

Abstract

CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT IN THE INDIAN ARMED FORCES

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The historical perspectives highlight evolution of customs and tradition in the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force. These include the great tradition of gallantry, honour, dress customs, mess customs and services courtesies highlighting the system of salutation and addressing of services personnel. Naval customs, musical customs, battle-cries as a motivational force when assaulting the objective, battle honours, medals and medal ribbons, war memorials are dealt with to give a bird's eye view. The evolution of the privileged class of the Indian Army Officers, their training and the aspects of the military leaderships, man-management and close relationship between officers and men gives insight into these important issues.

The current state of the cross cultural management in the Armed Forces emphasizes the aspects of secularism in recruitment, selection, training and development as there is no reservation quota for SC/ST or OBC in the Indian Armed Forces. Emerging consumerist culture and deteriorating recruitment standards leading to a shortfall of 14,000 officers in the Army is alarming. The *Institution of family welfare* under the supervision of respective service chief's wife is useful for healthy cultural development for soldiers' families.

The joint nature of technical operations and strategic planning necessitate proper understanding, co-operation and amalgamation of work cultures of the defence forces. Restoration of open system of performance appraisal and objective reporting, constitution of Armed Forces Tribunal and introduction of women commissioned officers since 1992 are steps to build healthy cultural traditions in the Armed Forces. Fair and just evaluation during various competitions, educational and cultural facilities available at Armed Forces Institutes, common dress codes and bill of fare serve as a bridge for diversified cultural ethos of people joining the Armed Forces. The established Indian tradition of Tolerance, Truth, Non Violence and Compassion help the Armed Forces Personnel to adapt to the cultural ethos of civilians while acting in aid to civil authority and during counter-insurgency operations. Co-habitation by soldiers in barracks of cantonments assist in smooth amalgamation of peculiar regional cultures of recruits and evolution of a common Armed Forces culture as they get trained and adjusted to the working environment.

The complexity of warfare and emergence of convergence technology in the state-of-the-art weaponry demand that variant culture and ethos should be managed efficiently through evolution of carefully designed training programs. Common standard operating procedures (SOPs) for nuclear, biological and chemical warfare, Introduction of command, control, communication, computer and intelligence (CI) system would require intense mutual understanding of various Armed Services and co-operation between the three Defense Forces. The Armed Forces need to be Indianised and old British tradition like caste-based regiments need to be shed to meet the secular aspirations of the public. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) needs to allocate sufficient funds for acquisition and up-gradation programs and evolve healthy work culture in the new millennium.
