Chapter 5

Important Service Conditions -

Critical Analysis And Recommendations
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CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General. There are a large number of demotivators at work for Army officers, which have been adversely affecting their morale and motivation. These range from incommensurate pay and allowances to the hardship and risks undertaken by them, slow promotions, low promotions, unjustifiable parity with the Civil Servants, frequent transfers, unsettled family life, frequent discontinuity of children’s education, non-availability of family accommodation and partly - opaque performance appraisal system etc. It is proposed to analyse a few of the important aspects in this study. Samuel P Huntington\textsuperscript{153} said that society can only assure the Army Officer’s professional motivation if it offers him sufficient pay, both on active duty and when retired.

Work culture. Officer disgruntlement and, indirectly, shortage also feeds off the stifling organisational culture of the military whose ethos, to a large extent, curbs initiative and discourages self-criticism. The Indian army’s institutional culture is traditionally risk averse, top-down and discourages initiative in junior ranks. This ‘passing the buck’ culture is harmful to the development of junior officers and has completely destroyed any independent, leadership roles for JCOs and NCOs. This problem is compounded by the manner in which self-critical analysis is sacrificed for the sake of career advancement. Changing this organisational DNA is undoubtedly a long drawn out process but it requires urgent attention from the current generation of senior officers, if they wish to attract idealistic and enterprising youth\textsuperscript{154}.

When looking at factors which provided the greatest influence in deciding to stay in the Armed Forces, focus group members provided four salient reasons:-

- Future family priorities (which had the greatest consensus).

\textsuperscript{153} Samuel P Huntington, The Soldier and the State, 1957.

\textsuperscript{154} Mukherjee Anit, The Indian Express, 29 Jan 2008
• Job satisfaction.
• Remuneration (basic pay and pay upon promotion) and career prospects and
• Promotion opportunities.

In a survey\textsuperscript{155} carried out by R N Mahajan in 1999 on serving officers, the following important findings emerged:-

• Most serving officers were satisfied in the initial life with the values which govern career choice and retention in service i.e. monetary compensation, professional development, life style and social status.

• Job satisfaction and promotional avenues were found to be unsatisfactory but could be alleviated by in-service reform and governmental support.

• Lack of married accommodation, time consumed in financial claim procedures, quality of education for children and truncated career were found to be main irritants in the quality of life indices.

**Slow and Low Promotions.** Various polls ascribe slow promotion as a principal cause of the military career’s low popularity. In proportionate terms, the Administrative Service has forty times as many major general equivalent ranks\textsuperscript{156}. It has also been recommended by Gen V P Malik\textsuperscript{157} that promotion opportunities have to be improved close to that of civilians and police officers. K K Nayyar and R B Suri\textsuperscript{158} argue that every officer in the IAS is normally promoted to Joint Secretary level but in the Armed Forces, promotion to the equivalent rank is barely possible for one out of 200 officers. That too it takes place more than 10 years later than in other Central Government Services is another story. Vinay Shankar\textsuperscript{159} agrees that for a variety of reasons – some quite complex the career prospects of the Defence Service Officers are the worst among the government services. And within the Armed Forces, the Army is the most badly affected, notwithstanding the fact that its working conditions are also the most difficult and hazardous. Its pyramid is the steepest and therefore, it has to

\textsuperscript{155} Mahajan\textsuperscript{op cit} pp.26.
\textsuperscript{156} Mahajan\textsuperscript{op cit} pp.26.
\textsuperscript{157} The Hindu, New Delhi, 18 Jun 2007.
\textsuperscript{158} The Tribune, New Delhi, 16 Sep 05.
\textsuperscript{159} Asian Age, New Delhi, 02 Apr 04.
contend with the largest number of officers who get superseded\textsuperscript{160}. Approximately 60\%-70\% of the officers are passed over at the first important selection to colonel's rank. Thereafter, at each step, 30\%-40\% only get approved, as a result of which the establishment has to carry a lot of dejected and demotivated officers for considerable periods. This is due to the typical steep pyramidal structure in the officer cadre\textsuperscript{161}. Though the implementation of Part 1 of the A V Singh Committee recommendations has eased the problem of promotions up to the rank of colonel to some extent and Part- II implementation will only have a marginal effect on ranks of Brigadier and above unless other recommendations are implemented in tandem\textsuperscript{162}. It is of utmost priority that all the three services evolve a consensus approach and project a common case and face to the Government at the earliest.

\textbf{Warrant of Precedence.} At present, a class II officer of the Central and State Governments takes precedence over a Lieutenant, who is a class I officer\textsuperscript{163}. The analogy is that if the maximum pay of a civilian scale is equal to or more than the minimum scale of the rank in the Armed Forces, the civilian will take precedence. It is therefore recommended that the warrant of precedence or status should not be linked to the pay scale at all\textsuperscript{164}. It is seen that a brigadier with 29 years of service stands equated with a Director from the IAS and DIG from the Police with 14 years of service, a Scientist from the DRDO with 17 years of service and DIG from BSF with 20 years of service. This artificial and illogical equation runs right across the full rank structure.\textsuperscript{165} A brigadier should be equated to the Joint Secretary and accordingly, all the other ranks above and below must be equated correspondingly. H S Sodhi, also argues for revising the warrant of precedence upwards\textsuperscript{166}. The copy of warrant of precedence is attached as Appendix C.

\textbf{Voting rights.} The existing system of postal ballot papers should be replaced with ATM type of EVM machines so that the troops can cast their votes, which is their legal right. When EVM can be transported to far and remote place with very few people then it can very well be placed in places where troops are deployed. The army can provide assistance in this

\textsuperscript{160}\textit{Times of India}, New Delhi, 02 Apr 04.

\textsuperscript{161}\textit{Asian Age}, 02 Apr 04.

\textsuperscript{162}\textit{The Tribune}, New Delhi, 17 May 04.

\textsuperscript{163} Thakur Kuldip S Ludhra, “The Lot of the Services”, \textit{Indian Defence Review}, 1995.

\textsuperscript{164}\textit{The Tribune}, 18 Dec 06.

\textsuperscript{165}\textit{Indian Express}, New Delhi, 24 may 07.

\textsuperscript{166}\textit{The Tribune}, NOIDA, 22 Dec 04.
respect. This will help in making the armed forces a viable vote bank which will have pressure on the political parties.

**Modified conscript employment.** Any personnel interested in joining politics should have served in the Armed forces for a minimum defined period should be made compulsory. Similarly, as in vogue in the Army all the officers commissioned in Services have do a minimum period of attachment with basic arms, all the candidates who are selected to join Indian Civil Services should be made to carry out a minimum period of attachment with Indian Armed Forces. In the long run the added advantage will be that the civil services while taking decisions in the interest of the nation will know the inherent requirement of the defence forces.

**Separate Cadre for Ministry of Defence.** Today the reserve strength of officers available in various cadre are posted to Ministry of Defence to man the ministry affairs. The Defence Strategies and Studies is a specialised subject and requires a separate cadre recruited and groomed into managing these strategic affairs. This will assist in better understanding of the needs of the Indian Army and better integration with the forces instead of tenure based integration with the forces.

**Medical Rural Attachment** The medical professional degree has compulsory duration of attachment in rural areas, the same should be extended to field areas of Indian Army. It will have the advantage of making the medical fraternity aware of the forces also it will infuse current knowledge to the currently employed medical practitioners in the Indian Army.

**Equipment modernisation.** The constant debate of Army using outdated technology and equipment demoralises the target group for intake into the Army. It gives an effect that if joined they may have to survive on inadequate protection both for self and the country.

**Armed Forces Pay Review Board.** R N Mahajan\(^{167}\) suggested that an Armed Forces Pay Review Board should be formed. It should recognise their harsh and peculiar conditions and liability of service, which necessitate pay fixation to be unique and paternal. The pay review should not be linked with the other central government employees. The peculiar nature of

\(^{167}\)Mahajan, opcit, pp 135.
Army personnel’s working conditions demand that these be considered in isolation. Unfortunately, this long pending demand has not been accepted by the Government. When the 6th Central Pay Commission was constituted, there was a genuine demand from the Armed Forces that their representative should be incorporated as a member. Unfortunately, this was not accepted. The harsh and inhospitable conditions under which the Armed Forces operate cannot be fully and rightly appreciated by civilian members. UC Jha,\textsuperscript{168} argues that ‘a government that ignores the rights of its soldiers may find it difficult to recruit and retain them’. It is therefore imperative that such a request is considered sympathetically by the government and a member from the Armed Forces be incorporated in all future pay commissions.

**Pay and Allowances.** The pay and allowances of the Army personnel have always been under a constant debate regarding their inadequacy. In the era of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, the pay and perks of corporate executives are astonishingly high. Since the Army personnel come from the same society as the civilians, they cannot be insulated from the same. An Army man takes up his job to fight for his country and unquestionably gives up his life for it. There is no parallel to this in any other service. It is considered that while salaries may be pegged to the level of Civil Servants, the Government should substantially increase allowances of the Army personnel, by accepting a rational “X” factor. Gen JJ Singh,\textsuperscript{169} argues that men in uniform need to be better compensated for the risks, hazards, traumas and turbulences in the service life.

**Housing.** With the intense work going on for the Married Accommodation Project (MAP) in many stations, it is considered that the issue of accommodation when in service will be resolved to a considerable extent. However, in addition to the pay and allowances as mentioned above, the issue of housing after retirement bothers majority of the service officers. With the meager salary, it will be very difficult for an officer to own a house or a plot. In Pakistan Army, the officers are given plots free of cost at various lengths of service. While that would be ideal, it is considered that the Army should ensure that an officer is allocated a flat or a house in his choice station before he completes five years of service. The

\textsuperscript{168}The Hindu, New Delhi, 10 Jun 07.
\textsuperscript{169}Times of India, New Delhi, 08 Mar 07.
cost can be adjusted from the officer's salary. In fact, it should be made mandatory for the organisation to ensure that each officer possesses a house. In view of the steep escalation of the real estate prices all over the country, Army will have to find funds to invest in purchase of vast areas of land for allotment to its officers, after a few years in future. Otherwise, the pay and allowances might not allow the officer to be able to pay for the plot, in case he would like to buy it at the time of construction of the house.

Post Retirement Financial Management. For this purpose, Army may consider starting its own commercial bank on the lines of Bangladesh Forces Trust Bank which is a purely commercial one. The bank can also be open to the public. It should also open its own credit card business to the Army personnel, which would guarantee them assured returns in view of the huge captive market and likely insignificant non-performing assets. Ex-servicemen may also like to be the customers of such a bank, with the satisfaction that their investment, credit card purchases and profit would benefit the serving personnel. Having served in isolated areas and very little knowledge of finances the service and ex-service personnel become easy prey to various types of frauds and lose their hard earned money. Also, during the service loan extended to personnel can be extended to post service period providing longer length of loans.

MES Services. The MES services need to be upwardly revised to match the specifications prevailing in the civil. The material specifications have not been revised for very long and at times the material supplied is the lowest quality available in the market. Also, the quality of repair service needs to be monitored as it nowhere matches the standards available outside.

Mid-Career Transfer. In view of the steep pyramidal structure, the promotions are low and slow for the officers in the Army. To achieve the dual purpose of more and faster promotions, it has been contemplated for years that a system of mid-career transfer or lateral induction of Army officers to Para Military forces, Central Police Organisations and the State Armed Police should be facilitated for those retiring in the normal courseand those who get superseded. This would reduce the base of the pyramid and officers with blocked promotional avenues move out. This can thus be a 'Win-Win' proposition for the Army and these organisations too as they would be getting highly trained and experienced officers.

\[170\] Luthra, op. cit.
into their cadres. Such a proposal was agreed to in principle by the ex-Prime ministers – Shri IK Gujral and A B Vajpayee, when Gen V P Malik was the COAS but the respective Home Ministers failed to carry through the proposal with their Ministry staff\(^{171}\). S P Kapoor\(^{172}\) argues that it is the duty of the Government to facilitate a second career for those who retire at a very young age or for those who seeking a second career when promotional avenues are blocked. This would result in lot of savings to the Government and the PMFs would also get fully trained and motivated personnel\(^{173}\). The A V Singh Committee\(^{174}\) also recommended the same. In fact, it even went to the extent of recommending that senior Army officers should be allowed to proceed on deputations to the private sector too. These are potentially controversial issues with the PMFs and CPOs opposing large scale deputation of Army officers and the private sector raising troubling questions relating to independence and security. In fact, Section 6 (2) of the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954 allows officers\(^{175}\) to take up assignments outside the Government, to gain experience that would make their contribution to Government more useful in the long run. There is an urgent need to pursue the twin issues seriously, so as to find alternate avenues for Army officers and arrest their sagging morale. The private sector which is becoming more and more professional and competitive nowadays should also welcome this proposal as it would be getting officers with a very wide exposure and a lateral thinking as they come from a different set up. As it is, India Inc seems to have suddenly woken up to the talent treasure hidden in the Armed Forces\(^{176}\). The private sector can also guard itself against the ill effects of in-breeding.

**Voluntary Retirement Scheme.** The A V Singh Committee also recommended introduction of an exit route for officers in the form of Voluntary Retirement Scheme to remove stagnation and give the Army a younger profile. Going by the bad experience of public sector banks that lost very competent officers through such schemes in the past and forced to live with the dead wood that they otherwise wanted to get rid of, the Government, it is believed, is not keen to approve the scheme for the Defence Service Officers. It is added that required rules can be so formulated to ensure that only the superseded officers can leave the

171 Malik, Op cit.
172 The Tribune, Gurgaon, 04 Jun 05.
173 The Tribune NOIDA, 22 Dec 04.
174 The Hindu, New Delhi, 22 Dec 2004.
175 Times of India, New Delhi, 29 Sep 07.
176 The Hindu, New Delhi, 05 Mar 07.
service. Approval of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme along with other measures as discussed above will ensure better promotional prospects for others who wish to stay back or are not allowed to move out.

Premature Retirement.

- The number of Army officers seeking premature or voluntary retirement has been increasing over the years. The main reasons identified for seeking premature retirement are – super cession for promotion; being placed in permanent low medical category; compassionate reasons such as looking after ailing parents/children/siblings, ancestral property or litigation etc; failure to acquire minimum technical qualifications prescribed for promotion and increase in employment opportunities on the civil side. In his reply to Lok Sabha on 16 Apr 07, the Defence Minister informed the house of the following details:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Seeking Discharge</th>
<th>Approved for Discharge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Hundreds of officers of the Indian armed forces have been seeking premature retirement due to one reason or the other. Tabling the figures in the Parliament, the Ministry of Defence said 288 officers sought premature retirement from the Indian Army in the last year alone. The number for the Navy and the Indian Air Force was 122 and 183 officers, respectively. The three services have a shortage of officers. The Army has a shortage of 11,119 officers against its sanctioned strength of 46,614. The Navy has a shortage of 1,359 officers, while the IAF has a shortage of 1,352. One of the reasons for officers seeking VRS is better options available in the private sector.

177 www.pib.nic.in/release dated 26 Apr 07 accessed on 14 Jul 07.

178 Ibid.

179 The Tribune, New Delhi, 09 May 2012.
The above data is quite alarming, especially when deficiencies exist at the operative level. Unless a comprehensive and holistic review is taken of the manpower problems in the Army and situation remedied, it would be difficult to stem the trend. As and when the 6th Pay Commission award would be announced, the number of officers wanting to leave might be more because they can then bargain for a better pay package in the corporate world. Mahajan recommends setting up of a National Manpower Commission to go into all aspects of manpower for the Armed Forces, its macro management, terms and conditions of the service and the quality of life.

**Career sacrifice for wives.** The ladies who get married to army officers are well qualified and were having a career of their own, which they have to forego due to limited availability of jobs in the place of posting of husbands. Due to inflationary pressures and comparison with peers in other services they prefer to pick up a job of their own. This also raises discontentment in the family of officers.

**Limited availability of various services in cantonment.** The daily use services are not easily available in cantonments areas like barber, washerman, sweepers, maids etc. Due to lack of these services a major portion of quality time is consumed to fend for these services. Generally these services are difficult to obtain due to distance from source of availability and cantonment and strict security checks and procedures, even those willing to provide service resist performing these services in these cantonments.

**Limited exposure to financial procedures.** The financial procedures are never taught to an army officer. They tend to depend on the limited availability of knowledge with subordinate staff. This leads the officers to process most of the documents in good faith leading to financial audits. A separate and specialised cadre can be planned for Indian Army so that the specialised manpower is spared for performing the operational work in the units.

**Non delegation of powers to subordinate staff.** There is no direct recruitment of class two officers and they are still promoted from ranks. They still have low educational

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180Mahajan, op cit, pp71-75
qualification and only have in house training to handle the affairs which falls short of the desired level. The class two officers are still used as a liaison force between the officers and the class three personnel, which was done in the British era as they wanted to maintain the gap between the British and the Indian troops. Also, major force remains under utilised in the entire percentage and increasing the workload on the officers and keeping the JCOs unaccountable. The entire workload falls on the shoulders of the officers unlike Indian civil services where the major load is shared by the class two officers.

Performance Appraisal. One of the most talked about and resented issue in the Army is the performance appraisal system which is partially opaque. There is a growing lack of confidence in its fairness and transparency. Officers are also not prepared to take any risk or chance of offering a different view than that of the establishment as the ‘Zero Error’ syndrome creeps in. The performance appraisal system should ensure that it is made fully transparent and shown to the rate. Outside, in the corporate sector, ‘360 degree Performance Appraisal’ is the in-thing, by which an employee is assessed by those below him and by his peers also, thereby completing the full circle of assessment. It is considered that the Army is not yet ripe for the introduction of ‘360 Degree Appraisal’. However, the complete appraisal should be transparent.

Women Officers. The entry of women officers into selected services and arms of the Army has been inviting mixed responses. While the woman chauvinists plead that women should be accepted in all arms and services without any exception, the Army environment is not fully geared up for the same. Mahesh Vij181 argues that while the strata of the society from which officers are drawn may be relatively modern and liberal, the troops come from a background which is rather conservative and the presence of women would definitely pose Human Resource Management problems. Now that more and more women are coming forward to join the military, service, it may not take long for them and the troops to shed respective inhibitions182. Moreover, our Army has still not reached the stage of ‘Wars from a Distance’ being fought by USA183. Notwithstanding the same, there is a need to attract more women into the Army by more aggressive campaign and more importantly, convincing them

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182 The Tribune, Gurgaon, 25 May 05.
183 Vij, op cit.
and their parents that few suicide cases of women officers were an aberration. The women, on their part, joining the Army should aim to be assets and not liabilities\textsuperscript{184}.

**Educational upliftment.** The Indian Army is facing numerous challenges in its endeavor to impart quality education and training programs to its serving personnel. The socio-economic transition in society, the technological changes coupled with problem of technology assimilation and rapid obsolescence of weapons and equipment, shrinking defense budgets and fiscal constraints are only some issues. Other issues of concern are variety of operational roles and commitments, the need to conserve expensive equipment, the availability of training areas and infrastructure for education, large number of personnel involved for training and education, orientation and outlook. A concentrated effort has to be planned with the civil educational institutions to infuse current information at various levels in the hierarchy.

**Better medical facilities.** An officer while in service generally keeps fit but post retirement this reverses and there is a strong medical support which is required. Exservicemen Contributory Health Services (ECHS) has been commissioned but it has its own issues and has not reached to a mature health service as Central Government Health Service. This is a major factor need by service personnel as due to rigorous life while in service is genesis to many post requirement health support requirement. This needs to be addressed on a priority as this is creating a huge discontent in the service personnel.

**Better educational facilities for families.** To obviate the problem of good schooling for the children of Army personnel, the KendriyaVidyalayaSangathan and Army Welfare Education Society should be asked to take an annual feedback from the local authorities and population on required improvements and accordingly upgrade the teacher quality and facilities as desired. Utilizing the Information Technology Enabled Services educational support should be provided from central facilities in bigger towns to bring the students at par with the educational standards established there. Similarly, more schools may be planned in the Cantonments.

\textsuperscript{184}The Tribune, 18 Oct 04.
Starting Army owned Professional Colleges. Army has started in this direction and has opened few professional colleges(www.awes.nic.in/Colleges/colleges.HTM). These colleges will stabilise in times to come. However these colleges are inadequate for the wards of service personnel. Further to improvise the opportunity available for the serving personnel these colleges can be improvised to provide seats for serving personnel to upgrade their professional qualifications. This will help in saving cost of establishing additional college for serving personnel.

Indian National Defence University (INDU). Presently all the colleges opened by defence services have to be affiliated to certain recognised university for providing recognised degrees. By opening INDU the defence forces will be able to device syllabus as per defence requirements. In addition all the existing professional colleges can be placed under this university for the purpose of recognition. This also provide to pool the defence trained manpower under one roof to act as guiding force in the direction of educational requirement of defence personnel and defence personnel wards.

Reservations in Professional Colleges. Reservations in colleges are catered for by State Governments on an individual basis, there being no uniformity across the country, as education is mostly a state subject. The Central Government should insist that all State Governments must reserve considerable number of seats in consultation with the Army Headquarters both for wards of Defence personnel and for defence personnel for their mid career enhancement.

External Review. The issue of nonavailability of required manpower in correct quantity and quality has so far been addressed by in-house analysis, review and solutions. This has not been bearing fruit adequately. It is therefore important that this aspect is reviewed by a High Level Committee consisting of eminent persons from other agencies like colleges, universities, industry, government, serving and retired service personnel and security experts, who should thoroughly analyse the issue holistically and bring before the nation the compelling requirement of providing and equipping officers to meet the challenges to national security in the 21st century.\(^{185}\)

\(^{185}\)The Tribune, New Delhi, 16 Sep 05.
Special Commissioned Officers. There is a requirement for increasing the percentage of soldiers getting commissioned as officers. By virtue of their training, discipline and ethos, they can ably fill the posts of sub unit commanders. Being of a higher age group, they will not be in competition for the limited high ranking posts. Besides, this will provide added incentives for soldiers and make up for the shortfall of short service commissioned officers\textsuperscript{186}. This idea of pulling out more foot soldiers and training them to become officers is also being considered by Army Headquarters\textsuperscript{187}.

\textsuperscript{186} The Tribune, New Delhi, 18 Dec 06.

\textsuperscript{187} www.dnaindia.com report dated 21 May 07 accessed on 14 Jul 07.