



BALLAD OF MECHANISED REGIMENT

The Mechanised Infantry though fairly new
Is a mighty mobile machine,
From old battalions just a few
It has grown beyond all dreams.

A creation of General K Sunderji,
The Regiment surpasses all others,
Its growth surprises our adversary,
Whose Pugnacious designs it deters.

Amongst its many veteran units
Are 1 MADRAS of Kalidhar fame;
Royal JAT of Festubert grit
And 1/8 GR the legendary name,

The highly decorated 1 SIKH is there
So is great KUMAON (GWALIOR),
1 GARHWAL did Gadra clear
1 DOGRA did Asul Uttar honour.

7 PUNJAB which fought at Dograi
Is there with Chad Bet 7 GRENADIERS,
The MARATHA (BARODA) excelled at Bajai
As 18 RAJ RIF at Basantar,

Joined 16 MAHAR the PARA spartan
As did 18 RAJPUT of Nathula.
16 JAK RIF, last of the veterans
Was followed by 9 units secular.

The 23 received new colours
By Sri Venkatraman our President Supreme,
Feb 88 saw history at Nagar,
A new Guinness record was seen.

From BTR, SCOT, and TOPAS
Which covered the initial miles,
Now, BMP Is and IIs it has
With Malutka and concorse missiles.

Recce and Support Battalions,
Are growing from day to day,
These 'Eyes'cum 'Ears'determine
Our adversary's moves and ways.

Latest to join are the GUARDS legendary
MECH INF is a family of brothers.
General Nambiar now steers devotedly,
Adding laurels anew with feathers.

From Ladakh's frost to sikkim across
MECH INF has operated with pride.
In amphibious ops it has experience gross,
Through Andaman and Lanka's tides.

A harmonious blend of class and creed,
The Regiment has guts untried.
Its potential and grit is great indeed
As the nation looks on with pride.

--Major Anil Shorey, The Punjab Regiment

The Psychosis of Rank

BRIG N B GRANT AVSM (RETD)

Any man can always enhance his rank and status; but no amount of rank and status can enhance the man.

A recent news report claimed that, there are now four Directors General of Police in Uttar Pradesh. One is incharge of Civil Defence, another of Prosecution, the third of Housing, and the fourth presides over the 'vacuum at the top', whatever that means. Whether any one is in overall charge of the State's police force was not specified. Some months earlier, it was reported that, Bihar has the dubious distinction of having 14 Inspectors General of Police. In another context, a report mentioned that Tamil Nadu has four officers holding the designation of Chief Secretary. To cap it all, the army, not willing to be left out of the rank race, till very recently had three Vice-Chiefs of the Army Staff, which we understand would enhance their sitting order of precedence at the Republic Day parade. If Parkinson's Law were to operate in our various civil and military cadre reviews, it would state that 'rank expands so as to fill the voids of quality and morals of its employees'.

The rationale behind the burgeoning of administrative heads has never been explained. Perhaps it is because, unlike politicians who are seemingly unaffected by the constant rise in the cost of living, servants of the state where incomes are fixed by rigid salary structures, find that the only escape route lies in boosting their cadres, so as to have access to higher pay and allowances.

Whatever the reason may be in the civil organisations for such inflated ranks, military functions are quite distinct from those performed by other agencies of government. If the military was left to itself to evolve its hierarchy strictly on the basis of organisational and operational requirements, a more prosaic framework would emerge; but because it is part of the bigger hierarchy of government, it is influenced by certain extraneous considerations. One of these is the working need to find equations with the civil administrations; but this, as the army has perhaps now discovered, is a hopeless and sterile contest. For example, as far as status is concerned, whereas military ranks kept increasing in the same appointment, the corresponding rank of the civilian counterpart stayed at the same level, but his pay continued to rise substantially, which in the army only does so with an increase in rank. Thus whereas before, an Under-Secretary would address a Major as

'Sir', today he would not bother to stand up even when a Major-General entered his room. Thus unknowingly, the proliferation in army ranks, has only led to the further lowering of the status of the military vis-a-vis the civilian bureaucracy.

For more than a decade now, the government has been apprehensive regarding the falling quality of officer in-take into the armed forces, and the gradual deterioration in the motivation of the Service Officer. This has reflected in the increase of disciplinary cases, even amongst senior ranks, the filing of writ petitions in civil courts, the opting for softer jobs in peace stations, and reluctance to carry out difficult but normal tasks, leave alone those beyond the call of duty. The government tried to remedy this by carrying out two cadre reviews. The basic consideration was, to create more higher ranks within the existing establishments, and by giving concessions like free rations to the officer (not to his family) in peace stations, increase in the use of free postal envelopes in field areas, authorise more time-scale promotions to the rank of Lt-colonel, and an increase in the presentation of medals on republic day. On the face of it, all this gave the appearance of not only raising the soldier's emoluments, but also giving him parity of status with the civil services. It was made to believe that the army never had it so good, and the ever credulous soldier took the bait, hook, line and sinker. A detached study would however reveal that, these concessions only gave marginal fringe benefits. On the other hand, its effect on the efficiency of the service, may even prove to be rather damaging, by allowing mediocrity to creep in the realm of professionalism in the senior ranks.

To begin with, with the proliferation of ranks, unwittingly, the military has demonstrated the efficacy of the Peter Principle, by increasing the statistical chances of a greater number of officers now reaching their level of incompetence. An incompetent, or a not fully employed incumbent, being incapable of justifying his present job, takes undue interest in his previous job, to the annoyance of his subordinate. The military has today defacto attempted to flatten the pyramidal organisation, albeit more in default than in a planned manner, and has landed itself in a situation where, to take the Air Force as an example, Group Captains are commanding Squadrons, Air Vice Marshals are commanding stations, and even Air Marshals want to run the flight commander's office.

Again, with the decision to upgrade unit command to full Colonel, now implies that entry to the general cadre, such as it remains, will be in the rank of Brigadier. If an officer, once so promoted, is a success, all is well. If, however, he is not, he will have to be carried in that rank regardless of performance till retirement. The cushion of time, available earlier, for assessing

their performance in the rank of Colonel, will now be lost. Besides this, in many regiments there will now be two Lt-Colonels and two Subedar Majors. These two ranks cannot be driven like a coach and horse, as such, accountability will take a back seat. The army justification, if any, for tinkering with such time and battle tested appointments, is beyond comprehension. I guess the Navy will get over the problem by simply stating that, if it cannot provide more ships for its increased number of admirals, it can always build more cabins in the existing vessels for accommodating them.

At the higher levels there are now six different slots carrying the rank of Lt Generals, with the Army Commanders at the top, followed by Corps-Commanders and PSOs at Army HQ, with the Director Generals, Command Chiefs of Staff and Commandants of training establishments lower down. The criteria for promotion to Army Commander has necessarily to be stringent; it must include a successful spell as a Corps Commander. Since the number of corps commands is limited, all aspirants to army command, and these will now be far too many, can at best hope to serve for a year or 18 months, in the intermediate assignments carrying the same rank. These brief tenures will do no justice either to the appointments, or to the individuals.

It is the professionals quality of the technical Services however, that will suffer most in this rank syndrome. Even with the ushering in of the scientific age of Rajiv Gandhi's 21st century, in our army, there still seems to be a belief that, the environment under which the technical officer works, is not conducive to leadership development fit for higher command. The result is that, some highly qualified officers of the technical arms, are opting out for appointments in the General Staff cadre, for the sake of getting higher ranks denied to them in their own technical fields. In this respect, the recent policy decision taken by the Army Medical Corps, forcing expert medical specialists to become generalists for getting higher ranks, will result in the Medical Corps losing first-rate professional specialists, and in the bargain getting indifferent administration, more interested in the advancement of their ranks, than in the enhancement of their profession.

It could be argued that, mediocrity in a higher rank shouldn't cause undue qualms to the Services, since it is tolerated with equanimity elsewhere. Other walks of life, however, do not carry direct responsibility for the lives of men; the military on the other hand has to be very circumspect in the choice of its leaders. For soldiers, the outcome of wars never was, and never will be, determined by the quantum of brass worn on its shoulders. What the soldier has been clamouring for, and is still doing so now, is for a substantial increase in his total emoluments irrespective of rank, so as to be able to compete with the rest of society for the same kind of quality of life, which today he cannot

do so on his military pay. Although the new Army Pay Commission is now venturing to do just that, however, the damage may have already been done. Besides, even though many of the recommendations made therein have since been accepted by the government, what is the guarantee, that if the Police and the IAS increase their rank structures still further, the Army would not also want to do the same, to get even. Rank consciousness in the army has reached such a stage that, rows of seats are reserved rank-wise for officers, even in cinemas and other places of social intercourse, a thing which was never heard of in the past.

Perhaps we can best conclude this by comparing it with the proverbial stanza by James Reeves, of how, 'for the want of a nail the battle was lost'. Let it never be said of the Indian army that, for the demand of a rank, the pay was lost; for the want of a pay, the status was lost; for the demand of a status, the profession was lost; for the want of a profession, the war was lost; and all for the demand of a rank.