

#ARMY DAY

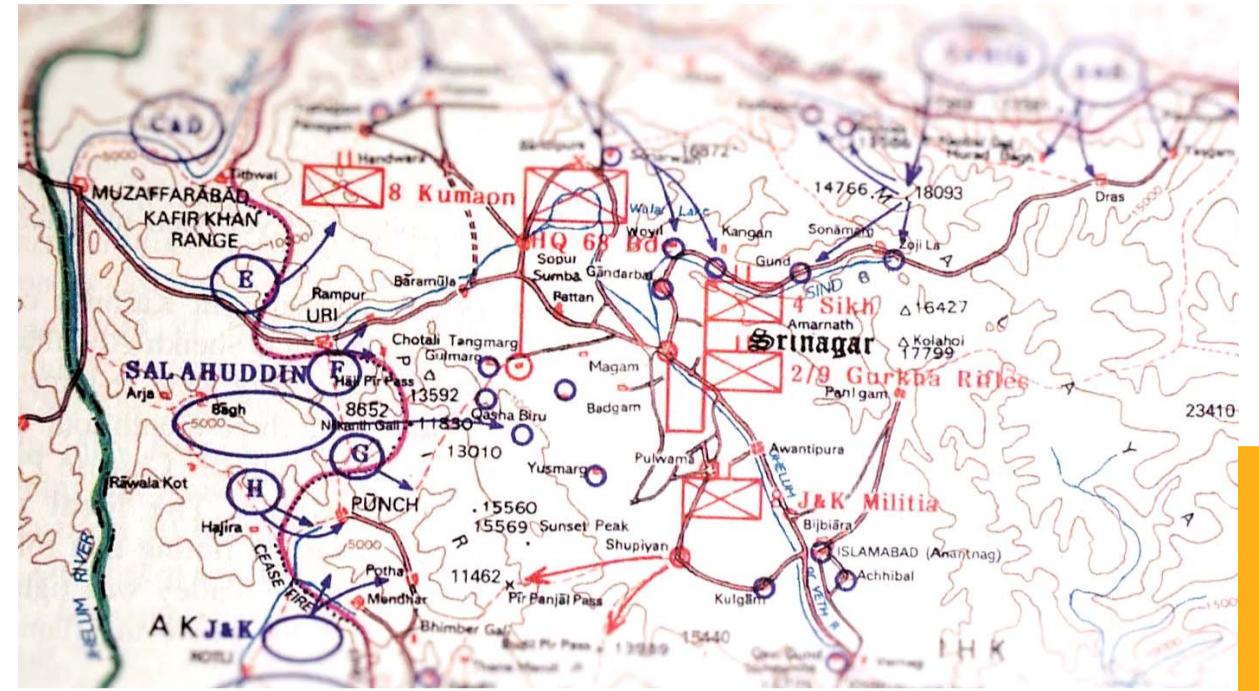
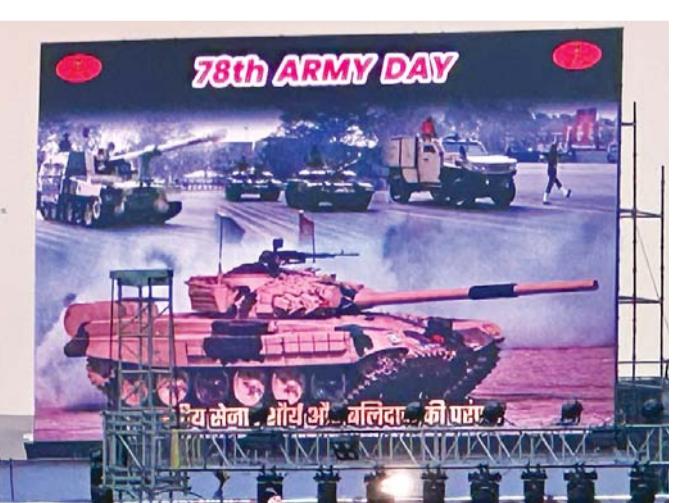
Sharya Sandhya,
With The
Setting Sun



Who we are and who we
will always be was
picturised before us. From
Maharana Pratap to
Operation Sindo



he Sharya Sandya, was what it said it was, an evening of memories of past valour and present execution. The setting sun was the backdrop against which a reminder of who we are and



A broader orientation and placement of Salahuddin Force.

● Kshema Jatuhkarna

came across this marvellous account from an account written by up to (from) army personnel from Pakistan. It was interesting enough to bring to Arbit readers.

Mukhtar was Company Havildar Major (CHM) of Ubaidia Company in Pakistan Military Academy Kakul. Tall height, smart bearing, pointed fauji moustache curved upwards on the ends, wearing a blood red diagonal sash over khaki uniform starched to a razor sharp crease, royal blue beret, trademark color of army's corps of engineers, shining spotless drill FTs with hammered heels, the sole of which never missed a stud. He was like any other drill staff in the academy, the epitome of dress, discipline and drill.

For the initial three terms, Ubaidia was my company and Mukhtar my CHM. Now all drill instructors by design are meant to be demanding, monotone harsh and unforgiving but they also get to pick their favourites. The 'good' block of PMA drill staff is well dressed and shiny khaki Raffulah Drill Square and to qualify one ought to develop a 130 degrees arm swing, knee raised to chest height and brought down in a swift nano-seconds movement, and to top it all, foot stomped on the ground generating a pressure of few hundred decibels. One of our Drill Subedar Majors from the Corps of Signals summarized it in these immortalized words, 'Saibano! Paa uthay lagay dabay, pata na chalay!' (The said SM got immortalized in the course chronicles with the title SM Shurlee but that's a tale for another day) A select few achieve this legendary standard and make it to the good books of PMA drill staff. I, dear reader, was from the other kind and with it came the consequences. Returning from the Physical Training or Halls of Study when the pack of drill instructors was let loose on the herd of cadets



Advanced Drill Competition. From the days of Babar Company.

A Skipped Visit

As a gunner Second Lieutenant, I was attending Basic Course at School of Artillery Nowshera, when out of nowhere, near Badashah, I bump into Mukhtar. He was now a Naib Subedar posted to the Engineers Center at Risalpur as Drill Instructor. After our exchange of pleasantries, he extended an invitation to visit him. There were other invitations too. Shafqat and Imran Shafi, old friends from Karachi college days, who were studying Aeronautical Engineering at Risalpur, had come to pay me a visit at Nagi Block of School of Artillery and invite me over. The life of an Artillery YO (Young Officer), dear reader, has other torments; solving a met (meteorological) message, CP (Command Post) Exercise, Gun Drill and more. I couldn't spare time and missed a second chance to visit Risalpur. I had skipped both the chances of knowing Captain Nisar Ahmed Shaheed, Sitara e Jurrat.

A present day visitor to Risalpur, other than Nisar Shaheed Road and Nisar Shaheed Park, would also come across Nisar Shaheed Degree College. The legacy of Pakistan Army Commando from Engineers Corps who fought beyond the ceasefire line as part of Gibraltar Force. If one happens to visit Cherat where Pakistan's Special Services Group is headquartered, Nisar's name is second from top after that of Maj Muhammad Sarwar of Armoured Corps on the honour roll. The entry on the board reads, "Capt Nisar Ahmed, SJ, Engrs: 1965."

Gibraltar was the botched venture aimed at infiltrations into Indian Held Kashmir by a composite force of Pakistan Army regulars and mujahids that eventually led to September War. Captain Nisar was part of Operation Gibraltar as he led a platoon for actions deep into Indian territory aiming at the very heart of Kashmir, the town of Srinagar. The detail on actions both in Operation Gibraltar and about Nisar's force is scanty, not readily available, and for that reason have stayed shrouded into mystery. It was fairly to us that an account came to us through an emotional article by Shemeem Burney Abbas.

Sailing through this love-hate relationship with the Drill Staff with an under-tone of respect (carried and treasured for life), we passed out to become officers. That was the first time I missed joining Military College of Engineering, and with it, a chance of visiting Risalpur.

My intelligent readers must have realized that "performa" was in fact the daily pro forma for the punishment parade roll call through which Extra Roll Calls (ERCs), or sometimes, Extra Drill (ED) were awarded commensurate with the degree of offence that varied from as grave as smiling, or marching improperly or loose belt to as trivial as a twisted shoe lace.

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Sheemeem Burney Abbas, an associate professor at the State University of New York, comes to our rescue through an article, first appeared in Friday Times during September of 2016. Sheemeem, the widow of Captain Nisar Ahmed Shaheed, reflects on her marriage with the officer; a short lived affair of a few months and brings to us in some detail the role and nature of the operation her husband was assigned. It mentions that Captain Nisar, while leading an infiltrating force, had crossed the Line of Control into Indian Held Kashmir in July of 1965.

The letter, a last one from Captain Nisar, begins with the emotional disclosure that the mere fact that

Sheemeem was reading it meant that

her husband was no more. Our captain goes on to write about the operational aspects of his assignments.

"My love, on the 3rd of June, 1965, I was assigned to HQ 12 Div in a special duty i.e. to organize and conduct the training of certain Azad Kashmir soldiers and DAFAMUJAHIDS. Later, I came to know that I am under a new HQ of up for this purpose i.e. HQ Line of Control Sub Area Moreet and that I will be required to go into Indian Held Kashmir on a mission to conduct commando actions and organise Guerrilla Warfare with the help of the local there... Our action commenced on the night 29/30 July 1965. However, the night for the Raid on targets was appointed on the 7/8 August night. The area I was assigned was GULMARG and PATAN where Brigade Headquarters

were located."

The Last Letter by Sheemeem Burney Abbas, The Friday Times, September 2, 2016

The Salahuddin Force

Lieutenant General (Retired) Mahmud Ahmed's magnum opus on the history of 1965 Indo-Pak war has a chapter dedicated to Operation Gibraltar. Combing through the highlights included by General Mahmud, we indirectly get some

details on the force Captain Nisar Ahmed was part of.

One of the six and strongest of all Gibraltar's echelons' was Salahuddin Force. Divided into six companies led by Major Mansha, this force infiltrated from the 'launch pad' of Bedori Buley over formidable and tricky slopes of Pir Panjal Range. They had initially assembled near Gureh in a forest that went by the name Khaga.

Major Mansha left one company

in the area of Gulmarg and directed the remaining five companies towards their objectives in the vicinity of Srinagar; Captain Zia's company was to raid the Srinagar airfield, the radio station was given to Captain Farooq's company, petrol dumps to Captain Shaffi's company and the Punjab Reserve Police Headquarters at Pir Panjal was the target of Captain Hashim's company.

We later discover that the company, left to secure the base at Gulmarg, was under Captain Nisar. Later, when the Indian forces based on an earlier trigger located and came to raid, the base camp near Khaga, Major Mansha had tasked Captain Nisar with his company to strike the targets in the Gulmarg area. It was during one such raid that our valiant captain sacrificed his life. General Mahmud's book is quite a character. One of Inayatullah's significant contributions was meeting with soldiers and documenting their stories from the active front immediately after 1965 Indo-Pak war. One of Inayatullah's publications of the 1965 war stories was titled 'Do Pulon Ki Kahani'. Quite interestingly, the story carrying the title of the book is the story of Captain Nisar Ahmed from the Gibraltar Force.

Now, Inayatullah remained an

editor of monthly *Sayyara Digest* and later started another monthly *Hikayat*. It is very likely that while writing *Do Pulon Ki Kahani*, he might have consulted the memoirs published in *Urdu Digest* or Commando Alamgir's book 'Operation Gibraltar: Mahaz e Kashmir'. What we gather from it are a few names from Captain Nisar's platoon: Subedar Sher Alam, Naik Muhammad Din and two civilian mujahids, Abdul Rehman and Hafiz Atulah. The platoon was tasked to raid Gulmarg's two bridges in a radius of 3-4 miles from their base. We don't get the names or locations of these bridges, what we get from the story is that the first bridge was a concrete structure in the vicinity of a supply dump and was guarded by soldiers from a Sikh regiment. The other bridge was a smaller wooden structure. The mission to destroy the former through explosives was successful and a huge explosion was taken care of the supply dump close to the bridge. The tactic adopted to destroy the wooden bridge, a few days later, was simply setting the bridge on fire. This was the mission where we lost both Captain Nisar and Subedar Sher Alam. The body of Captain Nisar was carried back from the site of the bridge and was

quiet on the type of the targets and the details of these raids. It was later when Major Mansha's force, having been unsuccessful in carrying out their mission, disengaged and infiltrated in packets. We are told that they had lost three soldiers and that included Captain Nisar. They had another fourteen wounded and four were captured by Indians as prisoners.

Do Pulon Ki Kahani

It's unlikely for the name Inayatullah 'Altamash' to ring a bell when it comes to writings on military history in the Indo-Pak context. With active service in British Army on Burma front in 1944, a prison break from the meticulous Japanese and then a desertion to join independence struggle while in Malaya, the gentleman himself is quite a character. One of Inayatullah's significant contributions was meeting with soldiers and documenting their stories from the active front immediately after 1965 Indo-Pak war. One of Inayatullah's publications of the 1965 war stories was titled 'Do Pulon Ki Kahani'. Quite interestingly, the story carrying the title of the book is the story of Captain Nisar Ahmed from the Gibraltar Force.

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