning staff and presented to the Central Government in 1986, which was accepted by the Government, in principle, but it has remained in the cold. Without going into specifics of the proposal, which could be further ironed

out, if required, it suffices to say that the proposal would have helped the nation in solving many of its burning problems. It is neither an impractical utopia nor detrimental to the interest of any other segment of the civil stream, as evident from the broad features of the proposal, given below :

(a) The regular cadre of rank and file in the Army is proposed to be brought down from its present strength of about 10 lakhs to about 4 lakhs.

(b) The JCOs strength to be reduced, but Regimental Commission to be liberalised, so that at least 50 per cent of the junior officers cadre are from the ranks.

(c) The annual intake for regular cadre to be brought down to about eight thousand per year, against the present rate of approximately fifty to sixty thousand per year. Against this, the VNS cadre intake is envisaged to be approximately 1.3 lakhs per year, with a training period of three to four months for each. Thus, at any one time, there would be approximately forty to fifty thousand on training, which is a workable proposition. India's annual recruitment, sometimes in the past, had even crossed a lakh per year, without any problem in their recruitment or training. The country has adequate infrastructure in this regard.

(d) The proposal envisages provision of civil employment to approximately 1.3 lakhs national service volunteers, per year, which should be easily adjustable in the police/paramilitary forces and other public sectors alone. Needless to mention the tremendous benefit to the police forces in getting trained and disciplined manpower, for comparable and compatible jobs in the PMFs. Even within the public sectors, under Ministry of Defence, there is a substantial scope of adjustment of VNS.

Bureaucratic Resistance

The bureaucratic resistance from some corners, is more on account of lack of vision and an imaginary apprehension in implementing the plan. Regrettably, even though Army is the model-ideal, of all paramilitary or police forces, there seems to be a reluctance on their part too, to accept the trained manpower from Army, for adjustment, after the voluntary service. The resistance is not on account of any inadequacy found in the national service youth, for their alternative

job in the paramilitary/police forces, but because the ministries involved in controlling the military, paramilitary forces and other public sector units fail to get out of their parochial loyalties and to take a national view of the problem. Understandably, the spin-off gains to the nation will far outweigh the costs. For example, there will be a substantial cut in the pension liability, besides other evident benefits, on account of reducing the regular cadre, which will afford us a better trained, managed, equipped and motivated service cadre. The greatest benefit will be in providing the national mainstream, a vast disciplined and trained manpower who would bear good influence on the society. The infrastructure of TA service would have to be geared up, on a national grid, to take in its ambit the voluntary national service.

Part II

Crisis in Leadership

- Indian Ethics and National Character
- Leadership : A Preview
- Junior Leadership
- Senior Leadership
- Men — the Essence of Army

Five

Indian Ethics and National Character

INDIAN ETHICS

Preserving the Pristine Values

The handed-down culture and ethics of a society bear relevance to its present and future generations. In India's case, the problem is compounded because the centuries-old foreign rule created a gap between the people and their own pristine values. Deplorably, a sort of pseudo-culture of alien values having supplanted the true Indian ethics, the present-day Indian is neither his ownself, nor has he been able to fully adopt the Western culture, which he has been trying to ape thoughtlessly. Not that all is bad with any foreign culture. In fact, there are bound to be some positive features, in any social order, which any other society may find relevant to borrow. However, as stated elsewhere, a group or society can best develop within the parameters of its own natural culture and indigenous principled values.

In a disciplined organisation, where an individual is required to relegate his personal interest to the good of the organisation, it is most essential that the organisational norms are in consonance with the traditional ethics and moral codes. Many a time, ethical

violations occur on account of ignorance of an individual, as to the correct ethics, or when there is a dichotomy between the individual's convenience vis-a-vis the social cost. Therefore, it would be relevant to highlight some of the main features of the Indian ethics, before we address ourselves to the prevailing aberrations.

Recalling Indian Ethics

Indian culture has its roots in the '*Vedas*' and other ancient scriptures, which still infuse spirit in the Indian society. We also have the advantage of having imbibed certain healthy elements from religions like Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, and other cultures. Thus, out of a healthy blending have emerged the typical Indian mores.

The Indian classic *Gita*, the divine song, symbolises true Indian culture, particularly the ethics of soldiering. The profoundest two lessons from *Gita*, which stand out as the sterling ethics of Indian soldiery are : 'duty for duty's sake', which is further reinforced by the most sagacious piece of advice, which Lord Krishna gave to soldier Arjuna, on the battlefield, "Thy concern is with action alone and not with the result thereof". When one does his *Karma* (work/duty) as *pooja* (worship), there is no question of seeking appreciation or fearing condemnation. Work done as duty brings no frustration. From the above, it follows that the essence of duty is *Nishkam Karma* (desireless action). However, '*Nishkam Karma*' does not mean *karma tyaga* (renouncing action) or working aimlessly. The second eternal lesson from *Gita*, for a soldier, is 'duty unto death'. Lord Krishna conjures up Arjuna by reiterating, "Lucky are those soldiers who die for the righteous cause." He exhorts, "Slain, thou shall go to heaven, victorious thou shall enjoy the earth. Therefore, arise, oh son of Kunti, resolved on the battlefield" (Gita II/37).

Detaching one's mind from result generates fearlessness in one's action. Thus, one can be more natural and without any inhibitions in performance of one's duty. In a pragmatic sense, one can not divorce one's effort or action from the set objective or motive. However, what is crucially important is that the thrust should be on the highest quality of Karma (duty), which should not be fuddled by anxiety of the results or motivated by any gross sense desires. When objective of an individual's Karma (duty) merges with the objective of the society, it becomes a noble act. Anxiety for favourable results, to seek satisfaction or gross sense desires, leads to all sorts of wrong means and unhealthy practices.

The highest code of 'morality in social conduct', enshrined in *Ramayana*, and the vital lesson of 'war for the righteous cause' in *Mahabharata*, provide depth to India's rich culture and social norms. A further depth to our rich culture and ethics is provided by the spirit of 'brotherhood' from Islam, and the spirit of 'sharing and service' from Christianity. A criticism from some corners that Indian philosophy is pessimistic emanates from one's lack of its true comprehension. What may seem, initially, pessimistic in Indian philosophy, has the persevering verve and spiritual strength of eventually overcoming the difficult and painful situations. Deep-seated in the Indian philosophy is humility and magnanimity in strength, an essential part of Indian character. One sees flashes of its manifestation in Indian history, whether it was Porus Vs Alexander or Prithvi Raj Chauhan Vs Gauri, or in the contemporary history, Mahatma Gandhi Vs the colonial empire; these are only a few of the examples of a typical Indian character.

According to Gita, "To him who has conquered himself, his own-self is a friend, but to him who has not conquered himself, his own self is hostile like an external enemy". Ultimately, what helps a man to attain the valued ethics are austerity, self-control and renunciation. In *Upanishads*, the body is compared to a chariot, the embodied soul to its master, the intellect or discriminative faculty to the driver, mind to the reins, the senses to the horses, and sense objects to the roads. The chariot can take the master to his destination, if it is strongly built, the driver can discriminate between the right and wrong road, if the reins are strong, the horses are effectively controlled, and if the roads are well chosen.

Military Service, a Calling

In the Indian moral code, military service is a calling (for the soldiers), different from any other civilian occupations. The most fundamental feature, which distinguishes a soldier from his civilian counterpart, is the soldier's unlimited commitment and liability which may result in sacrifice of one's life.

Ethics is concerned with life, as it ought to be lived, which entails an unceasing struggle for self-improvement. Ethics has a special meaning to the profession of arms, because it calls upon its members to make unreserved supreme sacrifice of life, at the bidding of a superior in the hierarchy. Therefore, unless the man has firm faith in the ethical correctness of the superior's motive and conduct, he

would lack conviction in his act and shall avoid risks to his life and honour.

The Questioning Spirit

An interesting feature of the *Advaitic* philosophy of India, also echoed by the existentialists, which seems to have been pushed to oblivion, brings out that man's 'manness' consists in leading a life which can continuously be questioned. Therefore, renouncing his questioning spirit is estrangement to his natural being. Having surrendered his basic character of questioning, man is in bondage of fear and ignorance. One of the principles recommended by *Advaita Vedanta* is called *Nitya* (right) - *Anitya* (wrong)', *Vastu* (gross/object) - *Viveka* (discrimination), i.e. cultivating the capacity of discriminating between right and wrong or real and unreal. Accepting blindly without discrimination whatever comes to us as mass order is *Anitya*, which one must question in order to find if *Nitya* lies therein. Thus, the spirit of questioning characterises the very being of man. In the *Advaita* philosophical system, the first step to *moksha-marga* (salvation) asserts that one must begin by trying to assert or question his routine day-to-day existence. The *Advaita* theory shows a way for man's coming out of his blind surrender to mass order, leading to estrangement. In the backdrop of this indigenous philosophy of manhood, it is amazing to see how the Indian society has mostly degenerated into a sychophantic preponderance, where it is a rarity to have a refreshing example of forthrightness and self respect. We owe it to ourselves and the organisation to nurture a work-culture which induces in each individual pride, elan and provides a higher meaning to his life.

The Ancient Glory, a Glance

With misinterpretation of Indian history by foreign historians, the high spot of India's ancient military traditions has not been well known or fully discovered in the past. It is now believed by historians that the kingdom of Mitanni (1500 - 1360 BC) originated in India, and extended up to Egypt. The most lucid account of India's rich military traditions is contained in the celebrated epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* (2000 - 1500 BC). The Mauryan empire (320 - 185 BC) stretched to encompass Eastern Persia and Afghanistan. The mighty *Tamil Cholas* (1014 - 1044 AD) extended their empire to include Malaya and Sri Lanka. However, India's post-golden age (320 - 500 AD) period witnessed the pacifist influence of Hinduism

and Buddhism, which was followed by start of the Muslim incursions, resulting, over the period, in gradual disintegration of the Indian sub-continent in smaller states.

The Alien Rule

During the alien rule lasting centuries, the patriotic spirit of the indigenous Indian was suppressed, and he was constrained to add to his character, over the period, a trait of opportunism, expediency and survival, which turned him into a self-seeking individualist. The Britishers never wanted to glorify India's ancient history, which they tried to obliterate in a clever way. Believing that Indians were happy with the British rule 'assumedly far superior to their (Indian) predecessors in respect of justice and establishment of internal security', they showed Moghuls as bad rulers and the Indian ways of life most primitive, so that the common Indian felt the necessity of continued British rule. India was projected to the outside world, as an utterly backward conglomeration of cave-men, snake-charmers and beggars, etc. When Vivekananda addressed the International Religions Congregation in the United States, the audience could not believe that he could be an Indian. It is believed that after Vivekananda's visit to the West, the Western society started questioning the rationale for allocating huge funds to the Christian missionaries working in India, which was already so rich in its heritage, culture and spiritual enlightenment. The renaissance of Indian national pride, injected by Vivekananda, and ably backed up by other contemporary national leaders, germinated a mass upsurge for the national movement for independence.

Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister during the second world war, had strongly opposed granting of independence to India. In a letter written to Atlee, the then Prime Minister of the British empire, he predicted that India would disintegrate soon, if granted independence, as evident from an extract of his letter, "Power will go in the hands of the rascals, rogues and freebooters . . . These are men of straw, who will fight among themselves for their selfish gains, and India will be lost amongst political squabbles". Regardless of the fact that most of his prognosis may seem true, India's resilience to live through such gloomy predictions is her biggest cultural strength and asset.

As stated earlier, the ancient concept of Indian nationhood, practically covering the entire Indian sub-continent and its peripheral

areas, had got blurred by the series of external invasions from the West, resulting in gradual disintegration of the Indian nation state into a large number of smaller independent states. With a view to consolidating their gains, the foreign rulers tried to expand their influence in the entire sub-continent. In the process, a pseudo image of Indian nationhood got projected, where Indians were alien and treated as second rate citizens in their own motherland. Thus, a common Indian's higher aspirations and spirit of patriotism remained in a state of suspended animation during the centuries of slavery, which pushed him to his cocoon. In the shadows of an Indian's sense of insecurity, his self-seeking and self-survival tendencies can be said to be a result of the oppressive environment in which he had to survive.

Ready Loyalty and Enterprising Spirit Exploited

With the birth of the Indian movement for independence, resurfaced the Indian national spirit to regain sovereignty, which also got support from the surging world opinion against colonialism, particularly during the world wars, where Indians showed their class as men of substance and valour. The awakening of patriotic spirit, enkindled by the independence movement had come, alas, after a long slumber. The Indian soldier who could not be fired by a patriotic cause while fighting for the alien ruler, was cleverly compensated by according him honours and mercenary incentives. Even though Indians were discriminated against, for not being considered worthy of joining the officer cadre of the British Indian Army till early 20th century, they joined its rank and file in large number, because besides mercenary attraction, the service gave them social status, as also an opportunity of adventure and visit to far-off lands. The degrading poverty and lack of other facilities for livelihood forced the youth to seek enrolment in the British Indian Army. As a mercenary, he fought for his paymaster rather than the country. Some analysts believe that Indian soldiery gave its loyalty to good leaders - foreign or native - but not to institutions, values, systems or society; which is, however, a debatable inference. The foreigners fully exploited ready loyalty of the Indian soldiers.

A period of over two generations since independence, has not been equal to generating the national character of pride and selfless service amongst Indians at large. The past attitude of abject servility to the alien ruler and paymaster continues to dominate the psyche of majority of Indians, including soldiers, to be subserviently loyal to

the paymaster (boss) of the day, even when at times there is a clash of interest between loyalty to organisation vis a vis the boss. This hang-over from our history of slavery and milieu of opportunism continues to breed sycophancy, which is rampant country-wide, including the military services.

NATIONAL CHARACTER

A national character ought to flow from native culture, religious beliefs and geographic location of the country. It finds manifestation in the pride an individual takes in his country, himself and the high values he displays in his general attitude and conduct. Essentially, man is same everywhere and cannot do without the cardinal values. However, in different parts of the world, importance has been given relatively to different aspects of the values, resulting in the nuances of differences between the national characters of different nations. However, this delicate characteristical variation does not create any serious problems in one group's interaction with a group of another country.

A Typical Indian Character

A typical Indian's character assigns the highest values to selfless *karma* (duty) and has eternal capacity to bear adversity for the righteous cause. His prayers seek universal good. He is individualistic to the extent to seeking his spiritual strength from within, whose ultimate goal in life is self-realisation. To the eternal question, as to why should man be moral, the answer given by Indian philosophy is that the prudent self-interest requires man to be moral. Therefore, the derogatory reference to an Indian for being a self-seeker is misplaced.

India's geographic location has, to an extent, influenced the general psyche of its people to be inward looking and defensive. Historically, with the exception of certain transborder Indian adventures in the BC era, as brought out elsewhere, all major battles of consequence were fought not on the borders, but inside the country. Even in defence, by and large, there has been a general lack of assertiveness. To the question as to why Indians have, as a rule, remained inward looking, without expanding, beyond the subcontinent, the answer *interalia*, that comes to ones mind is that, firstly, the country was rich in resources, where the common man did not have to look far for his needs; and secondly, the Indian culture

had imbibed in him a sense of self-abnegation, where material quest or expansionism were deemed a low object of life.

If one was to single out the most disconcerting inadequacy in the present-day Indian national character, it is the lack of spirit of national pride amongst Indians. Pride-in-self is a prerequisite to having pride in one's nation. Self-pride and honour can only come if one is truly dutiful (*dharmi*), efficient (*karmayogi*) and has a natural inclination to take the righteous stand for his genuine convictions. The key word is not what one is doing, but how one is doing. If there is one single anathema to one's self-respect, it is the lingering slavish propensity of Indians to sycophancy, which they find most easy and rewarding to indulge in. Naturally, the scourge of sycophancy cannot be eliminated, unless the top hierarchy of the country is purged of the imbecile and truckling mediocrity. Further more, without delving into reasons for the lack of a sense of united Indianhood, it suffices to say that the strong gravitations of regionalism, clannishness and caste have played havoc with one's identity as an Indian.

A Unique Heritage

Many Indians tend to be oblivious of the eternal richness of their heritage and natural endowments. Indian civilisation is the most ancient in the recorded history of man-kind, which has continued for over 4000 years of human civilisation, as evident from Mohanjodaro. Chinese civilisation dates back to about 3000 years, and Greek philosophy which started in seventh century BC, ended in the third century AD. The richness of India's geographic and natural resources is unique of its kind, with land configuration varying from the highest mountain range of the Himalayas to the lush green deltaic plains, the vast deserts and an extensive seashore covering about two-thirds of the national borders. At any time of the year, the country affords temperatures ranging from sub-zero to sweating hot. The most unique elements of Indian culture are its people, their customs, dialects and beliefs. The diversity in this regard is like the multi-coloured variety of flowers in a park. Physically, intellectually, spiritually and morally, an Indian is the envy of the world. If lakhs of foreigners are streaming to India, it is not for a merry-making trip alone, but to have a glimpse for themselves of the world's most ancient and rich civilisation.

About 30 years back when I was posted at the Indian Military Academy, once I happened to be deputed as a liaison officer with a British retired general officer, on visit to India, who had served in the British Indian Army during the first and second world wars. After meeting I could sense that the General looked filled with emotions, when he said that he could never get over the fond memories of the best part of his life that he had spent in India. During our conversation, he asked me which regiment I belonged to. On being told that I belonged to Jammu and Kashmir Rifles (JAK RIF), the grand old man paused for a moment and asked if I knew where the prettiest women and men (he seemed to have added `men' as an afterthought) in the world were found. When I said 'No', he mumbled 'Badharwah' (part of J & K), with a fond expression of deep nostalgia on his face. The General then narrated that as a young officer, he had read in a book written by a western traveller, claiming that the prettiest women and men in the world were found at 'Badharwah', which he (General Officer) had indeed found to be so when he visited Badharwah after reading the book. Till then, I had not visited Badharwah, and made it a point to do so, on getting my next leave. I could not agree more with the General's observation that Badharwah and its people were undoubtedly the most blissfully beautiful. There are many such exotic places and people in India which we have not been able to fully develop and project to the outside world.

Military, the Symbol of National Integration

It is time we as a nation, recaptulated and reiterated the cardinal values of national character, and live by them, through our acts and beliefs, as proud Indians. Indian military is not only the protector of sovereignty of the land but also the symbol of national integrity. It is to be seen to believe, how officers and men, from different regions and religious beliefs in the country, synthesise as a harmonious and disciplined group to live and die together. Military, being the most potent and disciplined organ of the society, has a special obligation to nurture and demonstrate national pride, in all its acts and concepts.

What is required is a deliberate and concerted movement at the national level to generate consciousness for each Indian to take pride in himself, irrespective of the position he holds or the level of work he is performing.

Six

Leadership — A Preview

A Candid Introspection

The proverbial truism that 'there are no bad units, there are only bad officers', should impel us to inquisitively diagnose if there is any malaise in military leadership. This is not to suggest that all is bad with the officer cadre. Since this exposition is targeted at the weaknesses of the military system, the good present in it is not being highlighted. There can be no reforms without a dispassionate critique of the malaise that has crept into the military management and leadership, as evidenced by a series of past cases and developments (elucidated elsewhere), which show, especially the top hierarchy in poor light.

Those with an irascible susceptivity to criticism are well advised to take the plain-speaking in this chapter, or elsewhere in the book, constructively, without losing faith in the Army's potential to rise to fulfil its role(s), in the event of an internal or external challenge. Calling a spade a spade is seldom a matter of elation to the caller, except that it takes the load of his dissenting views off his head. Most of us do have an intuitively good taste for righteous values, but being so involved in own job or affairs, the concern for unprincipled trends in the organisational or societal norms, generally remains subdued in

our subconscious mind. Many carry, all their lives, a regret deep inside, for not having raised their voice or given vent to their mind in words or in action. It is only when more of us are willing and prepared to risk our job securities for a higher cause of the national or collective good, that the unscrapulous and the undeserving individuals who have managed to rise to higher positions, could be checked from taking the system for a ride. To this end, instead of hanging back or trying to sidetrack the grave issues and inadequacies, we shall do well to face the naked truth with an open mind so that a collective voice and will is generated to arrest the unwholesome trend. Let no emotive sentiments or a false sense of loyalty put blinkers on our vision to discern the foul and, at times, shameful acts and trends.

The author has put across his personal view point, in true loyalty to the country and to himself, and emphatically claims that each case or incident referred to, or data quoted, is based on concrete evidence or personal knowledge.

Reinvigorating Leadership Values

I am reminded of a childhood anecdote, wherein a moral science teacher explained to us that like a tent required the support of a few poles, so did the society or an organisation function on the strength of a few noble and effective members who acted as conscience-keepers for the rest. In the case of Indian military, the good leaders as the poles of strength are becoming rarer and less noticeable amidst the proliferating multitude of non-professional mediocres. Certain good practices which kept alive and pepped-up higher service values are gradually being forgotten. For example, the normal practice of the senior officers to take every opportunity of a forum of discussion, conference or training event, not only to sum up the subject or event of the day, but also to accord an aim-plus to the event by reiterating certain higher values of service and other topical subject(s) of national interest, has become a rarity.

According to Max Pepree "Senior leaders who have no beliefs of their own and only understand methodology and quantification are modern-day eunuchs; they can never engender competence or confidence". Leadership and service values are inseparable and are too important to be forgotten or given a cursory lip service. The time-worn practice of having officers' fortnights, seminars, character studies, discussions, book reviews, as an important and regular

training event, needs to be revived and enforced at all levels of command. The scope of leadership training at various schools of instructions also needs to be enlarged.

Leadership, as a subject, is passing through a state of neglect. For a longtime there have been no worthwhile general staff publications which critically analyse the erosive trends for corrective measures in the field of leadership, to help promote the higher values of service, beyond the humdrum of routine existence. Nor is it the subject which could be left to the military bigwigs alone to mull-over and manage. It should equally, if not more, agitate the minds of junior leaders, who should feel free to share their views, based on their personal experience and convictions, with a positive and constructive mindset. In this regard, the system has to be prepared to welcome, and not discourage contradicting or dissenting views, for it is only these which are likely to make a positive contribution to the healthy values. By shirking to address ourselves squarely and constructively to contradictions or dissensions, if any, we perpetuate a moral weakness which is likely to degenerate the process of higher planning. Let us analyse, in the succeeding paragraphs, some of the key problem areas of leadership.

Institutional Incompatibility

There is a contradiction between what is ideal in the interest of an organisation vis-a-vis career interest of an individual. In the prevalent dichotomy between the institutional requisites of smooth careerism and the hazards of sticking to traditional values, it is unreasonable to expect the present-day officer to opt for the professionally suicidal course of sheer rectitude. Exceptions will always be there, however, they do not prove the rule. The stiff competition in the pyramidal hierarchical system encourages short range zero-defect trivia, to make a mark. Human motive for success and recognition impels one's drive for quick personal gains, even if at the cost of abdicating the ethical values.

The most adversely telling incompatibility lies in the existing military system of appraisal and selection. A leader's performance in his functions of command is essentially, by, of and for his command. Yet, the command has no say in the matter of assessment of the performance of its leader. The present system of leaving the performance appraisal to the superior officer(s) alone, is fraught with the serious affliction of incompatibility and lack of accountability. A

sense of insecurity on the part of a commander and the lurking fear of his incompetence being exposed, prevents the system from being more balanced and transparent. More about it later.

While the career interest depends on how well one has impressed his superior officer to record a favourable report, the organisational interest depends on how dedicatedly and conscientiously one had worked for human resource development and management of his command for its ultimate combat role in war. With the date for peacetime training and morale generally fudged to show a facade of impressive war-time preparedness, the real training invariably remains a matter of data-filling of the training events and administrative details. Therefore, it will be unfair to attribute the prevalent inconsonance between the ideal and operative standards, in the mode of conduct of the officer corps, to the contemporary socio-economic or cultural compulsions in the society. The malaise seems to have got entrenched in the military guts.

Tenor of Service Values

A war college study (early 70s), ordered by the US Army Chief, as brought out in the book *Crisis in Command*, had come to very interesting findings, summed up as follows, which are also relevant to the Indian military scenario:

(a) The junior officers were more concerned about the unethical practices and were eager to do their part to correct the situation.

(b) The reasons for the gap between the ideal and actual behaviours were found to be promotion-oriented behaviour, inade-quate communication between the junior and senior, dishonest reporting of situation reports, distorted statistics and non-objective reporting on officers.

(c) The senior officers setting poor examples of ethical and professional behaviour.

(d) Disloyalty to subordinates.

Near home, I recall a study conducted (1990-91) by India's College of Defence Management to identify the core values of the Indian society, and to find if these were in consonance with the value system prevalent amongst the servicemen, came to some very revealing conclusions, with regard to the gap between what was

perceived to be ideal and what was operative standard of the cardinal mores. The values of importance to the service, as conceived by the study were: altruism, courage of conviction, fortitude, honesty and integrity, honour, justice, knowledge, loyalty, physical and moral courage, self esteem, truthfulness and unity. The core values deemed significant by the study are not absolute and could be debated for deletion or addition in the listed values; however, the findings of the study with regard to the wide gap between the ideal and operative norms, tabulated in the extracts given below, were rather cheerless:

TABLE : 9

Analysis No. 1

Service Values (in order of preference of respondents)	Percentage of Officers who found the Present Standards Deficient
Honesty and Integrity	93
Loyalty	80
Courage of Conviction	92
Truthfulness	91
Honour	50
Courage	75
Knowledge	75

Note : In other words, up to 93 percent of the officers felt that the basic service values were deficient. Ironically, the highest mandatory qualities are the worst casualties, namely, honesty, integrity, courage of conviction and truthfulness, as evident from the Table, which shows that behind the facade of well-being there was a sorry plight.

TABLE : 10

Analysis No. 2

Service Values (in order of preference)	Actual Available (out of 10)	Ideal Weightage (out of 10)	Gap between Ideal & Actual
Honesty and Integrity	4.34	8.21	3.87
Loyalty	4.76	8.13	3.37
Courage	4.22	8.01	3.97
Knowledge	4.77	7.89	3.12

Note : The gap between the ideal and actuality was too wide to allow sustenance of values. Truthfulness seems to have been clubbed with honesty and integrity in this study. The above data was reflective of the opinion of a section of the officers, who were approached by the study group. In practice, the gap might be wider, which proves that the service

values were only being given the go-by and mouth-honour.

TABLE : 11

Analysis No. 3

Analysis of the responses received from rank and file, as given below, also revealed the nasty gap, though their value perception and preferences were different

Service Values (in order of preference)	Actual Available	Ideal Weightage	Gap Between Ideal & Actual
Honour	3.74	7.80	4.06
Unity	4.25	7.91	3.66
Knowledge	4.46	7.74	3.28
Honesty and Integrity	3.90	7.61	3.71
Loyalty	3.06	7.08	4.02
Moral Courage	3.82	7.56	3.74

Note : It is heartening to note that the highest priority was accorded to honour by other ranks, in the service values, which inspires them to keep their chin up in adversity and make supreme sacrifice at the call of duty. Interestingly, the values of Honour and Unity did not figure in the list drawn by the respondent officers in Tables 9 and 10 above.

That the officer corps are consciously concerned about the unwholesome gap between the 'ideal' and the 'actual prevalent' in the service values, is also evident from the fact that it is a common subject of private conversation, at all levels of the hierarchy, including the top brass, as if they are helpless observers to the eroding system. One and all seem to look for the cause and remedy elsewhere, instead of finding the blame within, and doing some soul-searching for immediate corrective measures.

A False Sense of Loyalty

Any progressive or dynamic system ought to be transparent and self-corrective. A tendency to push unpleasant facts under the carpet, or to show lack of moral courage to retract and redeem a wrong decision, can be highly subversive of good discipline and morale in a disciplined organisation. Regrettably, military history does not portray the top military leadership in good light, in this regard. Historically, all after-war reports which were critical of high

command, to name a few of them, 'Kirke Report' after first world war, the US Army report after Vietnam war, and in India's case, 'Henderson Brooke report on 1962 Sino-Indian war', were deliberately banned from being made public or disseminated, thus, denying the benefit of learning from one's own failings in planning and conduct of the wars. Under a false sense of loyalty to the organisational image, the system gets vitiated by unhealthy practice of withholding truth and clouding transparency.

The military system promotes unprofessionalism and incompetence; first, by constraining its members to act in a manner not conducive to professional rise or success, and secondly, by selecting and promoting those whose values are not up to par and personality imperfect. The system induces suppression of intellectual activity, which over a period of disuse, results in atrophy of thinking capacity. The decaying effect is not only in the intellectual activity but over the period of tedious monotony of petty routine, all-body and no-mind activity, the higher human sensitivities and vision also get degraded. In this regard, the earlier mentioned US War College Study Report, as summed up below, came to very revealing conclusions:

(a) The higher one's military status, the lesser one's inclination to discern differences between the ideal and operative military ethics.

(b) Officers commissioned from West Point (regular entries) not more honourable than those from other entries.

(c) Majority believed that all was not well within the Army.

(d) The top brass were out of touch with lower level realities; as one rose in rank, flow of information either diminished or became distorted.

The above findings of the War College Study, which are more than true of the Indian military as brought out subsequently, denote the weakest link in the armed forces. It is an irony that plurality of those holding the higher ranks were deemed to be the poorest in discharge of their legitimate duties, and thus, a serious liability to the country's security.

Seven

Junior Leadership

Kudos to Junior Leadership

Ultimately, the battles are won or lost at the defended localities and posts under junior leaders. The crucial role of junior military leadership in war effort, is often not fully appreciated. It is most heartening to see that the junior leadership of the Indian military have acquitted itself with great credit and honour, in all low or high-intensity wars and operations since independence. In fact, two parts of the Indian military, to which the nation stands indebted, are its junior leadership and the rank and file.

Junior leadership implies leadership at squad/platoon and sub-unit/company level. The lowest effective combat sub unit/group, called the primary group, depends on the type of operations and the basic orientation of the organisation. The primary group of the US Army, during the second world war, was a squad/platoon, which came down to buddy system in the Korean war. The German and Israeli armies maintained their primary group at company/squadron level, which is also true of the Indian Army. It is effectiveness of the primary groups in a unit which makes it a self-sustaining combat unit/regiment.

A unit commander has a larger team of squad/sub unit commanders and staff, besides other resources. Therefore, his performance depends largely on how well he has managed the resources at his disposal. However, at the sub unit level, the leader

has to influence battle by personal example and quality of his leadership, with only a limited scope of playing with other resources at his disposal, the outcome depends on leadership quality rather than management. Only with the junior leadership ticking, at section, squad and company levels, can a unit be effective in its role.

Hangover of the Colonial Era

Traditionally, the officer cadre had been the preserve of youth from nobility or the social elite, having an outlook of amateurs. However, this up-and-coming outlet of service in the British Indian military, was denied to the Indian youth, till early this century, as they were derogatorily considered an unfit stock for officership. A typical Sandhurst report, on a cadet of Indian origin, who was the first Indian to be granted entry in that premier institution, in 1918, said, "Takes trouble with his work but is handicapped by his limited knowledge of English causing poor results. Lacks power of command due to nervousness and self-consciousness." Ironically, the present-day Indian rural youth, having joined ranks and aspiring to be officers, seem to suffer from the same handicap and prejudice, as their forerunners did at the hands of the alien rulers.

Even at the cost of repetition, a little more is required to be said about the clout of English which was introduced in India by Macaulay to produce English-knowing lower staff (clerks), to facilitate colonial administration. English, on that account, had nothing to do with leadership potential of a young man, as in any case, the *lingua franca* of rank and file of the present Indian Army, or the former British Indian Army, has throughout been *Hindustani*. English had been a language of the Officer Corps' training and the officers mess, where no Indians were allowed (as officers) till early this century. Therefore, the weightage accorded to the English language, as a language of the present-day officer cadre, is misplaced. Besides restricting the recruitment potential of the officer cadre, mostly to a narrow segment of the English-speaking youth, it has generated certain amount of artificiality in the social and working environment of the Officer Corps.

The Organisation's Interest

We ought to be more pragmatic and discerning in matters bearing crucially on the health and growth of the armed forces. It is not merely a question of convenience of a segment of the organisation,

that they feel more at home while speaking in English, because they have been doing so all these years of service, but a matter of having a more natural and viable system of communication within the Army, which is conducive to its smooth functioning at all levels. It is intriguing to imagine as to what grave loss to the officer mess functioning or officers training or performance of duties as a commander or staff at various levels, will befall if one adopted *Hindustani* as the functional *lingua franca.* The argument that for learning and training in technical subjects, *Hindustani* or Hindi is not well developed is valid, for which in any case, the officer cadre have adequate base in English language. The pay-off by shifting to *Hindustani* as *lingua franca,* even at the schools of instruction is not far to see. Not that there is any ban on communicating or transacting in *Hindustani* but the officer cadre is shy of transacting in *Hindustani,* as if it is a demeaning act. This is reflective of the emerging trend in Indian society, where English once again, after the British Raj, is being treated as a language of scholars and status, which weighs on the psychology of the common man, who tries to exhibit his new found status by speaking English, whether or not it is appropriate. Mark Tully, an eminent journalist and writer, makes a telling observation that every Indian tries to show his knowledge of English, in that, even if one speaks to a middle or low middle class Indian in Hindi, he would reply in English.

At any rate, I do not wish to be drawn into the debate of national language. Apparently, English does have its relevance for Inter-State and Centre-State functioning, because Hindi has yet to cover large ground to come to a level of acceptability. I wish to restrict the scope of my consideration to working out a viable arrangement of a common language within military. As brought out earlier, the purpose of a language is a means of communication which should not be viewed entirely as a measure of an individual's leadership potential, where one should look for the attributes of dynamism, quick responses, flow of thoughts rather than proficiency in speaking a language.

Troops do not know English. *Hindustani* is, therefore, the working language of troops, which even those who are from non-Hindi belt, catch up during their training period. As far as officer cadre are concerned, perhaps, the best course would be to leave the discretion to the individual, so that he exercises his option, with a sense of self-respect, with no shame or guilt attached to speaking in *Hindustani.*

STAFF COLLEGE

Genesis

The introduction of Staff College by the Prussian Army in 1810 was a landmark in professionalisation of the officer cadre. The basic purpose of Staff College was to develop, among junior officers, a uniform intellectual outlook in handling the complexity of warfare. In other words, the staff officers were trained to think in a stereotyped fashion, so that when faced by similar circumstances, they should react in the same way. The concept of uniform training of selected junior leaders in the staff course paid rich dividends to the Prussian Army in the Franco-Prussian war (1870). However, over the period, the staff course has come to be treated as a qualitative requirement (QR) for higher command and staff responsibilities in the military, which is not in the spirit for which it was introduced.

The Object(s)

It may be appreciated that the QR for an instructor, staff officer and commander vary. It is inexpedient to try to achieve three-in-one or two-in-one results from staff course. The aim stipulated for the staff course, as given in the special Army Order, is 'to train officers up to the required standards for second grade staff appointments, and in doing so, to fit them, with further experience, for command and higher staff appointments'. The object of assisting an officer in his command assignments is common to any other course that an officer does. There is no greater training ground for an officer, to hold higher command assignments, than service with troops. A close look at the set objects of the course may reveal a bit of contradiction, in that, while the staff course is basically meant to format the thinking of an officer, the commander ought to be unorthodox and innovative in his approach, particularly in a war situation. Therefore, the only useful purpose of having qualified in the staff course is to assist an officer in holding higher staff jobs. Regrettably, qualifying in the staff course is deemed a mighty feather in an officer's cap, throughout his service, which also has its negative effect.

The Selection Criteria

In the current procedure for the Staff College selection, 70 per cent weightage is given to the written examination and 30 per cent to the record of service. It is observed that the differential in record of

service, between the officers of a batch, is very minimal. It is primarily the written examination which decides one's chance for being psc i.e. passed staff college. Hence, there is a case for review of the weightage being given to the record of service vis a vis the written test. With vacancies for the course limited to around 250 per year, about three-fourths of the officer cadre remain 'non psc'.

Since entry to the staff course is based mainly on a competitive written examination, the cleverer of the lot, accordingly, condition their professional attitude to avoiding practical professionalism and try to manipulate staff appointments, where they get maximum time to prepare for the examination. A study in this regard has revealed that the bulk of officers, who qualify in the entrance examination, are those who were posted at assignments where they got enough time and facilities for preparation before the examination. Most of those serving with troops or on difficult assignments in difficult areas are at a handicap in this regard. Many a professional gem, who accorded higher priority to practical soldiering and duty, instead of getting down to serious reading and cramming of notes, and had acquired the right professional grounding of service with troops, highly desirable for higher command assignments, had in the process, suffered a permanent stigma of being 'non-psc'. This came in the way of their promotional growth, at every stage, on consideration for selection for higher rank and responsibilities. The plea that a non-psc officer does not have adequate employability is untenable, because the best training value comes from on-the-job training and not by having done a course.

Many Natural Leaders Get Knocked out

Gordon Benneth, a military analyst, has drawn a distinction between the so-called thinkers (psc) and fighters (non-psc), "Thinkers were yes-men, lacking aggressive spirit. Fighters were practical men, unencumbered with theory, did not give a damn for anyone and got on with the job". The problem is only of attitude and priorities. Many good officers, at the early stage of youthful idealism and soldiering, do not fully appreciate the importance that 'psc' holds in their career and, therefore, do not care much. Many a proven die-hard soldier and leader of men (many of them even decorated by gallantry awards) get written off because they did not care much to be 'mugs'. On the other hand, some of the opportunistic *'babus'* who had no stomach for soldiering, evoked little leadership acceptance from the men, and were shunted out on non-professional or

ungraded staff appointments, where they devoted all their time to prepare for the staff course, managed to qualify in the staff college examination, and beat in the written test their professional peers hands down, where the difference between making and not-making-the-grade is fractional to a decimal point, and where no allowance is given to the hazards of a candidate's assignment and place of duty at the time of the examination.

On qualifying for the staff college, overnight the selectees get classified as serious professionals. After the staff college, they generally go on staff assignments, followed by a brief stint as second-in-command of a unit, before taking over as commanding officer. Thus, an indifferent or dim sub unit commander can get passed off as a professional with potential. Thereafter, many of these late professional starters do not look back and continue going places. There are many examples of officers having made the staff course, in the last or a wartime concessional extra chance, when they had given up hope of qualifying it, but once they did, they overnight got branded as rare-brand professionals. It is unusual that an officer who has qualified at the staff college does not make the higher rank.

It is all very well to contend that an indifferent company commander may prove to be a good battalion commander and an excellent formation commander. In this regard, examples like Montgomery or Auckinleck, are quoted to suggest that good athletes, who were most popular sub unit commanders, often remained athletes and unfit as higher commanders. This is an indefensible argument. Firstly, exceptions do not prove the rule; in that, on the premise of exceptions like Montgomery, who was basically a die-hard soldier, many so-called professionals try to gain acceptance as potential higher commanders. Secondly, an athletic young officer with a wooden head may be unfit for higher responsibility, but what about a professional thinking athletic young officer, who cares for the service values, and his healthy attitude towards soldiering leaves lesser time to prepare for the staff course, who in the process, misses the boat? There is no redemption possible, thereafter.

The Positive Side

Not that there is anything against doing the staff course, which does provide a grounding for undertaking the staff appointments, for which incidentally, there are other analogous shorter-duration courses, called staff officers courses, to train officers at junior and

senior levels. However, the feather goes only with the staff college. The good that one can see coming out of the staff college is that an officer is forced to study profession to prepare for the entrance examination, and subsequently in formatting his thinking-process in analysis of military situation before selecting a course of action. Further, the course provides a good exposure, where he interacts with the officers from other services and students from foreign armies, which widens his outlook. That senior leadership has to be well-informed is undeniable, but what is damaging is to overplay the role of the staff course in a commander's professional standing.

With the entire regular officer cadre having come through a stiff written and selection board screening by the Union Public Service Commission, what adds dimensions to an officer's subsequent professional profile is his exposure to various assignments. Unfortunately, the air of so-called professional elitism, created by the staff college, generates a sense of guilt and inadequacy amongst the 'non-psc' officers, who may throughout carry the regret, for not having availed of the opportunities or worked as hard, to qualify in the entrance examination.

Proposed Modification

Firstly, the criterion of selection should be modified to accord equal weightage, i.e. 50:50, to an officer's record of service and the written test. Secondly, in a command-oriented Army which Indian Army is projected to be, no weightage, whatsoever, be given to a 'psc' officer for any command assignments. In fact, it should not be considered as an input while considering an officer for higher responsibilities. Thirdly, the course could be made professionally useful by clubbing it with the all arms and services senior command course meant to train the potential senior commanders. Thereafter, the aim should be that all potential unit commanders must do this course for which the course duration could be reduced to about five to six months and capacity of the course increased by about 100 students. Having done that, the course could be designated as command and staff course.

LEADING FROM FRONT

Creed of Boldness

In the history of warfare, successful leaders have invariably led by personal example and followed the creed of bold risks to win battles. Aristotle said, "It was deeds rather than thoughts which counted in

war". On the other hand, there has been a school of thought, initially attributed to Philo, exhorting military commanders, who in his times were invariably the rulers themselves, "It is your duty not to take part in battle, for whatever you may accomplish by spilling your own blood could not compare with the harm you would do to your interest, if anything happened to you". Taking the cue from Philo's thought, a new concept of military generalship emerged, wherein, though the soldiers were expected to fight heroically, the senior commanders themselves chose not to act so. With the expansion in size of armies, personal leadership in some armies got replaced by bureaucratic leadership. The Prussians who were pioneers of 'intellectual generalship' were, for some period, influenced by this concept to avoid 'excess of heroism'. Though, the school of thought of non-heroic generalship did not seem to have evoked universal acceptance and military leaders, for the most part, continued to lead from front. Philo's concept had greater relevance to the dynastic rulers of his times, who also passed off as God incarnations, and therefore, their safety was perceived to be sacrosanct. Thus, the ruler-commander could not be unduly exposed to a physical danger. Moreover, the concept prohibited excessive heroism or fool-hardiness on part of a ruler or the highest military commander, and not to keep them isolated from the battle front, or to prohibit their proximity to the combat zone to inspire men.

The recorded history of warfare has all through witnessed heroic military leaders, starting from the epic battles of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, Alexander the Great, and the Crusader kings; military leaders considered it their moral duty to lead from front, and if necessary, to die in the battlefield. The creed of chivalry glorified close combat and magnanimity in victory. Caesar, Genghis Khan, Wellington, Napoleon, and in the near history, all great leaders of the world wars were heroic leaders. When Napoleon asked his generals if they were lucky, he meant to know if the generals were bold. Reeling under the ignominy of the 'Treaty of Versailles', the German Army, in order to revitalise its honour and combat effectiveness, issued manuals wherein the primary thrust was on resuscitating the code of chivalry (leading from front), surprise, flexibility and reserve.

For Wards to Influence Battle

It was with a view to influencing battle, with their presence at crucial moments, that the system of 'advance tactical headquarters' was adopted by most of the armies. Despite the advanced

communication system, which affords a commander facility of radio and telephone contact with the forward troops, his physical presence to influence battle at the critical juncture is crucial to the outcome of operation(s). No communication or computers, however efficient, can substitute the electrifying boost to the morale of troops, when they see their commander in their midst, sharing the risks of being killed or wounded in the battlefield. Sometimes, such exposures have to be made purposely to cool nerves of soldiers under combat stress. Though the lower commanders require freedom to conduct operations in their own way, yet the next higher commander must keep the option of his personal intervention open if the situation demands. This is because an isolated or uncontrolled set-back, even at lower level, is likely to have adverse effect overall and on other operations. Therefore, whatever be the level of battle, it is not fought in isolation — the whole nation is involved and has stakes in its outcome.

Fired by Idealism

It may be relevant to analyse as to what has made the junior leadership tick in spite of the none-too-bright example of senior leadership. First, youth is fired by idealism, has its own dash and enterprise, compatible with the combat role, which have even spurred the full-of-beans youth on to heroic acts of leadership. This is a phase of life when a man is naturally more responsive to group loyalties and patriotic spirit and is willing to take any risks. Secondly, joining armed forces has a special appeal to youth. Even though this call to adventurous manhood may have been overtaken by the glitter of material attractions in the non-military sectors, yet man has always carried a dream of leading men, as reiterated by Johnson, "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier." Therefore, those who do join, still have the inspiring force behind their undimmed zeal for high performance. Thirdly, his direct contact with the splendid Indian soldiery (rank and file) has a positive effect on his motivation, to live up to the traditional service values. Besides, there is an innate instinct in the young officers to make a mark and distinguish in a group in a challenging situation. In this regard, there is an added motivation for the non-regular (short service) entry, to perform well for their regularisation and absorption in the regular cadre. Moreover, with his limited contact with the senior hierarchy, the young officer is still in awe of his senior commander(s), and not yet disillusioned by what may have eroded

generalship. Lastly, majority of the junior leadership (including JCOs) is rural based and, as a result, it is attitudinally more compatible to lead men, whose base mainly continues to be rural. On the other hand, most of the senior leadership does not have the advantage of rural background.

Majority Higher Leadership Urban-Based

I was not conscious of how the rank and file perceived the inadequacy amongst the senior officer cadre, on account of the majority of them being from non-rural background, till about two years back, when I was spending some days of leave in my village. While sitting in the courtyard of the house, I saw a JCO and an OR dismounting from an Army vehicle and enquiring about the village *sarpanch* (village chief) who happened to be my brother. Since my brother was not at home, I invited the soldiers for a cup of tea, without disclosing my identity. The JCO told me that he had been detailed by the nearby military station headquarters to inform the ex-servicemen of the area to participate in an ex-servicemen rally in the coming week. When I casually asked the JCO, while having tea, if some welfare scheme for the ex-servicemen was likely to be announced, during the rally, he replied, *"Saab, in shahri bade afsaron ko kya malum ex-servicemen ki mushkalein?"* (Sir, how do these urban-based senior officers know the problems of (rural) ex-servicemen?) An indicator of the discerning perception of our men and the degree of their faith in the military top brass. It was an astounding eye-opener.

JUNIOR COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

A Colonial-Era Legacy

The legacy of junior commissioned officer cadre, originally created by the Britishers as a link between the (British) commissioned officers and the (Indian) other ranks, has continued as an intermediary class. Though technically, they are not commissioned officers, yet they are a class within a class of the junior leadership. Indian and Pakistan armies are the only ones in the world to have a separate junior commissioned officer cadre meant for junior staff and command assignments in a unit.

It has been a matter of debate as to pertinence of this separate cadre when the officer cadre is recruited from the indigenous

mainstream, who do not need a via-media between them and men. Yet, having existed for centuries, it seems to have acquired an indispensable status. Even if it is difficult to justify it on operational or functional grounds, it has assumed relevance as an inescapable welfare measure for rank and file, as it provides then a substantial fulfilment of their peomotion aspirations and social recognition. Functionally also, the JCO cadre do provide a link between the majority urban-based officer cadre and the (majority) rural-based rank and file.

Restructuring the JCO Cadre

The main drawback in the JCO cadre is that by the time a soldier becomes a JCO he is rather old for command of a sub unit/platoon. Whereas the average age of a platoon may be around 25-26 years, that of its JCO commander is invariably about 10 years older than the average age of the sub unit he commands. This is neither fair to the individual (commander), nor in the interest of the organisation. Therefore, while we should restrict the number of JCOs in a unit for some administrative assignments at company or unit level, the thrust should be to liberalise the grant of commission from amongst the ranks so that both the promotional avenues for the other ranks are enhanced, as also we have younger platoon commanders as suggested elsewhere in this book. We should aim at having at least fifty per cent of the officer cadre at junior level from rank and file — the other half being the regular cadre from the main civil stream, which should constitute the main nucleus for higher ranks and responsibilities. At company level, we need to have the senior JCO and an administrative JCO. In addition, at the unit level, we should continue having a subedar major and some other staff or administrative assignments for JCOs as a promotional avenue for those who cannot make the officer cadre. Thus, we would have shrunk the JCO cadre by about 50 per cent and increased RCO/SCO cadre officers in a unit to 50 per cent of the officer cadre. This will provide not only a younger leadership profile in a unit, but also a more contented and efficient set of junior leadership.

Eight

Senior Leadership

An Overview

A nation may live through an indifferent system of governance, politicians and bureaucrats, but the calamity that can befall it, on account of incompetent generalship can be beyond recompense. We may have the polity or the government we deserve, but if we have not been careful and sensitive to the upkeep of traditional service values of professionalism, an indifferent and incompetent military generalship may have proliferated which the nation never deserved.

An apathy or insensitivity on part of the society with regard to the tenor of professionalism in military may repeat the history of the first world war, where the pathetic performance of generals, as brought out in the book, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence,* attracted bitter and abrasive criticism of generalship by calling them "The donkeys". A poster showing a general decorating a soldier had the caption "Donkey Decorates Lion". It is advisable and proper that we carry out an honest critique of the quality of our senior military hierarchy.

Senior leadership may be reckoned to start from a battalion commander upward, since that is the level of command of a viably self-sustaining group. However, since battalion command (Colonel/ Lt. Col.) is very personal, with direct accountability, unlike higher level commanders (Brigadier and above), where command and

control over troops is indirect, we shall consider in our deliberation only the rank of Brigadier and above as the senior hierarchy.

A senior military leader is not only required to fulfil the roles of a heroic leader, military manager, a technocrat, but has also to play the role of a politician, a public-relations man, a father figure and a psychotherapist. It may not be reasonable to expect a commander to have mastery in all roles, as each individual is bound to have natural propensity for certain traits and disinclination for others. It is in this light that we have pronounced shades of military leadership, namely, mission-oriented heroic leaders, democratic leaders, public relations (PR)-oriented participative leaders, etc.

In the succeeding paras, it is not intended to demoralise the reader or indict the senior hierarchy as a whole, but to call upon the sagacity and conscience of all to carry out a soul-searching exercise. Perhaps, some good may come out of it. Instead of drawing an ostrich-like comfort from a typical Indian's proverbial sense of tolerance and persevering faith, sustained by the facade of a reasonable looking track-record of the armed forces in tiding over the recent challenges of low-intensity threats, one would do well to sit up, see through the hard realities and initiate steps to remove the snags, before they prove a stumbling block in the nation's effort to face a prospective major challenge. Even if the inadequacies do not seem so serious to an ill-informed observer, it warrants a thorough probe and prompt corrective measures. The question is not of demoralising the generalship either, but to candidly articulate the nation's will not to take a chance with its security. Through an open and investigative mind, we can help the Army see its own image clearly, instead of living in a fool's paradise, basking under the shade of its past glories.

The Calibre

Realistically speaking, since war is essentially destructive, it is natural that the best brains would be attracted to more positive and progressive vocations. Therefore, the cream of youth, as far as the intellectual calibre is concerned, is neither drawn, nor is it reasonable to expect it to be attracted to the military profession. We could be content with a little higher than the average lot, who have their values correct to make the larger chunk of military. The job content in any case does not require high brains, but a balanced, healthy, enterprising, out-door-loving man, with natural inclination for duty,

discipline, patriotic spirit and good human values. However, the society owes to the armed forces that they keep it attractive enough to draw a fair sampling of intellectually bright youth also to join the officer cadre, so that the force is representative of a cross-section of the society and the military profession is not totally devoid of the original thinking brains.

Notwithstanding the attractiveness or otherwise of the terms of service, some bright youth even though small in number, would invariably be drawn by their innate call to join the forces. It is this nucleus of diehard professionals who constitute the mainstay of service values and professionalism, whether or not they rise in the ranks of hierarchy. As Brigadier General Staff of a Corps, I recall visiting a formation on an exercise with troops, where a smart young officer (Para trooper) was deputed as my liaison officer. During the six hours that we spent together visiting the exercise locations, it emerged that the young officer was the son of a wealthy top technocrat (NRI in the USA). The young man was inspired in childhood to join the Indian Army when he, while living with his parents in the USA, had happened to view an account of Indo-Pak war in 1971. Even though this officer had no family background of anyone else in the Army, he chose to join the Indian Army, when he had options open to join any select profession in engineering/ medicine/business administration etc., in the best institutions in the USA or India. Some segment amongst the elite or intellectually bright youth would invariably be attracted by the profession of arms. Therefore, it is fair to assume that some percentage, even though small, of the enlightened senior officers who keep the system going and values alive, would invariably exist. However, the matter of a serious concern are the mediocre majority, who are indifferent and seem to be overwhelming and edging out the good quality officers, as hypothesised in the Gresham's law, "Bad officers drive out the good". When low-grade officers are in physical majority, they simply overwhelm the good ones. It is with this concern in mind that it is intended to analyse as to what has gone or could go wrong with the senior hierarchy of the Indian military.

A Misleading Euphoria

Since Indian military continues to be isolated from the society and is apolitical in character, little is known to the outside world about its internal problems. One factor which deservedly evokes public euphoria and gratitude for the security forces, is latter's having

acquitted themselves creditably in all external threats since independence, except the 1962 fiasco. The common man tends to feel highly satisfied and proud of the quality of generalship obtaining in the Indian military. However, a close penetrating look would reveal that all that glitters is not gold and there is a definite need to sit up and introspect, so that the degenerating erosion could be arrested, before it is too late. First, all military operations since independence, have been conducted at unit or sub unit level. In no single operation of attack or defence, more than one unit was employed at a time. Therefore, if all has been found very well in the military's on-ground performance in wars, the country owes it to the excellent rank and file and glorious junior leadership, whose level of sacrifice is unmatched in the world history.

Admittedly, the 1971 war for liberation of Bangladesh could be called a campaign where India had launched a large number of formations, which did show India's superior planning and higher directions of war. In this context, the bright spot that stands out is Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, who skilfully and ably orchestrated the 1971 victory, with his vision and charismatic personality. He is an exception and does not give reasons to wash the poor show of a host of other top ranking General Officers in various past wars. It may also be borne in mind that India had the most war-experienced generalship in 1971 war, fresh from the experience of 1962 and 1965 wars, which is not the case with the present-day leadership.

Regardless of the above, the most disconcerting evidence of poor generalship is that against heavy casualties of rank and file and junior leaders, in all wars since independence, not even a single general officer has been killed in action except Brig. Usman (1948), Brig. Master (1965), and Brig Hoshiar Singh (1962). In armies the world over, as explained not here, the sacrifice on part of senior hierarchy has been much higher than their proportionate share. Those who believe that getting killed is no measure of leadership are apparently living in a world of make-believe and detached from ground realities. There is just no explanation for this incompatibility except poor generalship.

Further, the trends, as highlighted later, show that of late the traditional values have stopped being seriously talked about. Reaching higher ranks and authority is viewed less as an opportunity to constructively contribute to the organisation or country, but more to exploit the position for personal ends or going out of the way to

dish out favours to others on non-professional grounds. Not that personal biases or partialities did not exist earlier, but sadly, today, one seems to have no qualm in claiming that since he had attained his rank and position in a hard way, he was entitled to break the rule of law and norms with impunity.

Casualties are Revealing

It is revealing to note, as mentioned earlier, that in the four major national wars and the protracted large scale counter insurgency operations, not a single senior commander above the rank of Brigadier was killed in action. The unit commanders (Colonel) killed in operations can be counted on fingers, and are much below their proportionate share. It may be noted that in an officer cadre of over 45000 commissioned officers, the number of Major Generals and above constitutes 0.6 per cent, Brigadier and above 2.1 per cent and Colonel and above 9 per cent of the officer cadre. Therefore, apparently the senior hierarchy of the officer cadre have not been sharing the burden of sacrifice, that they have been demanding from the other ranks in war.

Regrettably, on the other hand, there have been two cases of suicide by General Officers, during peacetime (1993-94), on alleged grounds of supersession, which would make anyone in uniform hang his head in shame. One wonders if Army Headquarters have carried out a thorough investigation in the matter, to identify whether they were misfits in the Army and had been hoodwinking the organisation all these years; or if the system or organisation was found to be insensitive to their genuine problems, thus forcing them to commit suicide. It might have been acceptable for a General Officer to have resorted to this extreme step, if he had brought shame to his country in a war; but committing self-murder for reasons of supersession is too grave a matter to be overlooked as a mere happening. There must be more to it than what catches the eye.

High Costs for High Results

Any contention that rank and responsibility of senior hierarchy do not warrant exposure to physical risks, and therefore, their casualties cannot be commensurate with their proportionate number, is ill-founded and misplaced. It may be thought-provoking to note the pattern of casualties in the German Army, which is known for its classic unit cohesion. For example, in the second world war (1944),

in the German Central Army Group, of the 38 divisions committed, 28 were put out of action because of heavy casualties; in that, of 47 Generals commanding divisions and corps, 31 were lost (10 killed in action, 21 taken prisoners of war). Of 675 General Officers, 223 were killed in action. The officer cadre, constituting 2.8 per cent, accounted for 3.5 per cent of the total killed. Interestingly, the losses of nobility in the German Army were 25.8 per cent more than the rest of the officer corps. In the French Army, where the officer cadre constituted 4.9 per cent, their share of death in war was 6.7 per cent.

The Japanese and Israelis take the cake in the matter of bravado and laying down their lives in discharge of duty in war, and the sense of honour attached to it. During the second world war, there were 30 Japanese killed for every one wounded, though generally, wounded in battle are three to four times the killed. In the recent history, the Israeli military leadership, with its motto "follow me", stands the tallest in leading from front, in utter disregard to the cost of sacrifice, which in some crucial battles was as high as 90 per cent of the officers of combat units and formations having been killed or wounded. With the service credo of fighting 'till the last man and last round', many a crucial battle was turned from defeat into victory.

In the above backdrop, it may be relevant to have a look at the pattern of casualties in the Indian Army in various wars and operations since Independence, as given in the Table below. The prodigious contribution of the junior military leadership and the rank and file, in all national and international wars, has been beyond the call of duty and much higher than their due share, which is evident from the fact that almost the entire number of casualties among the officer cadre, since independence, pertained to the sub unit and lower commanders. The blank sheet of sacrifice by the Indian generalship is too serious a matter to be overlooked.

TABLE : 12
The Number of Killed - Indian Army

War	Officers (percentage of the total killed)	JCOs	OR
Indo-Pak, 1947-48	76 (6.9 per cent)	31	996
Sino-Indian, 1962	96 (3 per cent)	97	3058
Indo-Pak, 1965	179 ((5.6 per cent)	134	2950
Indo-Pak, 1971	195 (5 per cent)	154	3594

(Contd...)

(Contd...)

War	Officers (percentage of the total killed)	JCOs	OR
Counter Insurgency Operations			
Op Orchid	25 (4.8 per cent)	29	465
Indian Military operation in Sri Lanka	51 (7.1 per cent)	77	589
Op Rakshak (Till mid 96)	70 (6.6 per cent)	90	895

Certain findings are significant from the data above. First, in the conventional wars since independence, there has been a receding trend in the proportionate casualties from the officer cadre, though overall, except in 1962 Sino-Indian war, their share is generally compatible with their number in the Army. Secondly, the JCO cadre have maintained a steady share of the casualties, which is a little on the lower side in wars, though it has shown upward trend in the low intensity (Counter Insurgency) operations, which is understandable, because the counter insurgency operations are mostly conducted at platoon and company levels.

Hurrying along the Higher Ranks

An officer joins the elite upper class of the system at too late a stage, with a limited time left, before retirement, which divides his attention between his duty and orientation for retirement. At the present reckoning, he takes over command of a unit between the age of 42 to 50 years, depending upon his arm or service. If he goes up in rank he gets a lease of another two years for each elevation, otherwise, he retires at 52 i.e. within two to eight years of his taking over a unit. Similarly, promotion to the rank of Brigadier and above comes at a time when majority of officers are not left with enough time for a command assignment, followed by staff, before being considered for the next higher rank.

Delayed promotion to the senior ranks results in a serious scuttling of the command tenures. For example, a typical upward-looking formation commander's tenure of about 18-20 months could be subdivided into the various stages of his command experience and mental attitude; namely, the period of new-found excitement and jubilation on promotion, which may go up to two to three months, followed by a period of four to six months for job orientation and

settling down, when he plans to effect, and in some cases orders various changes in an attempt to project himself as a commander with vision and creativity. Thereafter, in the next about six months, he generally gets disillusioned and frustrated to find that realities on ground do not have simplistic answers. An approach to short-term gains by hasty decisions may start backfiring, for which he gets busy manipulating records to clear himself of the possible repercussions, after he has left. Next three months he counts days waiting for his posting order, and after receipt of his posting order, he feels morally justified in taking no serious decisions, except rushing expenditure of various funds. He rarely had the will to grapple with the larger issues, only hobnobbed with petty issues, short-term measures and lived from day to day. Thus, the tenure of a tremendous opportunity to contribute to the development of ethical and professional standards remains a sojourn of day-dreaming. In most cases, the thrust is on proving that the predecessor had bungled up all functions of command, trying to achieve distinction in petty trivia, and using all ingenuity in subtly ingratiating with the superior(s).

Making a Mark through Trivia and Running Down the Predecessor

Though there are individuals and individuals, yet the institution is, to a great extent, responsible for attitudinal proclivity of playing-safe attitude of the commander during his ill-considered short tenure of command assignments. He is neither inclined nor does he find time to contribute, to the larger issues of strategy and operational plans or service values, yet he wants to make a visible mark in the eyes of his senior (who is also in the same jamboree of quick-ending tenure). The evident choice of showing his skill of perception and professional acumen falls on putting up a facade of creatively contributing to the eye-catching joints, most frequented by senior officers, namely, guest house, inspection bungalow, office, operational room, Flag Staff House, officers mess, the Officers Institute etc. The changes are, at times, totally unwarranted. For example, in some cases, when certain works/projects, ordered by a commander to effect renovations or changes in these places were still under way, and the large funds expended were being finalised, the new incumbent arrived and ordered fresh modifications or changes to the changes. It only leads to diversion and misappropriation of funds and waste of effort, just to satisfy his ego and belief to have creatively and meaningfully contributed during his tenure. A look into such wasteful exercises should be revealing.

It is also not unusual to find some senior commanders trying to unnecessarily fiddle with the operational plans, which they inherited on taking over, just to be one up on the predecessor. In many cases, it is with a view to get even with the predecessor, particularly if the succeeding commander had served under the predecessor. On a tendency to play down one's predecessor, I am reminded of the words of a capable senior commander who once remarked, "On one thing we all Indians agree, that our predecessor was a choo... (arse hole)". Some carry this passion to a dangerous limit.

In a particular case, a senior commander, in a hurry to put up a facade of his tactical soundness and vision, after taking over a formation, ordered cancellation of certain forward-looking and balanced operational plans, which had been finalised by his predecessor just three months before the new commander took over and approved by Army Headquarters, after wargaming and exercises with troops. The Principal General Staff Officer (PSO), who had lauded the previous commander's vision in changing the old and outmoded plans, effected a *volte face* and was now vociferous supporter of the new commander's so-called greater vision, for reversion of the operational plans. Interestingly, at this stage a new PSO took over, who, after study of the plans found that the existing plans, adopted by the previous formation commander, were positive and tactically sound. He, therefore, recommended further discussion in the matter before changing the plans again. After a series of discussions, though the commander was in agreement with most of the new PSO's recommendations, yet, he ordered to go ahead with the proposed reversion of the plans, since, he had made up his mind and seemed to be in a hurry to claim kudos for this. Accordingly, the proposal was prepared, as directed by the commander, and forwarded to the superior headquarters for approval. Regrettably, all lower formation commanders and advisers, who were associated with the finalisation of the previous plan, and were in agreement, had changed their minds with the change of the superior commander. They did not dare to disagree with the new commander's illogical decision for premature reversion of plans, except one lower formation commander who meekly expressed certain reservations. However, when the proposal was presented to the new Army Commander, it was shot down as a retrograde step, on the same grounds as advocated by the new PSO, who had recommended against the change.

Granted that a commander has the right to fight a war with the plans of his choice, but, there has to be a sound logic to it. Imagine the consequences of such a short-sighted proposal to change plans, even before they were fully validated on ground by troops. Besides harming the operational balance in planning, the message of confusion and indecision in higher directions of war was bound to have gone to the rank and file and junior leaders, who were helpless witnesses to such unexplained and illogical change in plans. The staff and other subordinate commanders, who are supposed to advise and assist the commander in formulation of balanced plans, regrettably say ditto and three-bags-full, without daring to disagree with the mind of the boss, even if retrograde. Not that any plans are sacrosanct; in fact, change ought to be brought about in a changed situation or when otherwise merited. But thoughtless changes in a hurry, only for the sake of change can be disastrous.

Other Aberrations

The pyramidal system, where avenues for promotion are very limited, the penalty of even an isolated poor performance appraisal can be grave. Unfortunately, the system provides little protection to an officer against bias of his senior officer, even though series of instructions exist for objectivity and fairness in this regard. In the event of a complaint, the system invariably supports the chain of hierarchy. In this ambience, it is natural for an officer, who is aspiring to go up in the hierarchy, to timidly play the tune of his superior officer(s) to be able to earn a favourable chit. Such a system only promotes mediocrity and sycophancy. Thus, the senior hierarchy, with some rare exceptions, has turned out to be a collection of mediocrity, specialised in apple-polishing, mouth honour and zero-mistake syndrome. Those who reach the top rung, out of an intense hunger for advancement, themselves invariably lack vision, creativity and openness of mind, so essential in a senior commander.

Further, there is no system other than the confidential reports to evaluate or monitor for calibre of senior officers. While at the junior level, there are promotion examinations and competitive tests, but once an officer is a battalion commander and above, there is no examination or test to objectively evaluate his performance fitness for the higher responsibilities. Therefore, if a colonel and above can take care of his performance reports and keep the reporting officer(s) in good humour, through professional or non-professional means, there

is nothing to stop his rise to the top, even if he may have already reached the level of incompetence. After all, an individual's professional depth or character qualities are as perceived by his reporting officer(s). There is no foolproof, objective and clinical system to assess. The question of introducing certain checks or tests at each level of senior hierarchy has been raised from time to time, but dropped every time, for obvious reasons, because it would expose those who are sitting pretty. Why should they change the cushy status quo? The organisation must institutionalise professional growth and orientation to the latest in warfare for senior commanders, through various courses, higher studies, workshops etc, which provide an additional input, beside the confidential reports, to assess their suitability for higher responsibilities.

According to a recent news item in the Chinese daily *Xinhua*, "In an effort to upgrade the overall quality of key Army personnel, the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) has directed its division and regimental commanders to enrol for the masters' degree studies in military science. Aimed at advancing the education of Army senior leadership and upgrading their overall quality, the new programme will serve as a new step in the post-graduate education reforms in military academics. The master's degree applicants will major in tactics, battle strategy, combat leadership, Army political affairs and logistics." The provision of study leave already exists in the Indian military. Given a requirement, the Indian Universities or the proposed Defence University could develop speciality and expertise in various fields of military sciences. It will be a good idea to institute such a programme for senior leadership of the Indian military too.

Personal vis-a-vis National Costs

There is a serious mismatch between personal costs vis-a-vis the organisational or national interest, in respect of a senior commander. A senior commander enjoys all benefits except that of his age vis-a-vis his subordinates. He enjoys the best of security, both in peace and war, higher perks, social status and is the least affected by the consequences of his bad planning or bungling up the organisational or national interests, particularly during peacetime. The top brass are mostly on the verge of retirement when they are called upon to take such vital decisions. Therefore, if the system has not taken care to promote the professional growth of commanders with a balanced

physical, mental and intellectual calibre, through sound grounding in the service values, the nation may face disastrous consequences.

Presently, the bureaucracy and politicians have neither the capacity nor the will to correctly gauge the true potential or capability of senior commanders to shoulder higher responsibilities involving vital national interests. They are likely to be influenced by the peacetime high-graph profile, or in some cases, political connection of the top brass. Not that there is a need for a *Gestapo* type of sleuth force to shadow the military top brass, but the system has to be discerning to perceive the nuances of the ethical and professional standing of a senior commander, which cannot be possible, unless the political and bureaucratic cadres have suitable service officers inducted at appropriate levels.

Some Saddening Trends

Preserving the quality of military leadership is too serious a business to be left to the Services top brass, as every citizen has a stake in the military leaders being able to win wars and act as a symbol of national integrity and pride. It would, therefore, be pertinent to analyse further as to what ails the present day military leadership. The object is not to wash dirty linen in public. Yet one cannot be blackmailed into silence by a false sense of loyalty to overlook the disturbing trends, because if no corrective measures are taken to arrest the unwholesome trends, the nation may have to pay a heavy price.

A large section of the present-day senior commanders do not match the classical image of a general officer. Instead of a dashing and mercurial personality, some are rather dim in their projection, and are likely to go unnoticed in an informal gathering. As if the pervasive erosion in the quality of political leadership and the rest of the powers that be, have something to do with the current mediocrity-bound tenor of military leadership. It is not intended to glorify flambuoyance as a leadership trait, but the leader must inspire confidence through his words and deeds. It is sad to observe that some, instead of being a point of attraction for others in a gathering, particularly to the junior officers, they seem to emit a repelling aura, wherein only a few of the eager-to-please cohorts stay close to them, who are perhaps more desperate than the rest, to ingratiate with the boss. Their sense of insecurity and inadequacy are evident from their aloofness. Content to speak to only a couple of their coteries,

generally standing in a pecking-order, they look grim and seldom speak beyond an obsession for 'I', 'my', 'me', not only in social gatherings, but also in professional meetings or discussions. They rarely project their philosophy or convictions on larger issues of life and the country.

When a commander, typified above, is obliged to speak in an event by force of circumstances, he evokes **little confidence**; he assiduously reads from script, is vague and the only aspects he might dwell on, in details, are the sub unit level mundane dos and don'ts, eg. VIP visits, TCP (traffic check post) timings, courts of inquiries, officer mess or Institute functions, etc. He hides his confused thinking behind the wisdom of the maxim, "By keeping quiet even a fool can go as a sage". He maintains an uneasy calm, gives no clear orders and when the things go wrong, he goes witch-hunting to find scapegoats. Continuously he eulogises his own past's so-called achievements, and reminds others that they were not up to his expectation. He does not have the will or moral courage to call a spade a spade, but instead indulges in cheap popularity.

The **tension of a senior commander** permeates to the rest of the group. A glum-faced commander is a kill-joy in any party or gathering. Even in social gatherings, people get down to talking shop, and rarely does a cheerful exchange of views take place on non-professional matters of common interest. Hardly any lively laughter or blooming faces. The situation in this regard may generally not be so dismal in lower field formations, but the higher the headquarters the more pronounced is the absence of cheerful and confident faces, as if most of them are carrying a load of files and other problems in their heads at all times. A sense of humour and wit are rare to find.

The **magic of smile** ought to be appreciated. A smiling person conveys that he likes and has a goodwill for the other person, which sets at ease the ambience and inter-personal equation. It costs nix, but is worth millions to a person who shares it with other. A smiling face radiates a magnetic halo of attracting others to him, which smoothens one-to-one communication, so very essential for a senior commander. A smile is a greeting of friendly feelings and camaraderie, not of being frivolous or cheap. Nor does it give one a licence to take liberty of familiarity. According to an analysts, as to why most of the senior officers look so grim and tense, he believes, "With high responsibility, seriousness is natural. Besides, age itself

brings in certain amount of seriousness. Above all, the prolonged battering of a subdued, sycophantic and artificial life, which a careerist senior officer has to live with for upward movement, takes its toll and smothers the verve of natural smile from his face."

Over the period, the paper-work has increased so much that most of the time is taken to attend to mundane correspondence. Excessive paper-work is only reflective of the mutual mistrust between the superior and the subordinate commanders and staff at various levels of the hierarchy. Even day-to-day orders or communications, which are clearly disseminable and understood on telephone, are duplicated in writing, because the superior feels that the subordinate would let him down by derelicting, and the subordinate feels legally bound to obey, only if written orders are received. Written confirmatory orders may be essential on important operational/administrative/training events, involving multiple agencies, for proper coordination of complicated matters; however, once guidelines have been issued in the form of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), seeking further written confirmation, with the aim of playing safe should be prohibited. In the process of discharge of bonafide duty, if some slip-ups do take place, these should be acceptable as part of training. It must be realised that a man having erred and corrected is better trained and a greater asset for subsequent performance than a person having taken no decisions or given no responsibility for fear of erring. I recall, once in mid 60s, when I was working as battalion adjutant/ company commander, our brigade commander, a gallant practical soldier, had prohibited written correspondence at unit and brigade level. All decisions or clarifications were issued or sought on telephone, leaving only conceptual papers or confirmatory operational or administrative orders or certain other inescapably important subjects, if ordered by the higher headquarters, to be reduced to writing. Telephone logs were maintained for reference and record. Soon, the culture changed to taking decisions on telephone and trusting the other side. The results were tremendous!

The present day senior commander's obsession for zero-mistake syndrome is accentuated by his short tenure. He spends most of his time in the office attending to minor staff duty and petty details to avoid slip-ups in routine function, which leaves very little time for him to remain in touch with the crucial major staff duty matters, troops and grounds realities. It is my belief that if a commanding officer spends more than one third of his time, and a formation or higher commander more than half his time in the office, they are not

doing justice to their legitimate functions of command. Likewise, a sub unit commander has no cause to spend more than about an hour a day in his company/squadron office. Major portion of the time has to be spent with men on training, operational preparedness, and looking for yourself the administration of men and material. The staff officers and heads of other arms and services ought also to spend substantial part of their time in regularly visiting troops. Needless to mention, it is the senior commanders who set the trend of indoor *babugiri* (clerkship) or getting out, to lend a personal touch to the operational preparedness, training and administration of one's command.

Unfortunately, the unhealthy trend of avoiding outdoor, particularly in difficult areas of high altitude mountains or insurgency-infested area, in some cases, is carried to an indecorous limit bordering on unbecoming dereliction of duty or cowardly act. Even isolated cases of this nature do incalculable damage to the proud image of the officer cadre. It is customary that commanders accord top priority to area-orientation and operational familiarisation, the soonest after taking over a command assignment. In fact, even before taking over, visits for designate senior commanders are generally organised for area/operational familiarisation so that there is no gap from the moment one takes over operational command. It is for this purpose that a handing/taking over period is catered for. Yet, the process of handing/taking over is invariably rushed through, where both the incoming and outgoing incumbents, are in a hurry to step-in/step-out.

Indifference to the need of being with troops and taking stock of the latest situation on ground seems to have infected the top brass. Otherwise, in a particular case, how does one justify delay of about four months by a very senior commander, after taking over command, in visiting the most strategically deployed lower formation of his command, an area where this senior commander had not served before, which constituted a crucial zone of the theatre of his responsibility. The reason in circulation as to why he had taken so long to visit the forward areas was that he wanted to give time to the lower formation commander, who had also taken over during the same period. It is inconsiderate to give such a long time to the lower commander, without having taken over or fully understood one's own responsibility and duty on ground. Giving some time to a new unit commander in a peace station may be understandable, but not a formation deployed on an active frontier,

where the situation may develop so fast that within three months time, it may be over or in the thick of it, when the senior commander would still be clueless about the ground realities. One cannot be clear about things through operational-room briefings alone.

Every visit does not have to be aimed at fully digesting all aspects of functioning of the headquarters or unit being visited, or to include the entire gamut of activities, namely, operational, administrative, training and social functions. The visiting commander has to set his priorities based on the principle of 'must', 'should' and 'could' during the visit. Visits could be exclusively job-oriented, i.e., area familiarisation, certain operational/administrative plans or social calls. In the above said case, if the lower formation commander was new, his staff was not. There should have been no problem in the senior commander being briefed by the lower formation headquarters staff and the next lower formation commanders. Ruefully, such attitudes percolate down, and the lower commanders are likely to take their own time to shake out from their cosy headquarters. It is deplorable to find some commanders taking the shelter of winter or monsoon hazards, as an excuse to justify delay in visiting the forward areas. They keep waiting for the ideal conditions of weather for flying or road move, without venturing out. When the commander is not inclined to venture out to be with his troops, all that is left for him is to show his so-called spark in the staff work, by being in the office at dot 8.00 AM and leaving an hour or two after the office timing, even though there was no worthwhile work for him. Thus, by spending excessive time in the office, he feels justified to relegate his priority of visiting troops deployed in difficult areas.

Another trend of the careerist commander posted in difficult/high altitude areas is to so manipulate his time that he spends most of it away from his sector, on some pretext or the other, at the cost of discharging his legitimate functions of command. He is invariably seen floating around the higher headquarters, so frequently as to be an object of sniggering remarks among subordinates, that he visits his command at leisure or while on temporary duty. A common pretext of leaving one's sector is liaison visits, discussion with higher commander or staff conferences, visit rear areas, social functions, etc. In some cases, a formation commander, given responsibility for a training event, prefers to concentrate his whole team, including some commanding officers and staff, away from their areas of operational responsibility, generally at higher headquarters location. Such

preparatory period may extend to weeks or longer. Another common excuse for the commander to move rearward is to make some presentation to the higher commander or staff; this is against the norms of service. Conventionally, any presentation or discussion on matters of operational plans, training or administrative matter etc., pertaining to an area, should be conducted in the area concerned. First, being in the relevant area or ground affords an on-the-spot advantage for any deliberation. Secondly, senior commander takes the advantage of interacting and directly obtaining views of the commanders and staff of lower echelons. In any case, it saves movement of larger people backward, by the commander himself moving forward. It is unethical to concentrate large-sized study groups etc. for long durations at higher headquarters. The disinclination of senior commanders to venture out is bound to cost the military very heavy in the next encounter, if they fail to ensure that the lower formation/unit commanders were performing their functions of command by sharing hardships with the men deployed in difficult areas. It is their moral obligation to come with a heavy hand on those lower commanders who show an attitude of playing safe and over-caution with regard to their personal safety and comfort.

Let me give the reader a refreshing change by quoting an (out of the ordinary) example of one brigadier X. On receiving his posting order to take up an assignment in a high altitude area, when the staff from his new assignment called up (on phone) as to his desired programme after arrival, he made a request to arrange a visit to the lower formation, within three to four days of his arrival (end January), deployed in the north plateau area with heights ranging between 16 and 21 thousands feet above MSL. The staff officer, initially thought that X was not serious, and then he explained that due to extreme winter conditions, heavy snow and generally foul weather, it was very difficult to visit the plateau by road. However X stuck to his resolve and visited the plateau by road, in spite of the reservation of the staff, and to the joy of the formation and units being visited. It was out of sheer excitement and heartfelt urge to see the plateau area, which is known to be one of the most difficult areas of deployment of Indian troops, which X had not seen before, that attracted him to make this trip at the earliest. Not that X performed a herculean feat by visiting the difficult area, it was his duty. In any case, troops were deployed there. However, with his itch to push on by road, even when there was a risk of being cut off in the high altitude area, for which he was not acclimatised, he refused to fathom any hurdles. With snow piled on both sides of the ice-topped road, it

was an exciting experience to travel in snowfall during the journey. While at the plateau, the mention by the commanding officer that he was carrying a golf-set along, was too irresistible an offer to miss this memorable opportunity of playing some golf at the highest golf course in the world (as heralded by a notice board at the watershed plateau, over 17000 feet above MSL). Looking across the International border, in a vast tract of desert at such a height was unforgettable and blissful experience for 'X' only to be experienced to be believed, in that rarer environment with temperature dipping to -30°, where precipitous mountains get suddenly flattened into a vast desert. The spirit of men surmounts all hazards.

A typical careerist senior officer not only spends energy and effort to **invest in the up-and-coming seniors**, but also selectively cultivates subordinates, by following the philosophy of 'live and let live' or 'you are OK I am OK'. The aim is to extract maximum out of the organisation. Sadly, some feel morally justified for indulging in non-professional pursuits on the plea that one has to fend for himself; according to them, the country or organisation hardly meet their legitimate aspirations.

Another new trend that seems to be catching on is that some have no qualms in not only obliging their own family members or relatives, by offering them the **luxury of visits to their sectors** of command, but they also cultivate contacts with higher civil officials or businessmen or entrepreneurs, by throwing open the services and facilities for their visits. Some go to the extent of personally conducting such tours which looks so odd and out of place. Taking time out of an otherwise tight schedule shows how frantic some of us are to invest in some selected people for during or after-service reciprocal benefits.

A unit or formation commander is called **'old man'** for the maturity of a 'father figure' expected of him, in that capacity. He has the moral charge of looking after the interests of the nation, organisation and each member of his command, in that order. Each member of the outfit looks up to the 'old man' for help in fulfilment of his aspirations and welfare. The most inescapably desirable trait of the 'old man' is his being a gentleman, with an incorruptible sense of fairness. Regrettably, there have been cases where some senior officers fell prey to their own prejudice and maliciously stooped low to conspire against their own subordinate(s), because of former's attitudinal incompatibility with the service ethics. One does not have to conspire against a subordinate, but just write him off or court-

martial him, if warranted. But this needs moral courage and self-rectitude. Therefore, the tendency to resort to ungentlemanly trait of back-stabbing, and behind-the-back nexus, as observed in some cases, cannot be adequately condemned.

In human perception and dealing, there can be an error of judgment which is understandable. In such a case generally, admitting an error and retracting the wrong done could wash the ill-effects to a great extent. It is a far greater crime to hide the truth. But sticking to the wrong decision and making it a prestige issue, as if the name of the service was at stake, irrespective of its immorality, is most despicable and reprehensible. A wrong decision may be bulldozed under the weight and influence of the concerned senior officer's rank and authority, but the damage done to the credibility of the system, in the eyes of the common man's perception, is irreparable.

A Sensitive Issue

It is natural for an individual to feel a sense of loyalty to the family, village, community or the regiment one belongs to or the religious faith one personally espouses. It is also natural for a person to be favourably disposed towards another person whose attitudes or views are common or agreeable. This is where the value of military training comes, which enables one to get over one's personal preferences or prejudices and to place the larger interest of the organisation above his own. The Army, basically organised to fight a conventional war against an external enemy, has also been called upon to undertake the unpleasant task of fighting the proxy war being waged by the outside inimical forces through our misguided youth. It is a sensitively difficult task for a soldier to be operating against the misguided youth of his own community or religious faith. However, once it is appreciated that the fight is not against an individual or a community or an area or a faith, but against the enemy-hired and abetted miscreants, whose sole objective is to disturb peace and developmental process, there should be no hesitation in use of force against such divisive and fissiparous forces. Pascal says, "Law without force is impotent." According to Bertrand Russel, "The existence of civilized communities is impossible without some element of force."

An officer is always expected not only to act good but also seen to be acting good. In situations where even if there is a remote

possibility of his motive being suspected, he must overtly demonstrate the propriety and fairness of his acts and motive. In no other jobs does one take an oath of total commitment to one's nation's cause, even if one has to give one's life. Therefore, it should be natural for a soldier to quickly see through a threat to the nation, whose protector he is.

It is unfortunate that some of us are so short-sighted as not to see the damage they do to the credibility of the system and the ultimate harm they cause to the very individuals or group/community to which they show undue favours. By showing favouritism, one turns the unduly favoured individual(s) or group, a suspect in the eyes of the larger segment of the society. Therefore, what may seem 'good' to a parochial mind is actually a harm being done to the larger interest of the favoured individual(s).

We owe it to the sworn commitment and national interest to keep our duty above personal fads and parochial inclinations. Indian military, a representation of the secular culture of the country, is proud to have produced a large number of illustrious commanders whose righteous handling of the tricky and sensitive situations having communal overtones, evoked unreserved acclaim from all sections of society and the country at large. We owe it to the glory of our soldiers (past and present), to keep a watchful eye on those who can easily fall victim to their parochial leanings and bring disrepute to the great military image.

An Unbecoming Act

The profession of combat is inseparable from the commander's sense of honour to risk his life in discharge of his duty. To show fear or to conduct in a manner displaying cowardice, in face of enemy, is the most dishonourable act for which the highest punishment (death) had been laid down in the Army Act. Regrettably, there seems no end to the incidents where senior officers betrayed a sense of insecurity and fear, and conducted themselves in an unbecoming manner, avoiding difficult tasks or showing excessive concern for their personal safety.

The incidents of some choosing to remain in rear or base, or getting admitted in hospitals, to avoid risk or difficult conditions in forward combat zone, have not been unknown in the past, though they are uncommon. In a certain case of insurgency environment, where troops and subordinate commanders were fighting militancy,

for a senior commander to feel so insecure, as to stop using star plate and car flag, while visiting and inspecting his troops in the heartland, was an unworthy bad example, particularly when the lower formation commanders were using their star plates and flags. Flags and star plates on a commander's vehicle constitute an important ceremonial to project his personality which galvanises the spirit of his command. If commanders of yore fought from raised platforms, like chariot or elephant back or some wore red coats, the purpose was not far to see.

In the leader and led equation, mutual trust is the most important factor. Trust breeds trust, which is a two-way passage. The slightest indication of mistrust betrayed by a commander can demolish the very structure he heads. There could be nothing more condemnable for a commander, in a particular case, than to have developed cold feet (during no-wartime), and to return his residential guard from a particular regiment, on imaginary and illogical grounds of personal insecurity. There was neither logic nor any operational compulsion to suspect the traditional loyalty of one's own troops, who, in any case, were assigned the more responsible role of protecting the national frontiers. How can a commander suspect the loyalty of his own comrades and still claim the right of command over them? How can any segment of the forces be considered hazardous or unfit to provide security to an individual? Such individuals are disgrace personified not only to the organisation or society but to the country, and should be meted out exemplary penalty when brought to light. Pushing such grave issues under the carpet can be suicidal to the organisation.

One may mention here the finding of the inquiry into the assassination of the country's late Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, as gleaned from the press coverage, that she had refused to change certain segment of her residential security guard. This is what makes a person great that one was prepared to risk one's life, rather than suspect one's own countrymen, on legitimate duty. And, this is what has kept this country going, or else, the disintegrating fissures of mistrust on part of the executive head of the country would have been too wide to close.

In my Regimental history, the name of one Lt Col Narain Singh Samyal stands tall because he, as commanding officer of a unit (in 1947-48) which consisted of troops from two communities, refused to heed an advice to remove men belonging to one community from

sensitive assignments. Placed in such a situation, it is very tempting for a commander to take counsel of his fears, and disarm the suspected elements; but a leader worth the salt would invariably choose to risk his own life, in a hope to favourably influence the situation by his personal example. It is a different thing that in the said case, the commander was betrayed, and troops from one community joined hands with the invading foreign marauders, and in the process, the Colonel got killed, but what he sustained was the traditional image of a brave and fair commander. It is this tradition which has retained the secular image of the Indian Army, where troops from all communities continue to serve with their heads held high. While Samyal fell to a betrayer's bullets, his contemporary Brigadier Usman died fighting a heroic battle, in the neighbouring sector, against his co-religionist invaders. No words can adequately emphasise the need to nurture this aspect of leadership.

To have fear is natural for any living being - a human being is not naturally brave. But our training, consciousness of being leaders and self-respect, help us to overcome our fears. There has to be something seriously wrong in our system that some senior officers could manage to go places, when their basic human instincts remained untrained and unsublimed. Perhaps, they could hoodwink the selection system, at the time of entry, and have managed to don the robes of tigers with a sheep's heart.

Claiming Immunity from Rule of Law

It has not been uncommon in the past to come across instances of misinterpreting law by those in authority, but the fear of law and accountability always seemed to dangle on every one's head, irrespective of one's rank or position. The biggest restraining force, against violation of norms or law, besides fear of accountability and punishment, is the fear of losing one's face and self-respect, in the eyes of one's command or subordinates. In the profession of arms, where a subordinate entrusts his life with his superior commander, the latter's propriety in day-to-day acts and decisions join to build his image and reputation as a worthy trustee of the lives of those in his command. Needless to mention that a commander throughout lives in a glass house, where all his acts and decisions are closely observed and analysed by his subordinates.

It is pernicious enough that some of those in authority can fall below grace by violating the norms of propriety; but what is more

reprehensible is that they feel it is their right to claim immunity from the rule of law, and that they are accountable to none. They are insensitive not only to the imperatives of their own self-respect and image, but also to the sensibility of those affected by their unjust decisions. They are blind to the signals and deaf to the corridor-whispers, as to the whys and hows of their questionable acts and decisions. As if they were in a hurry to make hay while the sun shone, irrespective of the propriety of the norms. Having reached a position of authority, the first thought is how they can look after their personal, regimental and community groups' interests, so that they can look back with a sense of accomplishment, as an investment for their post-retired life. The closed cases get revived, and the very organisation goes about manipulating retraction of its own past decisions, on the nod of the boss.

The convention goes that when a matter pertains to a member of one's family, relative or close group/regiment, the decision-making authority delegates the decision to some body else, and does not decide in the matter himself, so as to be and look fair. It is also a convention that a close relation of a superior officer does not serve under him directly. It is sad to see the blatant improprieties being committed in the matter of service norms. How does one justify the decision of an officer to give maximum unmerited benefits to his own family member/relative/regiment/group, at the cost of other similarly placed contenders, in the matters of favours of various kinds? Management of officer cadre is a sore point among the officer corps. Granted, it is not possible to satisfy every individual in service, yet, what spreads frustration and disillusionment is the incidents of violation of norms and naked favouritism or bias. It is also true that people tend to indulge in loose talk, because of their own frustrations, by denigrating the system or superior officers. But some-time one sees flashes of truth in the drone of loose talk. One must take note of these threatening flashes.

It is strange to find that some holding top authority go about violating norms without restraint or qualm, because they are believed (by some) to have accomplices within the system. Having reached a high position/rank, after which there is no higher rung to climb, they are possessed by their retirement blues, the priorities change and anxieties increase. Ironically, reaching a higher rank in the top hierarchy does not lead to a sense of contentment with one's life, but on the contrary, it seems to inflame more ambitions and anxieties in life. It is unbelievable, though not uncommon, to find that the higher

one goes, the more petty-minded and insensitive to human values one becomes. Some feel as if it is their right to hurt others. A man, otherwise with warm heart and a good conscience, gets hardened in his sensibility to other's feelings, and acquires more than a man-sized ego, once power gets into his head. Evidently, once this happens, he loses the grace and the equilibrium of his heart.

Let s Face It

Before the reader leaves this page, with any gloom from the preceding portrayal of the senior hierarchy, let me reiterate, what I have stated elsewhere also, that the picture is not complete. Against the majority presenting a gloomy picture of the senior leadership, there are some worthy diehard professionals, though in a minority, who act as anchor-men of the organisation. However, a disciplined organisation cannot run on good minority alone. It is the (bad) majority who should be our serious concern. Therefore, the aim should be to convert the minority (of good) into majority, because, it is easy for majority to carry alongside the minority and not vice versa. If the picture looks dim and cloudy, it is a stark reality, which has to be faced squarely without shying away from tackling it. Any heart-burning on the preceding plain-speaking is sheer escapism. If truth is bitter, let us swallow it bitter to cure the malaise. Avoiding its bitterness will only delay cure of the sickness, which has permeated down to the body's guts and entrails.

Nine

Men — the Essence of the Army

Men are the heart and soul of the Army; but for them, there would be no need for a commander. Once this is understood correctly, it will be possible to appreciate how important the quality of 'being' and 'spirit' of men is, for a quality Army. Like the nuances of morality vary between different races, so does the society's perception of soldiery vary, though thinly, say between the East and West. In the West, soldiery is honoured only in times of crisis, otherwise, it is a butt of ridicule. However, in the East, soldiery has by and large enjoyed a high status in society. In the Indian context, since the nation has continued to face some or the other form of national crisis or threat to its security since independence, the military continues to be held as the pillar of national stability and integrity.

Perception of Soldiering

Despite the varying perceptions, certain common notions, as portrayed in the book *Military More Than Just A Job*, correctly typify the life of a soldier:

"I go anywhere in the world, where they tell me to go,

Any time, they tell me to,

To fight anybody they want me to fight,

I move my family when they tell me to, on a day's notice,

And live in whatever quarters they assign me,

I work, whenever they tell me to work.

I do not belong to any union and do not strike,

If I do not like what they are doing to me.

And I like it.

May be that is the difference!"

This is what makes military service a calling, different from any other occupation. Sir John Hackett, however quotes another none-too-flattering perception of military service in his book 'The Profession of Arms', which should make the reader sit up and ponder:

> "Military produces moral imbecility, ferocity and cowardice. Therefore, defence of a nation should be undertaken by civilian enterprise of men enjoying all rights and liberties of citizens. His training makes him a weakling, has easiest of lives, has no freedom, no responsibility, politically and socially a child, with rations instead of rights, treated like a child, punished like a child, dressed prettily, washed and combed like a child, forbidden to marry like a child, called touring like a child, has no real work to keep him from going mad, except housemaid's work. His officer has not even house keeper's work to keep him sane."

Behind the facade of the above portrayal of soldiery, the author has made a point, which at the face of it, may look frivolous and far-fetched, but it is not totally devoid of meaning.

Besides getting the above said perceptions of soldiering, it should be relevant to get another perspective, as to how a soldier views himself vis-a-vis his civilian counterpart. Inside a soldier's psyche, there is a nobility of the cause and deep-rooted strain of patriotism, which distinguish him from the run of the mill, as depicted by Moskos and Wood.

> "They looked upon themselves as men who lived by higher values than civilians, as men who were bearers and protectors of the most important values, who maintained a sense of discipline while civilians abandoned themselves to hedoism, who maintained a sense of honour while civilians lived by opportunism and greed."

In the Indian context, there are basically two reasons why a soldier has continued to be traditionally accorded social acceptance in the

past. First, from ancient times, soldiers have enjoyed a higher status in the society. Secondly, till independence soldiery was the main employment, which provided the youth an outlet for earning livelihood, besides earning the state's recognition of soldier's sacrifices for the foreign rulers, even if oppressive. However, over the period, there has been an erosion in the social and state's acceptability of a soldier. The traditional *Varnas* (classes) in the society have lost relevance and soldiering is no more an economically attractive proposition, particularly, with the corruptive money-attraction which civilian jobs have, and remunerative job-openings in the private sector. Thus, at a time when war is becoming rarer, and the world's view against an external aggression is becoming more cogent, a soldier faces a serious crisis of social recognition as the most wanted and indispensably potent organ of the society. Of late, the world over, the states in general have been facing greater threats from within than from without. There is , therefore, a confusion between the overlapping roles of a soldier against an external threat, as also in aid to civil authorities.

Upholding Soldier's Pride

Relevance of an effective military force is inescapable, in the face of an active or potential adversary, across the borders. However, in the ambience of a long peace interlude, memory of the last war is fading fast; the civil bureaucracy, which rules the military hierarchy and society at large, are tending to treat Army as a white elephant and an avoidable drain on the national exchequer. It is the favourable attitude of society towards the soldier which gives him a sense of pride in his uniform. Only if a soldier feels proud to be seen in uniform in society, will he consider himself a prestigious member of the privileged fraternity of the military and the country. The state and the society, therefore, owe it to the nation's sovereignty, to keep the forces motivated by :

(a) Ensuring that military forces are equipped with the state-of-the-art weaponry and equipment, so that they are not placed at any disadvantage vis-a-vis the adversary(ies). A neglect or low priority in this regard can only be at the cost of national security.

(b) Not to treat the soldier as a non-skilled labour. Soldiering is a highly professionalised skill, where the soldier has to employ human resources, use sophisticated weapons, equipment and

the ground, in such a quick, aggressive and skilful manner that any lack of specialisation in his dexterity will cost him life, and to the nation defeat. Therefore, the impression in certain quarters of the society, that the soldier could be an unthinking brute, and yet effectively perform his role, has a serious repercussion.

(c) It will be naive to ignore the soldier's essential needs for suitable pay and perks, which afford him and his dependent family, a reasonable and equitable standard of living in society, so that his pride in the service fraternity is sustained.

(d) The nation has an obligation of taking care of the soldier's basic needs, not only during his service, but even after his active service, from where he retires young, for which he needs an assured second career for livelihood.

Uplifting Men's Quality of Life and Self Respect

Difficult living conditions in war or while on training, where men may have to do without basic necessities and bear privations, is understandable — they do not resent it because everyone is sharing hardship equally. However, the peace-time pathetic barrack-line living conditions of men and lack of their job satisfaction amount to brutalising them which should be a matter of serious concern.

An unwritten convention in the Army suggests that, to keep men from mischief, they must be kept busy doing (physically) something or the other. Thus, finding a useful pastime for men is a problem with commanders at times. In the process, men get employed on petty and non-professional jobs which are demeaning their honour and job-satisfaction. It hardly needs a mention that today's soldier has a tremendous potential for varied constructive diversions for his spare time, if judiciously planned. The present day environment throws open vast possibilities for a soldier's self-study and development in various fields, within or outside his profession of arms.

The sight of soldiers working as domestic helps or employed as non-skilled labours on cutting grass or cleaning roads in cantonments, lowers his prestige in the public eye and erodes his self-esteem, which he deeply resents. All cantonments must upgrade and modernise their equipment and other resources to ensure effective area-cleaning, hygiene and sanitation.

Many a time, we tend to overlook an impropriety in the belief that it was for the larger good. It needs no stretch of imagination to make out that men resent their unauthorised and unwarrranted employment on menial jobs and chores. Practical wisdom demands that through due process of Indianisation of military practices we should discreetly bridge the unwanted gap between officers and men which smells of the colonial apartheid. I wish to mention two issues which *inter alia* often come to mind. Firstly, there is no denying the indispensable requisite for an exclusive institution of the Officers Mess, to provide its member the essential facilities of home. However, by the same token, there is a bonafide case to have in each unit/station a club or institution for the other ranks as well. It will do well to uplift a soldier's self-esteem and quality of life, to have a respectable joint in the unit lines where he could socialise with others. The present-day soldier has the means and longing to indulge in himself and to entertain his kinfolks and friends with a sense of dignity.

The other issue pertains to the employment at times of the Army resources on maintaining some outdoor training/sports facilities or establishments which are not open to use by rank and file. Through Army patronage some excellent golf courses have come up in many military stations, which has appropriately improved the quality of life in these cantonments. It will be a good idea that within the constraints of administrative propriety, all golf courses in military stations should also be principly open to use by other ranks. To this end, the organisation will have to provide the game's kit and training facility to the selected OR who have potential for the game. Some Army golf courses have already taken steps in this direction, however, there is perhaps need to define the guidelines so as not only to rise above the possible hiccups of impropriety but also promote quality in the game. It goes without saying that such or any other facilities should in no way come in the way of operational preparedness, training and administration of the personnel/unit concerned.

The other aspect warranting serious attention is the awfully poor quality of living conditions for men and their families in military stations. Behind the splashes of *geru chuna* (white wash) and paint in cantonments, if a surprise visitor to a unit's latrines and toilets finds more than 50 per cent of the water taps and flushing tanks working properly, it is a jolly good show on part of the ancillary and maintenance staff. It is not an uncommon sight to see men sleeping

on ground or still using dry sanitation or deep trench latrines in some stations. Further, with the joint family system fast disappearing, even in rural areas, majority of ranks and file have domestic compulsions to live with or provide living accommodation to their families in military stations. Against this enormous demand, the lowly and antiquated 14 per cent authorisation of married accommodation to other ranks is woefully inadequate, which creates serious problems of management for the unit commanders.

The hierarchical system of the armed forces is geared, out of proportion, to focus on care and comfort of the officer cadre which is a legacy of the colonial rule. For example, a road journey along any line of communication in the East, North or West would reveal that while happily each station has a fair infrastructure, in the form of inspection bungalows, guest houses, officers messes etc. to cater for stay of transient officers and their families, there are hardly any such arrangements available for stay of men with their families. The moral dictum demands to generate equitable share of facilities for rank and file. Let all big and popular military stations have well organised holiday homes for officers, JCOs and other ranks on a judicious scale — I assure you, they will be fully subscribed. To the question arising in a reader's mind, as to the monumental effort and resources required to generate such large scale facilities for about a million strong rank and file, the answer lies in, inter alia, down-sizing the peacetime Army, as suggested elsewhere in the book.

Officer-Men Equation

The officer-men equation is the most crucial factor to sustain motivation and institutional cohesiveness ; an equation where there is total faith in each other's ability to perform their respective roles effectively, where men believe that their officers are genuinely concerned about the men's problems, and where they feel safe in the hands of their commanders in all war and war-like situations.

Moskos and Wood prescribe three basic conditions conducive to institutionalism: 'First, people accept difficulties if those in charge are seen to be wholly involved and genuinely concerned; secondly, there must be a clear vision and articulation of what the institution is all about, and how separate parts relate to the core; thirdly, members of an organisation are primarily value-driven, motivated by factors that contrast with calculative working, assumed to exist in the market place.' The key to healthy officer-men equation is the common man's

belief that each member of the organisation, from the highest commander to the lowest-rung soldier, is an important link in the chain, each having a significant role to play. No one is dispensable, nor can significance of any link be slighted or ignored. Once everyone feels important and has pride in belonging to the organisation, the institutional equation is well set for any task, however challenging.

Commanders have a special obligation of not letting men feel as if they are neglected or treated as second rate human beings. Generally speaking, the only difference between an officer and another rank is that the former was lucky to be born to parents who could educate him, whereas, the latter's potential remained unharnessed. As for human values or quality, there can be no bias against a class. All are individuals, unique in their own way - some among rank and file may be superior to their commanders as human beings. Therefore, what ought to be appreciated is that each member in the organisation has a specific role to play, which is distinctive and beyond substitution. Beyond that, there can be no gradation or differentiation. Given a chance, the lower ranked soldier may show a potential or an innate faculty beyond anyone's imagination. Therefore, it can be disastrous to think that the men are non-thinking beings, without any sensitivity to finer or higher emotions or values.

The other crucial aspect in officer-men equation is that sanctity of command at all levels has to be respected. In that, in any activity, ranging from an active operation to a barrack- cleaning fatigue work, if the activity involves up to ten men, i.e., strength of a rifle section, the section commander has to be participating in the activity. One man more than the section strength, the platoon commander has to be in attendance. Similarly, one man more than a platoon strength warrants presence of the company commander, and so on. When commanders at appropriate levels are present and participate in the activity of their respective command, the command is motivated. The commanders have no moral grounds to be away from their commands during any activity, even when it involves a monotonous fatigue working. For officers to disappear from the scene of activity of their respective commands, by ordering the JCO, "Sahib carry on", is unethical, immoral and not appreciated by men.

Indian soldier takes no long in sizing up his officer, and is prepared to go any length in making any sacrifice, once he is sure that the officer is trustworthy. It is a question of gaining confidence of

the men and injecting a spark. He is unlikely to cease routine performance of his normal duties, even under an indifferent leader; but the extra ounce of his response could be extracted only by quality leadership. Since true loyalty of a soldier is to his immediate sub unit/unit commander, the rest are only ornamental fillers, as far as the soldier is concerned. Therefore, what is crucial to sustain military effectiveness, is to maintain quality of junior leadership.

Great Soldiers

The equation has to be one of mutual respect for each other. If the men ought to hold their commander in an awe, for his professional competence and leadership qualities, the officers also ought to respect men for their specialised skill in their own field and their *Wafadari* (loyalty), beyond parallel. The finest instructor I have come across was *Havaldar* (Sergeant) Bindru, the Mortar Platoon *Havaldar* who had been an instructor in the Infantry School and was the Chief Instructor of my unit Mortar Cadre, which I attended in Nagaland soon after joining it in 1963. Without any formal education, his knowledge of the weapon system, tactical handling and instructionability were superb. Outside the cadre parade, he was fully respectful to me, as I was also the officiating company commander. But on parade, he was firm and maintained decorum of the class. One gets deeply touched to recall the unflinching sense of loyalty and devotion to duty of the other rank and JCOs, who serve their superior officers beyond the call of duty.

I recall a tough looking acting Lance Naik Sant Ram who was deputed as my *sahayak* (batman), on my first joining the paltan. The affectionate care he took of me and my affairs was most memorable. He managed my entire household and exercised a discreet check on my newly initiated drinking a glass of beer, while on a piquet in Nagaland. Every time he went home (in Kishtwar) he brought for me a bottle of honey and/or *desi ghee* (refined butter). Another landmark association which stands out was with Sub Atma Singh, the senior JCO of the company of which, with about one year service, I was the officiating company commander, during a battalion collective training exercise (1964). The way this JCO dutifully involved himself, in guiding and training me, to ensure that I performed my duties to the best traditions of the company, was remarkable. His piece of advice with respect to officer-men equation is still fresh in my mind, "The men expect an officer to show concern for their food and leave, and respect an officer for hard training and

discipline." What touched me most was that every time the company was bivouacking after a manoeuvre during the exercise, while I was busy going around the platoons, Sub Atma Singh, who had only a few months left to retire and had nothing to expect from me, would personally supervise to ensure that my bivouac was laid out properly. His own bivouac was the last to be raised. There are a large number of such valiant, capable and high-character soldiers, one had the privilege to serve with, and from whom one learnt a lot; it would require a separate book to recount their names and sterling qualities.

I cannot, however, resist mentioning the name of *Havaldar* Majora Singh, the Regimental Police Section Commander of the paltan which I commanded — an epitome of soldierly bearing, with handlebar bushy moustache, and a smile ever writ large on his face. There was a common belief that Majora could only stand, run or sleep, he could not sit, as he was believed to have a physical problem in sitting. Majora was, round the clock, on the ball and amazed me by emerging in every nook and cranny, wherever I happened to visit or pass through, at whatever time of day or night. His loud and confident '*Jai Durge*' always assured me that all was well. Popularly called '*Thanedar*'(Police Inspector), he had answer to all questions of paltan's security. Again a '*Shahi Anpar*' (illiterate), he was an epitome of discipline, soldierly bearing and loyalty. After I was posted out, he would often write to me, and affectionately admonished me if I was late in replying, by writing, "Are you so busy as not to be able to write a line to us. We get worried on your silence". After I took over a brigade in J&K, where Majora was living his retired life in a remote hilly part, I decided one day to surprise him by a visit to his village. After a long drive and over an hour's walk when I ultimately reached his house on a beautiful hilltop, I was disappointed to learn that Majora had gone to a neighbouring village to visit a relative. What stunned me was that his wife straight-away recognised me. When I asked as to how she had recognised me, she said that Majora often talked about his paltan and the CO Sahib. Next day, Majora travelled by the first bus to reach me. What a pleasure meeting the same old Majora! Imagine the quality of the man; though we chatted for so long, every time he visited my place, he never asked even once for any favour or help, even though he had grown up sons seeking employment. He looked so contented with life and was too proud to seek a favour. Talking of Majora Singh, I am reminded of the words of Bertrand Russel, "Talks with philosophers made me pessimistic, while a chat with my gardener always held hopes for a better world." Even after retirement, receiving letters and cards from some of the

JCOs/OR, with whom one had once served, and writing back to them, is a matter of great delight, which reflects that association and bonds of service are indeed close-knit.

Treating Men Shoddily

Commander has a great opportunity of making a positive contribution in the lives of those under his command. It is regrettable that many commanders use their commands for their own upliftment, have no time for their men and are in a hurry to exploit loyalty of the subordinates, without reciprocating in the same strain. Worse still is the ill-founded impression, amongst a large number of officers, evident from their attitude, who have no qualms in treating men in a shoddy and irresponsible manner, as if they (men) were second-rate human beings. Many a time, one wonders at the quality of patience and forbearance our men show in bearing the privations and, at times, unreasonable and bad leadership. Hats off to the tolerance and patient suffering of the Indian soldier, without a grudge or complaint, against an incompetent or indifferent leadership, perhaps in a hope and belief that he shall more than make up for any leadership deficiencies of the commander(s). He could even ignore corrupt practices of his commander, in a belief that he ought not worry as long as he himself was clean.

With regard to the shoddy treatment, sometimes meted out to the men, I am reminded of a recent incident. On a winter Sunday morning, at about 11 O'clock while I was sitting in the balcony of my house at Delhi Cantt, I saw a smartly turned out NCO going past my house and returning to enter the house gate. He turned out to belong to one of the units in the formation which I had commanded. I was touched by his courteous gesture of looking me up after reading my name on the gate. He had reached Delhi the same morning to deliver a package and to collect the luggage of his general officer commanding who was spending his leave in Delhi. The NCO seemed to be running temperature since arrival in Delhi, after a long journey from the East. After having breakfast, which my *sahayak* arranged in the house promptly, and an Aspirin tablet, he seemed to feel better. However, what shocked me was to learn from the NCO that when he had reported at the general's house (at about 10 am) to deliver and collect the general's baggage, he was told that the general was sleeping and that, he should come later. A sad state.

The only time the soldier is likely to react sharply and, at times, violently, is when his self-respect and honour are maligned or his

religious feelings are hurt. The Indian history has witnessed a number of retributive acts of violence by individuals or group against their commanders. The biggest rebellious act was the mutiny of 1857, which is a blemish on the then officer corps of the British Indian Army. It makes an interesting study to note that the Indian soldiers, with centuries-old tradition of loyal service to the Britishers, revolted because the British Officer corps not only had started taking the Indian rank and file for granted, but were also grossly insensitive to the honour and religious feelings of the men. It was a fact, not an imaginary resentment or fear of the Indian soldiers, that beef tallow was being used to grease the ammunition cartridges. Also admittedly, the European (Christian) officers considered it their moral duty to encourage Indian soldiers' proselytism into Christianity. In a subsequent inquiry, as brought out in the book, *A Matter of Honour*, the CO of 34 Native Paltan, had admitted that every officer considered his moral duty to convert Indian soldiers to Christianity. Naturally, this was a perfect recipe for mutiny, which started innocuously, from a small incident of Mangal Pande of 34 Native, to a hurricane of mutinous violent actions and battles. Even in the post-independence era, the services have witnessed some mutinous actions by soldiers, but without exception, in all cases, the troops concerned felt aggrieved of being dishonoured by abusive conduct of officers, or the religious sentiments of troops having been hurt.

What is also established, times over, that it is invariably a self-respecting and veritably hurt man who would resort to violence, if he finds that the system does not or cannot redress his grievances. Unfortunately, in the name of a false sense of loyalty to the service, the organisation invariably supports the authority or superior officer and comes down heavily on the aggrieved and agitated person or group. It is also a pertinent finding from the past incidents that in all such cases, either the CO was too weak to be able to handle the situation firmly, or he was too harsh and insensitive to the sentiments of the men.

Responding to the Clarion-Call

There has been some debate as to what motivated the Indian soldiery to loyally serve the foreign ruler(s), which was against the national interest. It is amazing that a nation reeling under the oppressive foreign rule, and having no direct link with the cause of the war(s), would rise to provide such large contingents in all major world wars.

In the first World War, Indian Army was expanded from 1.5 lakh, meant for law and order in the country, to a 15 lakh force, a major portion of which fought on foreign lands. Similarly, in the second World War, when the national movement for independence was at its peak, the Indian youth again responded to the clarion call of war, and the Army was raised to 25 lakh. Again, the major portion of the force fought on the foreign lands, 2.5 lakh in the West alone. Was the Indian soldier a sheer mercenary? Or was there something more to his motivation? Surely, the type of low pay offered to the soldier, and the fact that both after the first and the second world wars, over 80 per cent of the forces were disembodied, without any pensionary benefits to the soldiers, mercenary incentive could not have been the only driving motive. First, in the stagnating economic conditions created by the foreign rulers, over the centuries, the youth had no outlet, away from their gradually shrinking village farm-holding, where there was no industry and all public and government jobs were held by the foreigners, the indigenous youth took opportunity of an outlet in service abroad. This gave him on opportunity to visit foreign lands, as also to prove his valour in war. Secondly, it provided him social mobility in the caste-ridden society, particularly, the lower caste could claim virtues of fighting which accorded him a sense of honour and prestige.

With a discreet and deliberate effort of the foreign rulers to keep the forces apolitical, the military acquired a service culture, isolated from the society. Interestingly, the call to which the Indian soldiery responded for their supreme sacrifices was not to touch their patriotic chord, but in the name of their ancient glory, as evident from the following message to all Indian troops, as quoted in the book *A Matter of Honour*, "You are the descendants of men who having been great rulers and great warriors; you will recall the glories of your race; you will be the first Indian soldiers of the King Emperor to show that sons of India have lost none of their ancient martial instincts. Your religion enjoins on you that to give your life in battle is the highest reward. History will record the doing of the Indian sons."

Higher Motivation

Notwithstanding the policy of retaining an apolitical complexion of the Army, by the time the second World War started the spread of the nationalist movement for independence had started bearing effect, as evident from the fact that a large part of the British Indian soldiers were impelled by the patriotic spirit to join the Indian National Army

(INA), raised by the great Indian patriot, Subhas Chandra Bose in 1944. Not a small or inconsequential development, as made out by the British, that a large number of Indian men and officers in the British Indian Army, were so fired by their patriotic spirit as to desert the ranks of the British imperialists in thousands, to raise the Indian National Army (*Azad Hind Fauj*) which enabled formation of the first ever Indian Interim Government in exile, under Subhas Chandra Bose at Singapore. The INA, organised in three divisions, fought as a cohesive force in the Eastern theatre, in separate brigade sectors, called 'Subhas Brigades' against the British forces, which involved, along with the Japanese, an advance of 2832 miles and subsequently a withdrawal of 1100 miles. The INA may not have achieved, on its own, many tactical victories because of the failure of the Japanese to effectively support and supply it, but the very fact that the non-violent freedom movement had got transformed into an armed struggle, shook the edifice of the British Empire. Their contribution to India's freedom movement can be gauged from the fact that casualties in the INA rose to over 2000 killed, in action and due to sickness. It was not a mere exercise of changing-over the uniform, but a cold and deliberate decision against all odds, that INA soldiers decided to fight on the battlefield with the forces of the colonial ruler.

It is interesting to note, from the study ordered by Army Headquarters quoted earlier (Table 11), that rank and file ranked patriotism much higher than the reckoned preference of service values of the officer cadre. The 1857 war of independence is deservedly and proudly called the 'Sepoy Mutiny'. Therefore, for anyone to imagine, that the rank and file are a second-rate group of non-thinking personnel, is nothing but a diabolic short-sightedness.

GIVING THE QUEEN OF BATTLE HER DUE

In-house Parochialism

Somehow, the parochialism of the arms/services and regiments seems to have got deep-rooted, at the cost of the larger interests of the service. First of all, the only basic combat arm of the Army is Infantry, to which we may add Armoured Corps (AC). Other arms namely Artillery, Engineers and Signals are the 'supporting arms' and not 'combat arms' as at times made out. All other arms, including AC, were created to assist Infantry (The Queen of Battle) in the achievement of its battle objective(s). In fact, without Infantry they have no *locus standi*. Therefore, for any arms/supporting arms to take prece-dence over Infantry is absurd and untenable. It is not an

insignificant issue as some may contend. For example, in one of the recent Army Day presentations of unit citations for distinguished services, which I was viewing on TV, when the first two names of other arms units were announced, I wondered and thought that perhaps there was no Infantry unit getting this award. However, what followed was the names of over half a dozen Infantry units, announced thereafter, for the award. It is nothing but a mindless force of minority-complex, an indignity to the valrous killed or wounded who are predominantly Infantrymen or an insensitivity to the logic and spirit of paternal hierarchy, where elders are always placed at a higher standing. If you look at the history of raising of the supporting arms or services, initially, they were all raised by converting enbloc the Infantry units. Therefore, it is a travesty of rationality to push the mother of all arms and services to a lower pedestal.

Infantry has been reduced to 5th position in the order of precedence of the arms and services. And Infantry has lumped it - amazing ! Content with the triangle of Infantry man's war essentials: his personal weapon, marching boots and the pack on his back, he has not asserted his right, typically in the spirit of what Slim had to say about Infantry, "When every other Arm boasted about their achievements, Infantry stood quietly with victory under its feet."

Further, Infantry ought to be given a higher priority in modernisation of its weapons and equipment. With the continued neglect of due priority for Infantry modernisation, it is disconcerting to note that even para military forces have overtaken Infantry in the quality of their basic weapon and equipment holding. It can hardly be over-stressed that the need for a well-equipped and trained Infantry is imperative whether it is conventional warfare, counter-insurgency or any aid to civil power. Keeping it at a lower priority for modernisation is a disservice to the Army and the nation.

Craving for Command of Infantry

The highest human craving is to command and wield authority over large groups of men which automatically places the commander in the limelight. This innate wish is the motivation behind many of us joining the Army. Within the Army, this passion gets fulfilled only by command of manpower-intensive Infantry units and formations. It is, therefore, not unnatural for an ambitious non-Infantry officer to claim eligibility to command Infantry formations even without any

prior service in Infantry. One has known some excellent senior commanders who were non-Infantry, though they were rare exceptions. What is, however, crucial is the damage done by the system where an officer, having no experience of the Infantry grassroot level (sub unit) service, is suddenly placed to command an Infantry unit or formation. If it was only a matter of arithmetics or dummy war-games, perhaps there could be no debate on the issue. But the question is of leading men in the face of bullets and cold reality of sure death, which demand deeper understanding of the Infantry ethos, basic drills and intimate understanding of the human psychology and traditional values of leadership in war.

As said earlier, on principle there is nothing wrong in any officer, irrespective of his arm or service, to aspire for command of an Infantry formation. However, the organisation must ensure proper selection and training of such aspirants to help them do full justice to the aspired job. Let there be a provision to seek volunteers for Infantry from other arms services at about five years of service, so that after due selection, these officers could be given the benefit of Infantry service experience at the sub unit level. Any officer who has not served Infantry at the sub unit level is bound to remain deficient in his ability to command Infantry troops. In this regard, it may be reiterated that without prior service with Infantry, an armoured corps officer is as much handicapped in command of an Infantry unit or formation, as an officer from any other arm.

There has to be something seriously wrong in our reckoning and recognition of the all-important position of the Basic Arm, which constitutes over one-third of the entire Army, that in the recent past, a situation could develop in the Indian Army, wherein the entire top Army hierarchy, amongst the Chief and Army Commanders, there was not even a single Infantry man. Well, in peace time, any manoeuvres could work.

Infantry Image

One often hears a concern being voiced in various forums, on lack of volunteers at the time of commissioning, without anything concrete being done about it. Merely attributing it to the changing socio-ethical conditions in the society, is too simplistic an explanation to be accepted. Interestingly, the answer is not in the realm of impossibility. For example, till about early 60s, a big attraction to opt for Infantry, was the prospects of faster promotion, which is no more

the case. It speaks poorly of the management of the officer cadre to have a situation, for example, where an outstanding Infantry officer, having a letter of approval for promotion, to the rank of brigadier, in his pocket, had to superannuate, because of his age, before being promoted. Whereas, in the same station, his batchmate from services who was older and lower in order of merit than his Infantry counterpart became a brigadier about a year earlier.

The other aspect which merits attention is the need for due recognition and award for the peculiar hazards of service of an Infantry man. The recently-announced special allowance for Siachen is welcome. But there are a large number of other areas of deployment of troops which merit almost the same level of reward or recognition. Besides, what about compensation for other peculiar hardships which an Infantry man undergoes, in terms of his nomadic life of risks and a disturbed family life? It is mainly these aspects which act as demotivating factors for youth to opt for Infantry. Let there be an Infantry special grant, say Rs. 50,000, paid to each Infantry officer on commissioning, or a substantial Infantry hazard allowance paid to each Infantry officer during service, besides an assured faster promotion and the whole complexion would change.

Part III

Decline in Traditional Values

- A Prelude — Fostering Sound Traditions
- Forthrightness — A Virtue Indispensable
- Sickening Sychophancy
- Professionalism Overtaken by Careerism
- Self-respect and Righteousness
- Personal Example - The Best Order
- A Natural Living Style of Dignity
- Fraternity of the Officer Corps
- Charismatic Personality
- Reforming the Military Judicial System
- Some Additional Crucial Issues

Ten

A Prelude—Fostering Sound Traditions

While dealing with service culture and values, it may be pertinent to see its quintessence, as defined in the book, *Military More Than Just A Job*, "Culture is a pattern of basic norms which a given group, while coping with the problem of external threat and internal social integration, has discovered and nurtured, which have proved efficacious enough to be passed to the next generation or other members, as the correct model of conduct in relation to those problems". Therefore, sacrosanctity of traditional morals, which have taken millenniums to be discovered, refined and adopted, as an effective elixir for future generations. In military parlance, tradition implies that "you never fall below the standard of courage and conduct handed down to you." Compromising these unwritten laws would tantamount to reverting to the law of jungle and denying the society the benefits of its heritage.

Service ethics constitute the steel-frame foundation of conduct within the institutional, legalistic and professional parameters, enshrined in the service laws and conventions. The essence of ethics is to place the interest of others and the group above one's own interest. Ethics, dealing with good of society, is based on the Indian concept of duty (*dharma*), which helps rid themselves of self-centredness, cruelty and violation of norms. This creates an

environment conducive to pursuit of the highest good, which transcends self and the parochial sense of belonging to a fixed group, besides promoting social harmony and welfare of others by enjoining upon all their moral obligations to the larger good. Without ethical restraints, there would be organisational chaos, which is highly prejudicial to the well-being of any group or organisation.

In the classical Indian system, the higher placing in hierarchy is determined by the degree of voluntary renunciation, self-control and the level of intellectual and spiritual attainment. There can be no second view that to a greater degree, in the military ethics, the higher one's position is in the service hierarchy, the greater is his obligation to his command, and more apparent ought to be his self-renunciation and restraint.

Indianising the Traditions

Military is a society within a society. Its character of being insulated, self-sustaining, exclusive and secretive is essential, to some extent, for performance of its tasks to ensure national security against both external and internal threats. However, mere insulation is likely to distance it from the people whose servants the armed forces are. Even though an effort has been made to Indianise the ethos of the armed forces after independence, the common man still smells a colonial tinge, particularly in the customs and living style of the officer cadre. Understandably, an institution or system having colonial background of centuries cannot be changed overnight unless a viable and acceptable alternative is readily available. Therefore, there is a need for a two-pronged thrust: one, to reach out to the people, to educate and make them aware of the exclusive professional ethos of the mini society that the armed forces are, and two, to press on the process of Indianisation to remove the unwanted trace(s) of the imperial rule.

Military ethos and institutions have to be compatible and responsive to the political, social and economic goals set by the nation for itself. In this regard, the armed forces are seriously handicapped by the lack of public awareness of military matters and absence of any voluntary watch-dogs in the field of national security. Since no system can be truly self-corrective, it will be a good idea to have an independent body or tribunal, as part of the National Security Council, which could profit by the services of some of the universities (till the Defence University comes up), and the media in

helping the armed forces to see through the tenor of their professional forte and core service values, as perceived from outside.

Virtue of Duty and Rectitude

Indian philosophy recognises four legitimate objectives for human endeavours, namely, *dharma* (duty or righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (sense pleasure) and *moksha* (freedom through communion with God). Duty and righteousness are the basis of both individual progress and social welfare. It seems to lay greater stress on personal ethics than social ethics, because the society consists of individuals; if individuals were virtuous, social welfare would automatically follow. Moral-tone was very high in the ancient Indian society, where everybody was expected to do appropriate duties. It called upon people to do good to others, because by so doing, they (the good doers) purified their hearts and transcended the relative world of good and evil.

From the foregoing, it is clear that social ethics help a person curb his selfishness. However, social duty too has its limitations. Duty is often irritating; in it lies the idea of compulsion and necessity. A person, consciously engaged in discharge of duty, finds little time for recreation or other things his soul may desire. According to Vivekananda, "Duty is the midday sun which scorches the tender plant of spirituality". However, the spirit behind this is that for higher duty, one has to sacrifice the lower one. In that, if your duty to an individual comes in the way of your duty to the organisation, you ought to sacrifice the individual's interest; similarly, duty to the organisation has to be sacrificed for duty to the country.

Philosophers have faulted excess of any human urge. A school of thought holds that excessive emphasis on patriotism was a major cause of downfall for the Greek civilisation. Indian philosophy exhorts performance of duty not out of a sense of compulsion, but out of love; unless a man is inspired by the spirit of his duty, he cannot cheerfully do full justice to it.

Virtue is defined as, 'what is conducive to welfare of others', and vice as, 'what causes others pain and misery'. Truthfulness demands that facts must be described without any intentional deceit or unnecessary wordiness. Semi-truth and evasive answer are lies. However, according to a school of thought, since purpose of truthfulness is welfare of others, it should, therefore, not unnecessarily hurt the feelings of others. It is debatable whether

discretion demands that one should remain silent, if the purpose of not hurting others, is not served by speaking the truth. In military matters, remaining silent, with a view to avoiding unpleasantness, can be disastrous. Even Gita recognises truth as the universal virtue. According to Buddhist philosophy, it is not words or tangible actions alone that are moral or immoral, but also the disposition of mind. Thus, unrighteousness begins from the moment the mind resolves to be unrighteous, though the resolution may remain unfulfilled.

To ensure ethical correctness in a soldier's behaviour, the services have codified roles, responsibilities, obligations, and the manner of conduct of all ranks, in different situations, in both war and peace, which constitute the inviolable norms of service. Stiff penalties have been stipulated for violation of the service norms. Needless to mention equality of all in law, irrespective of the rank and position one holds. In fact, the higher the position, the greater is the sensibility towards compliance of rules of law. Violations at the level of higher hierarchy, if any, ought to attract exemplary punishment, and not allowed to be pushed under the carpet, under the weight of any interested party holding higher rank or position.

Moral Accountability and Individualism

Moral accountability encompasses an individual's obligation to personal moral conduct, diligent discharge of duty and serving the national cause. Sum total of worth in all the three parameters constitutes a man's test of morality.

Regrettably, an Indian is perceived to be a marvellous free-thinking individual but not as good a corporate or social man. Once I happened to play a game of golf at Delhi, with the then ambassador of Japan in India. In the course of conversation when I asked him as to what struck him about India vis-a-vis Japan, he told me that with his long association with this country, he had observed that an Indian was a good individual whereas a Japanese was a good social man. To elaborate, he said, "A Japanese child would carry a garbage piece lying in the street into his house, whereas an Indian would rather keep his house clean and throw it into the street." A subtle observation! A common Indian is scrupulous in managing his personal affairs, but when the question of priority between the national or social interest and his self-interest comes, he will more often than not opt for protecting self-interest, as if care of the national interest was someone else's business. When it comes to taking an

unpopular moral stand or doing an uprighteous act, he would rather play safe, with a belief *'sanoo kee?'* (how does it matter to me?). I have often wondered why! Perhaps, with centuries of slavery under an oppressive foreign rule, the common Indian always felt insecure, which generated in him an individualistic self-survival instinct. With his national spirit subdued, he found it more expedient to focus on protecting individual interests. He has failed to shed this legacy of the past.

It is unbelievable that all these mega scams and shady deals, which have been slow-bleeding the nation's development, were taking place under the public nose, and craftily manipulated by the very people entrusted with the country's security and economic development. It was sad that the system allowed itself to be taken for a ride by some treacherously corrupt individuals. What is sadder is that not a single voice of dissent was raised, nor did anyone resign in protest from amongst the long line of those in the hierarchy of decision-making and implementation. On the other hand, bungling up of practically all developmental national projects has rendered them irrelevant and economically unviable, because of lack of dispatch and sense of national spirit in processing and pushing these. Unless we generate consciousness, where each individual considers himself not only an individual but 'India-personified' and places national interest at the top of his priorities, the nation would continue to suffer at the hands of swindlers and putrid leaders or heads of bureaucracy. Besides personal moral accountability, the system must introduce effective checks and balances, for quick spotting and penalising those who derelict their duty towards their organisation and the country, whatever be the position or authority held by them.

With history of combat warfare being as old as mankind, certain assumptions have been accepted as indispensable virtues for personal and social obligations, which have been passed down to the newer generations as an oral history and customs. It is the moral responsibility of all members of a group to preserve and nurture these traditions which have a long history of tested relevance and wisdom, sanctified by blood and toil of the previous generations. Let us analyse, in the subsequent pages, some of the important service values, which are *sine qua non* of the military ethos, but are facing a threat of collapse.

Eleven

Forthrightness — A Virtue Indispensable

Environment of Free Expression

Commanders owe to the organisation rationality, transparency and an environment of free and frank expression based on trust and human dignity, which provide full opportunity for fulfilment of an individual's aspirations and attainment of organisational goals. Only in an environment of mutual trust and freedom of expression, both sides can share ideas, candour, dignity, warmth and sense of belonging. The leadership process, for effect, has to be participative, where everyone has the right of duty, to influence decision-making and to understand its implications. Participative leadership is different from democratic, because having a say is not the same as having a vote.

According to Max Pepree, "Among the most imperative traits of a military leader are : dependable integrity, cherishes heterogeneity/ diversity, searches out competence, open to contrary opinion, communicates easily, leads through serving, is able to see a broad picture and tells why rather than how". It is only a dedicated leader of vision and depth, who would genuinely look for a divergent view. When commitment to the higher cause is total, there could be no ego or arrogance, because the leader sees in each member of his outfit, a

vital link in the whole game, where he carries the team, as much as the other members of the team carry him on their shoulders.

The profession of arms deals with truth and not falsehood or half-truth, where penalty for falsehood is grave. It is the air of free expression and forthrightness, which can save the system from being corrupted by sycophancy or hypocrisy. If the institution sets a heavy price on speaking the truth, people would avoid such costly indulgence. However, if system encourages and awards free expression of truth, people would be inclined to do so, because man has a natural inclination and respect for truth. Therefore, the primary onus of creating an environment of truthfulness rests on the organisation and not the individual(s).

Military Stakes

There are two elements of forthrightness : one, expression of truth as perceived by an individual, and two, expressing it without any restraint or delay or fear of consequences. Most of us have the intention of speaking the truth, but deliberately delay such an expression, if unpleasant, in wait for a propitious moment. Delay in speaking or sharing one's thought may be acceptable, to an extent in non-military matters, but not so in military matters, which may have crucial bearing on national security or ethical norms. Each individual is capable of evolving a unique solution to a given problem. You never know, which of the multiple proposed solutions may turn out to be the best. Subject to the security constraints, by non-involvement of each individual in the decision-making process, the organisation runs the risk of denying itself the variety of options possible in arriving at the decision. Therefore, blind conformity with a party-line, based on one-man's decision or thinking, is irrational, illogical and dangerous, particularly, when the decision is still in the formative or planning stage. The old adage that 'two heads think better than one' highlights the importance of larger participative decision-making process to arrive at a balanced decision.

It may be noted that the concept held by some, of giving greater weightage to 'method' than 'matter', is unacceptable in the Military Law for the service personnel, irrespective of the perceived compulsions. Each individual subject to Military Law is obliged to make clear and prompt expression of truth, without withholding or twisting the facts.

Some individuals or groups are known to be more forthright and frank than others by nature, irrespective of the cost of their dissenting views, particularly in matters pertaining to national and organisational interest. What makes some more forthright than the others is their sense of national or organisational pride. A man according higher values to the national interest than his own, is bound to speak out truth without caring for the consequences. It is only a person, who places his self-interest above the organisational, would resort to deviating from truth or sugar-coating it, to please the other person or toe his line. Therefore, a simple measure of a person's national or organisational loyalty or spirit lies in his proclivity to forthrightness and accepting a dissenting view.

Bureaucratic Resistance Against Dissent

Dissent should not be taken as an act of mistrust or disloyalty. The person who dissents, straight-away reflects two laudable elements of his personality : one, the courage of his convictions, based on his own veritable perception and beliefs, and two, his wont to place interest of the organisation above any personal fixation of the superior officer or his own interest. It is the manhood in a man which impels him to give out a dissenting point of view, even if it is contrary to the party-line or the boss. It is only a man of vision, with clear concepts of his own, having a viable alternative to offer, who would risk the displeasure of his superior officer to speak out and propose an alternative course of action. A man lacking vision and logical mind is too unsure of himself to offer an alternative point of view. They say, "Only monkeys do not have differences of opinion. Only, the one, who has capacity to think, may not agree with another's point of view".

Liddell Hart's observation, "There was only one thing more difficult than getting a new idea into the military mind and that was getting an old idea out", had the background of his own service experience wherein he was ridiculed for his essay on 'Mechanisation of the Army,' by his own Chief of Imperial General Staff, whereas the same essay was prescribed as a required reading for the German General staff. The most rigid damper to a new idea or creative thinking is the mediocre superior officer or the top brass who believe that their career interest lies in stubbornly sticking to the status quo. I remember a recent case of an Indian Army Officer who was snubbed and accused of lacking vision by his immediate superior officer(s) for writing a conceptual paper which had subsequently elicited

commendation from three successive Chiefs of Army Staff. It is indeed an occupational hazard in the way of a fresh idea or a dissenting view.

Dissent Prompts New Ideas

From dissent emerge new ideas. Absence of dissent or forthrightness is against dynamics of society, and is bound to rust and decay the process of evolution of solutions to human problems. Thus, dissent serves as a raft to the future. From dissent alone will emerge new and fresh decisions and plans, which are balanced and forward-looking. However, dissent should be constructive and not prompted by vested interests; it should stand on the pillars of an honest belief, backed by sound logic. Otherwise, it is likely to be viewed with distrust. Healthy dissent with a positive motive must be honoured and rewarded.

Forthrightness is in the genes of a man, though, through training and free environment, it can be nurtured and encouraged. A man endowed with natural proclivity to forthrightness, is so possessed by his convictions or a point of view on a subject under debate, that till he takes it out and has had his say, he feels restless. The strength of conviction is like a fever running through one's system, or a ton of bricks on one's head, from which the relief comes only when one has vomited it out or unloaded through appropriate expression or communication, to the relevant person or authority. The strength of feeling and convictions, behind an expression or a message, makes its impact on the receiver, and it has a greater chance of acceptability. Therefore, speak out your heart, in good faith, and without restraint.

Twelve

The Sickening Sycophancy

A Security Risk

In the backdrop of the previously-stated truism, "The biggest threat to a nation's security comes from an indigenously grown sycophant military leadership", we owe it to the nation and ourselves, to check this evil from proliferating. Let us figure out the reasons, which promote sycophancy.

(a) A superior officer, who has himself flourished on account of sycophancy, would ever look for a coterie of sycophants around him.

(b) A mediocre superior officer, who has risen beyond his level of competence, is bound to feel comfortable amidst a group of mediocres and non-professional toadies. He is likely to feel insecure with an off-beat or innovative proposal or a subordinate with professional depth.

(c) In an environment where forthrightness draws disfavour of the boss, and the resultant condemnation of a forthright man, people would desist from opening up or speaking out and, instead, will be yesmen. Sycophancy is the convenient path of least resistance.

(d) In this competitive world, where everyone is seeking promotion and higher financial security, boot-licking is an effective tool to go up the ladder, particularly in the bureaucratic system, where appraisal is entirely dependent on perception of the reporting officer, as there is no foolproof system to relate it to actual performance on ground.

(e) Where values have degraded, and self-interest is placed above the organisational or national interest, sycophancy proliferates.

(f) Short tenures of command or staff leave little time for an individual to retract or redeem damages, if any, caused by their genuine mistakes in discharge of duty. To avoid costly mistakes, individual avoids taking any action or decision; the aim instead, shifts to safe-playing and pleasing the boss by non-professional means.

Sycophancy Is Disloyalty

To be a sycophant or yesman is to be disloyal. What is often overlooked is that the ability to carry out orders and the ability to think and express your points of view are not incompatible. It is one's loyalty to the organisation and himself which goads one to give his honest opinion even in face of disfavour.

A sycophant is a sick man of the society, whose mind and acts are always directed to serve personal motive, by ingratiating with his superior officer, through flattery. Flattery is anathema to human creativity and vision, of both the flatterer and the flattered. It is a human crave to be praised or appreciated, which a sycophant exploits by fulfilling this natural craving of his boss, through flattery and yesmanship.

There is a thin line between flattery and sycophancy; while thrust of the former is on exaggeration of facts aimed at praising the other person, the latter is mainly aimed at blindly acquiescing with the other person's point of view, even if faulty or flat. Like corruption, in which both the giver and the taker are equally blameworthy, in human dealings, both the flatterer and the happy-to-be-flattered are a menace to an organisation or society.

In an environment of sycophancy, larger interests of the organisation get ignored, as everyone is out to extract maximum and the fastest from the system, during his short tenure(s) available.

Sycophancy results in promotion of the incompetent and wrong people who are not fit for the ranks they hold. The worst sufferers are the important decisions and plans, made by a sycophant hierarchy, as the absence of dissent or freedom of expression is bound to deny the subject due benefit of diversity of views and the depth of participative involvement of all.

Sycophancy Is Derelicting Duty

A sycophant surrenders his right of discretion and independent thinking, thus derelicting his obligations to duty and service. A big injustice and wrong are done to the command of a sycophant commander, who is always looking upward, is subservient to his boss, suspicious of his peers and a terror to his subordinates. The interests of men and the organisation are sacrificed, without a qualm, at the altar of personal interests of a sycophant commander.

The sweetest thing to human ear is, and will ever be, to hear admiration. Therefore, sycophancy can never be eliminated totally; the virus can only be checked. The first step to check the unhealthy trend is to generate consciousness of its evils, which should be apparent to any rational thinking man.

A subservient or an unctuous person is a professional hazard and social menace, as per an old Indian saying, "*Ati vinamra doot lakshnam* (excessive courtesy is dangerous)". It should not take long to make out as to who means serious business and who shams his duty and tries to make it up by sycophancy. Not that everyone is a shammer, but given the human urge to seek higher recognition, a professionally unsound person will invariably try to make it up by the gimmick of fawning or lip-homage. It is refreshing to find a no-nonsense, self-assured and a self-starter subordinate. One deve-lops respect for such a self-respecting quiet worker who works more for his own satisfaction than to impress others. Our conscience is the best judge for us to suggest as to what is right or wrong, ethical or unethical, moral or immoral. It is only when we refuse to listen to the voice of our conscience that we fall prey to the convenient path of short-term quick gains, even though unethical.

Manifestations

A typical sycophant manifests his identification traits as follows: he is used to compulsive sirring; in the advanced stage of sickness, he uses sir before and after every sentence of verbal communication,

addressed to the superior officer. He never gives his own mind and, even if coaxed into giving one, he is non-committal and vague. In this vague confusion, he takes no time in jumping to agree with the boss the moment he gets a hint of boss's mind. While making a statement, he is ever looking towards the boss for latter's nod of acceptance. If he is an audience to his boss, he is continuously nodding his head, to provide instant and running support to whatever the boss says, without even fully digesting or understanding what is being said. In a get-together, he hovers around the boss perhaps to feel self-assured. He is nervous, sweating and a ready pliant, while addressing or briefing his superior, but is cold and inflexible in dealing with subordinates. He is innovative in violating existing instructions, to find ways to gratify his boss, by indirect means. He is so quick in shifting loyalties that with change of the boss, he immediately changes his mind and plans, to ditto the line of thinking of the new task master. Ever looking for excuses to please the master on non-professional grounds, he is efficient in keeping a track on the important occasions pertaining to the boss, and is innovative in making much of these - a clever ruse to blackmail the psyche of the boss who is bound to be influenced; after all boss is human!

In justification of the prevalence of an unethical trend in the social plane, it may be said that an organisation is like a family, where social interaction and friendly courtesies are desirable. No escaping the fact that social togetherness indeed demands close-knit social interaction and exchange of courtesies, which is a common practice in the services. However, in an environment of stiff competition, where each individual is being assessed for his professional performance, the master has to make a special effort to ensure that no non-professional factors are allowed to influence his perception or judgement about an individual's professional performance. The boss has not only to be fair and objective but also look to be so. Besides, such courtesies ought to be strictly reciprocal in equal terms. As head of the organisation, one is conventionally entitled only to the deference, due to a head of the family, which one cannot demand but deserve- one would surely get it if one truly deserves. More than that one must avoid, in particular, where transparency and equity in dealings should be the order of the day.

Thirteen

Professionalism Overtaken by Careerism

Essence of Professionalism

According to J C T Downey, "To be considered professional, a military system must satisfy three basic criteria. First, it must have some *permanence* , at least to the extent of a sizeable full-time nucleus which exists whether or not in emergency, or there is more general mobilisation. Second, the permanent nucleus must set its sights on technical *proficiency* which it attains by study and experiment, both in war and peace. Third, the system as a whole must be a *service*, that is, it must be under the will of the people via some political authority." In essence, professionalism is the spirit and measure of an organisation's capability to effectively perform its intrinsic tasks. Let us recount the essential parameters of professionalism, which include:

(a) Total involvement and commitment to one's duty.

(b) Maintaining and ever-improving personal and organisational standards of performance in one's job.

(c) In all dealings and planning, the interest of the country and organisation must be placed higher than one's individual interest.

The primary objective of military professionalism is the high state of preparedness for war against an external threat. In the secondary role, the services also act as an organ of national integration and assist civil administration in maintaining law and order and curb militancy. The basic requisites of professionalism are the same, from jawan to the highest military commander, i.e, high standards of performance, interest of the organisation held supreme, and a total sense of involvement. However, the scope of one's professional commitment varies with the level of responsibility one holds.

Professionalism proliferates where dissent is accepted, as a positive element of healthy growth of professionalism, where organisation encourages and protects true professionals, and where each individual, as a link in the chain, has full freedom and opportunity to realise his true professional potential. In this regard, commanders have a special role to play, by setting the pace and example of high professional standards of performance, skill and morality. Nothing motivates an individual more than the higher professional standards of his superior officer.

Growth of Professionalism

The concept of professionalism has undergone change over the period of military history. Till about the 19th century, as stated elsewhere, armies were raised only for campaigns, and ranks for leadership were purchased by elite of the society, out of an amateur sense of adventure and patriotism. With no standing armies, professionalism was more of a spirit and moral ascendancy of a country over its adversary than a skill in warfare. It was in this context that Henry Lloyd had observed, "It is universally agreed upon that no art or science is more difficult than that of war. Yet, by an unaccountable contradiction of human mind, those who embrace this profession take little or no pains to study it".

The pace of technical development, from stone to metal, gunpowder to breach loader, single shot to rapid-rate automatic weapon, foot soldier to chariot/horse and ultimately to tank and aircraft, has been at such a snail's pace that the art of warfare had changed only marginally in the past history on account of the physical factors. However, during the 20th century, the developments in the field of technology have been much faster, warranting higher standards of professionalism, and continued updating of the art and technology, to remain at par if not ahead of

the rest in the world. Military service has become more professional and the soldier can no longer be treated as an unskilled labour, nor can he be considered a mere cannon-fodder, as education has brought about greater awareness, where unnecessary loss of human resources is not acceptable to society.

Compulsions of a Careerist

In such a large organisation, with a pyramidal structure, where higher ranks steeply shrink to the ultimate 'one', there is bound to be a rat-race for the higher ranks. This stiff competitive environment, where one is superseded not because one is incompetent, but because there are no slots to fill, generates careerism in which an individual places his own interest above that of the organisation. His thoughts and actions are marked by opportunism and use of any means, fair or foul, to keep his profile graph favourable for the higher rank, at whatever cost. He does not hesitate to stoop low in ethics of service to serve self-interest. He is invariably a tensed man, with his mind ever engaged in trying to distinguish himself in petty routine matters, rather than major issues, because he is neither capable of thinking big nor does he have the will to address himself to the larger issues of national or organisation's interest. A strong protagonist of no-mistake syndrome, he believes in highly centralised system of working even in petty/routine matters. A careerist is an anathema to the interest of men, and he uses his command to serve his personal interest. Seldom does he take a stand for the sake of his men.

Sycophancy is an inseparable element of careerism, as a careerist cannot afford, nor is he inclined, to have a difference of opinion with his master. Sycophancy itself is a serious malady afflicting an organisation, but careerism is a much bigger menace. A sycophant may be a yes-man by sheer habit and may not go places, but a careerist is a cunning, calculative manipulator who would invariably achieve his goal, by fair or foul means. With high stakes in the individual's making or not making the next rank, as with every promotion one does not only gain in pay and perks but gets another two years or more of service, it is the attraction of longer service which is more crucial, because that is invariably the stage, when he is thickly in the midst of family liabilities. Nagged by a sense of financial insecurity, he would turn heaven and earth, to rise to the higher slot for an extended lease of two more years in service.

A Dangerous Contribution

A perilous contribution of careerism-sans-professionalism is highlighted by Norman Dixon, in his book, 'On Psychology of Military Incompetence'. "Another contribution to incompetence was the tendency to sack or curtail advancement of those who unwisely failed to conceal their lights beneath bushes of conformity." It is well known how JFC Fuller, who was the most original thinker and analyst of warfare, was made to retire in 1933, because he had dared to differ with the then (unthoughtful) British military hierarchy. This is the bane of military profession throughout the world. One can minimise the incidence of such casualties, but cannot eliminate it as long as a human sits on judgement over another human. It is only through raising consciousness and introducing checks and balances to protect merit that professionalism can be sustained in the Army.

Development of Professionalism

True interest of profession is served by being with men for the maximum time. That is why for a young officer, it is imperative to lay the foundation of his career by spending a minimum of first five uninterrupted years with men. For command of troops, initial learning from close interaction with men, is the *sine qua-non* of effective leadership. Training plays a key role in serving the true interest of professionalism. Hypocrisy in training is a disservice to professionalism.

The injudicious emphasis on paperwork leaves very little time for commanders to be with their men on training. As stated earlier, no amount of written papers or war-games or discussions can take the place of training with troops. Since everyone is in a hurry to make a mark of his suitability for the higher slot, by avoiding a blemish, he finds it convenient to lay stress on trivia and routine written work. Besides, the load of report and return is so much that most of the time is spent in managing routine matters, with little or no time left for serious concepts or doctrines to be framed or refined. Unless something serious is done to check the monster of paperwork in the services, these will be reduced to any other civil department of *babus* (clerks).

It is surprising to note that even in peacetime, views or recommendations on important policy matters are rushed through in such a non-serious and hurried manner that most of the times, too short a time is given to offer comments, as if the whole act is a mock

exercise. With emphasis on paperwork, the chief beneficiaries are the peacetime commanders, who are good paper-tigers, and who find this as an excuse to spend most of their tenures sitting in their offices with little contact with troops on ground.

Much to be regretted, professional evaluation has mostly come to be limited to ACR-oriented activities only. Instead of visiting the lower formations and units for regular contact throughout the year, the higher commanders generally fix an annual war-game/ operational discussion close to the ACR season, which generates tension, and the senior commander's impression about the subordinate commanders and staff are influenced by this brief contact. There is need to remove tension from such training events, which is possible only if senior commanders visit subordinate commanders more often and remove the fear of the unknown. In the absence of a regular and closer interaction, the superior officer comes to be treated as less of an 'approachable father figure', but more of a 'performance rater'. As a result, in the tension-filled atmosphere, the benefit of interaction and training is not fully drawn. Not only that, even social get-togethers become ACR-oriented events where hypocrisy and one up-manship get pronounced.

Another Pernicious Trend

Another pernicious trend pertains to the conduct of exercises with troops, which cost crores to the national exchequer. The main objective of training commanders and troops and of drawing appropriate lessons is overlooked, by so tailoring the events and timings for convenient presence of the visiting senior commanders, that the training value and realism are lost. At times, the passion to orchestrate the setting for convenience of the visiting senior commander, to observe various phases of the exercise is carried to a mindless limit. In a particular case of a large scale manoeuvre exercise for an offensive operation, it was designed to have a non-tactical freezing in the exercise for 24 hours, for the so-called misconceived administrative reasons, soon after troops had crossed the water obstacle, without going through the sequence and drills of the bridge-head-battle. It beats one's imagination how such an ill-conceived decision could be taken to suddenly halt the flow of operations at a period of peak activity, after crossing the obstacle in the bridge-head area, where troops are supposed to spend the least time, before breaking out for deeper objectives. In that particular setting, the worst casualities were momentum of the battle and *josh*

(offensive spirit) of the men which are critical at this stage of battle. It required a lot of persuasion to convince the commander to eliminate the unrealistically long non-tactical gap, which he reluctantly relented to modify. Imagine the lessons which the troops and junior leaders would have drawn from the earlier planned non-tactical opening of their *'langars'* (cook houses) and tents in the bridge-head area. Exercises with troops are very costly events, and one cannot afford to play with their training value for troops. The natural flow of the exercise does not have to be modified to suit the programme of visit of the visiting commanders. If at all, the visiting commander's programme has to be so arranged that the realistic sequence of operation is not disrupted. We need to come with a heavy hand to check such a damaging trend.

Fourteen

Self-respect and Righteousness

Leadership Motto And Spirit of Honour

A look at the Indian Military Academy (IMA) Chetwode Hall motto, which constitutes the credo for officer cadre of the Indian Army, "The safety, honour and welfare of the country come first always and every time; the honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command, come next; your own ease, comfort, safety come last always and every time", shows that honour of the country and the men you command, in that order, are a matter of prime concern.

It is the spirit of 'honour' which impels a soldier to lay down his life, because he cannot stand the thought of being dishonoured in his group. Whatever else may have been the inspiration behind a young man's joining the profession of arms, his primary consideration would invariably have been to live an honourable life. The key features of the profession of arms are elan, pride, the spirit of sacrifice and self-discipline.

The Moral Charge

A sense of commitment to the job at hand, training and welfare of men under command are the moral charge of a commander; nothing can be allowed to detract him from these moral obligations. He owes

it to the 'salt' (*namak halali*) of the organisation, and to himself, to protest against any orders which he believes are immoral or detrimental to his moral charge or interest of the organisation. A commander can win confidence and faith of his men only if they feel safe in his hands, and are sure that he would protect them against any misuse or denial of fundamental rights. Besides direct responsibility of the immediate superior commander, to ensure training, welfare and dispensation of justice to the personnel under his command, the other commanders and staff, in the chain of command and decision-making, are also morally bound to uphold the law of equity and honour of the aggrieved complainant, while disposing of his case. In fact, many a time, the complainant may not know as to who in the chain has stood by the law of natural justice and granted him justice.

A Look Inside

I got a first-hand insight into functioning of the decision-making process at the Army Headquarters, when I got posted there as one of the founding members of Complaints Advisory Board (CAB) in the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Secretariat. In the first briefing, the then COAS told us, "You are a safety valve outlet for the frustration of the aggrieved officers and men. I want to break the bureaucratic approach towards complaints and make the system more responsive". The thrust was on transparency, accessibility and objectivity in analysing and reviewing all cases before offering CAB's recommendations for orders of the COAS. We started with a healthy practice of encouraging differences of opinion, even among members of CAB, and collectively discussed complicated and important cases. As a convention, whenever there was a difference of opinion, between the dealing director and the head of the CAB, COAS was briefed in the presence of both, so that the he could seek any clarification before giving his directions. A complainant could walk in the office or house of any member of the CAB. In fact, we viewed it as an opportunity to get a further input in the case - a complainant runs the risk of exposing himself more than what is given in the file/ paper.

Working in the services is so conditioned that the higher authorities, in the chain of disposing a case, rarely disagree with what the dealing-officer puts down in the first noting on file. First, it calls for an effort to record a disapproving or dissenting note and the rationale thereof, and secondly, many are wary of offering a differing

view as it may be perceived as a vested interest or wrong judgement by the next superior officer in the chain. When there is a vested interest in the case, some resort to the unhealthy practice of either asking the desk/dealing officer to change the basic noting and put up again, or they would have done prior briefing to ensure favourable recommendation.

With the introduction of CAB, for which the initial selection of officers was made personally by the COAS, based primarily on the officer's reputation of being forthright and morally upright, it did shake the system a bit, as the incidence of CAB's disagreement with the dealing directorate/department went as high as about 30 per cent. I had the privilege of drafting and issuing the first Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the CAB in which objectivity, probity, fairness and openness of the system were stressed. I remember a case in which a complainant had submitted that the then Chief of Army Staff, while in the previous capacity of Army Commander, had been subjective in his appraisal resulting in supersession of the complainant. A tricky case where the COAS had to sit on judgement on a complaint against him. While discussing the case with the COAS, he brought out valid reason for the indifferent report on the complainant, as Army Commander. However, when I pointed out that the impugned poor performance report was an isolated aberration in the officer's otherwise bright record, the COAS promptly agreed to overrule his own earlier decision.

The Guardians' Go-By to Fair Play

The beginners' enthusiasm in the CAB for objectivity, openness, giving equal weightage to the individual and the organisation, appeared to have waned with the passage of time. In a case, the complainant's request for an audience with the head of the CAB in connection with a long pending complaint, was curtly refused, because the then CAB Chief seemed to have chosen to sacrifice the underdog complainant unheard, in favour of his investment in the respondent, who happened to be an Army Commander. Such incidents, in which the custodians of law and justice are themselves seen to be taking a partisan line, are highly demoralising.

In another case of unrighteous and unbecoming conduct, two very senior officers were alleged to have entered into a conspiracy against a self-respecting and professionally sound subordinate, because of professional differences and former's attitudinal

incompatibility in the matter of service ethics. As the case revealed, since they could not pinpoint any fault in the performance of duty of this subordinate, they manipulated his behind-the-back removal, against all norms and law in the matter. The officer brought out veritable evidence in support of the charges against the conspiring 'duo' ranging from 'cowardice to malicious and unbecoming conduct', and appealed for an inquiry in the matter. But the respondents, instead of ordering an inquiry or rebutting the charges and taking the complainant to task, chose to push things under the carpet, under the weight of their rank and position. Surprisingly, the system having realised that a wrong had been done to the complainant, yet it backed the respondent 'duo', apparently in a false loyalty to protecting the image of the service and authority, without appreciating the damage such an imprudent decision would cause to the credibility and fairness of the system. Since the Army Headquarters had also become a party to the irregularity of the 'duo', it went all-out to support its earlier wrong decision. Even though the next superior officer, who happened to be the (previous) Army Commander, who had highlighted, in his comments on the case, a bias and nexus on part of the 'duo', against the complainant, yet the Army Headquarters preferred to ignore recommendations of the Army Commander. Imagine the gravity of the despicable scenario; here was a junior officer (complainant) formally appealing for an inquiry into the charges against his superior officers, fully knowing that being an underdog, he was liable to be sacked and severely punished if charges were found to be untenable or slanderous, but the respondents, against whom serious allegations of malafide and violation of law had been made, chose to ungentlemanly scuttle the process of law, while sitting in the corridors of authority. The onus lay on the organisation to have taken the defaulters to task, irrespective of their ranks, if found guilty. Such incidents, even if isolated, are highly subversive of good discipline and morale.

It may be opportune to quote here the notorious case of British Royal Oak Court-Martial, where a Naval Captain was unlawfully punished for writing a complaint against his superior officer, which was within bounds of the Service Act. However, the Commander-in-Chief (Haig) cynically disregarded law and made it into a prestige issue and took a punitive and illegal course by framing a (made up) charge against the officer and forced the hands of admiralty to punish him. The result was soon to be seen. Within two years of this incident, there was a spurt in the disciplinary cases of mutinous behaviour and cynicism among men throughout the British Forces,

which was reflective of the anguish of all ranks, on the injustice having been meted out to a self-respecting member of the Forces.

Taking Courage for Righteousness

What is degrading the service values is the attitude of fear and servility on part of those in the chain of decision making. Integrity and loyalty demand the courage of convictions and moral courage to stand up for what is right. It may be apt here to quote the 'lament of a priest (Pastor Martin Niemoller)', who fell victim to the Nazis in 1930s, "First, they came for the Jews and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the communists and I did not speak out, because I was not a communist. They came again for trade unionists, and then for the Catholics, but I did not speak. Then, they came for me and there was none left to speak out for me".

The concept of righteousness may vary in shades from person to person, but the basic element of truth is crystal clear to everyone. White may be perceived as off-white, but it cannot be black and vice-versa. Wrong decisions demolish discipline and morale. To be fanatically supportive of a wrong decision can be disastrous.

Viewing it from the spiritual plane, one ought to live and conduct oneself naturally. Living naturally by one's convictions, gives one the great feeling of doing right and being or feeling good. This itself is a reward beyond parallel. By subduing one's conscience and indulging in hypocrisy in dealing, one dies many deaths a day, which robs one of his inner strength to feel good and happy. Besides, nobody can throw you out of your job, for speaking out your mind, or taking a righteous stand; the worst that can happen is to deny you the next rank. Well, it is worth ignoring the illusion of one's rank, in preference to one's inner peace and clear conscience. This pearl of truth is deeply interwoven in the Indian philosophy of life.

The aspects of discipline and loyalty have to be correctly perceived. Speaking out or living by one's convictions is not to be taken amiss, as insubordination or defying the authority; nor should it be viewed as to embitter personal relationship. After all, the officer cadre are well educated, mature, having gone through a strenuous regimen of pre-commission training in human dealings and etiquettes. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that an officer would keep discretion in mind, while expressing a dissenting view or difference or opinion. However, at no cost one ought to let truth remain unsaid, for want of an opportune moment or the so-called

sophisticated manner of conveying. You never know, your lone expression or input, however rustic or crude, may turn out to be crucial to national security or strategy, or may uphold tenets of justice and bring relief to an aggrieved man. Besides, you would spread a refreshing message of truthfulness and service ethos of honour and righteousness.

Two Heads are Better than One

Rationally speaking, we are all a unique product of nature, blessed with unique angularity and capacity of perception and vision. No two individuals can be exactly similar in thinking or attitudes. The strength of a group lies in facilitating each member to harness and realise his true potential. Similarly, a group where each member has a say is more closely knit, and everyone feels part of the final decision or plan, once he has been given the right of say.

I recall my association with a foreign officer, while doing a professional course. This officer had closely observed some other foreign armies, including the Israeli Army. When I sought his impression about the Indian Army, and in what way it differed from other armies, he said that what struck him about the Indian Army was its discipline and the social differential between men and their officers. The respect and loyalty given by Indian soldiers to their officers should be an envy of an officer of any other Army. Comparing Indian Army with Israeli Army, he said, "In the Israeli Army, in a section of ten men, ten different plans would be debated before the final decision was taken. Whereas, in the Indian Army it seemed to be one man's (group commander's) plan, which was finalised without adequate alternatives having been debated". How true this foreign friend was in his observation! It is difficult to believe that we, as people, are by nature handicapped or incapable of accepting a dissenting view freely or giving out our own mind on a subject under deliberation. Is there something in our culture which impels us to ungrudgingly accept injudicious or wrong decisions, as an ordain of destiny? We need to ponder!

Make a Beginning

Many a time, one takes excuse of inopportune moment or indiscretion to avoid speaking out. Candidness, forthrightness and being righteous have to be a day-to-day practice, and not pended to special occasions (*mahurat*) to air one's views. There may be a

tendency on part of some to indulge in out-of-turn speaking, merely to seek recognition. Such people cannot be many. Even if there are some, one ought to bear and tolerate them in the larger interest of openness and freedom of expression, because there is more to gain from tolerating an odd out-of-turn speaker, than discouraging many others, who may have some useful views or inputs to share. Sometimes, one prefers to keep quiet, or pends taking a righteous stand to another apt moment. If you have missed an opportunity, the convenient time may seldom come because with passage of time, your own enthusiasm or strength of convictions to share or project the point of view is likely to wane, and you may never be able to convey your mind. Besides, age and time take their toll in ebbing enthusiasm. However, if you have not been exercising so far your fundamental right of freedom of expression, it is never too late. There are all the chances that not only will you have a greater sense to self-satisfaction, you are also likely to draw greater admiration from others. If you do not make a beginning now, you are unlikely to relish and exhibit this manlike trait, when situation demands or when you have grown older and feeble.

Fifteen

Personal Example, The Best Order

The Highest Leadership Trait

If one was to single out the greatest leadership trait, it is man's ability to lead by personal example. Personal example of a leader acts as 'Midas touch' to galvanise men to produce unbelievable results.

As stated in another place, a leader lives in a glass house, where all his acts are observed and inferences drawn by his men. Though men keenly observe every action of their leader, ranging from personal lifestyle to his professional standing, nothing can reinforce their faith in the leader, more than his ability to share with them physical danger and his risk-taking personal example of leading from front, in a dangerous situation. Men in a dangerous situation look up to their leader for showing the way. The slightest hesitation or weakness betrayed by their leader, can slump down the morale of men.

Leading from front is the most indispensable quality expected of a leader in a risky situation, particularly at subunit and unit levels, because things will never move if the unit/subunit commander chickens out in a dangerous situation. Personal example of leading from front by formation or higher commanders, is equally important to galvanise the spirit of men, in particular, when chips are down and troops have been battered. Field Marshal Slim tells an interesting

experience, how in the face of bullets in the battlefield, when fear overtook him, he got courage on seeing a valiant action of a rifleman. No amount of reasons can justify a senior commander's commanding remotely from rear, when cost of failure is high, or when troops have suffered heavy casualties.

A view held by some that senior commanders should not expose themselves to physical risk of being a casualty, because with the leader becoming a casualty, the rest of the command structure would collapse and the flow of operations would get jeopardised, is a negative perception. Success in battle is more important than the life of an individual. The planning and control of operations is carried out through a team of experienced and specialised staff, with full involvement of the subordinate and superior commanders. In any case, a commander is always trained to step into the higher slot without any hitch or delay.

The second most important leadership trait which inspires confidence in men, is the professional competence of a leader. A faith that the leader would make the soundest plans in war is borne by his day-to-day's rationality and ability to tide over problems in a competent and confident manner. Men adore a leader who is bold, competent and who brings success and victories. War is a rare phenomenon, and may never come in the life-time of many soldiers. It is the image and reputation of competence and high standards of the unit's performance, cultivated by the leader, in various fields of activities, viz., training, operational preparedness exercises and sports etc., that build men's faith in their leader's professional competence. Personal examples and standards of a leader are the biggest force-multiplier in leading men to higher achievements and supreme sacrifice.

Galvanising Men in Crisis

Allow me to quote from my article on 'Personal Example is the Best Order', published in the *Combat Journal* in 1986, in which I have quoted an incident from the experience of a young company commander (Major X). In 1972, X's battalion was out on collective training for offensive operation across a canal/river obstacle, in the western theatre. His company was tasked to train for carrying out an independent commando mission, which involved, interalia, crossing of a water obstacle by two leading sections without use of any water crossing aids. X trained his company hard and was confident of its fitness to complete the task. A few days before the formation test-

exercise, one afternoon, X set out a full-dress company exercise to test its ability to carry out the assigned mission, under battle conditions across about a 120 ft wide fast-flowing canal. The leading elements were required to carry a pair each of ropes, iron pickets and hammers. As the leading man (Om Prakash) carrying a rope-end, tied around his waist, which happened to be the most difficult task, was about to reach the far-end, he developed a muscle cramp and was seen drowning when he was pulled out to the bank by the life-saving team. As luck would have it, in the second attempt, the volunteer swimmer (Labha Ram) carrying the rope-end also started shouting for help a few meters short of the far-bank, and he too had to be pulled out. With the two ace-swimmers being attended to and re-suscitated by a medical officer on the bank, and the sun about to set, there was an eerie despondency in the company group. The company was again lined up in battle order, and X asked for volunteers to take across the ropes and iron pickets. Only a couple of shaky and unsure hands could be seen coming up to the ear-line. X was agitated to find his company boys looking so demoralised which he could not stomach, and ordered the whole company to line up for swimming across the canal in a wave. At this, the company senior JCO, Sub Rattan Singh, a brave soldier, came up and advised X (in a whisper), not to order the boys to jump in the canal at that stage, as he feared a serious tragedy might befall, and suggested to postpone the exercise till next morning. X was in no mood to listen to the JCO and asked for readiness-report for the company to swim across. There was a hush silence and fear on everyone's face. Even the company second-in-command (a young officer who had fought heroically a few months earlier in the Bangladesh war) avoided looking into the eyes of X. As X got the report that the company was ready, at this juncture, he ordered a halt and asked for the rope-end, which had failed to reach across, to be tied around his waist. This astonished everybody, and there were many erect hands of volunteers going up, wanting to cross with the rope-end. X ordered the company to stay put on the near bank and took along another swimmer to carry the iron picket. A providential intervention, wherein God must have given X a tremendous amount of strength to enable him to cross the canal, bang at the opposite point without any hitch. Though fairly good in swimming, X was no match to Om Prakash or Labha Ram, who were the company's best swimmers. Nor had X practised carrying the rope-end across the canal, though he had been swimming with the boys, normally. With his crossing, there was a tumultuous response from the company, and whole lot of them wanted to

cross with the rope-end. Even all-smiles senior JCO insisted that the company should go through the exercise proceedings, even if the shadows were getting darker. However, X called off the exercise after about six to seven boys had crossed with the rope-ends. One cannot start calculating personal risks in a crisis situation. Personal example has to be spontaneous and its results are beyond one's expectations.

It gives me great pride in recounting a heroic example of leading from front in war, from the experience of a war hero, Major (later Brigadier) K K Khajuria, a true leader of men and a gentleman par excellence. In 1971 war, with three attacks having failed to break-in the enemy defences at Khulna (Bangladesh), his unit (1 JAK RIF) was launched to achieve this task, in the foreboding back-drop of heavy casualties suffered by previous attacking units. Khajuria, commanding the left forward company, came under effective enemy fire as it crossed the start line for attack. On seeing some boys from the right forward company, going to ground, after being fired upon, some boys from Khajuria's company also started going to ground. Reaiising that going to ground would be disastrous, both in terms of casualties and capture of the objective, Khajuria roared to remind his boys of the *Dogra* traditions of valour and pride, charged with the battle-cry and ordered his boys to follow him in the direction from where the hail of bullets was coming. The electrified men took no time to come abreast with their leader in attack, with many falling dead or wounded. Soon a heavy machine gun burst caught Khajuria in both his thighs and he fell. His senior JCO, valorous Sub Rikhi Ram, rushed to help his company commander who lay in a pool of blood, but Khajuria continued directing his boys to press on with the attack. When Rikhi showed reluctance to leave Khajuria in that state, Khajuria ordered him at gun point to proceed with the attack. There were only 57 (out of about 120) victorious gallant survivors reaching the objective from Khajuria's company in that heroic action, which opened the flood gates to Dacca. There are many such gallant actions in the war history, where the only way to succeed or save a situation was by personal example of the leader. Nothing can substitute a leader's blood in animating the spirit of a demoralised or battered force.

Though it is essentially the personal example of a leader that sets the pace for a group, an act of gallantry or distinguished performance by any other member of the outfit also bears salutary effect on the rest of the group, including the leader. Heroic acts are contagious at

whatever level or by whom-so-ever they are performed. However, since it is the moral duty of the leader to lead in all situations, he is expected to rise to every occasion by personal example.

Men of fortitude in war are men of morality in peace. Personal example is not something that can be suddenly pulled out of a hat, when situation demands. It has its breeding ground in the peace-time's hard training, where the leader earns the faith of men through his moral ascendancy and higher standards to lead them effectively, which join to reinforce cohesiveness in a group. Men are not easily convinced of the quality of leadership, unless he has brought them victories and proved his genuine concern for their problems and welfare. Unless he identifies himself with his men, through thick and thin, they would not be taken in by any of the gimmicks.

Leader's Answerability

In my unit, one had often heard stories about the style of command of a valiant former commanding officer (Col Hira Nand Dubey, Vr C), who commanded the unit during 1947-48 war. Whenever he awarded anyone a punishment of imprisonment in the unit Quarter Guard, he would himself sleep on ground for the duration of the punishment, because as commanding officer, he held himself accountable for the soldier's act of omission or commission. A leader who leads by personal example and accepts accountability has rarely to resort to punishment.

A commander, with unclean dealings and corrupt practices, can inspire no confidence. He has not only to be clean and fair, but must be seen to be so by his men. In any act, if there is even a remote possibility of the commander being viewed as unclean or unfair, he has to make a special effort to demonstrate transparency to sustain his clean and fair image.

Leading Against Odds

Only men of conscience and character would lead by personal example. In this world, where most seem to treat their moral charge of responsibility and the authority that goes with it, as an opportunity to exploit it to their personal benefit, it is not easy for a lone crusader to stick to moral ethics of self-abnegation. Yet, even if the system is found wanting in protecting the honour of an honest and efficient worker, against the malafide or error of judgement of his superior officer, a man with character will unfailingly stick to the righteous

course of values and propriety. He seeks his reward from within, which keeps him pressing on, in the face of ordeals on the path of rectitude. True leaders of men would be ever inclined to lead by personal example, whether or not it pays in the worldly sense.

By setting personal example, there is possibility of a danger to one's life or body, beside the risk of exposing one's profe-ssional or moral inadequacy; therefore, majority of commanders avoid this hazardous course and prefer to command remotely by the weight of their ranks and authority. Since the system encourages safe-playing and manipulating their career, where focus is not on higher values of leading men, they feel no moralistic obligation for trying to win the confidence of their men. In any case, men have no say in the appraisal of their leader's performance or true leadership quality. It is not uncommon to come across specimen of commanders who at the first instance ought not have been in the profession of arms. That they got recruited in Indian military is a surprise, and the bigger surprise is in their having gone high places of authority. It is, perhaps, humanly impossible to check entry into services of such individuals having character deficiencies, as in the screening done at the raw stage of school/college, a large allowance is given for their trainability. Some fail to train themselves, nor can any selection system be foolproof. What is, however, essential is that the unfit people, who are a liability or bad example to the image of the services should be sidelined from the mainstream to some non-combatant assignments, where their unsoldierly and unbecoming acts do not adversely affect the larger groups.

The System's Checks

Perhaps, ACR alone is not enough to identify poor leaders, because they often manipulate it well. Nor are the selection boards for promotion completely above board. There has to be an independent agency to over-see this aspect of the military senior hierarchy. This is where relevance of an informed and suitably educated bureaucracy comes up, which is possible only if (at least) some in the top decision-making body are former servicemen, or had closely worked with military, so that they can correctly appreciate and gauge the measure of professional standing or spoken reputation of a senior commander. A minister with service background could be of great help in this regard.

A man with a limited potential of leadership qualities, having failed to make a mark in his record of service, and having failed to

evoke natural acceptability of his men as their leader, diverts his focus and energy to making up his professional inadequacy through non-professional grounds. He plans his career by specialising in unrighteous activities, solely aimed at playing with the psyche of his reporting officer(s), so as to ensure a good performance chit. His professional mediocrity may have degenerated into imbecility, but that does not matter, because once he reaches the level of unit commander, his performance is open to being swayed by how he exploits the resources at his disposal, rather than his personal professional standing.

Leadership Base and Practical Training

At some other place, it has been stressed that an individual's performance as a young officer is a fair indicator of his potential for higher command responsibilities. Professional training of an individual is an ongoing process, wherein not-a-very-bright starter may overtake a brighter peer, purely by dint of his toil and devotion to profession. Notwithstanding the value of self-study and indoor training in ones' professional growth, the trend, however, to give insufficient credence to an officer's earlier career profile, ought to be guarded against. That was the crucial time when he had the best opportunity to establish his roots and standing with his men! It is these roots which will inspire him to lead from front, and live up to the trust and expectations of his men. There may be cases of some of the professionally bright young officers having slacked in their effort to do equally well in the indoor field of profession, i.e. courses of instructions, self-study or other indoor training events, but that should not wash away their veritable leadership qualities of being a leaders of men; because, when the bugle blows and time of trial comes, they alone will be acceptable to the men to follow as their natural leaders, and not the paper-tigers. No books or proformas will stand a leader good in a combat situation. It is his equation with men and the projection of his character qualities which will inspire his command.

It is debatable whether the so-called career courses, in their existing format, truly help an officer in discharge of his functions of command of taking bold decisions, as discussed elsewhere. We need to ponder over, whether formatting an officer's thinking-process, to consider and analyse situations or problems in a set pattern, as taught in the schools of instruction, smothers his originality. If so, what can be done to nurture his creativity and innovativeness? To this end, we

may consider to shift the thrust, particularly in respect of the command-oriented courses, from class-room instructions to practical training, by exposing officers, through training or tactical tours, to various theatres and operational scenarios, where they could spend four to six weeks each in practical understanding of the various operations of war. At the end of the tour, the student officers could be asked to put forward their comments on the existing system and plans, as perceived by them, which get better rationalised and refined through such open debates and reviews by outsiders.

Sixteen

A Natural Living Style of Dignity

Reasonable Requirements

Soldiering is marked by its Spartan and simple living style of dignity; luxury is an anathema to the profession of arms. Not that by joining military one gives away his fundamental right of basic needs and comforts for himself and his family, but his job is such that the more rustic and simple he is in habits, the better suited is he to discharge his duties. In olden days, officership in Army was not for pay. Till the beginning of this century, officers got a half-day's pay, and only a few armies maintained regular standing officer corps. Any move, in the yonder years, to enhance pay scale of officers was resisted by majority of officers themselves, because they believed that officers served for honour and not for material gains. That was perhaps another extreme; at that period of history, man was less encumbered by social pressure for material possessions. The British Chief of Imperial General Staff Field Marshal Sir Robertson had refused direct commission, and got enrolled in the ranks, because he could not afford to get funds from home to maintain himself as an officer, whose pay was a pittance. However, the changing socio-economic scenario has brought about relevance of an expectation for a reasonable living style by the soldier and his family.

Pay scale and allowances have been upgraded, from time to time in an attempt to meet aspirations of officers and men. However, by trying to materially match the remunerative civil or private sectors, where the scope of latter's material possessions is unlimited, military has gone wrong by losing the unparalleled benefit of its own uniqueness. Those working in the non-military private or other commercial sectors are working, day after day, to amass more and more assets — that is their business culture. No amount of money, on the other hand, could buy the inherent quality of value-based and secure living that a serviceman is provided. It is unnatural and unethical for the defence man in uniform to try to compete with his civilian counterpart and, in the process, feel frustrated. We do not need an equation in material terms, nor a parity with any civil services, because there can be no meeting ground or comparison between the conditions of military service vis-a-vis other public sector or civil services.

However, men in uniform and their dependent family members must be provided the basic necessities to enable them a dignified living. For example, a soldier needs free rations (which he is already getting), free house, including electricity and water (for which reasonable limits can be laid), free education for his children, free conveyance for official duty and other essential works, for which quota of fuel could be authorised, free medical aid for himself and his family (including parents), and concessional travel not only in service but after retirement as well. With these basic needs having been provided, his pay scales could be rearranged to enable him to live respectably in society. It may be recalled that with the introduction of free rations for officers, response to regular commission had considerably improved, particularly from the better-off sections of society.

The soldier's difficult-to-repair loss is on his home front where, due to his prolonged absence, there are serious problems in retaining his roots and rights safe. The state has to provide him an assured and special consideration for protecting his family and domestic rights.

The Questionable Degradation in the Order of Precedence

The most serious damage to a soldier's dignity has been done by gradually eroding his status or order of precedence vis-a-vis other civil services. Having withstood like a rock all internal and external threats to the nation's sovereignty, and having provided the nation

an uninterrupted environment for economic growth and development, it is most unrightful, on the part of the powers that be, to have degraded the military order of precedence from time to time. The first serious drop was effected on attaining Independence, when the Commander-in-Chief was lowered to the status of a Chief of Army Staff. Thereafter, there seems to have been a deliberate move on the part of bureaucracy, to gradually lower the status of military officers. One wonders why! If in 1948, the order of precedence of the defence services was lowered because of their transformation from the colonial army to the people's Indian Army, it was understandable. But, what were the grave compulsions for further lowering the status of the armed forces in 1962, 1965 and 1971? Was it a coincidence that such exercises of degrading the armed forces were undertaken on the eve of wars? Is it reflective of a jealousy which the bureaucracy may be having against the respect in society that the defence services officers continue to enjoy? Or is it because the armed forces have no union of their own to resort to a public protest? Nobody is demanding that the Army chief should rank next to the President, as was the case before independence. However, degrading his status to a new low, after every war, is mysterious. After independence, he was made junior to Supreme Court Judges, after 1962, junior to the cabinet secretary, after 1965, junior to Attorney General and after 1971, junior to the Auditor General.

Not long ago, a joint secretary was equivalent to a Brigadier, who was arbitrarily raised to be at par with a Major General. Similarly, an Inspector General is equal to a brigadier as per the central warrant of precedence 1937. Just because bureaucracy deals with the subject of protocol and order of precedence of various services in the country, they should not go about eroding the status of other services. Such arbitrary decisions create a bitter feeling among the services. If an order of precedence was decided on attainment of Independence, there were hardly any reasons to tinker with it thereafter. The country's top leadership would do the nation and its system a great service to have this issue re-examined thread-bare and resolved once for all, and put a moratorium on any future changes to it.

With the 'need-based package' having been granted, the servicemen would have saved themselves the rat-race for equation with civil services or private sector. With downsizing of the standing military force, as proposed at another place, it should be cost-effective not only to provide the above said package, but also to give the defence man a better deal for improved military technology,

weapon system and compatible terms of service and perks, without compromising the security imperatives.

The Changing Concept of Quality

Not very long ago, the concept of quality in life was different; one lived with so little in such peace and pride. I recall, for many years of initial service, the only possession one had was a box, which had been inherited from the Academy days, camp kit, a rucksack and a chimney wick-lamp which gave me company till I was battalion commander. A bicycle I had bought on commissioning was replaced by a scooter after four years of service. Even after marriage, the house-hold was a few boxes, many of them made of wooden packing-cases, used for dual purpose of sitting place also. One never felt any inadequacy, and had the best of everything. Practically, every holiday one went to a hill station, or on a hike or trek. Played the best of games, both for officers and troops. One lived happily through tight budgeting, without caring whether or not there was any balance in one's account at the end of the month, or if the neighbour had a luxury car.

As a commanding officer, for the first about one year (1979) we lived in a mud-walled thatched hut (*basha*), in a peace station. A few months after I took over command of the paltan, the commander of my previous formation happened to visit the station, and we invited him to join us for breakfast. When the guest came, it started raining and, to our surprise, leaking on the table where we were eating. The hon'ble guest suggested that the commanding officer's house ought to be maintained as an institution. One never quite felt the need of doing so, and had discouraged the staff from diverting any undue attention to the *basha*. There is no end to reasons for which one could envy one's neighbour. But, in a social circle, you would invariably find many of your kind whose living style is as simple, and possessions as scanty, if not more, which is more in consonance with the service culture.

Officers and men, with rural background, start with a clean slate of simple living and lesser material demands, but soon they start competing with their colleagues from urban background, for the latter's larger collection of household material comforts. The pressure for material comforts starts after marriage, and rightly so, because the family members are not subject to Service Act and cannot relish living a life of privations. It is here that the state has to come in

to ensure that their aspirations and the aspect of a reasonable social status vis-a-vis counterparts in civil stream, are not overlooked. After all, the military man constitutes an important organ of the society, being the custodian of national security, for which he was selected after being found to be the most suitable for this challenging job.

Equitable Equation

There has to be an equitable equation in the standard of living, between various segments of society. It does not behove well for the society in a welfare state, to find senior officers of the rank of Brigadier or above, standing on road-side for a lift in the public transport, because they do not have a private transport of their own, when their time should be at a premium whether it is during or after office hours. Not that there is any shame in travelling by bus which in any case they have been doing so all these years, but the question is of equation in the larger fabric of society. In other streams of the civil/public/private sectors, officials of much lower class/grade (say, equivalent to a Junior Commissioned Officer) live a luxurious lifestyle. The intention is not to wish for an opulent living style, which in any case is incompatible with the service culture of dignified simplicity. The problem is of denying the serviceman and his family a dignified standard of living and spreading a message of privation and neglect, which act as a demotivating factor for youth to opt for the services. Imagine, out of over a million standing force, hailing from at least a million families, the system has not been able to motivate them to constitute even a minuscule 10 percent of the optees for the forces as officers, which reflects the level of disillusionment of the wards of the service and ex-service personnel, from service in the armed forces.

If the basic needs of servicemen are taken care of by the state, the whole complexion of service would change, and the services would get their due weightage in the perception of youth. Inadequacy of the state-support to alleviate problems of the serving and former service personnel, to reasonably meet the basic necessities of their dependent family members, as also to face the social pressures to maintain standards, which join to divert the attention of service personnel from their primary vocation of soldiering, to indulge in non-professional practices. It may surprise readers to know that many of our men, while on leave, beside working in their homes/family farm, also resort to small-time job of labour etc., to supplement their small pay for their family needs. That is why troops from rural areas

generally opt for harvesting seasons for leave when, besides helping their families in harvesting/sowing, they get easy jobs on daily wages. Amongst the officer cadre, things are no better. Today's young officer does not enjoy freedom from financial insecurity which engages his mind throughout. Besides, an unhealthy trend has set in, where money matters are the most commonly talked points, whatever be the occasion or level. Each unit and formation/higher headquarters have some officer(s) well-versed in the subject of shares and investment, who spread the message of money consciousness and sagacity in management of funds. Needless to say, the emerging trend of money culture among service personnel is a reflection of the social trends, where the majority of servicemen suffer from a sense of financial and social inadequacy.

Money-Minding Not Everyone's Cup of Tea

The service personnel's problems of financial insecurity notwithstanding, it will be a disaster to allow the market culture, of viewing things purely from profit and loss angle, to usurp the service ethos of carefree and professionally enterprising lifestyle. Though the services continue to have a sampling of young officers who care less for money and more for their profession, but their number is gradually shrinking, which is a matter of concern.

Money management in not everyone's cup of tea. Nor does it guarantee a happier life. Some of us have a natural aptitude and easily fit in money matters, but many others are not made that way. Attitudinally, a typical professional would always feel out of place in financial matters. The only column he cares to look at, in the monthly statement of account, is the amount remitted in his bank account. He rarely raises observations on his statement of account. One gets so used to managing, to the last rupee of the fixed salary that a slight variation puts a strain on making both ends meet. In one case, I know, an officer's pay slip showed an unexpected credit of about ten thousand rupees, which he could not believe was legitimately his. Thinking that the account officer had made an error, he delayed drawing any cash from his account, till he got confirmation that the arrears pertained to an old case of his for which he had given up hope. Even with that, this sudden extra amount at hand made him feel uneasy. Mercifully,. the number of those who are lesser concerned or bothered about money matters is not too insignificant. They may be poor in bank balances but are rich in

attitude of carefree contentment and resourcefulness to meet a situation. They have had no occasion when they found anything missing in life or any basic necessities being compromised — money was always there when essentially required.

Seventeen

Fraternity of the Officer Corps

An Equation of Equality

On my selection for commission, soon after my school days, a relative of mine, who was a decorated veteran of the second World War, came to share his joy with my parents. On meeting, he remarked, "This boy is joining a class where as 2/Lt, he would eat on the same table as the President and Prime Minister of the nation". This prediction gave me a great feeling, to imagine myself sharing a table with Nehru. What the sagely soldier conveyed was that there was no difference in the social status between the highest and lowest ranked amongst the officer cadre. In other words, there are no classes within the class and in matter of social reckoning, one is not more important than the other. This constitutional equation gives one a feeling of pride (of a monarch) that one belongs to the fraternity of the elite officer corps, where he is second to none. At the same time, it is a reminder to the highest ranked officer that he is first amongst equals in the officer corps, and that he is not above the equation of fraternity.

However, in the functional or on-parade equation, the hierarchical pecking-order rank-structure is so strong that even one number senior in the same rank has a legitimate authority over the

junior, to pass any lawful command, for which he has constitutional sanction. Moreover, in official dealing, both in peace and war, there is no mollycoddling in firmly getting the subordinates to fully discharge their duty, which is often very difficult, and for which, exacting or harsh orders may have to be issued. Any dereliction of duty, complacency or substandard performance have to be checked with a heavy hand. For every act of omission or commission one does not refer to law book for a punishment; after all, the aim is to run a team to produce the results. Many a time, the superior officer may have to use language of reproof to the subordinate who he feels is not pulling his weight. Some egos get bruised and feelings hurt, which is an acceptable norm in military service. Yet, words once said, or wrath once taken out, all is forgotten, and the relationship is back again on even keel and cordial.

Parade Ground Bruises

To ensure that the on-parade hurts or bitterness are not allowed to cross the precincts of parade ground and personal relationship remains unaffected, it is customary for the senior officer to make it up, in a discreet manner, in officers mess or through other social interaction, with the subordinate who had been ticked off. It is not an appeasement or a sense of regret on part of the senior to have ticked off the junior, but a family-like conciliatory gesture of affectionately taking away any bitterness or tension from the latter. And, if the superior officer comes to realise that he was wrong in accusing or shouting at a subordinate, he customarily shows grace by expressing his regret; General Patton publicly apologised to a soldier, whom he had slapped, while in a fury. Rarely official work or parade-time tensions get travelled to the family four-walls, because officers are trained not to carry their official life home. In this regard, the superior officer's wife can play a remarkable role. She can have her own uncanny ways of sensing as to who had faced her husband's wrath on parade, and to cheer-up the morose hearts, in her own discreet way.

The keynote of a commander's projection is that as long as he maintains an image of being fair and well-meaning, his outbursts or wraths, even if overly harsh at times, would be accepted in a healthy spirit, giving an allowance for a genuine error of judgement. A gesture, on part of the commander, to redeem or retract a wrong without any hassle of ego, can only enhance his stock. An indelible impression of an incident, I carry of a good commanding officer, was

that having snubbed, rather harshly, an officer on parade for a reported lapse on latter's part, when he soon realised that the officer was not at fault and that there were some other reasons for the lapse which evoked his snub, he visited the parade ground again and apologised for his unwarranted letting out the steam. Only a mature, considerate and well meaning old man could do that.

Close-knit Family

A superior officer fills a slot in the hierarchy of the organisation, as much as his subordinate does — both having their respective significance. It ought to be appreciated that all members of an organisation are different parts of the same machine, each having its own significant role to play. If one part fails to perform its role, the whole machine would come to a halt. With each slot having its distinctive role and requirements, no one can arrogate to himself greater importance or higher recognition over the other.

A spirit of close-knit family runs in a good organisation. The smaller the group, the stronger the family bond. Though the joint family system is gradually disappearing, even in rural areas, the family values are still deep-rooted amongst the rank and file. The men by nature treat their seniors with deference, due to an elder in the family. However, the family spirit cannot be a one-way affair. The senior has to reciprocate, with equal affection and care, towards his junior, due to a younger in the family. In the same strain, it is for the senior to reach out to the junior to find out how things are with him (junior), and if any problems warranted an action by the senior. Likewise, the junior must feel free to air his views and problems for which he must have free access to his senior.

The spirit of fraternity cannot sustain when there are groups amongst the group or classes in the class. A lot to be regretted, the, primitive clannish instinct of parochialism drives many in authority, to show favouritism, based on considerations of caste, religion, region, regiments/corps, etc. At times, this bias, on non-professional grounds, is so blatant as to cast a stigma on the image of the organisation, and it demoralises others. There is also a tendency in an organisation for the like-minded and like-valued people to form cliques and own circles. An immoral or corrupt superior officer would invariably try to constitute an inner group of his own ilk to facilitate his corrupt practices.

Vitiating The Norms

With the avowed apolitical and secular character of the Indian military, parochial tendencies can be disastrous. The senior commanders have a special obligation to keep the services free from parochial trends or groupism. In a certain case of breach of discipline and moral turpitude in an establishment, the top man was found to have classified his officers in 'inner-inner-group', 'inner-group' and 'outer group'. The so-called inner-inner group was nothing but an unholy alliance to collectively indulge in immoral and corrupt practices, in which they had also involved their spouses; there were no holds barred within the group.

While it is the constitutional and moral obligation of each person, subject to the Army Act, to report to the next higher authorities whenever he observes or comes to know of any breach of discipline or violation of service norms, yet it is seen that unless an individual is personally effected, he is reluctant to report an illegality or irregularity that comes to his notice. The image of the service fraternity is a collective responsibility, and no individual, however high he may be in the hierarchy, can be allowed to tarnish it, or get away unscathed.

An individual's drive for self-recognition is so strong that he finds ways to bypass the stipulated rules in the matter of personal dealings, so that he could place the superior officer under some personal obligation or debt. For example, the instructions are clear and comprehensive on austerity measures in official and social dealings in the services, yet these are violated — by some blatantly, and some others contrive ingenious ways to ingratiate with the reporting officer(s). Some put up a facade of uprightness, but do not mind accepting or presenting unauthorised gifts behind the screen. It is refreshing to come across a rare sampling of truly righteous, rule-bound and an unfeigned officer. Sometimes, in the garb of close-knit family ties, costly gifts are given or accepted on certain occasions. Not that the normal gestures of courtesy, within a group, are undesirable. In fact, each unit or establishment has its own standard operating procedures, as to what exactly is required to be presented or accepted on various occasions, for which each member makes a pre-decided contribution, irrespective of the rank or position. The worst harm to the spirit of fraternity comes from double standards of some senior officers; there is a wide gap between what they preach and what they practise. Some view their rank and authority as an opportunity to

exploit, or make utmost use of the organisation for their personal ends.

Happily, the trend of excessive self-indulgence by senior officers in the matter of drinking, eating and smoking etc., has lately witnessed some sublimation, though marginal. Heavy drinking and smoking are no more a fashion. Perhaps, improved awareness, against immoderation in eating, drinking and smoking has brought about a healthy awareness amongst the officer corps, though much remains to be desired, in this regard.

Some commanders tend to leave instructions unclear, to be interpreted by lower commanders or staff, to suit their convenience. The motive behind leaving instructions vague is to wash one's hands off the culpability, and find scapegoats, if there is a backlash in violating the propriety. I recall having come across only two senior commanders who were truly true to what they preached and practised. One general officer condemned bull-shit and preferred to spend maximum time with men; while visiting troops he insisted on eating the langar-food in normal enamel/steel plates and mugs, used by troops. The other general officer, on taking over the formation, not only personally ordered that he expected on his visits simple meals of one dal, one vegetable, curd and one non-vegetarian dish (on certain days of the week), he refused to eat if his orders were violated — it happened only once.

Class Within Class

Besides the pernicious trend of having lavish menus on official or para-official functions, a despicable trend of creating a class within the class during social get-togethers is on the increase. Instances are not uncommon when, in the same party, distinction is made by serving a separate menu to the VIPs. A further grave damage is done to the officer corps fraternity by dividing members between the privileged ones, who would be served on tables and the unprivileged ones, who would have to make do with buffet arrangement. It should be most embarrassing for any right-thinking man to be dining on a table, when there are some ladies eating from a buffet stand. Unfortunately, as one grows in rank, he tends to be lesser sensitive to higher values of fraternity and social courtesies. One cannot accept the pretext that within a family certain special or extra-constitutional treatment should be in order for elders (seniors). If at all, some old parents attending the party or a sick member may be given special

consideration, but certainly no differentiation ought to be made for anyone else. What is not being realised is that by eating separately, the senior officers are denying themselves the opportunity of informally mixing with larger number of people to know and feel their pulse, which is a vital function of their command.

Eighteen

Charismatic Personality

A Rare Endowment

'Charisma' may be defined as an attractive aura of an individual's personality. Physical attribute or 'bearing' play only a limited role in lending charisma to a personality, though an impressive bearing does assist in making an impact. It is the individual's mental, intellectual and spiritual power, blended with his devotion and enthusiasm, which join to make a personality truly charismatic. In military parlance, it is the sum-total of a commander's leadership qualities, which manifest as a projection of his personality. Charisma cannot be measured in absolute terms or quantified. Though it is relative depending on the effectiveness of one's ability to inspire, there are certain universally accepted qualities which go to make a leader charismatic. Its appeal may vary from person to person or group to group, nor does a projection have an all-time appeal. A leader in combat may be an utter failure in peace and vice versa, as evidenced by many examples in history.

A personality may rarely qualify to be perfectly charismatic. It is being unrealistic to expect each military leader to have a charisma to inspire a mass following. However, in the profession of arms, a leader must inspire confidence and faith in his ability to lead his command in a crisis situation. Though a typical military leadership has a long list of desirable traits that a leader ought to possess, there are two most important qualities which men essentially expect in

their leader, in a crisis situation: he should be 'professionally competent', and he should be a 'man of character', in that, he should be genuinely committed to making any personal sacrifice in achieving the mission/task at hand. A man of professional depth and conceptual vision would invariably have a natural force of conviction, in whatever he says or believes. It is only a muddled mind which remains confused and confuses others. These imperative qualities of a leader do not grow overnight and are built with hard training over a period of time.

Man of All Occasions

An effective leader is not only a man of the moment, but a man of all occasions, whether it is battlefield, an operational discussion, a training event, a social function, or a public relation exercise; his each word and action carry weight and inspire confidence. This is not an in-born quality but acquired through serious training and fore-preparation for the occasion. When someone asked Napoleon as to how he looked so well-prepared at all occasions, he replied, "If I always appear prepared, it is because before entering an undertaking I have thought about it for a long time, and foreseen what may occur. It is not genius which reveals to me suddenly and secretly what I should do in crisis. It is deliberation and forethought."

A man with a sense of commitment takes every assignment or task as an opportunity to contribute or achieve challenging results, and to make a personal mark of distinction. A committed leader never looks for short-cut answers or time-serving results, but opts for long term measures in the interest of the organisation rather than his personal. He is prepared to take difficult and unpopular decisions for the larger good of the organisation.

Standing Tall

Looking at our recent history, since Independence, only a couple of senior commanders stand tall as having been charismatic leaders. Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw stands the tallest. Behind his flamboyant exterior, as if lacking seriousness, he has clear vision of the shape of things to follow, and does his homework seriously. India owes its 1971 war victory to his mercurial charismatic personality. The other charismatic military leader who earned name for his deep tactical and strategic perception and ability to produce results, far beyond his charter and resources, during 1971, was Lt Gen Sagat

Singh. I have personally not known him, but reading about his splendid exploits in 1971 war, one felt heartened. Another charismatic senior officer with whom I had an opportunity to work closely was Gen Sundarji. I have yet to meet a man to equal his intellectual calibre, and vision. Viewing from the point of charisma, he did jolt the military to think beyond their nose; it was a testimony of his charismatic leadership that not only he not only enjoyed tremendous clout with the political leadership, but the three Services had the best of coordination amongst themselves.

A Point to Ponder

Albeit charisma gets easily identified and favourably projected in a war or crisis situation, and has a different scope and connotation during peacetime; nevertheless, since war is a rare phenomenon, the constant need to foster the growth of a confident and inspiring leadership during no-war period, is more pronounced, so that the concept of charisma is kept alive. In the present context, a typical careérist commander is a cheerless looking man, who looks harassed, unsure of himself, tends to be aloof, because of a sense of insecurity and lack of confidence, can rarely philosophise his convictions of life-time experience, avoids taking a stand, is happier in the office than outdoors, and is too overcautious to expose himself to any physical discomfort or risk of body injury or sickness. Not feeling very easy amongst troops, he is short of words to speak with them and, therefore, avoids intermingling with them. What has robbed him of his manhood? Why has he acquiesced in living a life of many-deaths-a-day, and derelicting his moral duty to the organisation? Is his unbridled ambition alone the cause or is there more to it? We need to put on our thinking caps and ponder. For a nation to be live and dynamic, it is imperative for its military to have a fair sprinkling of charismatic leadership, so that when the time comes, the country is not handicapped, on account of its void.

Nineteen

Reforming The Military Judicial System

Preface

Military services have their own judicial systems which assist in disciplined functioning and dispensation of justice to all ranks, within the framework of their respective Services Acts, passed by the Parliament, as a statutory provision. Since military service demands an instant and implicit obedience of orders where a soldier may be called upon to make supreme sacrifice, at the behest of his superior officer, or undertake any hazardous assignment or a task, the military law, in the form of Act, rules and regulations, clearly defines responsibilities and functional obligations of each member of the force, from a sepoy to the chief. The manner of conduct in various situations has also been defined and punishment laid down for violation of these norms. The essence of military law, which has been framed within the parameters of the Constitution, is to cater for war-time conditions where speed in dispensing justice is of paramount importance. For this, a separate judicial system has been evolved which may seem rough and ready, but actually it is fairly comprehensive and meets the peculiar military operational and administrative needs. A man in uniform is the only category of citizens who is not only subject to the law of the land, but also to the additional jurisdiction of Military Law.

It has been debated sometimes whether the Army Act of 1950 is archaic and out of tune with the changed conditions and current trends. Though need for a separate judicial system is inescapable, because of the peculiar conditions and commitments of the services personnel, what is, however, imperative is the equity of justice, where a man in uniform is treated as a self-respecting citizen, by ensuring that there are no exceptions to the rule of law, and that it cannot be allowed to be arbitrarily bent or manipulated in favour of a higher authority, against an underdog lower rank. On one hand, there is a need to maintain strict discipline by upholding authority of the superior officer, on the other, to prevent arbitrary use of the authority which is bound to result in demoralisation of the force. In this backdrop, it will be relevant to analyse the existing military judicial system and see if some corrective steps are warranted to make it more fair and transparent.

Background

The origin of the Indian Military Law can be traced back to the advent of East India Company, which framed a rigid act to maintain law and discipline among the natives (Indians) enrolled in the Company Army. A commanding officer (CO) was given, through the instrument of summary Court Martial, magisterial powers of not only sentencing an accused to imprisonment in a civil jail but also taking away his livelihood. India's current Army Act, enacted in 1950, is basically an update of the Indian Army Act of 1911. There have been no substantial changes in the Army Act since enacted in 1950. Unlike the powers of superintendence of High Courts over all courts and tribunals throughout the country, the military courts/tribunals are exempt from any such superintendence. An appeal to the civil judiciary, in case of a court martial, could only be on a point of law or against procedural violations, if any, and not against the court martial award *per se*. The Indian Navy and Air Force have not delegated these hugeous powers of summary court martial to their COs.

While the British Army has an 'appellate court' for judicial appraisal, the US Army has both a 'Board of Review' and a 'Court of Appeal'. It may interest the readers to know that the world over, the armies of the developed or developing countries have adopted the provision of 'Court of Appeal', except India, Pakistan and some African armies. Similarly, the Indian and Pakistan armies, with common inheritance from the British, are the only ones to have a

distinction of according such huge powers of summary court martial to the COs of units.

The Existing System - Indian Army

There is a Judge Advocate General (JAG) Branch in the Army, which has its representatives down to the corps headquarters level. The JAG branch officers are recruited directly from the civil stream, based on their qualification in law. The JAG staff at corps headquarters provide legal support for court martial and other disciplinary cases to the lower formations and units. However, the JAG officer is just an advisor to the formation commander or to the presiding officer of a court martial, or any other legal proceedings. Nor is his legal advice binding on the local commander.

At Army Headquarters level, a separate legal cell and a Complaint Advisory Board (CAB) have been instituted to assist in analysis of the cases, and to ensure legal propriety in arriving at recommendations or disposal orders by the Chief of Army Staff. Officers in the CAB or legal cell at Army Headquarters, are on their normal tenure of staff, after which they revert back to their respective streams or corps.

The Aberrations

Since officers of the JAG branch are regular officers, functioning under local commanders who record their efficiency reports, they have no independence in functioning. Recommendations of the JAG officer are recommendatory, which the commander may or may not accept. On the other hand, without being part of the tribunal, they can (indirectly) influence the judgement in tune with the commander's mind. Further, the 'command influence' is in-built and open to exercise, in the discretion of the commander to select the venue, the presiding officer and members of the court to try a case within his command.

There is a fundamental drawback in the judicial system, in that, the same staff prepares prosecution of the case as also handles its trial or final administrative decision. With involvement in preparation of prosecution of the case, the dealing officer becomes an interested party. Therefore, the pre-trial and post-trial review of a case must be separated. In the civil stream, judiciary is totally separated from the prosecuting system.

Another serious drawback in the military judicial system is that the complaint against a superior officer is processed through the same (respondent) superior officer, without the complainant knowing as to what justification the respondent superior officer has given in his comments on the complaint. It is a case of a complaint against Caesar being made to him or his wife. Under the Service law, a complaint is required to be addressed to the immediate superior officer, who gives his comments and recommendations on the complaint before forwarding it to the next superior officer. Thus, a complainant stands seriously disadvantaged at the outset, because the superior respondent officer sits on judgement in his own case of alleged culpability detailed in the complaint. Against these charges, the respondent superior officer has the advantage of giving his own reasons, in arbitrarily rejecting the same. Therefore, for the most part, it remains a paper formality, as the next higher headquarters would invariably hold the hands of the superior officer, against whom the complaint has been made. In the normal course of civil law, a copy of an appeal or complaint is forwarded to the respondent, on which the respondent is required to give detailed comments in the form of an affidavit, a copy of which is made available to the complainant. The complainant has the right to put up a counter-affidavit, on what the respondent has contended in his affidavit. Thus, the judicial cycle is completed, before the matter comes up for adjudication. In the Service Rules, however, there is a serious lacuna which leads to arbitrary decisions, based on reasons or grounds unknown to the aggrieved party.

Equality in law is the most fundamental right of a citizen. The law allows no special privilege or legal exemption to any individual to violate the legal provisions or instructions laid down by Services Headquarters or Military Law. In fact, the higher the officer in rank, the more should be his accountability and sensitivity to propriety of law, and the severer should be the penalty for its violation. There can be no double standards in this regard. Therefore, any attempt on the part of those in authority to subdue facts under the power they wield, and insensitivity of those who run the system in upholding the tenets of equity, can be at a very heavy cost of morale and discipline in the armed forces.

Understandably, the present-day defence man is more conscious of his fundamental, human and natural rights. even though he is constitutionally denied certain fundamental rights which have been defined in the Military Law. In that, mainly he is prohibited from

forming or joining a union and to go to the press, without prior approval of the higher authority, in terms of Army Act, Section 21. Besides this, and his adherence to the military code of discipline, there is no other fundamental right which has been denied to a serviceman. This is not to suggest redundancy of a separate and exacting Military law, as it is difficult to imagine armed forces functioning and performing merely under the civil law. The defence personnel do appreciate need for a separate judicial system and their total obligation to it, which in fact accords them a distinctiveness vis-a-vis the civilian counterparts. Notwithstanding the above, it will be a sad day for the defence personnel and the country, if an impression is allowed to gather that a soldier is a second rate bonded citizen, who forfeits his fundamental rights of equity and equality, just because he has joined the profession of arms.

Judiciary Circumspect to Interfere

According to a survey, about 90 per cent of the court cases pertaining to the Army personnel have been adjudicated in the past, in favour of the organisation which is rather intriguing and cannot be taken at its face value. With the constraints of difficult living conditions and limited salary, for an aggrieved service-man to knock at the door of civil court is prohibitive in cost and social acrimony. Yet, those who feel deeply aggrieved opt for this course of action, with a hope to redeem their honour - they are prepared to pay the heavy price. A self-respecting man going to the court runs the risk of a heavy penalty on three counts: one, by the judiciary, if his charge or contention is found to be untenable; two, the service authorities may initiate disciplinary action or a charge of defamation by the respondent in case the complainant is proven wrong by the court, and, three, he also runs the risk of being labelled as persona-non-grata in the organisation, besides going through social stigma and mental injury for having gone to the court. It is, therefore, not a rash or impulsive decision by an individual to choose the costly and vulnerable course of approaching the court. He would have hesitated to take this course, even if there was a slight weakness in his case. Therefore, the above finding that only 10 per cent of the aggrieved defence personnel get a favourable judgement can be attributed to disinclination or extra caution on part of the judiciary to interfere with military matters.

Ironically, the establishment seems to draw satisfaction from the fact of having won about 90 per cent of the cases against those

individuals who have gone to the court. It is an unequal contest where one individual is pitted against the whole organisation. The aggrieved soldier is not even provided legal service (civil lawyer), on Government expenses, which is available to the respondents in the organisation whose wrong action or malice may have been the cause of the former's genuine grievance. It must be appreciated that, like a single act of indiscipline, on part of a lone soldier, can lead to disastrous consequences in war, similarly, even a single case of unpenalised or unredeemed decision, or a case of injustice to an individual, can be highly demoralising. Therefore, let us not draw satisfaction from mere numbers. A disciplined organisation must be sensitive to initiate improvements in the system, to avoid any reasonable cause for an individual to go to the court.

Segacity demands that if there are grounds which lead to arbitrariness and the resultant incidents of injustice in the armed forces, even if on a microscopic scale, these must be removed. Sometimes, the game of numbers and hypersensitivity to losing a case can lead to bulldozing and denial of justice. For example, in a certain case of an individual alleging bias against other individual(s), just because the respondent individuals were from the top hierarchy, the Judge Advocate General (JAG) was moved from Army Headquarters, with a large entourage, to the distant venue of the court hearing. Besides the services of two defence counsels, the Advocate General of the state was specially employed for this case at a heavy cost to the State. Usually, it may be natural for a judge to be influenced by such display of panicky reactions and over-kill attitude of the defence hierarchy.

The attitude of the civil judiciary towards military matters is a reflection of the piblic attitude towards the armed forces. A citizen, by and large, holds the armed forces in great awe and respect, which stem from his belief that the armed forces are the symbol of national unity and integrity. This impression leads him to believe in the existence of high discipline and propriety in the armed forces - he trusts that all must be well and right in the services.

With an apolitical nature of the Services and their isolation from the civil stream, public awareness of military matters is very limited. A very confined idea of military is restricted to only those families who have an enrolled representative in the Services. The public is, by and large, ignorant of the basic structure of the armed forces and its functioning. This problem is particularly pronounced amongst those

regions or classes of society, whose representation in the armed forces is scanty. Ignorance about the military matters is not only restricted to the uneducated class, but also amongst the educated class and even among the senior hierarchy of various civil departments, who have little interaction with military. Judiciary is no exception with regard to knowledge about the military services. Since they basically deal with civil cases, their understanding of the functioning and implications of the Military Law is limited, if not nonexistent. Thus, it would be tempting for them to choose the path of least resistance by supporting the organisation in legally controversial cases. Though the courts have intervened in many cases, but in such a large set-up these have had little effect on the military functioning.

The courts tend to be circumspect in handling the military cases, lest their adjudication on the issues should compromise the Army discipline and erode authority of the superior military commanders over subordinates. There is an apprehension in the minds of the judges as to the consequences of a judgement which blames military authorities - an evident clash in their perception as a citizen and as a judge. Further, it is quite understandable that the judiciary believes, in good faith, that by holding hands of the organisation, they are affording an opportunity and time to military hierarchy, for its self-correction to remove or rectify any aberrations which might have been observed in the cases. No surprise that the judiciary generally tends to rule out malice on part of military hierarchy.

In the hierarchical system, where authority of the higher rank is supreme, it is natural for the judiciary to give higher weightage of credence to the higher authority vis-a-vis the junior, when the contention is of one person against the organisation. Therefore, the benefit of doubt is likely to go to the senior. It is also understandable for the court to assume that, in the military functioning, if there was any violation of law against an individual, the higher authority in the chain would have automatically made amends. After all, senior commanders are gratefully viewed as custodians of national security by the common citizen. In case of a complaint against a senior commander, the court may be tempted to rule out possibility of culpability or malice on part of the superior officers.

Disturbing Observations

While carrying out a critique of the military judicial system, it is not only important to analyse its organisational structure but to also see

how it is performing on ground. After all, it is the application of law which is crucial. For example, the British do not have a written constitution, but in application they rigidly follow the conventions, and the common man is happy about its fairness. To gauge functional fairness and efficacy of India's military judicial system, we could do no better than quote, in the succeeding paras, some of the observations made by the hon'ble courts, which make a telling revelation of its vulnerability to violations by those in authority. Notwithstanding the general circumspection on the part of judiciary to interfere in the military matters, as brought out earlier, the following observations are crucial and are reflective of a sad inside picture.

The Sikkim High Court, in its judgement, in the case of R C Tiwari Vs The Union of India (1995) has quoted collectively certain observations made, from time to time, by various hon'ble courts, reflecting poorly on the in-house functioning of the military judicial system, as listed below.

> "A disciplined and dedicated Indian Army personnel should not nurse a grievance that substantial justice and fair play has been denied to him".

> "It is expected from the authorities dealing with statutory complaints that they pass a `speaking order' dealing with all points raised by the petitioner in his complaint".

> "Reluctance of the Apex Court to interfere with the internal affairs of the Army is likely to create a distorted picture in the minds of military personnel, that persons subject to Army Act are not citizens of India".

> "A military trial is marked by the age-old manifest destiny or retributive justice".

> "An appeal against Caesar to Caesar's wife has been condemned as injudicious and merely a lip sympathy to form".

The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir has made strong observations on functioning of the military system of dispensing justice, as evident from following extracts from judgments on two cases.

> "The case appears to be a signal example of the working of a system where denial of the very basic principles of natural justice seems to have been taken so much for granted that the party denying this

natural right to the other, the one aggrieved qualms, even though the party denying the basic right happens to be the fatherly sovereign, and the party denied the right is one of the millions of its employees, dependent upon its mercy, its benevolence. . . . . The gravity of the denial and its sinful consequences become still more unpalatable when the brigadier of the army who has been denied the right is none other than a part and an integral part for that of the Army's legal and judicial system. . . . . The respondents are totally silent in their stand before the court as to what impelled them to reverse the decision. Perhaps, something that has not been forthcoming. Perhaps some inconvenient considerations may have been withheld from the court for reasons best-known to the respondents. . . . . It patently was an arbitrary exercise of the administrative powers vested in the government."

(SWP No. 1209/94 Brig. K N Mishra vs. Union of India)

"It appears to me that it was merely a case of non-application of mind, or perhaps an improper application of mind while deciding upon the statutory complaint of the petitioner."

(SWP No. 1342/94 Brig. P N Kaul vs. Union of India)

In another case, a complainant brought out, with irrefutable evidence, charges of malice,violation of rule and unbecoming conduct on part of his superior officer, which were upheld and a redress granted. Subsequently, on the complainant's prayer that the respondent, whose bias against him stood established, should not be part of the selection board considering his (complainant's) case for promotion, in spite of a court injunction favouring the complainant, the organisation seemed to have felt compelled to support (and not to proceed against) the respondent who was one amongst the top brass. In justice, it is more important to be fair than correct; that is where judicious interpretation of rules comes. Could one reasonably expect the respondent to be fair to the complainant when he had yet to vindicate himself of the latter's charges against him? In his self-respect and to uphold tenets of fairness, he (the respondent) should have, on his own, detached himself from the impungned selection board consideration.

Proposed Remedial Measures

Human prejudices cannot be ruled out from any particular segment of an organisation or society. It is an individual trait. One could be holding the highest rank, and yet be filled with prejudice. Therefore, the law of probability demands that culpability for a crime cannot be ruled out from an individual, irrespective of his rank or position.

That is why, there are no exceptions or exemptions in application of law, where everyone is equal. Therefore, powers of adjudication in matters where an individual is an interested party have to be taken away, so that the system is not only fair, but looks fair too.

In July 1982, I happened to attend a seminar organised under the aegis of the United Service Institution (USI) New Delhi, which in essence, debated whether or not there was a need to reform the military judicial system. A very apt panel of distinguished participants had been drawn, which included two retired judges of the Supreme/High Court, Chief Editors of two leading national dailies, the first judge advocate general of Indian Army, who incidentally was a civilian (Justice DM Sen), besides a number of other distinguished speakers, representing the services and a paramilitary force (BSF). Ironically, except the serving military incumbents dealing with its administration, management of officers and judiciary, who opposed any change or softening of the existing administrative and judicial system, the whole lot of the other panellists and speakers favoured the need to update the military judicial system to the changed politico-social and service environment. The majority of the speakers proposed that in line with most of the progressive armies in the world, Indian Army too should have an independent 'Court of Appeal' and 'Administrative Tribunal'. It is amazing how rigidly bureaucratic the services are in resisting a change in the system. No wonder, one never heard as to the follow-up action, on institution of the far-reaching corrective measures, proposed in the above mentioned seminar.

An Independent Tribunal

All Central Services and Public Sectors have an independent administrative tribunal, to adjudicate impartially on complaints or appeals in matters of administration and promotion. For the military, compri-sing over 1.2 million, there is an imperative need to have a similar independent and impartial body to provide the service personnel the fundamental right of equality and fairness of justice. Though there is an equally strong case for having a separate 'Court of Appeal' for the military, however, it may be more expedient and practical to have one high-powered Tribunal to look into the complaints and appeals, both of the administrative and legal nature. To give this high powered body due credence, it should be headed by a retired Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge of repute. The other members of the Tribunal should be two retired judges/

chief justice of a high court, one retired senior officer each from Army, Navy and Air Force, who are known for their probity and sense of justice. It may be a good idea to associate the retired service chiefs as members of this body. The decision of the Tribunal should be final. However, provision should exist to provide services of a civilian lawyer to the accused or appellant, on Government expenses. The argument of some that institution of such a body will delay the process of justice is without substance. In fact, the process of justice is already being delayed beyond all norms of the stipulated time. The institution of this apex body will bring in an element of accountability and speedier process of justice at the lower echelons.

Processing of Complaints

If anyone in the chain of command of a complainant is connected with the subject, even if remotely, it should not be processed through such a superior officer. In such a case, the prudent course would be to initially provide only a gist of the allegations to the concerned respondent and ask him to give his side of the case. The respondent superior officer can then be given a copy of the complaint to reconcile the gaps or contradictions, if any. The contradictions could provide a good lead for adjudication subsequently. A copy of the comments of the respondent should also be made available to the complainant to enable him to submit a counter affidavit, if he wishes to. With the complaint processed at the outset through the respondent superior officer, he gets an opportunity to manipulate facts to contest unfavourable evidence in the case.

Defining War and Peacetime Application of Law

Requirements for judicial process for war and peacetime conditions and are different. For the same crime, the awardable punishments are different for war and peacetime conditions. During wartime, certain exemptions are permitted in the procedural norms. However, since war is a rare phenomenon, there is likelihood that under the garb of war time emergency, the decision-making procedures may be arbitrarily compromised or bypassed during peacetime. There have been cases where certain senior commanders have taken refuge of war conditions to justify violation of procedural norms, though the conditions were normal for administrative functioning. There is need to remove ambiguity in this regard to avoid arbitrary use of war time conditions.

Speaking Order

All administrative disposal orders or awards in respect of complaints, appeals or findings of a court martial should be backed by a statement of reasons; in that, all issues raised in the complaint or appeal should be commented upon and grounds for rejection or dismissal or award thereof detailed in the order. The existing practice of one-line blanketed-disposal or rejection or award is arbitrary in nature and against the law of fair justice.

Restructuring Service Headquarters

The existing JAG Branch and other agencies namely CAB and Legal Cell should function through the Administrative Tribunal. However, if they are considered essential to be retained for advice to the Service Chiefs, they could in that case be placed for technical control under the Tribunal.

Twenty

Some Additional Crucial Issues

APPRAISAL AND SELECTION SYSTEM

The Incompatibilities

In the management of organisation, a balanced and transparent system of appraisal for an individual's performance, and his selection for appropriate and deserved slot in the hierarchy, are crucial for his job satisfaction and morale. Agreed, no system can satisfy everyone, yet, it must be free from any inherent incompatibilities so that the influence of human subjectivity is reduced to the least. A look at the existing military system of appraisal and selection would reveal that it suffers from certain fundamental aberrations, which warrant corrective measures.

While an officer uses his subordinates and other resources at his disposal for fulfilment of the organisational task(s) and duty, his performance appraisal depends entirely on the perception of the reporting officer(s). Ironically, the 'used' has no say in evaluating how the 'user' has performed in latter's moral charge of using the 'used'. A commander uses his command and the resources integral to it in the discharge of his organisational duties, yet the command has little say in the performance of their leader. To contend that a

superior officer is expected to be objective and fair is not enough, because in human relationship or equation, subjectivity cannot be totally eliminated. Therefore, the thrust in a good system should be on mitigating the effect of subjectivity or bias.

The other drawback which stands out is that whereas in the performance of an organisational role all elements of the organisation are involved, the appraisal process is confined to a couple of individuals whose level of contact and ability to appraise vary. Also, the appraisal process is based on limited contact of the reporting officer(s), which makes it susceptible to the ratee's selective and manipulative performance to impress the rating officer(s).

The worst aberration in the existing system of appraisal is that there are no checks to ensure that it is objective and related to performance on ground. Since it is a matter of subjective perception of the rater, a biased rating could be totally divergent from actual performance of the ratee. Further, there is an institutional incompatibility in the existing system of appraisal, in that, though the rating officers are supposed to endorse their appraisal independent of each other, the prescribed processing of the performance report, in the channel of reporting, induces influence of the lower rater on the higher raters in the chain, being in the same file or proforma. The next superior rater is bound to be influenced by the first rater's appraisal. Even if we grant that the next superior officer would be objective and may disagree with the first rater, the damage done to the ratee because of subjectivity of the first rater is difficult to redeem, particularly, in the environment of stiff competition, where the selection process for higher ranks is more of a rejection process.

Rationalising Performance Assessment

One way to mitigate the influence of human bias or subjectivity on part of a rater is to broad-base the appraisal by involving subordinates in the process. It may sound a radical thought, but given a more serious deliberation, one would find that the problem, if any, is more of attitude than in being.

The existing concept of unquestioned and absolute authority of a commander has been passed down to the Indian military from Britishers which is liable to be used arbitrarily. Nor is it in consonance with principles of rationality and collective accountability. If one looks deeper into the classical Indian ethos of a typical military commander, who was invariably also the ruler, he

had an efficient set-up of a secret agency (*Guptachar Vibhag*) to covertly obtain feed-back as to how the subordinates or common men perceived the performance of the ruler or the military commander. In the ancient Indian history, kings are known to have disguised themselves as a commoner and moved about in the society to feel their pulse. In *Ramayana*, it was such feedback which led to the decision of Lord Rama to banish his queen. Therefore, the system of obtaining feedback from subordinates is an integral part of the Indian ethos of good leadership, which should be accepted in principle without any hesitation. We have, however, to be discreet in not compromising authority of the commander, as also ensuring morale of troops.

Unfounded Apprehension

The above proposal is expected to evoke resistance from the service hierarchy because of the perceived apprehension of its so-called serious repercussions on the apparatus of command. The apprehension that the proposal, if accepted, will erode the authority of a military commander is understandable, because, we are not used to the concept of appraisal by a subordinate. However, if you look at it more dispassionately, it will be clear that the performance of a commander cannot be isolated from the performance of his command, of which the subordinate is an integral organ; which the latter has a moral right to gauge. Once it is understood that the aim is to bring about better performance of the organisation and greater accountability of the performer, the fears of bad consequences will vanish.

A good leader will invariably take bold and balanced decisions which will always be backed to the hilt by his command. A few individuals getting ruffled is of little consequence. On the other hand, only a weak commander would resort to appeasement which would neither win him the respect of his command nor produce effective results. Therefore, a well-meaning natural commander need have no apprehension of his authority being compromised.

The United States Army adopted a system of assessing 'group cohesion' and 'performance potential' of its units based on recommendations of a 'study by Manning and Trot', in which the following questionnaire was directed at the junior enlisted men:

(a) How often, aside from meetings, does your platoon commander talk to you personally?

(b) Is your squad leader ever included in after-duty activities?

(c) Who would you go to first, if you had a problem, like being in debt?

(d) If you went to war tomorrow, would you feel confident going with this unit or would you rather go with another?

Balancing of Appraisal System

The proposal envisages obtaining a feedback with regard to a commander's command performance from his subordinates, which should constitute an essential input for the superior officer before endorsing his appraisal. The feedback from subordinates has to be obtained discreetly on relevant aspects of performance of the unit/formation to which they belong. This input could be obtained in the form of a suitably prepared questionnaire to be forwarded by subordinates about their respective unit/establishment. The questionnaire could avoid direct reference to the commander, but directed at the command/establishment. The inputs received have to be viewed in totality; in that, a case having positive to negative equation as 90 : 10 gives a different indication of performance from an equation of 60 : 40 or 40 : 60 respectively. We should not look for 100 per cent positive inputs; if it is so, there is something wrong or unusual. A commander cannot be condemned on account of some isolated negative inputs, unless it is a *prima facie* case of moral turpitude, which should be viewed in the backdrop of his overall performance. A negative input should be treated similar to the treatment meted out to an anonymous complaint, which may or may not be acted upon, depending upon its *prima facie* relevance or veracity. Therefore, we need to have no apprehension on the proposed system, as with practice, it should mature into an acceptable and workable system.

Objectifying Achievement

While a format exists on objectification of a commander's performance, the system does not cater for objectification of actual performance of his command. There is, therefore, need to quantify a commander's achievement on ground by relating it to the performance of his unit/establishment in various fields. To this end, the standards of a unit in various fields of activity i.e. war, operational preparedness, training, equipment, morale, administration and interior economy etc., should be objectified

annually at the time of its annual inspection, through specialised technical teams, so that the standards of a unit/establishment are known and recorded at the time of its being handed over to the new commander, to facilitate assessment of his contribution to the unit when handed over to the next commander. The yearly appraisal of the unit's performance should be attached with the annual appraisal of its commander.

Independent Reporting

It may be a good idea to institute independent appraisal by the reporting officers in the chain, in that, the appraisal report should be endorsed and forwarded to the service headquarters, by each rater separately, without one knowing what the other rater in the chain has endorsed. In case of an indifferent and widely varying or adverse report, the comments of the reporting officer(s) may be sought. It may increase work at the service headquarters, but would be worth it. It will mitigate the influence factor of one report on the other, as also result in greater interaction and the need to know more of one's subordinate officers, to enable an independent performance appraisal by the higher reporting officer in the chain.

Moderating Factor

It is natural for a human being to be favourably drawn to another individual on the grounds of kinship or regimental, ethnic or regional affiliations. It is not uncommon to find cases of some, otherwise mediocre officers, who are boosted up by a rater on non-professional grounds beyond all norms of balance. To mitigate the aberration caused by such subjective raters, it is necessary to apply a moderating factor, call it factor X. The format can be institutionalised to identify cases having any of the above said linkages between a ratee and the rater, so that factor X can be applied to the appraisal of the ratee if it is not in consonance with the overall performance profile of the ratee. Ideally, officers having a close linkage of kinship or belonging to the same unit should not serve one under the other, once away from the unit.

The Pay-off

It needs no stretching to imagine the positive pay-off of the above proposal, if accepted. It will generate an element of accountability on part of the commander towards his acts and decisions, particularly

those relating to the larger interest of the men and the organisation. It will also mitigate the damage being done to a commander's image and credibility by his unrestrained arbitrary decisions and questionable acts, as he will be more discreet. It is only the bad leadership which will to be exposed. The proposal on the other hand will protect and encourage good leaders in the discharge of their duty.

TRIMMING THE FAT

Removing Redundancies

To keep an organisation trim and sharp-edged, it is highly desirable that it performs its tasks, and at the same time, be cost-effective. There is always a tug-of-war between what is an inescapably essential requirement vis-a-vis a desirable one. A number of studies have been carried out in the past to identify fat in the military establishments, but we are too emotionally attached to the status quo, and tend to stubbornly resist a change in the organisation. Thus, the structure generally remains what it was ages ago. The need to continuously review the existing structure of all organs of the set-up cannot be over stressed, so that the fat, if any, is shed before it becomes a liability.

As regards the fat becoming a liability, I am reminded of an incident, when I got posted for the first time to the Army Headquarters, where I was working as head of a section. Soon I noticed that whenever I happened to walk into the office of the office superintendent, there were some unfamiliar people floating around. When I asked as to who these people were, I was surprised to learn that over half a decade earlier when the Iran-Iraq war had started, a special cell was created in the neighbouring section, to keep in touch with the developments in the war. The war having ended long before, the personnel were jobless and did not have enough accommodation in the parent section, yet the Section or Directorate concerned were not inclined to shed them. Rest assured, there are any number of small or big establishments which have a little or no job to perform.

Need for a Dispassionate and Continuous Review

A look at the Army structure would reveal that certain organs of its structure are redundant. For example, with the improvement of the

road network and aerial lift capability, there is no relevance of having a separate Pioneer Corps, which is a troop labour force. Practically, all units and main picquets are connected by road, which allows regular maintenance by road. Even in snowbound high altitude areas, the stocking is done by road or air. Further, troops have been in their defensive positions for years, which enables preparation of defences by troops themselves. Therefore, Pioneer Corps has no relevance for a defensive posture. For an offensive operation some may justify requirement of some Pioneers support in difficult areas, for which levy porters could always be enrolled in the event of war. Even combat troops may have to be used as porters in certain situations. Therefore, there seems no real need to continue with this corps. It is appalling to see how this force is being misused. Over 80 per cent of this force is away from their place of deployment and being misused all over the countryside.

Similarly, the relevance of Animal Transport (AT) is questionable. With the road network having extended to remote areas and state of maintenance by air having improved, there is practically no requirement of mules(GS). In fact, a look into the state of employment would show that the local formation and unit commanders in difficult high altitude/mountainous areas do not want mules in their sector as they are a liability, besides littering the whole area. Therefore, you find the Animal Transport units/ companies are located in the plains, which is cockeyed. There may be some odd posts or picquets/pockets where mules are an essential requirement for a limited period of the year, for which local ponies/ yaks could be hired or enrolled which will be more cost-effective. The operational requirement of mules for carrying artillery equipment is debatable in view of the changing equipment profile. However, if essentially required some AT elements may be retained till we can produce an alternative and more expedient arrangement. Therefore, most of the AT elements along with their veterinary establishments could be wound up.

The Tip of The Iceberg

The above is only the tip of the iceberg. There are a large number of other corners which could be trimmed. The main reason why military authorities are reluctant to shed fat in its establishment is the lack of trust and an apprehension that once they shed some fat, they may not be able to get it back for a subsequent essential need. Therefore, the belief is that it is better to have an in-built cushion of

reserve so that one could play with it rather than sit back helplessly, if some requirement develops tomorrow. This is an untoward apprehension which should be removed. The other unfortunate trend in this regard is that a large number of redundant establishments are being retained without a change to justify higher ranks and appointments, particularly among the services. The issue needs to be addressed dispassionately at the national level. Needless to mention, by trimming the pudgy corners alone, a tremendous saving could be affected which could substantially help in the modernisation process.

Part IV

Reflections From An Experience of Command

- Sub Unit Command
- Commanding Officer
- Formation Commander

Twenty One

Sub Unit Command

The Biggest Human Pride

The biggest pride surging in a human chest emanates from the thrill of commanding men. There cannot be a bigger honour. It is an intoxication.

The art of commanding men lies not in driving them like a herd, but in inspiring each one of them to deliver their best. It is a sacred mission with the commander, to judiciously employ the human resources at his disposal, to produce the organisational goals, as also to make better the lives of men under his command. For a commander, there cannot be a better slogan than the motto enshrined in the Chetwood Hall of the Indian Military Academy, reproduced here, at the cost of repetition, "The safety, honour and welfare of the country come first, always and every time; the honour, safety and welfare of the men you command come next; your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and every time."

Like each authority has its obligations too, so does the thrill of command demand strict adherence to moral and professional norms from the commander. A command is an opportunity to substantially contribute to the organisation and the men you command. Personal consideration or pay-off for the commander are incidental, and not aimed at. A command is the moral and divine charge, because with your ability to perform effectively and achieve results, is linked the sovereignty of the nation and the well-being of your command. And

with the well-being of the man under your command is linked the happiness and care of a large number of his related and dependent family members.

Leadership is an individual style - we are all blessed with some unique inherent traits, which manifest themselves, when one dons the leadership mantle, or when one is faced with a crisis situation. One cannot do better in the matter of leadership, than share with the reader one's own experience in command of men. To this end, I have chosen to relate some selected personal anecdotes incidents and beliefs, as a result of my experience, which have left an indelible imprint in my mind. The aim is not to write an autobiography, but to give the reader an idea of the typical Army ways, as experienced by an officer, in the yester-years, and to share his thought-process in the functions of command.

SUB-UNIT COMMAND

INITIAL DAYS

Exciting Opportunities

I was fortunate to have the first taste of command in Nagaland, after getting commissioned in June 1963, when insurgency in the state was at its peak. The fire of insurgency was burning in the entire length and breadth of Nagaland and the hilly regions of Manipur. Since the Sema tribe (then) provided leadership to the underground hostile forces, the Sema area was the most active with insurgency, where my battalion was deployed.

The Commanding Officer (CO), Lt Col Khajoor Singh, the last State Forces' Officer to command the unit, was a model CO, having got the command of a unit rather late in his career, because the State Force Officers lost seniority on absorption in the Indian Army. A man of few words, he had enormous fire behind his placid exterior. Two aspects of his command made a special impact on us; one, his sense of justice, and two, leading by personal example; whether it was a training exercise, long route-march (in the post-1962 era, units used to have a weekly route march of 35 miles), or a patrol moving in the jungles, he would invariably be in the forefront - in fact, very often, too far in front, for comfort of the leading sub-unit commander. Beside his big walking-stick, he was always self-contained with the battle-order-kit (side pack) and drinking water from his own bottle. At that stage, when many of us were under half his age, we

marvelled at the old man's grit and will-power to press on, without ever showing symptoms of fatigue. The whole day long, it was difficult to find a suggestion of smile on his face, but once in the officers mess, he was a different man — cheerful, jovial and ever ready to join or lead a Dogri group song, his favourite being - '*Mundia Pirthi Singha*'.

First Taste of an Independent Command

For us young officers, it was a great enchantment to get an opportunity to command a company, whenever the permanent incumbent was away on leave or on a course. A company had its domain over a number of villages, and its commander was not only responsible for counter insurgency operations, but also coordinated developmental activities in conjunction with the local civil administration. I got an opportunity to officiate as Company Commander after the permanent incumbent went on a three-month course. After a few days of my taking over, a delegation of students from a local school hostel came to meet me. On meeting them, I was astonished when one of them requested for my permission to allow them to study at night. When I asked as to why they needed my permission for studying at night which was their duty, I was further surprised to know that since burning of light was prohibited after last light, because of the curfew, they could not study in the absence of light. At this, I told them that they would not only study but I would also carry out surprise checks to ensure that they were studying. To help them, I ordered to give them some lanterns and kerosene oil, as a gift from the picquet. For the delegation members, it was hard to believe. I also attended one of the school functions and gave away some prizes for the best students. The response was tremendous.

A Friendly Gesture Repaid

One morning, I was moving out with a patrol party to link up with a patrol from the neighbouring company, and as we were passing through the village, a young school girl came across my way and looking rather upset. She mumbled something which I could not make out. I could recognise her as she had recently won a prize, in the school function which I had attended. As we went a little further outside the village, the same girl again approached from the opposite direction, and told me, "Be careful sir". This alerted me, and I ordered the boys moving along the higher ridge line to be more vigilant. We had gone about a kilometre ahead, when we were fired

upon by a hostile ambush party; but, because of the quick enveloping action of the patrol's forward elements, moving along the higher ridge line, the hostiles quickly beat a retreat. That was the first ever shot which was directed towards me and my patrol. Excitement was rife and though we set on a chase to intercept the insurgents, they had melted in the jungle. We could only see the tell-tales of the ambush site. That we escaped casualties and beat the ambush, the credit goes to that little girl, who felt inclined to warn us and took courage and risk to do so.

I made it a point to visit and show greater attention to those families whose members had joined the underground organisation. There were many fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and wives, who were not averse to the idea of cooperating with us in facilitating the surrender of their family members in the underground establishment, but they had their own compulsions. I remember having goodwill meetings with the wife of one underground brigadier, who was commanding the most active brigade of the underground in the Sema area. His wife was living along with her children in a village falling in my company jurisdiction. A young educated lady, she could not be easily convinced of the futility of her husband's course of militancy. On New Year's eve, I sent her children and families of other underground hostiles small gifts.

A man joined insurgency movement on being brainwashed by an ideology. However, once he had joined the underground establishment, the most important factor which kept him sticking to the hostile organisation was not the ideology, but his fear that on surrender he and his family would meet retributive treatment from the underground. If somehow we can soften the anti-establishment attitude of the family member of the militant, it has a great softening effect on the hardened militancy in a man. Nothing can work against the interest of counter-insurgency (CI) operations more than meting out a punitive harsh treatment to the family members of an underground militant/insurgent. Many a youth, sitting on the fence, turns into a hard-core militant, after seeing his family members being treated harshly on suspicion. However, it hardly needs a mention that there can be no compromise in carrying out firm and aggressive CI operations to keep the armed militants on the run, so that they are forced to surrender or face elimination. It is also understandable that citizens by and large have to pay the price of their peace, during insurgency, in the form of being inconvenienced during CI

operations. What is crucial in the conduct of CI operations is to firmly check excesses and strictly punish those who violate norms.

A Chance Missed

During those days, the aspect of drive and initiative was inherent and more pronounced in one's functions of command. A sub unit commander used initiative to take decisions, within the broad framework of the instructions issued by the unit commander. There was neither any obligation on part of the lower commander, nor did he resort to seeking directions from the higher Headquarters on every small matter.

My post also had a platoon of Assam Rifles, commanded by a JCO, and secrecy of information pertaining to troops movement was of paramount importance. We had been getting reports of the location of an underground Naga Battalion Camp in the general area of my company jurisdiction, but its location had remained a mystery in spite of a series of operations conducted to locate it. One evening after dinner, I decided to take a column out for area familiarisation of one of the far-off villages. It was about five hours walking distance, and we were around the village about an hour before first light. After the columns had scanned through the village, we concentrated in the school building, where the headman collected the male members of the village. It was always my practice to share my breakfast/meal with the village head, whenever I visited a village. As I was having a chitchat with the village chief, I happened to see a man trying to avoid my eyes. I walked upto him, put my hand on his shoulder and could sense his uneasiness from his shaking body. When I asked the village head who this man was and what he was doing, the answer was not very convincing. My bluff, that in our record he was a hard-core insurgent, and unless he cooperated he would be proceeded against, worked. The man in question turned out to be an enlisted porter of the underground establishment. After my promise for his rehabilitation and suitable reward, he agreed to show us the way to the underground camp, about which we had been receiving reports. As I ordered my platoon to move for the hostile camp location, my JCO (Subedar Hari Singh) advised that we should collect one more platoon strength from the company post. Even our guide apprehended that we were too small in strength vis-a-vis the hostile strength in the camp. I got persuaded by the counselling of the JCO, which I have always regretted.

On return to the post, we got the remaining company ready to move, after handing over the post to the Assam Rifle Platoon. At this juncture, the battalion Adjutant came on the air to speak to me in connection with some other matter. I informed him that I was going for an operation. After a few minutes, the Commanding Officer himself came on the radio and directed me to delay my move till he reached my post with one more company column. We had to stand down till the Commanding Officer arrived with another company, by late evening. We could thus move for the operation only by about mid-night, and raided the hostile camp the next day.

It was an interesting experience to see how the underground had laid out in a thick jungle, about 8 km from the nearest village, a well organised camp, beautifully snuggled in a thickly forested re-entrant, a little distance away from a stream. The track-discipline was superb; having reached the camp within 50 meters, we could see no tell-tales. However, when we were about an hour from the camp location, we had heard a stray bullet shot, which we guessed was by a look-out man of the camp, though some thought it was a bamboo cracking sound. There were sentry posts around the camp, separate areas for offices, parade ground, living barracks, community hall, etc. Fire was still burning in the fire places of the camp deserted moments before. Opportunities of fleeting nature will invariably present themselves suddenly, as it did in this case. Those who cash these in the quickest possible time stand a greater chance of making a success than those who are slow in reacting.

Good Old Soldiers

When I joined my paltan on commissioning, we still had the last batch of the State Forces Commissioned Officers some company commanders and the battalion second in command. They were seasoned men of action, whose first priority was their men. Each one having put in about 15 years of service, they would take a stand for their men. And the respect from the men that they enjoyed was something unbelievable. The names of Dwarka Nath, Kartar Jamwal and Goverdhan Jamwal (later Major General) come to one's mind. The whole atmosphere in a company was that of a family. They were highly protective of their command. And the best part was, they were all a happy and contented lot, with a carefree attitude towards life. Their loud laughters and singing together old Dogri songs on the slightest pretext was a common feature. No trace of tension, and talking at someone's back was unheard of. If something was irking

with their family life. There were a number of officers having their sons or brothers/close relations in the ranks, but they were correct and exacting on parade ground, and never allowed it to influence their functioning or image of fairness. They had an utmost sense of discretion and enjoyed full faith of their men.

Maturing into a Company Commander

I shall now upgrade my reflections of experience as a permanent Company Commander, and subsequently as a Battalion Second-in-Command, before taking over command of a unit. After Nagaland, my experience as sub unit commander pertains to Arunachal Pradesh, then North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), followed by Rajasthan, Punjab and J & K.

Each one of us has a unique distinctiveness. So is singular each group, being a combination of peerless individuals. If a commander can sell this message to every member of his team, he has already won half the battle. This message, however, cannot be sold by simple oral reiteration. The man must feel the honour of being cared and wanted in a group. Psychologists have amply proved that a man cannot be motivated for higher noble cause, if his basic necessities are not met; though men are known to be prepared to suffer any privations, once they are convinced of the imperatives of a situation and the cause. Therefore, once leadership can provide an assured environment of being cared and wanted in a group, the higher motivation by injecting a spark of unique matchless uniqueness can be developed.

The most nagging problem of a soldier is his worry about his home for which he needs leave. An individual requesting for leave has a right to be granted leave, unless he is in war. After all, the man knows his entitlement and proceeding on leave costs money. Further, there is a biological and social need for a change and to visit home at least once in every three months, to meet one's family. For care of prolonged sickness of a dependent family member, or to attend a legal/civil litigation at home, a soldier could be sent on an attachment with a local unit for the period of his essential requirement. What is required is a spirit of appreciating the problem of the man. There could be no difficulty in providing an assurance or a guarantee to the soldier that he would get his leave, when he requires it. I never said NO to a request for leave.

The Bahadur Bravo Spirit

To create a spirit of distinctiveness in my company, I put up the banner 'BAHADUR BRAVO' on a big bush next to the gate to the company post. This banner became a permanent property of the company thereafter. Further, I gave a motto to each member of the company *"Bahadur Bravo ka sanman aur apani unnati mera pratham kartavya hai"* (The honour of Bahadur Bravo and own development is my primary duty). When a man develops himself individually in education, ridding himself of superstitious dogmas, is assured of development of his family members, and has something to look up in personal growth, his responses to the organisational needs are better. Thus, I found that the motto to invoke the honour of the sub unit and individual development of the man was apt to generate espirit-de-corps and pride. To generate similar esprit-de-corps, at section and platoon level, I conducted inter-section and inter-platoon competitions in field craft, firing, physical training, battle physical efficiency tests, sports and discipline. It is amazing how men respond to a competitive spirit. Nobody wants to let himself, his buddy or section or sub unit down. Within a section, each individual had a buddy who was supposed to know everything about the other person i.e. his buddy.

A leader has a tremendous opportunity to contribute to the life of his men. Our men are simple, unaware and victims of many social prejudices and dogmas. I was very particular about family planning, and maintained a register of family members of each soldier. Whenever a person came for an interview or 'orderly room', the company family register was put up to me. If he had more than two children, he was advised to have himself vasectomised before proceeding on leave. At times, I bulldozed my way through. I remember, my company Havaldar Major Anchal Singh (later Hony Captain) got himself vasectomised on being told by me. Unfortunately, after operation he developed infection which hospitalised him for about two months. This dampened the enthusiasm of men seeking vasectomy. But soon, Anchal was back in the lines and worked as an ambassador for others to follow suit. Years later, while commanding a brigade in J & K, once when I was visiting border posts along the Indo-Pak border, I visited Anchal Singh's village and was very delighted to find that Anchal was doing very well - having a tractor of his own and a good farm; he was the village head and actively involved in ex-servicemen and other social activities. His one son was Sub Inspector in police and the other a

JCO in the Army Education Corps. He reminded me on our meeting, with his usual broad smile, how grateful he was to me for having got him vasectomised after his second child.

One gets the real feel of command of men as a company or squadron commander. At this stage, the leader and the led equation is one-to-one. One closely shares with men moments of togetherness while in training, operations or in the barracks. There can be no communication gap between the leader and the led — if there is any, it is a failure of the function of command. The sub unit commander has not only to have, on his tips, names of his company personnel but also know the background and peculiar problems of each. He attains this intimate knowledge, if he is throughout informally accessible to his men, while on training or sports or on other occasions of meeting. Once you know your men, it does not take long to read from their faces if they have any problem. Do not hold back after reading a problem on a soldier's face; put your hand on the man's shoulder and ask him what the problem is. In an environment of affectionate freedom of expression, the man would surely tell his problem. At sub unit level, there is no relevance of through-me channel of hierarchy — the officer must reach out directly to his men.

Group Cohesiveness

The commander also owes it to his group to train his junior leaders, — only if section and platoon commanders tick, that the company as a whole can tick. Command of men at section and platoon levels demands still higher equation of personal leadership. The most difficult command is that of a section, because the section commander has not only to command his men but he has also to live with them. Therefore, unless the company commander truly appreciates the peculiar problems of platoon and section commanders, he would not be able to assist them in their function of command. First of all, identity of a section and platoon must be retained on permanent basis, in that, personnel must be posted and work on permanent basis in their section/platoon; changes or transfers should be avoided as far as possible. Secondly, section and platoon commanders must be given opportunity to train their own men within the overall directions of the company commander. Then only can one hold the section/platoon commanders accountable for training and administration of their respective commands. Too much of centralisation at company level, can be at the cost of section and platoon *esprit-de-corps*.

The most meaningful aspect of the experience of command as a sub unit commander, is that one is very closely associated in the entire spectrum of activity, including getting into competition with men, on the firing range, physical training or obstacle course. I did commando course after about four years service and could not believe myself on being awarded the commando dagger for being the best student on the course, particularly because I had proceeded on this course on a half day's notice, as the officer detailed on this course had to be diverted elsewhere. One could dare the boys on all fields of training and sports.

With my obsession for physical fitness, I could not bear a man with a protruding paunch. Once, a JCO was posted to my company on return from an Extra Regimental Employment (ERE), whose paunch irritated me on seeing him first, on a morning PT parade. At the end of normal PT tables, we would often practise fireman lift or some obstacle crossing etc. On that day, I chose to pair with the fat JCO for fireman lift. When I was running with him on my shoulders, he must have felt so awfully guilty for being overweight, he did not take long to shed his extra pounds of flesh.

Participative Administration and Healthy Competition

It is only at sub unit level that you can extend the company spirit to participate in important social events pertaining to the boys, namely, marriages or deaths. A meaningful incentive can be given to the company in various sports and training events. In administration of men, the company commander should pay particular attention to the quality of preparation and presentation of food for men and the hygiene of toilets/bathrooms. In the name of competition and the company prizes, one can expect wonders from men. The best standards in administration can be achieved by positively involving men in their own administration. They have to be educated and motivated not only in matters of their personal hygiene and cleanliness, but also in self-discipline and public awareness in use of light, water and cleanliness of community places, namely, cook house, dining hall, toilets, bathrooms, etc. One may organise a small demonstration to impress dos and don'ts in the matter. One has to appreciate that our men are, by and large, too simple for words, particularly, those hailing from remote and under-developed rural areas. I recall, the only case of a sexually transmitted disease in my company was that of washerman Indroo, an old man who was close to his retirement when he contracted this sickness. After deinduction

from Bangladesh where the paltan had suffered very heavy casualties, when it came to Calcutta for a transit halt, the then Commanding Officer having appreciated the problem, ordered that all soldiers going on out-pass would carry a condom in their pocket. Poor Indroo's condom remained in his pocket. When I asked him why, he said he had never seen it before, and did not know how to use it.

Dissent in Loyalty

In the prevalent ambience of 'no mistake syndrome', it is not unusual to find many senior officers, otherwise sound and sagacious allowing themselves to be pressurised into taking hasty and faulty decisions, to cover up a perceived weakness. At times, one is confronted with a tricky situation where one has to disagree with a superior officer. I recall an incident when I was asked to coordinate construction of ditch-cum-bundh (DCB) defences in a particular sector. A senior commander was scheduled to visit the area and was to be briefed from a view-point, on a gap between the two segments of the DCB. The gap was also the dividing line between two unit areas/sectors. It so happened that at this point, because of the ground configuration, the level of water in the right segment which happened to fall in the neighbouring area, was deeper than water level in the ditch on our side. When the Commanding Officer, a capable senior officer, visited the view-point, he thought that the shallower water level in our ditch would reflect adversely on the unit. After he found that there was no way we could increase the water level in our ditch, he ordered me to drain out water from the neighbouring ditch which was on a higher gradient, by digging a small channel. Finding that the CO was in no mood to listen, I tried to avoid immediate implementation of the (wrong) orders, by suggestion that I would further go into the possibility of improving the water level in our ditch without draining out the neighbouring ditch. Next day, the Commanding Officer again came and was agitated to find that I had taken no action for syphoning water from the neighbouring ditch. He ordered me to hand over the charge to another officer, with immediate effect. Within a few hours after I was removed, a small channel was made to drain water to our ditch. However, the pressure of water was so heavy because of a natural slope, that the small channel developed into a gushing canal, and the entire water not only got drained out from the right flank ditch, it did not stay in the left ditch either, as it flooded over the next gap about 300 meteres left of the view-point.

The next two days the whole battalion was busy round-the-clock moving stones and earth from a distance away, to re-erect the gap.

Mystical Faith

The old saying that "there are no atheists in a battle position" is proverbially true. The greater the difficulties and risks of a situation, the more reinforced is man's faith in God. However, at times, it takes the shape of growing blind faith in certain mystical powers, based on some rumours or other irrational grounds. When I returned to the paltan, as its Second-in-Command (2IC), after a staff tenure of brigade major, and was carrying out familiarisation with the unit's area of responsibility in the Poonch sector, I happened to visit a picquet, where we were close to the enemy defended post across the border. There was a big tree with a grave, attributed to a *'Peer'* (saint) within this post, and men had faith in the *Peer Baba*. A practice had started, one did not know when, that a visitor had to remove his boots and other leather equipment before paying obeisance to the *'Peer'*, before one went around the picquet defences. All this happened under close observation of the enemy sentry, who was barely about 150 yards away. When I told the Picquet Commander that I would pay obeisance to the *'Peer'* with my boots and equipment on, he could not believe it, and predicted a calamity if I displeased the *'Peer'*, as, he explained, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for removing boots had been passed down in the handing over note from the previous units. I ordered cancellation of the SOP by taking the blame on myself.

Having mystical faith based on rumours or superstitious beliefs is a crime in the armed forces. For religious faith, each unit is authorised a religious teacher and all religious functions of troops are observed with due regard. There is no place for having irrational blind belief in any superstitions and rumours. Unless it is checked, it takes absurd dimensions and weakens the psyche of troops.

In another sector in the East, I came across a more laughable situation. A soldier (mule driver) who had died about 20 years ago, in a peacetime environment while performing his duty, is supposed to have come in some other soldier's dream, about 10 years after his death. The soldier, who saw the deceased soldier in dream, thought that the deceased soldier's soul was not in peace. Therefore, he got around his unit to raise a small stone in the memory of the deceased soldier. Gradually, this place started being called a memorial in the

name of the dead soldier, who started being called a '*Baba*'. Over the period, the memorial stone developed into a memorial hut, men started giving donations and it grew into a large source of income to the local formation commander. At some stage, a decision was taken to send regularly, out of the donations, a substantial monthly stipend to the bereaved mother of the late soldier who was already drawing pension. Not only that, every year a group of men were being sent on duty to accompany the *Baba's* so-called spirit, which was assumed to be proceeding on leave to his village, for which a proper reservation was done in the train and the imaginary *Baba's* bed was spread on a berth. I came in the picture at a stage when a proposal was put up to send a substantial amount to the deceased soldier's family for construction of a religious place in the name of the *Baba* at his village. I intervened in the proposal and strongly recommended that we must educate our men to desist from such blind mystical beliefs, and that the fund should not be allowed to swell into a large sum. After all, the amount came only from the pockets of the men - there being no civilians on the watershed area where this memorial had come up. While we must respect feeling and faith of our men, we owe it to our function of command, to educate them correctly. When I intervened in the proposal of sending a huge amount to the bereaved family, the local formation commander was upset and tried to put the fear of God in me by quoting a previous commander, as was rumoured, who had suffered professionally because he had not paid due deference to the *Baba*. I had a great difficulty in persuading the superior commander, though not with full success, to put a check to this unauthorised and unsoldierly activity. It is a serious problem, which we ought to understand and take steps to be rational ourselves and educate our men accordingly. Unfortunately, each one of us are so pressurised by our unbridled ambitions to keep climbing up, that we are reluctant to risk a chance. We are, by and large, a scared people, fearing that any rationality in belief or action, which is contrary to a blind mystical faith, may annoy the supernatural power.

Rough Spoken

While handling men, one has to be very sensitive to their peculiar attitudes and responses. For example, troops from certain areas may laugh away if their superior officer uses harsh or foul language for reproof, while some other troops may be very sensitive. I recall once, while I was officiating as commanding officer, there was an important training event for which the whole unit was out on an exercise. In the summing up, while going over the lessons learnt during the exercise, I expressed my annoyance on a particular event

where a slip up had taken place because of an OR's negligence. I made that OR stand up and angrily told him that in the otherwise a very successful event, he stood as a black slur on the name of the paltan. I thought, that was the end of the matter, but that was not to be. Next morning, I was reported that the OR, at whom I had shouted in the summing-up address, was missing from the lines. We searched around for him but found no trace. The Company Commander and Subedar Major feared that he might have committed suicide. Next day the SM, on his own, sent a man to his village where he was not found. However, on the third day the father of the deserter, who was an ex-serviceman, came with the deserter who had gone over to his in-laws. He would have preferred a few days imprisonment in the unit quarter guard rather than being called a *kala dhabba* (black spot) in the *Sammelan*. Perhaps, I had over-reacted to the soldier's slip-up in the exercise.

Twenty Two

Commanding Officer

A Unique Honour

We were out on an operational alert in mid 1979, on the eve of Bhutto's (former Prime Minister of Pakistan) trial and hanging, when I received my short-notice posting order. It was quite puzzling, because I was ordered to take over in the rank of Major as a Commanding Officer of another battalion, even before our promotion selection board was known to have taken place. The puzzle was further confounding because my own course-mate, only a few numbers junior to me, who, it was believed, had a good record of service, was already 2IC (second in command) of the battalion to which I stood posted. I literally cried while leaving my old battalion which I had served for about 16 years — one could not bear the thought of being away from the midst of the blooming faces of the members of the family where one had grown up.

However, on joining the new Paltan (5 JAK RIF), what struck me and my wife was as if we had returned to our old battalion - the same (type of) faces, the same sort of affectionate crowd. In the dining-in party, I said, "My status is like a girl after marriage; hereafter, my total loyalty is with the new home", yet, while drinking a toast for the new Paltan, instead of calling the name of the new Paltan (SURAJ GORKHA), I slipped-up to call 'RAGHU PRATAP' (the old Paltan). I laughed this away as a slip of the tongue, by saying that old habits die hard.

I had the privilege of taking over the Paltan from an outstanding professional, who had the reputation of being an upright and thorough soldier. It was apparent to me that my worthy predecessor had worked very hard as Commanding Officer of the Paltan, which he had commanded for an unusually long period of over four years. However, he seemed to have been unlucky in his command and the resultant performance of the unit was lower than his own and others' expectations.

Initial Hiccups

On my first meeting with the Brigade Commander, he seemed to pity me for having come to a battalion which, he thought, was thoroughly unmotivated and inefficient. He told me that I had a weak team of officers, because there was not even a single officer in the Paltan who had got a grading higher than Charlie (average) in any professional course. To highlight the standard of motivation and *esprit-de-corps*, he quoted that in the last inter-battalion boxing championship, not a single boxer had completed the three rounds, let alone winning a bout. He also reminded me that Paltan was the last in all sports and training events in the last couple of years. I requested the Commander to give me three months uninterrupted time which he granted. What I could sense was that while individually each man looked smart and responsive, yet there was something amiss as a team. I was briefed on some past unusual cases, pertaining to under-currents in the Paltan, based on parochial grounds of region and caste.

On my first day on parade, when I was told that a residential guard for the Divisional Commander was about to leave, I walked to the vehicle where they were loading their baggage, etc. From a mere look I could see the guard was not of the desired standard. I told my staff to ask for three to four days delay in despatch of the guard. I did a fresh selection of the personnel and looked into their clothing and equipment, besides a concentrated capsule of training before they left.

Since I was totally new to the Paltan, it was as essential for me to know everyone as much as it was for all ranks to know the mind of their new CO. I, therefore, did a ground reconnaissance and set a 10 days exercise for the Paltan, which was subdivided into sub unit level collective training: three days each for section and Platoon level, two days company level and three days battalion level. I went down

to each section/detachment commander and heard him brief me on his tasks and personnel. On the last three days, we made it into a two-sided exercise, with each half of the unit exercising against the other half. It was a momentous time. I knew exactly what I could expect from each segment/level of command in my Paltan. In these two weeks, the Paltan also got to know what their new Commanding Officer expected from them.

Setting Goals

About a month after I took over, there was a reference to an old case reflecting adversely on the Paltan, for which the Commander called me, and before he conveyed his unhappiness over the case, I reminded him of his promised three months. I found myself in a hurry. I chose three slogans: one each for myself, for my subordinate commanders and staff, and for all ranks in the Paltan. For myself, I picked up *"Chirian ton main baz turaon, tahon Guru Gobind Singh nam kahaoon"* (only if I can make sparrows tear hawks shall I be worthy of being called Guru Gobind Singh), which I kept on my table. For my subordinate commanders and staff I had "I accept nothing but the best", which I got boldly written, framed and displayed on the wall behind my office chair. For all ranks, I modified the motto which I had given to my company Bahadur Bravo, "SURAJ GORKHA *ka samman aur apni unnati mera pratham kartavya hai*" - this was displayed in each barrack, office and verandah. Each man in the Paltan was expected to explain to me, when asked, the essence of the unit motto.

In the first Sainik Sammelan, I told the boys that I was lucky to be in the midst of the finest quality of soldiers I had ever known, and that each had as significant a role to play as I had as the Commanding Officer. I called upon their personal honour to rise and show others what we were capable of achieving. I told them that I had a mission, which I was determined to accomplish, and would not let them sit back.

The First Blood

The events of inter-battalion training competitions were coming shortly. First one to come was the inter-battalion cross-country competition. I asked the company commanders to conduct inter-platoon competition and select company teams, before we conducted intercompany competition to select the battalion team. I met the boys in one of their initial practices for the cross-country. The other units

of the Brigade being old and illustrious (JAT and Para trooper), the results were stunning. The SURAJ GORKHA boys had swept the board by winning the top honours. The second event was boxing, for which we again had an inter-company tournament. Each company provided bone soup or extra milk to its sportsmen. I myself got into the ring sometimes, to impress on the boys the aggressive and killer instinct. When the tournament came, each boxer was a tiger in the ring, though we did not win the tournament but we redeemed the honour and pride. Every boxer was either a winner or fought doggedly till he was knocked down or beaten bloodily over points. The Brigade commander and others could not believe it. It was a turning point. While writing this and recalling the great fighting spirit displayed by each boxer in the ring, my emotions seem to be getting the better of me — I can feel a lump in my throat.

Soon thereafter was the Divisional inter-battalion Medium Machine Gun (MMG) firing competition, where we were at the bottom 10th position the previous year. I called the MMG Platoon JCO, Nb Sub Major Singh, and told him that the Paltan's honour was in his and the Platoon boys' hands. The MMG Platoon was camped at the firing range, to practise day and night firing, till the competition. The weapons were got repaired or replaced. It was unbelievable when the results showed that our MMG Platoon had won divisional championship by a huge margin from the runners-up team. The day we got the news of the Paltan's MMG competition, we were camping at our operational location for an exercise; the Commander drove to the exercise location and on meeting, he said that he had come to congratulate me personally. When he asked me as to what I thought he was congratulating me for, I said it must be for the boys' good show in the MMG competition; the Commander said, 'No' and told me he was driving straight from the Divisional Formation Commanders Conference, where the GOC had placed on record that the residential guard which my Paltan had sent (on the third or fourth day of my taking over) was the finest group of disciplined and motivated soldiers he had ever seen in life. In fact, on one of the divisional sports events that we organised for the Division, when the GOC was leaving after giving away the prizes, in which my Paltan was runners-up in the closely fought Divisional championship, he put his hand on my shoulder, before entering the staff car, and asked me," Do you have a vacancy for me to get enrolled in your unit?"

Savouring Tea and Music

To uniformalise the unit's daily routine, I ordered that the entire unit would have a tea break at 1030 hours for 20 minutes. I did not appreciate indiscreet and uncontrolled flow of tea and refreshment in the offices or elsewhere in the unit. At the unit tea break time, tea and refreshment were served to all ranks. There are enough rations authorised to a soldier, to enable him to eat as much and as many times as required. Even at breakfast, the men could eat as much as they wanted - rationing or scaling of *puris/prathas* etc. was prohibited.

I ordered that during tea break, the unit pipe band would play daily. There was a lot of resistance and problems posed by my staff in implementing the orders for the daily play of band; but I insisted that even if there were two or three boys of the band platoon, the band would play and the band music programme must be put up to me daily by the Adjutant, before the tea break. I made it a point to sit in the balcony of my office, in front of which the band played on all working days under a tree. One may not have technical knowledge of the band music, but every ear can appreciate good and soothing melody, which is the true test of good music. I got educated on the military band music as the programme was put up to me daily. The result was unbelievable; after about eight months, when the inter-formation band competition took place, the band which was at the bottom in performance the previous year, not only won the Divisional championship, but also the Western Command championship. Thereafter, the band won Command championship for the next four years, both in the Western and Eastern Commands.

Within a year, the battalion had won all professional competitions and most of the sports competitions, including two of the three competitions at the Command level.

A Gem is Lost

The battalion was tasked to give a demonstration to the entire division, on assault across a wet Ditch-cum-Bundh (DCB), a linear obstacle built along the western border in the plains of Punjab and J & K. To test the efficacy of our defences based on DCB, we decided, as part of the demonstration, to assault these from the enemy direction at night. The Battalion was camping at the demonstration site, on a water-filled drain which was over 10 feet deep and about 80 feet wide. Since the drain had not been cleaned for years, there were lot of weeds in it. For crossing at night, all possible safety

precautions were taken, including arrangements for emergency lighting of the demonstration site, besides life-saving boats etc, in the event of an emergency. Three days before the event, we were having a full-dress rehearsal after it was dark. I was in the middle of the water obstacle, in a boat, observing the leading phase of two assault companies, swimming across the drain, by using individual water-crossing expedients. Suddenly, a jawan started shouting for help from the right forward company. We immediately switched on the lights, a safety boat was rushed to the man in distress and he was pulled out. I asked both the Company Commanders to freeze the exercise and carry out a head-count. At this stage, only the leading platoons of the two assault companies had crossed, the remaining parts of the companies were still on the near bank. I heard someone shouting the name of 'Subhash' from the far bank, and in reply another voice saying from the near bank '*Subhash yahan hai*' (Subhash is here). I asked the company commanders to give me a report after physical check, both assault Company Commanders gave me all-correct report. But something deep in me was troubling me. I extended the exercise-freeze time and ordered physical head count once again, after burning lights and fire. Soon it was found that there were two men by the name of Subhash in the Company; one in the leading assault platoon (an ace swimmer) and the other in the reserve platoon. It was already about 20 minutes past since the leading Subhash had got quietly drowned in the weeds while trying to save his buddy, Janak, who had started shouting for help. His body was fished out and all efforts to revive him failed. While Subhash was evacuated to the nearest hospital along with a doctor, in a hope that his body might be revived, we went through the exercise proceedings.

Next day, there were some pestring queries being raised by the staff, particularly from the Divisional Headquarters, as if they suspected a possible laxity on our part. Nevertheless, both the Brigade and the Divisional Commanders were very understanding and when the GOC asked me on phone the next day, if I wanted any change in the training event schedule or the responsibility, I firmly told him that we would stick to the schedule of the event, as planned to be held, three days later. Some time after the GOC had spoken to me, the Brigade Commander came to the exercise location and collected the men to speak to them. After expressing his condolences on the death of a brave soldier, he asked for those boys to raise hands who were non-swimmers - not a single hand went up. Then he

asked for those who were not confident of swimming across the deep drain; not a single hand went up.

The sacrifice of Subhash had only given a further spark to the *josh* (spirit) of the boys and they were not demoralised , which the Commander tried to find out by asking them to raise hands. It was sad bidding farewell to gallant Subhash the next day for which his family members had been brought from his village. The very next day, the boys showed greater resilience and *josh* in producing a demonstration which became a talk of the formation, and a model of drills for others to follow.

A Dreamland for Training

Soon after the demonstration, we moved to the vaster tracts of Rajasthan for Exercise Shikar, which was said to be the largest ever exercise with troops conducted, to test some strike and holding formations in their operational roles. My battalion was tasked to hold a node which was addressed by the strike formation in their offensive. I, followed by my order group, arrived at the node area about an hour before the last light, and the fighting group, constituting the remaining Paltan, arrived after last light. By first light next morning the Paltan was dug in its defences, as per our drills, and ready for my stand-to inspection, when I was suddenly informed that the Army Commander (Lt. Gen Krishna Rao), the Corps Commander and the Chief Umpire were landing at my view-point, after about two hours. This made the situation interesting, as having moved from one defended locality to the other throughout the night, I was about to start my inspection-round of the Paltan, when the message of the visit came. Sometime at night, I had asked my Intelligence Officer (Dinesh Nanda), who always efficiently rose to the occasion, to prepare a panoramic view of the area as an aid, though our Corps Commander had prohibited preparation of any enlargements, as he believed in briefing off the map only. As the Army Commander and his large entourage settled down for my briefing, the Army Commander did not seem to like the idea of being briefed off the map, and asked if I had made an enlargement of the area. I looked towards the Corps Commander, hoping that he would intervene to tell the Army Commander about his orders on not making enlargements, but he kept quiet. At this, I asked Dinesh to bring the panoramic view; he had not only prepared an excellent enlargement but had also marked the entire battalion defended area. The briefing-cum-discussion went on for about an hour and a half.

At the end of the briefing, the Army Commander asked me to take him to the nearest defended locality. I told him that he was already in one. He walked to the nearest trench, where the trench commander, one Lance Naik, was quick witted and replied all queries confidently and clearly. Next to it was an anti-tank gun position (106 mm RCL) which is critical in a defensive layout. There, the gun post commander happened to be one Havaldar Shamboo, who did not enjoy my confidence, because I had failed him in the senior NCO Cadre for promotion to the rank of Junior Commissioned Officer, just a month earlier, as he was unable to achieve the stipulated (excellent) standard in Battle Physical Efficiency Tests (BPET). However, the briefing that Shamboo gave to the Army Commander left me stunned. He had not only perfected the gun drills, but also correctly visualised how the enemy attack would develop against the defended locality. When the Army Commander asked him as to what were the basis of his (Shamboo's) tactical assessment of the enemy attack, he replied that last night when the Commanding Officer was briefing the Company Commander from that locality, he was listening. The Army Commander went to two more trenches, and before turning about, he put his hand on my shoulder and asked,"Tell me, Kuldip, had you concentrated last night your entire battalion at this post"? "Have a heart, Sir", I replied and insisted that he should visit any other locality, even if he was short of time. He agreed to visit, on his way out, one of the depth localities, where the state of preparedness was equally good, if not better.

A Sidelight

A memorable sidelight of the exercise was my keeping a month-old promise to send our pipe band to Delhi on the wedding of a regimental officer, whose father, Lt Col R S Pathania, was an illustrious former Commanding Officer of the Paltan. With the wedding date clashing with the peak period of the exercise, when all move outside the exercise had been stopped, and the band equipment was lying in the rear, over 300 km away, it seemed a difficult task to keep the promise. The 2IC, however, worked out a plan and gradually infiltrated the band equipment to the exercise location.. Since the exercise was two-sided, both sides were intensively patrolling the exercise border areas and capturing each others' soldiers as prisoners, it seemed difficult to board the band boys in a train going towards Delhi. Life was so busy for me during

the exercise that before I could apply my mind as to how to reach the band at Delhi, my 21C had already hired a few camels to move the band boys alongwith their equipment, in disguise, to a railway station about 20 km in depth. The band boys after keeping the date at Delhi, were directed to return via the unit permanent location. Before depositing the band equipment, however, they started testing their instruments, and with that the cat was out of the bag. Everyone in the station knew that we had sent our band platoon personnel away from the exercise location. The Commander (by this time a new Commander had taken over the Brigade) was very upset and asked my explanation. I explained to him that with over 100 per cent trained reserves of medical platoon available, the absence of the band platoon had not been allowed to be felt, nor had the battalion been found wanting in any way; he should, therefore, leave such a decision and prerogative to the Commanding Officer. I could not have disappointed an ex-Commanding Officer of the Battalion. The Commander was gracious enough to accept my logic and the matter was closed.

A Gala Camp Fire

The exercise went off tickety-boo. The day the exercise was over, we decided to have a camp fire. In the afternoon, I was informed that the Corps and Divisional Commanders, the Umpire staff, and a number of other senior officers would also join the Paltan in its Camp Fire *Barakhana* (feast). In *barakhanas*, we strictly followed that there would be no separate enclosures for officers and that we would eat and drink the same what our men had. In the afternoon, the Commander rang up to enquire if all was under control to cater for a large number of visitors. On being asked as to what drinks were being offered to the visitors, I said that in *barakhana* we only served rum and soft drinks. Having refused to make an exception, I recommended that the visiting officers could first come to our camp Officers Mess, where they could be served a drink of their choice, before they joined the boys for *barakhana*. This was agreed to. While with the boys, no exception in drinks was made even though broad hints were thrown. At the campsite there is a greater fun enjoying the moment than worrying about the type of drinks. The singing of company songs, the boys lifting officers on their shoulders and dancing away merrily, are too overwhelming to bother about what one drank or ate. In fact, everyone was so immersed in the fun and enjoyment, that most of them changed over to rum or soft drink

while having *barakhana* with men, which carried on till we had gone around all company stands.

Delving In Military History

Soon after we returned from the exercise , we got deeply involved in a Command training event for officers, 'communist counter offensive in Vietnam' which came to my lap as leader of the study team deputed by the Division. I involved most of my own officers in the event, with only a few officers from outside to help us. The new commander also got involved in the conduct of the event. The GOC got me and my team at the Divisional Headquarters, the venue, about four days before the event when we had the advantage of his personal guidance in giving final touches to the presentation. We had spectators coming from Army Headquarters, College of Combat and the Staff College, besides officers from the entire command. We had collected some material on the subject from the embassies of the countries concerned, though the main help came from the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), New Delhi. We had worked in our spare time on collection and sifting of the material for over six months. It was an immense education, besides giving my officers tremendous confidence. The event was attended by the Army Commander, a large number of spectators including Chief Instructor Staff College, and was commended by all.

Getting around the Colonel of the Regiment

One did not realise that time had moved so fast, till one fine morning we received the posting order of my relief. This was the time when the Paltan was due to move to a high altitude area, and I could not bear the thought of leaving them at this juncture, till they had settled down at the new location. It took me a serious effort, through a letter and personal interview, to convince the Colonel of the Regiment to delay my handing over till about six months after I had moved the battalion to its new location, even though it delayed the schedule of taking over by my relief. My request was granted.

Blooding in the Mountains

It was a splendid experience travelling with the Paltan in a military special train, from West to the East, a journey extending to about two weeks. Detailed instructions for our induction in the new formation had been received. In Phase 1 of the induction, the Paltan was to

move on foot from the rail-head to the new location, a distance of about 110 km. After a temporary halt, the Paltan was then to move up to a high altitude location. The staff officer who received us at the railway station, on behalf of the new formation, told us that keeping in mind the record time, set by a Paltan in the past, for completion of Phase 1, we were expected to arrive at the destination the earliest by about 1400 hours on D Plus 2, when it was customary for the formation Commander to join us for a reception cup of tea, for which the time of 1700 h (D plus 2) was fixed. My 2IC, the Officer-in-Charge of the unit advance party (Surrinder), a thorough soldier, even if a low medical category, who had arrived at the new location about a month earlier, had arranged our reception etc. in conjunction with the formation staff. However, it surprised us to find that the unit had reached its destination well before mid-day on D Plus 2, over three hours ahead of the formation record time set some years back.

With our arrival in the new Division, coinciding with the decision to adopt the forward posture, our Paltan was deputed to be the Divisional forward defences battalion (screen). After a few weeks stay at the rear location, the whole formation moved on foot to take up the forward posture. The troops were to march to their new defences, to be prepared in the vicinity of the watershed (line of actual control), a distance of over 250 km. It was a great fun watching the whole brigade-sized force marching together. We were second in the order of march. Ahead was a Paltan, with rich traditions and big name. One witnessed some funny sights while on the march. For example, the commanding officer of the Paltan ahead of us, who insisted on being called the commandant, rode on a colourfully decorated pony, which had been purchased as regimental property of his Paltan. One was thoroughly impressed by the quality of rank and file of this Paltan, but officers treated themselves a class apart, and one could see a sense of fear amongst its men. With the exception of a few young officers, none of the officers of the leading unit carried their own pack and equipment. In my Paltan, there were common standards for all. I carried my own ruck-sack, throughout. On arrival at the destination, on the first day, when we started climbing for the watershed ridge line, the pony-riding commandant had a heart attack and had to be evacuated. A good officer otherwise; one wonders, how stupid one can be at times, in ignoring the imperatives of fitness in a high altitude area. Only through physical conditioning does human body get adjusted to take on the rigours of high altitude area.

Singing Together

It was while camping in an arctic tent near Bumla, at an altitude of about 16000 feet above MSL, that I got down to composing the Regimental song - my first ever composition in life - *"Hum JAK ke jawan hain badeh chalo* (Advance, the brave soldiers of JAK)", which the unit pipe and string bands soon picked up as a marching tune. The Colonel of the Regiment had tasked me to come out with a Regimental song, for which I had been wanting to contact some lyricist, but one just did not get time. It became very popular and the whole Paltan started singing on roll-calls, *barakhanas* and *durbars*.

Each company was given a name, namely, Ajay Alpha, Bahadur Bravo, Choukas Charlie, Daler delta etc., each having a company song, which they sang on company and unit functions. One cannot imagine how powerful and a cohesive-force singing together in a group can be. The happiest emotions are exchanged while singing in a group. While marching up these long distances, the boys were invariably singing their group songs, at times with the accompaniment of the unit band, which invariably accompanied us, when the unit marched on road. When the marching steps are playing to a band note, all tiredness is forgotten.

An Excellent Team

I had an excellent team of officers; they might not have done well on courses, but they were a good spirited lot. Sensing uneasiness and reservations on part of my batchmate 2IC (Prithvi Pandit), I had a heart to heart chat with him on the third day of my taking over the Command. I told him that he was not 2IC but No 2 Commanding Officer of the Paltan and that his decisions and status would be respected. He was overwhelmed and extended me such cooperation that I was touched, and felt sorry when he left on posting. My biggest strength were an excellent team of young officers, who ran the show. Though, after me, there was a row of four senior-most officers, who were low medical category, but all of them were highly responsive and self-starters to share their responsibility, except one typical careerist officer who was possessed by his passion to climb up, without coming to grips with the job at hand. Initially, he impressed me with his social graces and gift of the gab and I thought he would be an asset and should be a suitable CO after me. But I was soon to be disappointed; when we went out on the Battalion collective training - he was found totally out of depth, and prone to

shamming. It is amazing how an otherwise good officer can pick up unsoldierly traits and wrong priorities. Even as adjutant he did not prove equal to his job. When he realised that his lack of professional depth stood exposed, he got admitted in a hospital, from where he emotionally black mailed me by writing regularly long letters, that he had come to an end of the road in life and deeply regretted for not having come up to my expectations. A typical non-professional careerist, who could stoop to any level for personal motive.

On the other hand when I recall the unstinted loyalty of my other company commanders, whom I called gladiators, I feel emotionally touched even at this moment, with a sense of indebtedness for the support they gave me. The gang of gladiators included Kishore, Raji, Amar, later joined by Krishan and Susheel. I regretted having recommended posting out of Ajit Sahi, based on certain briefing to me, when I found him to be solid on ground. Kishore had joined from another battalion, being a low medical category, and had applied for premature retirement from service. Finding Kishore a highly forthright, professional and trustworthy colleague, I requested him not to insist on his hanging the uniform, for a year, which he agreed, like a good soldier. The same officers who were considered low profile and dim, stood out in any gathering, social or professional.

The most heartening response was from our ladies. By nature a shy and aloof lot, they were taken out of their shell by my wife, and we became the most close-knit and lively crowd. It is a question of spotting and sparking the vast and varied potential of ladies — they can make invaluable contribution to welfare, domestic peace and healthy projection of the unit. A good 'unit spirit' permeates down to its every lady and child which is fostered by a free social interaction amongst families of all ranks and their discreet association with unit welfare activities. The ladies (and their husbands) are averse to being coerced into attending various family welfare activities, at the cost of attending their domestic chores. The programmes, therefore, have to be attractive, need-based and popular enough to evoke voluntary participation. The main pay-off of free interaction amongst the ladies is the confidence generated among the simple and less-informed, to voice their problems to wives of the officers. It is surprizing how effectively wives of officers can contribute, through their counselling and help. While ladies in no way should interfere in the unit functioning, there should be no hesitation, at the same time, to discreetly associate them with some of the institutes' functioning.

For example, there is no reason why wives of JCOs cannot be invited to the JCOs Mess regimental functions. Ladies of ranks and file are no more withdrawn or averse to social interaction and, given the encouragement and guidance, can conduct themselves with due grace. A well conceived family welfare activity provides ladies and their children an opportunity to learn and develop themselves from interaction with each other and through organised training.

A Solemn Trust

Command of unit is a solemn trust, for which one has to take a stand at times, on points of propriety, which may not be in consonance with the superior officer's mind. It gives no one a pleasure to disagree with others, particularly a superior officer, but when it is a matter of principles, one has to take a stand. I recall two occasions worthy of mention. As a commanding officier, I had given strict orders that during parade hours no working party would be sent outside the parade ground. The higher headquarters staff once ordered the unit to send a working party to dig a pond in a senior commander's bungalow. The working party was sent only after parade hours. When the higher headquarters staff seemed to harass my staff for not sending the fatigue party for the whole day, I personally spoke to the higher staff concerned and told him not to insist on our sending men during parade hours, and instead the job might be given which would be completed in a set time-frame. The next day, our unit detailment was cancelled and a working party from another unit was ordered. There was no mention of it again.

The divisional commander was moving out on posting. I attended my first conference of the brigade commander, after the unit had reached its new location, which had been called to coordinate the farewell programme of the GOC. He suggested that all units should send a team each, preferably headed by an officer, to purchase an exquisite piece each of art or handicraft from the area of recruitment of the units. The brigade headquarters was also to send a separate team. When I was asked, I said that we had a unit memento to be presented on such occasions, therefore, we did not propose to send out any team. My Paltan was kept out of the exercise of the teams going all over the country. We, however, organised a grand function in our unit lines, in our customary way, to bid farewell to the outgoing GOC.

If in spite of an uncompromising attitude of rectitude, one survived and rose in rank, t was no less a miracle. However,

invariably whenever there is a clash of personality with a superior officer - which would happen many a time to a strong personality - the next superior officer(s) would normally hold his hand and over-rule any damage caused. Nevertheless, an average or mediocre officer cannot disagree with his boss and yet expect to rise in rank. One has to be cut-above his peers in merit, to catch the eye of other suprior officers in the chain, to come to his rescue; which may not always happen.

Garnering Means

As a commanding officer one faces problem of funds, particularly in a relatively newer unit. I felt myself handicapped in fulfilling my moral charge of contributing to the unit in the absence of essential funds, but did not let it stop the move-forward. Three areas which urgently needed funds were, purchase of some equipment and instruments for the pipe band, giving a facelift to the unit *mandir* and some essential sports kits. I discussed the matter in the unit *durbar*, and there was a consensus to raise some funds from individual contributions (on a sliding scale). Though it was not allowed, I found no other way for creating immediate funds with which we spruced up the *mandir* and bought the deficient band equipment and some sports kits. In the meantime, we organised the Unit-run canteen more efficiently to produce better return. Our soda water machine was lying out of action, which we got repaired and activated. Soon, our string band started earning its own maintenance funds. We hired services of coaches for various games which gave us good results. As a drill, the state of expenditure and balances in the funds were read out in the unit *sammelans*.

Immense Potential

As a principle, I had prohibited forwarding of nil report, which is so common when some volunteers are sought or comments are asked. In the initial period after taking over command, once we were asked to forward names of body-builders to take part in the Inter-Services competition. Next morning, I looked at the PT Parade and picked out a young boy, Darshan Singh, whose body looked well structured. None in the unit had any clue about body building, but we sent him for a fortnight's refresher training at the venue of the competition. My reminder to anyone going out, that he was representing the Paltan, was enough of motivation. We could not believe when Darshan returned after about two months, having been selected for

the services team and awarded a prize. Later, we learnt that he had spent his own money to get some lessons from a private coach, which we reimbursed.

Accessibility and Collective Participation

If I was to single out one factor which quickly got me over to all ranks of the new Paltan, it was my accessibility to each one of them, at anytime of day or night, and my being able to sell the message that each jawan was as important a link in the Paltan's family-chain as was the commanding officer. Before any major event, I had a unit *Sammelan* (address) with all ranks, and sought views from them on the impending event, besides having routine monthly unit *sammelans*. It was heartening to see men coming up with some fantastic ideas. I remember, when we were tasked to give a demonstration to the Division on 'assault across DCB', in my open discussion for the event, some of the suggestions made by some OR became our SOP later.

For accessibility, besides having a *'Peti-Patrika'* (Suggestion Box), in all central places, where men could drop any letter of suggestion or complaint, without exposing their identity, what worked more effectively was my directly reaching out to all rank and file. Outside my office, there was a tree which I named *'Kalpa Vriksh'* (Tree of Wish) by placing a placard, where anyone, who wanted to meet me immediately, could come and stand. I would leave all my commitments to attend to the man standing under *'Kalp Vriksh'*. There were incidents when even JCOs stood there to have my immediate hearing. When we moved to the high altitude area, where there was no suitable tree, I got a portion of the rock outside my office painted white and called it *'Safed Patther'* (White Stone), where anyone, who wanted my immediate audience, could stand. The *'Kalp Vriksh'* or *'Safed Patther'* concept continuously kept me close to and in touch with all ranks of the Paltan.

Training — Participative Accountability

Training has to be the primary concern of a commanding officer. I do not agree with those who would give a long list of reasons for how training could not be carried out. Instead, one has to earnestly find ways to make the most of the available time and opportunities to train men.

My concept of training hinged on making each individual accountable for his own individual training, afford each commander, down to section and detachment, atleast one training cycle (10-12 weeks) to train his command and carry out battalion collective training at least once every year. The spirit of individual training was, besides individual's accountability for his personal standards of training, to generate a 'competition with self' so that he ever tries to improve on his previous standards of training, education and general awareness. To create individual accountability, I got training cards made for each individual, which he was supposed to carry on person at all times. This card gave the details as to when he had last fired his personal weapon and carried out battle physical efficiency test or physical proficiency tests, and results obtained therein. The worst defaulters in individual training are the administrative staff and personnel working as *Sahayak* or attached for some duty outside the unit. It was also an individual's personal duty, besides the company commander's, to ensure that he had completed his six monthly firing and BPET tests, before he was sent on leave, except where granted special exemption by the CO. Every day the unit short range was active and twice a week there was BPET/PPT organised for those who wished to participate.

It was assuring to see how each individual responded to complete his personal obligation towards his own training. One would find *Sahayaks* (batmen) and clerks etc., on their own, reporting at the firing range and BPET start points. Soon, I found, there was rarely any individual with his card incomplete. For sub unit training, I strictly followed the concept of 'training company'; in that each company was designated by rotation, training company, once in a year, when the company commander had his maximum available strength on training. In addition, a 'casuals training company' was created for training of the remaining personnel. If a unit can keep its firing range active every day and night, and its obstacle course humming with activity, more than three-fourth of the training is already completed. One is bound to be pleasantly surprised by the more-than-expected results that our sub unit/section/detachment commanders can produce, once a spark of motivation and competition is injected in them, to train their own command.

A Gratitude

I shall be failing in my duty if I did not place on record my grateful appreciation for the first brigade commander, Brigadier (later Lt Gen)

V Madan when I took over the Paltan. He was not a run of the mill senior officer, gave me full freedom in organising unit training and other activities, and never interfered. Himself a die-hard professional and thinker, he never thrust a point and had the grace of accepting a differing opinion. The other great quality of his was to give credit to his subordinates publically and in front of his superior officer. It is the latter quality of giving credit to a subordinate, which seems to have become rare. The other senior officer whom I found to have the grace to give credit was Maj Gen (later Lt Gen) VK Sood, with whom I served as his Divisional Principal Staff Officer in Nagaland-Manipur. On one occasion, the Chief of Army Staff (Gen. Vaidya) was to be briefed. The GOC gave a brief assessment of the situation and suddenly said, "Well for detailed briefing on operational and other plans my G1 would do a better job", and handed over the stage to me for briefing and discussion, which carried on for over two hours. Invariably, it is the commander having professional depth himself who would be inclined to give credit to his subordinate - in fact, he feels happy in growing training and projecting a subordinate.

Tears of Happiness

Before the unit moved to its next location, we were to complete our annual inspection. I knew, it was my last annual inspection with the Paltan. The first event was the ceremonial drill which I commanded myself, even though I was given the option of giving this responsibility to my 2IC, because during that period, I had a small injury. When I saw my Paltan fall-in in their colourful ceremonial dress, my emotions got better of me, but I controlled myself. After the excellent parade, when I came home for breakfast, I could not control my emotions and cried like a child on the breakfast table. It is a great emotional bond which brings together individuals from all over, to live, do and be ever ready to die together in a unit. The spirit of the Paltan which I had left about 16 years earlier, once again overwhelmed me, when I saw its special courier reaching me in Sikkim, hundreds of miles away, to hand over the unit memento, just two days before the date of my superannuation from service. In the memento, one can see the image of the great comrades one was privileged to have been associated with. Command of unit is indeed a supreme experience of one's life.

Twenty Three

Formation Commander

An Introduction

After taking over the brigade, located in a hilly area of J & K, as a measure of introduction, I set a 10 days brigade exercise with troops, where all three battalions and supporting elements were given independent areas for their unit level exercises. It followed the time schedule of three days each at company and battalion level and four days for brigade level exercise. Hills provide vast tracts for training exercises. It was an excellent opportunity for me to interact with the units. It was also a good occasion for interaction between the units, at various levels. We also organised, during this outing, demonstrations and TEWTS (Tactical Exercise Without Troops) on important subjects. In the last phase, it was a two-sided exercise, with units operating against each other. The finale was an exercise involving a brigade-sized attack by infiltration at night, on an objective about 10 km in depth. Each unit did a commendable job.

Field Days on End

With my brigade dedicated for reserve tasks to a portion of a Corps Zone, when I met the Army Commander, I suggested that the reserve brigade should not only be associated with the operational planning and operational alerts of the entire Corps Zone, but also be familiarised with the remaining parts of the Command theatre; because, when enemy threat developed in any part of the Theatre, the

reserve brigade, might have to be rushed. Therefore, unless the brigade was familiar with the terrain and operational plans, it would be handicapped in carrying out the reserve tasks, subsequently in war. The Army Commander appreciated my suggestion and ordered my association with operational alerts and other planning process of the entire Corps Zone, and also desired me to carry out liaison with the other Corps Zone. This increased the commitments of my Formation Headquarters and the units because throughout the year, some or the other Division would be carrying out an exercise or operational alert or wargame, which meant that we were continuously on the move and alert. In addition, Operation Rakshak was launched during this period, in view of the disturbances caused by the proxy war in J & K, for which troops were extensively deployed for border-sealing role as also to flush out militants from the interior areas.

A Missed Opportunity

It was about 10 pm and soup had just been served, at a party in an old friend's house, when the Command Chief of Staff, came on the line and asked me, as to in how much time I would be able to move out two battalions for a special operation in the Valley. I told him that within one hour after the transport was made available. With my one battalion already having been deployed elsewhere, when he told me that only battalions were required and I was not required to go along, I strongly protested and said that even if it was one man more than a battalion, there was no way I could stay back. Within 15 minutes he came back, after consulting the Army Commander, to confirm that I could also leave. I was told that the (valley) Corps Commander would brief me about the special operation at an RV (rendezvous) in Kashmir Valley at 3 pm next day, a distance of over 250 km.

One felt quite heroic at the thought of being inducted in the Valley which was on fire. I could see some admiring glances at me in the party. From the party, I drove straight to my office where my commanding officers and staff were waiting. Since some vehicles were to fetch up from another station, we could get transport only by 2 am. At 3 am we marched out. It had rained very heavily the whole night, therefore, at the first Traffic Check post (TCP) we were told that there were landslides at three places and that we should halt at the TCP till landslides were cleared. I decided, instead, to wait at the first landslide site. We had already alerted the road repairs

organisation to speed up slips clearance, though it was too much to expect them to work at night to clear the slides. Nor could we have waited for the road labourers to take their own time to clear the block, and yet reach the RV in time. The units had been advised to keep crow bars and other tools etc. readily available for road clearance. The columns were to immediately dismount at a road block and get down to its clearance fast. In fact, I was moving with the leading column and controlling the road clearing activity. Within half an hour, the first road block was cleared.

When we reached the second road slide area, a dozer was already working on the site. However, we had to spend another half an hour before we could cross this road block. The third slide was almost clear by the time we reached it. However, there was another surprise landslide where a rock had fallen on the road, which we used our own manpower and equipment to clear.

What surprised me was that the brigade column had reached the RV, over two hours before the expected time of arrival. When the Corps Commander arrived, he was upset to find that the other two brigades which had also been ordered to move to the RV, from within the Valley, for the same special operation, were behind time. As regards the operation, it was a typical case of over-reaction and deficient planning at the higher level. If there was a credible information of some foreign infiltrators having concentrated in a part of the Valley, it was inadvisable to delay the flushing operation till a divisional-sized force (three brigade groups) had been collected. For any worthwhile results, the operation should have been launched quickly with whatever force could be mustered locally. We went through a big movement of troops, to no avail. It, however, gave me, my staff and the COs a good opportunity to polish up our drills for conduct of actual operations. One learnt a lot of lessons with regard to coordination of such a large-sized operation. We stayed on in the Valley for some time till we were deinducted.

Addressing to the Problem

Having been a regular visitor to Kashmir since childhood, I have always felt that with the unparalleled and bountiful gift of nature, and its all-important location, it has rightly been called for ages-long, the crown of India. Its people are peace-loving and, by and large, as spirited Indian nationalists as any other Indian. In all wars and national crises, the Kashmiris have galvanised themselves and fought

valiantly against the foreign aggressors. Thus, the problem in Kashmir is not of the Kashmiris; it is a problem of the abettors from across the border, and mightily compounded by India's political bungling.

During the period of end 1989 and early 1990, when I was in the valley with my brigade, when many thought that Kashmir problem was irretrievable, I found that the common man was not carried by the anti-India propaganda or pro-*azadi* slogans. I never came across a face which did not respond to my smile with a smile. What was, however, apparent was an eerie sense of uncertainty generated by India's political vacillation and infirmity. The most disastrous decision, on part of the Indian Government during that period, was its abject surrender to accept the militants' conditions for release of the kidnapped daughter of the then Minister of Home. With that, the initiative was wrested by the militants, and the fence-sitters who constituted a vast majority of the Kashmir population, were disillusioned as to the Government's ability to control the foreign-supported insurgency. If the problem has eluded a solution for so long, the reason is not far to see. Besides the inept political handling of the situation(s), from time to time, we have failed to address the problem at its source, and have tried to give the malady only a prophylactic treatment, rather than pulling the disease up by the roots.

Employment of Reserve — a Positive Concept

True to the reserve role, my brigade was invariably mobilised and ordered for induction in a crisis situation, either as a part of an operational alert exercise or for actual counter-insurgency operations, in vast areas encompassing the hill sector and the plains, for which mobilisation drills were fully geared to meet all contingencies. There is invariably a debate on employment of a reserve formation. With a compulsive tendency on part of the holding commanders to embroil the reserve formation in parts, as the situation develops instead of employing it as a whole, a comical situation could develop, where the units of a reserve brigade would have got sucked, one by one, in different sectors, leaving in lurch the brigade headquarters, whose jobless commander could whistle at his dog and go for a walk. I have always maintained that the reserve formation must be employed as whole, without petering out its collective war potential.

It is imperative that the war games and operational discussions, pertaining to a sector, are not conducted in isolation from the overall

picture and requirement of resources for the other sectors. An operational discussion or a war game of a particular formation, is likely to visualise the worst scenario for it, as if the entire thrust of enemy offensive would come against it. Thus, trying to meet the worst possible scenario of defensive battle in each sector, which is mostly exaggerated, temptably, all available resources get defensively sucked in, with very limited or no resources left as uncommitted reserve for offensive or counter-offensive operations.

It is inadvisable to hinge the concept of defensive operations on trying to stabilise the defensive situation, by blunting the enemy offensive frontally, before launching own counter-offensive. The worst threat to a concept of defensive battle comes from fighting it defensively. It must be appreciated that in a short and intense war, unless, besides the offensive formations, the defensive formations are also geared to undertake offensive operations, from day one, the war may come to an end without a large number of holding formations having made any contribution to the war effort. Even in the defended sector(s), where the enemy offensive is addressed, the priority should be not on fighting a holding action, by concentrating all effort at the head of the enemy thrust, but a disruptive and unbalancing counter offensive action, by taking battle into the enemy land, to force him to recoil. What pays in war is a bold and aggressive action, aimed at wresting initiative from the attacker, particularly when the chips are down for the defender.

An attacker is very sensitive to the security of its tail and wary of any bold disruptive action by the defender which can force him to recoil. In this context, it may by interesting to recall how, at a critical juncture in the 1973 war, Israelis, who seemed crushed and overwhelmed, turned the table against the Syrians in the battle of Golan Heights. As brought out in the book *'War and Antiwar'*, in a surprise move, Syrians had launched five divisions with over 1400 tanks against Israeli two brigades (6000 men and 170 tanks). A situation arose when 90 per cent of the Israeli officers were either killed or wounded, the Israeli divisional headquarters was overrun and the defenders' tanks were reduced to seven, when a reinforcement of hastily-repaired 13 tanks was received, and there was a debate whether to employ them on plugging weak points for a holding action, or to employ them on an offensive action. The defending commander decided to use them for a counter attack which stunned the Syrians, who were at that stage only a few minutes from Jordan River and sea of Galilee. Subsequently, when a

division-sized reinforcement fetched up, and its employment was again debated, the defender opted to use it for counter-offensive rather than succumbing to the temptation of committing reserves on ground holding role. And that was what forced Syrians to recoil and withdraw.

As to the point of application or objective for a reserve force, Liddell Hart has prescribed an eternal recipe in his book '*Strategy, The Indirect Approach*', "In general, the nearer to the force that the cut is made, the more immediate the effect; the nearer to the base the greater the effect. In either case, the effect becomes much greater and more quickly felt if made against a force that is in motion than a force that is stationary".

A hyper-sensitivity to the loss of ground forces the higher commander to get involved in the defensive battle rather prematurely, and thereafter, it becomes a continuous slogging match. In fact, the military psyche is so obsessed by the previous wars that commanders generally end up fighting the last war(s) in their thoughts and plans.

A Negative Concept

With an obsessive defensive psyche, a defender tends to choose the path of least resistance, by occupying an arithmatically drawn linear defence line along the entire frontier. We seem to have forgotten the time-tested positive concepts of tactical traps or lures, killing grounds, the well-conceived defensive or tactical mine fields, and instead cannot resist the temptation of displaying every bit linearly on the shop window. A great damage has been done to a commander's creativity and planning by the concept of DCB, developed on both sides of India's western borders. Created at a period when the then ground forces commanders might have found its relevance to certain areas and situation, it has now turned into an essential evil and a limiting factor in all military thinking.

History of war bears testimony to the fact that no defence-line, however strong it might be, could stop a determined attacker from penetrating it. In fact, these so-called impregnable defence lines, have proved catastrophic to their defenders, whether it was the German *Seig Fried* or French *Maginot* lines in the Second World War, or *Barlev line* in Arab-Israel war.

Creation of ditch obstacle, to protect an important communication centre or a fort, has been known in India's past

history of warfare. However, the concept of creating a linear ditch obstacle, along the vaster spans of its western border, came into being after 1971 war. The experience of 1965 and 1971 wars revealed that both sides could, at will, violate the borders and make initial territorial gains against an unprepared adversary, which was particularly unacceptable in the narrow stretch of plains in the Jammu region, where the IB ran close to the crucial and vital line of communication (L of C) with the rest of the country. Therefore, to provide a protective shield to the L of C, a DCB obstacle was made in the Jammu region. However, the essence of the linear obstacle, as would be apparent to a rational observer, was to save men from the ground-holding role, so that larger troops could be spared as reserve for mobile operations and undertaking counter-offensive in a faster time-frame. Regrettably, over the period, the underlying logic and spirit of the concept of DCB seem to have got lost. One has to guard against the temptation of hinging the operational plans on the linear obstacle being held with maximum available troops and other resources, with hardly any worthwhile reserves maintained at unit or higher levels.

What is more tragic is the universal application of the DCB concept along the rest of the western borders, whether or not the tactical or strategic considerations merit it. The astronomical initial investment in creation of this obstacle system, and a heavy maintenance cost to keep this system operative, are a prohibitive indulgence. Unfortunately, on the contrary, the tendency of extending this wastefully expensive indulgence, in other sectors seems to be continuing, without realising the trap the defenders are falling in. With the crores of funds that one has to spend in annual maintenance of the DCBs, one could equip and modernise a large force, which is a bigger need, and at the same time, a tactically more sound and rewarding concept in the defensive posture.

A Potpourri of Other Reflections

One difference worth a mention, between the command experience of unit and a formation, is that the unit commander gets too emotionally involved in each unit activity. For example, a commanding officer is so involved in the outcome of an inter-battalion competition that he hardly enjoys the event, unless his team wins. On the other hand, a formation commander views things from a more detached and broader perspective. However, even as a

formation commander, getting involved in unit matters becomes inescapable at times.

On my first round to the unit lines, I found that living conditions were deplorable, particularly, the water and hygiene/sanitation state was precarious. It was revealing to learn that Infanty units, which had the shortest peace tenure and had the worst type of disturbed family life because of their far and wide deployment in Operation Rakshak, had the least authorisation of family accommodation in the station. I had an audience with the Command Chief of Staff and the Corps and Army Commanders to draw their attention to the grave administrative aberration, for which corrective actions were initiated. While we were trying to provide minimum essential needs to our men, I was surprised to find that based on a past projection, a large fund for a special work, for construction of some additional guest rooms for officers, had been released. Well, having more guest rooms was not a bad idea, but surely, it was not the priority need. Therefore, I surrendered the funds for the guest rooms. Tragically, the system did not allow re-appropriation of the surrendered funds for another urgent work, as I expected when I surrendered the said release of funds.

Hazards of Being a Goodie-Goodie

Some people are too polite and obliging to be effective commanders. A commander has to be harsh and exacting, at times, to firmly check substandard and bad discipline. A philosophy of live and let live can be highly dangerous. Sometimes, the so-called goodie-goodie commanders, because of their indecision and infirmity, let a situation grow worse till a state when it is too late. Once, while witnessing an inter-battalion firing competition, I overheard an officer of a particular unit publically blaming a section of his own unit for the unit's poor performance in the competition. This unit had been raised as an experiment, by pooling troops from two different old regiments. This officer, belonging to one Infantry regiment, was heard to make an insinuating remark, that with such a junk of men having come from the other regiment, how could that paltan perform well in the competition. It was a rare occasion for me to have the officer called in my office along with his commanding officer. Sure enough, the problem in the unit was serious. There was almost a state of mutiny by a section of the paltan, for which I had to intervene to control things. It was with a ser regret I had to hold the commanding officer's hands in rt-m ing . vise

first-rate soldier, on grounds of discipline and awarding him serious punishment, which the CO could have avoided.

Making the Most of Training Opportunities

We had planned to carry out Brigade collective training in the plains of Punjab, about 160 km from our permanent location. About a week before the move of the Brigade for its exercise location, we were told to cancel the collective training, because due to critical shortage of fuel in the country, all large scale movement of troops by transport had been stopped. I did not accept the cancellation of the training event and, instead, made out a small exercise plot, for cross country movement of the brigade group, through the hills. It gave me an opportunity, after a long time, to walk with men, over a long distance for three days. Our movement used to start after last light and end before first light. During the day, we would halt. It was a fun once again to sleep in a bivouac during the move. The collective training that we carried out, as per the schedule, was later converted into a demonstration for the entire Corps, for attack across DCB. We associated aircrafts in the training demonstration. Again, there was so much to learn.

What we seldom missed was our officers fortnights where we discussed topical issues, various concepts of leadership, management of human resources, book reviews, analysis of operations, military history and higher values of life, etc. It was surprising how officers took pains to prepare their part of the training events. It was also an occasion to freely interact with each other.

During various training or sports events, I did not encourage separate enclosures for tea for officers. I would invariably walk across and pick up a glass of tea from the men's stand. As an experiment, we started having a common enclosure for officers, JCOs and the participants of the event. Initially, some problems were posed in creating such large stands, but gradually it became a drill with no problem whatsoever. Frequent free interaction with JCO, OR and their families is a good training and confidence-building ground for them, their wives and children.

The other thing which I insisted on was that while in the Officers Mess we must have an officer-like standard of high taste, but while on training with men or an operational environment, there could be no different standards for officers. In that, I was allergic to 'bull', particularly while on outdoors. I remember the first unit I visited, for

an operational briefing, in the area of our operational responsibility, where arrangements for the view-point on a shrubby height, included white-washing of stones on both sides of the track, leading to the viewpoint, *shamyana* (decorated enclosure), items of mess furniture, cutlery etc., and not to forget the elaborate tented toilet. All other commanding officers were also present at the view-point. I told them that I hated 'bull' during outdoors and I was not walking away since it was the first time. I did not have to repeat these instructions.

My wife made it a point to invite each officer and family to our house over a cocktail party. While preparing the list of guests, priority was given to the junior officers. It is delightful interacting with officers and families in your own house, when you go about personally serving them. There was no officer or lady in the Brigade who had not been invited to our house. On two occasions, we also invited for tea some selected JCOs with their wives to our house. Such social interaction with JCOs and their families has its own pay-off. Many a time junior-officers and ladies would comment that for the first time ever they had been invited to a Flag Staff House.

A Trek

During my first year's annual leave, I decided to go on a trek, for which I asked for volunteer JCO/OR from the brigade headquarters Camp. A physically fit Subedar Major of the brigade headquarters' Camp and 10 other OR were selected out of the volunteers, and we were lost for a week in the interior of J&K, each one of us carrying own rucksack. One cannot imagine how beautiful each unknown track, hill range or valley could be. Halting on a rock and looking down the exotic valleys takes away one's fatigue. On a trek, one needs help of a guide in the interior hilly areas, to take you along a short-cut or along a particular chosen route. For the first three days, we picked up a school boy (class X) who, on his own, wished to join us as he was having holidays. He was well looked after. The last leg of our trek was a halt at Mantlai, near Sudh Mahadev, which is gifted with a breath-taking scenic beauty. I was stunned by its natural panoramic loveliness when I saw it first. Besides an airstrip, the big and posh hostel facilities created by late Dhirendra Brahmchari, the natural environs are too enchanting. One felt sorry, that because of some bureaucratic hassles, the facilities were lying in a state of disuse.

I was just two days in my second year's leave, and was planning to leave for Himachal Pradesh the next day, for a long visit and trek, when I received my posting order, to move at a short notice, to take over as Brigadier General Staff of a Corps deployed in Punjab & Rajasthan. That brought an end to an eventful and satisfying inning with the great Tithwal Brigade.

TAIL PIECE

I wish to reiterate my belief that a commander who is, (a) clean (both in motive and dealings) and (b) a competent performer of his duty, will be respected and supported, to the hilt, by his command, to produce unbelievable results. Well-meaning decisions, devoid of any personal interest, even if not fully in conformity with the rules, are invariably accepted. Under the halo of a commander's missionary zeal and inspiring personality, his aberrant streaks, if any, are overlooked by rank and file. However, while men readily accept a veritable and fair hard task-master without a complaint, management of officers needs discreet handling. It is difficult for a commander to keep every officer happy and be effective too. An odd careerist subordinate is bound to sulk and resent when he finds his performance appraisal not to his satisfaction. A commander does not have to be overly bothered about it. This is a tax a good commander has to pay for his honest and fearless functions of command.

It is the moral duty of a commander to train and develop his subordinates, through regular guidance, counselling or warning, as warranted, which is unfortunately getting out of the fashion, on account of the ill-advised pretext of running a happy team. As if the reporting officers are in competition with each other, in inflating their respective subordinates' performance reports, which they find as an effective tool to hide their own inadequacies, as also to keep everyone happy. But in the process, they fail the system by clubbing donkeys and horses together, as also deny the former an opportunity to improve professionally, through an objective appraisal which brings out their weaknesses. Besides, a conscientious and objective reporting officer stands as an odd-man-out and unwanted by his subordinates. Something ought to be done to resolve the mess created by an obsessive linkage of an officers' merit with his figurative profile (on record).

A Good Commander's Definition

I may wind up this chapter by giving the essence of an interesting definition, given in the book, *Crisis in Command*, of a 'good officer' and how to locate him: 'distrust an officer with perfect record of service; look for a man with low marks in tact, who deviates from accepted doctrine, with low marks in loyalty, unwilling to acquiesce with superiors' policies; distrust the one who uses buzzwords, has all his tickets punched; trust the one who has repeated tenures of combat, whose command performed well.'

Epilogue

Summary of the Suggested Reforms

NATIONAL LEVEL

General

It is imperative for the nation's top leadership to appreciate and address themselves to the crucial military problems, which bear on the country's security. After all, the armed forces are only the war horses at the disposal of the country's political leadership. Unless, the political leadership shows sagacity in discerning the nuances of the combat effectiveness of its forces, we may be heading for a jolt of 1962 once again. In this regard, it may be pertinent to point out that the history of reforms shows that these can never be effected by an organisation from within, because of the vested interests of the hierarchy to maintain *status quo*. Therefore, reforms have to come from outside. In the succeeding paragraphs are summarised the proposed major reforms, to help overcome the crisis in leadership.

National Security Council (NSC)

Unless the reforms start at the top, no positive results can be expected. For a long time, the desirability of having a National Security Council (NSC) has been accepted in priciple, but remained in the cold, eventhough this has constituted an important item of the election manifesto of some of the major political parties. There is an imperative need to have an apex body to define and regularly update the country's security perspective and give a clear direction to its military forces. It ought to be a functional body and not merely

titular. Therefore, unless we have specialists in the military matters forming part of the NSC, the whole exercise will be a non-starter. To this end, the Chiefs of Staff of the three Services must form part of the committee.

Inducting Military Mind in the Mainstream

The inadequacy in national security planning will continue to nag us, unless we have a fair presence of retired service personnel, inducted in the political stream of the country. Presently, military representation in the political field is negligible and found wanting. After all, security perspective demands a clear understanding of the world's military scenario, the potential and possible designs of the hostile neighbouring countries and, based on these, laying down the organisational roles for our forces, both for the reactive and pro-active modes. This is not easy for a political leader to comprehend in totality, unless he had been associated with military matters at some earlier stage of his life. The political leadership's inadequacy in military matters leads to its exploitation by bureaucracy who are equally detached from ground realities, in the matter of national security. The other ramification of this inadequacy, which is of a more serious nature, is that a less-informed political leadership can not take strong decisions and show political will in military matters. For this, unless the political leadership is educated and clear about the nuances of the military matters, their decisions in the matter of defence will continue to suffer from imbalance. A weak political leadership gets invariably exploited both by bureaucracy as also by the serving military leadership.

It must be noted that when a soldier retires from service, say an OR at mid 30s, JCO at mid 40s, and officer at 50-52, he is at the prime of his professional efficiency and has a vast potential to contribute to the society. Instead of being a sentinel soldier on the frontier, he is now a serviceman at his home, in his street, village and the area. With a naturally ingrained sense of discipline and duty, he is a good influence wherever he stands. Society must institutionalise utilisation of this vast potential. Having spent the prime of his life in an insulated and protected environment, it is not easy for him to quickly adjust himself to the ways of life in the mainstream. Therefore, it will be a good idea to provide an institutionalised reserved representation to some suitable exservicemen in the Parliament, state assemblies/councils and other lower level elective bodies, down to the roots, say Panchayat. The trained and

disciplined manpower of ex-servicemen should be channelised to various developmental activities in their home states, where they generally prefer to stay. Similarly, political parties should draw in more of the talent and expertise amongst the retired defence personnel.

Bureaucracy has Powers without Responsibility

With less-informed political leadership, the bureaucracy have come to assume absolute power on all military matters, without a shred of accountability for military preparedness. While they wield all the power and have the last say in higher planning and equipping the forces, they are not the least answerable for any military disaster that the nation might suffer. For ensuring operational success, the buck stops at the military commander's table. The bureaucrats draw strength from their years-long working in the same department, thereby, having a deeper knowledge of any case or subject coming up for government approval. In procedural wrangling, they are one-up on the service officers, who are posted on a short tenure basis. Many a time files keep shuttling up and down in trying to pick holes, instead of appreciating the spirit of the matter and moving forward. Moreover, on part of the bureaucracy, it is not fair to assume knowledgeability, just because they have been dealing with military matters on files. Unless one has been adequately exposed to the ground conditions of military services, one can never get the correct perspective.

Unfortunately, many in the hierarchy and chain of decision-making feel that they are doing a favour while doing their legitimate duty. Some unscrupulous ones in authority try to have their pound of flesh by extracting compensatory favours. Since bureaucracy holds the key to all decisions, including matters of promotion, a large section of the military officer cadre feel that instead of hitting one's head against the wall of the military organisition, one could achieve favourable results by circumventing the stipulated channel and getting on directly to the corridors of the powers that be, among bureaucracy and political leaders. It is sad to read in the press about certain incidents of corrupt practices in dishing out promotions in violation of the norms, where merit is given a go-by. One is not too sure of the veracity of such rumours, but people do quote instances of bargaining or bartering between the services headquarters and the bureaucratic channel.

There has to be a perfect match between ground realities and the decision-making process. The assumed knowledgeability of bureaucracy is dangerous. Therefore, there is a definite case for lateral induction of service officers in the bureaucratic channel and vice versa. Suitable officers could be inducted in bureaucracy after they have had an experience of command, of atleast a unit, and staff at the formation or higher level. This lateral adjustment could be both on temporary tenure-based or on permanent basis. Similarly, civilian officers intended to be specialised in Ministry of Defence, must have a tenure or two of holding a suitable appointment in the service or lower headquarters, before they come up to the level of joint secretary. It will be a good day for the country when we have a former service officer rising to be the defence secretary, and a still happier state when an ex-serviceman takes over as defence minister.

Restructuring Para Military Forces

Besides the military machine, the country's security also depends on how well its Police Forces are organised, to maintain law and order during peace, as also act as second line of defence during war, in conjunction with military. It is, therefore, imperative that their role and command and control are clearly and pragmatically defined. To this end, the para military forces must be divided under two main categories, i.e. those organised for law and order, to be controlled by Ministry of Home, and those meant for border management during peace, and operating in conjuction with Army, during war situation, to be controlled by Ministry of Defence. For better coordination of effort, the border management responsibility on sensitive borders during peace can be handed over to RR, for which a minumim of 50 per cent of the BSF be merged with RR. The remaining half of BSF be retained as a separate force, to deal with low level militancy in the states as also carry out border-management on relatively peaceful borders. NSG should also be merged with BSF or CRPF. In addition, Police and PMF operating in conjunction with Army for operations against militancy or a warlike situation, must come under the unified control of Army for the duration of the operation(s).

Down-sizing the Standing Army

There has been a welcome thaw, over the years, in the Sino-Indian relationship. China evidently has higher priority problems, to attend to, with Washington, Moscow or Tokyo rather than Delhi, which does not seem to figure in her priorities. Even Pakistan seems to be

realising the futility of her India-bashing policy. How long can one live in an illusory dream or mania of ill-wishing a neighbour, without suffering himself? Never in the history of the world has a state prospered economically to its potential, as long as it felt threatened by its hostile neighbours across the borders. There could not be a more appropriate time than the present, to carry out substantial reduction in our standing armed forces, thereby sending across a message of our goodwill as also the faith in our ability to protect the country's territorial integrity through national mobilisation in the event of war. My belief is that both China and Pakistan would respond by down-sizing their forces as well. In fact, China has already taken a substantial step in this direction. The specifics of my recommendations made at Table 8 of the book, may be considered for further analysis and study. At the outset, we must reduce our standing Army by 30 per cent, over the next about five years years, after which a further reduction to 50 per cent could be affected. A school of thought that by unilateral down-sizing of forces, the country runs a security risk, is misconceived because the essence of the proposal is to improve the combat potential through modernisation of the forces, with an efficient national mobilisation scheme, to take the field at a short notice.

Administrative Tribunal

There is a positive need for instituting a high-powered special Tribunal for the military services to adjudicate both on legal as also the administrative cases. It is highly desirable that men in uniform do not feel to be a second-rate citizens, and denied their fundamental rights of equality with their civilian counterparts, in matters of equity and natural justice. The distinction of being the only developing/progresive Army in the world, having no 'court of appeal', should be done away with. The Tribunal should be headed by a retired chief justice of India, with two to three retired judges/chief justice of High Courts, three retired chiefs of staff from the three military services or other suitable senior officers.

A view held by some that the proposed reforms are likely to erode the authority of senior commanders lacks substance. A dispassionate view would, on the other hand, show that by allowing the commanders an unchecked and arbitrary use of their powers is, in itself, erosive of their moral authority, besides undermining discipline and morale of the forces. Institutional safeguards and checks against arbitrary use of authority are a must in a disciplined

organisation. Both, the authority of the commanders and morale of the men are equally indispensable requirements of a combat force. Bad and unjust decisions, emanating from arbitrary use of power, can be highly damaging to the morale and discipline of any organisation. The proposed reforms should, therefore, be viewed positively. Institution of a statutory body will further strengthen the faith of all ranks in the system.

IN-HOUSE MILITARY REFORMS

Rationalising Procedure of Complaints

Law of natural justice demands that if anyone in the chain is connected with a complaint or case, it should not be processed through such a superior officer. The prudent course would be to initially ask the concerned superior officer to give his side of the story, on the allegations made, without giving him at the outset a copy of the complaint. Once his comments have been received and analysed, he could then be provided with a copy of the complaint, to reconcile the gaps or contradictions, if any. In the meantime, a copy of his comments should also be made available to the complainant, to enable him to submit a counter-affidavit, if he so wishes. Thus, the cycle is complete before adjudication. With the complaint going through the respondent superior officer, he gets an opportunity to manipulate the facts, to contest unfavourable evidence in the case.

Speaking Order/Decision

All complaints/appeals must be disposed of with a detailed statement of reasons which cover all issues raised in the complaint, and the grounds for rejection thereof. A single-line disposal or rejection is arbitrary in nature and against the law of natural justice.

Violation of Law and Service Norms

A case of violation of law and instructions must be sternly dealt with, without an exception, irrespective of the rank and position of the individuals involved. Or else, the service culture of discipline and faith will go to ruins. Such a case must be referred to the Tribunal and military authorities be prohibited from disposing it of.

Restructuring Service Headquarters

All agencies involved in disposal of legal cases, namely, the JAG Branch, CAB and Legal Cell should function through the proposed

Tribunal, preferably for all purposes, or else, at least for technical control.

Mitigating Subjectivity in Appraisal

Balancing Performance Appraisal

The existing system suffers from inadequate safeguard against a biased appraisal of a reporting officer. It is not easy for a ratee to establish subjectivity on part of the rater, as the system is heavily loaded against an upright professional who places interest of the organisation above an individual superior officer's. It is not uncommon to come across cases where an officer richly contributed to the efficiency of his outfit and produced high results, yet the recorded performance was dim. There is no institutionalised provision of obtaining a feed-back on the ratee's performance, as perceived by his subordinates directly or indirectly. A system of obtaining feedback from subordinates will generate greater accountability on part of the commander towards his acts and decisions, particularly as these relate to the larger interest of the organisation. It may sound too radical a change, but viewed rationally, it will protect good leaders of men against bias, and expose the unprofessional fake ones. It may be reiterated at the cost of repetition, that the aim is not to erode the legitimate authority of a commander but to institute checks and balances on its arbitrary use, which can demolish the very fabric of a disciplined force. We could obtain this input in the form of a discreetly prepared questionnaire, to be forwarded by subordinates about their respective unit/ establishment, with a serious penalty against those who indulge in denigrating their superior officers with an ulterior motive. A commander cannot be let down by an isolated adverse or motivated feedback. A total view will have to be taken, after considering both the positive as also the negative feedbacks. The proposed system with practice should mature into an accepable and workable system as in vogue in some progressive armies.

Self-assessment

It will be a good idea to introduce a system of self-assessment by the ratee on the line of the existing system among the civil Central Government employees, before the reporting officer endorses his appraisal. This should act as a moral check, though in a small way, on the reporting officer's subjectivity in assessment.

Objectifying Achievement

The existing system does not cater for objectification of actual performance of a commander in his functions of command. It will substantially enhance credibility of the system, as also assist the reporting officers in the chain, to objectively assess the ratee's actual performance on ground, by relating it to how his unit/establishment has performed in various fields of activity. To this end, the standards of a unit in various fields of activity i.e. war performance, operational preparedness, training, equipment, morale, administration and interior economy etc could be objectified annually in conjunction with its annual inspection by an independent and specialised agency. Thus, the unit/establishment will be handed over to the new commander with the standards obtaining. The yearly appraisal of the unit's performance should constitute an important input for annual appraisal by the reporting officer.

Applying the Moderating Factor

Human being, as he is, is naturally inclined to favour his affiliates on grounds of kinship, regimental or ethnic connections. This unsublimed clannish instinct among some senior commanders leads to imbalancing the fair equation of merit, by their boosting up a favourite ratee (mediocre), beyond all norms of objectivity. To check this unhealthy trend of a subjective rater, it will be a good idea to apply a moderating factor, say factor X. The system can be institutionalised to identify cases where a linkage between a ratee and the rater exists, so that factor X can be applied to the appraisal of the ratee, if it is not in consonance with his over-all performance profile. Preferably, officers having a close linkage of kinship or belonging to the same unit should not service under each other, after leaving the unit.

Officer Cadre Intake

The Officer Cadre intake should be so organised that we should get about 50 per cent of the entry from civil stream, for NDA and Services Academies (IMA etc), and the other 50 per cent should come from amongst rank and file. We should scrap the Short Service Commission entry from civil stream. As proposed in Chapter One, the terms of the entries from rank and file should be modified to enable soldiers' entry in the officers cadre at a younger age, so that they are not seriously handicapped or placed at a disadvantage for further promotion.

Enrolment

Though thrust on looking for intellectual potential of a candidate is welcome, it should not be at the cost of character potential of the man. For the general duty combat arms and services which constitute the major chunk of intake, the demand should be more on the character potential and physical toughness for which the rural youth aptly foot the bill. We should, therefore, not insist on matric qualification for the general duty entries of combat arms and services. Further, we should have larger percentage of enrolment from border states and gradually change the single or fixed-class based combat arm regiments into all-India all-class based enrolment.

Reinvigorating Traditional Values

Presently, there is no dedicated organisation to specifically monitor aspects of the military ethics in the services. Nor is there any specifically defined code of conduct or honour code, as is in vogue in some other armies. Though there is an Institute of Psychological Research and also an Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences, and some other establishments under the Ministry of Defence and the services, much remains to be desired in coordinating their effort at the national level. The recent raising of a separate cell for Human Rights by the Army was rather an incomplete step. We should suitably structure this cell and include in its ambit, the study, development and monitoring of the service ethos and traditional values in the Army. Various incidents in the services may be studied from the angle of their influence on higher values so that in the rush of mundane activity the larger and higher aspects of service are not missed out.

Senior Leadership Reforms

No reforms can work unless we address ourselves to the problems at the top. The reforms have to be viewed not as an indictment, but as a positive measure to assist the senior leadership in self-corrective reforms. The following may be instituted :

1. A progressive system of training and objective assessment of suitability of senior officers for taking up higher responsibilities is imperative. There is a need to institute departmental/service courses and special studies, followed by an evaluation, which should be an important input for evaluating an officer's potential for higher promotions. Senior

commanders should also be encouraged to enlist themselves for masters or post-graduate degrees in various subjects of military science from suitable universities in the country. Institution of a 'defence university', as proposed, should help in organising meaningful training for higher commanders.

2. As a gesture of personal example and selfless service, all Services Chiefs may declare their decision not to undertake a gubernatorial or ambassadorial assignment after retiring from service. They may choose to join politics, but not accept the Government nomination for any such job. This will clear the air of any mistrust and an impression that the heads of their services do not take a firm stand to protect interest of their respective services, because of the hanging corrot of an after-retirement cushy job. In fact, the types of jobs offered and accepted in the past, by some retired heads of services, were rather demeaning. It will also help generate growth consciousness among them to fully and fearlessly dedicate themselves to the moral charge of their duty.

Key Thrust Areas to Invigorate Service Values

The key thrust in the traditional values should aim at :

(a) Generating an individual's pride in himself, his organisation and his country, based on principles of meritocracy and equity of law.

(b) A working environment where making genuine mistakes is considered a higher and positive asset than avoiding decisions from fear of committing mistakes.

(c) Eliminating fear and sycophancy amongst all ranks so that they work with dignity, with interest of the organisation and the country always supreme.

POST SCRIPT

The foregoing pages may have raised some hackles and gladdened some hearts. What I have tried to convey is based on an inspiration out of experience, an involved deliberation and observations of about three and a half decades, on the service matters, which one has held so close and dear to ones heart. The organisation has its own constraints against reforms from within; a vioce of caution or change often gets drowned in the cacophony of the outright majority of those who have a personal motive in perpetuating the *status quo.* What really motivated me to undertake the venture of writing was a belief that the most in service or retired wanted these reforms, though were not inclined to speak out. I have, therefore, for the most part, tried to be an earnest spokesperson.

To make sure that I made no misrepresentation of facts, a draft copy of the book was circulated to a large number of serving and retired officers. Many interesting and useful comments were received, but one common feature of all comments was their appreciation and general agreement with the issues raised in the book. That reinforced my resolve and crystallised my thought process.

Once we as individuals start viewing beyond the precincts of our obsession for personal ends and self aggrandisement, and accord higher priority to the interests of the country, life will be more meaningful. When we as professionals, be it soldiers, doctors, engineers, teachers, entrepreneurs, or workers in any other field, concentrate on serving personal interests alone, or as a politician identify ourselves with the parochial interests of family, relations, caste, community, and forget our primary responsibioity towards the country, these are danger-signals to take note of. By the same token, we need to immunise ourselves against the virus of wrong identity, in terms of language/religion/caste, and discover our true identity as an Indian *First* and everything else later, where glory of India becomes our ideal to be achieved, which is possible when duty becomes our *Param Dharma* (supreme faith), whatever capacity we might be working.

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