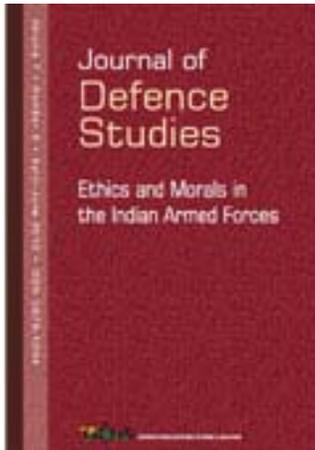


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Ethics and Military Leadership

S.R.R. Aiyengar*

'Ethics' derived from the Greek word 'Ethicos', means character or manners and guide actions thereby becoming a 'normative discipline'. Military Ethics applies to a specialized realm and has developed principles appropriate to it over time to help guide future operations. The armed forces must be always ethically led to uphold the defence of the nation and its national interests. Ethical leadership embodying the ideals of the profession of arms entails creating ethical command climates that set the conditions for positive outcomes and ethical behaviour. This article identifies commonly observed fault lines in the ethical conduct of a few members in the armed forces. Without being over-critical of ethical lapses in recent times, it suggests certain steps that could be emphasized to enhance the prevalent ethical climate.

*Yat-Yat acarati sresthas—tat-tad ev'e'taro janah
Sa yat pranam kurute—lokas tad anuvartate
(Whichever may be the way of life that a superior
adopts—that very one is by other people [followed].
What he makes his guiding principle,
the world too behaves even according to the same)¹*

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INTRODUCTION

The question of ethics is faced in all walks of life, raising hard, often insoluble questions about choosing the right path. This is probably one of the most difficult areas to define in almost any profession. Such normative judgements can never have universal application; additionally, they may be time specific. What may have been the right thing to do in one age or at a certain point of time may be totally wrong in another. Parties to the same concern may often, with a perfectly clear conscience, choose radically different paths. However, core values of any organization do not change with time or people. Core values are those that govern personal relationships, clarify who we are, articulate what we stand for, guide us how to teach, inform how to reward, guide us in making decisions; in other words, they are the essential tenets of an organization and are the practices we use (or should be using) everyday, in everything we do.

A significant dilemma emerges, despite the sincere wish to conform to ethical principles, when these principles are themselves felt to be contradictory and one is left to make a difficult choice, guided by one's conscience. Conscience is probably best described as a fallible moral judgement which, if acknowledged, produces actions and which, if ignored, merely produces guilt. An informed ethical conscience consistent with our value systems strengthens a leader to make the right choices when faced with tough issues. A leader of conscience does the 'right' thing because it is right—not because it is expected, or prescribed or easy. Ethics is ultimately about individual character as manifested in the decisions and actions of all who are considered leaders within the profession. Leadership is best understood as a matter of character that demands individual moral decisions. Its exercise can never be a mindless application of popular and simplistic formulas.

In the relentless quest for success, recognition and even fame in an increasingly consumerist competitive world, we all seem to have become obsessed with 'doing the thing right' rather than 'doing the right thing'. Intense competition to climb the 'pyramid', numerous environmental compulsions and the desire for quick results in the face of complex pressures have possibly resulted in the dilution or compromise of ethics, values and principles.² Media reports of various scams and financial/moral irregularities and human rights violations are but some indications of the broader decline of values and principles. One can also notice the general decline of values all over and its affect upon the moral fibre of our leaders. Ethics is a critical component of any organization's climate.

WHAT IS ETHICS?

In order to understand the nuances of ethics in the military environment, it would be best to have, clearly before us, the definition of the issues we are addressing. For this, four words whose definition was sought from the Oxford Dictionary included 'ethics', 'integrity', 'honesty' and 'moral'. The dictionary definitions are as under:

- Ethics: Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conduct of an activity.
- Integrity: The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.
- Honesty: Free of deceit and untruthfulness; sincere.
- Moral: Concerned with the principles of right and wrong behaviour.

It might be noticed that none of these four words mention 'legal', 'lawful', 'according to rules', etc. All four relate to a person's own principles, his respect for truth and his own innate judgement of his conduct which keeps him on the path of right behaviour. He is expected to do this regardless of what the law says, out of his own conviction and free of the pressure of either his peers or his superiors watching him and then pulling him up for wrongful behaviour. Ethics and integrity, therefore, have to come from within and cannot be superimposed. To help a person to behave ethically we have laws, codes of conduct, systems of checks and a standard of what is acceptable to society, but these by themselves cannot create morality, uprightness, honesty or ethical behaviour. That has to come from within the individual.³

ETHICS AND ITS MILITARY CONTEXT

The word 'ethics' owes its origin to the Greek roots 'ethicos', which has its basis on moral character. It is a philosophic discipline that primarily seeks to distinguish between what is morally good and bad, right and wrong. It is also associated with the Greek philosophers: Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. Closer home, the Bhagavad Gita propounds the concept of 'dharma', or 'righteousness' or doing one's duty. '*Satyam vada, Dharmam chara*' (speak the truth and practice dharma) is one of the important aphorisms enunciated by the ancient gurus of India. The entire discipline of ethics in Indian epics is built upon the concept of 'dharma'—denoting a mode of life or a code of conduct. One can also notice that scriptures of all faith/

religion equally stress the need for unison of *manasa*, *vacha* and *karmana* implying 'thought', 'words' and 'actions', respectively.

In contemporary times, ethics has come to assume two things. First, ethics refers to well-based standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness or specific virtues. Second, ethics refers to the study and development of one's principled standards. It is necessary to constantly examine one's standards to ensure that they are reasonable and well founded. It also implies a continuous effort of studying our own moral beliefs and our moral conduct, and striving to ensure that we, and the institutions we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly based. The duty to set the example for others falls to the greatest degree on the most respected and qualified members of the profession; in the armed forces, on us as officers. Professions create their own standards of performance and codes of ethics to maintain their effectiveness.

Making choices lies at the heart of ethics. As an organized discipline, ethics emphasizes systematically finding the best reasons for making particular choices or crafting particular policies. It can be thought of as a guide to using one's freedom to choose. Military ethics applies to a specialized realm and has developed principles appropriate to it over time to help guide future practices.⁴

Military ethics is a normative discipline and as such, it deals in values and how to choose among them. It does not aim to describe the world of human conduct as it is, but rather to prescribe how things ought to be, providing a road map for informing decisions and improving the reality of life. As an organized discipline, it acts as a guide to help distinguish between better and worse reasons behind a particular course of action and choosing the most reasonable path in the light of values we cherish. Military ethics is applied ethics in a leadership environment. There is nothing theoretical about it and its adequacy and legitimacy are in the individual's conscience. Leadership demands an ethical example and this is best summarized and exemplified in the well-known 'Chetwode' motto:

The safety, honour and welfare of the country comes first, always and every time.

The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next.

Your own ease, comfort and safety comes last, always and every time.⁵

These are hallowed words which reverently dictate what we as officers, as leaders, ought to be, can be and will be. They are our rallying points for they mould us in uniform as custodians of the nation's defence. It is the motto that drives every officer through a demanding career, through war and peace. Whilst some may fail its acid test, to the majority, it becomes a way of life, thus ensuring that India has one of the finest and most professional armed forces in the world. It is the spirit of this credo imbibed in every officer that binds him with his men in an unshakable bond of camaraderie.

Our way of life and our well-being in the armed forces depends upon the ability of leaders at all levels to inspire and lead, often under the most harrowing conditions and unimaginable levels of stress. How do we go about these duties is the important question that props us. The military ethos or its ethics has an important role to play here.

The military ethics is the collection of values, beliefs, ideals, principles and other moral-ethical knowledge held by the Services and embedded in its culture that inspires and regulates ethical individual and organizational behaviour in the application of military power in the defence of and service to the nation. The core of our profession is our ethic. Ethics has a special meaning to the profession of arms because it calls upon its members to make the unreserved supreme sacrifice of life at the bidding of a superior in the hierarchy. Hence, unless a man has firm faith in the ethical correctness of the superior's motives and conduct, he will lack conviction in his act and will avoid risks to his life and honour.

This institutional ethic is derived from the imperatives of military effectiveness and the values of society whom the armed forces serve. Further, the Services self-police such that leaders at all levels guard the integrity of the profession of arms inclusive of both its expertise and its ethics. They set standards for conduct and performance, teach those standards to others, establish systems that develop members to meet standards and take rapid action against those who fail to achieve the standards.

ATTRIBUTES OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Leadership is 'the process of influencing others in order to gain their willing consent in the ethical pursuit of missions'. Leadership does not derive from positional power or authority but from character. Leaders inspire others when they are recognized as ethical people who energize trust and commitment in the pursuit of missions by ethical means. Leaders embody the ideals of the profession of arms.⁶

Researchers in the field of applied psychology define ethical leadership as: 'Demonstration of appropriate conduct through personal actions and relationships and the promotion of such conduct to subordinates through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making'.⁷ Authentic, transformational and ethical leadership are at the heart of our military profession. Leaders at all levels set the ethical tone for subordinates in their units and establishments either by omission or commission and have a significant impact on how their subordinates act and perform. As an officer, be it be on a staff/instructional/command assignment, s/he must exhibit three important traits to create conditions for his/her unit or establishment to be successful. These are:

1. One must be cognizant of your part in preserving one's traditional role as guarantor of Service values. Leaders must articulate and communicate an ethical organizational vision. Leaders must hold people accountable and put ethics above short-term interests.
2. Act as ethical standard bearers, to model the ideal and to forge an atmosphere of trust and confidence. Trust has its roots in strong values and ethics that influence one's perception of situations and problems. Trust is a function of character and competence and both are vital.⁸
3. As teachers, to show subordinates how to do what is required and to encourage them to do so. Leaders must model appropriate behaviour and expectations. They must hold themselves to high ethical standards and strive for honesty, humility and integrity in their professional lives. Leaders must accept responsibility for their own ethical failings.

Communication of proper ethical standards is the foundation upon which leadership is built. While official policy may be clear and specific, if leaders by action indicate that ethical and moral behaviour is not important, then that perspective will prevail. Good leaders make it clear that there is no excuse for poor behaviour. Commitment to our highest aspirations, openness and self-correction are the essence of ethics in military leadership. Ethical leadership requires ethical leaders. If leaders are ethical, they can ensure that ethical practices are carried out throughout the organization. It will not be necessary to define ethical leadership in words only. Instead, it will be demonstrated by the leaders.

FAULT LINES IN ETHICAL CONDUCT AFFECTING MILITARY LEADERSHIP

The nature of the military system in itself is able to breed some of the ethical dilution visible presently. The primary reason is military structure, which is extremely pyramidal and highly bureaucratic. High ambition leads to a drive for success in which ethical sensitivity is bought off or sold because of the personal need to achieve success. Also, faced with the lack of self-esteem and an ethical crisis within, the military creates a superior image for itself, which is to be protected at all costs. Related to military ethics and moral values, the stated pressures manifest themselves as:

1. *Loyalty syndrome*: The problem arises when a genuine, wholesome loyalty to the boss degenerates into covering up for him, hiding things or not differing with him when he is wrong. Ambition is an aspect which inspires a great degree of pseudo-loyalty. Any hint of criticism, howsoever justified, is seen as a form of disloyalty. This breeds sycophancy. Sycophancy has been rightly called as the convenient path of least resistance. A less secure leader will need pseudo-loyalty—that is, fewer ideas that threaten him—and this pseudo-loyalty is sought through fear. Suppression of truth is thus guaranteed. We cannot and should not tolerate, by virtue of misplaced loyalty, unethical behaviour.
2. *Obsession with image*: Officers who have become consumed by success have often been corrupted by the idea of careerism. The quest for rank and power shatters their grasp of what is right. The military is acutely conscious of its image and, at times, goes to extreme limits to protect it. Unfortunately today, in the Services, we tend to manipulate or suppress information in the name of protecting the image of the unit, the formation and indeed the military itself. Whereas in the loyalty syndrome people are reluctant to tell the truth, with the image syndrome, they are not even interested in it. More emphasis is on 'DASH and FLASH'. We continue to hear of commanding officers (COs) hiding information, manipulating data and not giving truthful reports, all in the name of protecting the 'name and honour' of the organization.
3. *Drive for success*: An unhealthy drive for success at all costs is perhaps the biggest ethical challenge to the Indian military. Unfortunately, we also observe that in today's environment, career advancement seems to have taken precedence over professionalism in the true sense. Command assignments are viewed more as a

passport to sustain the drive towards personal career advancement. The unfortunate truth is that the balance tilts in favour of the careerist as against a genuine professional. The fallouts can be seen in sycophancy, one-upmanship, inhibition to an environment of dissent and free expression and the no-mistake or the 'zero-error' syndrome. There can be no more insidious and certain a path to the demolition of Service values than the patronage of sycophancy and the 'zero-error' syndrome.

4. *Authoritarianism versus personal example*: Leaders are often entrusted with significant formal power. The abuse of this power is authoritarianism and it is wrong. 'Serve by example' is a trait practised today by only a handful of officers. The senior ranks are guiltiest in this regard. Perks and privileges have outgrown the sense of duty. Senior officers overuse their privileges and blatantly violate the norms of propriety. There are also some seniors who have developed a yen for 'five-star' culture and ostentation, forgetting that luxury and materialism are an anathema to the profession of arms. Astounding perks, pampering and adulation are sometimes the best ways to describe the lifestyles of few of the so-called successful senior officers. A sense of entitlement and of having great power gives a feeling of being omnipotent, powerful and important, often skewing one's judgement.
5. *Majority have the feeling that unethical officers are making to higher ranks*: This view amongst officers cannot be wished away and this very impression, right or wrong, is a cause for concern. Such officers feel that promotion itself works and it provides vindication of the means employed. Can there still be ethical questions to ask? Promotion (symbol of success) is itself evidence of a virtue, they feel. Also, it has been a uniform experience in all armies of the world that during long spells of peace, it is invariably the 'self-seeking', hardworking and good in 'public relations' (PR) and pliable officers who forge ahead. There are, of course, many exemptions to this.
6. *Belief of ends justifying the means*: It should be an absolute rule among military people that ends do not justify the means. Not that means justify ends. Both ends and means must be consistent with our fundamental values. Honourable ends cannot be achieved by dishonourable means and nor do honourable means justify dishonourable or unethical ends. Under all circumstances, the end

can never justify the means, however expedient it may seem at the time.

7. *Selfish, promotion-oriented behaviour, disregard for principles... accomplishing the most trivial of missions with zero defects:* Under pressure to get ahead, such an individual is tempted to pursue advancement at the expense of others, to cut corners, to seek to win at all costs, to make things seem better than they are—to take advantage, in sum, of a myopic evaluation of performance. People will do what they are rewarded for doing. The quantification system of assessment that we follow is much more important and possibly much more visible than the quality and future consequences of the means by which ends are attained.
8. *Aberrations in private behaviour:* There is perhaps a perception prevalent amongst many that the private conduct (sexual, social) can function on a totally different plane from the public conduct or the functioning in professional fields. This kind of perception is against the very foundation of the military system, which places a profound stress on the ‘whole’ or complete man. There cannot be a lack of congruence between personal and professional standards, between a private man and public man in value terms, without devastating harm to one’s ability to perform professionally. It is good to remember that your life as leaders are so entwined with those of your subordinates that every action of yours is a mirror for others to emulate and thus, the crying need for consistent ethical and moral standards, both at work and at home.
9. *Miscellaneous disturbing trends:* To include, non-reporting of an accident or a failure, giving inflated Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs), fudging various training data like firing test and Battle Physical Efficiency Test (BPET) results, connivance in or knowledge of fudging or hiding facts by next superior commander. Every inaccurate or untrue report weakens the military structure, damages its efficiency and makes the system more susceptible to subsequent and even greater falsifications and inaccuracies.

ETHICS AND THE SENIOR OFFICER⁹

Being a senior officer/leader or an officer in senior ranks implies that he is at the pinnacle of hierarchy and wields considerable influence over his subordinates and the professional environment. Unlike command at junior levels, the senior officer is watched by an increasingly wider community, even

beyond the military, by the society at large. Hence, his conduct, character and personal integrity is subject to much larger span of observation. It is important for leaders, especially the more senior ones, to make sure that clear values guide everyone's behaviour in the organization. That is only likely to happen, of course, if the leader's behaviour sets an example of desired behaviour. If there is indifference or hypocrisy towards values at the highest levels, then it is fairly unlikely that principled behaviour will be considered important by others throughout the organization. One of the destructive effects of success is that the perpetrators know they are wrong as they are doing them, and they fully know that it can get them into trouble if caught. They also strongly believe that by virtue of their status, rank and position they have the power to conceal.

This is an area of special concern; especially as the tensions that would confront senior officers could turn out to be fertile grounds for ethical abuse. As one progresses, the higher the position or rank, the more complex and less precise are the issues, less subject to specific rules and simple solutions. Added to this fact is that officers in elevated positions are insulated from critical feedback. Nobody around these leaders is prepared to take the risk of confronting them about their bad conduct/behaviour or ethical lapses. These tensions will require of the senior leader, bedrock of ethical values. Some of the very specific issues that one would have to watch out for are:

1. *Use of authority*: Power is inherently a part of management and leadership. The issue is using it with intelligence and respect for others with some sense of moral direction. We are all aware that the authoritative structure of the profession of arms, even though essential, is the natural breeding ground for unethical use of authority. The higher a person goes, the easier it is to misuse his/her authority. The checks and balances that we were subjected to as junior officers become less evident and less compelling. One of the widespread and patently unethical uses of authority is the exploitation and degradation of subordinates. We have fostered the image of the successful leader as the one who doesn't get ulcers, but gives others ulcers; as the one who is hard, unfeeling and even vicious. The higher a person goes, the more important it is to be careful that the person's impact on the lives and careers and families of the subordinates is positive, healthy and not negative. As the Greek philosopher Socrates reminds us, 'The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavour to be what you desire to appear.' The crown of command should not be worn with arrogance, and while

rank has its privileges, remember infallibility and entitlements are not among them.¹⁰

2. *Rationalization of our indiscretions:* We tend to rationalize small personal indiscretions that we would never accept in a subordinate. Sometimes, we begin to believe that we are somehow above the law—they didn't have a person of our status and responsibility in mind when they wrote it, did they? We then divert funds, misappropriate them, etc. It has been generally observed that 'senior' officers do not get relieved for incompetence. They get fired for indiscretions, which is simply another way of saying that they have used their authority unethically. As the saying goes, 'The higher you go on the Flag pole, the more your rear end shows'.¹¹
3. *Financial management:* This has been, of late, an area of great concern, especially with the amount of money now available for operational purposes. The area of money management has always been fraught with great pressures and temptation. Where large sums of money are involved or business interests are brought to bear, there is a possibility of conflict between moral and ethical codes of the business world and those of military profession. Quite often, one may get involved in procurement functions, authorizing local purchase, purchases of 'Commercially Off the Shelf' (COTS) equipments, etc. All too often, the unsuspecting officer finds himself in the position of being trapped into receiving favours from persons with whom he is doing business before he realizes that they fully expect something in return. What to them is a legitimate business expense in promoting sales of their product can be a concealed form of bribery to the officer. This weakens his moral position of impartiality and objectivity in office.

In a study of ethics policy and practice, no point emerges more than the role of senior leadership in providing commitment, direction and example of ethical behaviour. Also, contrary to the popular notion, neither age nor rank invests in a senior officer with any 'Solomon-like' wisdom. They give him only the experience, which helps him to tide over many a crisis that might stump a younger man.

THE WAY FORWARD—ENHANCING THE ETHICAL CLIMATE

Ethical climate is the pervasive characteristic of our armed forces that affects how decisions are made. The health of the ethical climate is based on the

perception of the soldier or the led as to how the leadership does business, thereby constituting perception of right behaviour. Highest standards of ethical climate and conduct are essential to maintaining a healthy military service and to attracting and retaining the best and most talented of each new generation of entrants in the armed forces.

The only way forward is to first recognize the fact that ethics and values in the armed forces, in general, are being routinely compromised. The feeling of 'if you get away with it', then it does not matter if it is right or wrong and 'it pays to be a winner' is prevalent and may be even accepted. Sceptics may even say that there is no use of study of ethics and values as they carry little meaning in the 'heat of combat operations'. Nothing can be farther from the truth as it is only when you continuously reflect on good ethics and values, will you arrive at the correct decision in battle or under pressure.

Without being too critical of ourselves, but at the same time, to put into place measures, checks and balances that will ensure that the ethical code of conduct of the armed forces reflects what is best in the Indian culture for the armed forces, a few suggestions are hereby offered. These are only the reiteration of many of the things that we have all learnt in our life's journey in the Services.

Leaders at All Levels are Personally Committed, Credible and Willing to Take Action in the Values They Espouse

At all levels, those who lead need to realize what they are doing and accept responsibility for their actions. As it is remarked, 'the fish rots from the top first', the leaders must not only exemplify Service values in their words and deeds but they must also create the opportunity for everyone under their command to live them as well. Setting the example is a powerful leadership tool. The significance of a leader's position as a role model can't be overstated. Role models help in personifying the shared values and teach others to model the values. Ideally, for junior officers, the ideal role model should his CO. Akin to physical fitness, ethical combat fitness is a command responsibility, which is inextricably linked to operational effectiveness—we ignore it at our peril. It is important for the leaders at all levels to foster an ethical climate by making ethical expectations clear, discussing ethical concerns, dealing with ethical risks and ensuring a reprisal-free environment in their own area/zone of influence. As leaders, the responsibility is much more, for it is not merely about obeying the law

but doing the best to teach and inspire and lead others to live the values that we as leaders are pledged to protect and defend.

Model the Way—Leading from the Front

Personal example is the pinnacle of all leadership qualities. In fact, no aspect of leadership is more powerful than the leader's personal example. First, and the most important, is to set the example in terms of personal and professional conduct by demonstrating commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct, and also continue to make diligent efforts to live up to those standards. Communicate in no uncertain terms what your standards are and be sure they understand what you mean, and what you expect, and help them appreciate how that translates into day-to-day behaviour. One would only add here, 'if you want to act ethically, find an ethical boss'. Titles are as they are granted, but it is the behaviour and conduct that wins a leader respect. Seniors must model the way. As someone has rightly said, 'people may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do'. All leaders must live and breathe the ethic. Their ethical behaviour will be a guide to the led and will further be reflected in the unit as a whole.

Clearly, leading from the front is critical in the Army. Leading from the front presents different challenges at different levels. Leaders who lead from the front get critical information about what is happening on the front lines, set the example, provide clear direction to the organization, and build morale and the determination to win.

Transparency in Working

Information accountability will ensure a more responsive officialdom who have, over the years, been used to working in a culture of misplaced secrecy. It would certainly curb people adopting devious and questionable means to find out information which otherwise is not available. With growing demand and the introduction of Right to Information (RTI) Act, one is witnessing many welcome changes even in the armed forces. An important aspect which has been now recognized as an essential requirement is in ensuring probity, especially in matters related to defence procurement. It is essential to encourage transparency keeping in mind the demands of security, encourage candour by free and frank discussions and accept dissent, and not view it as a sign of disloyalty. It is good to remember that a reasoned debate is better than unspoken dissent. Fairness, transparency and consistency are the best ways of inspiring confidence, making coteries redundant and minimizing instances of perceived injustice.

Mentoring and Counselling

It is an enduring principle of the Army leadership that we mentor, coach and counsel subordinates. Senior leaders have a moral and ethical responsibility to develop subordinates while balancing both short and long-term needs of the Army. Grooming and mentoring is the primary task of every senior which is, unfortunately, shied away for some reason or the other.

Mentoring plays a big part in developing competent and ethically sound future leaders. It is not limited to 'high potentials' or a few favourites. Counselling is an interpersonal skill essential to effective mentoring. Effective counselling helps subordinates develop personally and professionally. Ethical leaders talk with and not to the soldiers. Regular, effective counselling is essential for ethical development, and responsibility for this problem must be equally shared by the institution, its leaders and subordinates. The second-in-command of a unit could be considered for being designated as 'Unit Ethics Counsellor/Coordinator'. Likewise, at the brigade and divisional levels, the deputy commander/deputy General Officer Commanding (GOC) could be entrusted with similar tasks. At the corps and command levels, the Chief of Staff (COS) should be assigned such tasks of overseeing and keeping a watch on the ethical climate prevailing in their respective areas of responsibility. Appropriate rank/appointment holders in other two Services could be identified for such oversight.

Walk the Talk

Another cliché that means the same thing is 'practice what you preach'. It is the opposite of being a hypocrite. It is, unfortunately, not uncommon to hear people in many organizations describing how they don't believe what they are being told, or how the 'management' says one thing and does another. The term 'walking the talk' has become an everyday phrase and with the theme of 'empowerment', people are being challenged more and more to 'model' what they say they believe. It also means to do as you say you would do, and to be consistent with your words and actions. Today, we all may have learnt how to 'talk' to one another with all the techniques that are given in the books, but if the words are not connected to deeper parts of ourselves, others will find it hard to believe in what we say. Sometimes, the greatest distance we have to travel is the distance from our mouths to our feet. Military professionals cannot afford to be ethically passive or lazy; they must be fully aware of what they are doing and always accept total responsibility for their actions.

Adopting Institutional Measures—Create the Right Environment by Affirming Shared Values

Systems and structures must be in place to support and reinforce its values. Ensure enforcement of ethical code by rewarding ethical behaviour and disciplining non-ethical conduct. We need to reward and acknowledge ethical behaviour and punish or penalize bad behaviour. These actions need to be seen and projected to all the led. This is a powerful way to send signals about desirable and undesirable behaviour. All espoused values must be well integrated in the organization's decision-making process. Also, we must remember that we cannot envision all of the circumstances requiring ethical decisions and choices by professional soldiers. It is, hence, essential to win trust, confidence and loyalty of increasingly discerning, aware and intelligent subordinates. The Services are a value-based organization that stresses the importance of the team over the individual. Values that emphasize only individual's self-interest are cold comfort in times of hardship and danger. Rather, we emphasize 'shared values', that is, the values that make an individual reach beyond self. The message is 'affirm shared values', for they encourage ethical behaviour and foster teamwork and esprit de corps. They also promote higher levels of loyalty and foster pride about the unit/establishment and the military itself. In short, they articulate and embody the purpose and values of the organization.

Assessment of Ethical Climate

In the Services, more than in any other organization, it is especially important for people to have confidence in the organization's ethical environment because much of what is necessary in war goes against the grain of the values individuals bring into the Services. Just because a leader sets a good ethical example does not mean subordinates will follow it. Some of them may feel that circumstances justify unethical behaviour. Therefore, leaders must constantly pay careful attention to the team's current ethical climate and take prompt action to correct any discrepancies between it and the highest standards. It would hence be very good to carry out an assessment of the ethical climate of a unit or establishment periodically by some structured methodology. Help could be sought to design one such assessment tool by the Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR). The assessment tool could include, among other things, identifying unit member's commitment to values, unit/workplace policies and practices, unit leader's actions and environmental/mission factors. Such a tool would

help in taking/identifying actions necessary to accomplish this vital leader function.

A Formal and Progressive Ethical Training

Pouring abstract ethical wine into practical military bottles requires no mean effort. The need to progressively stress these aspects as a person progresses in Service life would imply that we need to ensure that ethics and ethics training are as important as technical, tactical and physical proficiency. Ethics must be ingrained and integrated into all Service and joint training. Some effective methods of ethics-specific training include:

1. A building block approach wherein we need to start early and reinforce that training more frequently in an officer's career; ethics training must become an essential part of each Service's professional military education from initial entry training to general/flag officer education. Case studies and then analyses would help the officer to understand what is right and wrong.
2. Training that does not separate ethics from tactics. Every level of professional military education should receive an emphasis on education and training in moral and ethical issues.
3. Tactical decision games, discussion groups, vignettes, scenarios and simulations are effective tools available to leaders at all levels provided the leadership is effective in mediating and executing.
4. The emphasis should be on small groups with interactive and continuous communications versus power point-dominated training.
5. An 'Ethics Instructor Course' could be considered for introduction by Army Training Command at the Institute of National Integration, Pune. It is also learnt that some re-designation and relocation of this institution is being contemplated.

Some specific targeted approaches could be:

- Target senior leadership with the philosophical and academic discussions on military ethic.
- Target mid-level leadership about the value and understanding the military ethic.
- Target soldiers with recognizing and valuing the military ethics.

From the first moment of one's introduction to military life, whether in basic training or in academies/schools of instruction/colleges of higher

learning, we should never lose out the experience of a new climate that exalts and inculcates ethical propriety. At the same time, we must also keep in mind that personnel and rigours of battlefield turbulence attenuate training's usefulness over a period of time and that the quality and quantity of training must be sufficient to compensate.

It is said that old dogs cannot be taught new tricks. One does not like to admit it, but there may be some truth in it. Any attempt to change the ethos of the armed forces must involve actions at all the three levels of leadership, namely, the direct (tactical), directional and conceptual (strategic) levels. Senior officers would have to accept this gauntlet to set the process going (top-down approach). At the same time, a bottom-up approach would also need to be initiated to bring about changes in the officers at lower and middle levels. If we can synchronize these efforts, we would have made a great beginning to set things right. Training on how to deal with situations with an ethical dimension, and how to anticipate situations that involve ethical choices, can go a long way towards ethical institutional practices.

However, simply injecting another block of instruction on ethics as an 'easy fix' will not solve the problem. Rather ethics and ethical behaviour must be inculcated into military culture and incorporated as part of all training events. Ethics must be viewed as a way of life. An ethical foundation must be developed early among all military members from initial training onwards and must be reinforced by leader behaviour, both 'on' and 'off' duty. The development of moral character and military competence is inextricably intertwined not only in battlefield effectiveness, but also developmentally, through right understanding and living out of the Services' ethics.¹²

Screening before Intake

Service Selection Boards (SSB's) and recruiting organizations are expected to screen aspirants for their beliefs in the value systems of the armed forces. Those found wanting should not be selected. Our present systems at the SSB's need to be updated and modernized keeping in mind the present-day environment, especially when the civil society is showing signs of ethical laxity. At present, we have no system of any such tests for induction in the armed forces of personnel below officer's rank. The DIPR must undertake this exercise with the active involvement of the three Services in designing suitable tests and checks and balance to ensure that at the induction level itself, we are able to weed out undesirable elements. There is need to periodically assess if our selection instruments are achieving the

desired purpose, and suitable feedback reports must be sought from the concerned Services at some specified Service period. One such check could be instituted before a person is being considered for a command/sensitive assignment.

Professional Ethical Code—Beyond the Chetwode Motto

Beyond the ends of wartime efficacy and retention of public trust, the Army needs an institutional ethic to safeguard the Army profession. Scattered exhortations exist, but it would add strength to their application if they were founded in formality. Here, it is not the intention to question the relevance of the inspiring beacon of the Chetwode motto, but the concern often expressed is that the ethical standards taught to the cadets do not serve them well when they move into leadership positions in the 'real world' of the armed forces. When new officers leave their basic schools and training centres and enter the Army at large, they have major adjustments to make. A young warrior, as he can be rightly called, is loud, proud and motivated after his pre-commission training, and then becomes disillusioned on arrival at his unit. This situation could be caused by lax standards, poor unit work ethic and discipline, hypocrisy by leaders, too little hands-on training, and too little leader mentoring. Things are different, and radically so, in the larger world, where practice takes over from theory. Many hold the view that the Chetwode credo—though very reasonable and practical guide to professional behaviour, especially when you are in direct contact with troops—is an insufficient guide as it becomes less influencing as one moves away from face-to-face, where one-on-one mentoring, counselling and debriefing thrives, and there is two-way leader development counselling. In other words, it is all right but not enough.

It has been suggested that we should try to work out for ourselves a code of conduct that might help us to cope with our ethical problems—one which we would consider worthy of adoption by the entire officer cadre. Professional military ethic must be functional, that is, it must accommodate the features necessary for effective performance in battle. Just as obviously, the ethic must be legal, that is, it must conform to all established laws. And perhaps less obviously, but no less important, the ethic must be culturally and politically acceptable, that is, it must conform to the dictates of our national values. The product thus formed is a complex pattern of normative practices expressible in terms of principles. It should be inspirational, philosophically defensible, persuasive and an exhortation to better behaviour, rather than a list of offenses. So, for an expression of our

ethic to be functional, it must also be fairly comprehensive. In a profession as diverse as ours (that is, ranging from young, minimally educated enlisted personnel to highly educated senior officers), this is no small challenge. Ideally, the code should supply 'moral direction' to know what is right and inspire moral commitment in advance to motivate members to act in accordance with their knowledge.

A 'perfect code' may be misleading for, in real life, it may turn out to be different. What is important is that the code must allow each person to address personally important issues at a particular moment in their life. The code represents a journey of personal reflection, a journey necessary for skillful, ethical decision-making. We must acknowledge here that many times, the real world issues are tough to describe accurately let alone address successfully. The best we can do is to do our best.

Spiritual Influence/Fitness—A Key Component

Spirituality is a discipline that has been generally mistaken for religion. Spirituality represents the essence of religion. While religion has rituals, spirituality focuses on principles, values and ethics, passions, meaning, clarity, direction, authenticity, purpose and presence. These aspects are enhanced when leaders tap into their deeper selves.

The necessity of spiritual support for personnel in crisis has been recognized not only in the armed forces but also by civilian law enforcement and disaster relief personnel. Spiritual fitness in the armed forces means the ability of the individual to believe in the importance, necessity and just nature of the mission; to have faith in the reliability of leaders; in the dependability of his fellow comrades; in the training and equipment furnished for the operation; and to be prepared to encounter and cope with extreme danger, devastation and even death with confidence, dedication and courage.¹³

Spiritual fitness transcends moral fitness because it prepares the individual to deal with ultimate questions such as the meaning of life and not merely questions of proper behaviour. Spiritual strength for many is supported by their religious convictions; for others who may not be religious, it may be an expression of their loyalty to the nation, to the unit, and to the fellow comrades. Spiritual strength is an inspirational trait which can motivate a unit even when circumstances are bleak. There is an aspect of courage which comes from a deep spiritual faith which when prevalent in a unit, can result in uncommon toughness and tenacity in combat. We must be diligent in strengthening the moral and spiritual

fitness of our personnel. Spiritual fitness reinforces such values as respect for others, loyalty and selfless service.

Practice of Meditation

As a suggestion at an individual level, the practising of meditation as means of self-introspection is being recommended. We are all aware that there are many schools of meditation, but all of them help a person take that inward journey to look within himself. Meditation trains our mind to regulate itself, leads us beyond the outer activity into the inner silence of our hearts, where we find ourselves connected to our divine essence or by whatever name you may like to call it.

The regulated mind and connection with our inner self develops in us a balanced state which is unaffected by the ups and downs of everyday life. Our natural capacity for wisdom and right action begins to manifest, allowing us to prioritize the conflicting demands of life. Sustained practice of meditation develops a constant balanced state, a deep sense of connection with our inner selves and a lasting direction and meaning to our lives.¹⁴

More and more people around the globe are turning to meditation, realizing that in order to reach full potential as complete, balanced human beings, the inner spiritual longings must be addressed along with the material demands of daily life. It helps to detach yourself from useless aspects, from superfluous things, diverting yourself from the harshness of certain images, of sounds increasingly louder in terms of decibels, and contributing to the refining of your perceptions. By practice of meditation, you improve inner poise and get transformed little by little. You develop a sense of detachment and reflective intelligence and thus are able to control, modify and overcome the force of one's gregarious instincts and frenzied individualism throwing up the best and worst in you. There is no spiritual search without a re-appraisal and intensive work on oneself.

It is for consideration that along with Yoga which is being encouraged in the academies, some exposure to 'meditation' techniques could be institutionalized. Some recent workshops conducted under the aegis of Army Training Command (ARTRAC) at the Officers Training Academy (OTA), National Defence Academy (NDA) and Indian Military Academy (IMA) have been very well received by the cadets.

CONCLUSION

Our armed forces are framed by our preparedness to bear personal and collective risk, and by our resolve to apply force wherever and whenever it

is necessary. For the armed forces to fulfil this mission, it is essential that we are operationally capable; it is also crucial that we are ethically dependable. Leadership in the armed forces is based upon the premise that for the armed forces to contribute to the defence of our country and its national interests, it is necessary not only to maintain an operationally capable force but also an ethically dependable force: one which abides both by the letter and by the spirit of the laws of armed conflict. For the armed forces to be ethically dependable in this way, they must be ethically led at all levels.

Leaders inspire others when they are recognized as ethical people who energize trust and commitment in the pursuit of missions by ethical means. Leaders embody the ideals of the profession of arms. Leadership amplifies command. Leaders bring strength of character to command positions. Leaders model professional ideals, reinforce services values and enrich positions of command with moral insight. Ethical leadership entails creating ethical command climates that set the conditions for positive outcomes and ethical behaviour.¹⁵

Most men are inherently neither good nor evil. Each has within himself the capacity for actions that are admirable or reprehensible. What brings out the best or worst in us is often the organizational climate in which we find ourselves. In the armed forces, there are units/establishments which, at particular times and under particular commanders, come close to living up to the ideal standards to which we aspire. There are others which fall lamentably short. Remember, you have more control over the professional environment than you may realize. A sense of moral resilience is what all leaders need in order to address the pressing challenges that we face now and in the years ahead.

No one could possibly argue that adherence to ethical standards, and the responsibility to leaven the officer corps in terms of its ethical norms, is free of risk, or even easy. It is just essential. It is as simple as that. Doing what is right yourself, teaching what is right to your troops and encouraging all others with whom you come in contact (including peers and seniors) to do what is right—that is what we are training officers to do, what the services needs them to do and what the nation relies on them to do. On this, all else depends. Ethics are never dispensable as they form an integral part of human survival. Standing firm ethically can exact a cost, perhaps a steep one. As professionals, we must be willing to pay it.

NOTES

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