

INFANTRY IN INDIA



V R RAGHAVAN
LIEUTENANT GENERAL (RETD.)

INFANTRY IN INDIA



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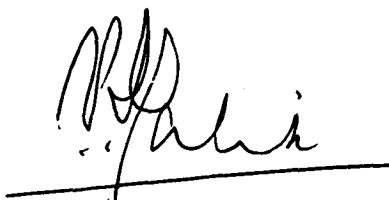
Foreword

The Indian Army has relied on its Infantry extensively through history. Geographical factors of terrain and climate have played a part in it. The more significant reason is the reliability of Indian infantry in being able to operate with ease in difficult conditions. It has proved itself in being competent to manage with minimal hardware through extensive innovation and by adapting to local conditions. It has effectively combined with other combat and support arms to win battles again and again even in the most difficult conditions. It has the best combat record in the Indian Army, and its ability to conduct operations over long periods is proverbial. It has stoically accepted the highest numbers of casualties in the history of Indian arms and continued to retain its combat edge. The defining quality of Indian Infantry can be aptly described in one word, i.e, dependable.

Infantry in India comprises many regiments. The regimental system is a unique feature of Indian infantry. Regiments of infantry are the building blocks on which the reliability and efficiency of the infantry arm are structured. The regiment provides the historic traditions, the values of honour and fidelity, and a caring support system to the infantry soldiers. The regiment is the rallying symbol of Indian infantry. The focus on the regiment, however, tends to underplay the larger perspective of infantry as the primary combat arm in India. It is to balance this perspective that the infantry

regiments decided to have a book written on Infantry in India.

I am delighted that the book is published in the 50th year of India's independence. There is no better moment to take stock of what Infantry has contributed to independent India's history. In the process of writing this absorbing account, the author has surveyed the evolution of the infantry arm in India and elsewhere in the world. Even more important are the challenges which infantry would face in the future. As the author convincingly argues, technological ability to revolutionise military science, will more than ever make infantry the essential combat arm, in peace and war.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'VP Malik', is written over a horizontal line.

October, 1997
Army Headquarters
New Delhi

(VP Malik)
General
Chief of the Army Staff

Preface

The Director General of Infantry asked me in 1993 to conceptualise and write this book. The Colonels of the Regiment in infantry had decided that it was necessary to record the evolution of the infantry arm in India. It was a wise decision to highlight this predominant arm of the army. Little had been written on it, while there was no dearth of published material on infantry regiments and battles etc. It was time to place a perspective on Infantry as the essential combat arm of army.

A first and happy endorsement from the Colonels of the Infantry Regiments was to my proposal to focus more on Infantry than on the regiments which form part of the arm. That led to the basic structure of the book, which having been approved by the Colonels of the Regiment, I was allowed the freedom to narrate the story in the manner I preferred. It then became possible to use the history of the infantry regiments and their outstanding battle record, to portray the evolution of Infantry in India.

Infantry is as old as warfare and the evolution of infantry in many ways coincides with the evolution of the latter. Warfare evolved over the ages through techniques and technology spread through trade and conquests. Consequently, while there were time lags between the advent of newer methods of employing infantry from one continent or civilisation to another, there was nevertheless a continuity in the evolution of the arm across the world. As a

result, while organisations, equipment and doctrine varied in matters of detail, the infantryman's functions continued to be not dissimilar in different armies.

The Cold War emphasis on strategic weapons and widespread mechanisation of warfare, saw a diminution of the infantry. The foot soldier was swamped - at least theoretically - by the cornucopia of hardware. Infantry was considered fit only to be carried to the battlefield to occupy ground already captured by the combined power of air, artillery and tanks. The end of the Cold War with the emerging downtrend in the utility of battlefield nuclear weapons, and the emergence of regional and low intensity conflicts, have brought about a sober realisation of the essential need for reliable infantry. In the Third World, an increase in the non traditional threats to security and in peace enforcement roles, has placed a new premium on the need for the modern soldier to operate more than ever on foot. In a seemingly paradoxical but inevitable reversal of the man machine relationship of the Cold War, man is once again the primary agent of victory. Infantry would remain, as it always has, the arm for gaining victory irrespective of the amount of modern military hardware inducted into the military.

This book relates the evolution of Indian infantry to those in other armies which makes a fascinating comparison. Infantry in each army brings to bear its cultural and social heritage on the way it is organised and employed. That heritage also influences infantry's position in the military's hierarchical order. India's infantry is unique, in that it is not only the largest combat arm in the army, but has contributed the most to the outcome of its wars. India's army is also one of the few in the world, where the importance of infantry has never been lost sight of in war and peace.

The researching and writing of this book has been a rewarding experience. I benefited immensely from the views, opinions and comments of many and it would be invidious to name only some from a long list. I cannot, however, fail to acknowledge the

meticulous and detailed observations of the Colonels of the infantry on their regiments' historical details. Equally, if not more important, was the constant technical and organisational support of three successive Directors General of Infantry, viz; Lt Gen CK Kapur, Lt Gen KS Mann, and Lt Gen Gurpreet Singh. The staff officers of the Directorate General Infantry were unfailingly prompt in response to my requests for help. It would also be appropriate that I mention the Delhi Policy Group, whose support systems made the writing of the book a manageable task.

VR Raghavan

Lieutenant General (*Retd*)

Infantry
Commanders-in-Chief
&
Chiefs of Army Staff
Indian Army



General (later Field Marshal) K.M. Cariappa, OBE



Field Marshal S.H.F.J. Manekshaw, MC



General S.M. Srinagesh



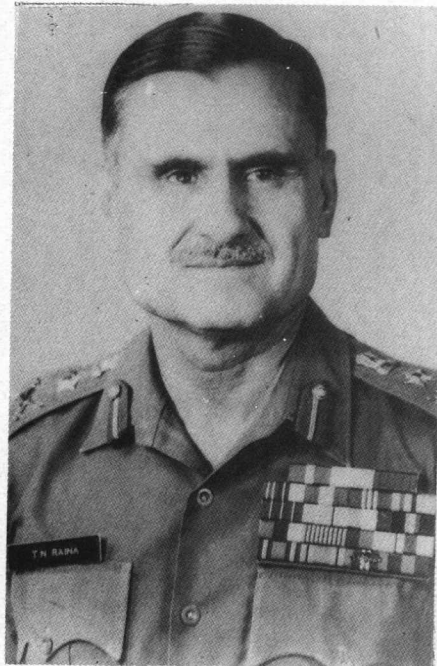
General K.S. Thimayya, DSO



General P.N. Thapar



General G.G. Bewoor, PVSM



General T.N. Raina, MVC



General K.V. Krishna Rao, PVSM, ADC



General K. Sundarji, PVSM



General V.P. Malik, PVSM, AVSM, ADC

Gallantry Awards

Victoria Cross

Param Vir Chakra

&

Ashok Chakra



Naik (Later Subedar)
Darwan Singh Negi, VC
World War-I 1914



Sepoy
Khudadad Khan, VC
Belgium 1914
(First Indian soldier to win the VC)
The cross was presented by the
King at the battle field.



Rifleman
Gobar Singh Negi, VC
(Posthumous)
World War-I 1915



Rifleman
Kulbir Thapa, VC
World War-I 1915



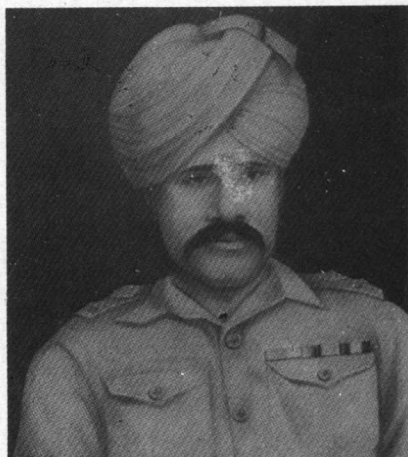
Jemadar
(*Later Subedar*)
Mir Dast, VC, IOM
World War-I 1915



Naik
Shahammad Khan, VC
World War-I 1916



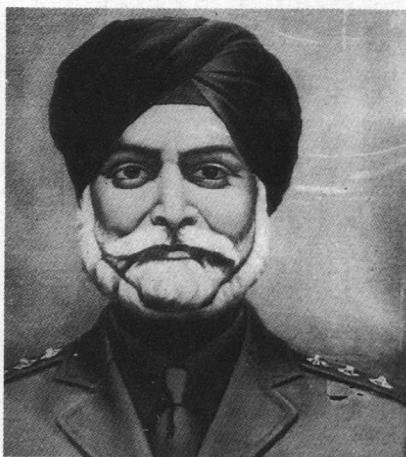
Sepoy
Chatta Singh, VC
World War-I 1916



Lance Naik
(*Later Jemadar*)
Lala, VC
World War-I 1916



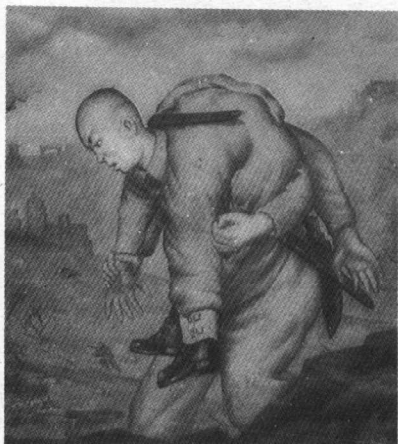
Rifleman
Karan Bahadur Rana, VC
World War-I 1918



Sepoy
(Later Captain)
Ishar Singh, VC
Waziristan 1921



Subedar
Richhpal Ram, VC
(Posthumous)
Eritrea 1941



Rifleman
Sher Bahadur Thapa, VC
(Posthumous)
Italy 1942