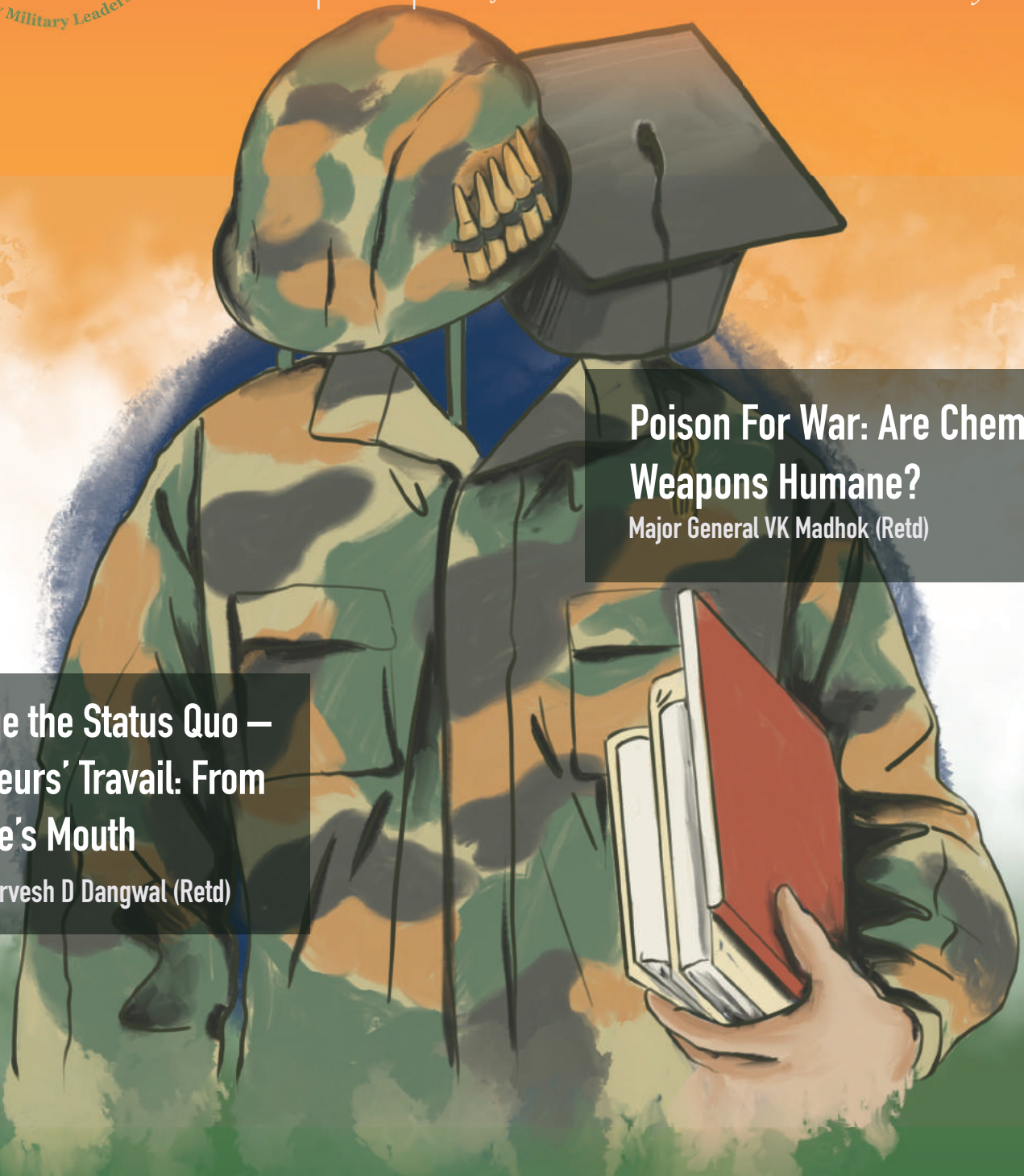




# VICTORY INDIA

VOL 2 | ISSUE 1 | January 2021

*An Initiative By MVI*



## Poison For War: Are Chemical Weapons Humane?

Major General VK Madhok (Retd)

## Challenge the Status Quo — An Amateurs' Travail: From the Horse's Mouth

Brigadier Sarvesh D Dangwal (Retd)

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Colonel Vinay B Dalvi Vol.2 • Issue 1 • December 2021

Dear Readers,

This January 2021 issue was intentionally delayed on account of our December 2020 issue being a bumper one of 30 articles that required double time and effort for compilation. The readers too would need more time to peruse and appreciate its vast content. Besides, the editorial team needed a well-deserved break as they had been working at a blistering pace for the past nine months; ever since the Mission Victory India website was launched and the Victory India Magazine issue launched, and six back-to-back editions rolled out between July-December 2020.

Last year was indeed one of the most testing and trying years, not only for our Armed forces and the nation but the entire world. The dreaded Covid-19 impact coupled with the Chinese intrusion on our Himalayan borders challenged the entire might and resilience of the nation. Despite the serious setbacks, India collectively and resolutely stood firm and held her ground by confronting all its challenges unitedly. It was a classic display of sheer will of the nation led by exemplary leadership at all levels and witnessed by the world.

This issue has four sections. The first section, 'Selection, Training & Leadership' has four articles including the cover story, 'Challenge the Status Quo - An Amateurs' Travail from the Horse's Mouth, 'Incorporating Scientific Approaches in Military Training Methodology', 'Officer Selection & Training System Needs Re-Appraisal & Co Relativity - Overhaul Needed' & 'The Profession of Arms, a Soldiers loyalty and the Indian Nationality.'

The second section is the 'Editor's Pick' comprising contemporary military matters, housing articles like 'Poison for War: Are Chemical Weapons Humane?', 'Targeted Killings: How Precedents Set Practice', 'Evolution of War Fighting Strategy in India' & 'Politico - Military Leadership Challenges of 2021'

The third section titled 'Professional Military Education' opens with our signature debate - 'Does India's Professional Military Education Need a Course Correction?' and followed by scholarly essays 'Arresting the Decline in Professional Military Education in India', 'PME: Poor Military Education and its Impact on Leadership' & 'Professional Military Training: The Delivery End of Business.'

The final section titled 'Vijay Diwas' also has four articles recounting various facets of the '71 War: 'A Victory to Remember', 'Recounting the Iconic Battle of Garibpur', 'Swift & Sure - A Tribute to Army's Daredevil Aviators' & 'From '71 Warfighting to CI Ops.'

Collectively, the above compilation of 16 select articles are intended to facilitate the increase in awareness of our readers towards several poignant professional military subjects besides familiarising them with few outstanding deeds of valour and heroism displayed by our gallant troops during the Indo-Pak 1971 War.

We hope that our 'Victory India Magazine' continues to hold sway and keep alive the interest of our readers through this new year 2021 and particularly enable our military fraternity to remain updated on several current and pertinent issues concerning armed forces, nation, and the world.

'Team Mission Victory India' will surely strive hard and continue to maintain and even enhance the standards set by our earlier issues during 2020. We earnestly request our dear contributors of articles and respondents to our debates to continue their selfless and sustained efforts for the noble cause of - Victory India!

Col. Vinay B Dalvi, ex-Maratha LI, ex-APTC,  
Editor-in-Chief Victory India.

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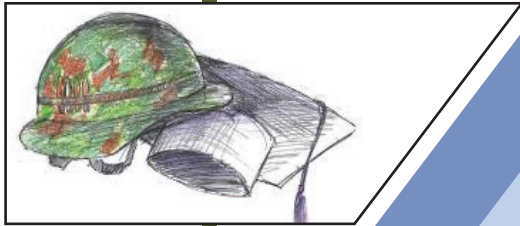
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# Challenge the Status Quo – An Amateurs’ Travail: From the Horse’s Mouth

By Brigadier Sarvesh D Dangwal (Retd)

**Editor’s Note:** Like most other aspects of military culture and training, which was a continuation of what the Indian Army imbibed from the British, the entire physical training (PT) system that was in vogue post-Independence too, was a legacy of the British Army. The PT School located at Aldershot, United Kingdom was the mother institution, which articulated and promulgated all related training concerning fitness and recreational sports and was the alma mater of the Army Physical Training Corps (APTC).

Post-Independence, it was for the first time in 1968/1969 that, a review of the existing system obtaining in the Army was ordered at the behest of the then Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw. The review board in its report recommended that, there was no need to change as the existing system was adequate to meet the needs and requirements of the Indian Army. Thereafter, it was only in 1986 that, when General Krishnaswamy Sunderjee was the COAS that, a second review was ordered and included in its ambit a larger and inclusive scope with specific terms of reference.

This review of the existing PT system restricted itself to the recruit and trained soldiers table cards, Physical Proficiency Test (PPT) and Battle Physical Efficiency Test (BPET) only and mandated the formulation of a new training and assessment system to include programs for special

areas, which exist in our hot and humid North East (NE) Regions, high altitude areas (HAA), deserts, the plains of Punjab and static and formation headquarters.

I have personally experienced and observed the earlier PT system from 1969-92 and the revised system from 1992-2008 while in service, and post retirement have been studying and researching the entire PT System followed by the Indian Army with a view to suggest objective changes to serve the best interests of the soldiers and the organisation, in the backdrop of the prevailing security environment and the invasion of technology and changes in war fighting which has impacted its very nature and understanding. Since it has now been almost three decades (1992-2021) since the revised PT System was adopted it is not surprising that, we are once again reviewing our existing system

While reviewing the existing system now or even subsequently, it will be most pertinent and relevant to know and understand the intricate processes and mechanics that went into reviewing and formulating the existing, nearly three decades old system. This will surely enable one to review the existing system most professionally and objectively only to recommend relevant and meaningful changes for the future.



The officer, who was profoundly and most intimately involved and instrumental in this meaningful and all-encompassing review of our earlier PT system, for five years during 1986-91 till its implementation in 1992 was Major Sarvesh Dangwal, who later commanded the Army Institute of Physical Training (AIPT) and superannuated on retirement from the office of Deputy Director General Military Training (DDGMT PT) on 30 June 2008.

Incidentally, he also won encomiums from the governing body of the Council International Sports Militaire (CISM) for the technical conduct of the World Military Games 2007 (Hyderabad and Mumbai). On my special and friendly request, he has narrated below for the benefit of posterity all that he could vividly recall and ink, to enable all concerned to comprehend the purpose and basis of review, the technicalities of formulating the existing system and the processes and mechanics of incorporating the existing system into the Army's playbook, its training doctrine. The sine qua non of any training system is the earnestness with which it is implemented.

### Prelude

I considered myself to be the least likely of officers to be picked up by the then DDGMT (PT), for a task as technical, complex, and challenging as this was. I was inducted into the APTC on 5 Oct 1982 and had done just one complete tenure as a Physical Training Officer (PTO) in a training centre, before the study group was ordered by the General Staff (GS). It was not only startling but also scary to be able to rise to the responsibility reposed upon me and to be able to contribute to such a demand as would be placed upon me as a member.

The study group was charged with the responsibility to prepare a training and assessment paradigm for the entire Indian Army and would impact the fitness of its human resource for the years to come. By any stretch of imagination, it was no mean task and I considered myself to be the least likely person to be a part of this study group, as I was woefully short of intimate subject knowledge, which was an imperative requirement to gainfully contribute to the General Staff Directive. I went beyond the initial apprehension and settled down with the choice exercised and was inherent in the trust which the DDG MT (PT) had shown in me and picked me up from an illustrious crop of colleagues in the APTC.

My service record is likely to have influenced my selection, but it was grossly inadequate for the task at hand only because I lacked the expertise and know-how of exercise physiology and its allied subjects. Therefore, when I reached Army School of Physical Training (ASPT); now rechristened as AIPT on temporary duty (TD) from the Grenadiers Regimental Centre, Jabalpur and met the Presiding Officer, apart from the initial exchanges with him, put down my request for time with the intent to do self-study and empower myself with the domain knowledge before I even put my pen to paper.

### Respect the Challenge Before Overcoming It

My tryst with self-educating myself commenced and I found myself with a book in hand, in my living space in the guest room of the Officer's Mess of the ASPT. The Officer's Physical Training Course (OPTC), which was my only gateway to permanently transfer into the APTC did not equip me with the level and quality of knowledge on exercise physiology and its allied subjects, which was fundamental to the requirement of a member comprising the study group.

The instructions imparted during the course were very rudimentary and did not come from someone who himself was knowledgeable on the subject at hand. The instructor's themselves lacked the depth of knowledge to be able to impart profound instructions to the students and I was a recipient of such learning only. My greatest concern was that the study group was tasked with a responsibility which was beyond the scope of mere amateurs, as I was and yet was the lynchpin of the same.

Even if I did not lack in my sincerity and industry towards the role assigned to me as a member, this could never compensate for my lack of knowledge about the subjects I was to deal with and question that which existed and was the basis of our PT regimen, which was in practice for the past four to five decades. This was a classic case of someone whose only criteria to be entrusted with such a responsibility was that he belonged to the APTC, the organisation which dealt with PT in the Indian Army.



Soldiers from the British Army's Royal Anglian Regiment and India's Rajputana Rifles breaking a sweat together as part of a joint military exercise; File Photo

I was weighed down by this thought only to further resolve to live up to the faith and trust reposed in my abilities by my seniors and not give up, and which was justifiable on all accounts. In pursuance of my resolve, I self-imposed a quarantine upon myself to study, read and make notes of that which was salient to my requirement. My routine was tailored to suit my purpose of remaining mentally agile, physically fit and having copious reserves of energy to immerse myself in my books.

I was fortunate to have the association of a sports medicine specialist who was co-located in ASPT and commanding a centre under the control of the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB), an armed forces unit. I found an incredibly good listener and friend in the Officer Commanding (OC)



of the centre, who clarified my doubts and expounded certain facts for easier and better assimilation by me.

In between, when I went for my weekly meeting with the Presiding Officer of the study group, I prevailed upon him that if we did think about bringing any change in our existing system, it should be supported by conducting practical training and tests on recruits and trained soldiers and then subjecting the results thereof to a statistical evaluation to decide for or against the recommended change. This was unanimously agreed to by the group and hence we were clear in our minds that, unless we had physically not ascertained the need for a change and validated it by a statistical evaluation, nothing would change.

### **What You Do is So Loud, That You Can't Hear What You Say**

My understanding of the subject matter was getting clearer with every day of studying and cross referencing it with other books to permanently embed the principles sustaining the hypothesis or facts. Simultaneously, I was also going through the existing GS publications which dealt with basic and battle physical training and critically examining its contents against the latest developments and changes in the field of fitness training in contemporary times.

Although the principles of physiology remained unchanged and permanent, the structure, designing, proliferation of activities which were subsumed under the scope of fitness, prioritisation of the fitness component, motor ability training and time as a factor in training attracted my attention and interest.

The important aspects which emerged from my studious deliberations on fitness, essentially was regarding the priority which is given to the several components of a fit profile in a human being. Of all components therein, cardiorespiratory/aerobic, and anaerobic endurance is the cornerstone of fitness, irrespective of the environment one lives and works in. It comprises between 50% to 60% of any training programme which aspires to bring about harmonious development.

For a combat army and its soldiers, fitness implies the ability of the rank and file to be able to sustain the rigours of the several and varied demands made upon its human resource. Hence, the very nature of the profession of soldiering demands a long haul and recurring energy supply, which supports the other components of strength, speed, flexibility and the motor ability of balance, coordination and agility.

It was thus observed that this aspect was not adequately factored into the construct of our recruit and battle physical training tables, and hence, was flagged as a shortcoming. My deduction in this aspect was further strengthened by my practical observation of watching recruits being put through extra endurance training to take an endurance test, which validated their cardiorespiratory fitness. The Recruit Training Card (RTC) did not adequately

prepare most of the recruits for the test, and hence, the training was not validated by the test per se.

There was an evident disconnect here between the training and testing. Hence, it warranted a relook into the priority, which was given to the aspect of cardiorespiratory fitness in the RTC as also merited an intimate examination of the erstwhile 2 miles (3.2 kms) test and its standards as a specific test for the intended component being assessed.

An extremely critical failing was observed, and which was the absence of any stretching or cooling down activity after the strengthening group was done with. It is important for the exercised and contracted muscles to be stretched and drawn to their original length for retaining body flexibility. Also, to be able to flush out body toxins and release these into the bloodstream and the respiratory system for re synthesis had been completely lost sight of.

Stretching through Yoga, to relieve strained muscles and relax these was considered to be a panacea, and hence, it forced itself into the construct of the cooling down group. However, at that point in time it was wrongly thought by the PT aficionados and some senior officers in the military hierarchy that, Yoga was a religious practice of the Hindus, and hence, co-opting it into our fitness training regimen would go against the grain of the Indian Army's secular outlook towards its organisational philosophy.

Notwithstanding, we included Hatha Yoga poses but under the subterfuge of just calling these as stretches. We were being guilty of not standing up for our cultural form of exercise but then prudence dictated otherwise, and we were convinced that the introduction of Yoga into the Army was just a matter of time, because it was 'an idea whose time has come' and hence it couldn't be resisted by Armies.

### **Restructuring and Redesigning the RTC**

Another aspect which emerged from my comparisons was the methodology, which was applied for the development of strength. The principle of repetitive overloading of a muscle group for bringing about a training effect and hence enhancing strength is a universal practice, whether it is load bearing or else done as resistance training. There was tremendous scope of introducing this in our experimental design of the RTC, by specifying the repetitions and sets of several free hand and equipment centric physical activities.

Also, the age-old adage of 'no pain, no gain' could not stand scrutiny in the light of the scientific understanding of strength training, which advocated work and rest intervals between two sets of similar activity. Therefore, a need was felt to structure our strength training activity in accordance with our alternate understanding of the same and optimize the training effect by specificity, repetitions, sets, rest between sets and variety.

When examining the construct of the RTC, it was my observation that the mobility group therein, which consisted

of exercises for the shoulders, dorsal and lumbar regions and legs as also coordination, performed in a squad formation could be substituted with a running form activity to mobilise the glucose/glycogen and better warm up the body through blood circulating in the larger muscle groups of the body. Also, when drafting the experimental RTC this mobility group was to be replaced with the newly introduced warm up and endurance group, which balanced the table card with the endurance component in a commensurate proportion of its priority.

We put time as a factor in training at premium and hence wanted to achieve the biggest bang for a buck by optimising it in the limited window of a daily period of 40 minutes in the RTC. We deliberately restrained ourselves from increasing the duration of a period, as the challenge we gave to ourselves was to achieve best results within the stipulated time and not bring about a cascading effect in the total available time for training in totality. Thus, we rearranged the groups comprising the RTC into three main ones, viz warm up, strengthening and cool down and specifically focused on developing and maintaining the desired fitness component by compressing time through specificity.

The idea was to focus on fitness exclusively rather than try to achieve a subsidiary advantage in drilling, marching and squad discipline. It was also felt that the manner of conduct of a PT period was too straitjacketed and hence required to become more akin to a more relaxed and informal coaching process which allowed limited and reasonable freedom to the trainees, with an intent to make it more fun rather than a stereotyped military class devoid of a relaxed atmosphere.

### **Trial Results: Control vs Experimental**

Another issue which was likely to adversely impact the result of the training imparted to the experimental group was the deep rooted and ingrained habits of the Physical and Recreational Training (P&RT) instructors, who were only accustomed to what they had imbibed over the years in their methods of instruction. The experimental group was subject to training by the diehard Physical Training Instructor (PTI) and for him to transit into and understand the rationale and logic of the Experimental design and its conduct was severely handicapped.

The no pain-no gain ideology was difficult to erase from the instructors mindset, whereas the experimental design professed work and rest intervals in a given ratio of 2:1 so as to extract the optimal training effect. For strength training the concept of working a muscle group to its failure wherein it is unable to maintain the form of the activity and such other nuances were well beyond their theoretical understanding. They were ignorant about the 'why' part of a concept and hence often faltered as a matter of habit on the 'what' part when required to put it into practice.

Similarly, the PTI was not empowered enough to understand the concept of Training Heart Rate when engaging a trainee in a cyclic activity for developing and maintaining

aerobic capacity. We were putting our hypothesis to test in an on 'job manner', wherein the subject population of the trainees was not kept isolated from any extraneous influences which was bound to compromise the results and mitigate the fidelity of the training effect.

Equally, a new and experimental design of training the outcome of which largely depended on the manner of its conduct and understanding of the theory behind the concept was a big dampener. We had to make do with whatever conditions prevailed and any thought of asking for time to address these concerns was straightaway rejected when examined in the backdrop of our proposal to practically try and test out any change before adopting it. We had initially decided to put to practice everything and rejected any thought of doing a theoretical exercise alone to pursue the purpose of the study Directive.

This required time, an unbelievably valuable and non-recurring resource. Moreover, when an earlier study Directive had been similarly ordered in 1968/69 it had submitted its report within a month and recommended a status quo. Therefore, when we were allowed time (12 months) to proceed in the manner as we wanted to, requesting for any additional time and conditions to approximate what could be described as ideal, was unlikely to happen and hence not pursued with the DGMT.

Without tinkering or else unnecessarily re-interpreting any established fitness principle, it was a conscious decision to prioritise our focus and functionally redesign our training pattern to meet the demands of our environment. Any fitness programme must essentially cater to the fitness components in such a manner as holistically addresses the understanding of what comprises an effective profile. Endurance takes the biggest slice of the cake at 60%, strength at 20%, speed at 10% and flexibility at 10%. The motor abilities of balance, agility and coordination are simultaneously worked upon while working on the components.

It was with this established postulate that we applied ourselves to work on a hypothesis which would be practically tested on ground for its efficacy and how it compared with the training effect induced by the already existing programme. Once we arrived at a consensus on our approach to the task at hand, the next logical step was to prepare an experimental programme for eight weeks duration for recruits under training in various regimental training centers across the length and breadth of the country.

I applied myself to the task in hand and did the needful. Our methodology to test and validate our hypothesis was to impart training to two similar platoons in the same week of training on the existing and experimental design of training. The platoon which was trained on the existing design was designated as the control group and the one trained on the experimental design as the experimental group.

However, it was felt that this was not the ideal method of validating the hypothesis as the recruits in the two

different groups were exposed to exactly identical and similar physical activity in all other fields/subjects comprising the training syllabi for them. They were doing the same drill, endurance training (ET), obstacle training (OT), vaulting and agility (V&A), assault course and sports and games.

### Theory in Practice

Having decided and arrived at a logical conclusion on the phased manner of our approach to meet the requirements of the Directive, we applied our learning to the trained soldiers Battle Physical Training (BPT). Herein, we emphasised development of aerobic and anaerobic endurance by introducing low intensity long distance running, interval training and repetition training.

These methods are used by athletes to enhance their performance and hence it could very well be used by soldiers in their BPT. The most likely and accurate interpretation of endurance was understood as the body's ability to repeat an action again and again without losing its intensity and form.

When considering the design of training for special areas, static headquarters/formations and those above 50 years of age, such as mentioned in the Directive, the biggest challenge was in the aspect of continuity training which demanded intrinsic levels of psychological internalisation of the fitness habit. Each individual must realise that the physical activity he is required to undertake is for his own good and thereafter the organisation he serves in.

In its loose and misplaced understanding, fitness maintenance is considered to be a coercive activity which is associated with drudgery and hence invites a fundamental abhorrence towards it. When it is imposed under the threat of punitive action and is held as a structured activity sustained by group support, then it is carried out as a parade.

But when, owing to either the ambient temperature and weather conditions, nature of employment and deployment, terrain considerations and regional geography, it is not possible/feasible to conduct continuity training which enjoys group support or else is done as a part of a routine structured activity, then it is only internal motivation which interests an individual to exercise for fitness maintenance.

### The Challenge of Continuity Training

To overcome the constraints of weather, temperature, and space we designed circuit training programs and for those in static headquarters and formations offered a bouquet of activities to choose from in keeping with individual aptitude, interest and availability of facility but ensuring that all the fitness components were adequately exercised in keeping with the weightage assigned to each for a balanced fitness profile.

Combat fitness demands all fitness components to be trained proportionately, however when unit/formation

roles demand differently the emphasis can well shift from one to the other or else augmented accordingly. The HAA in the Northern and North Eastern areas of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the Line of Control (LOC) posed great challenges to the serving soldier and therefore it was the considered opinion of the Group that to live, work, discharge the assigned role and survive in these inhospitable areas was enough of a test of fitness and hence did not warrant anything additionally.

However, sports and games provided the much-wanted diversity, required to stem the drudgery of serving in such inhospitable environments. The hot and humid areas of the NE were a challenge, when one considers the monotony and associated boredom that engulfs one here. Moreover, the restriction to come out from one's post in a largely insurgent infested region was a huge drawback to road running and walking for maintaining cardiorespiratory fitness.

The heart rate had to be pushed beyond its comfort zone to bring about a training effect. We considered weight training as a suitable alternative for all such posts and locations and all equipment and machines required as sector stores to minimise expenditure from the Annual Training Grant (ATG)/Sports Activity Grant (SAG)/Contingency Grant/Miscellaneous Grant/Or any other head.

This would break the routine of conventional BPT and induce interest which is steeped in the human nature of self-interest. We offered the bait of self-good to a soldier and made the organizational good a subsidiary requirement. However, it served our purpose because we achieved what our terminal goal is, a 'Fit to fight Organization.' The means to achieve it was inconsequential.

### Fitness For the Goldies

The programme for the above 50 years category of personnel was essentially self-driven and monitored by the individual himself/herself. It was generous on the major joints of the lower limbs and therefore precluded any stress and impact generating activity for cardiovascular fitness. Strength conditioning for purposes of maintaining a military bearing and flexibility of the joints through stretching (Yoga) was made centric to their training design.

Here again a bouquet of activities and choices were in-built in the program. For desert regions, other than what was available for soldiers in BPT, a series of breathing (Pranayam) techniques were recommended. The Shitkari, and Shitali and Kapalbhathi were useful during hot days and cold nights.

### Analysing PPT & BPET

It was our observation through study that there existed a lack of specificity in the test used to evaluate/assess a particular fitness component or else a motor ability. The 300 meters shuttle test which was there for testing agility was ill placed and was done away with. Instead, it was replaced by a more specific five meters line touch test. The



earlier jump and reach and standing broad jump tests had more to do with explosive power of the lower limbs and which was an endowed ability.

It really was not an effective test to gauge a base level of fitness for which the PPT was designed. Also, the sit-ups test was substituted by the bent knee abdominal crunches test. The former did not isolate the rectus abdominis muscles required for core stability and also adversely affected the dorsal/back muscles and could cause chronic back pain. Whereas, by bending the legs one was able to eliminate the iliopsoas muscle which otherwise assisted in the sit-ups and specifically target the rectus abdominis muscles.

Generally speaking, we had tentatively worked out most of everything that was required of us by the terms of the Directive, in so far as the 'why' and 'what', the training part was concerned. So, that brought us to the second major requirement of the study, and which was the assessment tests.

What existed then was the common PPT for all personnel but in the BPET there were different standards for those in the Arms and Services. This was difficult to understand and the only explanation which emerged was that the Arms were required to do more vigorous work in comparison to the Services. Our contention in this was that both were trained on a similar design and hence there was no reason for having easier standards for one and not the other.

Therefore, we removed the distinction in the standards of the test. It was extremely difficult for any of us to accept that, the APTC being a Service enjoyed the benefit of easier standards, whereas it should be right in the forefront in this regard. We also examined the different standards in the endurance test for varying altitudes and streamlined these to correlate with the understanding of high altitude as it obtains in the Army.

We also applied our mind to the different age groups, and which were far too many for taking the test and accordingly calibrated these with the physiological deterioration which takes place in human performance with growing age. The age groups thus became fewer. Next, we examined the tests per se in both PPT and BPET. While the former essentially gauges the preferred level of fitness for any person (male), in any walk of life, the latter is specific to the Army in its designated role of war fighting and associated activities.

### **The DGMT Presentation**

After, exactly a year from the date of the issue of the Directive, the study group made a presentation to the DGMT at the Army Headquarters (AHQ). As there was lack of clarity on the outcome of the trials and the results were nebulous, which was held to confirm the hypothesis, the Presiding Officer of the study group requested for more time to conduct the trials after

addressing the shortcomings which were observed in the first instance.

The request was acceded to and another year was allowed before the study group report was submitted to the directorate. As mentioned earlier somewhere, the major weakness was in the running and conduct of the experimental programme. Therefore, a capsule for the designated PTIs was held and their doubts ironed out and the theory part of the concepts explained and taught. After the training capsule it was felt that the instructors were now better trained to conduct the experimental tables. We now had about 5,000 recruits and another 2,000 trained soldiers who were subjected to these trials for three months.

After the training, tests were conducted for both the control and experimental groups, results were recorded in a specially prepared folder, collated, examined, and then graphically plotted on a graph. The pre-and post-training results of both groups were separately compared for improvement and then compared between groups and plotted. These results were also statistically analysed to determine the significance of improvement and then further tabulated in a matrix to make inferences. A comparison and significant significance of improvement was evident in the experimental tables and this validated and confirmed the hypothesis. The experimental tables were more effective and brought about better training effects.

In the BPET, the two miles and 10 miles tests were the biggest losers as they did not stand scientific scrutiny and presented a huge scope for improvement. The mainstay of fitness is one's cardiorespiratory/cardiovascular health and performance. In our understanding, the one component which was deserving of maximum attention and effort while profiling military fitness was our cardiorespiratory/cardiovascular health also known as endurance.

The heart, lungs and the vascular (arteries, veins and capillaries) System is the fount of all other components and its health and fitness dictate their potential for development and improvement.

The two miles test stood the scrutiny of being picked up as an endurance test but the standards which existed made it more speed endurance oriented. The test was more anaerobic than what is desirable (60% aerobic and 40% anaerobic) and hence lost out to keep its place. The long-haul aerobic pathway is preferred. The other, 10 miles test though qualified itself to be considered appropriate but its logistics and availability of space to conduct the same was posing difficulties and hence had made itself redundant in units/formations.

It was probably being held in the Army Pre-Commission Training (PCT) establishments and RTC. The study group was therefore looking for a specific and manageable test to assess the endurance component. The five kilometers (5 Km) test came up as a suitable alternative,



Endurance'; a critical fitness factor, developed in cadets through long distance runs; File Photo

quite akin to the 5,000 meters run on a track. It has an 80% aerobic and 20% anaerobic component. Then there were other tests which were modified for specificity and retained.

### Thumbs Up

Armed with a positive report validating our hypothesis, followed a spate of presentations in the AHQ and culminated with the then Vice Chief of Army Staff (VCOAS) Lieutenant General Mahajan. I was personally disappointed with the then DGMT Lt Gen Ved Airy, Mahavir Chakra (MVC) who was the Commanding Officer (CO) 3 Grenadiers in the Battle of Jarpal in the Western Sector in 1971, wherein Colonel Hoshiar Singh was awarded a Param Vir Chakra (PVC); who turned down our proposal of providing weight training equipment and machines as sector stores to identified posts in the NE.

### What is the Price We Put to Fitness?

As I had served as a PTO in the Grenadiers Regimental Centre when Lt Gen Ved Airy was the Commandant, we knew each other well at a personal level. My requests in this regard (weight training equipment) though agreed to in principle was turned down owing to budgetary constraints but with a caveat that it could be considered on a case-to-case basis subsequently.

Also, it was at his insistence that we sent our RTC and BPT revised programme and the New PP and BPE tests to various training centers and units for further trials, before seeking the approval of the then COAS, General SFJ Rodrigues for implementation in the Army. After three months of the trials as mentioned above, we received incredibly positive feedback from all Centre Commandants and COs.

Two of these units to which the new tests had been sent were 1st and 9 Para Commandos (Now Para Special Forces) and who hailed these as very challenging yet

specific and relevant to validate fitness components and motor abilities in an individual. The element of aerobic component in the RTC and BPT and the way it was progressively incorporated into the training design was welcomed by everyone without exception.

### Incorporating The Revised PT System

The study group was satisfied with its approach to fulfill the requirements spelled out in the Directive and the final noting sheet was prepared for approval by the COAS. The DGMT got the requisite nod from Gen Rodrigues with a remark "I hope it does not create ripples in the environment." Thankfully, none got created only because we labored with facts and dressed these in truth. Subsequent to this, drafts of everything were submitted to the Army Training Command (ARTRAC) for publication and distribution.

Simultaneously, capsule courses for P&RT instructors and Master's at Arms were held and conducted at ASPT to acquaint, educate and familiarise them with the revised regimen and tests. There were many critics of the entire endeavor and comprised primarily of die hard, dyed in the wool officers who considered themselves the ultimate authority on PT/Fitness Training.

It was their observation that the Revised PT and Assessment System was more reminiscent of what is applicable for school children. However, we laid their reservations in the matter to rest by researched material and scientific facts which was undergirded by sports medicine and the positive feedback received from Centres and Units.

There was a massive fixation on the test standards, and which is extremely important. It follows in the line ahead...

We had compiled a huge amount of data with respect to the individual performance of the trainees who





AIPT as the Alma Mater of APTC is mandated with institutional training to train the trainers, who in turn are entrusted to impart training at Unit level; File Photo

were put through the revised tests post their 90 days of training on the experimental programme. The trainees were in varied age groups and of diverse ethnicity, Regiments/Corps, Arm/Service, spread over different terrain but with similar physiological limitations and comprised recruits, soldiers, Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO), Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO) and few officers.

When these personnel took the PPT and BPET, their individual performance was recorded, tabulated, and plotted on a graph to see where the values lay. The densest cluster for the different age groups in quantifiable tests was picked up as our Satisfactory/Pass value.

Thereafter, the scatter pattern in the graph enabled us to determine the Good and Excellent standards. That which could not find a place in the densest plotting was marked as Fail. This was the best way of fixing standards and was premised on actuals rather than something which was theoretically determined and planted.

When we were looking for any similar record for the quantifiable values of tests in the existing battery of tests, there was none we could find or lay our hands on. The two-and 10-miles test standards were arbitrary and hence did not stand up to any scientific scrutiny when analysed for specificity and quality. One was too stiff and the other too easy to genuinely assess aerobic power, which is the salient way point of cardiorespiratory/ cardiovascular fitness.

Interestingly, the Supervising Officer P&RT, SC approached the Presiding Officer of the Study Group with a direction from his Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) that the two miles run as an endurance test in the BPET battery must remain and not be done and dusted with. We explained the reasoning behind our decision but in those days our understanding about performance, health and fitness was rather convoluted and did not enjoy the benefit of the scientific intricacies in matters of exercise physiology, which had become known through sports medicine and sciences.

Regarding the different standards for quantifiable tests, the group was divided in its view and felt that it should be just Pass and Fail. This served the purpose of validating training and fitness both. Anything over and above was considered to be a bonus and could be developed or cultivated on a need basis in formations/units. After all, at the cutting-edge level of the Army, fitness is the mandate of Commanders. Whereas the other considered view/opinion was that having Excellent and Good standards will act as a motivator to improve performance. Both viewpoints had their merits but finally the latter was adopted and exists.

### The Last Word From a Veteran

Health, fitness and performance in the physical domain is often confused and mixed up. Our Health comes from the freedom from any organic disease, our fitness from our ability to withstand the demands of our environment and our performance is our ability to deliver. Therefore, a healthy person may not be fit, and a performer may not be either fit or healthy. The APTC at the organisational, institutional and formation levels is charged with the onerous responsibility of keeping the cutting-edge human resource of the Field Army 'Fit to Fight and Fighting Fit'.

Therefore, it must be the responsibility of Commanders at all levels of Command, to trust and believe in what is provided by those who know what they say and do and for the trainers to understand the needs of the environment and tailor programs/regimen which is doable. 'One size fits all' is not a prescription that is advocated by the trainers, but it cannot be used as an alibi to scrimshank by individuals and wrested by Commanders from the specialists, only because they think they understand everything.

The issue demands a mutual respect for each other's turf and belief in a system, which has stood the test of time. The sum of the parts must be greater than the sum of its parts. APTC can value add, by providing to Commanders the optimal standards they expect from their soldiers, only because fitness sustains all forms of military training.



### Brigadier Sarvesh D Dangwal (Retd)

Brig. Sarvesh D Dangwal commissioned from IMA in 1971. Born into battle with 4 Garhwal Rifles, saw action in Jhangar, Naushera Sector in the 1971 Indo-Pak War. Served in APTC for 25 years, was Comdt AIPT & DDGPT before retirement in 2008. Was instrumental in revision of

entire system of PT and Testing of Army implemented in 1992 and obtaining till date. An avid reader and writer who freelances on diverse issues that impact civil society and especially those which concern the people of the hills of Uttarakhand. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of MVI.





# Incorporation of Scientific Approaches in Military Training Methodology

This is an abstract of a talk delivered by Col Vinay Dalvi, an athlete and physical trainer, at the Sports Authority of India Conference (SAICON) at New Delhi in December 2017. Reproduced here for the larger benefit of the Indian military fraternity!

By Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

'Enhancement of Training Curriculum in Armed Forces Training Institutes' was a subject of discussion at the apex military level and a joint decision being taken to make military physical training more scientific by incorporating 'Sports Medicine' in the training methodology of cadets, recruits and combat soldiers. The effective implementation of this decision on ground can bring immense benefits of sports/fitness medicine with systematic, progressive, and scientific physical training, especially for the officer trainees, where the physical training activities form 70% of their average daily 24-hour training period.

The entire physical training syllabus, curriculum, and tests rest on

three great principles of PT (harmonious development, systematic progression, and continuity) evident in the training pamphlets. The inclusion of sports/fitness medicine can bring scientific orientation to the entire physical development. The aim of physical training in the military is to make and keep a soldier fit both physically and mentally to perform his assigned task effectively and efficiently.

The training methodology must consider the 24-hour daily routine of a trainee and cater for adequate rest, recovery, recuperation, diet, and nutrition with physical load being administered progressively to improve fitness levels methodically and scientifically to attain optimum results as per individual

potential or capacity. The knowledge of physical and recreational training and sports/fitness medicine must be promoted amongst officers and junior leaders with a practical vision plan and road map.

## Definition of Sports Medicine

'Sports science' (also sports and exercise science, sports medicine, or exercise physiology) is a discipline that studies how the healthy human body works during exercise, and how sport and physical activity promote health and performance from cellular to whole body perspectives. The study of sports science incorporates areas of exercise physiology, sports psychology, sports nutrition, anatomy, biomechanics, and bio kinetics.



**Sports medicine as a subject was introduced in the military in 1980s by our pioneer sports medicine doctors to a few select sportsmen, coaches, physical trainers, managers, and administrators in the field of sports, especially individual and team sports like athletics, weightlifting, boxing, and hockey.”**



Sports medicine, also known as sport and exercise medicine (SEM), is a branch of medicine that deals with physical fitness and the treatment and prevention of sports and exercise related injuries. Although most sports teams have employed team physicians for many years, it is only since the late 20th century that sports medicine has emerged as a distinct field of health care.

### **Background**

Sports medicine as a subject was introduced in the military in 1980s by our pioneer sports medicine doctors to a few select sportsmen, coaches, physical trainers, managers, and administrators in the field of sports, especially individual and team sports like athletics, weightlifting, boxing, and hockey; subsequently spread to few other sports disciplines. This new knowledge and its technical application were not adequately understood or taken seriously due to our rigid/status quo mind set and laid down training concepts and methodology.

Review of the Army PT tables for recruits/cadets/combatants and PPT and BPET for all ranks of the Army was done during late 1980s by a Review Committee under Commandant AIPT/ASPT including a sports medicine doctor and most qualified and experienced APTC officers. The trials on the new PT tables and tests were conducted and comparisons drawn with the old system. The new system of PT tables and tests were approved and adopted from 1992 and continue till date. Based on these changes, the officer pre-commission military academies and recruit training centres adopted the new system with their existing ones to

meet the new service requirements of trained officers and soldiers.

### **Relevance of Subject**

The importance and relevance of this subject in the field of overall physical training methodology of military training for cadets, recruits and combatants was strongly felt by me due to my all-round exposure to not only several sports disciplines at national level but also my deep and sustained involvement of training officer cadets, recruits and testing all ranks through laid down PT tests.

The old, obsolete, and outdated system of physical training methodology repeatedly came to my notice besides the unsupervised non-structured unofficial training by senior cadets and unqualified or inexperienced service officers especially at our elite military academies disturbed me tremendously. The damage that they had caused and continued to cause gave me many sleepless nights. The only way to address these issues was through debate and discussion and subsequent penning down, initially as discussion points, articles, responses or debates and papers, leading to compilation of full

volumes. ‘Role Model’, ‘Sun Tzu’, ‘Victory India’ – 1,2,3 and 4 involving over 60 reputed/renowned military Veterans and others.

Our sustained and combined efforts to convert our penned down recommendations into realistic transformation on ground slowly but surely started ‘bearing fruit’ through better and wider awareness of the entire subject of quality military manpower, especially the elite officer leadership and the ways and means to improve it. The decision of the UCC to incorporate sports medicine in the physical training methodology of military training of cadets, recruits and combatants in July 2017 came after one year of consideration by the three services and joint acceptance for implementation on ground.

### **Army Physical Training Syllabus, PT Tables & Tests**

These are based on the training pamphlets issued by DGMT/ARTRAC and the PT doctrine and training methodology but finally left to the concerned training academies and recruit training centres. The trained manpower is left to the unit and formation commanders with supervisory role by concerned staff/tech/line directorates depending on the unit or establishment.

The immediate problem for incorporating sports medicine in training will be the imperative need to understand the laid down system of training as per the training pamphlets and guidelines. The correct/better understanding of this is a dire need as the training concepts



**Review of the Army PT tables for recruits/cadets/combatants and PPT and BPET for all ranks of the Army was done during late 1980s by a Review Committee under Commandant AIPT/ASPT including a sports medicine doctor and most qualified and experienced APTC officers.**





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and philosophy is personality based, not only in units but also training institutions. Other than APTC staff or PT Course qualified personnel, hardly anybody knows about the technicalities and principles of PT and the link with recreational training. Hence, this knowledge must be taken seriously first.

Thereafter, the introduction/incorporation of sports medicine/fitness medicine should be done. Sports and fitness medicine are two sides of the same coin. Similarly, the military training encapsulating the entire 24 physical training curriculums must be viewed holistically and a vision plan and road map made for systematic, methodological, and coordinated implementation at all levels including training academies and recruit centres.

### **Entry Level Physical Fitness Needs Revision**

Entry level physical fitness tests/parameters and selection system needs immediate review especially for the officer cadre with transparent/objective mandatory tests. The recruit entry tests are basically

physical oriented with less scope for other talented/technical candidates for selection. This needs review and dovetailed to meet different/varied requirements of multifarious trades of all arms and services, especially technical arms.

For the officer entries, the minimum physical takes off level required/demanded by the military academies must be met. The high wastage rate of cadets is partly due this 20-year-old demand of academies not being met. 'Trainability' and 'potentiality' are the two key words that have been 'subjectively' deciding the selection of SSB candidates. Objective and mandatory physical tests at the SSB selection centers will raise the entry level physical standard of officer cadets and positively impact the overall fitness standard of cadets besides drastically reducing wastage rates and training injuries.

### **Fitness Enhancement with Scientific Methodology**

The entire physical training methodology should be imparted progressively and scientifically to enable systematic and harmonious

development of the cadets and recruits right from the beginning with small and progressive doses for all round steady development. Violent and irregular doses of physical training in any form without rest, recuperation and recovery cause more damage than gain. The cadets and recruits must be made constantly aware of the drawbacks and adverse effects of following the wrong methods through official/structured or unofficial/non-structured training.

Awareness and education will bring in a desire to avoid wrong doings and misguided methods in both the trainers and the trained. Interaction between seniors and juniors cannot be avoided for effective teamwork and leadership development. However, it can be modified, refined, and improved through awareness of scientific methodology for enhanced fitness.

### **Benefits & Gains of Effective Implementation**

The cumulative and collective benefits that will accrue with incorporation of sports medicine in physical training methodology of military training of cadets, recruits and combatants will consequentially achieve the following:

- Enhance physical and mental fitness of trainees and combatants.
- Spread technical knowledge and scientific methodology of PT/sports/fitness medicine.
- Lead to more systematic, scientific, and methodological training of combatants.
- Will reduce training related injuries and even consequent disabilities of combatants.
- Will reduce wastage and morbidity rates of trainees.
- Enable and facilitate better health and physical fitness of all trainees and combatants.

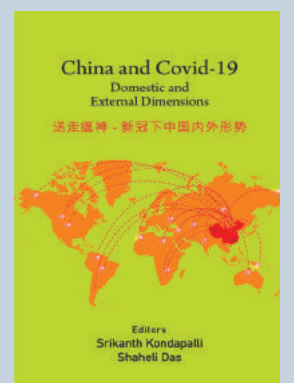
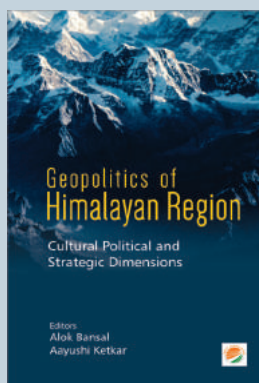
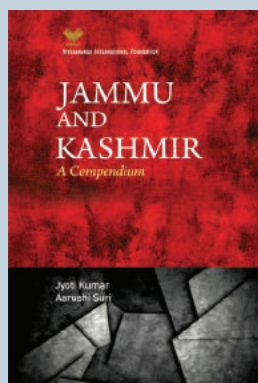
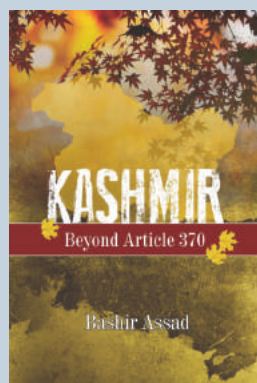
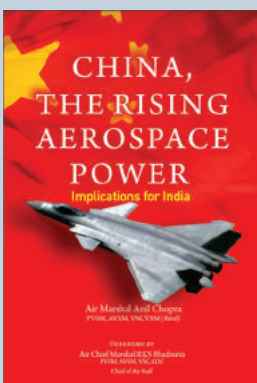
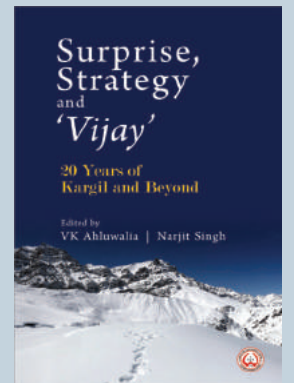
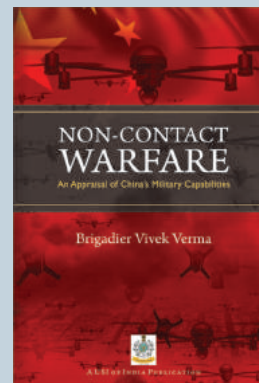
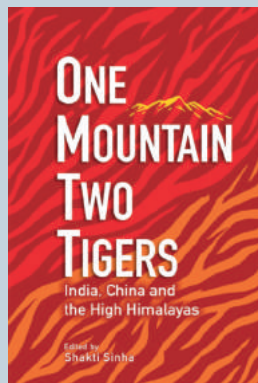
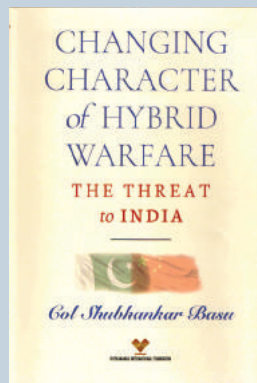
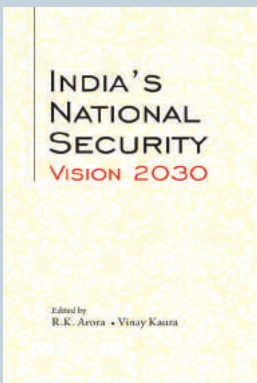
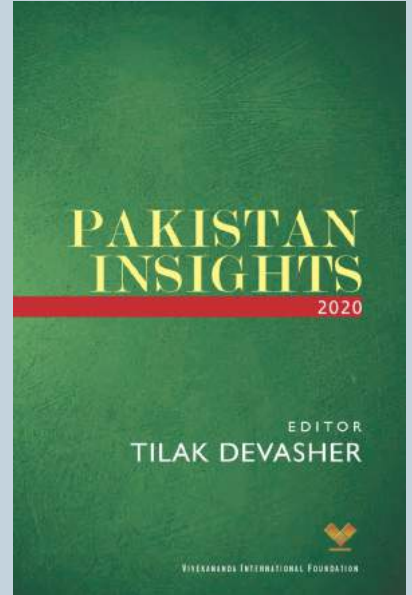
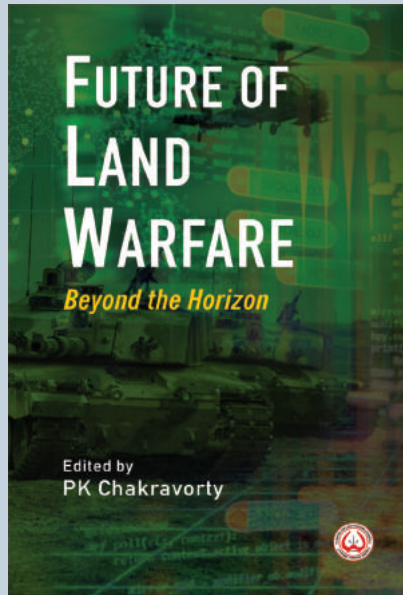
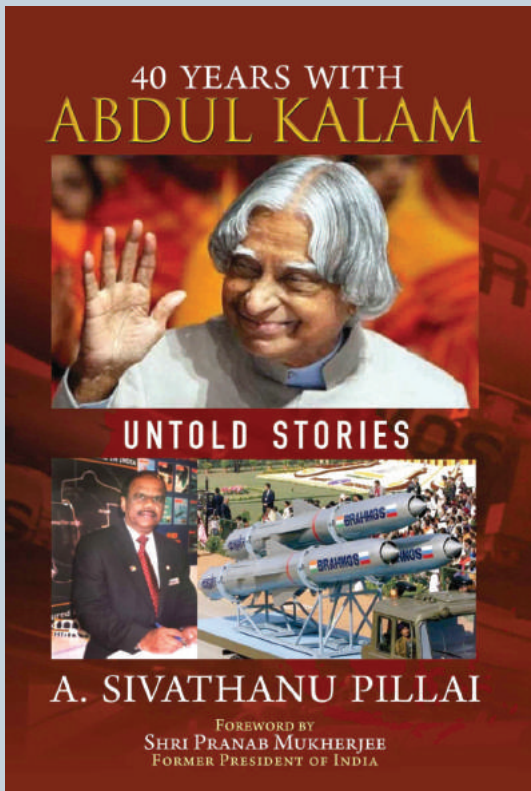


**Violent and irregular doses of physical training in any form without rest, recuperation and recovery cause more damage than gain. The cadets and recruits must be made constantly aware of the drawbacks and adverse effects of following the wrong methods."**





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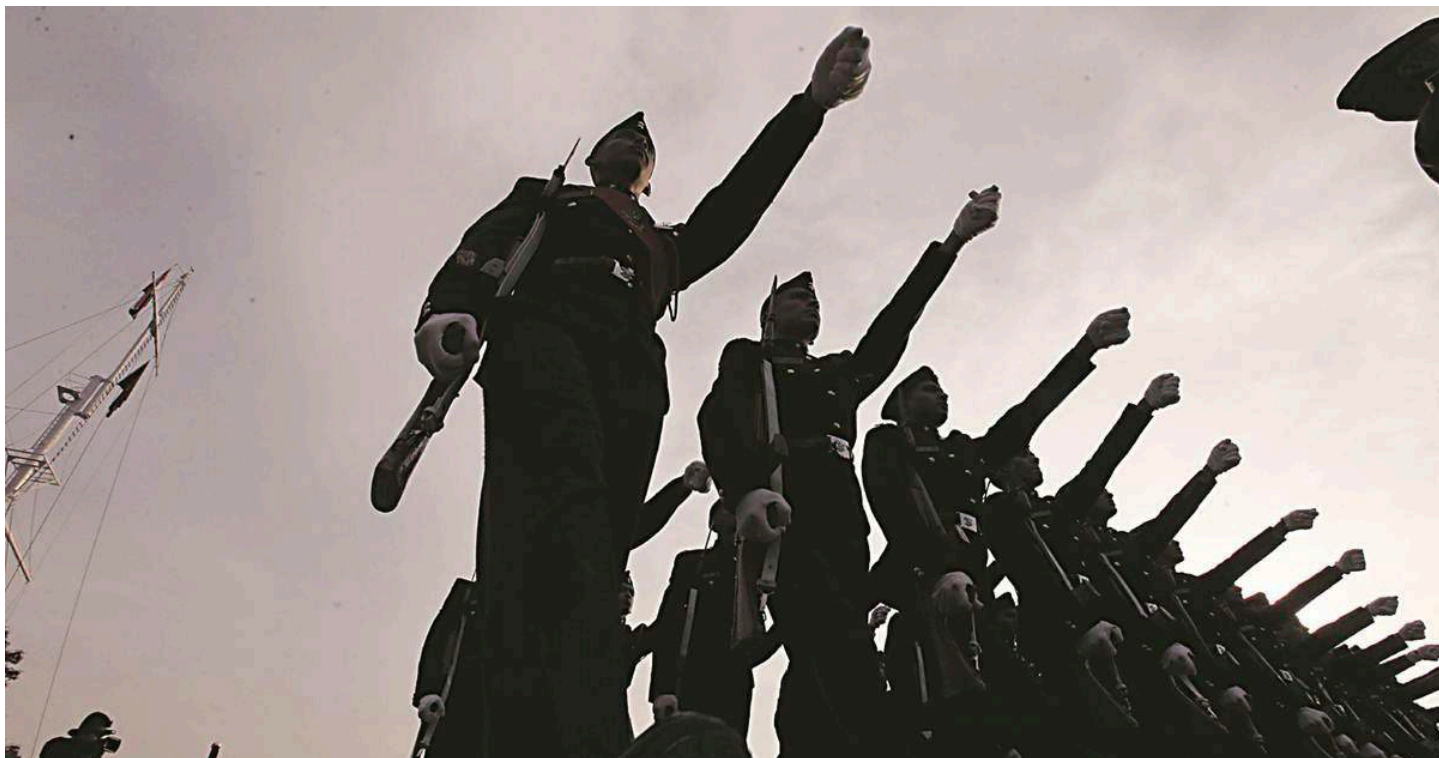
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# Officer Selection and Training System Needs Re-Appraisal and Correlativity – Overhaul Needed

By Brigadier LC Patnaik (Retd)

Unauthorised punishments often lead to ‘cognitive dissonance’, which impairs learning, creativity, slows down problem solving skills and increases forgetfulness, leads to inhibitions in creativity. Similarly, unauthorised punishments like manhandling, ground swimming or rolling down the stairs can result in ‘concussions’ to the tune of 30-60g force range. Emotionally, the above symptoms may lead a person to be aggressive, impatient, impulsive, and prone to low self-esteem, creating major disruption to an individual’s ability to perceive and assimilate. Some of them may also suffer from post-traumatic hypopituitarism with reduced muscle mass, decreased exercise capacity and depression.

The policy of officer selection for the Indian Armed Forces is jointly decided by the Chief of Staff Committee and the Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) under the DRDO.

Ever since Independence, three major revisions have taken place, with the last revision being made in 1998, wherein the screening process was introduced due to substantial increase in the number of applicants. The fourth revision is under consideration by the DIPR and is at the trial stage. The Services Selection Boards (SSBs) conduct one of the finest selection processes over a period of five days and recommend potential officer cadets with high trainability factor to the service Pre-Commission-Training Academies.

The cadets undergo training for a period of one to four years depending upon the type of commission, before they are commissioned into the Armed Forces. Notwithstanding the world class infrastructure and sufficient budgetary support for training of cadets, the National Defence Academy (NDA) has an annual attrition rate of 14-16%, while the service specific

pre-commission training academies have a 5-7% attrition rate. Although attrition in terms of withdrawals, medically unfit and physical casualties are unavoidable in military training establishments all over the world, the high rate of attrition at NDA, one of the premiere military institutions in the world, is a matter of grave concern.

In this context, Clinical Psychologist, Col P K ‘Royal’ Mehrishi’s analysis on the evolution of ragging, unauthorised punishments and psychological impact on adolescent minds is highly relevant with regards to the training of cadets at NDA and other parallel academies in the Armed Forces. His observations provide valuable inputs for re-appraisal of selection and training methods for our future leadership. Hence, we need to consider de-novo transformation measures to enhance the quality of our officers.



The psychological impact on adolescent cadets has been adequately analysed by Col Mehrishi in the perspective of mass and excessive punishments leading to cognitive dissonance. In 2011, a study undertaken by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States, found that cognitive dissonance can lead to impairment of the ability to learn, create inhibition in creativity, slow down problem solving skills and increase forgetfulness. The above factors seriously hinder learning ability amongst cadets. Similarly, as afformentioned, unauthorised punishments like manhandling, ground swimming or rolling down the stairs can cause 'concussions' to the tune of 30-60g force range.

The damage to the brain in such a force is not easy to detect because it is usually not structural in nature and severe enough to interrupt normal functioning and cause physical and cognitive symptoms, some of them immediate, others delayed for weeks, even months. This leads to dizziness, headache, fatigue and change in sleep patterns, which are normally the complaints during 'sick reports' by the cadets at NDA. Emotionally as afformentioned, the above symptoms lead a person to be aggressive, impatient, impulsive, and prone to low self-esteem, creating major disruption to an individual's ability to perceive and assimilate. Staying amongst peers in a highly competitive environment, many cadets turn to artificial stimulants and drugs, harming their adolescent body and mind. Some of them also suffer from post-traumatic hypopituitarism with reduced muscle mass, decrease exercise capacity and depression.

Hence, it can be surmised that the three essential factors of learning as brought out by Col Mehrishi; attention, retention and re-production are severely compromised through unauthorised and excessive punishments, prevalent in the Academy, for which there is a high rate of exodus in the form of withdrawal, relegations, and absconding. To address the issue, we need to follow a '3-S' policy of 'specialisation', 'segregation' and 'scientific' physical training at NDA.

**Specialisation:** There is an urgent need to create a new Dept/Wing for 'Physical Training' controlled and supervised by qualified persons both military and civil, with responsibilities to plan, execute and monitor the complete (360 degrees) aspect of physical training of cadets to include physical exercises, sports, drill physical adventure/co-curricular activities, and also authorised physical punishments as laid down. Physical training as a specialised training component and subject needs serious attention and can no longer be left to inexperienced Divisional Officers or senior cadets. All major military training academies of the world have already incorporated such measures since ages. Details of organisational and command structure can be worked out on a functional basis.



Shubham Gupta, 25, sustained major injuries during training, which rendered him completely disabled, File Photo

**Segregation:** All new entry cadets to be kept separately in their first two terms; for which one Battalion with 4-5 squadrons could be earmarked. Minimum two terms are recommended considering the time required for the muscles and bones to be set on a scientific basis.

**Scientific:** The overall weightage of physical training to be enhanced to 60% from the existing 30% for first two terms. Subsequently, scientific monitoring of body mass-muscle ratio bone development, identification of physical strength and weaknesses, spotting of potential sports persons, and scientific and medical treatment with the help of sports medicine specialists, counselors etc could be

planned. On completion of two terms, the cadets can be distributed to other squadrons with the physical training ratio gradually reduced to 20% by the Vth Term.

## Selection

There is also a strong need to review our selection process to assess their cognitive and physical capability and link it with the training at the service Academies. Certain recommendations in the selection system as given below could be considered:

- A fundamental shift required to move from existing personality-based selection to a cognitive based selection process for the following reasons: -

- Existing personality variables/ Officer Like Qualities (OLQs) focus more on social effectiveness and adjustment, derived from the Freudian concept of behavioral process and observable responses, neglecting the mental process which meditates the stimulus and response (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1975).
- Cognitive assessment provides time course for information processing, reaction-based measurements to provide baseline of assessment and subsequent monitoring.
- Rise of reliable cognitive function assessment tools such as British Army Recruitment Battery (BARB), Cognitive Screen AE (US) and





An NDA cadet sitting inside his cabin, in isolation; File Photo

Australian Computerised Cognitive Assessment Tool (ACCAT).

**Physical Efficiency Test (PET) can also be introduced at the Services Selection Boards (SSBs), to include:**

- One-mile shuttle run
- Pushups (30)
- Sit-ups (30)
- Chin-ups (18)

The above tests should be assessed on a gradation scale and marks obtained to be included in the overall assessment.

- Screening Test (Day-1): Based on Picture Perception & Description Test (PPDT) to be replaced by Cognitive Assessment Test (CAT) and the Physical Efficiency Test (PET).
- The Psychology Test and GTO assessment could be suitably modified

on cognitive assessment tools to reduce the scope and duration so as to complete the test in one day; thereby reducing the overall duration to four days, instead of present five days.

- In addition, to reduce the load of non-UPSC entries at the SSBs and reduce the vast rejection on the Screening Day, we could consider their shortlisting through established public examinations like

GATE (Tech Entries), SAT/CAT (Non-Tech Entries).

**Correlativity Assessment & Training:** There is a need to develop software to assess the correlativity between assessment and training to be shared periodically between the assessors and trainers to review their own mechanisms. The existing procedure is outdated and devoid of sincerity in purpose. This aspect, being Tri-Service in nature, should be under the control of CIDS.



### Brigadier LC Patnaik (Retd)

Brig. LC Patnaik was an Infantry Officer having vast experience in all theatres of war and types of operations. He has handled crucial military diplomatic challenges in the Middle East, peace keeping operations and training of foreign armies. He has a substantial experience in selection process in the Indian Army (President – SSB) and in the government. He served as the Chairman of the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC), where he had also served as a Member. He can be reached at Email:

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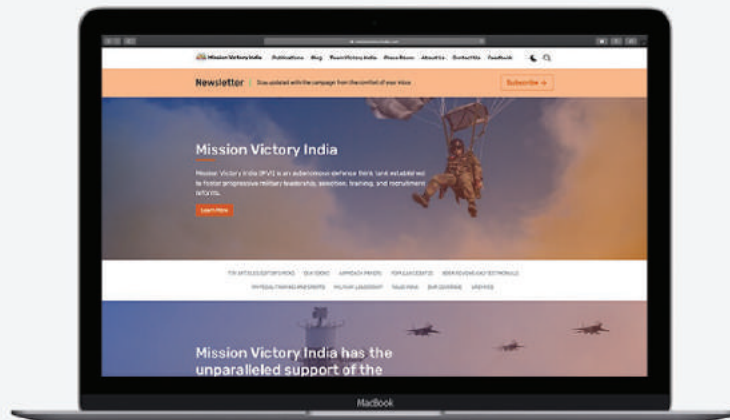
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# The Profession of Arms, a Soldiers Loyalty, and the Indian Nationality

By Nixon Fernando

The average leader may risk a lot, but the military leader is a case apart, he directly leads his charges into situations that deal in life and death. To that extent civilian leadership is radically different from military leadership. How could a cadet possibly, starting off as an average civilian, achieve transformation in the course of his training, raise his thinking and stature so high that he may become fit to face any battlefield with courage and a clear mind?

The candidates for the armed forces academies today come from the same society that is wrestling with the materialistic culture, the global village, uncontrolled access to information, and frustration with corruption and disenchantment with the political process.

There is also increasing awareness of issues of soldiers relating to denial of honour, degrading status,

lesser promotion opportunities, and corruption in government offices at their home turf, postings and pension issues. And the candidates who are mired in it need to eventually stand tall before their men leading them from the front taking on enemies with ferocity and without fear.

There is no doubt that the young minds in the military academies do dwell deeply on matters related to bravery and sacrifice; there is deep awareness that the demands of the call to arms is way out of the ordinary—even during times of peace. And their grooming in courage continues even after they are done with the academies—when they learn the ropes and join the traditions of valour that is characteristic of their respective units.

Now when the cadet is making that journey of transformation and elevation to the higher spheres,

what is it that will dispel all doubts and ease him into the role he is destined to play?

**Nationalism:** Among the things that impel soldiers to action is the feeling of nationalism; nationalism has always been a force for provoking fierce loyalty. Nationhood has been variously forged based on factors like race, religion, language and royalty and on this basis, sovereigns have been able to tap on the loyalty of their soldiers in defence of their nationalities. Now if that must be the motivator that transforms Indian soldiers, then one must look for a nationality that represents the Indian spirit.

Now how does one define Indian nationality? The cultural identity of the subcontinent—or nationhood if one may—extends beyond the boundaries of India; the people across the border in almost all directions more or less share the same



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So, then what should a mentor of the cadets in the academy teach the cadet? Why must the cadet be ready for battle? What should he imbibe which will set him as a credible example before the men he will command?

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sub-continental ethos. But the constitution of India operates only on a part of this subcontinent that we call India. Therefore, the feeling of nationality does not exactly coincide with its geographical boundaries and this causes a dilution.

Besides, though the ancient Indian wisdom is considered the foundation of this civilisation, our constitution, in its pursuit of modernism, does not give that wisdom a central place in the affairs of the nation. This therefore weakens the case for Indian Nationality.

None the less, the Indian Nationality continues to protect the spirit of oneness in diversity inherent to the ancient thinking and Indian soldiers defend this inspiring principle. This essence of nationality depicting that togetherness is embodied in the various symbols including the flag, the emblem, the anthem, the constitution, common bureaucracy, a single armed force and so on and patriots uphold this nationalism in various spheres of life—including the profession of arms.

**Other Motives:** Now does this call to Indian nationality completely explain the loyalty of the Indian soldier to his profession of arms?

The answer is an emphatic ‘no!’ In fact, it is not as straightforward as it appears; there is a great degree of subjectivity inherent in it because individuals think in different ways; there are many other reasons for which the soldiers fight; some examples being ‘pride of the regiment’, ‘the pride of being soldiers’, the defence of the nation and its systems, bread and butter, duty, humanity...

The traditions of loyalty to regiments were forged in British India. The officers of the colonial forces and their men are known to have taken excellent care of each other when they fought the common enemy, viz the enemies of the British state, namely the indigenous rebel, the invaders, the opposing princes...



IMA GC during POP; File Photo

The officers enjoyed a status in society only rivalled—and not surpassed—by the members of the Indian Civil Service. The soldiers also fought for order in society (rule of law) under the British crown and were handsomely paid. They enjoyed high status amongst their brethren, except of course when the Independence struggle reached crescendos—especially under Mahatma Gandhi, or when atrocities were committed against the indigenous population.

So, there was ‘glamour’ in being associated with the armed forces at that time. But then again, with

much of that ‘glamour’ losing its sheen today, the question arises as to why should the soldiers fight any way?

Another known motivation is that people do fight when they stand up for high idealism. But again, the modern sources of inspiration do not account for much; the current crop of Indian leaders, in most fields, look westwards for inspiration; but the concept of an ‘advanced nation’, as inspired by western thought, is not that source of inspiration for a soldier for which he would like to stake everything.

Then again, he could be inspired by great Indian leaders. But persons like Dr. Abdul Kalam, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, Mr.

Jaiprakash Narayan or Mr. T.N. Seshan are rare. The soldiers do not really have inspirational figures amongst their present national leaders to look forward to.

Chiefs who can stand up before their political masters, for what they believe in, are also rare. Though of course average jawans do find leaders closer to them who stand out as inspirational leaders. The stories of personal valour of some of the awardees of the highest military honours would indicate that you could not ask more from Military leaders...



Statue of Indian soldiers planting a flag to mark battlefield victory: File Photo

And yet, some people are convinced that the soldiers fight for their salaries and for food. To an extent it is ok, after all salaries are part of the compensation, but one would be considered a fool if just for the sake of food and salary he would want to put his life on the line.

Then there will always be a small flock of spoilers who would seek 'lucrative' (sic) wings like logistics, by choice, with an eye on corruption. And you would also find some others turned on by the power and pelf enjoyed by the officers in the armed forces, who therefore make it their ultimate destiny to become officers.

If this is the exhaustive accepted description of what motivates the soldier, then can we say that there is a feel of completeness in it? Without a doubt, the fact that we continue to have inspirational leaders in the junior ranks who lead their companies and units wearing their lives on their sleeves is a saving grace; that does bring a feel of completeness. But besides that, one could easily say that a certain 'punch' is missing in the

intellectual assessment of what distinguishes the core motivation of military leadership.

This has its consequences. If that which motivates the military is not an object of national reverence, if the public eye cannot perceive motivation other than what we have listed above, is this nation heading where it must?

There is a void and in the intellectual sphere and one still needs to look at how the advice of Lord Krishna to Arjuna can help in motivating Indian soldiers. One needs

to look at what the Sikh Gurus said to the intolerant rulers from Delhi or for that matter what Mohammed the Prophet said to those who stood up to fight persecution. This content must reach the Indian Soldiers.

So, then what should a mentor of the cadets in the academy teach the cadet? What is the answer to the question 'why must the cadet be ready for battle?' What thinking should the cadet imbibe which will set him up to be a credible example before the men he will command?

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### Nixon Fernando

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# Poison For War: Are Chemical Weapons Humane?

**“Chemical warfare remains a well-considered alternative to conventional, biological or nuclear warfare and, as such, many nations have been giving serious thought towards its development and use.”**

**By Major General VK Madhok (Retd)**

The employment of chemical weapons is not a new phenomenon. Such weapons were used in World War I, The British suffered nearly 180,983 casualties from gas warfare, of whom 6,062 died, that is, nearly one in 30, while they suffered 21,91,693 casualties from bullets, shell and bayonet, of whom 819,000 died, a proportion of one dead to three wounded. So far as the Americans are concerned, out of 1,87,686 casualties due to bullets, shell or bayonet, the deaths were 46,448, roughly one in four. As regards gas, for 74,978 casualties, the deaths were 1,400, less than one in 50. The chemical agents used in the great war included chlorine, phosgene and mustard gas.

These statistics lead one to conclude that poison gas is 10 to 12 times more humane than high explosives. One might not agree, however, with this

inference while discussing the Bhopal tragedy or, for that matter, the radiation leak at Chernobyl and the large resultant casualties. However, the first instance was entirely a case of gas leak and the second of radioactivity and these cases took place in normal surroundings and not on a battlefield, any comparisons as such would be incorrect.

## A Well-Considered Alternative?

Chemical warfare remains a well-considered alternative to conventional, biological or nuclear warfare and, as such, many nations have been giving serious thought towards its development and use. After World War I, the Japanese are suspected to have used chemicals against the Chinese during the 1923-43 periods. Cases of millions of Jews who were gassed in Germany

are well known. In the fifties, the suspected cases of use of herbicides by the British in Malaya and later by the Americans in Vietnam (Agent Orange) were brought to notice.

More recently, allegations against chemical attacks by the Russian were raised in Afghanistan. In the Iran-Iraq conflict, more than 50 claims were made of chemical attacks during the 1980-84 periods. Such attacks were launched; it is claimed, by means of artillery shells, aircraft or other munitions with nerve, mustard, and mycotoxin gases. Approximately 37 people suffering from the effects of chemical agents were reported to have undergone treatment in Vienna, Brussels, Geneva, and London.

In spite of all this, some people say that chemical weapons are more humane than even conventional



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Some people say that chemical weapons are more humane than even conventional munitions, while others feel that the chemical agents” are dangerous and because their use is unethical, they should be used only as a last resort.

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munitions, let alone nuclear: weapons, while others feel that the chemical agents” are dangerous and because their use is unethical, they should be used only as a last resort. It has also been recommended that in view of their temporary effects, chemical agents are more effective in flushing out operations and accordingly should be used first in conjunction with conventional weapons, particularly for immobilizing Military personnel, for instance, the crew in an air base.

Let us consider a situation where an adversary resorts to a sudden attack with tactical guided missiles on airfield runways followed by a chemical warhead to render all the crew temporarily immobile. Here is a possibility which cannot be dismissed lightly and, if successful, would make an entire airbase operationally unfit. The U.S. Army doctrine visualizes and caters for a situation. It envisages the employment of chemical weapons against airbases at any critical point in a battle with a view to render an airbase ineffective though strictly on moral grounds one may deprecate the use of chemical weapons. But then all wars are not fought on moral principles. Every religion prohibits wars, yet some of the cruelest wars in history have been fought in the name of religion.

Unfortunately, not much information is available and far less is known about biological and chemical warfare. Here a distinction needs to be made between-biological and chemical warfare. It is hoped that nations would continue to remain averse to bacterial warfare who's prime carrying agents are fungi, bacteria, viruses and rickettsia (a minute micro-organism found in lice and ticks and in-the blood of patients suffering from typhus).

About 90 nations have ratified the 1972 treaty which prohibits the stockpiling and development of biological weapons. Though earlier, despite the ban imposed the Geneva Convention of 1925 on chemical and bacterial warfare, 40 percent of the nations, including the USSR and the USA, had retained the right and option of retaliation through them.



Soldiers with the British Machine Gun Corps wear gas masks in 1916 during World War I's first Battle of the Somme. Archival Image

(Referring to the view that chemical weapons are “more humane than high explosives”. The author (Major General V K Madhok) says that the threat from them has increased in recent years not only because of the scientific capability to reduce more deadly varieties, but also because of the development of sophisticated missiles which can carry them. He suggests that civil defence officials should look into the need for educating people about this kind of warfare.)

It is reported that the U.S Army has suspended its work on chemical research and development in Maryland. This would affect the project on 155

mm binary shell. A couple of years ago a sulphuric acid spill is reported to have taken place over there which reportedly got mixed up with a nearby stream.’ Perhaps, the Americans feel that the Soviet chemical weapon capability is growing while their retaliatory ability is diminishing. As a result, an effort was made not only to modernize its chemical stockpile and to change the obsolete chemical munitions with newer binary weapons, but to keep their options open for use against the USSR.

At a NATO ambassadors’ conference held in May 1986, various aspects of chemical weapons are said to have been discussed. While Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway remained opposed to the production of binary weapons, Greece favoured a policy of a

European chemical weapons free zone and a worldwide ban. One reads that the U.K. decontaminated island off the west coast of Scotland from anthrax with a 12-man strong team; suitably inoculated, with protective clothing and necessary breathing equipment. This island is supposed to have remained contaminated following biological warfare trials in 1940. It was intended to burn off the ground cover and apply a solution of formaldehyde and sea water, the entire process taking about six weeks.

Today the Chinese have what they call an anti-chemical warfare corps as part of the People’s Liberation Army, with



US Military Aircraft spraying 'Agent Orange' during the Vietnam War; Archival Image

its own special school and research and development sections. It is supposed to have developed considerable anti- chemical warfare expertise. This corps also participated in various nuclear tests.

In some countries, chemical warfare situations are included as part of their field training. This is especially where such countries have suffered in the past. For example, in a recent river crossing exercise held in Vietnam, engineers forming a part of assaulting troops had to first carry out decontaminating operations before the main troops reached the other side.

One could safely draw a few simple conclusions from the above scenario. First, that the use of chemical weapons is an option which is very much available and that, besides protective aspects, many countries have gone in for a retaliation capability, Secondly, the chemical scientists have the ability to produce newer weapons and would not hesitate to do so. Lastly, with the availability of sophisticated, means of delivery in the shape of precision-guided munitions (one-hit capability weapons) chemical warheads can be launched from hundreds of miles away on pin -point targets.

Chemical warfare would be an entirely new experience in our, sub-continent. Therefore, it is essential to understand its effects. It can be most damaging to health and even strikes at the unborn. Agent "Orange"

containing a small dose of dioxin, used as a defoliant in Vietnam, caused several such problems for the civil population. At the diplomatic level in the next SAARC conference, it may be advisable to moot the question of a chemical weapons free zone. But at the practical level, individual as well as collective protective measures from gas masks to protective clothing and gloves are areas which need looking into by the civil defence experts.

### Chemical Agents: A Multitude of Delivery Options

Adversaries would be encouraged to use chemical agents on sensitive areas like airfields nuclear installations, important factories and headquarters prior launching overt or covert operations on such installations. As chemical agents are cheaper and easier to produce, the terrorists would also be tempted to use them. The need arises, therefore, of considering whether

separate chemical warfare experts are necessary. Also, there is an obvious need to develop detection and decontamination equipment of which there is now a flourishing industry in Europe and some other countries.

The scientists are now on trial of a non-lethal chemical; weapon which would place at the disposal of mankind a weapon which would reduce, though not completely eliminate, the necessity of killing as well as cause far less casualties and yet achieve decisive results. It would help to overcome resistance by spreading panic, causing temporary immobility, thereby, reaping the benefits of victory with far less damage and destruction, thus achieving the military objective of subduing an enemy's will to resist. Such a weapon could easily be delivered by artillery shells, aircraft, missiles, and rocket launchers and from ships or merely after screwing adaptors on rifles and pistols.



### Major General VK Madhok (Retd)

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# Targeted Killings: How Precedents can Become Practice

*“Eliminating inimical people bent on wrecking death and destruction on Indian nationals and interests, before they execute their evil intent, is an option India may explore more vigorously, within the confines of international law.”*

By Colonel (Dr.) DPK Pillai (Retd)

On November 27, 2020, Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, a Brigadier in the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and a nuclear scientist who was heading the Iranian Research and Innovation Organisation, was killed through a remotely operated machine gun from a self-destructing truck. His death follows the killing of the charismatic and popular head of the IRGC, General Qassem Soleimani, by a drone strike outside the Baghdad airport earlier in the year.

The elimination of such a high value target did not quite elicit a major retaliation by Iran. Iran insisted that despite repeated provocations, its restraint should not be seen as a sign of weakness. It does, however, beg the question whether their policy of ‘strategic patience’ was a sign of demoralisation, given the ease with which such high-profile targets were eliminated.

## Historical Context

Targeted killing involves the intentional and deliberate use of lethal force, with a degree of pre-meditation, acting under authority of domestic law, against an individual or individuals who are not in the physical custody of the perpetrator. These acts are committed by governments and their agents in times of peace as well as during armed conflict.

The methods used to kill from stand-off ranges include snipers, missiles, gunships, drones, car bombs, or even poison in closer proximity. Even if complex operational planning is required to eliminate targets, there are increasingly fewer risks to the human assets of the targeting state.

One of the most famous cases of targeted killing remains the operation

apparently authorised by the then Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, following the massacre of Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich in 1972. It is reported that nine out of the 11 members of the Palestinian group, Black September, who were apparently involved in the massacre, were killed by Israeli agents.

The term gained further prominence after Israel made public its policy of ‘targeted killings’ in the Supreme Court, following a lawsuit against its policies in the Palestinian territories.

The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was engaged in efforts to assassinate several high value targets like Che Guevara, as well as Patrice Lumumba of the Congo and Fidel Castro. US President Gerald Ford issued an executive order in 1976 prohibiting the assassination, or conspiring to commit

assassination, by employees of the US government, including those acting on its behalf. This executive order established a global consensus that targeted killing and assassinations were unacceptable.

The US policy changed after the September 2001 terror attacks. 'Predator' and 'Reaper' drones, special operations forces and even civilian contractors, were used to carry out targeted killings in Afghanistan and in places like Yemen. The first 'sanctioned' killing was in November 2002, when Qaed Senyan al-Harithi, an al-Qaeda leader responsible for the USS Cole bombing, was hit by a Predator drone in Yemen.

### The Legality of 'Targeted Killing'

The targeted killing of individuals identified as threats to the security of a nation state are, at best, contentious. Pre-emptive targeted killings have been pursued by nation states as a viable policy option within the framework of the laws governing armed conflict, as a legitimate response to 'terrorist' threats and challenges of 'asymmetric warfare'.

The US government, for instance, justified its policy of targeted killings as flowing from right to self-defence, as the country was in an armed conflict with terrorist groups like the al Qaeda.

Whether or not a specific targeted killing is legal depends on the context in which it is conducted. Article 51 of the UN Charter allows states to act in self-defence. International humanitarian law (IHL) lets states take necessary steps to protect themselves. As per IHL, targeted killing is lawful when the target is a 'combatant' or 'fighter' or, if a civilian, only for such time as that person 'directly participates in hostilities.'

Given the principle of military necessity and proportionality, any anticipated military advantage has to be weighed against the purported harm to civilians. IHL does not permit reprisal or punitive attacks on civilians and will apply regardless of whether the armed conflict is between states (an international armed conflict) or between

a state and a non-state armed group (non-international armed conflict), including with alleged terrorists.

Offensive actions such as targeted assassinations raise ethical questions but terrorism is a form of war — and in war, enemies can be attacked. While targeted killing could be considered as an option against terrorism, executed either within that nation state, or across borders, it should be within the ambit of international law.

### India's Options

India has not been immune to the targeting of senior scientists working in sensitive positions by inimical forces. If the admissions of former CIA operatives are to be believed, the deaths of Indian scientists, Homi Bhabha (who was killed in a mid-air explosion aboard Air India 101 in 1965) and Vikram Sarabhai (killed at a beach resort in Kovalam in 1971), can be attributed to foreign agents intending to derail the country's space and nuclear programmes.

Pakistan and China have provided shelter and support to trans-border terrorist activities. Dawood Ibrahim, India's most wanted, along with designated terrorists like Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar, have all found safe haven in Pakistan. China has consistently supported and shielded Pakistan in international forums in this regard as well.

If measures to extradite such individuals and bring them to justice for their misdeeds are not successful, then punitive strikes to take out the targets should be considered. If India has to execute extra-territorial targeted killings, it should credibly establish that its intelligence inputs are based on a high degree of certainty, with failsafe procedures for confirming the targets.

Utmost care should be taken to minimise civilian casualties.

In the eventuality of drone attacks and airstrikes, decision makers on the ground should be able to abort or suspend the attack, if it comes to light that the collateral loss of life or property damage is in excess of the original assessment.

It is not as if Indian forces are incapable of executing high profile operations. Unconfirmed rumours have long held that the exploding consignment of mangoes in Pakistani dictator, Gen. Zia ul-Haq's plane, was delivered by Indian agents. More recently, the interception of a high profile West Asian personality in Indian territorial waters, was successfully executed.

Given the experience of Balakot airstrikes in February 2019 and the subsequent incident of fratricidal shooting down of an IAF helicopter in the fog of war that followed the shooting down of Wg.Cdr. Abhinandan's MIG-21, the imperatives of maintaining the robustness of information flow in real time, cannot be over emphasised.

The concept of targeted killing to gain military advantage is not alien to Indian statecraft. In the Ramayana, for instance, Rama eliminates Bali to gain a strategic alliance with Sugreeva, in his war with Ravana. Ancient texts like Arthashastra prescribe elimination of threats before they become tangible. They also prescribe the creation of a cadre of assassins.

Eliminating inimical people bent on wrecking death and destruction on Indian nationals and interests, before they execute their evil intent, is an option India may explore more vigorously, within the confines of international law.



### Colonel (Dr.) DPK Pillai (Retd)

Col. (Dr) D.P.K. Pillay, SC is Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi/ Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of 'Mission Victory India'. This article has been reproduced from the 'Think Tank' MP-IDSA with due permission in the interest of our readers as part of the larger national security discourse.





## Evolution of Warfighting Strategy in India

**“Descent from the high pedestal of ‘Informationised Battlefield’ to slugfest has brought a new dimension to warfare and has created a strategic conundrum for the Indian Armed Forces.”**

**By Colonel Harsh Vardhan**

The Indian Armed Forces are usually known to be land centric, however, with unsettled borders on the West and North, not many options are available for the forces with respect to casus belli in modern times. The foundational animosity with both putative adversaries is scaffolded on territorial dissonance inherited from a colonial past. Apropos, it is quite understandable that India has fought most of its wars on terra firma.

Much has been said about the Cold Start Strategy and its offspring—the Proactive Strategy (PAS) which was the cornerstone of all operational planning and force articulation with respect to Pakistan and a derivative of OPERATION PARAKRAM. In hindsight, the efficacy of PAS, as a deterrent strategy

in the sub-conventional domain, was adequate enough to ensure that no large scale terrorist attack was prosecuted by Pakistan from 2001 to 2008.

The Mumbai terror attack on 26/11 burst the bubble of this strategic articulation where to Pakistan’s glee, despite extreme provocation, the Indian Armed Forces did not roll out of the garages and straight across the International Border in the manifestation of the oft-quoted, “HIT, MOBILISE and HIT HARDER”.

However, did this strategic paralysis since 2008 persist, and are Indian Armed Forces still looking for the lodestone which would pull the forces out of the morass. The answer to the question is a big NO.

Before we dwell into the new articulation for warfighting across the Western Borders, it may be prudent to place the construct of policy, strategy, and operational art in the correct context. A flow chart may explain the co-relation.

India’s articulation has been that of territorial orientation and sanctity of its own borders, being the schwerkpunkt prima donna of all strategic hypotheses, hence the defensive orientation that affected the national policy and concomitantly the war time strategy. It all changed with the conduct of the Ex BRASS TACKS which changed the intent on the Western Borders to punitive deterrence.

The armed forces have echoed the idea of war avoidance on the

George Kennan lists a range of such options from negotiation to embargo to intimidation, covert subversion, assassination and the limited use of military force.

Northern Borders with dissuasive deterrence transitioning to credible deterrent capabilities. The contention that doctrinal innovations along the way, have sought to optimise rather than rethink the orthodox offensive doctrine may be incorrect. The strategic articulation has evolved with the capabilities and environmental realities of the geopolitical space in the sub-continent.

Pakistan's responded to PAS by adopting a 'new concept of warfighting' (NCWF) and further the enunciation of Triple R (Rearticulation-Reorganisation-Relocation) coupled with merging of the nuclear warfighting with conventional conflict, imposed a degree of caution and recalibration. Pakistan called India's bluff on conventional conflict as a response to a sub-conventional attack and threatened a transition to the nuclear domain, thus curtailing the window of conventional conflict for India.

This schema seems to have worked well for the intervening period of 2008 to 2016, where a large number of terrorist attacks were perpetrated by the "Deep State" against India and specifically so against the Indian Armed Forces Samba, Janglot, and Pathankot being some examples.

However, the proverbial straw which broke the "camel's back" was the terrorist attack on the Uri Military Base which led to the next level of evolution in tune with the strategic reality of upping the ante in the sub-conventional domain, while calling out Pakistan's bluff to go nuclear in response to a kinetic conventional counter-response to a sub-conventional terrorist attack.

While the response to Uri in form of surgical strikes may have looked like 'an old wine in a new bottle', it triggered evolutionary germination of an idea which took the form of flexible responses and even before the 'ink was dry', it was executed as a response to Pulwama terror attacks.

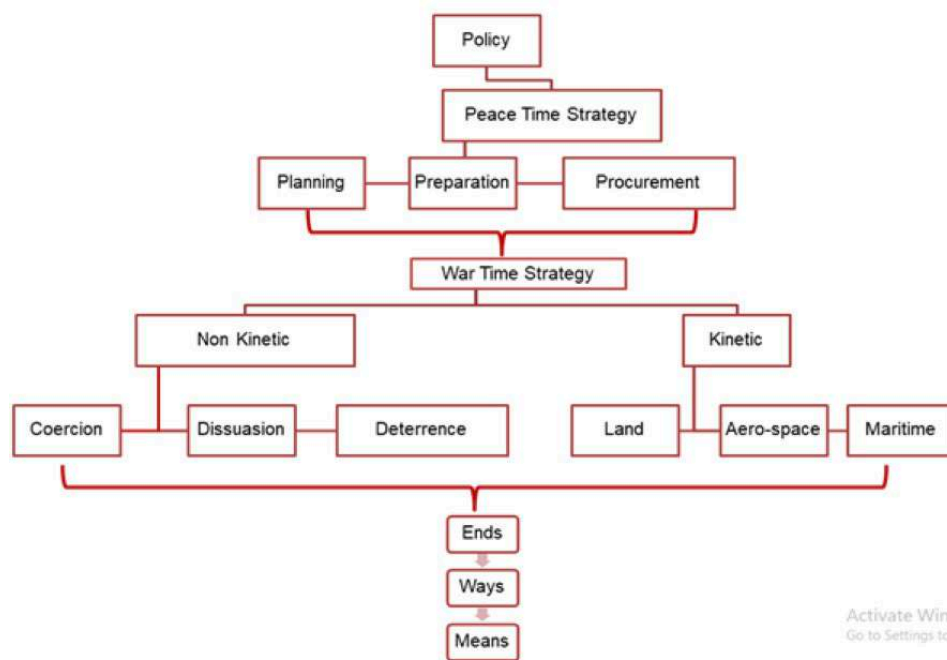
Such flexible responses are premised on the capability of the Indian Armed Forces to wage a limited war under the nuclear

the Comprehensive National Power (CNP) available, to help policymakers achieve geopolitical objectives without crossing the line into a full-scale conventional conflict or a nuclear confrontation.

George Kennan lists a range of such options from negotiation to embargo to intimidation, covert subversion, assassination and the limited use of military force. The failure of India's policy to stem state-sponsored terror is linked to the emergence of two new paradigms of military force:-

(a) Force is constant, and conflicts of all kinds are now inextricably linked to the civilian population

(b) There are no longer any rules involved in a conflict and



Linkages between Government Policy and War Strategy; Authors own compilation

overhang by offering the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) and Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) the choice of deviating from a preprogrammed conventional attack envisioned in the PAS; in other words, this response mechanism would allow India to 'control and direct' its armed forces in a crisis 'as the military situation may dictate'. This schema permits escalation control and at the same time would exploit all vectors of

countries can stay in a state of perpetual conflict without declaring war.

India has indicated to the adversary, a lowered threshold of tolerance and intent to respond under the conventional overhang to target terrorists and their infrastructure with kinetic force.

Similarly, this approach could entail integrating the use, or threat of



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While the response to Uri in form of surgical strikes may have looked like ‘an old wine in a new bottle’, it triggered evolutionary germination of an idea which took the form of flexible responses and even before the ink was dry

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Indian army cadets take part in a Tactical Continuity Training exercise at an Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Chennai; File Photo

use, of powerful non-conventional capabilities such as strategic cyber-attacks against Pakistan's critical infrastructure for the same purpose of raising the costs more than that he would expect to pay for adhering to his proxy war strategy.

Threatening to respond to Indian conventional aggression with nuclear weapons, whether tactical or strategic, might have been a fairly credible approach, but the new stratagem, in no manner, raises the nuclear bogey and such a response by Pakistan would tantamount to nuclear terrorism.

The evolution of the warfighting strategy might be explained with the help of the recent standoff at the Galwan Valley and the North Bank of Pangong Tso in Eastern Ladakh between two modern armies was bereft of all visages of technology and deteriorated to primal pre-historic warfare with PLA using clubs, stones, and batons.

This descent from the high pedestal of “Informationised Battlefield” to slugfest has brought a new dimension to warfare and has created a strategic conundrum for the Indian Armed Forces.

The “cut and dry hypothesis” against China for conventional conflict and transition from Border Management to a War-like scenario, has now been further nuanced with enough space being created for interposing levels on conflict along the escalatory ladder. This one-dimensional response to Chinese belligerence has now

tested the Indian military planners and would need to be responded to.

A veritable churning of ideas and processes is presently ensuing to ensure that military responses to conflagrations on LAC are prepared which cover the entire spectrum of conflict, keeping in mind the environmental realities of terrain, weather, and force differential with an adversary as key terms of reference.

The synthesis of strategic policy needs and evolving characteristics of conflict with PLA projects a strong case for the development of a novel response mechanism for Northern Borders.

The strategy must allow the employment of military force to better meet future challenges. The articulation must reduce the risk of full-scale intervention, permit intervention at a lower level of conflict, protect the will to intervene and achieve parity in effect, allow more rapid reconstitution of infrastructure and permit greater synergy of political, military, information, and economic tools.

Restraints to the use of military force against a stronger adversary must be attenuated permitting a bolder, preemptive intervention strategy at a reduced risk and cost. For the uninformed, to castigate the military thinkers and planners, currently grappling with the volatility on both borders, is easy.

It may be prudent to give some leeway to the present generation who maybe just more intellectually stimulated than what is easy for the ‘have been’ to admit.



### Colonel Harsh Vardhan

Col. Harsh Vardhan Singh is an ex-NDA, commissioned into the Indian Army in June '95 and commanded a battalion along the Western Theatre. He has had experience both in CI and CT Ops in J&K and on the LAC in Eastern Ladakh and has done instructional tenures in IMA, DSSC.



# Politico Military Leadership Challenges of 2021

By Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd)

Sandeep Unnithan's Interview of the CDS in India Today gave me an insight into the current thinking. It was followed up by two outstanding articles. One by Admiral Arun Prakash in Indian Express and the other by Lt Gen Anil Ahuja in Gunners Speak. It set me thinking of three recent events which should make our politico-military national leadership think hard.

Firstly, China has published a National Defence Law with effect from Jan 2021. It gives the Xi Jinping controlled Central Military Commission complete sway in China. It enables nationwide or local defence mobilisation to protect China's newly expanded national interests to include outer space, electromagnetic networks, and overseas development interests. It talks of global governance and setting up international rules. It gives an ominously new meaning to civil military fusion. Well. China appointed itself as the global military policeman. Secondly,

Japan, Australia, South Korea, and Vietnam have signed up with the RCEP.

It compromises their role in any arrangement to rein in China, including the QUAD. Thirdly. The EU-China investment deal led by Germany and France compromises their own Indo Pacific strategy and dilutes the larger one. Besides this, Pakistan and N Korea will always dance to China's tunes. In fact, a collusive threat from China and Pakistan will be the norm hereafter.

Most of ASEAN is already in China's grip. BRI countries will be arm-twisted to side with China. It leaves USA, UK, and India to fend off China. USA and UK are still in the throes of getting out of the grip of the Virus. The Biden team is yet to outline its geostrategic vision as USA has daunting internal issues to surmount. Resultant. India must handle China on its own! That is the

bottom-line confronting our politico-military leadership.

As we recover from the Chinese Virus, Indian aspirations will also go up and rightly so. Dismayingly, our internal politics are frayed with very little consensus on any issue. There is lack of political convergence even when the enemy is at the door.

Our economy is mercifully on the verge of a recovery but remains battered. It places severe restrictions on enhancing military capabilities and stamina. The chances of an enhanced collusive threat manifesting in the Summer of 2021 remains high. The threat, whether direct or indirect, will be multidomain in nature with a high degree of influence operations.

The paradigm of Indian security challenges just got stiffer. The new paradigm is evolving at a time when not only global issues are kaleidoscopic but domestic military issues are in deep flux. In such conditions





**It is oxymoronic to state that India must build capacities to handle China. The present level of preparedness enables us to deal with the immediate threat. What about the future? It has been one year since the CDS and DMA structure has come into being. Where is the national threat perception and the military threat assessment as its derivative? Have the lessons from the current crisis been factored in?**



our Politico-Military Leadership must get its Ps and Qs right. Issues which worry me in this paradigm are what I am highlighting.

The CDS and DMA come into being with great expectations of change. In the past year we weathered an unprecedented crisis with China. Hence it is understood that envisaged changes will take time to crystallise.

However, the trend lines worry me. The Prime Minister, on 15th August 2019, in his address to the nation *inter alia*, said "India should not have a fragmented approach. Our entire military power will have to work in unison and move forward...".

It was thereafter mandated to bring about jointness in operations, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance, etc of the three Services, within three years of the first CDS assuming office. In the past one year there has been too much discussion on theatre commands and far too less about Jointness. To the extent that individual Services are coming out with their concept of each command in public. Where is the "UNISON" factor of the PMs call? 'Joint Commands' follow 'Jointness' and not the other way around. Without Jointness, the Maritime, Air Defence and Logistics commands being contemplated will turn into low hanging 'poisoned' fruits.

Read the initial press release once again. The emphasis is on jointness in procurement, training and staffing for the Services through joint planning and integration with a time

stipulation. It is not on restructuring of Military Commands and establishment of joint/theatre commands which is not time stipulated! Yet we seem to be doing exactly the opposite. That too in a hurry. Further, joint commands which are politically distanced without a clear chain of command spell disaster.

Admiral Arun Prakash also made this point recently. It indicates either that the CDS and Service Chiefs are not on the same page or the political and military hierarchy are not in sync. Look at it another way. Promoting jointness will contribute to handling the immediate threats in 2021 better and also pave way for the future. Establishment of Joint commands, ranks, command and control etc are emotive issues and will be detrimental if implemented prematurely.

It is oxymoronic to state that India must build capacities to handle China. The present level of preparedness enables us to deal with the immediate threat. What about the future? It has been one year since the CDS and DMA structure has come into being. Where is the national threat perception and the military threat assessment as its derivative? Have the lessons from the current crisis been factored in? It will take a long time for Indian Armed Forces to come up to thresholds where we can handle China on our own.

Till then we must think of other means – diplomatic and political. To that extent, our politico military moves in Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Middle East are significant. We are being heard in the evolution of a post-US dispensation

for Afghanistan. We have started purposeful dialogues and action with all Indo Pacific stake holders. We have refused BRI and RCEP. In the same breath our politico military strategy must endeavour to make China and Pakistan look inwards. On this score there is very little clarity. Admiral Arun Prakash's recommendation of a parliamentary committee with military advisers to oversee transformational reforms is sagacious.

It needs to be expanded into strategic spheres to evolve balanced continental, maritime and aerospace strategies. Capability building must be in response to a national threat perception and strategy. The Armed Forces capability building must be joint, holistic, innovative, and flexible to offset our deficiencies with what we have till our plans crystallise. Let me explain further. Recently it was in news that the US Marines are shedding their tanks and M777 ULHs for HIMARS (land based rockets) and UAVs.

While we do not have to ape them, their use of Rocket Artillery is thought provoking. Why are we not increasing our indigenously developed long range Rocket Artillery to offset our lack of aircraft as also lack of a suitable tank for HAA or for that matter to offset shortage of conventional artillery? I wrote about this issue long back. Why is there no informed debate on the plan for the third aircraft carrier vis a vis additional submarine? All these have been left hanging in suspended inaction. The fact that there is not enough convergent thinking by military leadership is palpable. Overall, Jointness in planning is the first step! It is missing in action.

The third issue which troubles me is that the onus of funding/preparing for imminent conflict cannot be through internal economic saving measures like extension age of retirement and other administrative prudence. It is also dismaying to see individual Services putting out their perceptions in social media. Disjointedness again! Getting back to the issue. Funding for national security is the job of the nation. At



CDS and Service Chief's at a National Security meeting; File Photo

times like this, when Xi Jinping has ordered PLA to be ready for 'war at any second', there is no room for a guns vs bread debate.

In this context I am reproducing the prophetic feedback I got last year, from two retired cerebral generals - an Infantryman and a Gunner. One stated "National Security doesn't come cheap not where India is. The Nation must bear this burden. Paucity of funds will remain a constant. While the Services leadership must do better in resource management to ensure the optimum utilization of funds the Government cannot absolve itself of its responsibility to provide adequately for defence, besides finding ways to ensure that the Services are not driven to situations where they feel compelled to raise retirement ages to save on pension".

The other stated "it's the Governments call to have an Army, Air Force and Navy. If it wants, it must find the money too. It is not for the Armed Forces to self-finance its modernization by monetizing land or cost cutting by some arbitrary age amendments." These ring

so absolutely true today. Somewhere India's politico military leadership midwived by an unaccountable bureaucracy resting on self-serving silos which comprise our defence establishment is going wrong.

Let me put in another manner. It is expected that the soldier fights till the last bullet and the last breath in defending the nation. Heroically – 'Bharat ka Raksha Marte Dum Tak'. Does not this man, who is dying for the nation deserve to be equipped well till the last penny in the coffers? Even if it is at the cost of the nation going hungry or if its economy breaks down? Believe me, if he fails, the true Chinese Virus will consume us fully.

From 1962 till Galwan, this nation was in a psychological trauma. For the first time in six decades we have made the Chinaman look what he actually is. The moral and psychological advantage is with us. Press it home. The PM said "Jaan hai to Jahan hai". I will take it a step further. "Desh Hai toh Azadi hai." It is also up to the CDS and Service Chiefs to put it across as simply as that in the manner they choose fit. I do hope the four lions of the Ashoka Pillar finally turn their heads inwards speak to each other and then growl together in the right direction. It should be the Chinese one!



### Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd)

Lt Gen PR Shankar was India's Director General (DG) Artillery. He is highly decorated and qualified with vast operational experience. He is now a Professor in the Aerospace Dept of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras. You can reach him on Twitter: @palepurshankar, Email ID: pravishankar3@gmail.com.

Views expressed are the authors own, and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'MVI.'





# Does India's Professional Military Education Need a Course Correction?

The quality of 'Professional Military Education' in the Indian Armed Forces has been a long pending area of discourse, with the subject only recently coming to the arena of public discussion. This debate aims to bring a diversity of Tri-Service views on PME.

By Colonel Vinay B Dalvi, Aritra Banerjee

Professional Military Education: Tracing the History of the Discourse in the Indian Defence Media Space

The perceived inadequacy in the quality of Professional Military Education provided to officers and even the men of the Indian Armed Forces has been a long-standing point of contention, one that has been advocated passionately by the Victory India Campaign Through its anthology of books for over a decade; albeit one that has been routinely brushed under the carpet as a matter of "organisational pride".

One of the earliest views on the subject was laid out by Major General Raj Mehta (Retd) in the

cover story titled 'Grim Portents' in the November 2011 issue of 'Geopolitics' magazine. This article was followed by another complementary piece titled Grim Portents Redux the following year.

In later years from 2011 to 2019 these articles were followed by several articles and even debates encapsulating PME either directly or indirectly in five volumes of the Victory India Campaign compendiums including several renowned and reputed military authors. Further many such articles and debates were also published in the reputed Fauji India magazine during 2016 to 2019.

From 2020 onwards the Mission Victory India online publication

and Victory India Magazine has been amply covering this vital subject in several articles and debates in some form or the other, highlighting its critical importance for our military leadership at all levels.

A landmark analysis on the subject by Lieutenant General (Dr.) Rakesh Sharma (Retd), a research fellow at the New Delhi based Think Tank, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), in his article Professional Military Education & Producing Thought Leaders for The Army' was published in the Indian Defence Review in 2017.

The subject lay dormant in the Indian defence media space until the publication of the November 2020 issue of the FORCE magazine

which saw a series of hard-hitting articles on PME. The issue's cover story Train. Learn. Balance by FORCE executive editor Ghazala Wahab and subsequent articles on PME in the November issue, rekindled the discourse on this critical subject.

Through the December 2020 issue of the Victory India Magazine, Team MVI followed up with a series of articles splitting the different aspects of the subject and the issues surrounding it, with an entire section dedicated to PME.

Most recently Former Naval Chief Admiral Arun Prakash, broke the camel's back with his article Defending the Last Bastion with the subject Indian armed forces must prepare personnel to shoulder responsibilities at all levels of new unified commands published in the Indian Express on 16 Dec 2020 and widely circulated to bring sharp focus once again on this vital aspect of PME for the Indian military.

In conformity with the above renowned Defence and Strategic affairs expert Maroof Raza, wrote on the need to Give Military Officers a Useful Qualification in the Last Word in the December, 2020 Issue of Fauji India, adding further relevance and validation to the renewed discourse; emphasising on the need to course correct the entire outlook for tri-services military education at all levels, right from the training and grooming of young officers to the relevant courses at all stages of their professional military careers.

Maroof Raza's views highlight the crux of this layered issue and has been reproduced below as the trigger for this MVI debate.

### **Trigger: 'Give Military Officers a Useful Qualification'**

"There is virtually no organisation of the Indian government apart from the Armed Forces, at least in India, which demands from its officers a constant level of academic accomplishment and intellectual growth in their entire service

career. And as any service officer will know, life in the Services is filled with training courses and a whole lot of events that make considerable intellectual demands on our officers.

"However, military men are still seen to be men of brawns and not brains, primarily because they are construed in the words of Samuel Huntington as "Managers of violence" (as he has elaborated upon in his masterpiece, 'The Soldier and the State'). But as many of them seek a post retirement life in the corporate world, a suitable qualification would make it useful for them to get seamlessly absorbed into the new jobs they might seek.

"About three decades ago a maverick Israeli academic, Martin van Creveld wrote a more provocative study of why military education was not regarded seriously by the civil world, in his book titled: The Training of Officers: From Military Professionalism to Irrelevance.

To some extent, the title in itself says it all. However, the central point of his thesis was that the extensive academic work done at military training Institutions (such as in India, the National Defense College, Higher Command and Senior Command courses) have often had no academic accreditation with a respected university.

In the case of such courses being delivered at Mhow, the student Officers do get a qualification from Indore University – but that hardly inspires confidence outside military circles. An MBA from an affiliated IIM would be very helpful.

"Without that, the hard work put in by service officers on their various courses of instruction carries no recognition in the civilian world. And without proper academic accreditation, all the work that our service officers put in during their long and challenging careers, counts for little outside military circles.

It might be argued that the NDA does give a bachelor's degree of the

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi, but its staff and students abhor the military. And the Staff College (DSSC) at Wellington gives a master's degree from Madras University, but neither is the JNU a sought-after destination by under graduates nor is Madras University recognised outside India for excellence in strategic studies.

"Considering the amount of money that is spent on the training and exposure of Officers for some of the courses (like the NDC that includes a trip abroad), it would make ample sense for the NDC and DSSC to seek an arrangement with some globally recognised institution, like the reputed Department of War Studies, at King's College, London, that gives the British armed forces degrees for some of their courses.

"Moreover, the bachelor's degree that is given by the NDA, Khadakwasla, is given to the students who complete a bit of this and the bit of that, in about twenty subject areas and is designated the BA or BSc on the basis of the student's academic curriculum.

But it would do the NDA cadet and entire Services community a lot of good if they were at the NDA given a bachelor's degree in military studies, because it is Matters Military that we must prepare those cadets for, and not for a generalist undergraduate degree.

"That would then make the NDA's academic curriculum more focused. There are many popular courses that are offered in military studies in India and abroad. In fact, Pune University itself has a well-respected Department of Defense Studies, so why isn't that considered? Apparently because the NDA didn't want Pune University's faculty breathing down its neck, with frequent visits to their campus. Hence the choice of JNU!"





## Responses



**Rear Admiral Vineet Bakhshi (Retd), VSM, Former CO INS Shivaji**



In a study of the origins of power, prosperity and poverty, a fundamental finding by Devon Acemoglu and James A Robinson was that it was the strength or failure of crucial institutions which resulted in the rise and fall of nations, the progress or regression of countries thereof. In our own country, the Armed Forces are a key institution and have been the bulwark thus far against the destabilising forces, principally from across the border and sometimes from within.

Institutions, according to Samuel P. Huntington, are “stable, valued, recurring patterns of behaviour”. Further, the Armed Forces institution can be defined as an integrated structure of the Armed Forces comprising of regulations, customs, traditions, people and processes, set up with the sole purpose of abiding by its role as defined by the Constitution of India.

The question before us per se concerns the development of one of its primary and pivotal ingredients, the Officer, as he is prepared for higher responsibilities and the processes thereto. A frailty or shortcoming of the leadership, would undoubtedly lead to a diminishment of the Institution, with grave consequences for the country.

As much as a forging will be reflective of both the materials used and the processes that shape it, and that the future can hardly be predicted, or moulded, it is a rigorous study of history and analysis that helps and aids us to prepare for it.

A need for enhancing the quality of intake into the training academies, by casting the net further and looking to sensitise students from such institutions such as the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas to join the Armed Forces, was debated and discussed in this forum.

In his research on ancient Indian Education systems as brought out in the book, *The Teacher and the Taught*, Padma Shri MT Vyas has defined the ways the Indian civilization produced such remarkable works such as the Sacred Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Upanishads, the grammar of Panini, Ayurveda, Arthashastra and so much more.

Amongst his many deductions was the fact that the “Ashrama” or training institutions, were careful about whom they selected, character of the student being a key consideration and that the teachers were exceptional. Can we learn from history and not be too concerned about the democratisation of the Services?

Having been inducted, it is the blend of mentoring, training, experiences and eventually individual performances, which grinds and distills the individuals, placing them into positions of responsibilities, of leadership. In this process, they transit through various training institutions of the Services, which have been affiliated to different Universities for award of “Degrees” of many hues.

This “affiliation” is evidently an evolution of various policies in education since Independence. However, our very basic education system is modelled on a legacy of the British, who set it up to create a class of clerks and low-level bureaucrats, where original thinking was at a premium.

The New Education Policy 2020, if implemented in letter and spirit, with funds to match, is expected to change this. Nonetheless, some quality Institutions such as the IITs, not only have autonomy, but rigour in their academics and research. Consequently, they attract some of the best minds and teachers in the country.

If our Institutions were to be affiliated to or run for their academic content by such Institutions, assuredly it would make a radical difference, most palpable would be in promoting creativity over rote. The “Degree” is often a near statutory requirement for many avenues of placement and also for something as mundane as an “ECNR” stamp on a passport amongst others.

It is a recognition not only by society, but also by officialdom, that the individual is learned. So yes, a “Degree” is necessary. It is within the purview of Academic Councils of autonomous institutes, to define the range and scale of subjects and their content, which can be established by the needs of the Armed Forces and lead to award of a suitable “Degree”.

To conclude, the Armed Forces as an Institution is critical for the wellbeing of the nation. To ensure that we have quality leadership in the Armed Forces, would require the inflow of the brightest minds and for their subsequent academic education to be run by premier institutes of our country.



**Major General Anil Sengar (Retd), Author and Analyst, Former ADGMF**



Norman Dixon in his seminal book *The Psychology of Military Incompetence*, after studying battles over 100 years concludes that in general military leadership is incompetent. The reason is that most generals are trained but not educated. They continue to do more of the same. In India, most generals are comfortable at the tactical level and do not comprehend the larger aspects of the complexity of warfare. The reason is the lack of PME.

In the growing complex security environment and the changing character of warfare, lack of PME will cost us heavily. Generalship is about dealing with unseen intangibles that are hard to teach. It is a function of deep analysis, evaluated experience and study. The Indian PME for leadership lacks in preparing the leadership for the future. You can keep going up the ladder by doing more of the same and boss management.

The promotion based on redundant Annual Confidential Reports (ACR) needs a thorough review, a culture of dissent and no holds barred discussion needs to develop. The Ladakh face off turned the corps commander into a soldier, a diplomat and a politician, all roles into one. The nation looked at him to deliver when the politician and the diplomat and the National Security Advisor (NSA) stood on the sidelines. A role for which the Corp Commander was never educated or trained.

We need to review our system and include a structured PME for star ranks and not select a few which prepares them for the complexity of the future. A colonel can become a division commander in seven years. A Major General becomes an army commander in four years without a structured system to enable him to grow intellectually to handle the enhanced responsibility.

The fact that one army commander acknowledged that he was still on a learning curve says it all. My latest book *The Be-Know-Do of Generalship* deals with this subject.







PME builds a more potent fighting force; Picture Courtesy US Air Force PRO

**Gp Capt TP Srivastava (Retd), Author and Analyst, Former Instr, DSSC, CDM, AFA, NDA**



Poor/irrelevant standard of PME is attributable to following:

- The military is averse/reluctant to change: To cite an example; Our premier institution DSSC, Wellington runs exercises framed decades ago. As a Directing Staff (DS), I proposed that every course must be exposed to new exercises to prevent 'Prevalent Copying' as well as infuse new dimension in thinking.

A discussion on the matter chaired by the Commandant wasted more than an hour without reaching any conclusion. Finally, it was put to vote. I received two votes; one was mine and the other from CI (Air). The main objection to my proposal was from training teams because they had to do work to frame new exercises, which they refused to do.

- Our syllabus for PME is outdated: We fail to notice a radical change in Civil Services written test. Optional subjects have been replaced by GK/Current Affairs. Let us not mix up PME with education imparted during professional courses viz a pilot undergoes MCF every time he/she moves to new machine.
- Divergent views are invariably met with scorn by the superiors: In the process we lose huge numbers of brilliant youngsters. Even today military commanders are unable to differentiate between divergence of opinion, disobedience and refusal to accept a flawed directive.
- Encourage and Empower Original Thinking: We, at our premier institutions, are producing 'professional clones'.

### **Critical Changes Required**

- Revert to the old selection procedure for the National Defence Academy (NDA): With the recently introduced education policy it would be simple. Get a cadet after class eleven.

Only those genuinely interested will join. Currently a candidate looks at joining military service only after having been 'FAILED/REJECTED' in every other field.

- Have a Clear Vision as to what Constitutes PME: Professional Military Courses viz 'YOs' in Army must not be part of PME.
- Yearlong Undergrad Course by NDU: The National Defence University must commence training military officers on abridged 'ONE YEAR UNDERGRAD' followed by 'ONE YEAR POST GRAD' courses. Syllabus will have to be framed by academicians.
- Foster the Spirit of Academia along with Training: Former IAF Chief tried to introduce the concept of 'Scholar-Warrior'. Even the IAF refused to accept it.
- Manpower Shortage Cannot be Used as an all-Weather Excuse: Let us get out and get it over with talking about shortage of manpower It is a non-existent paranoia afflicting military in a big way. In fact, this excuse is used to cover up the failures. I state this with reasonable authentic info about manpower in all three services.
- Employ the Experience of Veterans: Consider using enormous expertise of volunteer/capable veterans for imparting training to budding leaders.

Are we willing to swallow and accept reality? Recently a former Service Chief penned his views on PME. In the Indian Military we continue to use an eminently flawed term 'JOINTNESS'. Incidentally, the former service Chief also used the same term. During my tenures as staff in premier military institutions, I made attempts on numerous occasions to replace this ill-conceived term with a more rational term highlighting inter service co-operation 'MUTUAL INTER-DEPENDENCE' but failed. No wonder then that China has reached where it has.

US Generals are miles ahead of ours in educational as well as professional exposure due to the global presence of US Forces. PME is addressed in China at the level of President Xi. In India, we have an ignoramus trying to tear the fabric of Indian Military based on whims and fancy. The Indian Military is headed into the 'woods' of uncertain future under the leadership of an ignoramus.

### **Parth Satam, Principal Correspondent, Fauji India Magazine**

The Indian military - especially the Indian Army - often forgets war fighting is brain as much as it is brawn. And many such wars have been won by the former. But it's the excessive focus on the latter that has bred a culture of roughshod physicality that looks down upon academic discourse as "intellectual" bookish practices that are an impediment in a rigorous profession such as soldiering.

As self-defeating as it is, it turns the Clausewitzian notion of war being "politics by other means" on its head. If war is politics, then politics is also history, which itself is influenced by everything from economics, sociology, philosophy and science and technology - which in turn affects human conflict i.e., war.

Of course, this culture does not exist singularly, but has been affected by obsolete Colonial-era personnel management policies (selection, training, and promotion) that Col Vinay Dalvi has been crying hoarse about in his Victory India series of books and articles. A battlefield commander, well read in the above subjects and understanding his enemy better, is better placed to deciphering the latter's goals, giving him invaluable advantage in combat.

But it is only when we nurture Soldier Scholars, and not brainless yes men, who replicate their seniors' course material in staff College courses, foster ideation and encourage independent thought can we truly have a world class military. While struggling with our long running woes of modernising our archaic weapons, maybe some internal non-material reforms too are in order.







# Arresting the Decline in India's Professional Military Education

**“There is not much need for education when the only agenda is to follow orders – training is just enough. Being a hierarchical organisation, the organisational direction is always dictated from the top.”**

**By Pankaj Bhagwati**

While discussing Professional Military Education (PME) in the Indian Armed Forces, the natural flow of argument would normally revolve around whether PME has declined in the Army relative to the yesteryears or not. However, the moot question is not whether the decline has occurred, because the answer is an absolute affirmative. The more relevant question would be what the causes were, so that they could be addressed, and the trend reversed.

The symptoms of the decline are everywhere, from the manner in which we have been fighting Counter-Insurgency (in the absolute same manner since the last three decades), to the manner in which Operation Vijay was executed, the pervading sentiment of despondency amongst

the officers and veterans, the widening schism between the officers and enlisted men, increasing levels of animosity against the General Officers, right unto the perceived persona of the Chief of Defence Staff as a politician amongst the uniformed. The ramifications of the decline in PME are wide-ranging and debilitating.

Education is different from training in that education involves an iterative employment of data cognitively to arrive at solutions. We may be trained by the Army and its courses, but education is completely personal and requires aptitude. Military education involves mental scenario building and constant revisions of perceptive end-states based on different permutations of actions applied.

This process develops naturally during wartime, but in the present geopolitical situation long wars will not be the luxury our generation benefits from. PME is also not always kinetic and involves various kinds of educations necessary to prosecute military operations. Hence, emotional education is also a part and parcel of PME. Therefore, a General bereft of Emotional Intelligence – and lacking emotional connect with his army – can never be relied upon to deliver victory.

**What are the reasons for the lack of Professional Military Education in our Army? Some of them are outlined in the paragraphs below: -**

**The Microsoft Bug:** Like William Morrow's theory of



Colonel David Smith (Retd) from the Stimson Centre conducted a study on higher military education at Baluchistan; File Photo

Freakonomics, the advent of computers and the reliance on the Microsoft Powerpoint is probably one of the major reasons for the decline of PME in the Armed Forces. The power-point not only gave endless powers of projection to the pseudo-tactician but also enabled retention, reuse, and plagiarism of ideas. It was safer to project a validated presentation (taking refuge in the fact that it had been accepted once in a different formation) rather than try something divergent and incur the wrath of the inspecting officer.

Even in courses of training, from the academy onwards, power-point presentations enabled students to learn by rote only the pertinent aspects and also made it much easier for instructors to frame questions from that database. From the National Defence Academy to the Junior Command Course, the Higher Command Course and the National Defence Course, it is the Power-point Presentation that reigns supreme. Power-point killed ingenuity in the Indian Army. Eliminate Power-Point altogether from formations and courses of instruction.

**Group Think:** In her book 'Fighting till the End: The Pakistani Army's Way of War', Dr Christine Fair characterises the Pakistani Army being afflicted by 'Group Think'. It

is not much different in the Indian Army where bad decisions are taken based on validations within a coterie headed by 'Strong Generals' (known for their 'Strong' likes and dislikes).

Many of Indian Army's drills and battle fighting methodologies (such as fighting in obstacle ridden terrain) are derived from such 'Group-Thinks'. Loyalties to the group prevent the presentation of counter-arguments. Presenting divergent views or harbouring different opinions is a sure way to end an otherwise promising career. It is no secret that Generals across our army head various coterie.

**The Military Secretary's Branch:** The MS Branch of the Army (considered as the most important branch) also has a hand in

preventing PME. It creates an artificial segregation. Staff tenures hold greater weightage than a regimental tenure. It is ridiculous to imagine that a staff posting in Leh can have greater weightage than a regimental tenure on the Line-of-Control.

Repeated staff tenures in field and the Army HQs creates a false sense of superiority in the minds of both the individual as well as the assessor. Lacking valuable ground experience, such individuals rapidly rise up the career ladder (helped by the coterie) and make cardinal errors.

Every recent debacle from the Kargil Operations up until the recent Chinese aggressions validates this issue. The MS Branch's requirement to segregate officers has also led to an over-objective Confidential Report.

Education is different from training in that education involves an iterative employment of data cognitively to arrive at solutions. We may be trained by the Army and its courses, but education is completely personal and requires aptitude. Military education involves mental scenario building and constant revisions of perceptive end-states based on different permutations of actions applied.





Young US Marine Officer asking questions during a professional course; Photo Courtesy USMC PRO

The ACR report has little subjectivity resulting in inflation and a misplaced importance of the ACR.

Surprisingly, the selection process into the Higher Command Course or the National Defence Course solely based on ACR rather than any meritorious or intellectual achievement/contribution. The result is that only intellectually subservient individuals rise up to the top echelons promoting a culture of servitude rather than intellectuality.

**The Annual Confidential Report:** The Annual Confidential Report has been over-hyped. While the ACR is definitely important, it should not be the sole basis of promotion. Higher weightage should be given to professional competence of the individual. In order to enhance PME culture within the Army, it is important to ensure the weeding out of non-professional individuals especially from the top echelons. Professional competence should not only be assessed from above, but also by those below. It is time that a 360-degree evaluation comes into existence and the one-sided approach be relegated.

**Need for Critical Cognisance:** The recent paper written by US Colonel David O Smith, titled 'Wellington Experience', brings out all that is wrong with our educational process. Instead of critically analysing the paper and taking

cognisance of the causatives that resulted in the paper, our Army (especially the hierarchy) takes simple recourse to the logic, "We know better".

Brushing away symptoms and pointers that indicate the malady is not a professional method of addressing lacunae. There is no doubt that the manner in which we impart training (which in turn forms the bedrock of military education) is fraught with inconsistencies and fakery. As an instructor in the Army War College, I have witnessed first-hand how assessment exams were deliberately kept so simple and the marking so liberal so as to project good course performance (an indirectly portray good instruction capabilities).

The other reason was that the student officers were found so bereft of common military knowledge that it entailed a huge effort on the part of instructors to bring them up to a common datum. Even in the Higher Command course the main objective was to complete the bugbear of research and thesis and get it over with. Divergent thoughts and non-conformist plans are shunned in our training establishments. This is not just because of culture, but also because the instructors in these institutions lack intellectual depth and capacity to comprehend, moderate and refine maverick thoughts of their students.

**Conclusion:** The character of our Army has gradually changed over the years. Our Generals consider the organisation as an extension of the political apparatus. Rather than educate the political hierarchy of the feasibility of military options and its manifestations, they have succumbed to the 'Yes Sir' mentality.

The politicians on the other hand have once again started to politicise the armed forces by selecting the most pliant of individuals in the top echelons. As a stakeholder in National Defence, the Armed forces have been left to an 'Obey & Execute' role rather than a participative one. There is not much need for education when the only agenda is to follow orders – training is just enough. Being a hierarchical organisation, the organisational direction is always dictated from the top.



### Pankaj Bhagwati

During his service in the Indian Army Pankaj Bhagwati has served in Counter Insurgency Operations both in Jammu & Kashmir & North East India. Highlights of his service include participation in Operation Vijay in 1999, rendering service as an aviator for eight years, as a Staff Officer in UNIFIL during the Israeli Hezbollah Conflict of 2006, commanding a battalion in Kargil, a tenure in Information Warfare & as an instructor in Army War College. Views expressed are the authors own, and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'MVI.'





## BOOK REVIEW: **MISSION VICTORY INDIA**

By Lt Col Balasaheb Barge, 15 Maratha LI, 1965 & 1971 War Veteran

'Mission Victory India' (Volume 5 of Victory India Campaign books) Edited & authored by Col Vinay B Dalvi with essays, articles and responses from 30 military veterans and academicians is indeed a 'treasure book' strongly supported by select print media, especially Gomantak Times Goa and Fauji India magazine. The book gives immense insight into multifarious military issues of national importance.

The book is informative containing valuable articles and essays with rich responses, honest and clear opinions, concrete recommendations, and pragmatic views, constructive write ups aimed at honest and progressive approach for the betterment of the armed forces. This is in fact the need of the hour!

Essentially, both aspects, i.e. proper and meaningful training with mature leadership need greater attention to maintain the standards achieved by our predecessors to arrest the slide down. In nutshell, overhauling is desired at all levels without any fear or compromising trends.

The mindset needs to be positive especially at higher levels. Unfortunately, the armed forces are exposed to the undesirable elements and hence there appears to be some turmoil. Soonest we return to the apolitical state the better it will be. Honesty is the key factor! Everything will fall well in place. As all know, our armed forces are the largest and disciplined force in the country. Hence, the protective approach is a must. Also care is required to be taken by all 'Think Tanks' that such a fine and dedicated force of mankind is kept well protected before it disintegrates into thin air!

In retrospect, it appears that the present situation is deficient of moral values and precious principles which has resulted over a period of time and now requires a strong and corrective action before the situation gets into retrograde mode. Essence must be well thought out with well desired training and very high order of leadership.

The collective work of this book includes articles and essays with responses from several learned and committed veterans and academicians which is undoubtedly praiseworthy! It has very high value to be emulated for participation and practice. The relentless pursuit can bring about definite positive change and past glorious days of high training standards and moral & ethical values.

Book details : '**Mission Victory India**'. 217 pages Price Rs 795 /\$27.95

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# PME: Poor Military Education & its Impact on Leadership

*“Professional Military Education is the fundamental requisite of war winning strategies.”*

By Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha (Retd)

War is a complex human activity. It is destructive but also the mother of human progress and development. Wars do not follow mathematical rules and formulae. Definitely past templates can not be applied to new military polemics. The tactics and strategies of war vary according to changing times and advancement in weaponry.

It needs specialised men with systematic training and orientation. Besides there is a need for their constant upgradation of knowledge keeping in line with emerging forms of war as well as advancement in weapon systems so as to evolve befitting strategy and tactics. The “uninformed and uninitiated”, as Alvin Tofflers says, are not suitable to conduct modern wars. It must be appreciated that knowledge updating, particularly for leaders, is mandatory to ensure transition to new methods of war.

With the passage of time, generations of warfare undergo changes. In the past century or so, warfare has progressed from ‘Trench warfare’ to ‘Mobile warfare’ and now ‘Non-Contact warfare.’ All this affects the means and methodology of war. The ‘uninformed and uninitiated’ are also those military men, who have not been kept updated on new advancement in weapons and technology. It is essential for them to be keeping up the pace with the times. Professional Military Education (PME) is the fundamental requisite of war winning strategies.

## When The War Evolves, So Should The Warrior

Recently, two articles have come to my notice on the need for professional military leadership to constantly upgrade its knowledge with regards to new Revolutions in Military Affairs

(RMA). One was by Dr Pauline Shanks Kaurin, renowned academic and the other by Ghazala Wahab, Executive Editor of FORCE magazine.

Defining the aim and purpose of PME, Dr Pauline Shanks says, “In one sense, it refers to a plethora of training, continuing education, and other activities designed to provide development to members of the military at various points in their career and to prepare them for the next level of responsibilities.” It is clear that the military must be prepared and trained to cope with rapid advancements in weaponry and emerging war philosophies.

It is no gain saying the fact that templates of the past can not be applied to new war scenarios of the future. To stagnate with redundant old weaponry and outdated war strategies is a sure invitation to a

humiliating military defeat. The collapse of Saddam Hussain's massive Iraqi army in just 60 hours during the second Gulf War is an example of what can happen when armies are out of sync with emerging weaponry and doctrines of war.

In short, it is to prepare military men and leaders for the transforming security environments at the regional and international level, keeping in league with the national security policy and objectives.

The second article, by Ghazala Wahab, brings out the lacunae in training and preparation of Indian military leadership. She brings out the politico-military disconnect and highlights its pitfalls, such as promoting mediocrity in the military leadership. This is an interesting fact and one would like to dwell upon this.

### Splitting the Anatomy of Pliable Military Leadership

In my article 'Splitting the Anatomy of Pliable Military Leadership' I had stated that "the journey of Indian army's pliable leadership was not in isolation and not of recent origin too. It came in hordes and with regular periodicity. The seeds of pliable military leadership were sown when the "Jeep scandal" took place in 1954. This scandal, by the turn of the 21st century, had snowballed into multiple scams, involving many defence deals - in which senior officers were involved."

The primary reason for pliability of military leadership is due to Nehru's fear of a military coup. Politicians thereafter continued to be worried about a military coup against the political leadership. In fact, Nehru is alleged to have stated in 1948 that India did not need an army as it had no enemies.

The distrust towards military leadership led to weeding out competent officers and this practice carries on from Nehru's times. As a result the armed forces have been kept out of the framework of national security apparatus. Bureaucrats and police officers have been the pivots of the national security framework.

In other words, square pegs in round holes were fitted in the security framework, whose job it was not to deal with it. As a result military leadership has always remained subservient to politico-bureaucratic apparatus on national security. And the results have been disastrous, whether it was the Sino-Indo War of 1962 or handling of the Kargil conflict in 1999 or even tackling of the 26/11 Mumbai Attacks and Pathankot Airbase attack of 1 January, 2016.

Worse was that pliable military leadership, who swarmed the higher echelons, had become automated tools of bureaucratic directives. Personal promotion became the agenda of higher military leaders. They accepted a lesser role of a subservient in matters of national security. Consequently, PME

failure. The 'Zero Error Approach' is the cause of the 'Two down' philosophy overwhelming the Indian Armed Forces, particularly the Indian Army. Thus, not only subordinates learn this but it kills the 'initiative' amongst juniors.

A habit of looking over shoulders has crept in the military leadership by way of 'on the job training' by watching the behaviour of their seniors. Thus when they reach higher ranks they continue to look down. Indian Armed Forces thus, train leaders only to be perfect in subordinate roles and not higher roles. This is where bureaucracy gets an edge over Generals.

PME of the armed forces is not tuned to train independent thinkers. Careerism is in-built in all professional



Indian Army Infantry, Aviation and Armoured Corps personnel during an joint training exercise; File Photo

in the Indian armed forces got reduced in scope to routine military matters.

### PME: Poor Military Education?

There is no doubt that India does have a system of PME by way of various courses at the training institutes both for junior and senior leadership. But it is flawed in its execution.

In theory, Indian military leaders are trained to think 'Two Up'. But in practice they follow the principle of 'Two Down'. Over-insurance has cropped in because of the fear of

courses. The focus of students in Indian military courses, both for Other Ranks (ORs) and officers, is on attaining a good grading and not to upgrade knowledge or learn new features.

Courses are so designed that students are supposed to come with prior knowledge. They do not learn anything new on the courses. This phenomenon is applicable for both the men and officers. Higher grading on a course does not make one a good and competent soldier but a careerist who is governed by personal motives.



The Kargil fiasco showed that the Kargil Brigade Commander and Divisional commanders were 'Gladiators' of 'foreign postings' and good course gradings. They excelled in extra curricular activities rather than 'soldiering'. Up the chain of Command, it was the same scene. The Corps HQ officers were involved in playing golf while fatal casualties were brought by helicopters. It made then Defence Minister George Fernandez lose his temper.

At Leh, the Divisional Commander was busy organising Arboriculture and May Queen pageants, while Pakistan was consolidating on the heights of Kargil. Going down the line at the Battalion level, when civilians Bakarwals reported of Pakistani movement in the heights, messengers of such information were beaten and asked to shut up.

The irony was that all three commanding officers of the Kargil Brigade had been nominated for a prestigious Higher Command (HC) course, due to their excellent performance in extracurricular activities and NOT soldiering. This course is supposedly a link in the process of PME of higher Commanders. It is less said that the better that focus of the course is 'nomination' and not 'learning'. There is no such system where a non-qualifier is demoted to a lower rank. It is just a stamp.

To say the least, such 'course stamps' only create much hyped 'Gladiators' but very poor military leaders. One of the finest military leaders of the Indian Army during the 1971 War was Lieutenant General Sagat Singh who was the lynchpin of the rapid Indian advance into Bangladesh and carved out Victory before the 7th US Fleet could intervene. And he was not qualified on any of these 'Gladiator courses'. What more he was looked over for the post of Army Commander

The second drawback of Indian military PME is NO joint training of men below officer rank (PBOR). Even amongst officers, the first interaction takes place at the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC) Wellington — but this is also for selected few. However, even teaching here is cosmetic. It is

done in a disconcerted manner. There is hardly any joint training.

Same goes for HC and National Defence College (NDC). They only create Gladiators for 'foreign postings' and 'higher ranks'. This also influences their green paged monster called the Annual Confidential Report (ACR), which is definitely not based on performances but the stamp of these courses. This is a clear cut adulteration of the minds of ACR writing authorities.

I can write a thesis on how Gladiators were made in the Indian Army under the garb of PME. But this should suffice to shake up the defence edifice. As

ACRs have become the sole instruments of promotion in the forces today. It is not rocket science to say that they are not only manipulated but far removed from reality. They are not performance oriented but based on how much one pleases one's boss. In most cases, some competent divers suffer because of the ire of the boss's wife.

Some two and a half decades back, on a new year's night, a General Officer Commanding's (GOC) wife in Amritsar, had hauled up all Divisional Officers. The ACR system also suffers from human weaknesses. Reviewing Officers (RO) and Senior Reviewing Officers (SRO) act as spoiled sports, in most



CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat along with other senior officers; File Photo

a passing reference, let me bring out that the three main causes of poor military leadership are: -

- Annual Confidential Reports
- Course Gradings
- Weightage for Foreign Postings

### Of 'Ketchup Colonels' & 'Booze Brigadiers'

cases, without knowing the officer. Inflated or deflated reports by them decide the promotion and rejection of subordinates. There are many other ills connected with ACRs. It needs a separate article.

Course grading is another menace playing havoc with officers' careers. High gradings on courses are not really a measure of true potential of most officers. Most of the time, they are manipulated through regimental and





DSSC Wellington, is the mecca of PME for the Tri-Services; File Photo

family connections. Having been posted twice as instructor in premier army institutes, one must say that regimental affiliations play havoc with the grading system.

Manipulated ACRs and course gradings lay the foundation for foreign postings and thus incompetent leaders become 'great leaders' on paper, who invariably fail, when crisis arise. Some of these 'peace-time greats' rise in the hierarchy ladder. Promotions after the rank of Colonel is certainly based on one's purchased ACR and manipulated career profiles. No wonder that today, incompetent officers swarm the higher ranks because they had hoodwinked the system.

It is natural that wars do not occur every year. Most of the officers commissioned after 1972 in Indian Army, have had no such experience. Dealing with insurgency and terrorism is no substitute for war experience. In fact, insurgency environs make 'false heroes'. Gallantry awards are manipulated by showing 'fake encounters'.

The stories of 'Ketchup Colonels'; 'Booze Brigadiers' and 'Chicken gobbling Generals' do paint a dirty picture of military leadership. The Tehelka-expose, Operation Westend had highlighted the rot that had set in.

But it was many decades ago. Today it has reached its nadir, threatening the very fabric of military leadership.

Military leaders of today are more governed by 'personal ease, comfort and honour first' against the advice of General Philip Chetwode, who had addressed the passing out parade of first Course of the Indian Military Academy, (IMA) Dehradun. Generals rush to courts for personal gains; Generals make complaints against their superiors and Generals indulge in corruptions.

Obviously, their subordinates would learn from them and fill their slots when old ones retire. What was a trickle some four to five decades back,

became a deluge some three decades back at the opening of the 21st century and now it is a Tsunami. It is a sad state of affairs.

Mediocrity mixed with criminality has crept in the military leadership of today. Cases of moral turpitude overflow. A chief of the Army manipulated the Low Medical Category (LMC) for himself, for the hearing impaired, a few weeks before his retirement. An Indian Air Force Chief got involved in the Augusta Westland helicopter scandal. An army chief runs to court for a change in date of birth.

Gone are the days when Lt Gen SK Sinha resigned and honourably retired when superseded. Recently, there was a case when two seniors continued to serve when a junior was appointed as Chief of Army staff (COAS). A retired general had made an offer of 14 Crores for approving a Tatra vehicle purchase by the army. It is nothing but a disgraceful act.

Point is that the Generalship today has lost the moral mooring which it had held on a very high pedestal in the past. It needs overhauling. Military leadership has to be rid of the 'Godfather' system; 'Regimental loyalties' and the ill effects of ACRs as well as Course Gradings. There are many ways to set the rot right. But the first thing is to recognise the ailment before a solution is found.

But who would bell the cat? Those who have to overhaul it are the ones who had benefited from the rot in the system, in short, the law makers were the law breakers.



### Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

Col. Rajinder Kushwaha is an ex-NDA, commissioned into 3 Bihar. He is a battle-hardened veteran of the '71 War & has served extensively in various counter insurgency environments across the country.

He is a renowned author, and a highly respected defence & national security expert and a regular contributor at the 'Fauji India' magazine, 'Defence and Security Alert' (DSA), the 'Indian Defence Review' (IDR) among others. You can reach him on Twitter: @RajeeKushwaha, Email ID: rajee749@yahoo.com





# Professional Military Training: The Delivery End of Business!

**“Whatever generals may do whichever army has the best trained section, platoon, company and battalion; will win the battle and will carry the commander. Strategy matters second to physical fighting in the battle field.”**

**By Lieutenant Colonel MK Guptaray (Retd)**

In 1971 we assembled for dinner in the Officer’s Mess after the daylong preparation for a likely war against Pakistan. The Bangladesh genocide was in full swing. War was imminent. A conversation broke out on the shaping of a mediocre and brilliant officer. At that time our most revered and thoroughly professional Commanding Officer, then Lt Col S Chengapa uttered these few words which still ring in my ears even today. I totally believe in these to be the gospel truth. This is applicable in all walks of life. Einstein said “Genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration”

For sometime intensive discussion is going on Professional Military Education (PME), in military parlance ‘Professional Military Training’, specially at strategic level with special emphasis on quality of present general cadre, available training facilities

to train higher military echelon, battle readiness and participation in political-bureaucrat and military interaction to develop and achieve strategic aims.

To achieve success in any profession one needs to develop both theoretical and practical knowledge. So along with burning two hours of midnight oil, one needs to soil one’s hands too.

When someone joins an organisation like the defence forces, administrative service, medical or engineering or any other service through a competitive examination, the successful candidates would definitely have secured a minimum bench-mark for their successful entry. Further advancement, thereafter, depends, primarily upon self endeavour followed by ethos of the organisation one serves in.

It’s a process of gradual advancement acquiring professional knowledge, field experience, maturity, self integrity, self confidence, honesty, love for the country and its countrymen and last but the least showing compassion towards the men he commands. These are the primary requirements to excel in any public service or individual life and more so in the army which needs to protect the country at any cost, with the primary aim to destroy the enemy or capture strategic locations and secure his own men.

I would like to mention a small anecdote here. Somewhere I read when the British 1 Airborne Division was taking off from England, as a part of 1 Allied Airborne Army, to capture a number of bridges across the number of Dutch rivers, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery was present. Tears were rolling down his eyes as

he murmured “many would not come back”.

Military service is incomparable to any other service which provides ‘soft arm-chair, air-conditioned office job’. Nobody can fathom the extent of adversity faced in this service unless one has experienced it. Destruction is all over. Killing and getting killed is not at all a pleasant experience. This service needs constant knowledge-gain and updating in both theory and field exercise.

The more one rises, the more it becomes challenging for him with obscure knowledge of the field situation, enemy reaction and its resources and even own reaction. The war starts with a plan but ends with many unexpected changes. It is very difficult to hold one’s nerve especially when one is under extreme adversity.

I have seen thirteen of my soldiers being thrown up in the air when an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blew under their feet in one of the lanes near Jaffna fort while they were clearing it. That is the level of price one has to pay. Those who have the wrong notion while working in administrative services or politics about the defence services may cut it out.

Unlike other services, the defense services, besides thorough training, knowledge and experience need special character traits like boldness, courage, physical fitness, clear thinking in the fog of war, power of endurance, enthusiasm and last but not the least intuition. Mistakes in other services can be mended but not in the defence services where the stakes are far too high.

Defence services have three stages of command; executive, up to unit command level, directional, from brigades to corps/command level and strategic from command/theatre to army or army group level. These officers accordingly need to be trained and upgrade themselves.

At the same time there is a need for combined training at national level for higher military brass and similar categories of bureaucrats, politicians, technocrats, industrialists, scientists

etc, to understand each other’s work responsibilities in the big wheel of war and get exposed to nuances of formalising and achieving the national strategic aim and objective.

Under the above situation, the military needs to run the Professional Military Education (PME) separately for each service and jointly for all the three services and combined strategic training for those top military brasses in coordination with top bureaucrats, politicians, intelligence service officers, technocrats, scientists, industrialists etc, which may be called ‘Strategic Interactive Training’ who are involved to help achieve national strategic aim.

The training is required to be planned and conducted to achieve dual results. One, for purely on military matters; two, military-civil combined strategic training.

The military, therefore, is required to plan and conduct training accordingly. Up to the unit commander level it is going to be hard core military training involving tactical movements, battle drills, weapon training etc. From the Brigade commander and up to the level of corps commander, it shall be a combination of tactical training and strategic maneuver in order to assist attaining overall strategic aim.

The real strategic training starts at command and army headquarters level where decisions are more of a strategic nature with proper understanding of national aim and strategic direction given by the national cabinet. Job of bureaucrats and other players, as mentioned above, is to assist the effort by coordinating national resources.

The responsibility to develop a newly commissioned officer up to the unit level rests on the concerned unit and formation and service headquarters. From brigadier to corps commander the system gets broader and the officers as they grow will have to adapt themselves in their larger role. Their work is constantly monitored and directed by the higher Headquarters.

For this there are necessary professional courses at each level. Commanders at command and army

level, when they start commanding more than one lakh to million troops, which is beyond the conception of civil bureaucrats and most of the politicians, require ingenuity, perception, knowledge, courage, strategic forethought and honesty to the nation.

There can hardly be any training modules for this. This leadership needs extraordinary attributes to grasp the intricacies of the situations which are generally vague. Unlike other services the situation will generally remain vague. Correct input will never be available due non-availability and denial of correct information due to various reasons and that too will be rapidly changing.

Two things get established: one, need of continuous tactical and professional training for all ranks of defense service officers to remain update with the new tactical, weapon and strategic situations; two; there is a need for combined higher level strategic trainings for top military brass with other associated services and experts to understand the intricacies of selection of strategic aim and the means to achieve it.

There is an indisputable undercurrent between the government, politicians, bureaucrats and military who seem to be not giving their best to the defense services, which is the last resort of any government to apply its political will on ground, when all other endeavours fail and also protect the country. The reasons may be lack of mutual understanding, trust and interaction between these most important government agencies.

Once periodical combined training starts and relevant parties understand the importance of each other for the very existence of the country, I am sure the present distance will be removed and the country will get stronger.

Yes, India started with poor political as well as defence strategy consequently we lost UN seat, Tibet and the 1962 war. Had Tibet been what it was the geo-political situation would have been totally different. China would not have been what it is today and it



would not have breathed down our neck.

Those days the Ichapur gun and shell factory was believed to be producing lanterns in place of rifles!! Our soldiers had a .303 Springfield rifle of 1903 model which was used in both the world wars whereas Chinese were much better equipped.

When the British General Roy Butcher took the Indian defence policy to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru he was believed to have said that India did not need an army, police was enough. The dispute and distrust between the Defence Minister V.K. Menon and the Army Chief Gen Thimayya reached to such an extent that Gen Thimayya had to resign.

Nehru did not accept the resignation and he continued as the Chief but his recommendations were not accepted and the result is best known to everybody. That was our understanding and national strategy. Now let us get clear as to who needs strategic training more? Trying to isolate the army in strategic training may not be a correct assessment.

I still do not understand why a police officer should always be National Security Advisor (NSA) in place of a defence officer whose daily bread and butter is strategy? Employment of the defence forces is too intricate to be understood by a non-defense person. For proper development of defense forces the government is required to issue a strategic aim encompassing a minimum 25 years for the entire country to develop itself accordingly. There is no shortcut.

With regards to military strategy, it changes with the changing geopolitical situations. Things have changed very fast in the last one decade. China has become hostile, the South Asian countries are fast coming under Chinese influence, they are becoming more and more economically powerful and playing important role, Russia is moving away and losing superpower status but US at the same time leaning towards India, Pakistan is becoming economically weaker, however, leaning more and more towards China thus making two and half fronts a reality.

The Chinese economic invasion into South Asian countries, construction of CPEC, developing string of pearls, creating naval bases around India in Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea, besides North and South China Sea, are giving certain indications which cannot be missed.

In future war, the center of gravity will shift from land army to navy and air force. These two along with the missiles and the cyber warfare will be the battle winning force. Without any experience in using nuclear and with the vast devastating capacity it has, it is very difficult to have a clear cut policy. It is the debate between first strike capabilities or retaliatory one. Both will usher in destruction!

Nuclear weapons are both of strategic and tactical nature depending on its yield and target. As per the procedure the control of nuclear weapons during peacetime is with the heads of the states. It is unlocked during war and authority of its use is decentralised based on the nature of likely target, strategic or tactical, and accordingly its yield. However, the authority never goes below strategic level. There are some exceptions with regards to the Navy.

Another thing which is very important to understand is starting constructing defensive shelters against Nuclear Biological Chemical (NBC) strike, first for soldiers subsequently for the nation. It is a huge task

requiring huge resources for the country and the population of our size.

Therefore, the necessity of creating National Defence Universities and various other associated study centers, for military and combined civil-military training, cannot be over-emphasised. The government must take necessary measures for their early set-up. The delay, that is being caused, may again be the result of mutual circum-spection. So, establishment for training military universities will improve the strategic thinking and new battle concepts and combined universities will definitely dispel mutual circum-spection and make a civil-military homogeneous team.

Last but not the least, whatever generals may do whichever army has the best trained section, platoon, company and battalion; will win the battle and will carry the commander. Strategy matters second to physical fighting in the battle field. Whether tactics make a battle successful or vice-versa is an unending controversial discussion point.

To conclude I would like to mention I used to tell my troops during training that in war there is no second position: you kill or get killed; no second chance is given and that is the best strategy. Whatever may the manoeuvre be, you have to kill and not get killed. It is that rifleman, seaman and airman that will bring you victory! Hence, do not forget their training!



**Lieutenant Colonel MK Guptaray (Retd)**

Lt Col. MK Guptaray is an author of two books; Sri Lanka Misadventure, coauthored with Col Gautam Das and Birth of a Nation on Bangladesh war of 1971. He is a seasoned veteran of the 1971 war; where he had the privilege to participate in the Naogan Sector under 104 Brigade, 19 Division.

He participated in Op-Pawan in 1987 capturing over half the Jaffna Town within 5 days of landing at Palali airport with barely a strength of 220 to start with which reduced to 180 in no time. He has held various A, Q and G staff appointments from Brigade to command level.

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## A Victory to Remember!

**“We, as a nation, should forever remember with great pride and gratitude the ultimate sacrifice made by 4,000 soldiers who laid down their lives on the battlefield and 10,000 more who went home wounded or disabled.”**

**By Lieutenant General Shankar Ghosh (Retd)**

An iconic signpost on the Indo-Pak border read: “You are now entering Pakistan. No passports required. Bash on regardless.” This was for India’s 54 Infantry Division under the command of the charismatic Maj Gen WAG Pinto, spearheading the Indian offensive into the Shakargarh Bulge in December 1971.

For the nation, 1971 was a historic year and we, as newly commissioned second lieutenants, were part of this history, part of this great military success. And this victory is since celebrated every year on December 16 as Vijay Diwas.

Unfortunately, over the years, it appears that the 1971 war is gradually fading from public memory

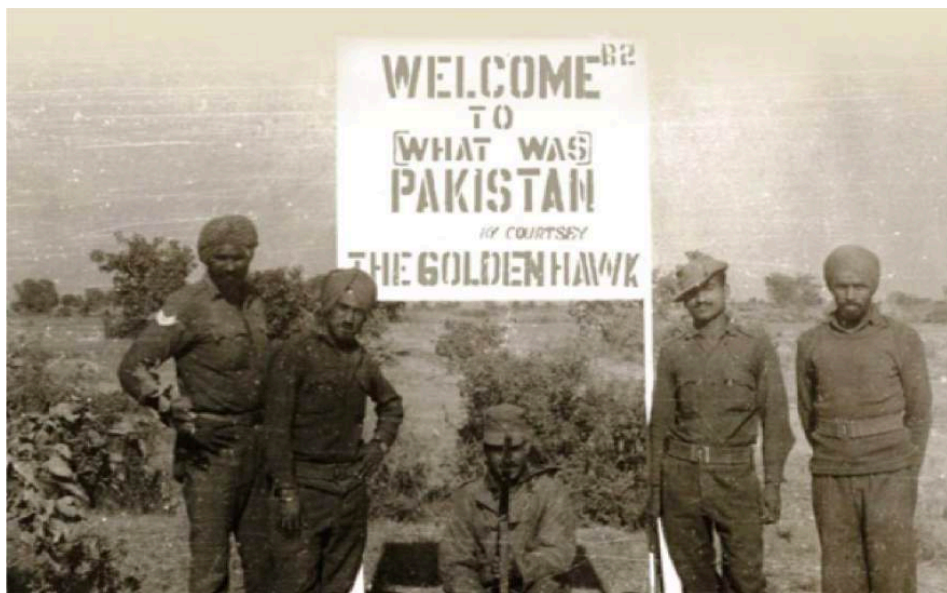
and being overtaken by Kargil, Balakot, Doklam and Galwan. Vijay Diwas has been replaced by Kargil Vijay Diwas. Has the nation forgotten the greatest ever victory achieved by its armed forces? Have all the sacrifices of our young officers and men gone in vain?

Today, many of us who were part of this great campaign are no more. The youngest alive are in their 70s. All that is left for these veterans is a brief wreath-laying ceremony on December 16 at a war memorial, for which most of them are not even invited. The rest of the nation, in any case, hardly remembers this war.

In the run-up to the 50th anniversary of the war next year, the nation needs to commemorate

December 16, 1971, when under the leadership of the iconic General Sam Manekshaw, the Indian Army, supported by the IAF and the Indian Navy, blitzkrieged its way to achieve one of the greatest victories by any modern-day military, dismembering Pakistan, and bringing about one of the biggest humiliations any country could ever have to undergo.

The ‘famed’ Pakistani Army was disgraced in the eyes of the world when Gen AAK Niazi and his 93,000 soldiers prostrated themselves in front of the Indian Army in the biggest military surrender after World War II. Till today, the Pakistani military smarts from the ignominy of this defeat by an Army which it used to sneer at.



Bombay Sappers around signboard marking India's watershed victory; Archival Image

December 16 is a day of rejoicing because on this day we, along with the Mukti Bahini, liberated and created a free new nation, Bangladesh, and ended a barbaric pogrom by the Pakistani Army of mass killing and rape of its innocent and hapless people.

In a memorable conclusion to the war, young Major Ashok Tara, VrC, in a brilliant operation, rescued the entire family of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, held prisoner by the Pakistani Army, including his wife Begum Fazilatunnesa and daughter Sheikh Hasina, the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh and a great friend of India.

The war produced heroes like our young Param Vir Chakra (PVC) recipients 2/Lt Arun Khetrapal, Flying Officer Nirmaljit Sekhon and Lance Naik Albert Ekka, who along with several thousands of unrecognised, gallant soldiers laid down their lives with the words 'Naam, Namak, Izzat' on their dying breaths.

We had inspiring officers like Major Hoshiyar Singh, awarded the PVC for his extraordinary bravery at Shakargarh, Major Ian Cardozo, who, given up for dead due to gangrene, chopped off his leg with his khukri and went on to become a Major General, or Maj KS Chandpuri, MVC, who with his small force, gallantly defended the post of Longewala against

the greatly superior Pakistani forces, thus enabling the IAF to decimate the attacking enemy tank regiments.

A special place of honour should be reserved for the silent service, the Indian Navy. In a daring operation, its missile boats attacked the Karachi port, sinking and damaging several Pakistan ships and destroying critical logistics facilities. The Navy dominated both the western and eastern seaboard, thus greatly restricting freedom of action of the Pakistani Navy.

The new generations also need to learn about and honour extraordinary commanders like Capt MN Mulla, MVC, who, in the highest traditions of the Navy, chose to go down with his ship INS Khukri, along with near 200 officers and sailors.



### Lieutenant General Shankar Ghosh (Retd)

Lt Gen Shankar Ghosh is a Former GOC-in-C, Western Command and is a military luminary who has held several challenging and high-profile appointments throughout his highly decorated career. He is a prolific writer on National Security issues. This article was first published in the 'Tribune' and has been reproduced with due permission from the author in the larger interest of the military fraternity. Views expressed are the authors own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India.

On this occasion, we, as a nation, should forever remember with great pride and gratitude the ultimate sacrifice made by 4,000 Indian soldiers who laid down their lives on the battlefield and 10,000 more who went home wounded or disabled.

Let us also never forget our 54 officers and men taken prisoners of war, who are dead or dying in Pakistani prisons. How unfortunate and tragic that we as victors, allowed 93,000 Pakistani prisoners to return home to their families but could not bring back our own soldiers, while also returning 13,000 square km of captured territory won with the blood, toil and sweat of our men.

Next year is the golden jubilee year of the war. On this landmark occasion, not just the Indian military, but India as a nation also needs to celebrate Vijay Diwas 1971 and remind the world of this great victory of the 'righteous over evil'. Apart from declaring 2021 as the Year of the Soldier, December 16 should henceforth be celebrated as the Armed Forces Day and do away with the irrelevant and antiquated Armed Forces Flag Day on December 7.

Let a chapter be added to our history books so that future generations read about this momentous victory and continue to remember and honour the sacrifices made by the gallant soldiers of India.





# Vijay Diwas: Recounting the Iconic ‘Battle of Garibpur’

**“The Battle of Garibpur was a strategic battle in which the troops of 14 Punjab Infantry Battalion Group exhibited rare courage, grit and determination. Though the battle was fought mainly by 14 Punjab, it was the other supporting units and the IAF which played a crucial role in its success.”**

**By Colonel Vijay Yeshvant Gidh (Retd)**

The ‘Lightning Campaign’ to liberate Bangladesh during the Indo-Pak War 1971 was one of the finest moments in Indian history. One of the main factors leading to the fall of erstwhile East Pakistan was the low morale of Pakistan Armed Forces. While various factors are attributable to this lowering of morale, one major factor was the famous ‘Battle of Garibpur’ fought in the initial stages of the war.

This key battle fought on 21-22 November 1971 before the Indo-Pak War was officially declared on 3 December 1971, was the first major battle in East Pakistan where a single infantry battalion 14 Punjab (Nabha Akal) supported by a squadron of armour and intimate fire support successfully fought a Pakistani brigade.

The situation on the Indo-Pak border was worsening due to genocide by the Pakistan army in early 1971. In view of the military actions by the Mukti Bahini, Pakistani forays and provocations inside Indian territory increased, leading to Indian casualties. 14 Punjab was concentrated near the International Border, where it was tasked to train the Mukti Fauj volunteers.

It also had to neutralize an enemy Border Out Post, Dhopakhali, manned by Pakistani regular troops and border police; so as to successfully dominate the border and ‘No man’s land’ across the Kabadak River. By end November 1971, the enemy actions had reached a level where it became necessary to

protect Indian interests by occupying selected enclaves in East Pakistan.

## Task and Purpose

14 Punjab (Nabha Akal), a veteran battalion under the able command of Lt Col (later Brig) RK Singh was initially tasked to occupy a battalion defended area in Fatehpur, located 6 km inside East Pakistan, which was well dominated by enemy patrols. The task was later revised ‘to secure area of Garibpur by first light 21 Nov 1971’.

The battalion was chosen to advance well inside to secure enemy territory in order to block the road Chaugacha – Jessore and trap the withdrawing enemy from Chaugacha, or prevent any reinforcements joining from Jessore.

The unit was supported by artillery, 'C' Squadron of 45 Cavalry consisting of 14 PT – 76 tanks, platoon engineers of 102 Engineer Regiment and medical elements.

### Importance of Garibpur

Located in the Bayra salient, Garibpur lies astride the highway from India to Jessore via Chaugacha. The hamlet of Garibpur, located 6 km inside East Pakistan, was an important crossroad for both nations. In the event of the full military option having to be exercised, 9 Infantry Division had planned to secure Jessore, and one of its axis of advance was the Chaugacha – Jessore highway. Its control created a road map for Indian forces to eventually defeat Pakistani troops in December 1971.

### Reconnaissance

During morning 20 November 1971, a strong patrol was sent across the border to reconnoiter a suitable area ahead of Fatehpur. Maj (later Lt Col) AP Vishwanathan, OC Alpha Company led this patrol which comprised elements of rifle companies to ensure that all these companies would have route guidance on arrival into positions. The move of the unit was supposed to be a surprise, but following a skirmish with an enemy patrol, the Pakistanis were alerted of the impending attack.

### The Advance to Garibpur

14 Punjab along with 'Charlie' Squadron 45 Cavalry equipped with 14 PT-76 tanks crossed the international border formed by the Kabadak River near Bayra and reached the Garibpur position by last light on 20 November 1971. There was just enough time for Lt Col RK Singh to issue orders on the radio to his Company Commanders and the Squadron Commander, 'Charlie' Squadron 45 Cavalry before the early winter set in.

### Assessment of the Enemy

A battalion of Pakistani 107 Infantry Brigade was located at Chaugacha, while the remainder brigade and 9 Infantry Division was in Jessore. Since the Garibpur position would outflank

the Pakistani battalion at Chaugacha, there was likely to be a strong enemy reaction. This factor had necessitated the grouping of tanks with 14 Punjab, a fact not known to the enemy.

As the enemy had a secured firm base of Singajhuli available for launching its attack, enemy activity had to be kept under watch. The enemy had the capability to build up for an attack at night and launch its armour supported by infantry from the North and North East.

### Deployment and Preparation of Defences

Companies were allocated their area of deployment. Maj NS Narang, 'Charlie' Squadron Commander, 45 Cavalry, was ordered to deploy his tanks in conjunction with two recoilless guns to cover the enemy armour advance from the direction of road Jessore – Chaugacha and the east between Garibpur – South Jagannathpur.

Delta Company under Capt Balbir Singh, with one section MMGs and a recoilless gun occupied a company defended locality in South Jagannathpur to cover the tank approach with elements of armour. Charlie Company under Maj NJS Bains, with a section of MMGs occupied a company defended locality further North at Track Junction near Pitambarpur, where the two tracks converged from Chaugacha.

Alpha and Bravo Companies under Majors Vishwanathan and KM Machiah occupied the gap between Charlie and Delta Companies. Battalion Headquarters was located near Garibpur. Battalion Headquarters was located near Garibpur. By 3 am on the 21st, the battalion was in position and the men were feverishly at work to get the defences ready by daylight.

### Bold Deployment of Protective Patrol

A patrol with Capt GS Gill, the Commando Platoon Commander and the artillery observer Capt PP Chaturvedi from 6 Field Regiment had been moved North towards Singajhuli – North Jagannathpur to cover the enemy movement on road axis Jessore – Chaugacha.

In the cold and foggy early hours of 21 November, Capt Gill heard the unmistakable sounds of enemy tanks moving south from the Chaugacha – Jessore road. The fog and poor visibility allowed the patrol to remain close to the enemy columns and report on them accurately.

Capt Chaturvedi, provided with a fine opportunity, brought down some good concentrations on the closely massed Pakistani columns. In the poor visibility and the noise of tanks and own artillery fire, the patrol was nearly encircled, but resolutely broke away. Capt Chaturvedi was wounded and was bravely carried by Capt Gill and others till they finally made their way back to the Company.

### Enemy Reactions

As visualized, the Garibpur position outflanked the Pakistani battalion at Chaugacha and there was violent response by Pakistani 107 Infantry Brigade at first light 21 November to 14 Punjab's entry across the Bayra salient. It became known later through the prisoners taken that Pakistan's 6 Punjab, elements of 21 Punjab, 22 Frontier Force and 3 Independent Armoured Squadron of Chaffee tanks made up the attacking force.

### Bold Attack by Pakistani Infantry and Armour

During early morning of winter, heavy fog had enveloped the surrounding area. At about 3.30 am on 21 November, our Commando patrol deployed near Singajhuli passed on a message regarding roaring sound of tanks from the direction of Jessore.

At 5.30 am, Capt Gill reported on radio link that he could see enemy armour and infantry lining up for assault in the Forming Up Place (FUP). All companies were warned to be ready for the impending enemy attack. Enemy artillery guns opened up and started pounding our defences to support their assaulting armour and infantry. As dawn broke out on 21st November, the enemy launched a brigade size attack supported by a squadron of armour equipped with M24 Chaffee tanks.



Possessing numerical superiority, the Pakistani troops were in a position to decimate the Indian intrusion. But the Punjab Battalion, known for its long history of valour rose to the occasion splendidly and thwarted the attack, ably supported by the armoured squadron, 45 Cavalry and intimate fire support by own artillery.

### **Intense Infantry Encounter**

Around 5 am, Charlie Company reported enemy activity opposite their defences at Pitambarpur. It became apparent that while an infantry column was making for Pitambarpur, simultaneously a tank based force was approaching D Company at South Jagannathpur.

At 6.15 am, 6 Punjab of Pakistan Army ferociously charged the C Company location near Pitambarpur through Chaugacha built up area. The enemy encircled the Charlie Company location and a fierce encounter and exchange of fire took place. During the pitch dark night, the enemy had closed near enough to indulge in hand to hand fight.

When the enemy was seen making an outflanking move to surround the company from South, Lt Col RK Singh now ordered the company south to Jehangirpur, for which the Pakistanis would head to take the battalion from the rear. Maj NJS Bains, the Company Commander marshalled his company with great skill and executing a well-organized move almost in the face of the enemy, occupied a new position south of the built up area in the forest vegetation near Jehangirpur.

During the enemy's outflanking move to attack Charlie Company, when the enemy had closed in within range, they were effectively engaged at the opportune moment by own troops. Sub Malkiat Singh, the Platoon Commander enthused his men by moving under the enemy's small arms and artillery shelling at the cost of his life.

While hurling a grenade on the charging enemy, he was grievously wounded but continued to fire till he emptied his two light machine gun magazines. He displayed conspicuous

gallantry and indomitable courage in the face of the enemy, for which he was awarded a well-deserved Mahavir Chakra.

When the enemy was very close to own defences, Maj Bains requested for Defensive Fire (SOS) fire on the enemy forming up at the FUP and getting ready for their third attack. Maj Kailash Nath, the Battery Commander ensured an accurate barrage to break up the enemy momentum of attack. The enemy fled in confusion suffering heavy casualties.

### **The Main Frontal Attack**

The main attack, however, came frontally on Delta, Bravo and Alpha Companies. The infantry – tank attack first came on Delta Company location at South Jagannathpur around 6 am. The Pakistani thrust lines having become apparent, thanks to the good work of the patrols operating ahead of the defences, readjustments to muster the recoilless guns (RCLs) and the PT-76 tanks at the required places had been carried out.

The enemy attacked confidently and two of the enemy tanks were destroyed by own armour. During the tank duel, a charging enemy tank sneaked through the fog close to the D Company locality, within 25 metres of the positions. The enemy's artillery and tank fire had forced the recoilless crew back, but Havildar Lekh Raj, the RCL gun detachment commander, reacted swiftly. He single handed, loaded the RCL gun himself and fired at the charging tank. In no time, the tank was ablaze. This NCO was awarded Vir Chakra for his outstanding courage.

In another engagement, one of our tanks which had by then moved to cover the developing threat, hit another Chaffee which turned out to be the enemy troop leader's tank. The troop leader attempting to clamber out was shot by Capt Gill. In the close fighting that ensued when the other Chaffees closed in, the Squadron Commander, Maj DS Narang was hit and killed while directing his tanks standing up in the tank cupola. In the neighbouring troop, Lt Tejinder Singh, the troop

leader, was similarly hit and badly wounded.

Under the cover of fog, a tank troop firing their MMGs and guns closed up to Delta and Alpha Company FDLs but own troops steadfastly stuck to their defences giving a determined fight. On both sides, a matching and relentless intensive battle of armour and infantry raged for over two hours. During the ferocious enemy encounter, both sides suffered heavy casualties.

By this time, Pakistani 6 Punjab, which had been moving south, closed in through the woods on Garibpur and attacked the Battalion Headquarters area from the West. Under Capt (later Brig) MPS Bajwa, the Adjutant, the Battalion Headquarters and Signal Platoon personnel in depth, engaged the enemy effectively. This assault was broken up using very close artillery support DF (SOS) competently handled by the Battery Commander, Maj Kailash Nath.

By about 8.30 am the enemy momentum of assault petered out and it was clear that Nabha Akal with its affiliated units had carried the day. The winter sun, now up through the rising fog, revealed large number of enemy casualties, which included 10 of enemy's tanks destroyed and 3 abandoned in good condition. The killing ground was strewn with the debris of an assault, with the dead and weapons lying where they had fallen.

### **The Air Battle**

Around 9.25 am on 22 November 1971, four enemy Sabre aircraft suddenly appeared and started strafing the battalion defences. One of our PT-76 tanks tried to engage the enemy aircraft flying low with its machine gun. This tank was rocketed by all the aircraft and destroyed, while the crew was seriously injured along with some troops on the ground.

The second time, at about 2 pm the same day, enemy's three aircraft roared in freely when Maj Kailash Nath, the Battery Commander, got a smoke shot fired in the enemy position at Singhajhuli. This deception paid good dividends as all the enemy aircraft

diverted their attack on their troops at Singhajhuli.

Again, at about 2.45 pm the same day, three more Pakistani aircraft roared in and were having a free run, when suddenly, four Indian Gnat aircrafts from No 22 Squadron based in Kalaikunda appeared in the sky. In the first aerial combat between the two sides since the 1965 War, all three enemy aircraft were shot down in the ensuing dog-fight.

Two of the Pakistani pilots Flying Officers Khalil Ahmed and Parvez Mehdi Qureshi ejected safely but were captured by the Indian Army and treated as Prisoners of War (POWs). The troops on the ground had an uninterrupted view of this air battle, which gave the Battalion a tremendous fillip.

Once more the diminutive Indian Gnats flown by the IAF pilots had established its mastery over the Sabre jets. The result was that since the interception of the three Sabres over Garibpur, the PAF stopped sending fighter-bombers to support own troops and the subsequent Indian formations were now free to continue their advance towards Jessore.

### Chivalry and Honour of Both Sides

Interestingly, Khalil Ahmed's elder brother Aziz Ahmed was later one of Pakistan's most popular High Commissioner to India. Parvez Qureshi, a Sword of Honour at the PAF Air Force Academy, later on became the Chief of Air Staff of the Pakistan Air Force in 1997.

Don Lazarus (then a Flying Officer) who had shot him down in 1971, sent him a congratulatory letter to which Qureshi kindly replied and complimented Lazarus for the 'fight' shown by IAF pilots that day. Gp Capt Lazarus, who later happened to be our Instructor in the prestigious Defence Services Staff College at Wellington, still preserves this letter. It speaks volumes of soldiering, chivalry and honour on both sides!

### Importance of the Battle of Garibpur

The Battle of Garibpur had many national and international repercussions and led to interesting results on both sides. Gen Yahya Khan declared a National Emergency in Pakistan and complained to the UN Secretary General, U Thant about India violating the UN Charter. On the Indian side, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced India's determination to match the Pakistani response.

The unique battle of one Battalion Group defeating a Brigade attack supported by armour and PAF will go down in the annals of warfare as a classic example indeed. On the tactical level, the battle forced the Pakistanis to vacate Chaugacha without a fight. Later when the war was fully joined in early December, this resulted in own



Lt Col RK Singh (with stick) and Capt Balbir Singh, OC 'Delta' Coy

9 Infantry Division to close up almost halfway upto Jessore, which was its initial objective.

The Battle of Garibpur was a decisive victory, where Nabha Akal and attached troops fought magnificently. It not only blunted a Brigade sized attack supported by enemy armour and PAF, but in the process two Pakistani infantry battalions (6 Punjab and 22 FF) and 3 Independent Squadron were badly mauled.

### Own Casualties

Our own losses including the affiliated units were 28 killed and 42 wounded, while four PT-76 tanks were destroyed. During the tank battle, Maj NS Narang got killed while Capt RP Chaturvedi was seriously injured while directing artillery shoots on the enemy.

### Enemy Casualties and POWs

13 Chaffee tanks were neutralized which included three captured in running condition. Practically the whole of enemy's squadron was annihilated. Three enemy aircrafts were lost in the air battle while 300 soldiers, including three officers were killed and wounded. Six enemy POWs apprehended by 14 Punjab confirmed the identity of the Pakistani units involved in the

battle. A large quantity of arms, ammunition and equipment were captured which included Chinese made automatic weapons and mines.

### Honours and Awards

The Battle of Garibpur brought a total of 40 well-deserved gallantry awards to the battalion, its affiliated troops and the IAF. While Lt Col RK Singh was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra, the unit earned another MVC (Sub Malkiat Singh) posthumously, two Vrcs (Capt GS Gill & Hav Lekh Raj)



and two Sena Medals (Capt Balbir Singh & L Nk Sewa Singh).

The attached troops won one MVC (Maj DS Narang) posthumously, two VrCs (Nb Risaldar RP Singh, 45 Cav & Capt RP Chaturvedi) and one Sena Medal (Maj Kailash Nath). The three IAF Gnat pilots (Flt Lts RA Massey, MA Ganapathy and Fg Offr D Lazarus) who shot down the Sabre jets were awarded a VrC each.

### Ordering of Commission

After the War, Pakistan ordered a Commission under Chief Justice Hamoodur Rahman on the defeat of the Pakistani Army during the 1971 Conflict. An extract of the report mentioned that Brig Mohammad Hayat, former Commander 107 Brigade, 9 Infantry Division, East Pakistan be tried for by court martial for not formulating a sound plan for the defence of the Jessore fortress and failing to properly plan and command the brigade counter-attack at Garibpur.

### Memorable Visit to Bangladesh

During Vijay Diwas 2013, Brig RK Singh was part of an Indian delegation consisting of 1971 War veterans which visited Bangladesh, where he got an opportunity to visit the battlefields at Garibpur after 42 years! The people of Garibpur and surrounding areas are ever grateful for the contribution and sacrifice of the Indian soldiers.

A small memorial with an epitaph commemorating the Battle of Garibpur is located astride the road leading to Garibpur, a tiny and predominantly agricultural hamlet. A high school has been constructed at Garibpur village, and another monument erected near a mango tree in an open patch in the school premises to commemorate the martyrs – both Mukti Bahini and Indian soldiers of the Liberation War.

Some villagers say that a few graves of Indian martyrs are located there and the farmers still recover tank shells and odd bullet empties from their fields – a stark reminder of the fierce tank and infantry battle between the Indian and Pakistan armies during November 1971.

Some Bangladesh officers attending the Staff College Course at Wellington few years ago, informed me that the Battle of Garibpur is enacted by their battalions as part of an exercise organized for troops to draw many useful lessons. They requested for some material and original photographs of the Garibpur battle, which was I sent them later. There is a war museum at Jessore Cantonment which contains artifacts, photographs and other items from the 'Liberation War'.

### Book on CO's Reminiscences of the Battle

Brig RK Singh had written a book "The Battle of Garibpur, Indo-Pak War 1971" in 2014, which is the Commanding Officer's account and personal reminiscences of the Battle of Garibpur. Inclusion of Original photographs of the battle area, the air battle at Bayra and the author's recent visit to Bangladesh enhance the attractiveness of the book. One of the photographs depicts 14 jubilant officers and men of the unit and attached troops atop a captured Pakistani Chaffee tank bearing number 14 in Urdu.

Some veterans of the battalion including Brig RK Singh were planning a trip to the battlefields of Garibpur in 2015. However, the proposed visit could not materialize and unfortunately Brig RK passed away in February 2016.

During the recent visit of the Bangladesh PM, Sheikh Hasina to India in April 2017, Sub Malkiat Singh, MVC (Posthumous) was one

of the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War, whose family was honoured by the PMs of both the countries. The Commanding Officer and Subedar Major of the unit were invited for the ceremony in New Delhi on 08 April 2017.

### Conclusion

The Battle of Garibpur was a strategic battle in which the troops of 14 Punjab Infantry Battalion Group exhibited rare courage, grit and determination. Though the battle was fought mainly by 14 Punjab, it was the other supporting units like 'C' Squadron 45 Cavalry, the Engineers and Artillery; and the IAF which played a crucial role in its success.

It was the first main battle of the 1971 War, which was a significant military victory that blunted the enemy's counter-attack capability. The extensive damage and heavy losses suffered in the first encounter left a significant impact on the Pakistan Army's ensuing operations and adversely affected their morale.

This eventually paved the way for the Indian victory over Pakistan 49 years ago. However, the unit was denied a well – deserved award of Battle Honour 'Garibpur' Battle, since it was fought prior to commencement of hostilities on 3 December 1971. One of these Pakistani Chaffee tanks captured in running condition by 14 Punjab occupies a place of pride in the Punjab Regimental Centre at Ramgarh Cantonment, Jharkhand today.

### Colonel Vijay Yeshvant Gidh (Retd)

Col Vijay Yeshvant Gidh, VSM (Retd), an alumnus of RIMC, Dehra Dun and NDA, Khadakvasla was commissioned in 13 Punjab (Jind) in June 1976. He was 2IC of 14 Punjab (Nabha Akal) during its tenure in UN Peacekeeping Mission (UNAVEM – III) in Angola. He later commanded the unit for four years in J&K, Manipur, and Nagaland. Col Gidh has served as an Instructor in NSG Training Centre, Manesar; Brigade Major of the Jelepla Brigade; Battalion Commander in NDA and Centre Commandant, The Punjab Regimental Centre, Ramgarh Cantonment. His son is presently commanding the Battalion.

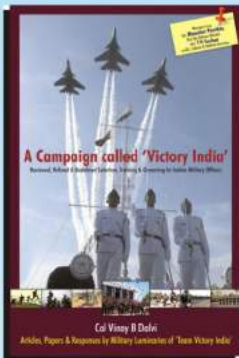




# A Campaign called 'Victory India'

## Compendium on Selection, Training and Grooming for Indian Military Officers

Books authored by **Col Vinay B Dalvi** & Published by **Pentagon Press**



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"A trail blazing collection of over 30 well researched articles, military papers, news stories and letters by over 30 authors, analysts, scholars and professional respondents. The collective contributions of several military luminaries have comprehensively reviewed, refined and redefined the existing selection systems and training and grooming methodologies of young military officers with the sole aim and objective of enhancing the quality of Indian military leadership at all levels.

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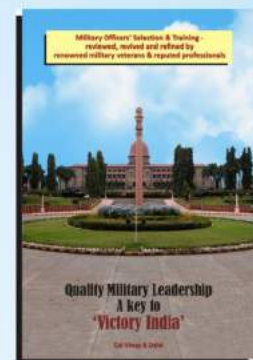
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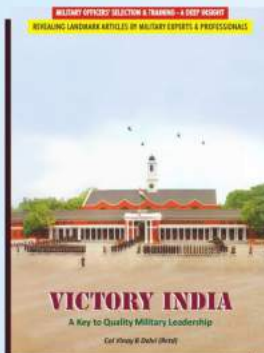
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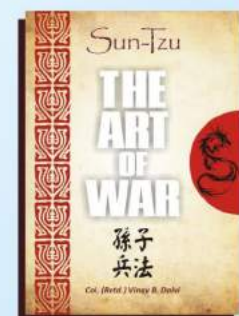
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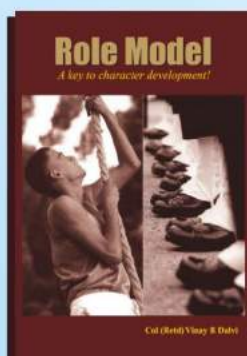
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## 'Swift and Sure' A Salute to the Army's Daredevil Aviators of '71!

By Staff Correspondent

Above the Battlefield and Unarmed into Battle: Air Observation Post pilots are expert gunners, skilled flyers, and incurable rule breakers. Flying from airstrips just behind the front lines, without armament and facing both ground flak and enemy fighter planes, they act as elevated observation posts for the soldiers on the ground. Story of one such AOP Pilot who flew into glory, earning himself a Mahavir Chakra.

Captain Pradip Kumar Gour was a pilot with an Air Observation Post 660 squadron deployed on the Western Front during the Indo-Pak 1971 War for the Liberation of Bangladesh. Throughout the operations, he flew round-the-clock missions deep inside enemy territory, directing artillery fire and obtaining vital information about the enemy, undeterred by heavy small arms and artillery airburst fire.

On Dec 11, 1971, Capt P K Gaur noticed about 11 enemy tanks advancing towards Malidpur with the aim of encircling the Indian posts there. He immediately cautioned the Indian troops about

the strength, direction and likely aim of the enemy tank force. He maneuvered his small, unarmed plane in such a manner that all enemy attempts to shoot him down failed. On the other hand, he directed the artillery fire so effectively that 8 of the enemy tanks were knocked out and two were irreparably damaged.

This day in 1971, a major operation was planned over Beins River and Capt Gaur had been airborne for over three hours, locating and registering targets deep inside enemy territory when he spotted three enemy Sabre jets operating in the area. He dodged them and decided to continue with the mission in view of its vital nature. However, Pakistani jets tailed and shot down the Krishak. The young gunner went down in his burning aircraft. Capt Gaur was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra for his act of bravery and extraordinary devotion to duty.

The co-pilot of Capt Gaur was Capt Gurmit Punia, while force landing their Krishak ac, it caught fire. While Capt Gaur died, Capt Gurmit Punia suffered 80-85

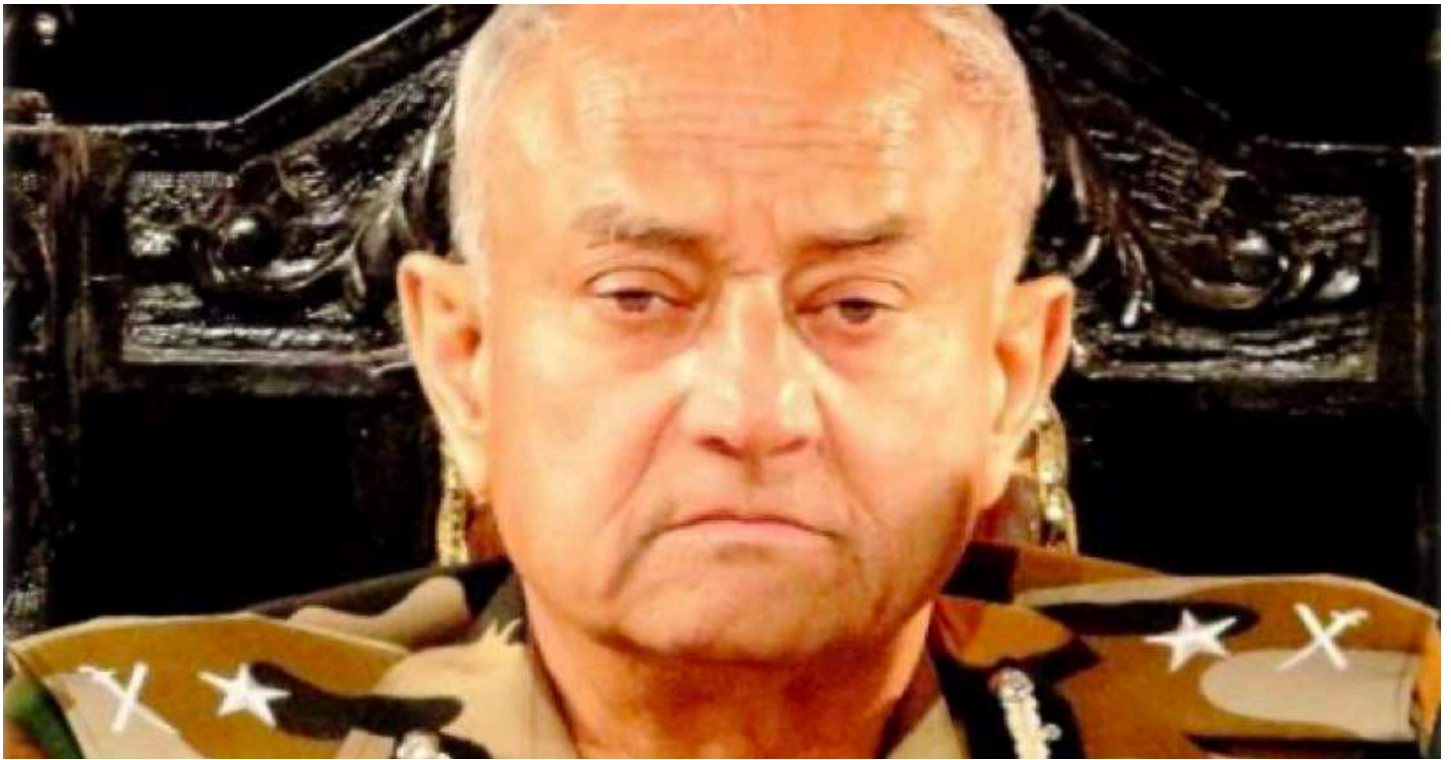
percent burns, and was taken to Military Hospital, Poona, where he was successfully treated and cured. In the process, Capt Punia lost his right forearm. He was given a gas agency in Patiala which was later shifted to sec 32, Chandigarh.

Capt Punia got a Vir Chakra, he had passion for Squash. Though he lost his right arm, yet he practiced playing squash by holding the racquet in left hand and used to play till a few months before, when he was no more in this world.

Fallen but not Forgotten: You live on in our hearts and your act of valour continues to inspire young Army Aviation Corps pilots. Today in the Army Aviation Corp training centre at Nasik, the Capt P K Gaur Memorial trophy is awarded to the pilot for Best in Direction of artillery fire.

A salute to the Army Aviators!

*With inputs by Major Jawahar Thota (Retd)*



## From '71 Warfighting to CI Ops, Brig. BK Ponwar is a Complete Profile in Courage!

**This profile is dedicated to Brigadier Basant K Ponwar (Retd) for his outstanding services in the 1971 Indo-Pak War for the liberation of Bangladesh and over half a century of ongoing contributions to the nation's Counter-Insurgency efforts.**

**By Colonel Vinay B Dalvi, Aritra Banerjee**

Brigadier Basant K Ponwar AVSM, VSM was commissioned in the 1st Maratha Light Infantry in December 1969 as a freshly minted Second Lieutenant. He spent the first two years of his service in the Battalion specialising in anti-terror operations in India's North-East and in the Jammu and Kashmir valley. The 1st Maratha Light Infantry was a part of the 95 Mountain Brigade and by 1971, he was serving in Nagaland, in the thick of hardcore counter-terror operations.

Eventually orders were passed to place the entire 95 Mountain Brigade under the 101 Communication Zone and move to the Eastern theatre of the 1971 Indo-Pak war and liberate Bangladesh. Alongside the rest of

the Brigade, the 1st Maratha LI moved to Joshepur, south of Tura in Meghalaya and from the end of November 1971, the 1st Maratha LI was involved in the small cross border skirmishes against the Pakistan Army inside Bangladesh.

Being a Battalion highly specialised in counter-insurgency operations, the Battalion needed a baptism by fire to start fighting as a regular Infantry Battalion, and 2/Lt Ponwar was one of the first men from the regiment to see action upon being thrust into the conflict in the end of November. Early in his deployment into the conflict, he led an ambush party with comprised of boys from the Battalion along with some local Mukti Bahini guerillas and crossed over through

the International Border, entering what is now Bangladesh.

2/Lt Ponwar and his team ambushed a Pakistani mail vehicle on the Jadavpur-Mymensingh road and started gathering critical intelligence on enemy presence in the area. He located the positions of the enemy Battalions operating within the area, locating the presence of the Pakistani 93 Infantry Brigade, and had brought back news about their strengths and positions as a direct result of operations dominating the 'No Man's Land' across the International Border. He also took part in the second raid conducted by two Battalions on the Kamalpur Border outpost.



As the 13 Guards attacked the Kamalpur outpost—which was held by Captain Ahsan Malik of the Pakistan Army, 1st Maratha LI went to cut-off the heavy mortar support brought in for the defense of the Kamalpur outpost. Unfortunately, the Kamalpur outpost held their ground, forcing the 13 Guards to pull out. “Major Vatsa from the Corps of Engineers destroyed the enemy mortars by placing diamond charge of plastic explosives” while 2/Lt Ponwar and the 1st Maratha LI managed to decimate the enemy soldiers in the mortar positions in a deadly ambush laid by 1 Maratha LI.

As the war officially broke out with Pakistan on the 3rd of December 1971, the entire 95 Mountain Brigade was pulled into action in Bangladesh. The 1st Maratha LI was the first to capture the town of Bakshiganj with the loss of only one sepoy, killed in action. 2/Lt Ponwar served alongside his Battalion, later moving on to the thick of the fighting in the battle of Jamalpur; which was a roadblock action in which the entire battalion had blocked the Jamalpur-Dacca road.

Jamalpur was the garrison of the 31 Baluch Regiment of the Pakistan Army and after Brigadier Hardev Singh Kler’s requests for the 31 Baluch to surrender being denied by Lieutenant Colonel Sultan Ahmed, the 1st Maratha LI moved in and had outflanked the enemy in Jamalpur. The fighting became more intense as the boys of the 1st Maratha LI and 2/Lt Ponwar closed in on the 31 Baluch’s garrison—only 1,000 yards away from them till the 31 Baluch had brought in artillery support, pushing back Lt Ponwar and his boys.

Later, the entire 1st Maratha LI had literally decimated the 31 Baluch by a heavy ambush assault, with the young daredevil officer also in the ambush team, mowing down Pakistani soldiers. “I was with the right forward C Company. The Pakistani’s attacked our position on the nights of 10-11 December 1971 and got

hell from us. Over 230 Pakistani troops were killed in action, with 300 having surrendered to us. Jamalpur was captured by Indian Forces.” Recounted Brig. Ponwar.

After the liberation of Jamalpur from Pakistani occupation, he was also present in the liberation of Tangail; on the leading columns of Indian army vehicles linking up with the 2 Parachute Battalion at the Poongli bridge outside Tangail, being the link up officer. Upon entering Tangail and after meeting the legendary Mukti Bahini leader—Kader Siddiqi, this is what he had asked— “Dushman kidhar hai?” (“Where is the enemy?”), Kader Siddiqi had replied — “Dushman bhaag raha hai!” (“The enemy is running!”)

Narrating the events following the pitched battle of Jamalpur, the war veteran said, “The next day I was asked to lead the advance to Tangail. Where I met Tiger Siddiqui short of Tangail. Following which I linked up with the 2 Para on Poongli Bridge at about 1600h on 12 December. This Bridge was over the Turag River, so we did not wade through but drove on and entered Tangail by 1800h. Pakistani Forces had all withdrawn to Dacca for the last stand.”

“2 Para had action against the withdrawing Pakistani 93 Brigade Headquarters and one Battalion from Mymensingh on the night of 11/12 December and the day of 12 December. Pakistani Battalions at Jamalpur and Mymensingh were asked to fallback to Dacca as there were no regular troops available for its defence. So, when they tried to break through our roadblocks, they suffered very heavy casualties and only a few managed to bypass and get away to Dacca.” Added Brig. Ponwar.

He was there in Dacca during the liberation of the city and was also tasked with guarding and managing the Pakistani Prisoners of War inside the city after the Surrender ceremony. At the time of attaining this glory, he was only 22-years-old. Even after 48 years of the

liberation of Bangladesh, he is welcomed in Bangladesh as a hero and he talks about the gratefulness of the Bengali people and the Mukti Bahini in supporting his Battalion in the operations. He still remembers the slogans by the Bengalis on 16 December 1971, screaming— “Indian Army Zindabaad!”

After his tenure in Bangladesh, he served as an Instructor in the Commando Wing of an Infantry School from 1978-1981 where he specialised in Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare training and served as a Commandant in the Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare school. He has been instrumental in dealing with Naxalites in Chhattisgarh and after his retirement from the army as a Brigadier in 2005, he has been the Director of Counter Terrorism and Jungle Warfare College, raising specialised commandos in breaking the backs of the Naxalites.

Presently, he is serving as the Inspector General of Police in Chhattisgarh and has imparted Guerilla Warfare training to the Indian Police, Indo Tibetan Border Police, Sashastra Seema Bal, Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police Force personnel serving in the Naxalite prone areas and has established Counter Insurgency and Jungle warfare schools in Kanker and North Bastar.

He has been also invited to talk about Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism in London, Germany, Australia and the Army War College, Mhow. Even after his long service in the army from 1969 to 2005, he is still serving with pride and honor! “I am in my 51st year in uniform. Having served 36 Years in the Indian Army and 15 Years in the police force on a special assignment with the Government of Chhattisgarh to train the police in guerrilla warfare to combat the Naxalites. They are now on the Run!” Said the decorated veteran with pride!

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