

Indian Express, September 12, 1983

Army leadership

Sir,

There is a general tendency among retired officers to feel that the institution in which they served has changed for the worse since they left service. The conclusions of General Antia in his article "Decline of Army leadership" (IE Aug 18) may not have been born out of such a tendency. But the pessimistic view taken by the General can hardly improve matters or put the public wise.

The example of indiscipline and sycophancy cited by the General cannot be defended but then a few examples such as these cannot be used to condemn army leadership as a whole. The ideal, from which the General feels the Army has fallen, never existed. I have served in the Army nearly during the same period as the General has and could pull out numerous examples from that period to match the recent ones highlighted by him; but to what purpose? The situation in other armies of the World is also not the ideal that the General has in mind, and, relatively, perhaps, our army leadership deserves more praise than condemnation.

The real test of leadership is war and the Indian army leadership has stood the test of two recent wars. Indeed, with the armed forces of the two countries more or less evenly matched the military advantage gained by our army in both the wars, was primarily due to superior military leadership. The officer-Jawan ratio among those killed in these wars speaks volumes for the courage, spirit of sacrifice, and devotion to duty of the officers who led their troops in battle. Could the decline have set in immediately after the 1971 war?

What appears to be a spurt in the number of cases of indiscipline - and let us say sycophancy - may not be really so. There are two reasons why there seems to be a rise in their number. The interest of the people in the armed forces has greatly increased over the years and the army today is more exposed to public gaze than before. Every newspaper has a military correspondent which not many had some years back. Consequently many happenings in the army which went unnoticed before are now receiving the attention of the press and the people. Secondly, with the army having increased nearly four fold the number of such cases is bound to increase even if the percentage remains the same.

One wonders what led the General to believe that the standards of training have fallen. The general impression among knowledgeable people is that the Army has never had it so good as far as training is concerned.

The General's conclusion that the junior officer today stands isolated as he is not being fully accepted in the officer fold because of the broad base from which he has been selected is arbitrary. The terms junior and senior are relative and the cut off year between the two not having been mentioned it is not clear as to who is not accepting whom. The General might have known that the selection base was broadened immediately after Independence and has remained broad ever since. Where then are the officers who could claim to have been selected from a narrow base?

**MAJOR K BRAHMA SINGH
219 Palace Road
Jammu**