

Selection of Army Chief

Introduction

With the announcement of Lt Gen Bipin Rawat, present Vice Chief of Army Staff to be the next Army Chief there has been lot of discussions on this issue as the traditional method of seniority has not been followed by the present Government. Two other General Officer Commanding of Eastern and Southern Commands are senior to Lt Gen Bipin Rawat.

It is still not clear whether Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) or Permanent Chief of Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) will be appointed and who will get posted there. The Government has not come out anything on this yet. Probably the issue will get clearer after some more time. Ask any professional soldier, what does he want to become, Army Chief or Permanent Chairman Chief of staff committee. Similarly Army Commander or The Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC) at HQ Integrated Defence Staff . The answer is simple. If, and there is a very big if as nothing officially has come out, Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi is made Permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee option should have been given to him for becoming Army Chief or Permanent Chairman COSC.

This announcement has created a storm in TV and print media. More importantly Social Media is agog with all sorts of comments and remarks. Regrettably large number of retired service officers have joined the fray sometimes with uncharitable remarks which is avoidable. But this is bound to happen when the Government does not come out with a statement for the reason of this appointment at variance with standard practice. Selective leaks by Ministry of Defence (MoD) add confusion. The statements by MoD officials on condition of anonymity must be stopped. The issue coming out of this controversy must be analysed and corrective action taken.

Historical Perspective

It was different era. Lt General Thakur Nathu Singh, a maverick, was offered the post of first Army Chief ahead of Gen (later Field Marshal) K M Cariappa by the Defence Minister Sardar Baldev Singh. Lt Gen Thakur Nathu Singh declined the offer saying Gen Cariappa was senior and he deserved the post. This did not deter Kipper Cariappa to issue show cause notice to his Army Commander when he thought Thakur Nathu Singh was not right! These were different times. Ethics and Values seem to have changed. A copy of the letter dated 22 Nov, 1946, from Sardar Baldev Singh, addressed to Nathu Singh is given as Appendix.^[1]

Prerogative of the Government

There is absolutely no doubt, that the selection and appointment of Army Chief is the prerogative of the Government. The Government has to decide who is best suited for the job. However, due to some very valid reasons seniority is a very important criterion for selection. There are only very few cases where this seniority condition was overruled. It is also the same in judicial system. One of the very few case where seniority was overlooked when A N Roy was appointed as Chief Justice of India. The reasons and its effects are well known. There are rules and there are conventions or traditions. Though the rules are there but when you break a well established tradition in the selection of a very sensitive and critical post of Army Chief there has to be some sound well grounded reasons to do that.

In other countries also, the same procedure is followed. It is the Government of the day which appoints the top post. The most powerful Secretary of Defence after Robert McNamara, Donald Rumsfeld in 2003 appointed Gen Peter J. Schoomaker, who retired from the US Army in 2000. Rumsfeld had ongoing

1 . Courtesy Maj Gen V K Singh (Retd)

problems with the sage advice of his Army Chief Gen Shinseki regarding troops strength at Iraq. On the eve of his retirement at the end of his four-year term Gen Shinseki wrote a letter to his Defence Secretary Rumsfeld which is a classic. It is strongly recommended that people read this 16 page letter available at <http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/opinions/documents/shinseki.pdf>

Indian Experience

General Thimayya was selected for the top job in the Army and on 8 May 1957, he was promoted to General and took over as Chief of Army Staff. He superseded Lieut General Sant Singh, who resigned, as well as Lieut General Kalwant Singh, who decided to continue².

Lt Gen P S Bhagat, PVSM, VC was probably the most capable and popular Army Chief Indian Army never had. Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw wrote the Forward in Prem Bhagat's biography, written by Mathew Thomas and Jasjit Mansingh. Sam wrote:

"As a senior officer the characteristics I admired in him, both as a Staff Officer and Commander, were his friendliness, outgoing and funloving attitude, his generosity, loyalty to his subordinates and colleagues, his outspokenness, and that he did not mince his words. He was well read, militarily sound and a thinker. I had considered him as my NATURAL SUCCESSOR as the Army Chief, but then the Government must have felt it would be uncomfortable having two successive strong Army Chiefs. SO THE ARMY MISSED A FIRST RATE CHIEF."

The Army Chief, General G.G. Bewoor, was due to retire on 11 April 1974. (At that time, the retirement age for the Chief was 58, and 56 for Lieutenant Generals). Since Prem was to reach the age of 56 only on 13 October 1974, he was almost certain to become the next Chief, being senior most. But the bureaucrats in the Defence Ministry had other ideas. Having dealt with an intractable Chief like Sam Manekshaw for four years, they did not want another strong Chief on their hands. A routine letter is sent to officers who are due to retire, about six months in advance. This was done in case of Prem also. In order to bring pressure on him, and force him to resign, this fact was leaked to the Press, which speculated that he would now seek premature retirement. Prem was furious, and made it clear that he had no such intentions.

The Government now realised that the only way to deny Prem the post of Chief of Army Staff was to supersede him. However, by now he had become immensely popular, and his supersession would have had wide ranging repercussions. So another ploy was thought of. Due the extension granted to Manekshaw, Bewoor's tenure had been reduced, and he had been Chief just for a year and half. To compensate him, it was decided that he should be given a year's extension. This would ensure that Prem would retire, as a Lieut General, without technically being superseded.^[3]

Lt Gen S K Sinha, PVSM who had been Western Army Commander and Vice Chief of the Army staff, was expected to become Army Chief as he was the seniormost. But General Arun Vadya was appointed as Army Chief. The Government of the day cited two MVCs earned by Gen Arun Vaidya as the reason vis-à-vis Gen Sinha's lack of war experience.

"A few days later, there was a joint statement in the Press, by six prominent MPs, which included Charan Singh, Jagjivan Ram, L.K. Advani, H.N. Bahuguna, George Fernandez and Dharam Vir Sinha. They severely criticised the Government for its interference in the professionalism of the Army for short term political gains, and praised the dignified reaction of Sinha, at his supersession. They demanded a debate in Parliament, on the subject, in the forthcoming session. When the House met, the members tried to raise the issue. However, in the Lok Sabha, the Speaker did not permit a discussion on grounds of security. In the Rajya Sabha also, the Chairman disallowed a debate, leading to angry exchanges between the

² Maj Gen V K Singh, Leadership in the Indian Army, Biographies of Twelve Soldiers, Sage Publications, 2005

³ . Maj Gen V K Singh, Leadership in the Indian Army, Biographies of Twelve Soldiers, Sage Publications, 2005, PP 288-289

treasury benches and the Opposition, some of whom quoted the instance of Thimayya's resignation, and the debate in Parliament that followed.

Though the official reason cited by the Government for Sinha's supersession was lack of combat experience, when compared to Vaidya, the actual reasons could be one of many others. Some felt that his proximity to Jaya Prakash Narayan, whose very name was anathema to Indira Gandhi, had sealed his fate. Others felt that his views on the role of civil servants in the higher defence organisation, and the need for a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), were not liked by bureaucrats, who lobbied to get him sidelined. Another reason could be his penchant for wresting concessions from the Government, which had made him popular with the soldiers. A senior journalist, Kuldip Nayar, wrote: "Sinha's brilliance was his undoing."^[4]

Operational Experience

Does the Army Chief need operational experience at every level?

General George Marshall remains, after George Washington, the most respected soldier in American history. Yet he never had command of troops in battle, the customary path to greatness for a military leader. Franklin Roosevelt, came to regard him as so indispensable in Washington that, when the cross-Channel assault was finally mounted in 1944, he could not let Marshall assume command of the invasion force. President Roosevelt didn't want to lose his presence in the States. He told Marshall, "I didn't feel I could sleep at ease if you were out of Washington."^[5]

Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, a Military Cross winner at Burma took no active part in 48 war with Pakistan, 62 war with China and 1965 Indo-Pak war. That did not stop him from orchestrating brilliantly the 1971 Indo – Pak war.

"The Chief of Army Staff, General P.P. Kumaramangalam, was due to retire in June 1969. Sam and Harbaksh Singh were the two contenders. Sam was senior, but Sardar Swaran Singh, the Defence Minister, favoured Harbaksh, who had commanded the Western Army during the 1965 Indo Pak War. However, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi gave a decision in favour of Sam and he became the Chief on 8 June 69. He had reached the pinnacle of his career, which had almost been cut short a few years earlier when he was at Wellington. He was destined to write his name into history books, as India's first Field Marshal and the victor of the 1971 War."^[6]

Infantry Experience

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel was a typical infantry officer, his book on Infantry Attacks^[7] continues to remain as a Bible for infantry soldiers. That did not stop him from becoming a brilliant Panzer leader following auftragstaktik. Similarly Field Marshal Heinz Guderian was a Signals Officers but become the founder of Blitzkrieg. Guderian was trained at the 3rd Telegraph Battalion of the Signal Corps before World War I. At the outset of World War I Guderian served as a Signals Officer in the 5th Cavalry Division. With the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914, he found himself working in signals and staff assignments. Though not at the front lines, these postings allowed him to develop his skills in strategic planning and the direction of large-scale battles. Said Hermann Balck: "The decisive breakthrough into modern military thinking came with Guderian, and it came not only in armour, but in communication."

4 . Maj Gen V K Singh, Leadership in the Indian Army, Biographies of Twelve Soldiers, Sage Publications, 2005, PP 378

5 . Ed Cray, General of the Army: George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman (1991); Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall, 4 vols. (1963-1986); Mark A. Stoler, George C. Marshall: Soldier-Statesman of the American Century (1989).

6 . Maj Gen V K Singh, Leadership in the Indian Army, Biographies of Twelve Soldiers, Sage Publications, 2005, P 201

7 . Erwin Rommel, Infantry Attacks, Pen & Sword Books Limited

Of those things Guderian contributed, Balck considered some of the most important were the five man tank crew, with a dedicated radio operator in the hull of the tank, and the operation of the signal organization in the division to allow the commander to direct the division from any unit. This allowed forward control of the division, which was critical to mobile warfare.¹⁸¹

One of the most illustrious soldier Indian Army has produced was the Victoria Cross winner Lt Gen Prem Singh Bhagat. He was a Sapper (Corps of Engineer) officer. By the criterion cited today he would not have gone anywhere.

One of the most dynamic Chiefs we ever had was Gen B C Joshi from Armoured Corps. Unfortunately due to his untimely death he could not complete his tenure as Chief. What he achieved during his short tenure in terms of Army Educational Institutes, Rashtriya Rifles etc would remain as milestones for any later Army Chiefs to follow.

Similar example can be given for Army Chiefs from Infantry also. Gen N C Viz got the fencing made in J & K against all odds including vehement protests by the then Northern Army Commander Lt Gen Rostum Nanavatty. In one stroke of pen he promoted approx 8023 officers. Given how Ministry of Defence functions these were no mean achievement.

Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorism Operations (CI/CT Ops) Experience

Fundamental issue is an officer goes where he is sent. He has no say on this. If one has not been sent a CI/CT ops area that cannot be held against the officer. One finds some selected officers keep going to CI/CT ops area at every level of command from battalion / brigade/ division/Corps/ command. Through it does have its advantages. But on the other side people tend to do the same things again and again as previously done and no new idea gets tried out. In 2007 Lt Gen H S Panag, an officer from Mech Infantry was posted as Northern Army Commander by the then Chief Gen J J Singh. In his one year tenure he introduced a large number of innovative ideas, some of them were not liked by the risk averse tradition bound people. Point is not whatever he tried was a success, but it is the introduction of new methods/ ideas/ processes which is important.

Some of the reasoning of the selection given by Ministry of Defence under conditions of Anonymity, may not pass scrutiny. They are :

- If the major adversary of India is China then Eastern Army Commander looking after border with China from Sikkim to Arunachal Pradesh and CI Ops Areas of North East India is a very important cog in the wheel.
- If the Special Forces Operations in Myanmar were carried out under Corps Commander, 3 Corps, Eastern Army Commander was very much in the big picture looking after strategic issues.
- Does the lack of experience in plains and desert sector for conventional operations make Lt Gen Bipin Rawat less suitable as Army Chief? These are all untenable logic given.

Indian Army is an extremely professional organisation. The units and formations engaged in CI/CT Ops area of J&K are led by very capable commanders. Army Chief at the strategic level has very little to do at tactical level. The operations are mostly carried out at company, at best battalion levels. Units have well honed drills/tactics and procedures to counter any situation. Today all Divisional/Corps/Army Commanders and Chief are from infantry. Newspaper report says in Kashmir Valley alone, 71 soldiers have been killed this year, worst since 2008.¹⁹¹ In J&K number of security personnel killed in 2012, 2013,

8 . https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinz_Guderian

9 . <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/3-jawans-killed-in-jammu-and-kashmir-death-toll-this-year-87-worst-since-2008/articleshow/56042552.cms?>

2014, 2015 were 17, 61, 51 and 41 respectively. In 2016 this figure has shot up to 87.^[10] Should the present commanders at all levels be made responsible for this. It does not happen that way. We are in for a long haul at J&K. Reverses will happen. People who have been through the operations would know.

Only 15 and 16 Corps are involved in CI/CT Ops against Pakistan. However, the balance of the Corps 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 21 and 33 are very much part of Indian Army and cannot be left out of battle. Are we forgetting conventional operations? Using jargons like hybrid threats to justify promotion on experience of CI/CT Ops need scrutiny.

We have infantry officers commanding Armoured Division or Strike Corps. DGMO during recent Surgical Strike has taken over a Strike Corps from another infantry officer.

Present Eastern Army Commander was being groomed for future Chief. That is why he was posted as Chief of Staff, HQ Northern Command. With his experience of Delta Force, Northern Command and Eastern Command in addition to conventional offensive operations he has a fairly well rounded portfolio.

How Do You Select Strategic Leaders

Armed Forces all over the world have struggled to find right kind of strategic leaders for their top echelons. Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales, an Ex Commandant of the U.S. Army War College recently wrote a very interesting paper. He wrote this would be a fine system if tactical genius and strategic genius were related. But experience has shown that great tactical skill does not equal great strategic skill. In fact, tactical and strategic genius are unrelated. Officers with potential for strategic leadership are morally as well as physically brave. They may not be able to make the convoys run on time, but they have a special talent for seeing the future and conjuring a battlefield that has yet to appear. These are young men and women who are intellectually gifted. They can think critically. They are more interested in studying warfare than practicing it.

Tactically talented officers can move hundreds. Strategically talented officers can maneuver hundreds of thousands, if not millions. Tactically talented officers know how to fight enemies they know. Strategically talented officers are prepared to fight enemies yet unforeseen. The tactically talented read the manuals and put existing doctrine into practice. Strategically talented officers continually question doctrine and eventually seek to change it. Tacticians see what is; strategists conjure what might be.

Not every officer promoted to flag rank needs to be a professional strategist.^[11]

Advanced countries like USA are struggling with these issues. Our Professional Military Education, Talent Management etc are crying for new impetus.

Selection System in the Army

There is something rotten in selection system for promotion of Indian Army Officers. The acid test of senior leadership is seen by the performances in war. Very few countries of the world would have such combat experience like us post Second World War. A quick analysis here would not be out of place.

1965 Indo Pak War. This is what Maj Gen Sukhvinder Singh has to say about the leadership in his much acclaimed book India's Wars Since Independence.^[12]

10 . http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/data_sheets/annual_casualties.htm

11 . Maj Gen Robert H. Scales, Are You A Strategic Genius?: Not Likely, Given Army's System for Selecting Educating Leaders available at : <http://strategicstudyindia.blogspot.in/2016/11/are-you-strategic-genius-not-likely.html>

12 . Maj Gen Sukhwant Singh, Indian Military Leadership needs a relook?, Book Excerpt: India's War since Independence,

Niranjan Prasad, then in command of 15 Infantry division, led the advance of Lahore and proved so inept in battle that he was removed from command a day or two after that start of operations. His replacement was Maj Gen Mohinder Singh, whom the pundits had relegated to a desk job in Army Headquarters on the ground that he was unfit to command to division. In battle, Mohinder Singh already holder of the Military cross, won the much merited Maha Vir Chakra and proved himself a leader in crisis. But our systems had denied him a divisional command in peace.

On a rough analysis, it appears that out of 24 brigade committed in battle in 1965 war ten were sacked for incompetence in battle and only four of the rest earned command of a division. One of those four was exposed in the conflict of 1971, another left the service at his own request, a third retired, and the fourth was approved for promotion only on review despite his good performance in Bangladesh.

Out of 11 divisional commanders committed in battle in 1965, only three became corps commanders, and out of these, two did comparatively poorly and were the only ones not decorated. This is indicative of their performance. And those who were decorated and made much of by our nation were unceremoniously wasted out. Such was the efficiency of our systems.

In 1971, out of 21 divisional commanders committed in battle, eight were Brigadiers in 1965. Of them only four were committed in battle and two won distinction with MVC. The remaining 13 were Lieutenant Colonels in 1965, and none of them was committed in battle either as an officer commanding a unit or operational staff of a division. They were a collection of untried officers, and those who had acquitted themselves well in the earlier conflict had fallen victim to our systems.

After the 1971 conflict, when the time came for appointments, two corps commanders who had lost the vital territories of Chhamb and the Hussainiwala enclave and a third with nothing to show in his favour were elevated as Army commanders, while the best field corps commander and the man mainly responsible for the fall of Dacca was sidetracked in promotion and finally retired.

Kargil

Performance of GOC, 3 Infantry Division came under scanner. GOC 15 Corps did not exactly cover himself with glory. If one takes the number of unit commanders North of Zozi-La before the Kargil War and see the approximate number of officer who would have made to the ranks of Divisional/Corps Commander by the trend prevalent that time and compare with the number of unit commanders who actually made it to Divisional/Corps Commanders post Kargil, the gap will tell the story.

It is not that higher leadership has failed completely. In this fiercely competitive world why there is so many failures. Where are we going wrong ? Do we carry out in depth analysis to improve our promotion system. The common refrain one hears is, we have studied other systems of the world. Under the present circumstances this is the best that we can have. Others say, how can you expect change from the people who are products of the same system and got benefited.

Some of the areas which merit immediate attention is :-

- Parochialism. Allegation of parochialism has to be addressed. This has become a serious issue. Regiment of Artillery is the largest arm after Infantry. The best and brightest from them opt for General Cadre for commanding field formations. Based on their performances as Brigade Commanders they are nominated for higher promotion. How come from 78 to 81 batch Arty officers only one has made it to command a Corps. The comparison with Infantry and Armd Corps officers would be stark as hardly few miss command of a Corps after doing National Defence Collage (NDC) Course. Senior officers of the rank of Army Commanders from Armd Corps, it may be presumed, were part of making this decision of depriving Artillery officers.

available at <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/indian-military-leadership-needs-a-relook/0/>

When the Chief was from Artillery similarly Arty officers get advantage. In a large professional Army like ours we cannot afford to have issues like parochial interest. The Raksha Mantri cannot have a hands off approach and leave it to the internal management of the Army when such things happen. Merit must be the only criterion for promotion and postings.

- Talent Management. In increasing use of technology in warfare today we require tech savvy human resources. How do we recruit, train, retain and look after their career interest is a complex issue. These human resources are in short supply and get much better remunerations outside.
- Selection to Command a Particular Formation. There should be more clarity as to how we select an officer for a particular formation. When an officer is selected for say, two star rank, the difference in quantified merit is in decimal places. Some people keep getting command of brigade/division/corps in field/CI/CT Ops areas. The officers have no say in where they are posted. For example, if you take 19 Infantry Division located at Baramulla. Most of them who commanded that division rise to higher ranks. Compare this with 20 Mountain Division very few of the GOCs of 20 Mountain Division would rise to three star rank. When there is hardly any difference in caliber of people selected for two star ranks, why this difference?

Promotion system for senior officers is under constant scrutiny all over the world. Present Secretary of Defence of USA Ashly Carter immediately on taking over listed this as one of his most priority tasks. He said, " The military is a profession of arms, It's not a business. The key to doing this successfully is to leverage both tradition and change."^[13]

Equal opportunity should be given to everybody. In the present system because of date of birth, officers commissioned as Short Service Commission/Direct Entry/Army Cadet Corps cannot become three star officer in General Cadre. Please see the number of officers from these entries in three star rank General cadre and answer will be evident.

There is no doubt about the following :-

- Selection of Chief is the prerogative of the Government of the day.
- Merit must prevail.
- Promoting people based on Date of Birth when you become a three star needs to be stopped. Today date of birth decides who will become Chief/Army Commander/ Principle Staff officers and others. With so many Lt Gens in the general cadre everybody cannot be equal.

However, one has to be careful while appointing Chief of Indian Army. Not for nothing the seniority principle was violated only twice in selection of Chief of Indian Army. How do you evaluate merit in such a senior rank, how do you bring objectivity in evaluating when the Prime Minister/Defence Minister has hardly any interaction with the Army Commanders. The system and processes for such selection have to be in place before the Government start taking such decision. Otherwise a very unhealthy process of senior officers cosyng up to political parties in power will start. Or the vice versa can happen. India takes great pride in their apolitical Army. It is envy of the world, it should never be tinkered with. Former Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash observed that theoretically all three officers were on the same level. "Yes, the principle of seniority prevents any controversy. But if the government sees some merit in someone, it is their prerogative," he said. He said that if merit is going to be the criterion for the selection, then "some ground rules should be laid out by the armed forces to ensure political bias or interference does not come in".^[14]

13 . <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/795341/remarks-on-the-next-two-links-to-the-force-of-the-future>

14 . <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Defence-circles-see-political-interference-in-Army-Chief-appointment/article16901055.ece>

We can look at the systems followed by other countries. For example in USA Chiefs and senior officers are grilled by Senate Committees / Congress before appointment. Even Secretary of Defense when nominated are asked tough questions by the Armed Services Senate Committee.^[15] Prospective officers in contention may be asked to give presentations to the Prime Minister about their future plans as Chief. Lt Gen HS Panag has suggested the following competency requirements and qualification for the post of the Chief^[16] :-

- Capacity to provide best advice to the RM, PM and the Cabinet Committee for Security with candour and forthrightness and more importantly, the moral courage to disagree when required before a final decision is taken.
- A wide-ranging intellect with broad knowledge of strategic and military affairs, understanding of the constitution and government functioning beyond military matters, and backed by a broad-based varied command, staff and operational experience as a higher formation commander (division and above).
- Ability and will to execute the National Security strategy and Transformation Strategy; create and sustain the deterrent decided by the government; and to lead intellectually and managerially his subordinate commanders for the same.

Tolerance for complexity and ambiguity:

- A man of character with impeccable integrity, moral courage, communication skills and bearing with a strong sense of ethics and trustworthiness - a role model for his service and the country.
- At international fora and in military diplomacy, his personality must be worthy of admiration. The adversaries must hold him in awe.
- Believe in civil government supremacy, have credibility with the public, media and parliament, and compatibility with the RM and the PM.

Cost Benefit Analysis

If one does cost benefit analysis of the decision of the present government to appoint Lt Gen Bipin Rawat as Army Chief following emerges :-

- There has been absolutely no negative points for the senior most Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi. His CV is well rounded and ideal for Army Chief.
- There would have been no controversy if Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi was appointed as Army Chief.
- Since merit wise there is no difference between the three officers being talked about what has the Government gained by this appointment.
- The reasons given out unofficially by MoD sources on conditions of anonymity and some defence experts have no merit in supersession of Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi except proving the brownie point, it is the prerogative of Government. Nobody questions Government's prerogative. What is that particular quality that Lt Gen Bipin Rawat displays which forced the Government to take such momentous decision only second time in the independent India.

15 . <http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Hagel%2001-31-13.pdf>

16. Lt Gen H S Panag , The COAS Controversy Shows Need For Reform In Army available at <http://strategicstudyindia.blogspot.in/2016/12/coas-controversy-shows-need-for-reform.html#more>

Conclusion

Before a momentous decision like this is taken, all possible after effects should be logically analysed. Indian Army is the pillar of the country. Well established customs and tradition should be tinkered with after due deliberations.

Senior retired officers in open domain or social media should refrain from making remarks which have far reaching consequences. There is a sizeable number of serving officers who are observing and making their own opinion. We should not also forget the effect of these discussions on men of our magnificent army.

Raksha Mantri must step in to correct anomalies, if any, in the present system. Every appointment/posting in the senior ranks get stamp of approval from the Ministry. When there is so much competition for three star rank, how do you explain around 15 posts of three star rank remaining vacant.

If there is a policy, that should be scrupulously followed. Appointments of Principal Staff Officers, critical appointment like Director General of Military Operations are to be held by officers who have commanded a Corps. There are valid reasons for this policy. These policies are not followed. Though officers after command of a Corps are available, officers getting promoted to three star rank are given these sensitive appointments. This is no aspersion to the capability of these officers. They are excellent officers, but so are those who have commanded Corps and fulfill this criteria.

If there is a departure from policy, Raksha Mantri must personally take responsibilities for such a change and be answerable.

Selective leaks from Ministry of Defence on conditions of anonymity must stop. If some statement has to be made, it should be made publicly by some responsible officer. Armed Forces cannot be treated like this.

There is absolutely no doubt about the capabilities of the Chief designate Lt Gen Bipin Rawat. Once a decision has been made by the Government of the day, it is done. Period. All of us must strengthen the hand of the Chief so that he can guide the great Indian Army to its path of glory in next three years.

About the author:

Maj Gen PK Mallick, VSM is a veteran officer of the Indian Army

Disclaimer:

All views expressed in this paper are personal.

17 THURSDAY NOV.
1946
NEW DELHI

22nd November, 1946

My dear Nathu Singh

Your letter of 21st November has reached me. You have been selected and earmarked to be the First C-in-C of India, with Command over the three Defence Services. This decision has been arrived at, after the Muslim League joined the second 'Interim Government', and with the consent of all the Political Parties comprising the Government. It is on the recommendation of the present C-in-C, and with the approval of the Governor General, the Viceroy, and may be the HMG. The approval of the officers senior to you does not arise.

With regard to the acceleration of Nationalisation, and the Integration of the three Defence Services, it is under the active consideration of the Government.

For our Government accepting 'Dominion Status, and remaining within the Commonwealth. This is a Political matter, and it will be better for us to keep this in our forefront.

About the appointment of the next Governor General of India, to be an Indian after Lord Wavell, it is a delicate problem, and we need not pursue it for the present.

You might please note that after the 'Transfer of Power' to India, you will be working under the Ministry of Defence as C-in-C of India, of "Free India", and it is expected of you to accept the Government decision, as conveyed by me to you, at a "Tea Party" at my Residence, when the Premiers of Punjab and NWFP, and a few others were present.

With high regards,

Yours sincerely,

B. K. Singh

Brigadier Thakur Nathu Singh
The S.P. Directorate,
S's Branch
Army Headquarters
New Delhi.