

THE FALLACY & DANGERS IN LOOKING FOR *INTERSE MERIT* AMONGST ARMY COMMANDERS OR THEIR EQUIVALENTS IN THE NAVY & AIR FORCE FOR FILLING UP POSTS OF CHIEFS OF THE ARMED FORCES INSTEAD OF GOING BY THE TIME TESTED PRINCIPLE OF SENIORITY.

by



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The Bombay Sappers

Hindus as a Race

1. Lack of Moral values & Scruples. Hindus, who comprise 80% of Bharat's population, are cowards, dishonest & corrupt; have no pride in their culture & traditions and are totally devoid of moral values & scruples, patriotism, nationalistic feelings & self-respect. Sanatana Dharma is the Religion, nay, 'way of life' of this land called Bharat; yet a few amongst us have the *temerity* to openly declare that, Sanatana Dharma needs to be exterminated like Dengue, Malaria & CoVid.

2. Lack of Unity. It is the lack of 'Unity' amongst the Hindus and their Kings, that, numerous Muslim invaders, all barbarians, starting with Mohd Bin Quasim invaded & conquered Sind in 712 AD; followed by a host of other Muslim invaders, culminating in Mughal Rule, which ended in 1857. The Mughal Raj was followed by the British Raj which lasted till August 1947. And thus it will be seen that we Indians, the Hindus, have been slaves initially of the Muslim invaders followed by the British, for a period of 1200 years. And that is the reason for Hindus, displaying a 'slavish mentality' even today. Just see the way, Hindu masses licking the '*dhool*' (ie. dust) of the '*pavithra charanon*' (ie. holy feet) of a white woman of foreign origin, who knows nothing about Sanatana Dharma or the Customs & traditions of this great land called Bharat.

3. A Nation of Bikaos. Bharat is a Nation of 'Bikaos', ie. 'purchasable commodities'; where people's souls, and that includes votes, can be purchased at the time of Elections, by offering freebies, viz. hard cash in thousands of Rupees kept in envelopes at one's doorsteps, free water, free electricity, free bus travel, free TV sets, free Refrigerators, free mixer-grinders, etc. the list is long. Today, corruption has become a way of life in our Country; immaterial whichever party or alliance is in power at the Centre or in States. No wonder, *Shri Anand Ranganathan*, an eminent Scientist and a research historian & analyst of international repute, has stated in his book, '*Hindus in Hindu Rashtra*', that, '*Hindus are eighth class citizens and victims of State sanctioned apartheid*'. He has in his book very correctly summarized as to what ails the Hindu society in this Country.

Democracy, Governance & Politicians

4. It is said, 'Of all forms of Governance, Democracy is the least evil'. According to Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the USA,

'Democracy is Government of the people; by the people and for the people'.

And when you say, 'by the people' it means 'by the representatives of the people' who are known as Politicians.

Democracy in India- a Farce & a sham

5. Reproduced below is extracts of a News item which appeared in **The Statesman**, six years ago, ie.in 2018, regarding Politics and Politicians:

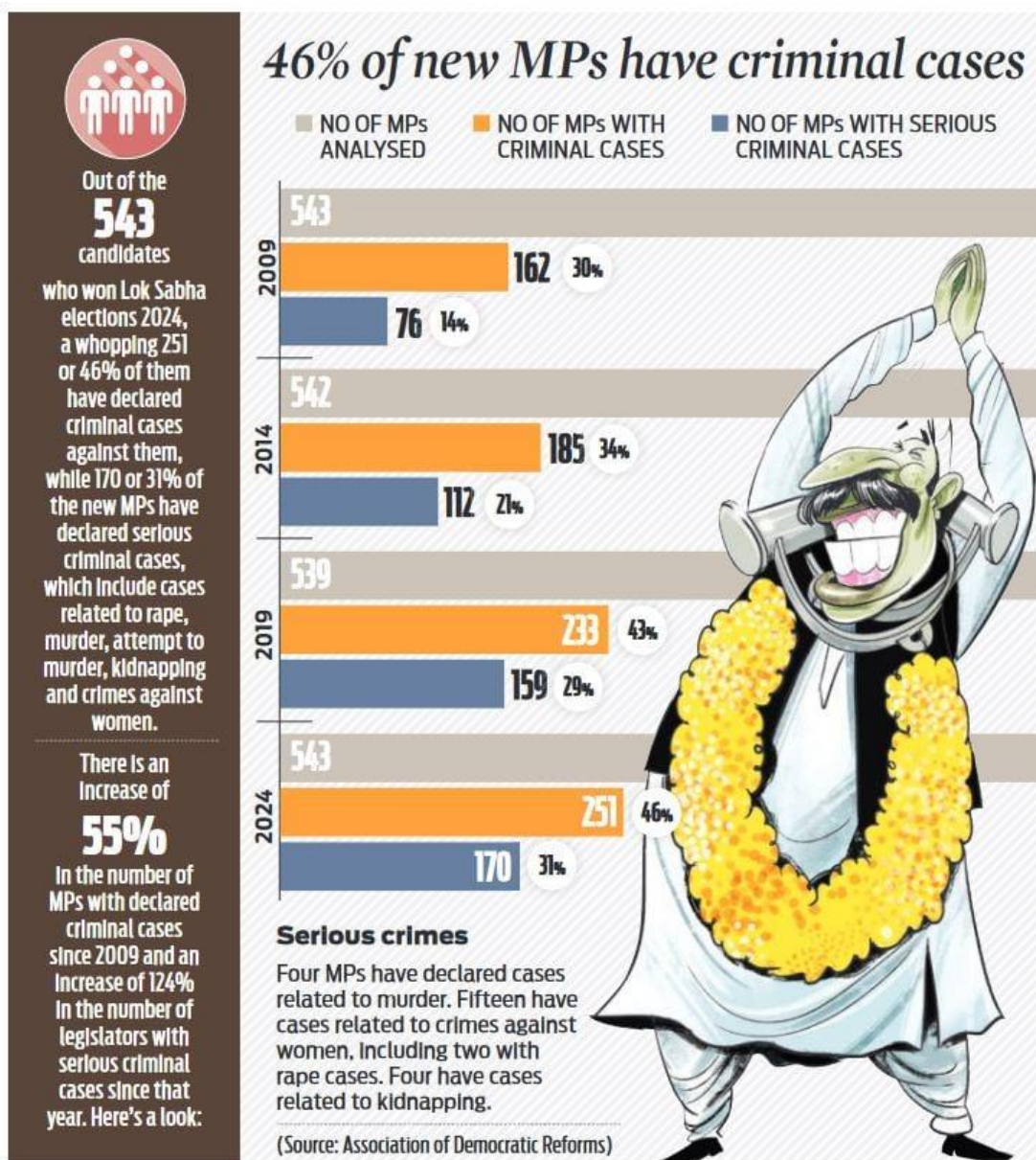
"Patriotism is the last refuge for a scoundrel" Dr Samuel Johnson said. In George Bernard Shaw's words, "Politics is the last resort for a scoundrel"

https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/democracy-needs-citizens-to-step-up-1502714064.html#google_vignette

A Bangalore based Techie, Bubby Andrews wise cracked to reflect the present political situation of India, by saying, *‘Were these two great critics alive today, sure they would have corrected their quotes by replacing ‘last’ with ‘first’.*

Criminalisation of Lok Sabha , Rajya Sabha and the State Assemblies

6. In India, a large majority of MPs & MLAs elected to serve the poor & downtrodden of our Country, are charged with murder, rape, loot & corruption. *The Statesman* in its report, six years ago, went on to say, *‘1765 (36%) MPs & MLAs as against a total of 4896 lawmakers in the Parliament and State Assemblies are facing criminal trial in 3045 cases’.*



7. Please click on the following link and read the Article, '46% of new MPs have criminal cases registered against them' appearing in the New Indian Express on 9 June 2024

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2024/Jun/06/record-46-of-newly-elected-lok-sabha-mps-facing-criminal-cases-study#:~:text=251%20of%20the%20543%20newly,the%20Association%20of%20Democratic%20Reforms.>

8. The above quotes and statistics of Criminals in Politics, speaks volumes of the nature of our Democracy, which I say, is a '*sham & a farce*'; for no honest ordinary man or woman can ever dream of contesting an Election. Elections in India, are all a question of money power and muscle power; where, '*jis ki laati, uski bhains*' is the order of the day. The hallmark of today's Politician is: he is dishonest, unethical, immoral & totally devoid any scruples; and whatever he promises or speaks, he does not mean to fulfill them; and whatever he does or speaks is only for securing his *gaddi* (ie. seat) for the sake of power. And for power, he needs to get votes by means fair or foul. Politicians will not hesitate to sell even their wives, sisters & daughters, for the sake of votes & power.

Four pillars of Democracy

9. One often hears that Democracy in India rests on three pillars, viz. the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. Well, even if one of the three pillars fail, Democracy in India would cave in and the whole edifice of Democracy would come down crashing. The fact that it has not happened, but on the contrary, Democracy in India is vibrant & thriving, despite all its ills, it is because there is yet one more pillar which is holding Indian Democracy aloft. And that is the central pillar, the strongest pillar of them all, the Armed Forces of this Country, which stands guard 24x7x365, ie. year after year, decade after decade, safeguarding our far flung borders in most inhospitable terrain.

There are no Holy Cows

10. There are no Holy Cows; be it an individual or an Institution; be it the Prime Minister & his Cabinet colleagues or the Military Hierarchy, comprising the CDS, the three Service Chiefs and the Army Commanders & their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force. No individual or an Institution is above criticism for their acts of omission or commission leading to destruction of the fighting potential of the Armed Forces.

Politicisation of the Armed Forces and its disastrous consequences

11. It was Indira Gandhi who believed in having Committed Judiciary and Committed Armed Forces Chiefs to do her bidding, whether right or wrong, all for the sake of Politics and remaining in power. The means never mattered to achieve her ends.

12. Seniority in the Armed Forces is sacrosanct and it is the cornerstone of Discipline. Amongst the Army Commanders, even if one is just one number senior, he is senior; and it is his right to be promoted and appointed as COAS when a vacancy arises. An Army Commander who becomes a Chief by superseding his senior(s) by virtue of his political connections, not only loses his moral authority to render sane & mature advice to the Defence Minister and Prime Minister; but he is soon seen being treated as a vassal; and would be seen talking/singing what the Prime Minister wants to hear, whether it is in the interest of the Nation or not. Such men are **YES MEN**.

13. **Yes Men.** The following is an extract of an Article, 'Yes Men' by Purnima Thripathi & Venkitesh Ramakrishnan which appeared in the Magazine 'Frontline' on 18 June 2020.

"Field Marshall Sam Manekshaw, considered one of the greatest military strategists India has produced, was also known for his piquant comments and biting repartees. One of his oft-repeated comments, indirectly referring to Army officers subservient to the political and administrative leadership, as **YES MEN**, is reproduced below:

<https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/beware-the-yes-man/article31765890.ece>

“A Yes Man is a dangerous man. He is a menace. He will go very far. He can become a minister, a secretary or a Field Marshall, but he can never become a leader, nor ever be respected. He will be used by his superiors, disliked by his colleagues and despised by his subordinates. So, discard the Yes Man.”

Fallacy & dangers in looking for *interse merit* among Army Commanders or their equivalents while appointing COAS/CNS/CAS.

14. The promotion pyramid in the Armed Forces being very steep, only the cream, ie. those who are professionally sound & competent, make it to the rank of Lt Gen in the General Cadre. And for a General Cadre Officer of the rank of Maj Gen/Lt Gen to be appointed as a Corps Commander, the stepping stone to becoming an Army Commander, he should have a residual service of three years, ie. he should not have crossed the age of 57 years, on the day he takes over command of a Corps. And a Lt Gen of the General Cadre after having commanded Corps is considered for appointment as an Army Commander, provided he has a year & a half of residual service; ie. he should not have crossed 58 years & six months by way of age on the day he takes over as an Army Commander. And, it is an accepted norm, that, when any Lt Gen of the General Cadre having commanded a Corps is appointed as an Army Commander, he is fit enough to be the Chief; and as per norm the senior most Army Commander gets promoted & appointed as the Chief, when a vacancy arises.

15. Dangers of looking for *Interse Merit* amongst the Army Commanders while choosing one of them for promotion & appointment as the Army Chief. Given Hindus' propensity for dishonesty & betrayal, to look for any *interse merit* among Army Commanders & their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force for promoting & appointing one of them as the Chief, would:

- (a) open the flood gates of betrayal & character assassination by Army Commanders against one another;
- (b) not only that, the Army Commanders in race for the Chief's post, would leave no stone unturned to go all out to dig out dirt from the past of the other Army Commanders in contention; and to find out whether they are/were involved in any acts of omission & commission or indiscretion, starting from the time they were Battalion Commanders;
- (c) Army Commanders instead of staying in their HQ and ensuring the Operational preparedness of their Command, would be seen visiting Delhi every now & then to:
 - (i) Indulge in the worst form of sycophancy, wherein, one would see Army Commanders sucking up to the Defence Secretary, the Raksha Mantri and the Prime Minister, by way of calling on them to shower them with appropriate gifts according to their standing & stature, to curry favours and to remain in their good books for consideration for promotion & appointment as the Army Chief, when the time comes; and,
 - (ii) Call on all MPs of the Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha from their home State, requesting them to use their good offices by exerting pressure on the Defence Minister & the Prime Minister to get them appointed as the Chief.

16. What a shame and what a degradation of the top brass of the Military Hierarchy one would witness in their race to become the Chief, by means fair or foul.

A few examples of 'Yes Men' as Chiefs

17. Appointment of Lt Gen PN Thapar as COAS. On retirement of Gen KS Thimayya, Lt Gen PN Thapar was appointed as COAS, superseding Lt Gen SPP Thorat, the then Eastern Army Commander. The then Govt headed by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru as PM with Shri Krishna Menon as his Defence Minister did so because Lt Gen SPP Thorat, the then Eastern Army Commander, had by way of a Military Appreciation, apprised & warned them way back in Oct 1959, of the impending Chinese invasion of India,

which came to pass in October 1962, with disastrous defeat of the Indian Army, despite the gallant Officers & Men of the Indian Army displaying highest standards of Bravery while fighting the numerically strong Chinese Army, known as PLA, in the highest traditions of, '*last man; last round*' in the icy heights of the Himalayas, without any winter clothing and running low on ammunition. Immediately after the Indo-China War of 1962, Gen PN Thapar, the COAS, was unceremoniously sacked; and was succeeded by Gen JN Chaudhary, the then Army Commander, Southern Command.

18. **Note:** It however another matter, not known to many, that, one evening after the Chinese debacle, Shri YB Chawan called up Lt Gen SPP Thorat who was leading a retired life; and requested him to come to Delhi as Nehru, the PM, wanted to see him. Lt Gen SPP Thorat did go to Delhi and met Nehru. Nehru during meeting, expressed his regret that Gen SPP Thorat's Military Appreciation of Military Threat by the Chinese, carried out in 1959, was never put up to him; and asked retired Lt Gen SPP Thorat to take over as the COAS, succeeding Gen PN Thapar who had been unceremoniously sacked. In response, Lt Gen SPP Thorat thanked Nehru for reposing such trust in him; but, politely declined to accept his offer, as long as Krishna Menon was the Defence Minister. Krishna Menon, the then Defence Minister, too was sacked soon after; and was replaced by Shri YB Chawan. Since Gen JN Chaudhary, the then Army Commander, Southern Command, had by then been appointed as the COAS, succeeding Gen PN Thapar; Shri YB Chawan, the Defence Minister, at the behest of Nehru, requested Lt Gen SPP Thorat to head the Defence Advisory Council placed directly under the PM, as its Chairman; which he gladly accepted; and rendered yeoman service.

19. Lt Gen Arun Sridhar Vaidya, MVC (Bar), ie. twice bestowed with MVC. Indira Gandhi, as PM, made Lt Gen Arun Sridhar Vaidya, MVC (Bar), then the Southern Army Commander, as Chief of Army Staff (COAS), by superseding Lt Gen SK Sinha, the then Vice COAS, who was senior to Lt Gen AS Vaidya. The result: Gen AS Vaidya, as COAS, presided over the execution of '*OPERATION BLUE STAR*' in which our troops stormed the

Golden Temple at Amritsar (Punjab) on 6 June 1984, to get rid of terrorist Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwale (posing himself as the 11th Guru and strutting about with a gold tipped arrow in his hand) and his gang who had illegally occupied the Golden Temple, the most revered shrine of the Sikhs all over the world. '*Op Blue Star*' resulted in scores of young officers & soldiers getting killed; and hundreds of them getting injured, a large number of them very seriously.

20. '*Op Blue Star*' created mayhem in the Army, with Sikh troops killing Brigadier RS Puri, Commandant of the Sikh Regimental Centre at Ramgarh (Jharkhand) and looting of the Regimental Armoury; and Sikh troops deserting their Battalions from as far off places as Agartala (Tripura) and Tiruvananthapuram (Kerala) and marching towards Amritsar. It took carrying out of about tens of Court Martials to restore discipline amongst the Sikh troops and another two decades to regain their trust.

21. Was carrying out '*Op Blue Star*' the duty/responsibility of the Army? No; definitely not. It was purely a law & order matter of the State of Punjab; and it is the State Police along with personnel from CRPF who should have been sent to storm the Golden Temple. Then why didn't Gen AS Vaidya, the then COAS, say NO to Indira Gandhi, the PM, to carrying out of Op Blue Star? The answer is simple: he lacked the moral strength to stand up to her; as he was beholden to her for making him COAS over the head of Lt Gen SK Sinha, his senior.

22. Fast forward to 31 December 2016. Lt Gen Bipin Rawat, then Vice Chief of Army Staff was promoted & appointed as COAS by the BJP Govt headed by Shri ND Modi, the Prime Minister, on 31 December 2016, by superseding Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi, the Eastern Army Commander and Lt Gen PM Hariz, the Southern Army Commander, both of them senior to Lt Gen Bipin Rawat.

23. Criteria for deciding 'Interse merit' amongst Army Commanders. A couple of Veterans whom I personally hold in high regards & respect, while vociferously batting for consideration of '*interse merit*' amongst

Army Commanders, while appointing Chiefs, are silent on the aspect of 'parameters' that will have to be taken into account while deciding on '*Interse merit*' amongst Army Commanders and their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force. Will the Parameters include: (a) Personality & Military bearing; (b) Professional knowledge & competence; (c) ability to get along and play ball with, ie. be subservient to the Defence Secretary; and Political Masters, the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister; (d) be amenable to execute non-military tasks whatever in nature; (e) should not raise uncomfortable Questions relating to Op Preparedness, viz. lack of/shortage of military armaments, equipment critical for National Defence & Security; and above all (f) should never talk about the welfare & wellbeing of Serving Officers and troops in general, viz. their pay & allowances, their living conditions, etc; and welfare of Ex-Servicemen, in particular; for, the very words 'welfare of Ex-servicemen' is anathema to the Defence Secretary, the Finance Secretary, the Defence Minister, the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister; who at every given/ available opportunity wish to cut down the Pay & Allowances and perks & privileges granted to Soldiers.

24. Committee for looking into '*Interse merit*'. The Veterans who have been batting for appointment of Chiefs based on '*interse merit*' of Army Commanders and their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force, are again silent when it comes to who will decide on the '*interse merit*'. Will it be a committee which will decide on the suitability of every Army Commander and their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force, in contention, as to their suitability for promotion & appointment as Chief? And who will head the Committee, ie. will the Committees be headed by the Hon'ble Defence Minister or the Prime Minister or the CJI or the CDS; and, who will be the Members of the Committee; and, what would be the terms of reference for the Committee so formed to select the most suitable Army Commander (and their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force) for promotion & appointment as Chief?

25. Fast forward to 30 Sep 2022: Appointment of Lt Gen Anil Chauhan as the CDS. Normally, it is a serving or a retired Chief of the Army/Navy/Air Force, a four star General/Admiral/Air Chief Marshal who is appointed as the Chief of Defence Staff, like in the case of Gen Bipin Rawat who was appointed as CDS wef 01 January 2020 on his retirement as COAS on 31 December 2019.

26. On demise of Gen Bipin Rawat, the CDS, who unfortunately passed away on 08 December 2021, Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane, the then COAS, being the senior most amongst the Chiefs, should have been automatically elevated and appointed as the CDS; but that did not happen; and the post was kept vacant for nine months, ie. till 30 September 2022, when Veteran Lt Gen Anil Chauhan was resurrected and appointed as the CDS.

27. Lt Gen Anil Chauhan, on his retirement as the Eastern Army Commander, was appointed as an Advisor to Shri Ajit Doval, the National Security Advisor (NSA). Resurrection and appointment of a retired Army Commander of the rank of Lt Gen as CDS, is definitely a departure from accepted norms; and for doing so, ie. to accommodate Lt Gen Anil Chauhan, who had retired as an Army Commander on 31 May 2021, the Govt showed no compunction in tweaking the rules; by announcing that even a serving/retired officer of the rank of Lt Gen could be considered for appointment as CDS. Such an announcement was not in National interest; as serving Army Commanders (and their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force) by then having achieved a certain amount of propensity to betray their seniors and colleagues, thought it wise not to stand up and render sane & mature advice but to keep quiet, for fear of losing their chance to be considered for appointment as CDS. Why would they? They would not like to antagonize their Political Masters when each one of them is aspiring to become CDS, under the tweaked rules that even a serving Lt Gen or or their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force can be considered for appointment as CDS.

Note: *I have known Gen Anil Chauhan, the present CDS, from the time he was a Brigadier in Army HQ; and I have been touch with him during his years of climbing up the ladder; and I am in touch with him even today. Though **Gen Anil Chauhan** requires no certificate from me, **I have always known him to be a thoroughbred professional Soldier; and a MAN of transparent honesty and unimpeachable integrity, ever ready to extend a helping hand.** However in his present appointment as CDS, one cannot rule out the possibility of his taking decisions/actions based on compulsions of political expediency, on account of his being beholden to his Mentor, Shri Ajit Doval, the NSA; and his Political Masters, the Defence Mister and the Prime Minister.*

Summing up

28. To end, I would like to leave it to the readers to decide whether they would like to subscribe to the views expressed by a couple of Veterans, *“Why should the Country be deprived of the best talent available among the Army Commanders or their equivalents, considering their interse merit, while appointing Chiefs ”*; or say, *‘It is best that we stick to the time tested principle of ‘seniority’ amongst Army Commanders or their equivalents in the Navy & Air Force, while filling up the post of Chiefs in the Armed Forces.*

About the Author



Col SS Rajan, born 13 Oct 1944, was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers (The Bombay Sappers) on 30 June 1963. During the 1971 War, he commanded 182 Engineer Construction Company (of 268 Engineer Regiment) in Boyra-Jessore-Khulna sector in the Eastern Theatre; culminating in the liberation of Bangladesh on 16 Dec 1971.

He was Commander 24 Border Roads Task Force (BRTF) in Mizoram during the period Dec 1984-May 87; and, then commanded a Training Battalion in Bombay Engineer Group & Centre, Kirkee, Pune. Thereafter, he attended the Long Defence Management Course (ldmc-19), now renamed as Higher Defence Mangement Course (hdmc) in 1988-89 at the College of Defence Management, Secunderabad. He was Col ‘Q’ HQ UP Area (now Uttar Bharat Area) during 1989-90; Col ‘Q’ HQ Delhi Area (1990-93); and Additional Chief Engineer & Engineer Advisor to AOC-in-C Training Command (IAF), Bangalore (1993-96); whence he retired on 31 Oct 1996.

