Ethics, Moral and Values in the context of Military Leadership for Gen-Y: An Indian Armed Forces Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Military ethos embodies service to the nation. Since the inception of our country, Indian Armed Forces have defended the nation through the dedication of its soldiers. The nation is proud of their discipline, integrity, loyalty, patriotism, selfless service, and courage. However, with the changing concept of warfare to network-centric operations, there is a requirement to induct highly professional manpower, the so-called Gen-Y workforce. The present work is aimed at carrying out a reality check of our present value system and assess the fault line. In our attempt to gauge the present state of Ethics and Values in the Armed Forces today, we embarked on an analytical study encompassing, assessment of 'Organizational Culture', 'Ethical Climate' and along with it an opinion survey of 'Erosion of Values'. To arrive at the corrective measures, views were also sought on a variety of issues connected with ethical decision making, un-ethical practices commonly observed, ethical temptations which a military leader falls a prey knowingly or unknowingly. The scenario presents a scope for required path-correction to exploit the potential of Gen-Y workforce to achieve desired organisational goal.

Keywords: Ethos, Values, Morale, Ethical temptation, organisation culture, Gen-Y workforce.

INTRODUCTION:

The concept of duty, service, and self-sacrifice has always been associated with military leadership. The sacrificial content of the leadership ethos built up over decades has served the country well and the military was able to maintain the general perception of trustworthy professionals. While ethics related to long tradition & social values, morality is linked to personal belief. These three words of Ethics, Moral and Values are the binding force of a leader and in this context, the best example could be that the great warrior 'Bhishma Pitamaha', lying on a bed of arrows, had to say when Lord Krishna took the 'Pandava' brothers to learn wisdom from him during the great 'Mahabharata' war. His views on leadership articulated thousands of years ago continue to be relevant even today. The three points made by him were, "First, the conduct of a leader at all times must be above reproach. He must exercise self-restraint, control his passion, and act in a righteous manner. Second, a leader must subordinate his own interest to the cause he is supporting, and to the welfare of the men, he is leading. Third, a leader must not be too indulgent; otherwise, the men will disregard him. At the same time he must not be too harsh otherwise that will spread unhappiness and adversely affect the men attaining the goal he wants them to achieve."

In a democracy, Armed forces are established on a legal basis, retained under political control and must answer to elected representatives. They require a disciplined organization with effective command and control to ensure political direction is carried through actions at the front line. Apart from their primary roles in support of security and defence policy, the Armed forces provide an important and distinctive strand in the fabric of the

Nation. They promote the ideals of integrity, discipline, professionalism, service, and excellence. To do so, they formulate their own values, where it is necessary to do so by the virtue of their profession.

Challenges of 21st Century Military Leadership:

The 21st century, being labelled as the information age – the technology age is facing a great challenge of virtual warfare. The typical 'bloody or the gun battle' will be the last phase of any war. Today, armed Drones have become the virtual combatants. The advancement of Missile technology has enabled targeting beyond thousands of km. (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles; 'ICBM' has a minimum range of 5500 km). The capability of the Air Force is being proved in Iraq, Kosovo, and Afghanistan war wherein thousands of people have been killed due to aerial bombing without loss of a single pilot. In recent time (26 Feb 2019), the air strike by Indian Air Force on Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) camps in Balakot, Pakistan also indicates the potential and likely destruction that could result in a future battle scenario. Decisions are being taken at the political level and Armed Force leaders are expected to implement the same. The changing nature of warfare, equipped with 'Robots', Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine learning as well as the expansion of national interests well beyond geographical boundaries, due to economic interests, have placed fresh challenges on leadership. Tomorrow's motto is to subdue the enemy without fighting. We are facing the reality of killing the enemy without seeing an eye to eye. Thus, the context of Ethics, Morale, and Values of military leaders are taking a new dimension and are expected to see major changes for future leadership.

Not only the mode of warfare is changing but also the people, likely to be engaged in future war, are going to be a different breed. In the immediate scenario (in the next 20 years), our entire workforce, as well as the future leaders will be those who were born between 1982 to 1999. Twenge & Campbell (2008) describes this generation as Millennials. Other common names for this age group are GenY, nGen, and GenMe (Twenge, 2010).

Statement of the Problem:

The paper aimed at obtaining a view from the environment about the present state of ethics and values in the Armed forces through a structured analysis of prevalent Organizational Culture and suggest steps required to meet future challenges while dealing with Gen 'Y' workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

A recent review by Lyons and Kuron (2014) provides evidence that the next generation youths have significantly different attitudes and values. These Gen 'Y' demands leisure and work-life balance. Factors of individualism, egoistical tendencies, and self-interest have become the priority (Twenge & Campbell, 2012). In addition, job satisfaction has become a priority rather than job security. The average employee's career in a corporate world has shrunk to less than 5 years (Lu, Gursoy & Neale, 2016)! In summary; Millennials are going to be different and all these theories of leadership need to be rewritten for our future leaders.

Attitudes toward work are changing. As per (Twenge & Kasser, 2013), "Work centrality is becoming less and less important across the three generations, being least important to the Millennial generation" This change of employees perception towards work is likely to impact leaders' abilities to lead them. Similarly, studies such as (Twenge, 2010; Twenge et al., 2010), also indicate that intrinsic rewards are more dominant compared to extrinsic factor for the Gen-Y. Graen & Scheimann (2013) observed that monetary compensation is becoming top-priority in work. At the same time, the Millennials are also more likely to appreciate feedback from their supervisors and greater accountability (Laird, Harvey, & Lancaster, 2015). There will be a growing threat of challenging authority figures unless based on logic (Ahmed, Scott-Young, Ahmed, & Fein, 2013). Overall, it can be envisaged that the new generation is a different breed and are likely to pose challenges for future leaders within organizations. Anderson, Baur, Griffith, & Buckley (2017) wrote, "…millennials are most assuredly different than their predecessors with respect to ideas, behaviours and viewpoints" and "… organizational leaders will have to lead these employees, by necessity, differently".

Societal Challenges:

Materialistic outlook, globalization, and self-centered orientation are going to be the order of the day in the emerging socio-economic scenario all over the world. 'America First', 'China's aggressive exploitation of African Sub-continent', 'growing demand of deportation of the migrants from European Union' are shaping the changing world politics. Within the country, the issues of religious intolerance, fundamentalism, Naxalism and terrorism are becoming a threat to the peaceful coexistence of human society. Tomorrow's leader thus needs typical ability to deal with cognitive complexity, should have the tolerance of ambiguity, and exhibit intellectual flexibility and an understanding of the organizational dynamics.

Present Challenges of Indian Armed Forces:

It is not enough to win the Nation's war but win it in a way that is consistent with the values of their society and the principles of their cause. To do so they need to base their professional commitment on a common moral-ethical foundation, providing guidance on conduct, the standards, and duty. Undergirding, the constants that make the Armed forces what it is are its Military values. One must not become complacent about the role of values. The values that the Services espouse are thoroughly consistent with Nation's societal values, but it is a bad assumption to presuppose that everyone entering the Armed forces understands and accepts the values, which are emphasized in the Services.

The Services are a value-based organization and stresses the importance of the team over the individual. Rather the emphasis shifts to 'shared' values, the values that make an individual reach beyond self. Towards this end, value-based leadership means setting the example and then creating the command climate where everyone can put values to practice. Leaders must not only exemplify these values in their words and deeds, but they must also create the opportunity for every member in their command to live them as well. Of late, one has increasingly heard the lament that the ethical standards in the Armed forces have steadily declined and the moral values are being eroded. Thanks to our very active media, certain recent incidents have portrayed deterioration in the quality of ethical fibre within the Armed forces. The increasingly competitive environment has resulted in a condition in which many officers are being subjected to tests of conscience for which they are ill prepared. This brings to the point of the accepted societal norms for each generation. Is that society has changed very quickly for the military? The basic ideas of 'Naam-Namak-Izzat', around which the traditional armies had institutionalized, no longer being practised in contemporary society. Thus, exists a requirement of looking into the cadre structure as well as aspects of leadership in any military establishment.

Research Questions:

The concept of warfare is changing from the conventional 'holding-the ground' to 'Network Centric Warfare'. The battle-space has expanded in all the three dimensions i.e. Physical, Information, and Cognitive. Integration of people, platforms, weapons, sensors, information, and decision aids have become the top priority of all countries. To meet this challenge, armed forces will have to induct highly skilled professional and train the others to maintain their sophisticated weapons and sensors. Managing this Gen-Y is going to be a new HR challenge. Following research questions are to be understood to achieve the above:

(a) Will the concept of Ethics, Moral and Values continue to be the guiding principle of the Armed Forces?
(b) What is the present Organisation climate of Armed Forces?
(c) Carry out an assessment of the ethical climate of the Armed Forces.
(d) To identify fault-lines, if any?
(e) To suggest measures including a 'Way Forward'.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Present work is aimed at conducting a reality check of Indian Armed forces. Data is collected through a questionnaire from mid-level officers (Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel and Brigadiers and equivalent officers of other services). The respondents were also asked to comment if there is a need to have a comprehensive code of ethics, especially for senior leaders. Views were also ascertained about the adequacy or otherwise of the present standards of ethical training at various levels. A detailed analysis of the respondents of about 430 respondents belonging to all the three Services is carried out to identify the present organisation culture and identify the fault lines. Opinions of the respondents have also been analysed to suggest remedial measures.

Research Design:

A questionnaire is designed to assess the present status and assess future requirements for its leaders. The questionnaire has five constructs and they are distributed through five parts as described below:

(a) **Assess Organisational Culture:** The part consists of 27 questions on a 5 point Likert Scale
(b) **Assess the Ethical Climate:** This part has four subunits, distributed through 23 questions to capture the following:
    (i) Individual character – "Who we are?"
    (ii) Unit/Workplace policies and practices – "What do we do?"
    (iii) Unit Leader Action – "What do I do?"
    (iv) Environmental/Mission Factors – "What surrounds us?"

(c) Identify Erosion of values, if any. An opinion survey is carried out through 20 statements on a 5 point Likert scale.

(d) Way Forward and Measures. This part consists of nine open-ended questions.

Both qualitative and quantitative analysis is carried out on this cross-sectional dataset.

Methodology of Study: Data Collection, Sample Size, Tools for Analysis:

The study population was for the personnel of Indian Armed forces that includes Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Navy. Quantitative data are on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. Qualitative data is collected in the format of text and remarks. In the present study, valid data from 430 officers have been collected. A summary of the data collected for analysis is as follows:

		Rank				Total
		Lt Col and Eqvt	Col and Eqvt	Brig and Eqvt	Maj Gen and Eqvt	
Service	Army	1	289	31	0	321
	CG	0	1	0	0	1
	IAF	5	67	2	2	76
	Navy	3	27	2	0	32
	Total	**9**	**384**	**35**	**2**	**430**

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS:

SPSS Ver 20 is used as a data analysis tool. 'R' coding is used to carry out text analysis for the open-ended questions. Descriptive statistics is used as a measure for various attributes/concepts relevant to the study. To assess the variation across different strata, Chi-Square and ANOVA tests have been carried out. At the beginning stage, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is done to identify key factors. These factors are linked with relevant attributes as applicable to armed forces. Text analysis is used as a tool to analyse open-ended questions and to capture key suggestions.

DATA ANALYSIS:

In the present study, exploratory factor analysis was applied to yield factors that form the dimensions for each measure for capturing the organisation culture. In part-I of the questionnaire, 27 questions were asked and these are used for present analysis. Factor analysis was carried out using SPSS software. Sampling adequacy was tested through computation of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test. The sample is adequate if the value of KMO is greater than 0.5. The result indicated by our analysis was 0.791. The observed significance level is 0.000 (p-value). It is small enough i.e. < 0.05 (at 95% confidence level) to reject the hypothesis as shown in Fig 1. It can thus be concluded that the strength of the relationship among variables is strong and is suitable for further analysis by factor analysis. A principal Component analysis was carried out using VARIMAX rotation with Kaiser Normalization for Eigenvalue >1. The rotation converged in 11 iterations. In this analysis, we have looked into those variables where the loading is ± 0.50 or greater which are normally considered significant. In the present study, the weight of 0.4 is utilized as the minimum cut off. The scree plot based on this analysis is shown in Fig 2.

Figure 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.791
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2178.395
	df	351
	Sig.	.000

Figure 2: Scree Plot :EFA
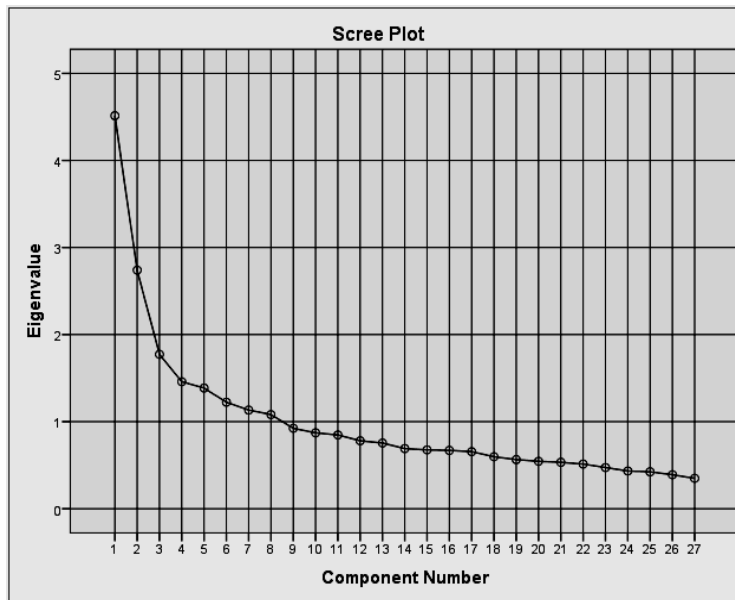
The EFA analysis based on PC analysis indicates 8 components. However, considering the poor fit of the model with 56.7% of variance being explained individual factor loading has been examined. Based on factor loading and relative coherence among the variables, the new set of latent variable are defined as shown.

		Question Numbers
Factor 1	Observance of Ethical Codes and Practices	7,8,9,10,11,12,14,15
Factor 2	Organisational Leaders as Role Model	16,17,18,20
Factor 3	Trust with the Organisation	21,22,23,24,26
Factor 4	Credibility / Foundation of Org Culture	2,4,5,13
Factor 5	Self- Centered	1,3,6,19,25,27

Figure 1: Assessment of present Organisation Culture of Armed Forces
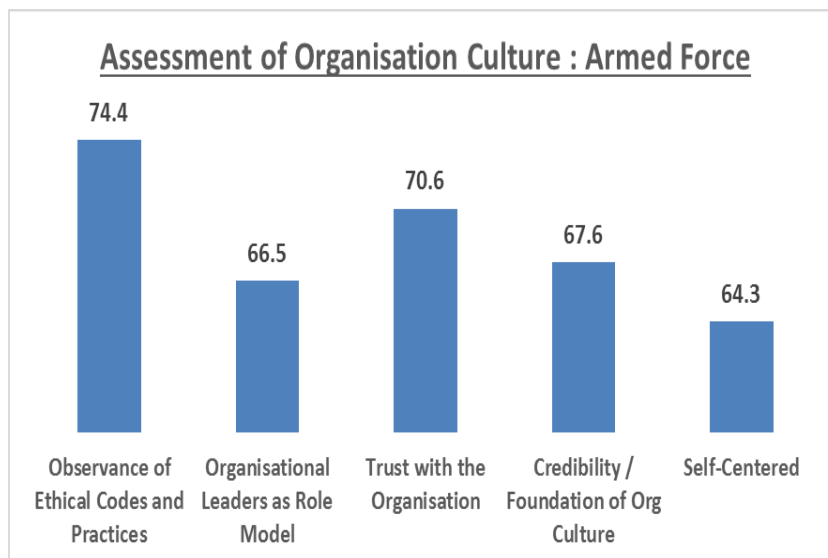
Summative scale for each factor attribute has been computed which reflects the overall value of that construct. The mean score is converted to a scale compatible with 100. Considering the Likert scale attributes, the summative score indicates the perception of officers on what they feel about the prevalent organisation culture. Based on the above, the overall summative scale is prepared as shown in Fig 3. The Armed Forces Ethics explains the nature of 'Honorable Service' both as an institution and as a profession. Observance of these codes

and ethical practices inspires and strengthens their shared identity as 'trustworthy ' professionals, drives 'Character development', and reinforces 'Trust' amongst its members and with the Indian people. Our present analysis reveals that it's rating is close to 75%. Having such a strong ethical practice, the organisation can mould all its employees including the Gen-Y to follow the time-tested practices. The leader as a role model is to infuse on an organization with value beyond the technical requirements of relationship is characterised by mutual respect and confidence. The study finds the present rating at 67%. This aspect is important considering that Gen-Y workforce, who don't believe in authoritative leadership; have to be motivated for Organisational goal. As an Institution, armed force continues to garner trust among its employees. Its rating of 70% may be considered as healthy. On the issue of 'Self-centred', a mix response is received. This attribute shows a wide variation in the response with mean value at 3.21 on a 5 point Likert Scale with sizeable respondents preferred to remain neutral. This indicates a healthy culture where people are less self-centred. That also speak loud about the ethos of Indian Air Force, 'People first – Mission Always' and Captain Vikram Batra's statement, "Either I will come back after hoisting the Tricolor, or I will come back wrapped in it", beautifully encompasses the true essence of the Indian Army!

Figure 2: Practices need to be eliminated to improve ethical climate

Leadership Dilemma:
Having identified a weak link (about 25% who have expressed concern on ethical standard), it is essential to identify the causative factors. We have carried out a text analysis of our open-ended questionnaire data to identify some of the factors. Word-cloud is designed through 'R' coding. On the question of 'What are the practices which you wish to eliminate to enhance the prevalent ethical climate?' varied responses were received as shown in Fig 4. The top 5 practices, which have to be minimised by way of training or strict policies may thus be summarised as below:

(a) **Sycophancy**
(b) **Zero-error syndrome**
(c) **Financial mismanagement**
(d) **Misuse of authority**
(e) **Misplaced loyalty syndrome**

Factors that influence Ethical /Unethical Decisions:
Inputs were collected from a sample size of 430 respondents across three Services to ascertain the reasons for such unethical decision and comments were sought about the factors that influence ethical /unethical decisions. The Text analysis of the suggestions bring out these key issues as shown in Figure 5. The study highlights the top five causes as summarised below:

(a) Personal gain / Greed
(b) Pressure from Seniors / Societal pressure
(c) Lack of professional knowledge / Fear of failure
(d) Ambition
(e) Systemic failure

Figure 3: Factors that cause unethical decision

Term Frequency - Wordcloud

There is a requirement of the Organisation to take note of these factors and initiate measures to overcome it. Close examination of the above data analysis reveals a tendency for a person to accept the values of his peers and superiors. This tendency, stemming from a respect for the talents of especially his superior as well as his authoritative position, should be acknowledged by every leader as a part of his power for good or evil. The larger the number of these subordinates, the greater is his power in this matter. And it is also natural for men to expect responsible action from someone with so much power. If a leader acts ethically, this is attributable to his own set of values and his ability to resist pressures and temptation while giving credit to his superiors & peers and relegating the ethical climate of the organization to a comparatively lesser degree of importance. This also highlights a very relevant question in that if such a person is 'inner-directed' or 'others-directed? Ambition, drive for success and

promotion related issues also seem to weigh on the consciousness of people as they decisions ethically or otherwise. It is interesting to note the comparatively lower ranking of financial need as a cause for unethical decision.

Variation of Responses among Different Groups:

Table 1: Chi-Square Tests: Personal code of conduct: variation across Rank

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	50.934[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	46.761	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.958	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	429		

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests: Ethical Climate variation across different Ranks

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	49.382[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	39.062	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.760	1	.000
N of Valid Cases 429			

It is essential also to identify whether the responses are homogeneous across the sample. Chi-Square test for homogeneity is carried out using SPSS software under two categories i.e. on the organization and on service seniority. When compared across Ranks, significant variation is observed only for a personal code of honour and ethical climate as shown in Table 1 and 2. No significant variation is seen across the Services as summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Variation across different groups in terms of major attribute

Attributes	When compared across	Pearson Chi-Square ('p' value): Asymp Sig. (2 sided)
Personal Code of Conduct	Services	0.917
Personal Code of Conduct	Seniority group	0.768
Superiors Behaviour	Ranks	0.311
Superiors Behaviour	Service	0.832
Superiors Behaviour	Seniority group	0.899
Attitude of Peers	Ranks	0.745
Attitude of Peers	Service	0.366
Attitude of Peers	Seniority group	0.791
Ethical Climate	Service	0.331
Ethical Climate	Seniority group	0.061
Financial Needs	Ranks	0.222
Financial Needs	Service	0.193
Financial Needs	Seniority group	0.720
Promotion Aspects	Ranks	0.405
Promotion Aspects	Service	0.162
Promotion Aspects	Seniority group	0.608

Respondents were asked to comment on how much importance is placed on the understanding of being professionally ethical while training. They were also asked to comment on how much emphasis does the Military lay on ethics, morals during training at various schools of instructions in the Armed Forces. It is seen from the responses, that majority of the respondents (approximately 78%) were of the view that it was inadequate, as depicted in Fig 6. Many were also of the view that there is certainly greater scope in the emphasis on Ethics education and Morals across all ranks (12%) and stressed that it needs a strong willful implementation. While some felt that, it was adequate they have also mentioned that monitoring at various

levels is essential. Some have suggested a more coherent approach backed by case studies is important in ethics education and training. Many, who have commented on the adequacy of the present training schedule, have stressed that teaching must also stress the importance of context and circumstances.

Figure 4: Training need for Ethics, Moral & Values

NEED FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION
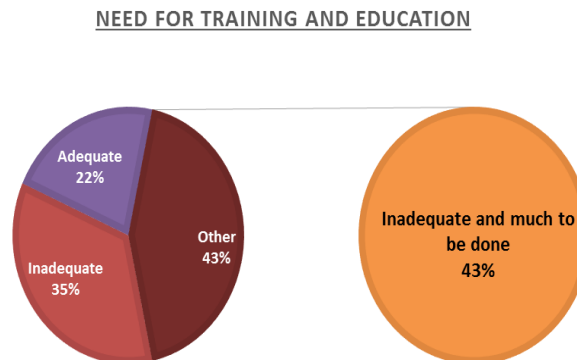
Warning Signs of Ethical Failures:
The views of the respondents about the warning signs of ethical failures in organizations were sought. The warning signs of impending ethical failure as discernible from a wide canvas of opinions can be briefly highlighted as:

(a) Demonstrated arrogance.
(b) Unpredictable changes in behaviour.
(c) Secretive and withdrawn.
(d) Questionable Decision – making.
(e) Disregard for rules.
(f) Selfish promotion oriented behaviour.
(g) Favouritism/ preferential treatment.
(h) Unwillingness to listen/accept advice.
(i) Disrespectful of others.
(j) Lack of honesty.

Lessons for Gen-Y Workforce:
The changing socio-economic environment has resulted in our society becoming more materialistic. It is threatening to take its toll, by gradually distancing the service ethos from its traditional values. The present study has observed a healthy organisation climate but an eroding leadership tendency. The warning signals of poor leadership and declining ethical standards in the era of Gen-Y workforce may slander the very essence of our great military heritage and our armed forces will have difficulty in maintaining its motto 'Duty, Honour, Country'. For a scenario like this, the solutions have to be found within. Internal dynamics need to be continuously adjusted to counter external influences.

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:

The present study carried out a cross-sectional survey of Armed forces to assess organisational culture and prevalent ethical climate. EFA was carried out to identify the prominent factors of prevalent organisation culture. The study reveals that personnel of armed forces are proud of the ethos & values of the system. Regimentation continues to be prevalent and personnel have shown faith in the organisation. Selfishness continues to remain the lowest priority. However, some personnel have expressed their concern about the quality of leaders. The study also identifies major factors, which forces its leaders to take un-ethical decisions. The organisation must notice the warning signals through an effective feedback system. Having identified this fault line, a cohesive strategy needs to be formulated to arrest the further decline of these core issues.

For the last two decades (Since 1999 Kargil war), Indian armed forces have focused on modernisation. Perhaps due to greater interaction with the external environment, and issues of macro-level strategy in nature, the aspect of military ethos has taken a back seat.

As the Armed forces are in themselves a microcosm of India, the rising education and awareness levels in

recruits is easily perceived. Rising unemployment, coupled with awareness drive through television and social media is attracting urban youths to join the Armed forces. The image of the soldier is fast changing from the stereotype of an innocent, less educated but dedicated and disciplined to a soldier who represents the typical middle class. The influence of civil society is fast encroaching into the value system of Armed forces. This change is synonym with the visible shift in the nature of India's economic activity. The issue is going to be more critical as the next generation workforce (Gen-Y) become part of this organisation. As the Armed forces shape itself for the future, it would do well to pay particular attention to arrest the erosion of value system and initiate urgent steps to restore the age-old system of regimental traditions and values, which is key to develop camaraderie and loyalty between the led and the leader.

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