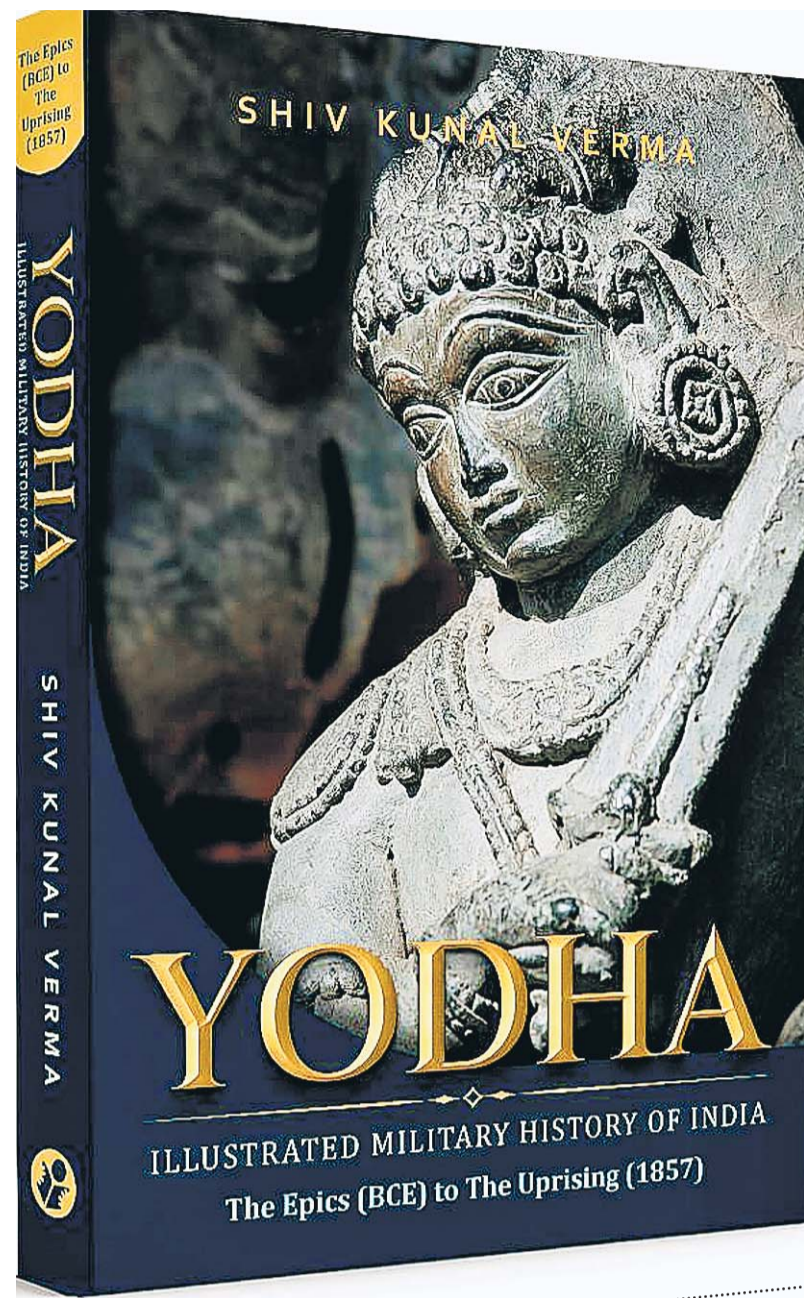


Baku Jazz Festival

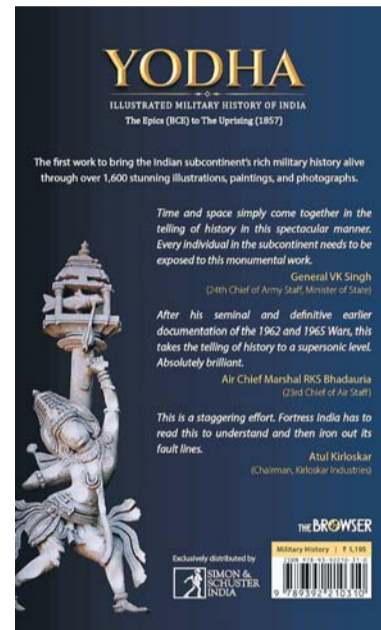
Thu, Oct 17th, 2024 - Sun, Oct 27th, 2024



The Baku Jazz Festival is an annual celebration that fills the streets of Azerbaijan's capital with vibrant sounds and rhythms. It attracts jazz enthusiasts from around the world with a diverse lineup of both renowned and emerging artists. This event showcases a unique fusion of traditional Azerbaijani music with contemporary jazz, offering audiences a taste of the country's rich musical heritage along with global jazz influences.



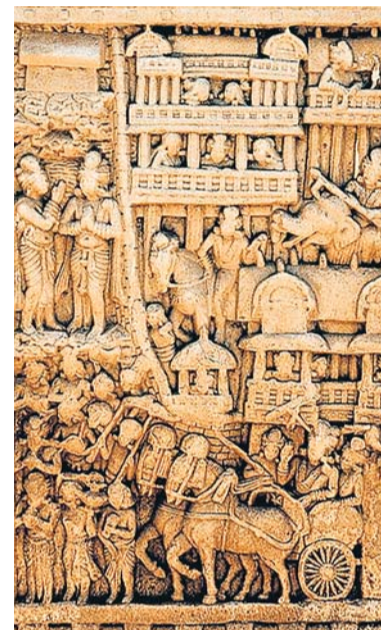
BRINGING INDIA'S RICH MILITARY HISTORY ALIVE



Samrat Chandragupta Maurya.



Maharaja Ranjit Singh.



Emperor Bimbisara.



Sher Shah Suri.



Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu and Kashmir.



Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, VSM (RETD)

Shiv Kunal Verma can clearly be called one of India's finest military historians. His latest offering, 'Yodha: Illustrated Military History of India' is the first volume, which covers the period from the epics (BCE) to the Uprising of 1857. A single word to describe this latest magnum opus from an individual, who has single-handedly made it his life's mission to keep Military History alive in this country, is 'brilliant!' Kunal's earlier books, the most notable being the three-volume *Northeast Trilogy*, the books on the *Assam Rifles*, *The Long Road to Stachen, 1962: The War that Wasn't*, and *1965: A Western Sunrise* together add up to an impressive body of work.

Considered amongst the most definitive works today, and combined with the various films that he has made, he has undoubtedly carved a niche for himself. The films he has made for the Air Force, Navy, Army (including on the Kargil War), and Assam Rifles, and

about institutions like NDA (*Standard Bearers*) and IMA (*Making of a Warrior*) have given him a deep understanding of the Armed Forces and the nation. For various reasons, Military History, as a subject in the Indian subcontinent, has not been given its due importance outside the preserve of the Armed Forces. This is now beginning to change with authors such as Kunal reaching out to a larger and wider audiences with his insights. However, India's military history is both vast and panoramic and has contributed

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immensely to India's rise as a 'formidable global player'. Religious and zonal affiliations have created a tunnel vision that, even seventy-seven years after Independence, shrinks perspectives 'to narrow domestic walls.'

'Fortress India,' as author Shiv Kunal Verma likes to call it, can only be one cohesive entity if the people bounded within by geography begin to understand it as one. He states, "Only when we can see the larger geographical picture each and every time in our mind's eye will we be able to relate to the way life has played out through the generations before us."

About the Book
Together, the two volumes of *Yodha* are a major step in that direction. Collectively, they have close to 1800 images, making it visual treat. The illustrations and photographs are indeed outstanding.

The effort to put these two volumes together must have been humongous. The first volume starts with the *Ramayana* and



French and British Ships at War.

Kanchipuram and Tanjore gave us a glimpse of the Pallavas, Cholas and Pandyas who, between themselves, ruled the Deep South for centuries." Piece by piece, the search began to find visual content. He then painstakingly contacted museums, private collections, and institutions, and slowly the entire canvas began to emerge. The focus during this period remained on the South, as the Vijaynagar Empire had left behind ruins that continue to tell the story of Ancient India. Unfortunately, the early Northern kingdoms in the post-Chandragupta period left behind little tangible physical evidence that could be drawn upon. Apart from the images, the text and captions are extremely well-researched and the narrative takes us through the various stages of the subcontinent's history in a seamless manner.

Mahabharata, which he states is "relevant to our times." The first recorded history then takes us to the time of Emperor Bimbisara, who is credited with having the first imperial control of the subcontinent. This is when both Buddhist and Jain scholars began to chronicle and document events. While Chandragupta Maurya created the first pan-Indian Empire with the aid of his mentor, and later, Minister Kautilya. Kunal goes on to state that "Kautilya won his wars by other means and tactics as he realised that a battle with Magdh would require much more than a large Army."

Commenting on the genesis of *Yodha*, Verma says, "While photographing some of the old *Hoyasala* temples in Karnataka, I realised that there were a lot of war scenes that existed, but these were overshadowed by the more spectacular carvings of gods and goddesses. Buddhist *stupas* went as far back as recorded history, and temples in

eliminate his brothers. However, this period also coincided with the rise of the Nawabs of Carnatic, the Marathas under Shivaji and the Mysore State. Towards the North, Guru Gobind Singh was forming the *Khalsa Panth* to fight the Mughals, while in the East, Lachit Borphukan's *Ahoms* defeated Aurangzeb's right-hand man, Mir Jumla, on the Brahmaputra River. The dynamics of the power struggle between the French and the British intensified, who, after defeating the Bengal and Awadh Armies, gradually established themselves as the masters of the Gangetic belt and Central India.

The defeat of Tipu and the subsequent vanquishing of the Marathas then virtually gave them control of all lands South of the Sutlej. This period also saw the rise

Gujarat, Bengal and Bahmani Sultanates also became major players. By 1498, the first Portuguese ships had arrived off Calicut and 'discovered India' centuries after Chola and other ships from the subcontinent had been negotiating the open high seas and trading with distant lands. In 1965, while shooting the maritime history of the Indian Ocean for the Navy, Kunal visited Lisbon, where the Portuguese Navy presented him with paintings of St. Raphael and St. Gabriel, both of whom find a place in the book.

What comes through almost immediately is the sheer ruthlessness of the Portuguese, who, like the Islamic invaders before them, relied on spreading terror through mass murders. Babur's short tenure is followed by Humayun's reign, interrupted by Sher Shah Suri and his son's rule. Akbar, then, stabilised the Mughal Empire, which then became the dominating power. Running parallel with the Mughal Dynasty, the book documents the arrival of the Dutch, the British and the French. The Mughals brought in 'gun powder' and a new style of combat 'focused on artillery and muskets.' This contributed to 'the change in battlefield tactics and evolution of military strategy.' Aurangzeb's initial military genius saw him literally

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half decades later, the Bengal Native Army did exactly that.

The annexation of Sindh in 1843 was a result of British imperialism. It was criticised even by Englishmen and the author quotes Arthur Innes, who stated in his book, *A History of England and the British Empire* that if the Afghan episode is the most disastrous in our Indian annals, that of Sindh is morally less excusable.

Shiv Kunal Verma describes the events of 1857 as an 'uprising.' Volume 1 ends there, having set the ground for more contemporary events that followed after the British Crown took over from the East India Company. What stands out is the brutality of the British in dealing with those who had risen against them, which include 'tying Indian Sepoys to canons and blowing them

released, which covers the events from 1857 up to the Kargil War. As per the former Army Chief General VK Singh, "Time and Space simply come together in the telling of history in this spectacular manner." The truth is that most people tend to look at any battle or period of history in a piecemeal manner and the picture that emerges is quite different from the one that we see in case we view the same events against the larger framework. Undoubtedly, this book has covered the vast canvas of events and has opened a 'window into the subcontinent's military history.'

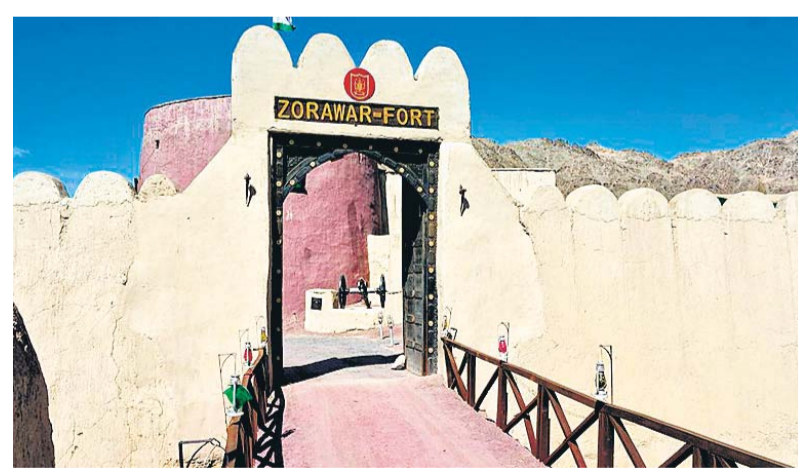
Historians often quote two sayings. The first is, "If you do not learn from history, you are doomed to repeat your mistakes." The second is perhaps more pragmatic, "We know from history, no one learns from history." However, Military History, as one learns from this book, has had a significant impact in the world we inhabit.

There is no doubt that this monumental work and definitive work, painstakingly put together by the author, has set a benchmark in understanding our rich, vast and complex military history. This book deserves to be read not only by academicians and those in uniform, but by all segments of society across the country.

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Conclusion
Having gone through the first volume, the reader now awaits the second book, which is yet to be

to pieces in front of crowds, who were forced to watch this spectacle.



Zorawar Fort.

#DIWALI MELA

Tradition Meets Empowerment



ACS, Sreya Guha, at the Diwali Mela.

This Diwali fair brings together the rich heritage of Rajasthan through handcrafted creations by rural women. Organized by Rajeevika, the event celebrates tradition while offering these artisans a platform to build sustainable livelihoods.



Tusharika Singh
Freelancer Writer and City Blogger

A vibrant celebration of craft and culture is being unfolded at the Deepawali Fair, organized under the *Rajasthan Grameen Aajeevika Vikas Parishad* (Rajeevika). Being held at the Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj Institute, situated on JLN Marg, this fair is more than a run-of-the-mill festive marketplace. It showcases the spirit of Rajasthan's rural women, who have transformed their lives through self-help groups (SHGs), turning traditional skills into sustainable livelihoods.



Rural Resilience

What sets this fair apart is the sense of pride radiating from the women behind the stalls. These are not just sellers, they are artisans, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. The fair provides them with an essential platform to not only sell their products but also showcase their skills and engage directly with a wider audience. The handmade goods at each stall reflect the hard work and dedication that have gone into creating them, and the women are eager to share their stories and crafts with visitors.

During her visit to inaugurate the fair

Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan, Sreya Guha, took time to appreciate the work on display, engaging with the women at their stalls and learning about the techniques and traditions behind each product. Her interactions underscored the significance of the fair as a platform that not only promotes local crafts but also empowers the women who create them. It is through fairs like this that the traditional knowledge and skills of Rajasthan's rural women gain recognition, ensuring that their crafts continue to thrive in modern markets. As the fair continues, running until October 27, it offers an ongoing celebration of Rajasthan's cultural wealth and a reminder of the strength and resilience of the women, who drive its rural economy forward.

Handcrafted Heritage

Strolling through the venue, it is impossible to miss the vibrant displays of handloom textiles, intricately woven handicrafts, and an array of homemade delicacies. Each item reflects not just the culture of Rajasthan's districts, but the personal journeys of the women who created them. These women have been empowered through Rajeevika's initiatives, trained and supported to turn their artisanal skills into a source of livelihood. For many, this fair represents an opportunity to display their work on a larger platform, directly engaging with cus-

tomers and earning fair prices for their efforts. Rajeevika's *Mission Panch Ratna*, the ambitious project behind many of these success stories, is a key highlight of the initiative. It aims to transform the lives of rural women by turning them into 'Lakshmi Didi's' women who earn over one lakh rupees annually. This transformative effort provides not just income but a pathway to financial independence and a better quality of life for these women. The range of products on offer at the fair is as diverse as Rajasthan itself. There's the unmistakable blue of

traditional pottery from Jaipur, the soft and airy *Kota Doria saris*, and the vibrant colours of *lac bangles*, all representing the unique cultures of Rajasthan's districts. Alongside these, food products like pickles, *mangoji*, *papad*, and millet-based creations offer a taste of rural Rajasthan, each bite steeped in tradition. One corner of the fair is alive with the sizzling sounds and enticing aromas of the food zone, serving up *Rajasthani* delicacies that are hard to resist. This is where shoppers take a pause, refueling with authentic fare from the state.

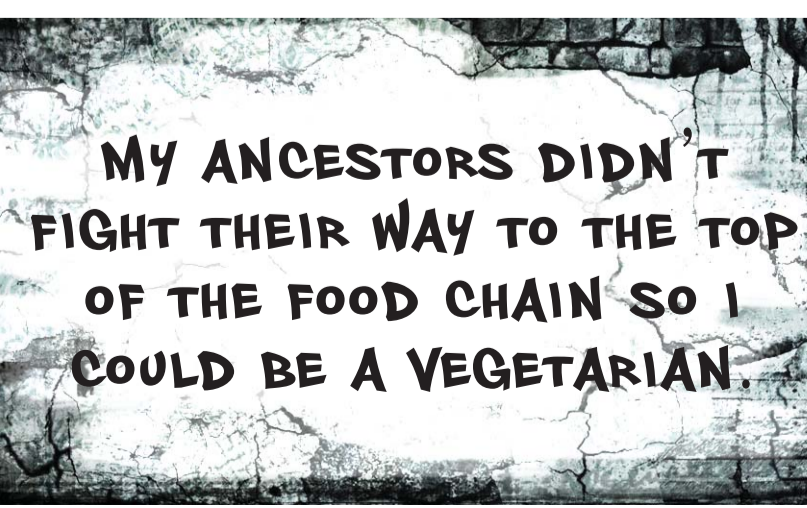


ACS, Rural Development, Sreya Guha, at the Diwali Mela.



Alexander vs Porus.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman