

## **RE-EVALUATING THE NCC**

**BY**

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### **Genesis of NCC**

As per the NCC website, it was formed by the National Cadet Corps Act of 1948 and raised on 15 Jul the same year. During the 1965 and 71 wars, NCC cadets were the second line of defence. They assisted ordnance factories in their production, were involved in supplying arms and ammunition to forward areas and in cases even for patrolling in depth areas to capture enemy paratroopers.

They also worked hand in hand with civil defence employees and took part in rescue work and traffic control. Post the 71 war the NCC syllabus was revised to include development of leadership and officer like qualities. Military training was reduced and emphasis on social service and youth management enhanced. NCC commenced with 20,000 cadets in 1948, which has risen to 13 Lakhs today. This does not include the millions which have graduated through its portals over the years.

### **Values of NCC**

Its motto is 'Unity and Discipline'. As stated in its website, there are select core values which the NCC aims to instil in its cadets. Some prominent ones include

- Creating a sense of patriotic commitment to encourage cadets to contribute to national development.
- Respect for diversity in religion, language etc, to instil national unity.
- Adhering to norms and values enshrined in the constitution.
- Understanding values of honesty, truthfulness, self-sacrifice, perseverance and hard work.

With these values, the NCC should have been the organization changing the future of youth across the nation, making them disciplined, nationalistic, responsible and tolerant citizens of the country. However, it has been limited due to organizational and financial constraints.

### **Present State**

In an article entitled, 'NCC- the silent contributor to nation building and national security', in the USI journal Oct-Dec 17, Lt General Vinod Vashisht, the ex-DG NCC, writes that the organization presently has its presence in 703 of 716 districts of the country, the only exceptions being extreme remote areas or newly carved districts of Manipur and Telangana. He goes on to state that it has a pan-India presence, covering 16,288 institutions with almost 8000 still waitlisted. Most of its cadets, as per Vashisht, flow from 'government educational institutions and economically modest households'.

The funds for the functioning of NCC are shared between the state and centre, with the centre bearing the larger portion. For the North East and J and K, the complete funding is borne by the centre. The annual budget is to the tune of 15,000 Crores, of which over 11,000 crores is earmarked for salaries.

### **Should NCC be Made Compulsory?**

NCC is presently both at the school and college level. There have been regular demands for making it compulsory for students. Late President APJ Abdul Kalam was a great advocate of compulsory NCC training at schools and colleges. In his opinion, such an action would lead to elimination of corruption in society, promote discipline and help protect the environment. The ex-governor of West Bengal, MK Narayan was also of the same opinion. Vashisht, in his article states that in 1963, NCC was made compulsory for all college students, however organizational and budgetary compulsions led to its withdrawal in 1968.

The then defence minister, Manohar Parrikar, stated in a debate in parliament in Aug 16, on making NCC compulsory in schools and colleges, 'Suggestions have been received from various sources for making NCC training compulsory for school and college students. However, it has not been found feasible in terms of requirement of infrastructure, manpower and resources'.

He went on to add that if it is made compulsory, then 4 crore students would have to be trained as against an existing capacity of 13 Lakhs being done now. The NCC establishment held at present is of 1979 vintage, which would be insufficient to enhance its capacity or even absorb the 8000 waitlisted institutions. It therefore seriously needs to be re-visited.

### **Importance of Expanding the Role of NCC**

The NCC was at one time considered to be a feeder for those seeking to join the armed forces. However, it has not succeeded for multiple reasons. It has however been able to change outlooks, enhance leadership qualities and create an atmosphere of discipline and tolerance amongst those who have been a part of it. Therefore, its scope needs to be expanded.

The nation is presently going through turbulent times. Indiscipline, religious intolerance, corruption and strife dominate headlines daily. These are the very core values which NCC aims to inculcate in its cadets. Thus, considering expanding the scope of NCC to involve maximum youth across the nation into its folds is essential. The intention being to change outlook and enhance self-discipline.

The other aspect is whether NCC is essential at both, school and college or only at the college level. Discipline in school is maintained by multiple means including common uniform, set schedule, compulsory attendance and close monitoring. Further, there are other options at this level including scouts and guides, which inculcate almost similar values as the NCC.

Discipline tends to become lax at the college level. Hence most anti-national protests emanate from college or university students. Recent protests of JNU, Delhi University and Presidency University amongst others are examples. Further, NCC cadets from this level are more inclined to opt for joining the military, as the basic training is geared towards leadership and nation building. Therefore, logically, NCC should be more prominent in colleges.

Maximum participation should be encouraged at this level. Encouragement could involve relaxation in criteria for government jobs, central police forces, armed forces (both at the officer and below levels) and state police forces. This relaxation in criteria is logical as the individual undergoing training successfully, ends up as a disciplined and imbued with essential core qualities.

By adopting this methodology, the figure could reduce from the 4-crore mark as mentioned by Parrikar in parliament. Further, it should be compulsory for a year for everyone and additional for volunteers seeking to go for the 'C' certificate and gain benefit in various government schemes. Attendance in NCC events should be compulsory and counted towards overall obligatory attendance.

### **How will The Nation Gain by Making NCC Compulsory?**

There would be immense gains if youth undergo compulsory NCC training. There would be enhanced respect for the soldier and his commitment to duty. Camaraderie created by attending training and camps would transcend religion, caste, region and education barriers, enhancing nation building. Discipline, desire to remain physically fit and respect for time would become engrained in the youth. This would change work ethos of the future. In the ultimate analysis it would protect the nation from within, while the armed forces ensure protection from external aggression.

### **How can it be done?**

Lt Gen DB Shekatkar committee report submitted in Dec 16 had strong suggestions for the NCC. A paper published by CENJOWS on the report states, 'The NCC is an excellent organization contributing to nation building and youth development. The growth of the NCC is hampered by lack of resource in terms of instructors and staff. The NCC should expand and the resource requirement can be met by resorting to reemployment of Officers, JCOs and NCOs from the areas where they are to be employed.' He had further suggested that if this is resorted to, then the NCC could also be considered for transfer to the Ministry of HRD from the MoD.

The armed forces with their existing deficiencies cannot provide any enhancement in manpower. It has thus adopted to post those proceeding on retirement or lack motivation themselves to the NCC. The losers by this approach remain the cadets, who have elevated expectations and hopes when they join, but are at times impacted by the lack of interest of those responsible for their training.

Funds have never been an issue for the government of India, provided there is a will behind a mission or task. The infrastructure exists, it needs to be reoriented and redeployed. Hiring local staff with reduced serving personnel may be an option, however nothing comes without its collection of disadvantages. These could involve favouritism, corruption or even lack of suitable motivational staff as the hunt would be restricted to district levels. In the long term, if correctly pursued, the benefits would far outweigh the negatives.

### **Conclusion**

The prime minister stated during his address to NCC cadets in Jan this year that NCC is 'known for its discipline and unity. It is not a mechanism but a mission.' He went on to add that NCC should prepare an outline for growth over the next five years. Growth implies bringing maximum youth into its fold. It therefore needs to re-establish its priorities on which section of youth it needs to absorb.

The centre should reconsider its approach to the NCC. It should push through legislation making it compulsory for minimum a year, essential for all seeking government employment and special opportunities for those willing to even join below officer ranks amongst other incentives. It also needs to reconsider its reorganization, reducing burden of employing serving military manpower, hiring veterans with a desire to influence and motivate youth instead.

As the nation proceeds through turbulent times, the NCC remains a major hope of changing mindset and views of the youth, if correctly harnessed. It remains the largest volunteer organization in the world and could be a game changer for the nation in the years ahead, if correctly nurtured. It could remain mired at its current level if ignored, which would be a loss to the nation.

**Disclaimer:** Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS.