

MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

Wars may be fought by weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of men who follow and of the man who leads, that gain the victory.

- General George S Patton.

INTRODUCTION

Phenomenal technological and social changes are taking place all over the world. Technology is changing human life-styles and expectations. We have come a long way from radio sets to satellite TV, internetted world and instant communication across the globe. Social values, ethos, culture, family patterns are changing very fast. It is natural that we in the armed forces cannot be oblivious to these problems nor be insulated from them. We have to accept the ground reality and develop suitable models for leadership development and training of our commanders at all levels. However, despite all the changes in the environment the key player in warfare remains the soldier. The challenge is upon us to change our leadership styles to meet the changes in society and technology. The ability to motivate, encourage, develop and guide others to achieve their full potential is the hallmark of every good leader.

Today's military leaders have a far greater challenge than ever before. As socio-economic changes and increased educational standards have brought in qualitative changes in the attitudes and expectations of the soldiers the officer men relationship is also undergoing radical changes. In addition today's leaders have to train their subordinates in a whole gamut of warfare that is possible in our army. We have to remain prepared to respond across the entire spectrum of conflict. This changing face of warfare poses special challenge for our army and we need competent soldiers, leaders, units and formations to meet these challenges.

TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT

The Soldier

With the improvement of general educational standards, technological advancements specially in communication and media, social changes, breakdown of joint family systems, materialism, scant regard for law and order, more people joining the army from urban background, changed moralities and value systems etc. all have a bearing on the requirements and aspirations of today's soldier .Today's soldier has the following characteristics :- ¹

- He can think, appreciate, criticize . He wants to know what is going on, what he has to do, why and when. He wants to make sure his interests are safeguarded.

- Many officers and men come from similar background. There is no rigid class distinction between an officer and a soldier. An officer has to be really superior to his men now.
- He wants to express his views frankly and be heard. He resents autocracy.
- He has different set of rules for self and others.
- Military profession may not be his first choice. He would rather join state police if given a choice.
- The increased demand for highly skilled technical personnel outside prompts the technically competent to get out of the army, at the first opportunity.
- Demand for family stability.

However, this is bound to happen and there is nothing wrong about it. Since with implementation of successive pay commission recommendations the remuneration to a soldier is not that bad and there is no dearth of candidates for entry into the army we must demand good quality in entry level itself. It is all the more required as technical advancements in weapons and equipment's demand operation and maintenance of increasingly complex technical system by these soldiers. We must refuse to tolerate mediocre soldiers and must demand a higher standard of soldiers than ever before.

What are the qualities a good soldier must have? He must have the technical competence, knowledge, positive attitude, skill, discipline, responsibility, motivation, good habits. Many will enter the army who will not have the core values, the bedrock of our army. Lack of alignment between societal and core values of army will present significant challenges to the leader. The hearts and minds of these persons have to be changed to bring them into the line of accepted core values. At the recruitment stage itself effort should be made to recruit those whose values must closely align with core values of our army. Army should not be for everyone as it demands a high degree of commitment.

What are the expectation of today's generation of soldiers from their leaders? They want us to know our job. Leaders must have sense of duty. Should be able to take charge when in charge, should be able to set standards and lead by personal example, courage specially moral courage to support the subordinates with courage of conviction, strength of character, intellect, genuine interest in their welfare and professional development.

Leaders

Rapid change in the society and technology have affected military leadership at all levels. This is natural. However general erosion in our values, ethos and culture in outside world cannot be allowed to be filtered down in our Army's values, ethos and culture. Ours is a profession when time comes we as leaders may demand supreme sacrifice. Some of the observations that erosion of system has brought about in our

army at both Young Officers upto company commanders level and battalion commander and upwards level are enumerated below. By no means it can be taken as happening across the board, but these are some distressing signals which need immediate attention.

Young Officers Upto Company Commander Level

Our Young Officers are the best. All our successes in ongoing LICO are due to them. A very high percentage of casualty bears testimony to the fact they lead from the front. The following observations may not occur in many units but they are worrying signals :-²

- Tend to forget our inspiring Academy credo that honour, safety and welfare of the men we command take precedence over our own needs and comforts.
- Insensitivity and indifference towards genuine needs, feelings, emotions and aspirations of the men.
- Not sharing with the hardship of our men. Not caring enough.
- Men are being treated with indignity and lack of humane understanding.
- Not working hard enough to get to know his men. No effort is taken to spend some portion of any leave to visit areas from which his men hail. When the Exercise is over the officer is first to be off to mess or family quarters when men are still depositing arms, stores or cleaning equipment.
- Not checking the day to day administration of sub units - the ration, the barrack, the latrines, to name a few.
- Men are addressed in abusive languages. Sahayaks are being used like menials. Mess Havildar, waiters and cooks are targets of enraged officers.
- Men are casually locked up in the quarter guard for a day or two.
- Men are seldom given any time to themselves fearing that they may be upto some mischief.
- Indicators like increase in disciplinary cases particularly insubordination, applications for premature discharge, deserting service, absence without leave or overstayal of leave, hospital admission and sickness rates are manifesting itself.

Battalion Commanders and Above³

- The officer corps is lacking in their responsibilities of looking out for the welfare of subordinates.
- Afraid to make a mistake with someone always looking over his shoulder.

- Subordinates are not properly developed. There is a general feeling among junior officers that seniors are untouchable, unapproachable, unreasonable and constantly looking for mistakes. A commander who takes a genuine interest in the welfare and training of his subordinates is getting rarer.
- Zero error mentality is automatically wedded to the philosophy that it is worse to report a mistake than it is to make one.
- Don't tell the truth. Failure is a curse.
- Careerism, stifling of initiative, lack of trust in subordinates.
- Senior Officers going to court, lack of faith in own system.
- Subtle and unconscious change in attitude and values, unhealthy and untoward pressure to strive for success.
- Workaholics. There is a real connection between workaholics, breakdown of families and loss of ethics. Centralised control of power without delegation of authority.
- Fear on the part of commanders that his subordinate's mistakes resulting from loosened rein would make the command look bad and thus jeopardize the commanders own success. Over control is the reflex of commanders own career insecurity.
- Higher you go, easier it is to misuse authority.

WAY AHEAD

Let civilian voices argue the merits and demerits of our processes of Government, whether our strength is being sapped by deficit financing indulged in too long by federal paternism grown too mighty, by power groups grown too arrogant, by politics grown too corrupt, by crimes grown too rampant, by mortals grown too low, by taxes grown too high, by extremists grown too violent, whether our personal liberties are as thorough and complete as they should be And through all the welter of change and development our mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars.

- General Douglas Mac Arthur

Having seen the perspective from the soldiers and both junior and senior leaders, what should be the pattern of leadership in 21st Century so that army is well lead and the soldiers remain motivated to the highest level? Initiatives are required to be taken whose common purpose is to produce leaders with the right values, attributes and skills. The development of pattern of leadership for the 21st Century would be discussed under the following headings :-

- (a) Development of JCO / NCO.
- (b) Training.

- (c) Selection of Leaders.
- (d) 21st Century Leader.

Development of Junior Leaders

There is a general feeling that current system produces junior leaders who are more reactive than proactive, adapters than innovators and conservative than imaginative. In this system command level errors are extremely costly in terms of career potential. The army culture is risk aversive, conservative and reactive. We have to develop an organization climate which supports practice of good leadership and stimulates such practice as risk taking and fairness. The root problem of junior leader development is that army is struck in performance rather than learning culture.

An important part of effective leadership is the ability of officers to work together with JCOs and NCOs. To develop effective working relationships, both must know the similarities and differences in their respective roles, duties and responsibilities.

Since officers and JCOs share the same goal - to accomplish the unit's mission-responsibilities overlap and must be shared. In general officers lead and JCOs / NCOs help them carry out their responsibilities.

In our army there is an unique institution in JCOs. Few other armies has it. It has both advantages and drawbacks. We have to make them accountable for lot of responsibilities. In the present context considering the number of JCOs available in any unit one feels they are underemployed. They are a valuable human resource and should be made to realise their full potential. This is one area where a lot needs to be done.

Some Important Aspect of Junior Leader Training

- Create an environment where they "can be all they can be".
- Inculcate initiative, creativity and problem solving ability of soldiers at all levels.
- "Never tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity".
- Listen to soldiers, develop a feedback system.
- It is amazing what gets done when nobody worries about who gets the credit.
- Focus on soldier and not the boss.
- Learn how to think and not what to think.

Training

Peacetime habits become war time habits. Training develops soldiers who are disciplined, physically tough and highly motivated. Because soldiers spend their majority of their time in training, leaders play a specially important role in developing soldiers. Training is a continuous process and is conducted at units, training establishments and in Exercises. Officers should also continuously upgrade themselves with broad, professional reading programme, duty related correspondence course participation and off duty study and research. The officers must maintain awareness of new technological developments that have military applications.

Institutional Training. Our training establishments should remain ideal training grounds. These establishments not only train recruits / officers on initial induction, but also train a large number of them who keep coming back for upgradation and attending other courses. Many values and attitudes are developed at these institutions.

Institutional education should focus on qualities of high order thinking that demonstrate synthesis and integration, innovation, intuition, information management and vision. There is merit in education of classical art and culture to expand one's horizon. Though instructions from ARTRAC and higher ups keep coming from time to time to lay stress on innovative and creative solutions to tactical problems, invariably it is that solution which comes on the mat for driving home some lessons! As nobody wants to be put on the mat only conventional solutions are thought of and submitted. Though it may help us winning Sand Model Discussions, definitely this thinking is not going to win us the next war. Special care need to be taken for posting of instructors who would encourage in students to innovate, embrace change, be creative, improvise, cope with uncertainty, accommodate new ideas, develop intuition and capability to use information technology.

Selection of Leaders.

Boldness grows less common in the higher ranks.... Nearly every General known to us from history as mediocre, even vacillating, was noted for dash and determination as a junior officer.

- Clausewitz.

Most good leaders in peacetime seem to translate into good combat leaders. The great and famous commanders like Guderian and Rommel were superb tactical commanders in their earlier years as company and battalion commanders. The goal of every combat arms officer should be competence as a tactical commander. Those who are the most competent and whose intellectual and leadership qualities enable them to handle more complex organizations and greater responsibilities, should be the division, corps and army commanders of the future.

In our army the problem of selection of higher commander increases as an officer spends most of his time as professional soldier upto brigade commander level. Exposure to the higher level of command is very limited but with each promotion the

command responsibility increases manifold. Leader with creativity, intuition, vision and intellect have to be selected.

Selection system in every army causes a lot of debate. No system is perfect. However, it is easier to criticise than improve the appraisal system. Feelings of environment on the present selection system need to be taken into account. One school of thought is like this :-

- ✚ Everybody can break you, but nobody can make you. Excellent or outstanding performance by practically all of one's rater as many as 50-75 over 30 year career may come to a naught by submission of one mediocre / poor grading by any one of the rater.
- ✚ Problem remains how to select bold, innovative, intellectual, intuitive and visionary commander. How do you select an officer who has the moral courage to tell their superiors when they are wrong. As George C Marshal says "It is hard to get men to do this, for this is when you lay your career, perhaps your commission, on the line".⁴

When there is all round deterioration in ethics and value system there is a perception amongst officer corps that the present system of evaluation may throw up a particular set of officers. Gabriel and Savage in their book Crisis in Command has made suggestions to officers who wanted to reform US Army after Vietnam War. Some of them are :-

- Distrust any officer with a perfect or near perfect record of efficiency reports. He is conforming to the existing value system.
- Look carefully at the man who gets low marks on 'tact' and who deviates from accepted doctrine. He may be creative.
- An officer who gets low marks for loyalty is especially valuable, for he is unwilling to acquiesce in his superior's policies without debate.
- Distrust any officer who has all his tickets punched. He is likely to be a manager playing the system.

Is there a case in our army to guard against these tendencies?

As the Annual Confidential Report system is complex the officers initiating report also face major dilemmas. Sometimes ethical principle of fairness conflicts directly with the ethical principle of honesty. Am I being fair to my people to rate them honestly in accordance with the intent of the ACR when I know that across the Army my contemporaries are inflating the reports of their people? Am I justified in waging a one - man campaign for strict honesty when it comes at the expense of my people? ⁶ There is no easy solution to this problem.

21st Century Leader

Battlefield of the Future. The future is uncertain. Nobody knows in which battlefield conditions we will operate in the 21st century. A large portion of our army is already sucked into Low Intensity Conflict Operations. This is sure to continue for a long time to come.

Conventional warfare would be far more lethal with increased battlefield mobility, fluidity and uncertainty. Possibility of nuclear warfare is real. Electronic Warfare may make communication between units and commanders at headquarters impossible. Information warfare with all its components of Command and Control warfare. Psychological Warfare, Electronic Warfare, Cyber Warfare and Economic Information Warfare may not be far away. Because of night fighting capabilities soldiers may be called upon to fight continuously with little or no rest. Rear areas are likely to be attacked effectively. Weapon systems would have much more electronic components making them more accurate and lethal. The global media would be there all the time. Latest communication systems and information technology in the command and control systems will pose new challenges to the leaders

Technical skills of followers may exceed that of leaders. It may not be possible for a commander to keep pace with rapid rate of technological changes while coping with incessant demands of command. In critical condition commanders may be flooded with information overload creating condition of "Paralysis of Analysis." Would the commander study computer outputs or act in gut feel or intuition?

However, in our effort to capture the leading edge of the information age, it is important to remember that at night, in the rains, attacking uphill in the mud, it is the quality of the leadership, not the speed of the processor, that will carry the battle.

Attributes of a 21st Century Leader. In addition to all the time honoured and tested leadership qualities that have been highlighted earlier, the leader has to possess some more skills to operate successfully in the next century. He has to change his leadership styles to the demands of high tech battlefield and legitimate expectations of today's generation of soldiers. He has to have an innovative mindset. He should have more communication skills for both his command and handling media personnel in war. The 21st Century leader is expected to have :-

- More initiative and foresight.
- Intellect.
- Higher technical competence at all levels.
- Capacity to generate higher level of unit cohesion.
- Capacity to operate autonomously.
- Greater flexibility and adaptability.
- Capacity and opportunity to experiment.

- Capacity to create a climate for more junior leaders that permits rational risk taking.
- An awareness of power and politics.
- A thorough understanding of the system.
- Ability to use intuition in decision making.
- Skill in dealing with officials from various Government agencies.
- Skill in resource management.
- Cultural sensitivity.
- Caring leadership.
- Joint warfare competencies.

Indian Context. There is a definite requirement of developing a leadership doctrine in our army. It would put thinking of our army on leadership in the same platform. In different forums where leadership is discussed lot of ideas are mooted. Air Land Battle, Maneuver Warfare to the latest fad Information Warfare are discussed with implication on leadership. But what is our stand?

Are we preaching "Auftragstaktik" style of leadership concept and mission type of orders based on commander's intent? With present system of communications and command and control system available a corps or a division commanders can dial battalion or subunit commanders directly. With this technology available what approach should we follow ? Centralized command and centralised control or centralized command and decentralised control? Command and control dilemma is real. How do we integrate our systems as presence of high technology itself cannot guarantee success in war?

Whatever leadership doctrine we adopt it has to be based on Indian conditions and realities. There is a danger in following whatever is being preached by Western Army specially US Army without taking into consideration our army's ethos and culture. For example Tofflers have given a clarion call to soldiers to questions authority, "The new military needs soldiers who use their brains, can deal with a diversity of people and cultures, who can tolerate ambiguity, take initiative, and ask questions, even to the point of questioning authority. As in the civilian economy, fewer people with intelligent technology can accomplish more than a lot of people with the brute force tools of the past."⁷ The point is, are we ready for this type of soldier behaviour?

We have to keep in mind our cultural heritage and value based traditions. Some of the rich Indian Values that must be taken into account for development of any leadership manual are:⁸

- Purity of mind.
- Work Worship (Karma)
- Honour (Izzat), pride in sub unit, unit and in the Army as a whole, and overall in the nation.
- Religion (Dharma).
- Ethico - moral soundness.
- Comaraderie.
- Respect for individuals.
- Secularism
- Self Discipline and Restraint.

CONCLUSION

The ability to motivate, encourage, develop and guide others to achieve their full potential is the hallmark of every good leaders. While some will attribute leadership success to charisma most believe that leaders can be mentored and taught as long as there is true desire to lead.

There are those timeless lessons that never change. The lead by example advice is as old as leadership lore itself, yet there is a need of repetition in each genre. At the same time we have to develop thinking, tough minded, self reliant, confident and courageous leaders who can respond to friction, fog of war, uncertainty, unexpected enemy action with initiative and grim determination.

In a period of revolutionary changes in the conduct of war, different kinds of people - not simply the same people differently trained - rise to the top of the armed services. The new technologies will increasingly bring to the fore the expert in missile operations, the space General and the electronic warfare wizard.⁹ The current technological revolution will change the face of battle again, but we must never allow the human spirit to fade in the fog of technology.

We must not forget our Indian values, ethos and culture. Basic tenets of our value systems like “Nishkama Karma” (selfless duty), “Namrata” (humility) and “Yatachitta” (self control and discipline) should always be kept in mind. The importance of “Service Before Self”, core values like integrity and moral courage can never be over emphasized. The relationship between the leader and the led should be of teacher and student, the “Guru” and the “Gurukul”.

Finally,

A leader is best
When people barely know that he exists,
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him,
Worst when they despise him.
“Fail to honor people,
They fail to honor you;”
But of a good leader, who talks little,
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
They will all say, “We did this ourselves.”

- Lao Tzu, Sixth Century B.C;
Verse 17 of the Tao Teh Ching.

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