

## [BOUND TO BURST- THE AGNIPATH BUBBLE](https://news4masses.com/bound-to-burst-agnipath-bubble/)

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by



**Lt Gen Prakash Katoch**

**[Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and former and DG Information Systems]**

**Email: Lt Gen Prakash Katoch <prakashkatoch7@gmail.com>**,

Quoting abrogation of Article 370 in J&K, CDS General Anil Chauhan said India doesn't need a "written" National Security Policy (NSP). Can he explain why criticism prevailed through decades that instead of NSP we have instruction in '*bits and pieces*' in various ministries? Does abrogation of Article 370 constitute NSP? Why did the government in 2010 task NSA Ajit Doval to define NSP? Would a written NSP imply accountability, which the government fears? Social media posts call this "payback time" by Chauhan to his mentor – Doval; since he was under Doval for 8-9 months as a retired three-star officer before being appointed four-star CDS by tweaking the selection criteria.

General Chauhan has also been praising the 'Agnipath' scheme, brushing aside "some veterans" criticizing it. Significantly, former COAS General MM Naravane wrote in his memoirs that Agnipath was thrust upon the Armed Forces. But neither he nor other Service Chiefs protested. Naravane also mentions his decision to not engage advancing PLA tanks after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's dictum: "*Jo Uchit Samjho Karo*" – do as you deem fit. One post terms this Naravane's feeble attempt (due to his Nagpur connection) to absolve the political leadership for the pusillanimous response to China in 2020. **But the political hierarchy cannot deny accountability for China's territorial gains notwithstanding government denials.**

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The "some veterans", which the CDS scoffed at for criticizing Agnipath, include Admiral Arun Prakash, former Chief of Naval Staff, whose views can be [read here](#), who says national security is globally considered by economists (not soldiers) – as "the first

charge to the treasury” but defence spending in India is relegated to the “unscheduled” category and linking it to veterans pension is another anomaly, which led to Agnipath.

Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi, former Vice Chief of Army Staff and Founder Director of Centre for Land Warfare Studies, whose observations must be [read here](#), writes “the mess created by the government in first announcing a new system of recruitment in the army and then trying to retrieve their bungling, reminds one of a few basic issues one learnt in the 40 years of service in the nation’s army.”

Views of Lt. Gen. Harwant Singh, former Deputy Chief of Army Staff can be [read here](#), who writes if name alone (Agniveer) could deliver, then much else becomes redundant and in fact superfluous; pointing out that change for the sake of change can result in failure. Similarly, views of Lt. Gen PG Kamath, former Commandant Army War College, can be [read here](#) who calls Agnipath a path towards self-immolation with valid reasoning. He questions why the Cabinet Committee on Security did not consult Service Chiefs while discussing Agnipath?

Can these veterans be considered run of the mill riff-raff? Not many are aware that under bureaucratic pressure, the Army proposed an experiment with 100 officers and 1,000 soldiers for the Tour of Duty – later named Agnipath. But the government stopped regular recruitment for two years, creating massive manpower deficiencies to ensure no protests by the military against en-mass induction of Agniveers. The fact that RSS out up stalls to sponsor first induction of Agniveers indicated the plan was conceived by the PMO in conjunction with RSS.

Above was preceded by a massive media campaign of military pensions being a heavy burden on defence, leaving little for modernization. But when it appeared in media that 40 percent of defence pensions are consumed by small number of civilian-defence employees, expenditure in other government services (despite national pension scheme) is far greater than Armed Forces and every civilian defence employee is four times more expensive than his/her serving/veteran military counterpart, Defence Minister Rajnath said that Agnipath is not about money – but to bring youthfulness in the Armed Forces. Can he explain in which war the Indian Army (including taking back the incredible heights in Kargil during 1999) experienced lack of youthfulness? And, what assured re-employment is he harping on at the cost of combat effectiveness?

A perfectly running system of regular recruitment, effective in wars and operations, was replaced by Agnipath, perhaps to: divert attention from the unprecedented high unemployment levels; providing security guards to corporate who fund elections; destroying regimental system of the Army (which has been the bedrock of success in battle) as proclaimed by the NSA and under false pretext of labeling it “colonial”.

In 4-years, Agniveers cannot pick up requisite soldierly skills, on-job training is misnomer especially with units widely deployed in operational areas, 25% absorption in military means increasing manpower shortages; employment of demobilized Agniveers in police/CAPF is similar to ex-servicemen that has not worked in the past and will imply demobilized Agniveer starting at the very bottom (4-year military service not counted); unemployed Agniveers would be preyed upon by terrorist/militant/goon forces unless the plan is to raise a private armed militia for ethnic cleansing like the 5000-6000 strong armed state-supported Arambai Tengol in Manipur.

Some quote Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, former Western Army Commander who favoured short tenures for soldiers. But this is 2024, not 1965, and short-tenured soldiers have ended up as cannon fodder in the Russian and Ukrainian armies in the Ukraine War. Operational capability of Agniveers cannot be compared to regular soldiers. Ironically, appeasing China has led policy makers to believe there would be no war. But China is feverishly consolidating along the LAC, has deployed J-20 fighter jets and AWAC at Shiagste and is [helping Pakistan consolidate defences](#) along the LoC with India. Looking at the global dynamics and US-NATO warmongering, can our pundits vouch that India will not face war and it will not be a long one?

Not acknowledging damage by Agnipath to the bond between the armies of India and Nepal is being naive. The logic that shortages in Nepalese Gorkha-manned Regiments of the Indian Army is stupid; only helping to break the Army’s regimental system, making all units all-class like police units. This shortsightedness overlooks how it has contributed to Nepal moving further into Beijing’s strategic sphere – joining BRI, Nepalese coins with maps claiming Indian Territory and allowing China oil exploration in the Terai region. Can we visualize how this helps China’s hybrid war? Do we know how [China orchestrated the Hamas attack on Israel](#) last October?

### **Would the Defence Minister, the NSA and the CDS explain the following?**

- If the Agnipath is so good, why is it not introduced in police/CAPF?
- Which countries in the world make military pensions part of the Defence budget?
- Is there a secret 'paid' agenda to hollow the man behind the machine?
- Family of a policeman killed fighting drug mafia is awarded Rs one crore compensation and one family member assured government job but why does family of an Agniveer, like Jitendra Singh Tanwar (inset) killed in counter insurgency operations, get peanuts?

A former COAS, member of the ruling party, has hinted of likely changes in Agnipath. If these changes are increasing Agniveers military service from 4 to 5 years and absorption in military 50% instead of 25%, it still degrades military capability. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi talks of 8.2% economic growth being just a beginning and India aims a \$7 trillion economy by 2023, why can't we scrap Agnipath and revert to regular recruitment. The BJP-RSS should not make this a prestige issue.

An erudite veteran-scholar Colonel, who is hardcore BJP, says, "The trick to subjugate an organization is to infect the head, so that the fence starts eating the crop – this is what has been done to the military and 'yes men' are dime a dozen – Cry My Beloved Country Cry."

A former Vice Chief of Army Staff writes, "We have a serious handicap.... the import ex China has grown since Galwan in 2020... Our Leaders are looking at just the next elections and no one is willing to recommend guns over butter... We in uniform may crib about it but I don't see light at the end of the tunnel. We may barter some more land to look good and continue freebies to the teeming masses."

Finally, the majority view is that saying or writing anything means talking to a wall. The Agnipath bubble will burst in the next war but the noise will be obfuscated by the paid media.+

#### **About the Author**

Lt Prakash Katoch is former Col of the Regiment, the Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and former and DG Information Systems.

