



# ETHICS AND VALUES IN MILITARY LEADERSHIP

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*To educate a man in mind and not morals is to educate a menace to society.*

—Theodore Roosevelt

In our relentless quest for success, recognition and even fame in an increasingly consumerist competitive world, the military also seems to have become obsessed with “Doing a 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 ethics, values and principles falling by the wayside. Media reports of stage-managed encounters and killing of terrorists and senior leaders looking toward civil courts for resolving promotion issues in India, human rights violations of prisoners by US military leaders, the tail-hook scandal, etc. are but indications of the broader decline from the proverbial tradition of an officer being a gentleman first who would lay down his life for a cause and principle.

Over the last decade or more, we have been reading extensively about ethics and values in corporate governance (Infosys and Tatas are now household names!) rather than about military honour and integrity. We need to clearly reestablish our lead not only in good governance, but, more important, in ethics-based leadership in the armed forces. During the earlier days of the Indian Air Force, nobody really talked about values and ethics because it was ingrained in

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almost every action that was done or every word that was written or spoken, from the very beginning. Today, the time has come to start laying the foundation of ethical and value-based leadership once again or we run the danger of having the very structure of our house destroyed. Before proceeding further, we need to ask ourselves two basic questions and answer them as honestly as we can.

- Are we facing a crisis of leadership, not in terms of performance and results, but in terms of ethics and values?
- If we are genuinely concerned, what is the way forward? Is there a need to widely institutionalise the teaching of values and ethics in military institutions of learning?

The bottom line, of course, is to first recognise the need for ethical and value-based military leadership and to reaffirm its importance in projecting the armed forces as an instrument of credible national power. Only then can we shake off the cocooned feeling that all is right and start reflecting at all levels on what needs to be done to restore the pride, élan and impeccable pedigree of the armed forces.

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#### CORE DEFINITION OF ETHICS AND VALUES

There is no better place to start than at the core definition of ethics and values. Ethics as defined by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* is “the science of morals,” “moral principles” and “rules of conduct.” It relates to what is honourable or the morally correct or the study of both right and wrong. Some questions that immediately spring up when one looks at the bare definition are: Where do these morals come from? What is their pedigree and can we use them as a template for both our professional and personal conduct at all times? Only when these questions are answered convincingly will a military leader apply them to all facets of his leadership, be it during peace or war. The word ethics owes its origin to the great Greek philosophers, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, and is a literal

translation of the word ethos that means habitual or customary conduct. To Aristotle<sup>1</sup>, ethics meant the study of excellence in the virtues of character. Closer home, the *Bhagvad Gita* propounded the concept of *Dharma* or 'righteousness' or doing one's duty, be it in peace or on the battlefield.<sup>2</sup> With the advent of Christianity, the moral aspects of what the Church considered right or wrong crept into military ethics. The Chinese have also contributed in full measure in the area of what military leaders should and should not do, through the teachings of Confucius and Sun Tzu. From all these philosophical musings and moral codes laid down by new and established religions and philosophers emerged a set of **rules of conduct** that were **honourable**. If one looks at the two phrases emphasised, in ancient times these were applicable only in two main activities viz. sports and warfare. These Rules of Conduct and Honour Code have stood the test of time and have formed the foundation for the emergence of a number of value systems. Truth, justice, equality, integrity and courage are amongst key examples of military ethics.

**Ethics are a broad, strong and inviolable framework that comprises a few rules of military and personal conduct in which you fit in values that are need and situation-based, as spelt out from time to time by the top leadership.**

What then are values? Falling back again on the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, it means one's principles or standards; one's judgment of what is valuable or important in life. It relates to attaching significance or regarding highly. If one looks at the definition, what emerges clearly is the fact that values are personal benchmarks that are greatly influenced by parents, teachers, mentors, peers, superiors and, of course, the '**environment**'. Mark the word environment because today, the environment, more than anything else, has become the scapegoat for decaying values. If one were to explain very simply to young military officers and men, one could say that ethics are a broad, strong and inviolable framework that comprises a few rules of military and personal

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1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1985).

2. Gen (Retd) Shankar Roy Chowdhary, *Culture and Military Ethics* (Ramakrishna Math-Vedanta Kesari).

conduct in which you fit in values that are need and situation-based, as spell out from time to time by the top leadership. Integrity comes from a Latin word that means entire and whole. In relation to professional conduct, we define integrity as “uncompromised values”, i.e. professionalism is behaviour aligned with uncompromised values. To be consistently professionally effective requires balancing passion, vision, and action with integrity and aligning these elements at each step along the way. Integrity, according to many purists, is the only way out and encompasses all known ingredients of leadership. In short, integrity is uncompromising and dictated neither by environmental, nor by organisational compulsions.

#### **HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND DECAY OF MILITARY ETHICS AND VALUES**

Images of the great warrior Arjun being given a treatise on morals, ethics and values on the battlefield by Lord Krishna are vivid in every Indian mind. Should he decimate the revered teachers who had taught him every skill they knew, or the warrior cousins he had grown up with? That was when Lord Krishna stepped in with his Divine justification of *Dharma Yudha* or Righteous War: a war he urged Arjun to fight with a clear conscience because it was the right thing to do.<sup>3</sup> Homer's heroes from the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* fought each other at Troy over a moral violation of ethics. Battlefield ethics of fighting equals and returning the bodies of slain warriors indicated the existence of an honour code.<sup>4</sup> The Roman Empire fell because of a progressive decay in morals and ethics that blinded successive emperors from differentiating between what was right and wrong. They ordered the military to plunder, destroy and rape; and the military blindly obeyed till the rage of the common man pulled the empire down. Renewed multiple pressures on medieval military leadership led to the subjugation of classical military ethics and universal values like honour, integrity, courage and honesty to the spread of religion. The Industrial Revolution and its fallout of colonisation did have its share of unscrupulous and

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3. Ibid.

4. Aristotle, n. 1.

unethical conquests of natives, but, at the same time, it laid the foundation for the emergence of a worldwide similarity in military leadership as practised by the British and the French. Ethics and values as practised by British stalwarts like the Duke of Wellington who once said, "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing field of Eton," indicated that good military leadership could not be acquired in a matter of days or weeks but accrued from years of value-based grooming and learning.

While military ethics have remained almost static for thousands of years, military values have undergone many transformations. Historically, military leaders have always struggled to cope with political or nationalist directives and modern military values owe their origin to the emergence of the nation state and the rapid proliferation of military technology. World War II saw the success of generals like Rommel and Slim who occupied the moral and ethical high ground and yet won. Rommel always struggled to come to terms with Nazi Germany and yet managed to carve out an exemplary niche for himself amidst the moral degradation that was to ultimately cause the collapse of Nazi Germany. It also saw the emergence of politically savvy generals like Eisenhower who were operationally sound and yet malleable and flexible. Then came Korea and Vietnam wherein a nation's military leadership had to succumb to political manipulation.

The aftermath of the Vietnam War saw a complete reappraisal of military leadership in the US armed forces. A grassroots drive was initiated to restore the faith of a nation in its military leadership and of the men in uniform in their leaders. Closer home, General Thimayya's resistance to the "forward policy" and Defence Minister Krishna Menon's highhanded treatment of senior military officers was based on the need to preserve the honour of the armed forces. It is another matter, however, that the ill-fated Menon policy was ultimately implemented, leading to the 1962 China debacle which brought into focus the need to reinforce ethics and values in the Indian Army that were severely compromised during the conflict. Field Marshal Manekshaw, Air Chief Marshal P. C. Lal and others epitomised all that was best in military ethics. To a large extent, the success of the Coalition forces during "Operation Desert Storm" was

due to focussed, ethical and value-based military leadership as displayed by both General Shwarzkopf and General Horner. The same cannot be said of the recent war in Iraq where the media has exposed the blatant aberrations in military values and ethics by the US and British officers and soldiers in the absence of any strong value-based leadership.<sup>5</sup> History is replete with examples of both upholding what are the best in military ethics and values and what are the worst. It is for practitioners of this profession to dig into history and make a choice.

#### **PRESSURE ON MILITARY LEADERSHIP**

The changing nature of warfare, rapid socio-economic changes and expansion of national interests well beyond geographical boundaries have placed fresh challenges on military leadership. Terrorism, insurgencies and ethnic warfare have seen the most brutal and horrifying excesses in Bosnia, Chechnya and Rwanda. The proliferation of democracy has also placed fresh demands on military leadership in terms of compliance and taking orders from political masters. Materialism and economic progress have exerted their own pressures on the moderately paid

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practitioners of the military profession. Intense media scrutiny has also resulted in many leadership aberrations being made public, forcing the military leadership to increasingly look inwards and focus on ethics and values. The pyramidal structure in the armed forces has always existed; competition has always been intense and soldiers in the past have retired or exited from service gracefully and with minimum fuss. This was mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, there was very little transparency in the assessment and promotion system; and, secondly, the Honour Code was so strongly ingrained in officers that aberrations were kept in-house to preserve the *Izzat* of the defence Services and

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5. Human Rights Watch Report 2004, "The Road to Abu Ghraib."

not wash dirty linen in public. Today, things are completely different. Military leaders do not want to retire young because of economic and resettlement uncertainties. There is, at times, an intense desire in many leaders, whose ambition far exceeds their ability, to rise in rank by 'hook or by crook'. In this race up the ladder, ethics, values and principles are the first casualties. Increasing transparency now comes into play and leaders who feel they have been denied a rightful place in the sun have started taking the legal route to redress their grievances, bringing issues of fairplay, ethics and values into the public limelight. Equally troublesome are perplexing questions faced by commanders in anti-terrorist internal security (IS) and counter-insurgency (CI) duties where the divide between right and wrong is wafer thin. How does one adhere to the principles of *Jus ad Bellum*, that lays down what constitutes a just cause for a decision to wage war, and *Jus in Bello*, that decides who should be immune from direct and intentional attacks in war? When targeting enemy military forces, how should officers and soldiers weigh force protection against civilian casualties?<sup>6</sup> How do you teach your men and officers to retain their sense of balance in the face of brutal, unscrupulous and fanatic insurgents and terrorists who exploit the land and local people to their advantage, even using them as human shields? With rapidly changing social norms and increasing permissiveness in society, marital discord and extra-marital liaisons amongst men and women in uniform is on the increase. How do military leaders cope with such changes? AIDS is another challenge in our search for a new set of ethics and values for the military. How do we as military leaders cope with these problems and instil in our officers and men a set of ethics that are constant and values that combine progressive thought and conservative tradition with

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6. Dr David L Perry, *Strategic Leadership Course*, (US Army War College, 2005).

the aim of making the military leader stand out in comparison to business and political leaders as guardians of a free and progressive democracy?

### DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON VALUES AND ETHICS

The aftermath of the Vietnam War and the public outcry against declining morals, values and ethics forced the US armed forces to look inward and institutionalise the ethics and values that were expected of men and women in uniform. In the mid-Nineties, the US Army formally listed its seven values<sup>7</sup> as:

- Loyalty.
- Duty.
- Respect.
- Selfless Service.
- Honour.
- Integrity.
- Personal Courage.
- Character.

The US Air Force (USAF) concised it to just three core values<sup>8</sup> viz.

- Integrity First.
- Service Before Self.
- Excellence in All We Do.

Some of the issues that merit close attention and are universally relevant are discussed below. These traits have been particularly singled out as they are perceived to be important in the context of the Indian armed forces too.

(a) **Loyalty.** Loyalty should not be confused with blind obedience to illegal or unethical orders. Leaders must follow their conscience when giving orders and subordinates must exercise their judgment when the orders are unethical and violate the laid down values. As long as leaders and subordinates

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7. *Seven Army Values-US Army Field Manual 22-100.*

8. *USAF, Little Blue Book.*



understand that loyalty is first to the organisation, its values and principles, and not to the individual, the dividing line between loyalty and sycophancy would be clearly defined.

- (b) **Respect.** A good leader must always respect individuals, whether senior or junior. He must honour their status, value their opinion and accept inputs humbly for whatever they are worth. Individuality and self-esteem must be respected, as that will foster mutual respect, something that is imperative for value-based teamwork. It is common to confuse between respect and subservience. While respect is an affirmation of mutual or one-sided affirmation of professional capability or personal standards, subservience is 'blind respect' that is based on fear, greed and ambition.
- (c) **Integrity.** Integrity of thought and action is central to good military leadership. A person of integrity does not change moral principles when they become unpopular or inconvenient. Broadly speaking, it means adherence to moral and ethical standards. Integrity is all encompassing and includes both moral and physical courage, honesty, propriety, accountability and justice. A look at the USAF values indicates that excellence is important but it is at number three on the list. What can be deduced from it? It is a realisation that if one concentrates on the means and the methods, keeping the good of the organisation or your immediate environment in mind, the excellence will automatically follow. The Honour Code is said to have been very evident in a recent exercise with the USAF, especially during debriefs where violations were admitted honestly by USAF pilots right in the beginning without waiting for others to point them out.

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The basic worry in the United States today relates to how they can retain their global supremacy without undermining their moral foundations. In her review of Martin L. Cook's book *The Moral Warriors: Ethics and Service in the US Military*, Shanon E. French zeroes in on the

issue of military advice to political leaders/policy-makers and advocates non-partisan advice based on ethics and sound judgment. An interesting aspect though is the author's opinion of what a military leader should do if he disagrees with the execution order of a military mission that has specific political clearance. The right option considered is resignation and not defiance or disobedience as it would reflect 'maturity of judgment' and this was exactly what General Thimayya almost did when faced with unpalatable higher directives.

#### CHINESE MODEL

The simplest articulation of ethics and values for the military can be traced back to the early day of Mao and the Long March. In its early days, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) formulated its three Main Rules of Discipline and Eight Points for Attention that laid down ethical rules of conduct for its personnel.<sup>9</sup> It reflected a grassroots approach and has stood the test of time. Some of the prominent ones are:

- Do not take a single piece of thread from the masses.
- Speak politely.
- Pay fairly for what you buy.
- Return everything you borrow.
- Pay for anything you damage.
- Do not hit or swear at people.
- Do not damage crops.

#### EROSION OF ETHICS AND VALUES

While we have a tradition of customs of the Service, and the attributes of leadership do focus on values, ethics and value systems in the Indian armed forces have never been institutionalised. We have rather relied on tradition

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9. Chinese White Paper on Defence, People's Republic of China (PRC) State Council Information Office, December 2004.

and hand-me-downs to inculcate ethics and values in our officers and troops. The armed forces have lived and operated in isolation all these years, admired from a distance by both the common people and the political establishment. Ethical misdemeanours were more often than not viewed as mere aberrations and not systemic faults, and swept under the carpet after symbolic courts of enquiries or even court martials. Institutional concern was not very apparent as the overall quality of military leadership was considered to be very high and comparable to the best in the world. Things started changing in the Nineties because of both geopolitical and environmental changes. The major factors that have accelerated the erosion of ethics and values in the Indian armed forces are:

- Rapid economic growth and growing disparity in incomes between the military and other professions.
- Increased involvement of the armed forces in internal security duties without adequate institutionalised sensitisation.
- Increased involvement in anti-terrorist operations and the associated dilemmas of force protection vs non-combatant immunity, collateral damage and civilian casualties.
- Enhanced civil-military-para military liaison and increase in the exposure of men in uniform to various forms of corruption.
- Poor resettlement opportunities for officers and men who superannuate early in life.
- Changed priorities of the younger generation and absence of enough 'role models', coupled with reluctance on the part of senior officers to assume serious mentoring roles.
- Lack of any serious institutionalised training in ethics and value-based leadership for officers and men.
- Intense media scrutiny of matters relating to the military.
- Closed assessment system and absence of a fair in-house redressal system that forces military personnel to go to court and tarnish the self-image of the armed forces.
- Changing morality of personal relationships in society.

### THE WAY FORWARD

The only way forward is to first recognise 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 was right or wrong and it “pays to be a winner” is widely prevalent and accepted. The next step is to adopt a bottom-up approach in inculcating ethics and values in both officers and other ranks. Presently, there is no institutionalised sensitisation to the importance of ethics and values in good military leadership. Along with military history, why cannot we introduce ethics and values in the curriculum at the National Defence Academy (NDA) and the Air Force Academy as part of a character building and training programme? Why can't we include the study of ethics and values from an even younger age at our Sainik schools and institutions like RIMC? We have also seen a top-down approach in which senior officers articulate their views and concerns on values, ethics and leadership and expect the younger generation to accept them without understanding or being convinced about the 'payoffs' of ethical and value-based leadership. Instead, why don't we start at the very bottom of the pyramid? Do we really think that a few leadership capsules conducted by institutions like the College of Defence Management and the CLABS (Centre for Leadership and Behavioural Studies) at the College of Air Warfare are likely to inculcate good leadership skills? Indeed, it is a good beginning, but it should be accompanied by a grassroots drive to inculcate the ability to differentiate right from wrong.

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and shared periodically along with the action taken by the three Services so that the point is driven home that no compromise is acceptable as far as ethics and values are concerned. A reduction in the involvement of the armed forces in internal security duties is an inescapable imperative. This would make it easier to adhere to core values and ethics of the military profession and insulate the various rungs of military leadership from the risks, temptations and pressures associated with internal security duties. Resettlement and parallel absorption in the public and private sectors of retired officers and men, or veterans as they are now called, is vital in keeping relatively young military leaders secure about their future. Compromising ethics and moral values in order to secure an uncertain future is one troubling issue that needs to be addressed on priority. Mentoring in the armed forces is becoming a lost art that has to be revived if we are to pass on ethics, values and traditions to the younger generation. Many middle ranking and senior officers are, at times, so busy furthering their own careers that they see little value in investing time and intellect on the younger generation, who in turn are getting used to 'quick fix' solutions and increasingly reluctant to take the difficult path of doing the 'right thing'.

Sceptics may say that there is no use for 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. **So, the Mantra should be to catch them young and inculcate in them the ability to quickly differentiate between right and wrong so that when the going gets tough, a military leader seldom takes the easy way out.**

#### VALUES FOR THE MODERN MILITARY LEADER

Moral values and ethics can be enforced by law or ensured by creating an environment of fear, the likes of which existed behind the Iron Curtain. Sadly, these methods have never stood the test of time and crumble in the face of adversity or 'when no one is looking'. Personal conviction<sup>10</sup> is the only way to ensure the

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10. Maj Gen Jerry E. White, "Personal Ethics vs Professional Ethics," *Air Power Journal*, Summer 1996, pp. 30-34.

sustenance of any framework that exists for ethical conduct in the armed forces. As alluded to earlier, it is important to clearly establish an ethical framework for our men and officers that helps them distinguish right from wrong from a very early stage of their military careers. These can be termed as Core Ethics and could include inviolable attributes like **Integrity, Honesty, Responsibility, Accountability, Justice, Trust and Courage**. It is not enough to articulate these in a document or doctrine or a White Paper, but actually to go down to the nurseries of military education and teach our young cadets and officers with examples from history and relate these to their present lives. Having established a basic framework, it is for the leadership to spell out the values that fit into the framework, and these values would form the building blocks of a strong and enduring organisation. Leadership has three components, viz, technical expertise, institutional authority, and moral authority. Technical expertise is the ability, skill and knowledge necessary to do what must be done to accomplish the desired objective. Institutional authority is derived from the position in the organisation occupied by the individual. Moral authority is knowledge of, and concern for, what is best for the institution and those who follow you. Some of the values that may be considered are age old ones, and some have emerged as a result of our changing times. A sample of these attributes is given below. These values should be able to guide and motivate our military leaders to realise both organisational and personal goals.

**It is important to clearly establish an ethical framework for our men and officers that helps them distinguish right from wrong from a very early stage of their military careers.**

- Professional Excellence.
- Self-Confidence.
- Flexibility of Thought and Action.
- Decision-Making Ability.
- Technology Orientation.
- Intellectual Ability.
- Multi-skilling Ability.

## **ETHICAL AND VALUE IMPERATIVES FOR SENIOR MILITARY LEADERSHIP**

To avoid unnecessary clutter, it is also important to lay down certain imperatives for the senior military leadership as the consequences of their actions can be far-reaching. The additional burden of command makes senior military leaders the cynosure of not only the eyes of the men they lead, but the eyes of millions of their countrymen, thanks to the increasingly transparent and even prying media. Let us acknowledge that the pressures on them are tremendous. Apart from diverse, invisible and often unscrupulous opponents in battle, they also have to cope with the chronic stress of modern day living that permeates from their own personal lives to the lives of the men under their command as well as their families. The highly regimented, rule bound, fast moving and competitive work environment may lead to feelings of alienation, inadequacy, powerlessness and worry about basic survival in the rat race. In such a situation, unless a leader is equipped with all the basic core values and ethics and reinforced with years of experience and wisdom, the chances of taking unethical or wrong decisions are very high. This was clearly evident in the recent cases of prisoner abuse at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib where senior Coalition leaders are said to have tacitly approved of the debasing torture of legitimate prisoners of war (POWs).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, other than the core values and ethics, what are the imperatives for the senior military leadership?

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- **Credibility and Trust.** Credibility and trust go hand in hand. Spell out to your subordinates clearly what you expect of them. Share your vision with them and live your values as you preach them.<sup>12</sup> Do that and you will win their trust and their efforts. The maxim of practise what you preach and only

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11. n. 5.

12. Jack Ward Thomas, Chief USDA Forest Service, Society of American Foresters Convention, Portland Maine, November 1995.

preach what you can practise is so very important to win the trust and loyalty of increasingly discerning, aware and intelligent subordinates.

- **Control of the Environment.** Control of the environment is important to do the right thing. Let the environment control you and you will fall prey to the pressure it exerts on you. This is only possible if a military leader is professionally sound, politically aware and environmentally sensitive. This would ensure a proactive approach towards ensuring a harmonious politico-military relationship and ensuring that the prestige and honour of the armed forces is maintained at a time when the bureaucracy, police and para-military forces are increasingly growing assertive.
- **Risk vs Ethics and Duty vs Conscience Dilemmas.** Understanding the Risk vs Ethics and Duty vs Conscience Dilemmas is very important for military leaders at all levels. Service in the armed forces is risky. Risk takers are more prone to making mistakes and getting into trouble. If you crucify honest mistakes, it will lead to a loss of values like initiative and courage. So you need to institute measures to educate these risk takers on the moral and ethical dimensions of their actions so that an element of caution creeps into the risk, making it a trifle more balanced. It is a tough call and has to be honestly addressed. History is again replete with generals having to go into battle with a 'sinking feeling' that the higher decision, though not the morally right one, was probably the only decision left in the overall national interest. Operation Bluestar and Operation Pawan in Sri Lanka are two classic examples wherein the Indian armed forces placed duty above everything else, suffered heavy

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casualties, but came out with their heads held high because of stable and focussed leadership. More recently, this issue has assumed fresh significance with a number of retired US generals, including General Anthony Zinni and General Shinseki, coming out with scathing attacks against Donald Rumsfeld for riding roughshod over sane professional military advice and going into Iraq in 'cowboy style' with inadequate troops for peace-enforcement and peace-keeping. The outburst, it appears, is a long pent up conflict between duty and conscience, something that gets extremely difficult for senior military leaders to resolve in such situations. In the final analysis, it will be inner strength that is bolstered by strong ethics and values that will show the way.

- Developing your subordinates for tough and varied combat conditions is another aspect of today's fluid battlefield environment. Training them for instinctive decision-making under pressure (so crucial in the air force) will only happen if they are capable of independent thought and action, of doing the right thing at the right time.
- Senior military leaders like winners, but they must realise that all winners don't do the right thing. Right values are neither safe, easy nor advantageous. Practitioners of right ethics and values often lose, but they still go ahead and lose because they defend the values that have been ingrained in them.<sup>13</sup>
- Complex decision-making at senior levels also involves the Dilemma of **Right vs Right**. How do you resolve an issue that pits Truth vs Loyalty or the Individual vs the Team or Short-Term Gains vs Long-Term Ones? Do you stick to a rule-based solution or a 'care'-based one, or do you decide where the greatest good for the maximum people is achieved?

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13. Norman Shwarzkopf, "Ethical Leadership in the 21 st Century," talk at the Institute for National Leadership, February 2004.

- **Transformational Leadership.** Transformational leaders are those who seek, by means of moral example, to persuade their followers to adopt a goal that is in the best interest of the Service. Example is not the main thing—it is the only thing. The transformational leader, therefore, is neither morally nor intellectually arrogant because his success does not depend upon merely reaching a certain objective, but rather upon convincing his followers that the goal is worthwhile. It is the goal of the transformational military leader to create a morally courageous, physically tough and technically proficient force that will continue to realise its objectives in the future even when the present leader is no longer present.<sup>14</sup> “We” and not “I” is the hallmark of such leadership.
- **Humanity.** Combat, peace-keeping and peace-enforcement operations run the risk of failure despite all the training, contingency planning and tactical brilliance, and at times the only intangible element that propels the final push that transforms defeat into victory is a leader’s ability to call on hidden reserves of endurance and will power in the men he commands. This, invariably, is possible only if a leader is humane, leads from the front and has a genuine ‘feel’ for the troops he commands.
- **Professional and Personal Ethics.** Unlike the ongoing debate that is raging in ‘civvy’ street and the corporate sector on the need to separate professional ethics and conduct from personal conduct and ethics, military leaders have no such choice. Their lives are so entwined with those of their subordinates that every action of theirs is a mirror for others to emulate, and, therefore, the crying need for consistent ethical and moral standards, both at work and at home.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Thomas, n. 12.

15. n. 5.

### A CASE STUDY

In June 2005, Col Ted Westhusing, a 44-year-old leading military Ethicist, scholar and a full professor at West Point was found dead in Baghdad with a single gunshot wound to the head. The army concluded that he had committed suicide with his Service pistol. He was, at that time, the highest-ranking Service officer to die in Iraq. A note found in his trailer seemed to offer some clues as it read, HOW IS HONOUR POSSIBLE IN A WAR LIKE IRAQ! Col Westhusing had volunteered to serve in Iraq because he was upset with reports of unethical practices in Iraq and wanted to try and help in stemming the rot. It was only a matter of time before he is reported to have received a complaint that a private security company had cheated the government and committed human rights violations. He reportedly confronted the contractor and conveyed his concerns to superiors who launched an investigation. In e-mails to his family, he seemed very upset that traditional military values such as honour, duty and country had been replaced by profit motives where the military had come to rely on contractors for jobs once done by the military. His family will never know whether Col Westhusing actually committed suicide because he was depressed or was done in by the contractors.<sup>16</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Stephen Covey in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* clearly mentions that managers are trained to do a thing right, and leaders to do the right thing. The military needs leaders because good leaders almost always turn out to be good managers, whatever their style may be. As far as the Indian armed forces are concerned, it would augur well to see the signs emerging from Iraq and the conduct of the occupying Coalition forces. The saying that **forewarned is forearmed** rings true in the case for enhanced awareness of the need for ethical and value-based military leadership. Education and awareness programmes are vital for integrating these values in doctrine and training plans. Ethics are never dispensable. They are an integral part of human survival. But in the 21st century, such survival will be more

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16. Who Killed Col Ted Westhusing, Blogs at [www.moreaples@hotmail.com](http://www.moreaples@hotmail.com).

complicated and precarious than ever before, and the ethics required of us must be correspondingly sophisticated. Finally, ethics are absolutely necessary to tackle the pressure of truth, occupy the moral high ground and reinforce the position of the military as the vanguard of a nation's leadership.

*If it is not right, do not do it.*

*If it is not true, do not say it.*

—General Marcus Aurelius  
Roman General