

INFLUENCE OF CHANGING SOCIETY ON SOLDIERS AND SOLDIERING: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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Most of our soldiers come from rural background and join the Army without knowing what it does and how it works. They only start to understand soldiering; its purpose and uniqueness after entering it. Soldiering is a tough profession, demands of the soldiers to lead a regulated and regimented life. They are expected to be always ready to make great sacrifices in the sense that they ought to place duty before self and should be motivated to kill and be killed for the greater interests of the society. But one must not forget the fact that they are the products of society and that they have families - wife and children; they too have dreams, hopes and aspirations just as everyone else in the society has. Hence, they find it challenging - challenging to cope with the demands of the profession of soldiering, while at the same time fulfilling family and social obligations.

This study aims at understanding our soldiers and their soldiering by interfacing conflicting family and institutional requirements in the context of changing societal conditions. It also attempts to recommend ways of meeting the needs of our soldiers, so that they take soldiering not as a mere vocation but as a profession.

INTRODUCTION

This study involves the study of 'soldiers' and 'soldiering'. Therefore, there is a need to understand the terms '**military**', '**soldiers**', and '**soldiering**'. The word military is frequently used to cover all branches of the armed services - Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and etc., whilst at other times it is used exclusively as a synonym for the Army.¹ And when we talk of soldiers we actually mean the uniformed members of the armed services. 'Modern-day soldiers are not solely employed to fight, they are employed to be soldiers and take part in all activities of soldiering.'² The word 'soldier' is really far too loose a term to be used in anything more than the most general discussion. 'Soldier'

1. Edmonds, Martin, *Armed Services and Society* (Colorado, 1990), p. 22

2. Patrick Milehan, 'Fighting Spirit: Has it a Future?' in *The British Army Manpower and Society into the Twenty- First Century*, edited by Hew Strachan (London, 2000), p.248

comprehends all the uniformed members of the Army, which also includes 'sailor' in the Navy and 'airman' in the Air Force. In Bangladesh the soldiers in the Army include anyone from *sainik*³ with hardly few weeks of service, to the oldest serving Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) and officers of the rank of Second Lieutenant up to General. 'Soldiering' is nothing but the career these 'soldiers' have accepted as their way of life. There are unique differences between soldiers and their civilian counterparts in their recruitment, service conditions and housing arrangements. Soldiers live in cantonments, where free access of people in general is restricted. There are 'in-living'⁴ family quarters in cantonments for housing soldiers' families. They face the same life course issues that challenge most families in our society - raising children, coping with financial problems, managing career and family, dealing with marital problems, transitioning into retirement and so on as all others do. However, they have their distinct military ethos, which make them distinct within society.

In Bangladesh, we have soldiers from both urban and rural areas, but the majority belong to rural areas. To keep pace with the modern-day requirements, educational standard for recruitment in the Army as 'sainiks' has been upgraded from class VIII to S.S.C passed.⁵ Hence, our soldiers are now more educated and more conscious of their duties and responsibilities as well as of their rights and privileges; they certainly have more commitment to the service but also have more hopes and aspirations just as others in the society have.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The principal concern of this study is to understand the relationship between the society and soldiers in the context of Bangladesh as well as its impact on them. The study addresses the following issues:

- a. Our changing society and its impacts.
- b. Conditions that condition soldierly mind vis-à-vis attractions of soldiering.
- c. Influence of changing society on our soldiers and their soldiering.
- d. Recommendations.

3. 'Sainik' is the lowest rank of a soldier in the Army.

4. 'In-living' quarters are army quarters in the cantonment allotted to married soldiers to live with families.

5. Minimum educational qualification for being recruited as a *sainik* is Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Exam. in 2nd division or equivalent. It is effective since 19 May 1996.

Research Methodology and Scope

Personal experience of the author, official documents relating to the Army as well as views and observations of different researchers on the issues concerning evolution of society provide the necessary basic research inputs. Efforts have also been made to empirically substantiate the arguments presented in this study by carrying out appraisal of a survey, case studies and the opinions of senior army officers. The study focuses on issues concerning only the married soldiers from sainiks up to JCOs⁶ of the Bangladesh Army.

OUR CHANGING SOCIETY AND ITS IMPACTS

Soldiers in Bangladesh are seen to remain separated from society as they mostly live in cantonments, which is also the case in many other countries of the world. As a matter of fact, typical service conditions, housing arrangements, their distinct ethos and moral keep them almost aloof from civilian society. They tend to form a distinctive community within the larger mainstream society, and hence do not always necessarily mirror society. Therefore, to understand soldiers' way of life, hopes and aspirations, it is essential to study the evolving society, which they live in, and the inter-linking factors that have their part to play to influence changes in our social fabric.

In order to understand the relation between society and soldiers, and its impact on the later, one must understand the make-up of present Bangladesh society, both at rural and urban level, as well as have an insight of the different development issues like economy, human development, education and gender relations for a better understanding of the changes that are gradually shaping our society.

Economic Development

Indeed, Bangladesh economy is doing well now in the sense that it has 'reduced its dependence on foreign aid significantly.'⁷ Its!...economy [has] experienced a modest and reasonably steady annual growth of GDP of just over 4 percent... The population growth rate has declined remarkably particularly in recent years, and there has been considerable improvement in human development indicators, but the incidence of poverty is still one of the highest in the world. Food grain production growth has grown slightly ahead of population growth, but the rest of crop agriculture has performed poorly. In manufacturing,

6. JCOs include Warrant Officers, Senior Warrant Officers and Master Warrant Officers.

7. Wahiuddin Mahmud, 'Bangladesh Economy: Performance, Prospects and Challenges', in Bangladesh on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century, edited by A.M. Choudhury and Fakrul Alam (Dhaka, 2002), p. 73

*the phenomenal growth of the ready-made garment industry has enabled Bangladesh to achieve a high growth rate of exports, and yet the envisaged development of broader, more diversified and modern industrial and export base has not taken place.*⁸

Agriculture and exports, especially of garments, have been our main drivers of growth. It is encouraging to note that our participation in the global economy has recorded a steady rise - the trade to GDP ratio rising from 10% in the mid-1970s to 16% in mid-1980s to almost 30% now.⁹ These do give us an idea about the economic performance of Bangladesh as well as their impacts on our society.

Human Development

According to Frederick T. Temple, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh, Bangladesh has a reasonably strong development performance record with some outstanding successes in human development and moderately good growth performance, resulting in a fairly steady decline in the proportion of the population in poverty.¹⁰ The following data¹¹ illustrate Bangladesh's progress on human development:

- a. The primary school enrollment rate has risen from 62% in 1985 to almost 100% today.
- b. The ratio of girls to boys among primary school children has risen to 1:1 today, compared to 5:7 in 1985.
- c. Bangladesh reduced its population growth rate at unprecedented speed. It is now 1.5% per year compared to 2.4% in the decade following independence.

Educational Development

It is true that education has not as yet reached every person of our country. In 1995 adult literacy rate was 47.3%¹² and in 1997 it was 51%.¹³ Nevertheless, every year we find a large number of youths becoming educationally qualified to enter the job market, which is evident from the table below:

8. Mahmud, p. 73

9. Frederick T. Temple on 'Reforms and Socio-economic Performance in Bangladesh,' An Unpublished paper presented at a seminar on 'Accelerating Growth and Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh', organised by Bureau of Economic Research, Dhaka University, in 2003, p. 3

10. Temple, p. 2

11. Temple, p. 1

12. Bangladesh 2020, Published for the World Bank (Dhaka, 1998), p. 7

13. Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh 2000, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (Dhaka, January 2002), p. 351. Note that different sources have different data on the matter.

Performance of Examinees in S.S.C./H.S.C. Examinations

Table - 1

Year	S.S.C. Examination			H.S.C. Examination		
	Appeared	Passed	Passed %	Appeared	Passed	Passed %
1997	734475	373784	50.89	659533	242960	36.83
1998	870401	433934	49.85	480559	220748	45.93
1999	980680	555066	56.60	543745	290627	53.44
2000	928391	382744	41.22	502933	186234	37.92

Source: Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh 2000.

In the year 2003, a total of 9,21,024 took the S.S.C. Examination out of which 3,30,766 passed, the pass percentage being 36.85.¹⁴ Despite such poor results in these examinations in recent years, some progress in this field has certainly taken place. This may be attributed to the fact that 'educational enrollment as well as the percentage of literacy has risen. Education has been diversified. Particularly worthy of attention has been the interests the girls are taking in education'¹⁵ A relatively conservative analysis also reveals that attendance in the educational institutions has increased and drop out rate has declined over the years. This trend certainly has positive sides, but it also has some negative implications. The negative implications the society is to contend with are:¹⁶

- a. The number of educated unemployed almost doubled between 1977 and 1997.
- b. Higher education has spread to the middle class and the poor, which has also resulted in the increase in the number of unemployed youths.
- c. In 1977, most of the educated unemployed had only a tenuous connection with agriculture, because education has made them averse to manual labour and agriculture.
- d. In 1997, the trend was to get involved in business or so-called white-collar jobs, failing which they would simply sit idle.

14. The Daily Star, 16 July.2003, p. 1

15. Choudhury, p. 215

16. Siddiqui, Kamal, Jagatpur 1977-97 Poverty and Social Change in Rural Bangladesh (Dhaka, 2000), pp. 213-214. Here the author gives out his findings of only one village, but the picture is more or less the same in other villages of Bangladesh.

Gender Relations: Changing Role of Women

The population ratio of men and women in Bangladesh in 1996 was about 1:1 with male numbering 62712,000 and female 59413,000.¹⁷ It is true that educated young women who become educated wives and mothers are, in the final analysis, the most decisive factors in a developing country's bid to control not only the growth of its population but also to enhance its development. The following table reflects the present state of female education in Bangladesh:¹⁸

Female Education in Bangladesh

Table - 2

Indicators	Girls	Boys	Total
Primary Enrolment Ratio (Net) 1997	70	80	75
Secondary Enrolment Ratio (Net) 1997	16	27	22
Adult Literacy Rate (%) 1997	27	54	39
Drop-out Rate (%) 1994	33	31	-
Completion of Primary Cycle (%) 1997	67	69	-

Source: Human Development in South Asia 2000, Weekly 2000:2/3/2001.

It is understandable that women in Bangladesh are far behind the desired literacy level. The situation is worse for women in higher and technical education. This is because 'poor parents consider any expense for educating a girl unproductive as she leaves their family after marriage. A survey conducted in 1986 showed most men in rural Bangladesh considered educated women responsible for unhappy conjugal lives.'¹⁹ Against such negative trends - still in vogue in certain sections of our people - our womenfolk are seen to be emerging in their own right as responsible members of the society.

Technological Development

Indeed, the world is now experiencing the latest development of science and technology. We have no doubt as to the numerous benefits technology can offer us today and will offer us in the days ahead. Technological development is also taking place alongside all the developmental activities in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh, of course, not at the rate we want it to happen.

17. Statistical Pocketbook, p. 135

18. Ahmad Sherafuddin, 'Women in Bangladesh', The Daily Observer, 09 May 2001, p. 5

19. Shawkat Ara Hussain, 'Status of Women', in Bangladesh on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century, edited by A.M. Choudhury and Fakrul Alam (Dhaka, 2002), p. 237

Activities involving agriculture, irrigation and health-care, movement from one place to another etc. have become technology-dependent. The network of cellular phone, which now covers almost the entire country, is a great technological leap forward for Bangladesh. All these contribute towards improvement of our quality of life and overall development.

Rural Bangladesh: Changes through Development

On the changes taking place in the rural areas of Bangladesh, Mr. Serajul Islam Choudhury commented, 'Life in the villages has altered. Trees have been felled, and road links improved. Automobiles move about throughout the country. Electricity, mobile phones, power tillers and water pumps are active in the villages. The rural economy has itself undergone noticeable changes; ... Employment, however, remains scarce; and that is the main reason why there is internal migration towards towns and also the capital.'²⁰ The positive effects of these developments are that the people are now keen on improving their quality of life. However, there are adverse effects, and the most significant being the creation of rural townships and the road-networks at the expense of agricultural land. Besides, it has caused more and more people, who otherwise work on the land, to migrate to urban areas to find alternative means of livelihood.

IMPACTS OF CHANGING SOCIETY

Family and Household

Demise of the Concept of Joint Family Structure

Our society is now rapidly changing resulting in the disintegration of our traditional joint family structure. Agrarian Britain had almost the same kind of joint family structure in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. 'In agrarian Britain the typical family was centred on the village or the hamlet... Two or three generations of a family would live in the same village, would practise craft such as smithying or tanning or would work on the land, and upon the shoulders of the working father would fall the ultimate burden of providing for his family. He taught his sons, and perhaps his nephews too, the skills they would need to earn a living themselves, and his wife and daughters and plus any elderly dependent relatives, took on a supporting role'.²¹ Bangladesh, being an essentially agrarian country, has had similar family structure and social norms that have endured well into the last century and even into the current century to some extent.

20. Serajul Islam Choudhury, 'Society and Culture' in Bangladesh on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century, edited by A.M. Choudhury and Fakrul Alam (Dhaka, 2002), p. 214

21. Ruth, Jolly, *Military Man Family Man* (London, 1992), p. 7

A survey, carried out in Jagatpur, one of the villages in Bangladesh, reveals a clearer picture about the present status of family structure in our rural Bangladesh. It shows that in 1997, 72.5% of the total households were nuclear, 26.5% were joint families and only 0.8% families were extended. Further study reveals that 79% of the poor households were nuclear, 74% of the middle-class families and only 24% of the rich families were nuclear.²² The advantage of a joint family was that a male member of the family could remain away from his wife and children for a prolonged period leaving them at the care of the others in the family and he did not have much to worry about. The greatest disadvantage of breaking up of joint families into nuclear families, as identified in the survey, was that there would perhaps be no one to fall back on in a nuclear family situation in times of adverse and emergency situations.²³

Changing Attitude of Men and Women towards Family Separation

Disintegration of the joint family structure has influenced the attitude of men towards their occupation. The land, each nuclear family owns after it detaches itself from the joint or extended family structure, is usually seen to shrink to the extent that it can no longer support the family. Therefore, we now find that all the members of a family - especially male members - do not necessarily want to cling to the family profession but do something different to earn their livelihood. Again, a nuclear family usually prefers to live together to see the father being active at home rather than remaining absent. A father needs to accommodate the demands of two careers within the household - being engaged in a vocation to earn a living and performing the responsibility of both husband and father. However, it is also not unusual to find families in our society where men live away from home to earn a living for the family and wives look after the household affairs including taking care of the children.

Changing Attitude towards the Task of Parenting

The change in our traditional joint family structure has also changed our general attitude towards parenting. In a joint family, children can grow up under the care of their grandparents or relatives, which does not happen in a nuclear family. Though wives do accept the compelling circumstances to let husbands live away from home for occupational purposes, yet they would always be happy to see that both of them share the responsibility not only of running their home but also the upbringing of their children. Birth and babies are women's matter and that dedication to the occupation to earn for the family is men's matter is an idea, which is gradually becoming moribund.

22. Kamal, Pp. 278-279

23. Kamal. p. 280. See the survey findings for more advantages and disadvantages that have been identified.

Employment Opportunities and Rural to Urban Migration

Overall rural development, now taking place in Bangladesh, has contributed in producing more and more educated youths for different types of jobs in industries, security firms, construction firms etc. These industries and enterprises located mostly in and around urban areas are attracting men and women from rural to urban areas. While it encourages internal migration from rural to urban areas, it also has some effects on the lives of our people of both rural and urban areas.

Changing Attitude towards Women's Participation in the Mainstream Economy and Activities

Changing conditions in terms of development in the country are also changing our traditional attitude towards women. Increasing numbers of women are seen to be participating in the country's mainstream economy. 90% of workers in the garment industry are women, and there are women working in industries like textile, electronics, pharmaceuticals etc. We see educated women pursuing career in engineering, medical and nursing services, teaching, banking, government cadre services and in non-governmental organisations. This will be evident from the following table:²⁴

Female Participation in Economy

Table - 3

Number (million) of female labour force	27
Female labour force as a % of total labour force 1998	42
Women as a % of total administrators and managers 1990-99	4.9
Women as a % of total professional and technical workers 1990-99	34.7
Female unemployment rate as a % total female labour force 1996	2.30
Female economic activity rate as a % of male 1997	77.2
Female earned income share as a % male 1997	33
Percentage of female labour in agriculture 1994-97	41.7
Percentage of female labour in industry 1994-97	27.8
Percentage of female labour in services	30.5

The significant change in our attitude towards the role and status of women in our society is also reflected in the fact that we now have women²⁵ as commissioned officers in the Armed Forces.

24. Ahmad, p. 5

25. Lt Col Md. Nazrul Islam, 'Bangladesh Armed Forces and Popular Expectations', The Daily New Nation, 26 March 2003, p. 5

CONDITIONS THAT CONDITION SOLDIERLY MIND

According to Huntington, the uniqueness of soldierly mind lies in certain mental attributes or qualities, which constitute personality of a soldier. Many a writer - civil and military - tend to agree that the soldierly mind ought to be 'disciplined, rigid, logical, scientific; but not flexible, tolerant, intuitive, or emotional.'²⁶ However, this approach to understand personality of soldiers may not be useful for outsiders, until soldiers are studied by relating their personality, values and behaviour to social context.

Though the Army does not differ in their basic characteristics from other Services, even civilian organisations, it distinctly differs in their emphasis, and in the detailed terms of engagement of soldiers generally incorporated in legally binding service regulations. Central to the notion of the possibility of death in the course of mission accomplishment is the transfer of individual values to those of the group, since experience suggests that individual survival is ultimately dependent on the cohesion, morale, discipline and preparation of the fighting group, each being a part of it.

Soldiers' Unlimited Liability

The fact, that the Army is formed, equipped and trained either to deter conflict, or to do battle against adversary makes it stand out as a symbol of independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Army is thus, and will certainly be uniquely engaged in a sphere of state activity where stakes are not just high but they are often total. It is this very characteristic that differentiates it from all other civilian institutions, whether public or private. Indeed, all soldiers of the Army have an avowed duty to respond to the utmost of their ability for the purpose, for which they are maintained. This is frequently referred to as soldiers' 'unlimited liability', which carries with it the real possibility of death in the course of carrying out their duty.²⁷ All out efforts are, therefore, made to prepare the soldiers to learn to survive under any kind of dangerous, unpleasant and hostile environment. This requires great emphasis to be placed on personal and organisational discipline, and self-discipline of every individual as well as the cohesion of the various sections that make up the whole fighting unit.

26. Huntington, Samuel P, *The Soldier and the State*, 13th edition (London, 1998), p. 60

27. Martin, p. 30

Soldiering Demands Enforced Obedience to Orders

The secret of the Army's ability to prepare its soldiers for the supreme sacrifice for the country lies in the supreme military virtue, which is obedience. In the Army, obedience stands out to be the greatest military virtue, which needs to be enforced and strictly managed. Therefore, personnel in our Army are subject to the Bangladesh Army Act (BAA), who are obliged not to '...disobey in such a manner as to show a wilful defiance of authority a lawful command given personally by his superior officer...' or not to disobey '...the lawful command of his superior officer, knowing or having reason to believe him to be such...' ²⁸ What is more important to note is that they are subject to two laws - law of the land and the Army law. The latter relates to preventing them from committing such offences as contained in the Manual of Bangladesh Army Law (MBAL), which also provides extra powers to regulate all the soldiers; these extra powers enable the Army to enforce compliance of its members in times of crisis.

The conflict in the military or the Army between obedience and professional competence usually involves the relation between the subordinate and superior. 'In operations, and even more particularly in combat, ready obedience cannot conflict with military competence: it is the essence of military competence.' ²⁹ Lord Nelson said, "To serve my King and to destroy the French I consider as the great order of all, from which little ones spring, and if one of these little ones militate against it, I go back to obey the great order." He said so while justifying his disobedience to one of the operational orders he received, which now serves as a classic example of disobedience by subordinates of operational orders of superiors. ³⁰ The officers and men in uniform, who revolted in favour of our Liberation War in 1971, also displayed similar Nelson-like disobedience to serve the spirit of our freedom struggle. However, these were extremely exceptional circumstances that called for such display of disobedience.

Terms of Conditions/Engagement

The loss of individual freedom of soldiers, when necessary, is seldom questioned as it is accepted uncritically because it is a precept, which reaches to the very heart of the military ethos. Men under arms or men in battle cannot be allowed to take unauthorised decisions because a collection of individuals may become a mob, but never an army. Therefore, any one willing to be a soldier is expected to accept this very way of life and conditions before enrolling himself

28. The Manual of Bangladesh Military Law: The Army Act - Offences (Dhaka, 28 November 1982), Pp. 147-187

29. Huntington, p. 75

30. Huntington, p.75, see footnote.

as a soldier. In Bangladesh too, soldiers are enrolled according to the procedure as laid down in the BAA Sections 11 and 12.³¹ Enrolment is voluntary but all need to sign a contract to the effect that they agree to accept the terms of engagement as shown in the table below:³²

The Period of Colour Service for Each Rank

Table - 4

Rank	*Selected Trade	Others
Sainik	21 years	21 years
Lance Corporal	22 "	22 "
Corporal	24 "	23 "
Sergeant	25 "	24 "
Warrant Officer	28 "	27 "
Senior Warrant Officer	30 "	29 "
Master Warrant Officer	33 years or 5 years tenure of appointment, whichever is earlier.	

From the table it becomes apparent that sainiks and corporals are expected to retire at the age of 38 - 41 years.

Training

Training, all-important for the Army, is what it mostly remains busy with. It is tough, repetitive and, perhaps, monotonous, but there is no way that one can risk compromising with it, lest soldiers fail to do what they are expected to do. However unpleasant, difficult and rigorous it might be, training in the Army must go on. It is essential to ensure that soldiers are adequately trained to prevail and survive under life-threatening and hostile conditions. The Bangladesh Army has been doing its best in this regard. We have soldiers well tested by time. Their contributions towards successfully containing the insurgency in the CHTs and their role in reaching a Peace Accord, which is under implementation, are enough to justify this contention. Besides, their activities in aid to civil power in combating natural calamities or their roles in the maintenance of law and order during national elections and other potentially volatile situations also bear the testimony of the high standard of our training. Again, it is because of training that our soldiers are performing well in UN peacekeeping operations and earning laurels for themselves and the country.

31. The Manual of Bangladesh Army Law, Pp. 413-418

32. The Bangladesh Army Instructions Number 65/54 - Amendment, 14 March 1988.

Living Conditions

Soldiers live in cantonments and so do their families. However, all married soldiers are not allowed to live with their families. For example, only 20%³³ of married other ranks of armour, infantry, artillery, engineers and signals units are allowed to live with their families in family quarters, both in-living and out-living quarters,³⁴ and the rest have to stay in barracks. This is essential for having adequate number of soldiers always readily available for any kind of duties that they are called upon to do.

The problems of soldiers, particularly of the married ones, need also to be understood from their perspective. These problems often centre on family issues and usually relate to living or not living with family. In a unit with about 800 officers and men, other ranks will number about 750. Experience suggests that this unit will have about 400 married other ranks to be allotted with family quarters. As per the current policy, out of these 400 only 80 will be allowed to live with their families in out-living and in-living quarters, and the rest will have to live in barracks. Plain arithmetic says that it will take about 5 years to complete allotment of family quarter to each married soldier, if each of them is allowed to retain the quarter for one year. The Indian Army reportedly faces the same problem of not being able to provide married quarters to their soldiers. However, the Indian Army attempts to reduce the effects of the problem by making an arrangement whereby soldiers may let their families live in 'the separated-family-housing areas', which are located in the vicinity of cantonments/garrisons and well looked after by the concerned cantonment authority. The houses are rented and maintained by the fund generated from the house-rent allowances of those soldiers whose families reside in these housing areas. Soldiers in India, therefore, need not usually worry much about moving with their families from one station to another as they may let their families live in these housing-areas.³⁵

ATTRactions OF SOLDIERING

Salary

The salary structure of the military including the Army ought to be based on institutional and occupational characteristics - institutional relates to salary as per rank and seniority. The salary and other privileges given in return for

33. It was 14% and increased to 20% on 30 April 1997.

34. 'Out-living' quarters are privately owned and located adjacent to cantonments. A soldier who cannot be allotted with an in-living quarter, despite being entitled as per policy, rents an out-living quarter. This happens because the Army still does not have in-living quarters as per authorisation. These are duly inspected before soldiers are permitted to rent such quarters.

35. This has been learnt from Brigadier Vijay Kumar Aluwalia of Indian Army.

compliant behaviour of soldiers and their rigorous service conditions are better than what their civilian counterparts in the public sector usually get. What is important to note is that our soldiers are to often live away from their families - wives and children. It certainly causes them extra expenditure and also hardships to their families. That is why, there are the allowances like defence services allowances, ration allowances, rations for wife and children at subsidised rate - all of which they receive as extra recompense for working under unpleasant or difficult conditions, which one call bonus or overtime in civilian terminology.

Career Prospects

The career pattern of soldiers,³⁶ as it exists in our Army, provides for a number of steps and also opportunities for progressing up these steps fairly rapidly. However, the career structure is like a pyramid and promotions are on merits and results. Therefore, every soldier has to earn his promotion by sustained effort over many years, and anyone who falls behind in advancing his career up the pyramid finds himself retiring early. The structure is such that only few go up while the bulk are left out to retire at different stages of their career and at different ages.

Comradeship and Variety

Tradition, esprit, unity and community are amongst the most important in the value system in the Army, which help develop 'comradeship' amongst soldiers. As a matter of fact, these are the most attractive aspects of soldiering. This is certainly not the case in ordinary life. Again, the repetitive and monotonous nature of training in the Army becomes interesting when there is variety in the methods of training and the environment in which it takes place. This is something to which due attention is always given. In the process, the Army is seen to offer opportunities for doing something different at different times.

Welfare and Rehabilitation

"The more the military's actions make service members and their families truly hear and believe the message that 'the military takes care of its own,' the less will be the conflict between the two greedy institutions of the military and the family."³⁷ Though this message relates to the welfare of soldiers and their

36. There are seven ranks from sainik to master warrant officer and three honorary ranks i.e. honorary lieutenant, honorary captain and honorary major.

37. Mady Wechsler Segal, *The Military and the Family as Greedy Institutions* in *The Military More Than Just a Job?*, edited by Charles C Moskos & Frank R Wood (Virginia, 1998), p. 96

families of the American Army, it appears to hold good for our soldiers as well. Welfare of soldiers in the Army is essential because the profession in the Army makes demands upon its members that other forms of employment do not: fixed-term contracts of service, liability for 24-hour and seven-day-a-week service, frequent postings, strict military discipline and the possibility of being involved in life-threatening situations. The purpose is to reflect the Army's paternalistic attitude to ensure our soldiers that they have a secure environment in which they and their families live, work and grow.

In Bangladesh Army, we have the Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate, which deals with welfare-related issues of the Army including soldiers. It is responsible to help serving, retired and distressed army personnel in their efforts to rehabilitate themselves. To this end, it arranges pre-release training on different trades for interested other ranks prior to their going on retirement and also helps them find suitable jobs in different government or private organizations.³⁸

United Nations Peacekeeping Missions

So far 41,311 officers and men of Bangladesh Armed forces have participated in 26 different UN peacekeeping missions. The economic return from UN peacekeeping functions to both the individual and the country is commendable. Our participation in peacekeeping operations has also greatly enhanced our image over the world. This is evident from the comment, which Hillary Clinton made during her visit to Bangladesh: "I know Bangladesh through its Armed Forces' role in UN peacekeeping".³⁹ Our achievements in many UN peacekeeping operations are matters of national satisfaction. The Army's increased participation and achievements in UN peacekeeping operations have received wide coverage in our print and electronic media, which have also helped create a positive image of the Army to our people at large. No other organisation of our country has been able to earn such laurels for the country in such a short span of time, and herein lies its difference from other organisations. And this very difference, more than any other thing, possibly encourages many to join the Army.

Did Our Soldiers Know of the Army Before Joining It?

Most of the candidates, majority being from rural areas, do not generally know the Army well before applying for joining it. They do not know what the

38. The Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate of the Bangladesh Army is responsible for such tasks as per its Charter of Duties.

39. Lt Col Md. Nazrul Islam, 'Role of Bangladesh Armed Forces: Reconstruction and Peacekeeping', The News Today, 27.March, 2003, p. 5

Army does and how it works. They do not have much idea about soldiers and soldiering - its purpose and uniqueness, its attractions and hardships. The findings of a survey⁴⁰ revealed the following responses of 50 young soldiers on the matter:

- a. Most of them did not have any knowledge of the Army - what all it does and how it works.
- b. Most of them frankly and truthfully stated that their decision to join the Army was not influenced by their patriotism or their motivation to serve the country but to find a vocation.
- c. Many were, however, fascinated by the uniform the soldiers wear, the way they move about, and all good things they hear about the Army.
- d. Some of them were also motivated and encouraged by relatives and friends, who are serving or served in the Army.
- e. Many also said that they had formed a good impression about the Army for its role in the CHTs and UN peacekeeping operations.
- f. It was interesting to note that few of them claimed to have joined without knowing the kind of physical and mental hardships soldiers are to undergo and that given the option they were ready to quit the Army.

INFLUENCE OF CHANGING SOCIETY ON SOLDIERS AND SOLDIERING

Our soldiers develop as a result of a balance between nature and nurture - the totality being the result of these two influences. To understand them, it is fundamental to examine the whole social context - the context includes the society they live in and also changes in society in terms of social conditions, prevailing customs and so on. The emergence of so many forces and conditions for change - social, technological, economic - at times puts the Army in a state of off-balance. It is true that the social advances that have taken place over the years have empowered individuals and that they are more educated and have relatively improved standard of living. While they confront the conflicting requirements of the family and occupation, they also have the desire to reap the benefits of social advancements. Such a desire, which is quite understandable, may at times diminish the essential elements of soldiering.

40. A unit in Bogra Cantonment carried out this survey on 01 August 1998. 50 young soldiers had responded to the questions set for the survey. Young soldiers are those, who have just joined the units after their initial training.

Family Structure

The gradual disintegration of our traditional joint family structure is rendering the families to become smaller and independent. The role of men as husbands and fathers is also changing a great deal requiring them to be more responsible towards the family. This, in other words, demands of every husband, especially of a nuclear family, to live with his wife and children. It gives rise to a conflict between family demands and occupational requirements, which may also be equally applicable to soldiers of nuclear families. "A soldier that does not have peace of mind and is having so many family problems due to not being able to be home enough is not happy or confident in his work, and if that lacks, he is not giving his most".⁴¹ It only suggests us to realize the fact that the relationship between the Army-Family interface and the soldier's personal morale does have an impact on his ability to do his job, which can even be a cause of considerable strain on his soldiering.

Family Separations and Parenting

There are the field exercises, operational assignments in the CHTs or in aid to civil power, UN peacekeeping operations etc. All these result in family separations, which require adjustments by soldiers and their wives and children. Effects of separations on families are many and cannot be ignored under the changing societal conditions, especially when families are becoming smaller and independent. Family separations cause loneliness, and give rise to many associated problems. Here, the wife of a separated family is gradually being thrust into playing the role of both father and mother - a stressful experience for the family to cope with. The following two case studies may shed some light in this regard:

Case Study :1

It happened in 1998 and involved a sergeant of a unit located in Bogra Cantonment. The sergeant was allowed to live with his family - wife and two children - in the quarter allotted to him for a year. While living in the family quarter in the cantonment, he succeeded to get his son admitted in class VIII in Bogra Cantonment Public School - something he really craved for. After a year, when his son was in class IX, his turn to vacate the quarter was due. He was asked to vacate the quarter to allow others to get their turn. Fearing that his son's education would be affected if his wife and children went back to his village in Barisal, he made the following arrangement with the consent of his unit authority:

41. Rosen, Leora N. and Dorris B. Duarand, 'Coping with Unique Demands of Military Family Life', in *The Military Family* edited by James A. Martin and others (London, 2000), p. 68

- * His family would live separately in a rented house in the vicinity of the cantonment.
- * He would live in the barracks.
- * He would, however, be granted weekend-leave to be with his family as frequently as possible.

This arrangement enabled him to ensure uninterrupted schooling of his son, who reportedly performed very well in the S.S.C. final examination.

Case Study :2

A corporal, a driver by trade, was to retire in 2003. He hailed from Lalmonirhat and was happy to be serving in Saidpur Cantonment since 2000. He had been living with his family in Saidpur Cantonment for about a year. He got his only son admitted in the Cantonment Board High School in class VIII. In the middle of the year 2002, he was posted out to join a unit in Comilla Cantonment. He was a little disappointed and became worried that his posting would affect his son's education. He tried to get his posting order reviewed but failed. At one stage, he even opted to retire early.

Suppressed Family Problems

Many of our soldiers hesitate to let their family problems be known to others. The strains of separation may at times become serious at certain point of family life. Newly married couples that have had less time to solidify their relationships are more prone to confront such strains. Both the nature of service and the conditions of service stand in their way to solve such problems all by themselves. It is evident from the findings of the following case study:

Case Study : 3

In 1998, Lance Corporal X (of a unit hailed from a village in Kushtia) married after having attained the marriageable age as per policy.⁴² His father was a primary school teacher and he is the eldest son of his four brothers and sisters. He did not get a married family quarter in the cantonment for which he had to let his wife live with his parents at his village home. He, however, used to come home on leave every now and then - for about seven days after every

42. As per the Army policy a soldier is eligible for marriage after having served for six years or attained 24 years of age.

three months. Everything appeared to be going on fine but the situation started to worsen after about seven months. His wife developed psychic problem, which was nothing but a case that required greater time and emotional adjustments than established relationships. Knowing that he would not get a married quarter, he preferred to suffer in silence by asking for an extra favour from his unit authority in the matter. When the situation further worsened, he rented a private house in the vicinity of the cantonment and brought his wife to live there. Since his unit authority was not aware of this very arrangement, he was not granted leave to be with his wife as often as he needed. This seemed to have adversely affected the mental state of his wife to such an extent that she once attempted to commit suicide by taking poison. Fortunately, she survived as she could quickly be taken to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) and was given necessary treatment.

The findings of this case were - firstly, the existing policy required him to wait for his turn to get a married quarter in the cantonment; secondly, he did not apply for allotment of a quarter on extreme compassionate ground, instead decided on his own to keep his wife in a rented house; thirdly, this arrangement did not solve his problem as he had to live in barracks and his wife remained far away despite being so near; and finally, his wife survived just because she was immediately evacuated to the hospital and given treatment. Lessons learnt were:

- * Conjugal life, particularly of newly married couples, may turn bitter if husbands and wives do not give adequate time and attention to each other.
- * Soldiers ought not to keep such serious problems suppressed.
- * Immediate medical treatment can save lives. In this case, she would have been dead had this incident happened at her village home.

Health and Welfare of the Family

The Army provides free medical treatment facilities for soldiers and their wives and children. These are available only in CMHs or medical establishments located in cantonments/garrisons. Soldiers, whether living with their families in cantonments or otherwise, want to get their entitled medical treatment facilities whenever these are needed. But it is a paradox that only soldiers having their families in and around cantonments/garrisons can have better access to these facilities while the family members, who live in places far away from cantonments/garrisons, cannot. Again, separations also deprive soldiers' wives

and children of the welfare benefits of the Army - good schools for children, good housing conditions and community living, family welfare services etc. - all of which are available in cantonments. Therefore, once a soldier's family gets the opportunity to live in cantonment environment, it hardly wants to return, particularly if it is to return to village environment. This happens because the family members - wife and children - do not want to miss the quality of life that they start getting used to while being in cantonment environment.

Spouse Employment

Despite the fact that the overall salary structure of our soldiers is good, it is gradually becoming difficult for them to meet their needs. These demands include good housing and living conditions, good food, health-care, children's education and so on. Soldiers, having separated families, find their hardships aggravating further when their families depend entirely on their income. Factors, such as soldiers having educated wives and their aspiration to be more independent, changing attitude of society towards working women, economic well-being of families etc., influence the issue of wives' employment. Nowadays, wives' employment is being considered essential not only for financial necessity but also for enhancing the standard of living, which is valued more in our society. However, these dual-service couples often have to accept family separation with husbands and wives remaining in different locations. It may have an impact on their peace of mind, and also on their occupational standard.

Balancing Family and the Stressors of Soldiering

The effects of family problems, some of which have already been discussed, are also our pressing concerns. All these are inter-linked with stressors that are specific to soldiering.

Duty Demands

Soldiering has to be balanced with family expectations. The conditions of service require soldiers to be available for duty day in, day out and year in, year out. Training activities, functions that occur outside normal duty hours, routine duties etc. keep them engaged all the time. There is often very little personal time for them to be with their families. Such conditions and demands affect soldiers' family-lives, their expectations and aspirations as well as their soldiering.

Duty-Related Separations

Soldiers, living in cantonments with their families, have also to accept duty-related separations at short notice. It can range from a week up to months. These separations create a number of problems for soldiers and their families. Newly married couples or couples having small children are affected the most by such separations as the burden of responsibility for the day-to-day running of the family befalls squarely on their wives.

Posting and Transfer

Posting and transfer - a routine phenomenon in the Army - is yet another duty-related stressor. The following case study reveals how posting and transfer can, at times, affect the family life of soldiers and their soldiering.

Case Study : 4

In early 2003, Sainik Y of a unit in Saidpur Cantonment brought his wife and a three-year-old son in the station and was just about to settle down when he was posted out to a unit in Dhaka. It was a matter of great agony and despair for him, as he would have to start afresh the whole process of getting a family quarter in Dhaka station if he were to have his family with him. However, the cost of living to maintain his family in Dhaka being very high and unaffordable, he altogether gave up the idea of having his family with him. It meant that he had to return his family to his village home in Sirajganj before joining his new place of posting - something that he found very difficult to reconcile with. He also felt himself being let down before his wife and his relatives.

Career Related Agonies

The career prospect in the Army is bright but only for those who are disciplined and efficient. This results in the majority of soldiers being superseded at different stages of their career. Let us take the example of a sainik. If not promoted to the next rank, which he is expected to get after 8-10 years of service, he remains a sainik for the next 11-13 years doing just only sainik's duties. One may imagine his agony and frustration that he has to bear with for all the remaining years of his service. What then are the implications? He starts to suffer from inferiority complex, tends to do things just perfunctorily or attends to his family needs more than necessary - all these only reflect his disinterest in the service. It affects his performance as well as the performance of his unit.

Education and Skill

The importance of having educated and well-trained soldiers cannot be denied. Our Army has already enhanced the selection criteria for recruitment as *sainik* as it is modernising itself in terms of its management, weapons and equipment in keeping with the technological development. Our involvement in UN peacekeeping operations, which now require our soldiers to serve alongside technologically superior forces, also require us to have more educated and skilled soldiers. Indeed, we now have more educated and skilled soldiers, who understand their responsibilities better but at the same time have enhanced hopes and aspirations.

On the Basic Professional Values

Soldiering calls for certain qualities, characteristics and traits, to be possessed by every soldier. These include courage, sense of duty, pride in the profession and above all discipline. Conflicting demands of the family and society as well as the service do have some impact on our soldiers and on their attitude towards soldiering. However, our soldiers, being more educated, are now quite conscious of the implications and consequences of doing things in breach of discipline and professional values. As per the existing policy, only soldiers with good discipline record are selected for UN peacekeeping operations. This has also positively influenced the attitude of our soldiers towards military discipline, thereby contributing to the improvement of the overall discipline standard of the Army.

Discipline

The Army demands of our soldiers to remain as disciplined as they should be without affecting their obligations towards the family and society. However, service conditions that allow only 20% of married soldiers to live with their families in out-living and in-living family quarters in and around the cantonments do not seem to adequately meet the needs of the separated soldiers' families. A soldier, not allotted with a family quarter, is to perforce leave his wife and children at the care of his parents/relatives or let them remain all by themselves. Most of our soldiers are from rural areas, which are either flood/disaster-prone and/or lack in basic health-care and education facilities. It, therefore, becomes essential that both soldiers and their families get together at

regular intervals, and that can be possible only if they are granted leave. But 5% leave policy, in which 5% of the unit can be on casual leave at any time, prevents them from being able to be with their families at their convenience. Leave is, therefore, what they need most, and any unit not addressing this issue carefully may have discipline problems that may affect the performance of soldiers as well as the unit.

Obedience to Lawful Command

'If there are two governments in the state, each claiming to be duly constituted and to be deserving of military obedience, the military officer cannot escape the political choice between them'.⁴³ Here lies the conflict between military disobedience and legality, which puts officers and more particularly soldiers in a state of dilemma as to the right course of action to be taken. The provision of the BAA, which allows them to seek redress against any unlawful command but only after obeying it,⁴⁴ is good enough to put them in a dilemma of choice in such circumstances. Involvement of soldiers in military coups and counter-coups between 1975 and 1992, which are still in our living memories, saw many of them becoming 'victims of circumstances'. The situation has now changed. Education has given them the ability to at least have a commonsense understanding of difficult circumstances, which prevents them from getting involved in activities detrimental to their soldierly image and to the image of the Army.

Post-Retirement Life

Soldiers on retirement will have to be back to civilian life but only after having spent the prime time of their lives in the Army. They need not change their jobs only but also learn new skills in order to be able to quickly settle down and at the same time adapt themselves to the changes. The way of life in the Army is more organised, disciplined and its working environment unique in the sense that it emphasises on collective efforts and esprit de corps. Therefore, many of the retirees, despite being young enough to be able to start with a vocation afresh, are found to face difficult and stressful situations during their transition to civilian life. This is owing to the fact that the only profession i.e. soldiering, which they have learnt, is not good enough to find them suitable jobs with suitable working environment.

43. Huntington, p. 78

44. The Manual of Bangladesh Army Law, Pp. 157-160

CONCLUSIONS

Our society is changing. There are changes taking place in all spheres in Bangladesh: the standard of living in urban and rural areas is improving; literacy rate is rising and more and more, youths are becoming eligible to join the work force; our womenfolk are gradually emerging in their own rights and participating in our mainstream economy; there is improvement in the standard of our human resources and so on. All these factors are contributing to bringing about changes in our society, in our outlooks as well as in our attitudes towards adapting to the changes. Our soldiers are an integral part of our society; our society is changing and so are the needs, hopes and aspirations of our soldiers. Indeed, the way of life of our soldiers is quite different from that of their civilian counterparts and the general population. Soldiers are different because of their distinct ethos and mores. They are different for their typical service and living conditions. They accept family sacrifices and place 'duty before self'. Most importantly, they are 'willing to kill and be killed' for the greater interests of the society and the country. They are obliged to display all soldierly values including the highest standard of discipline.

Every soldier is, indeed, a member of a household- he is a son, a husband, and a father. He needs to accommodate the demands of his family - wife and children and dependents. Most of our soldiers are members of nuclear families, who also prefer to have the same after marriage. Therefore, they are to face the conflict between family demands and occupational requirements. They want to be good husbands and caring fathers and want to ensure health and welfare of their wives and children. For all these they need to have their families living with them in cantonments or else they need to be with them as often as possible.

All must understand that soldiering cannot be a life-long profession. As discussed, the retiring age is different for different ranks. Most soldiers retire as sainiks at an age of about 38-40 years, who still have a long way to go. Their going gets tough if they do not prepare well for transition to civilian life, which is the case for most of them. Therefore, to prepare well for post-retirement life, they need to train themselves on a second career - a career that is different from soldiering. Indeed, our soldiers will have the will to care for our society and the country if they are well cared for. Therefore, the purpose of this study has been not only to identify the problems and predicaments of soldiers and soldiering in the context of our changing society but also recommend measures that may help us carefully care for our soldiers. Herein lies the significance of this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has revealed certain aspects of soldiering - something soldiers can be proud of as well as matters of concern and disquiet that are caused by certain service conditions and service-related predicaments. In order to have soldiers free of cares, as much as possible, certain pragmatic measures need to be taken to help them cope with these problems without affecting or compromising with institutional requirements. For only soldiers, who are free of cares, may have the peace of mind to do their best and live up to their military liability, and/or their 'unlimited liability' for that matter. Therefore, the following recommendations may be considered to this end.⁴⁵

Married Soldiers Living with Families under Own Arrangements

The policy relating to allowing only 20% of the married soldiers to live in the Army quarters with families should prevail. Nor should the 5% policy of granting casual leave should change. However, the effects of these two policies that are the main concerns of soldiers having separated families can be mitigated, if married soldiers are allowed to live with their families in excess of the 20% policy under their own arrangement. It may be considered under the following guidelines:

- a. A married soldier may be allowed to have his family in a rented house under his own arrangement, if he is so willing for meeting his family needs - treatment of family members in the CMHs, education of children - or for allowing time for establishing relationships, particularly applicable to newly married couples.
- b. The soldier, so allowed, shall continue to live in barracks as per the existing policy. However, his unit authority may let him spend the weekends and holidays with his family provided his absence does not affect his duties and responsibilities.
- c. Any soldier, having his family under own arrangement, shall keep his authority informed of his exact location/address. Again, when at home on leave he should keep his family members or neighbours informed of his whereabouts whenever he is away. The purpose is to quickly trace him out to call him for duty whenever it becomes essential.
- d. For this he should be obliged to have his family in the vicinity of cantonments.

45. Opinions of a number of senior officers on these recommendations have been sought. They have also opined that these recommendations are worth considering.

The advantages of this arrangement are many: soldiers can have their families under their direct care to attend to their family needs; they will not need leave as frequently as they need now, which will greatly reduce the leave problem of units.

Separated Family Housing Areas in the Vicinity of Cantonments

The Army should earmark and, if possible, manage Soldiers' Housing Areas wherein houses of required living standard will be available for rent. Married soldiers, who live in barracks and are still waiting for their turn to be allotted with Army family quarters, may rent these houses for their families. Besides the advantages of being able to live with their families, this arrangement will help them have a community living with better living conditions. Most importantly, the Army will be able to exercise proper supervision and render security assistance to these areas as and when required.

Soldiers' Housing Scheme at District/Thana Level

For certain compelling circumstances like wife's employment, few soldiers may not intend to have their families living with them in cantonments but have them with parents/relatives in the villages. At the same time, they may like to send their children to reasonably good schools or have their other basic needs fulfilled. In the circumstances, they may be happy if they can have the scope to keep their families in and around their district/thana headquarters. Keeping this in mind, the Army Welfare & Rehabilitation Directorate may undertake 'Soldiers' Housing Schemes' at district/thana level. A soldier may be offered an option to have a flat from this kind of housing scheme on the following conditions:

- a. Depending on the price of each flat, which may be between TK 4-5 lacs, the number of installments for payment over a period of 20 years should be determined.
- b. The payment of installment should start as early as possible, preferably immediately after a prospective owner completes one year of service.
- c. By paying an installment of about TK 1000/= per month, he should be able to pay three-fourth of the price of the flat in about 20 years. The amount, which still remains due, should be paid off by him or be realized from his pension on his retirement.

- d. The flat should be handed over to him on payment of one-fourth of its price, which he may be able to pay after about 9 years of service - the time when he will have been married. But the ownership should be handed over to him only after he makes full payment.
- e. Anyone dismissed on disciplinary ground shall not be given the ownership, and the money he will have paid as installments, be reimbursed to him after deducting certain miscellaneous service charges.
- f. A soldier, who retires prematurely on administrative grounds, may get the ownership of the flat provided he makes full payment of the remaining amount at a time.

This scheme will hopefully help reduce family-related problems of soldiers. This will enable soldiers to find an easy way of preparing themselves for transition to civilian life after retirement. This will let them plan to have a house in thana/district headquarters. Soldiers', who will have joined this scheme, will also surely be refraining themselves from activities detrimental to military discipline. As a result, it will have a positive impact on the standard of discipline of the Army.

Enhancing Soldiers' Performance Standard

It is very much possible that soldiers, who are generally content, will not only strive for furthering their career prospects but also contribute to enhancing their individual standard. To have content soldiers it is, therefore, essential to pay due attention to two of the important service-related aspects - posting/transfer and terms of engagement.

Posting/Transfer

Each administrative division of our country has more than one Army unit and formation. Effort may be made to allow soldiers to serve in units/formations located in and around their administrative districts/divisions. They may be posted out only for operational requirements/assignments such as in the CHTs, UN peacekeeping operations or when assumption of higher ranks and appointments demand so. The merits of this arrangement will be:

- a. Soldiers will have their families, if not living with them in cantonments, at a relatively closer distance from their units. They will be able to come home on short leave or on weekends to respond to family needs, and expenditure involved for the purpose will be affordable.
- b. Demands for family quarters in cantonments will reduce and there will be less number of soldiers requiring casual leave of more than one week or so. This will facilitate units to have better personnel administration.

Terms of Engagement.

The existing policy relating to terms of engagement requires a soldier to serve for minimum 21 years to retire at an age of about 40 years. As discussed earlier, a soldier, if not promoted which is the case with most of the soldiers, has to serve in the same rank for 10-11 years more. While these soldiers become disinterested in soldiering, they also gradually become unfit for starting a second career after retirement. Besides, the Army has also to pull on with aging soldiers. Therefore, the policy on the matter should be reviewed to reduce the terms of engagement e.g. for sainiks it should be 15 years. The advantages will be: the Army will have relatively younger soldiers; they will be retiring at relatively younger age to start with a new vocation; the services of these retirees as reservists, whenever required, will be more effective and be available for a longer period.

Instilling Basic Professional Values in Soldiers

The Army now has more educated soldiers, which itself is a great step forward to our having soldiers imbued with motivation and required professional values. However, there is a need to conduct dedicated programs to apprise our soldiers of the contents of the MBAL, which is in English. Better knowledge of the Army law will certainly help keep them more disciplined and out of dilemma as to the actions they need to take during trying conditions.

Besides, the Army should continue to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. At the same time, the present policy of selection for UN peacekeeping operations basing on discipline record should be adhered to owing to the fact that it is helping the Army maintain discipline and instill the basic professional values in our soldiers.

Transitioning to Civilian Life

Despite the efforts of the Army Welfare & Rehabilitation Directorate in addressing soldiers' post-retirement issues and needs, many retirees/retired soldiers are still found to be in distress. Therefore, Soldiers' Housing Scheme, as suggested in the foregoing, should be undertaken to relieve the soldiers of their housing need - which turns out to be the most pressing concern after retirement. Through the Army Trust Bank, the Directorate should also consider giving loans to retirees to start self-employment projects such as poultry farms, running workshops etc. Such welfare projects will not only help retirees to settle down quickly but will also help enhance the image of the Army. If it so happens, it will be able to attract quality youths to become quality soldiers in the Army.

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