was commissioned in the Army in 1981 after training at the National Defence Academy (NDA) and Indian Military Academy (IMA). Since then I have been posted to a number of places and functioned in varying environment. In my service, I have seen a number of changes that have disturbed me. At whatever level of service I have been I have expressed concern at appropriate forums. Frankly speaking the situation has deteriorated. In my formative years of service I had a number of my seniors who taught me *(the hard way!)*, guided me and made me undergo rigorous training with the sole aim of moulding me into a form which was acceptable to the men. I was told, *"Be worthy of your men, prove yourself, it is only then that your command will be obeyed from within"*. Round the clock, throughout the year I was training, training and training, for as they say, *"the more you sweat in peace the less you bleed in war"*. The motto of Lord Philip Chetwode in the IMA was always at the back of one’s mind.

Today one sees a different picture altogether. A young officer (YO) joining a regiment (unit) today finds almost no immediate superiors. In 1981 there were 4-5 officers in a sub-unit, today there are a best 1-2! The YO is immediately handed over responsibilities which entails command of men, and command of men he does, in his way! The environment today does not provide him the direction and opportunity to first train with his men and understand them. Then in his initial years of service, he shunts from one training institution to another on courses. It is this officer who will later command his sub-unit, become a commanding officer (CO) and rise in hierarchy.

Over a period the Junior Commission Officer (JCO) cadre has bloated, thanks to cadre review during the fourth pay commission. On the other hand, the intake at the recruit level has reduced creating a situation wherein the senior lot amongst the soldiers has enlarged dramatically. Even after 10-12 years of service a jawan in general, does not pick up his first rank of Lance Naik or Naik. This leads to increased levels of frustration.
With large levels of supersession in the officer cadre, low levels of motivation amongst the JCOs and frustration in the jawans, the situation today is not as bright as I saw twenty five years ago.

The external forces too have played their havoc on the Army and the primary cause of concern has been the increasing use of the Army in counter insurgency and maintenance of law and order operations. This is in addition to their basic task of maintenance of utmost vigil on our borders. The level of pressure on a man in uniform has increased manifold. The peace tenure of units is gradually reducing. A soldier today is feeling psychologically insecure.

The aforesaid issues are just a part of the deterioration process. The internal and external changes have made their discernible impact on the ethics at work place wherein the cherished ethos is under threat. Tolerance levels have drastically reduced leading to unwanted changes in individual and group behavioural patterns.

Knee-jerk solutions are not the answer. At the macro level, the Govt of India has to sit up and take stock of the situation, coalition era notwithstanding! Relegation of affairs of Army to secondary importance and Army being at the beck and call do not go hand in hand. It is also time for the highest in military hierarchy to undertake major initiatives. While there is limited focus in this treatise on macro level issues the main focus is on the ground level realities. This project intends in its own small way, to analyse threadbare realities as it exists with a soldier who is the lowest in the echelon, and who forms part of a battalion or a regiment which are the smallest entity of a fighting force. With the problems well documented it intends to initiate a debate with certain viable strategies. It aims to stir up thought processes for frank and purposeful introspection by anyone who is concerned for the well being of the Army. This project is intended to make a beginning; it is never too late to carry out self appraisal. The views expressed in this project are based on the practical experience of my service as also on the interaction I have had with a sample of officers, JCOs and men specifically for the purpose of this study from which the data has been obtained and
analysed. The research methodology used for this project has been based on ground level survey of facts wherein the population has been observed for sustained periods of time. This has been supplemented by administering questionnaires to respondents of the cross section of the sample population. I must confess that all issues raised are debatable; in fact that is the aim. These issues need to be discussed openly at a much wider and enlarged level, as per the decorum of service. In fact discussion itself is one of the solutions. I must also state at this juncture that this project needs to be looked at with an open mind by everyone and once discussed and debated it must not be treated as a closed chapter. Re-appraisal of issues must be a continuous process to enable each one of us to check disturbing trends as and when they surface.

Place: Nashik

Date: September 01, 2006

Lt Col Romi Jiandani