

## CHAPTER - 1

### Introduction

#### Gurkhas Identity and Discourse

The Gurkhas have the glorious history from the past to present. They are known as the heroes of war in the world. Their regimental histories have spanned almost two centuries. The histories of Gurkhas are crammed with acts of incredible bravery and sacrifice. And their battle honors include an unprecedented twenty six Victoria Cross. The Gurkhas' particular reputation as fearsome fighting men remains unmatched anywhere in the world and was no better demonstrated than in the Falkland's conflict in 1982. There the mere threat of their Khukuri knives put fear into the hearts of the Argentines and probably encouraged their swift surrender at Port Stanley and saved far greater loss of life.

"Better to die than to be coward" is the motto of the Gurkhas. There are not any such major battles which are untouched by the Gurkhas army. Victory is mostly certain with the participation of Gurkhas army. Britain got victory on Malaya (1941), Java (1946), Japan (1946) and Falkland's (1982) with the help of Gurkha army. Gurkhas army showed their power by the help of their shining kukuri knives. Their bravery, in the First World War and Second World War, is carved on the history of world.

The Gurkhas have been the British front line since 1815. More than 2,00,000 enlisted for the First World War, and a tenth of their number were killed or injured. In the Second World War 250,000 Gurkhas fought against the German in famous battles such as Monte Casino and Tobruk and ruthless Japanese soldiers in the Far East, again suffering heavy casualties.

"*Ayo Gurkhalies!*" is the famous slogan of Gurkhas at the time of war. The beginning of the great battle of loss in which the regiment was to win undying fame by its bush and steady fastness and in which casualties were so high... no battle at which the regiment had previously been present compared in any way to this nor probably will any in which they are likely in the future to be engaged. So, Lieutenant C.D.Roe, commandant, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas Rifles, on the events in which the Gurkhas famous battle cry became a familiar sound in the world theatres of war. German and Japanese army used to fear by the bloodcurdling battle cry of Gurkhas "*Ayo Gorkhalies*".

The head of English people has been high, unfading due to the bravery of Gurkhas army. But the Gurkhas, who are called mercenaries but for whom, it will be seen, money is not the only draw. For one thing, the British have never been especially generous in their payment and facility. The payment and facilities of Gurkhas is less than the native British Soldiers. This is not the proper respect for the warier Gurkhalies. In the war, Gurkhas are at the forefront. But the discrimination on Gurkhas is obvious before us. It is injustice to the soldiers who are fighting in the frontline.

The agreement of India, Nepal and British government (1947) is full of deceive for the frontline warier Gurkhalies. Balaram Rai was killed in the war. His widow wife received around 7.5 percent of what the widow of an equivalent British soldier would receive. It provided an immediate lump sum of £19,092 and a pension of £939 24 a year for the first five years and £771.48 a year thereafter. A British widow's equivalent would get £54,000 plus six months pay and £15,192 a year pension. So, the pension which his widow would receive, however, it is criticized.

British government has not been responsible for for discrimination against the Gurkhas' pay and pension.

Thus, my research is based on ex-Gurkhas' (war veterans) experiences, nostalgia, pain suffering and their facility provided by the British government. I would like to talk here about the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and Malayan war veterans.

## CHAPTER - 2

### **Biographical Sketch of ex-Gurkha Major Dal Bahadur Gurung**

Major Dal Bahadur Gurung, One of the thousands of that name who have served the British Crown in the Gurkha regiments, spent his entire service in the 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles. In retirement, he is running a trekking and expedition company from Kathmandu along with other ex-Gurkhas.



Dal's whole family, ancestors of both his mother and father, were linked to the British army, and the connections could be traced back to beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. Both of his great-grandfathers joined the Gurkhas of the East India Company; his grandfather was born in India and he, too, joined the British army. He visited Nepal when he retired from military service and settled near Pokhara. It was tradition then for retiring soldiers to keep their uniform, and Dal's Great-grandfather wore his often, and always when he went to collect his pension. At that time there were only two places where ex-Gurkhas soldiers could collect their pension. One was in northern India and the other was at the British Embassy in Kathmandu. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to his story.

"It used to take my great-grandfather seven or eight days to walk there from his home, and he always put on his uniform and medals to go there. One time when he arrived to collect his money, he was confronted by a member of the ruling family of Nepal, the Ranas, who enquired him: 'What uniform is that you are wearing? Where did you get it?'

My great-grandfather replied well, sir, this uniform was not given to me by your government. It was provided by the British government for service in their army in India.

'Then, said the Rana, 'you had better go back there.' He was very angry at my great-grandfather's impudence and had he exiled back to India immediately, taking the whole family with him. They trekked for days back to the border and into Indian territory, and there they settled. My grandfather was born in India and joined the British army, and my father followed him. Unfortunately, my father expired at the beginning of the Second World War. My grandfather brought us all back in Nepal, to the hills above Pokhara, when i was about six years old. He taught me to read and write, and I went to school for only five years, to class seven.

My mother was 31 years old and my eldest brother was 16. So my grandfather looked after us from then on. When I was seven years old, my brother enlisted in the Gurkhas in 1942, and my second eldest brother enlisted a year later, leaving myself, my sister and younger brother at home. When my brothers came home in their uniforms, it was a true family occasion. Everyone was very proud, and my grandfather said I should enlist as soon as I could. The next year, when I was only 15, the recruiting officers came as usual looking for young men to join up. I was one of the boys selected, but my mother said: 'No, you are too young.' Next year, when I was 16, the recruiting officers came back again and I ran away with them.

The officers briefed me before I went to see the selection people and I was to tell them, when they asked how old I was, that I was 18. At that time the British recruiting depot was across the border into India and we had to walk for five or six days to reach it. There, after a couple of days of medical tests, I was recruited into the British army and was then transported by train to a depot near Calcutta which took

three days. So in October 1952, at the age of 16, I was a Gurkha of the British army. We spent three days sailed for five days to the training base in Malaya. I had 12 months' training before I went to my regiment in November 1953, the 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles.

Quite soon afterwards, I had two new experiences: the jungle and a ride in a helicopter, which was quite exciting for a young man who was only just past his seventeenth birthday. They had new Wessex helicopters which took us deep into the Malayan jungle, where we set up camp and began our exercises and patrols. After only three days, we were on one of our patrols when one of the soldiers, an experienced man, discovered tracks. He called me over. As I was a new soldier, he wanted me to show me what to look out for; we had to be very watchful and move around silently, like stalking tigers. I began to move back to my position when he signaled me to be quiet. Then he raised his sub-machine and fired and shouted to me to do the same. I could not see anyone, but I fired anyhow. Then, my friend moved cautiously forward into undergrowth and there were two bodies of enemy soldiers lying there. He had killed them both, and I had not seen either of them. They would undoubtedly have killed us, given the chance. That was a good lesson for me. That operation lasted for 31 days. We normally carried enough rations for five days, fairly meager food carefully measured each day. After that, fresh supplies came by way of an airdrop from a Dakota.

We would have to radio our position, chop away the undergrowth and create a drop-zone. We had put in a request for fresh meat; for one thing there are certain aspects of the Gurkha soldiers' religion that affect what they eat (no beef) and how it is slaughtered. So they dropped us live chicken in the basket. Well, most of the time they became entangled in the trees. Some times the baskets broke open and the

chickens would come fluttering down, squawking, and we were all running around trying to catch them. Other times, the baskets were just hanging there, high in the branches, and the birds were going cock-a-doodle-do and we had to climb up and get them down, but we could no, and one of our men had to get up and release the chickens. It was not funny at the time!

We carried out patrols in the jungle many times, and during my second year there the Communists had stepped up their ambush tactics. The whole company went into the jungle in search of them, and after two days my company commander decided to split us into three platoons each with around 25 to 30 men, each going off in a different direction. The problems was, of course, that form map references, which was pretty difficult in the jungle, I can tell you, If we did not show up, they would then come looking for us. What we did not know was that the communists were between us, and we walked straight into the middle of an ambush. One of the men spotted tracks. My platoon commander sent scouts to crawl forwards. The jungle was so dense that you could not see many feet ahead. The scout reported back that the enemy was close by; we had already dropped to the ground, lying face down and silent. My platoon commander gave the signal for us to prepare to open fire, and we did, giving them everything we had got. Our firepower must have been bigger than theirs. We escaped without casualties and completed the operation, and returned to camp.

We never know how long we would remain; time and time again we went off on our patrols responding to intelligence regarding the movement of the Communists. This remained the case until my first leave since joining the army, which was in 1955."

Dal's group was the first to be flown out; normally they went by sea. They were all weighed and given instructions on embarkation of the aircraft. They flew

from Singapore to Calcutta, with stops for refueling, and then a three-day rail journey brought them to the Nepalese border. At that time, Hindus living in Nepal had to undergo a period of purification, which lasted for five days, before they re-entered the country and traveled on towards their village. Under normal circumstances the journey would now be on foot, but while he had been away a light aircraft flight had been introduced from Kathmandu to Pokhara, where his grandfather and mother were waiting to greet him for the first time in three years.

"My mother had written to me to tell that when I came home on my first leave, I would have to get married. I was only 19 years old and I protested. My grandfather explained that if I did not marry, the girls for a young man of my age would be spoken for, and I would end up having no family. I could not, of course, disagree or argue. They had selected my bride, and I did not even see her before we were married. She was only 15 years old, and because there was no school in her village she had never received any formal education. We were married soon after I returned home and then, as the six-month leave neared its close, we were parted as I once more had to begin my trek across the country, back to Calcutta to rejoin my regiment in Malaya. Before I left my wife informed me she was expecting our first child – which was something all newly married Gurkhas soldiers aimed to achieve before they returned, and they would try again next leave, too.

The situation there was much the same. We were still patrolling the jungle and still hunting the Communists. For me, it lasted another two years until 1957, diving in and out of the jungle on long patrols. The jungle apart, Malaya was a beautiful country, some breathtaking scenery, and the Malays were very nice people; I thoroughly enjoyed it. Then we went to Hong Kong, which was another new



experience, and there I remained, largely on training exercises, until 1959 when it was time for another long leave – six months back in Nepal to see my wife and family."

In July 1960, on his return from leave, Dal discovered he had been selected to go to England with a training squad. He was already a corporal and section commander, and coming to England was a 'glorious experience'. He joined the demonstration company and took part in numerous military tattoos and demonstrations, at Warminster, Bath, Winchester and Edinburgh, a tour that lasted almost nine months. The Gurkhas, he said, always put on a good show. He was in the meantime promoted to sergeant and in the second year became a platoon commander and rejoined his unit in Brunei during the Confrontation.

"We soon found ourselves in action, with various skirmishes and firefights. On one occasion when we were on our patrol, we received word over the radio that our base company was under attack, surrounded by 80 enemy soldiers. We hurried back to launch counterattack and the Indonesians ran as we move in firing from the hip. Two of my soldiers were killed. They had to be pursued and the whole company moved off back to the same area again. We stopped at the border. One platoon stayed there; the other moved across to receive the enemy positions. The operations lasted about two days. The jungle was exceedingly thick and impossible to penetrate in places, let alone see very far ahead. We came upon the Indonesian camp, but it was across a river and surrounded by dense jungle. It was impossible to put it under observation. We circled it best we could but could not get close enough. The company commander decided that once again we should set up an ambush. My platoon was sent off to put itself in position. It was very difficult to establish to place and all that the ambush entails – settling your firepower into a killing zone and giving them covering fire. Anyway, we found into a killing zone and giving them covering fire.

Any way, we found our spot where we could expect the Indonesians to proceed and settled in. We were there for two days in total silence. On the morning of the second day, they arrived... ten enemy soldiers. We killed eight of them.

We returned to our base camp and then took a brief respite, a visit to the cinema in a small town nearby. There was a new English film showing – Bridge over the River Kwai – and a group of us went to see it. It was very interesting. Several of our men has relatives involved in that, but they weren't mentioned. While I was there, there was some shouting; 'Number 12 platoon... you must come out.' They wanted us back immediately. I arrived back at camp around three o'clock in the afternoon. There were two helicopters fired up and waiting to go. My platoon was going back into action. We were all prepared, as a matter of course, for immediate action, and the helicopters took us to a place about 35 minutes' flying time away. We were dropped back on the border with Indonesia to begin immediate patrols. There were reports of heavy Indonesian troop movements, and we were out in the jungle night and day.

On the nineteenth day we were preparing to pull out, and we invited some local villagers to come to our camp that afternoon for a meal to clear up what food we had left because we were leaving the next morning. At around six in the evening I felt it best that the villagers should return home, and we ourselves began preparing our evening meal. Suddenly, a barrage of mortar fire opened up around us. The Indonesians had surrounded our camp. We all dived for cover and fired back, although there was little chance of hitting them. They were firing from a good distance, well covered, but as a precaution we had encircled our camp with mines and trip alarms and they could not get close. We exchanged fire for about 15 minutes when their firing stopped and we stood by for the whole night expecting them to launch fresh attacks. We were on our own. Our radio was out and we could not get

support. We just had to stay out. It was pitch black. The following morning, at daylight, we rechecked best we could and found no sign of the Indonesians. WE hung around for a little longer and decided to change it and make our way back to company headquarters, which we managed with some speed; we could not allow ourselves to be trapped, with no food and running short on ammunition.

In September 1964 we were pulled out and returned to Hong Kong – and then five months later we were sent back again, to exactly the same place we had exited from on the border. My old platoon commander had become company commander and I had replaced him. We had three platoons in the company. I was told to take my platoon to the other side of the border. It was again a very difficult location, in the middle of dense undergrowth. Personally I am against following tracks, you can be walking into an ambush; it was a favorite trick of the Indonesians – and our – selves for that matter. We set off at 8 a.m. and by 3 p.m. were close to the site but couldn't see a thing; if we could not see it, how could we attack? Now, the same must apply to their side. This was quite a large camp, and regular supplies and airdrops were virtually impossible in this place.

There was a very big river close by and we decided that their supply route must be the river, so rather than proceed further into the jungle and very likely walk straight into trouble I decided that the best solution was to set up an ambush at the river. We returned to our base camp and I briefed my company commander on the situation. He wasn't very happy, but in the end, he said; 'OK, OK, sergeant, we'll do it your way.' That night after supper I gathered the men together. There were 24 of us in my platoon, and I selected 14 to come with me to the riverside to provide the firepower for the ambush. The rest would cover our backs. Then along came my company commander and said; 'Right, sergeant, I will go with the spring group'. In

other words, he wanted to lead the ambush at the head of the firepower. He had not been at the briefing, but none the less he took command of the attack. In due course the Indonesian supply boat came in and their soldiers emerged from the jungle to unload. Nobody opened fire. The problem was that I had told my gunners at the briefing that I would open first. My company commander called me forward; 'Why did no one fire?'

And my gunners said 'Why didn't you open?'

I had to explain to the commander that I had said I would open. Fortunately, within a very short while another boat appeared a much better prize. It was a larger boat which carried ten Indonesian soldiers along with their supplies. They had to get out and push it to the side of the river, about 65 feet [20 meters] away. I waited until they were alongside, and then the other came out to meet it. Then I opened fire, which was the signal to the rest of my men. We killed them all. When it was over, I blew my whistle and ordered them to stop firing and we moved forwards. We scouted around and then moved out; heading back to our base camp, and the sector brigadier came over and asked me how many Indonesians my platoon had killed. I told him 18 in all, during the present tour, and he said 'Well done', then got into his helicopter and flew away.

Back in Hong Kong I became a company commander and in 1978 promoted to Gurkha major. There were further tours to the UK and then Belize, and I also became captain of the Bisley shooting team which was quite a responsibility, quite a big! The reputation of the regiment depended on it. I returned to Hong Kong as one of the senior Gurkha officers of the regiment and remained there until 1982 when I retired after 30 years' service."

Dal then went on private assignment to the Sultan of Brunei. This is what the Sultan's private army is in effect. There were no formalities between the government of Nepal or the UK, and the arrangement was quite separate from the British government's own military commitment to Brunei. Many Gurkhas (and British ex-SAS) have served in full major by the Brunei government, first as company commander and then as battalion commander, with special duties at the Sultan's palace and he remained in the Sultan's service for a further ten years, until 1992 when he returned finally to Nepal.

"My wife had been with me for much of the time since I became an officer. She had lived with me in Hong Kong and again in Brunei. My eldest son was born in 1956, who was the result of my first leave home after joining the British army, when I got married. I asked him many times what he planned to do and did not encourage him to join the army. But he did so, and joined his grandfather's old regiment, the 1/2<sup>nd</sup> Gurkha Rifles, and as I speak has the rank of captain and is back in Nepal teaching British Officers Gurkhali, now with the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles. My second son was partly educated in England, where he did his A-levels. My elder daughter married a British soldier and is living in England, and my second daughter, who loved Hong Kong, is now working there and plans to marry shortly."

Dal's story is one that reflects the success that could be achieved by those who become Gurkha officers. For the riflemen themselves, it is a far less glamorous life and certainly a less comfortable retirement, returning as they are bound to do to Nepal for a fresh start in life. For the majority, it was a journey back to the land when still comparatively young.

## CHAPTER - 3

### Interview of ex-Gorkhas War Veterans

Name: - Dhirjaman Tamang

Permanent Address: - Khamlalong 7, Terhathum

Joined date: - 5, August 1946

Leave Date: - 7, July 1946



T: - How did you join British Army? Who encouraged you?

D: - I had gone to Ranke Bazaar, Taplejung on Sunday, September 1942. Galla was searching young men to join the British Army. He came near of us and asked, "Are you interested to join the British Army?" I was interested mainly because of the handsome salary. I thought the salary would be sufficient to increase the economic status of my poor family. Then I get involved in the selection process held in Ranke and fortunately I passed.

T: - Where did gallas take you from Ranke Bazar?

D: - They took me and two of my friends to Gumpad, India. It took us one week to reach Gumpad from our village. There was not any facility of vehicles to reach Gumpad during that time. So, we went there on foot crossing Pashupati Nagar of Terathum .

T: - Was there any test for you in Gumpad?

D: - Yes, there was still the selection process. There were certain criteria to be a British army. We had to cross those criteria to be an army. The British army officers took our physical test, heights, weight etc.

T: - What was the result?

- D:- We all got success in the selection. We were quite happy by our success.
- T:- Did your family agree to let you join the British army?
- D:- No, they didn't agree to let us join the British army. We went with gallas without giving any information to our families.
- T:- Why did they do so?
- D:- They had still the fear and terror of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War in which many Gurkha brothers were killed. Many wives were widowed due to death of their husbands in the battlefield. Our parents had some idea that the world was in the extreme threat of 2<sup>nd</sup> world war. As a British army, I had to take part in the great battles against Japanese and German Regime. I might or might not be return from the war. It was so risky. Due to that reason they didn't allow us to join the British army.
- T:- Where did you get training? How long were you trained there?
- D:- Our training place was Alhilal Kangra Valley, India. We were trained there for 12 months.
- T:- May I know your war experience ?
- D:- Yes, of course. I fought in the Second World War against Japan and German. As a British army, I took part in many major battles of the world. I am going to talk here about my war experience of Burma. We were staying at Kangra Valley after our training. Suddenly a message came to our platoon commander from the high commission. There was war in Burma. Our platoon commander asked us to go Kalia road, Burma. It was informed us that there was Japanese army's troop to attack the British force. But there was not the Japanese force in the Kalia road. We returned back to Burma. In

Burma, there was continuous threat from Japan. Japan was coming forward to control Malaya, Hong Kong, Brunei also. It was very challenging to return back Japanese force. In Burma, we fought very bravely against them. Firing was continuous against each other force. It was continuous both day and night. Japanese army was coming forward rapidly. They were in great number. But we never lost our hope. We fought bravely till the last hour. Finally Japanese army drew back. We drove them 109 miles away, Khuti. We reached Tidim, driving the Japanese force.

T:- What happened in Tidim?

D:- There was great war between us and Japan. It was continued for 17 days. We controlled Tidim at day time but Japanese army took this place in their controlled at night. This process was continued for some days. Finally, Japanese army went back. They crossed the Makshu hill. Our commander ordered us to check either Japanese army crossed the Makshu hill or not. We went there. I was in the frontline. Suddenly a grenade fell near of my feet. My friend lied on the ground. His mouth, tongue and teeth were broken. He was taken back to the hospital. I became senseless due to the high sound of blasting. After few minutes, I was in sense. I took the prawn position immediately. I saw, the Japanese army was sleeping near of me covering his body with the branches of trees. I had no.3 rifle. I shot and killed him on the spot in my rage.

T: - Wasn't there anyone for your help?

D: - No, I was alone at first. The Naik 1980 and less Naik 2198 came to help me. They came to me and said, "Where is firing?" In my rage I told them not



only cry but also fight. They knew my work and consoled me later on. They asked me to climb up the hill to find the Japanese army. We found that the Japanese army was sleeping on the top of hill due to their tiredness of these long 17 days and nights fighting. There was Japanese army looking us. I killed him with no. 3 rifle. Then we cut 17 Japanese army's head with our kukuri Knives. Other Japanese army went back leaving their war weapons and ration. Lal Singh Jamedar came there and asked me the Kirsch which I had taken killing Japanese army. Lal Singh Phoned the headquarter dealing about the situation. The Brigadier came with the tank. All the things were kept on it and taken to headquarter. The Brigadier gave MC to Lal Singh and wrote Bahadur in my chest.

T:- What happened after the war?

D:- The Officers managed our vacation. They gave our salary and we returned back to Nepal.

T:- How much salary you got?

D:- I got 3000 IC for these five years Service.

T:- Did you return back in your duty after the first vacation?

D:- No, British officers didn't inform me to return.

T:- Are you getting pension?

D:- Yes, I am getting 11 thousand for each three months. After three years of my return to Nepal the British agent came to my village searching ex-Gurkhas. They managed pension for me.

T:- Is it better to work in the foreign land as a mercenaries?

D:- No, it is not better. It is better to serve in Nepal.

Name: - Khadka Bahadur Tamang(M.M.) Less Naik

Army NO: - 106586 (10 G.R.)

Joined Date: - 4, August 1941

Retired Date: - 8, March 1946



T: - How did you join in British Army? Please, will you explain about it in detail?

K: - I had gone to Taplejung district in 1941, August. There was my uncle's house near of Taplejung bazaar. My uncle's health was not good during these days. So, I came to my uncle's house to meet and know about his health. The world was in the extreme of 2<sup>nd</sup> World War during that time. British government would like to hold the power and expand its territory in the world. It was controlling Singapore, Hong Kong, India and Falkland respectively. Many Gurkhas Army took part in the major battle of the world from the British side. They earned the fame in the British history of war. British government believed on Gurkhalies due to their honesty, bravery and skilled fighting in the war. So, there were many vacancies in British army for the young and energetic Gurkhalies. The vacancies were opened in 75 districts of Nepal. There was queue of people everywhere to join the British army. I heard that the gallas had come to Taplejung district to find the young Gurkhalies in order to join the British army. One of my friends encouraged me to join the. I determined to join thinking good earning and better Future of my life. My family's condition was so miserable. I had to join there because there were not any options of earning beside it. I meet the gallas near of Taplejung. He said to me, "Do you join the British army?" I agreed on him. More than 100 people joined the British army during that period.

- T:- Where did the galla take all of you after the first selection of Taplejung?
- K:- He took all of us to Silang then Hapabeli of India. We were trained there for 6 months.
- T: - Did you fight any battle as the British army?
- K: - Yes, I fought against Japanese army in the Second World War.
- T: - Where and when did you fight?
- K: - We were going to accomplish the six months training in Hapabeli. Suddenly, our officers said that Japanese armies were coming forward to attack us. So, we were asked to go Palampur. Japan attacked British army in Imfile(1943 Sept.) We went near of Imfile and stayed underground for 3 weeks. We were there to counter against Japanese army. They could not come forward. Finally, we drove them away across the border of Burma.
- T:- Did the War end? Where did you go after the return of your first vacation?
- K:- No, the war was not ended when I returned after the first vacation. There was war in Malaya. We were trained to swim 100m in Puna. After the training of two weeks to climb up and down the ship, we were taken to Mumbai. Then, we had to go Madras. When we reached Madras, we heard that German and Japan were defeated in war. Though German and Japan were already defeated, we were asked to go there. We heard that some of the Gurkhas army were kidnapped by the Japanese army. Our commander asked us to send Japanese army to their own country and take their war weapons.
- T:- Did you get success?

K:- Yes, but it was a very difficult task. We went forward to the Japanese army and asked for their surrender. But the Japanese army didn't do that. The Kernel of Japan was hanged in Singapore by the British army. Finally, there were no ways to attack the British army by Japanese. So, they ran away throwing their weapons back.

T:- What happened after the war of Malaya?

K: - We were sent to Indonesia, after the war in Malaya. It took 4 days and 4 nights in ship to reach the Java. It was said that there was a Japanese force (about 65,000) in Java.

T: - Did British force attack on Japanese force there?

K: - Yes, we attacked and took their weapons. We didn't kill them, we asked for the weapons first. Suddenly the Indonesian army killed the security person of our drinking water supply department.

T: - Did you feel anything about your family village and country while you were at the battle ground?

K:- Why not? I remembered my mother, father, relatives, village and country when I took meal and before sleeping. The nostalgia haunted me.

T:- Don't you have feeling of death in the war?

K:- Yes, but I thought about the promise "better to die than to be a coward". So, to kill others was major thing for me than to be killed by enemies. 'Death' is the common thing for the soldier. Victory of the nation is the major focus of the Gurkhas then the personal life. Courage avoids the fear of death at the time of war.

- T: - What about your vacation? Didn't you suffer from homesickness?
- K: - Duty is everything ... We don't think about the vacation there I thought that when victory was possible for our force, we would return. We were able to drive the Japanese army across the Burma. When the war was over, we got vacation of 2 months. There was the vacation of 1800 Gurkha army.
- T:- Did all the 1800 Gurkha army return from Nepal after the 2 months vacation?
- K:- No, they didn't return. Only 600 armies returned from the first vacation.
- T: - What do you think about this less number of returning?
- K: - I think that some of them were afraid of death. Some didn't return due to the family's pressure.
- T: - Why did you go back?
- K: - My father told me not to return in British army again but I determined to return. I thought that whatever happens I should join. I didn't feared with death. So, I didn't remain in Nepal.
- T: - What type of order officer gave to the British army?
- K: - He was so fired when Indonesian army killed British guard he ordered to kill those who killed him.
- T: - Did the war end?
- K: - Yes, the war ended. So, the British force was trying to return in their own country. All the army gathered in the same place and stayed there for 21 days.
- T: - Was it easy to return? How did they return from Indonesia?

K: - No, it was quite not. It was very difficult for them. The Indonesian had cut the bridge, broke the road and put the trees in the road. They were going to entrap the British force. The people of Java had gone away. They were afraid with British army. The city looked quite empty. We were taken to the edge of sea by plane, at last.

T:- What happen at the edge of sea?

K:- We were firing against the Indonesian army. But we were only 7 people. When they opened firing, we went there and attacked them with defense. We killed 22 Indonesian in the same place. I took Tommy gun and gave b Brain gun to my friend I took help of one of my friends. Finally, we took all the weapons of dead Indonesian army.

T:- Was the officer happy with you, seeing you and your friend's brave deed?

K:- Yes, he became really happy by the brave and courageous works. He thanked me at first and gave M.M., (Medal).

T:- What did you do in your leisure time?

K: - In the leisure time, they taught us about Math, compass etc.

T: - Were you wounded in war?

K: - Not really, but once the Bomb fired just before me. I was wounded due to the soil of the bomb's blasting. There was bleeding in my hands and neck. So, I went back to take medicine.

T: - When did you return from Indonesia?

K: - We returned to Nepal in 1648.

T: - How did the British government returned you?

K: - When the war was over, there was no need of soldier (Gurkhas). So, British government sends 18000 Gurkhas. The British government told them that they would call them if they are needed. They came to Palampur. The priest recited different religious books for 7 days. We 14,000 Gurkhas returned together from the British force. The British government gave money, ticket of train and clothes to our family.

T: - Are you happy to fight in the war for other country?

K: - I am not happy. To fight for the own nation is very better job. We get money besides that we get nothing in war in the foreign land.

T: - How much was the salary? Was it sufficient?

K: - The salary was 16 IC per month in the earlier phase but later in 1946 it became 600 IC. It is very low salary to maintain the family.

Name: - Dilli Prasad Limbu

Permanent Address: - Khamlalong, Terhathum

Joined Date: - 20, Oct 1955

Retired Date: - 6, Sep 1970.



T: - Where did you go to join the British army? How many of you joined there?

D: - I went to Ghopa, Dharan to join the British army we 15,000 young people joined there.

T: - Why many Gurkhas were recruited the British army during that period?

D: - British government was so proud with the Gurkhas in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> world war. The glory of British government was so high due to the warrior castes Gurkhalies. The great two world wars were ended. But there was war in Brunei and Malaya. We were recruited as British army to fight against the Indonesian terrorist in Brunei.

T: - Where were you taken after your first selection of Ghopa?

D: - We were taken to Singapore and trained at Newson. We took 6 months training.

T: - May I know about your experience of war? Please tell me in detail about any war in which you participated as warrior.

D: - I fought in the war of Lawas and Tanjin respectively. The Indonesian terrorist was trying to control the sultan of Brunei. They were entrapping him for his surrender. Brunei was full of the terror of Indonesian terrorists. Their aim was to control and take the sovereignty of Brunei.

T: - Wasn't it the matter of Brunei? Why did you fight there?



D: - Yes, it was the matter of Brunei, But Brunei's Sultan asked help with the British government. So, British government ordered us to release the sultan form the control of Indonesian terrorists.

T:- How did you release the Sultan from the terrorist's control?

D: - At first, we circled the Indonesians terrorist. It was very difficult task because they were well equipped with machine guns, rifle, grenade etc. Our commander asked us to narrow down the circle continuously, we were in great number. Finally, they went back to save their life. They didn't courage to open fire against courage to open five against the British army. We drove them many miles of away form here.

T:- Didn't you have the nostalgia of your family and relatives?

D:- Yes, the nostalgia, of my family troubled me. I was newly married young man. So, at the dinner and bed time I used to remember her, Mela Bazaar, Palam, and Dhannach etc. Sometimes, I used to burst into tears.

I would like to discuss here one of the interesting events of my life in war. Once, I was in extreme homesickness. But I had to join my duty of patrolling. I forgot everything about the war and remembered my wife at home; I had lost the bullets of my No. 3 rifle. It made me nervous. But my friend found it and gave back to me.

T: - What would happen if you had not found the bullets?

D: - Oh! it would be very bad for the warrior. If I had not found it, I would have been kept in suspense for some days. It would be shameful among my friends.

T: - When did you return to Nepal?

D: - I returned to Nepal after 15 years of service.

T: - How do you feel the difference to work in Nepal and Britain?

D: - It is good to work in Nepal. It is problematic to work in the foreign land we lost many things in the foreign land.

T: - How much is your pension?

D: - I am getting 18,000 rupees per month nowadays. It is not good. Everything is being expensive day to day. It is very difficult to maintain my life by this pension. British government has not been generous for our facility.

Name: - Sher Bahadur Limbu

Joined Date: - 9, August 1935

Retired date: - 20, December 1950

T: - May I know about your war experience?

S: - Yes, I fought in the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war.

T: - Who took you to Gumpad to join the British army?

S: - There was a galla in my village who asked me to go to Gumpad. Gumpad was the place of final selection for the British army. I completed all the criteria to be a Gurkha soldier. So, I was selected.

T: - Please, tell me your war experience in which war you fought as a British soldier.

S: - I fought in the Second World War. I am going to tell here about my war experience in Italy. In Italy on the night of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> September, 1944 the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Gurkhas rifles was fighting its way forward into the state of San Marino against bitter opposition from German prepared positions dominating the river valley and held in considerable strength in depth.

T: - What did you do there? How was the position of British forces?

S:- I was a number one Bren gunner in a rifle company which just before dawn came small arms and mortar fire section, I charged against the enemy putting the rest of the post to fight. Almost immediately another party of men and the two men and the section commander was badly wounded by a grenade but, without hesitation, I in spite of intense fire, rushed at the attackers and reaching the crest of the ridge brought my Bren gun into action against the main body of the enemy who were counter attacking our troops.

Disregarding suggestions that I should withdraw to the cover of a slit trench, I lay in the open under a hail of bullets. Firing my Bren gun which I know, I could only bring to bear on the German Emplacements from his exposed position on the crest of the hill as they could not have been visible from the slit trench.

T: - Didn't you afraid to go before the machine gun?

S: - No, I didn't. By the intensity and accuracy of the fire which he could bring to bear only from crest this isolated Gurkhas Bren gunner silenced several enemy machine guns and checked a number of German who were trying to infiltrate on to the ridge.

T: - What happened at the end?

S:- Both forward companies had exhausted their ammunition and, as they were by then practically surrounded they were ordered to withdraw as I covered their withdrawal they crossed the open ground to position in the rear and myself remained alone at this post until my ammunition ran out. I then dashed forward under accurate small arms and mortar fire and rescued two wounded men who were lying between me and the advancing German.

T: - How is the history of Gurkha army?

S: - The great bravery of the Gurkha army was instrumental in saving the lives of many companions and outstanding devotion to duty contributed largely to the severe reverse which the enemy eventually suffered when the Gurkha troops counter attacked. Their Names are engraved in the history of a very gallant soldier.

T: - Didn't you have the memory of your home, families when you were in war?

S: - Yes, the memory of my family often came in mind. It shocked me very much. But we had to forget that due to our business. We had to accomplish our duty any way.

T:- Haven't you afraid of death at the battlefield?

S: - Feeling of death is common for the living creature. But as army, our duty is to kill enemy or to be killed by them 'victory' is always our focus.

T: - What would you like to tell to your brothers?

S: - I don't like to encourage them to join in the army of foreign countries. I suggest them to work and serve own country Nepal.

## CHAPTER - 4

### The History of Victoria Cross and its Winner Gurkhas

Victoria Cross is the most prestigious award of United Kingdom, Britain. It is awarded to the British army who has shown the good leadership and bravery in the battlefield. It was established in 29



January, 1856 according to the high command of Elizabeth. At first, Victoria Cross was given to the army who had fought bravely in the Crimea war, Russia. There were 111 Victorious warier left alive among them 67 army got Victoria Cross by the hands of Queen Elizabeth. Crimea war was very pathetic war for Britain. Many British armies were killed, wounded and lost there. It made them quite nervous. Queen Victoria was also affected by such great loss of British force in Crimia war. She determined to encourage them by award and praise. Victoria Cross was awarded not on the basis of religion, caste and rank (grade). It belonged to the bravery of the soldier.

Victoria Cross was established by Queen Elizabeth's husband Albard. It is 3.6 cm wide. There is engraved lion in the middle of Victoria Cross. In the front part there was written 'For the Bravery'. But 'For Valore' was written on the other side. It is put on the chest with 3.75 cm ribbon. At the back of Victoria Cross there is written the date of war, person's name, army number and platoon in bold letter. *Nawsena* got the first Victoria Cross in 21 June 1854. It was given to Stalsen's NCO in 20 Sept. 1854. Both the armies were the victorious of Crimea war. Kulbir Thapa was the first Gurkhas who got Victoria Cross in the war of France 26 Sept. 1915. Rifleman Kulbir Thapa and Rifleman Karna Bahadur Rana got Victoria Cross in the First World War (1914-1918). Subedar Lal bahadur Thapa, Havildar Gaje Ghale, Rifleman Ganju

Lama, Rifleman Tulbahadur Pun, Naik Agamsing Rai, Rifleman Bhanau Bhakta Gurung and Rifleman Lachiman Gurung got Victoria Cross in the Second World War (1939-1945). Jemadar Netra Bahadur Thapa, Rifleman Sher Bahadur Thapa and Rifleman Thaman Gurung got Victoria Cross posthumously. It was awarded to their wife later on. After these two great wars, there was war in Malaya, Burma, and Brunei. Lance corporal Ram Bahadur Limbu also got Victoria Cross in the Malaya war, 21 November, 1965. He was the last Gurkhas who got Victoria Cross.

The Victoria Cross was made using the bronze of the Russian Gun which was captured in Sebastian Battlefield of Crimea war by the British army. The remaining parts of this gun is still there in the 15<sup>th</sup> Royal Logistic Regiment headquarters of British army. Victoria Cross was made by the Henkon Company of London from the earlier days. It's sole right is given to the defense ministry of Britain.

Rifleman Kulbir Thapa received the first Victoria Cross as the Gurkhas army. It was given to him for his courage and the most conspicuous bravery during operations against the German trenches south of Marquisate.

When himself wounded, on the 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1915, he found a badly wounded soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Leicestershire Regiment behind the first line German trench, and though urged by the British soldier to save himself, he remained with him all day and night. In the early morning at the 26<sup>th</sup> September, in misty weather, he brought him out through the German wire, and leaving him in a place of Comparative safety, returned and brought in two wounded Gurkhas one after the other. He then went back in broad daylight for the British Soldier and brought him in also, carrying him most at the way and being at most points under the enemy's fire.

Bhanbhagta Gurung, one of many of that name that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gurkhas Rifles enlisted was, it will be recalled, on hand to meet Major Gordon Corrigan and his band of travellers – the author included – at the Gurkha Welfare Centre at Gorkha in October 1998 when he was



79 years old. He was born in the Phalpu in the district of Gorkha and joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edwards VII's Own Gurkha Rifles, at the age of 18. He was among the first Chindit expedition and spent much of the next two years with the 3/2<sup>nd</sup> Gurkhas, part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Indian Division, in action down the Arkan coast in an number of assault Landings, In February 1945 the battalion landed at Ruywa and after heavy fighting came upon a brigade of the 82nd West African division attempting to evacuate its casualties but held up by the Japanese at a feature known as Snowdown. On the night of 4 March, B Company of the 3/2 Gurkhas was ordered to capture the ground dominated by the enemy. One of Bhanbhagta's fellow riflemen was killed in an attempt to rush one of their positions single-handed. The whole section was pinned down by a tree sniper who was inflicting casualties by the minute.

Bhanbhagta, being unable to fire from the lying position, stood up, fully exposed to the heavy fire, and calmly killed the enemy sniper with his rifles, thus saving his section for suffering further casualties. The Section advanced again, but when within 20 yards [18 meters] of the objective it was attacked by very heavy fire. Bhanbhagta, without waiting for any orders, dashed forward alone and attacked the first enemy foxhole. Throwing two grenades, he killed the two occupants and rushed on to the next, killing the Japanese in it with his bayonet. Two further enemy foxholes were still firing on the section, and again he ran forward alone and cleared these with bayonet and grenade. During his single-handed attacks on these four enemy foxholes



he face continuous machine-gun fire from an enemy bunker. He went forward alone for the fifth time, leaped on to the roof of the bunker and flung two No. 77 smoke bombs into the bunker slit. Two Japanese rushed out of the bunker coughing. Bhanbhagta killed them both with his kukuri. Remaining Japanese inside the bunker was still firing a light machine gun and holding up the advance of No. 4 Platoon. This time Bhanbhagta crawled and two riflemen to take up positions in the capture bunker, and, as the Japanese attempted to counter attack, the small party under his command ripped into the advancing enemy troops, inflicting heavy casualties.

His regiment gained the battle honor 'Tamandu' and some months later Rifleman Bhanbhagta was decorated with the Victoria Cross at Buckingham Palace by King George VI. After the war his company commander tried to persuade him to continue serving, but he chose to return to his village where he had frail widowed mother and a young wife and children. He left his battalion in January 1946, with the honorary rank of havildar. His three sons followed in his footsteps to serve in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of his regiment. he was honored by his own country in 1945, when he was awarded the star of Nepal, Third Class. His company commander, later colonel, D.F. Neil, described him as 'a smiling, hard-swearing, gallant and indomitable peasant soldier, who, in a battalion of very brave men, was one of the bravest'. When we met him in 1998, it was apparent from all around him that those thoughts had not diminished.

The leading scout, whose name was Thaman Gurung, was working his way to summit when he came upon Germans in a slit trench preparing to open fire on the main section. Thaman Gurung, who had just tuned 20, charged with his kukuri, but he didn't have to use it: the Germans were so surprised they surrendered and were sent down the hill to the rear section of the platoon. Their capture alerted the Germans on

the Other side of the crest, and as Thaman crept back towards them he saw they were preparing to open fire. Within a very short time mortarfire of some intensity came down on the Gurkha positions. In full view of the enemy troops, he dashed across the bullet-swept crest firing his Tommy gun into German positions until his ammunition ran out. Then he threw gun into grenades, darted back to the leading section, collected more grenades and hurled them at the Germans, thus creating a diversion for his section to withdraw. His citation completed the story:

Meanwhile the leading section which had remained to assist the withdrawal of the remainder of the platoon was still close to the summit. Rifleman Thaman Gurung, shouting to the section to withdraw, seized a Bren gun and a number of magazines. He then, yet again, ran to the top of the hill and, although he knew well that his action meant almost certain death, stood up on the bullet-swept summit in full view of the enemy and opened fire.....It was not until he had emptied two complete magazines and the remaining section was well on its way to safety that Rifleman Gurung was killed .....His superb gallantry and sacrifice of his life [allowed] his platoon to withdraw from an extremely difficult position without many more casualties, bringing valuable information that resulted in the whole Monte San Bartolo feature being captured three days later.

Anthony Harvey, being there, has, like the rest of the platoon, particular cause to be thankful for the actions of Thaman: ' There is no doubt that he saved our lives, and long after the action a court of inquiry was set up and all the witnesses were sworn and made to tell what they knew about it, as a result of which an application for the award of the VC was made and was granted. It was thoroughly deserved.'

These outbreaks of violence, often on the run, were sufficient, once again to produce numerous examples of Gurkha heroics – and one outstanding example was

recognized by the award of the Gurkhas' final Victoria Cross. Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu, then 26, came from the village of Chyanthapu in Yangrop Thum, eastern Nepal. He joined the 2/10<sup>th</sup> in 1957 as it neared the end of a ten-year stint of antiterrorist operations in the Malaya Emergency and later moved on to Borneo. In November 1965 the 2/10<sup>th</sup> was ordered to dominate a positions 5,000 yards (4,572 meters) inside the border between Malaysia and Indonesia, in the Bau District of Sarawak. Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu's Company confronted a strong enemy force located in the border area entrenched in platoon strength on top of a sheer-sided hill. He could see the nearest trench and in it a sentry manning a machine gun. He inched himself forwards until, still ten yards (nine metres) from his enemy, he was seen and the sentry opened fire, wounding a man to his right. Rushing forwards, he reached the enemy trench in seconds and killed the sentry. Under heavy enemy fire, he gathered his own group together and proceeded to attack. Two of his men fell seriously wounded. Knowing that their only hope of survival was immediate evacuation from their exposed position so close to the enemy, the lance corporal made three attempts to rescue his comrades, crawling forwards in full view of at least two enemy machine-gun posts. For three full minutes he continued to move forwards but, when almost able to touch the nearest casualty, he was driven back. After a pause he hurled himself on the ground beside one of the wounded and, calling for support from two light machine guns that had now come up to hi right, he picked up the man and carried him to safety. Without hesitation, he immediately ran back to the top of the hill, again moved out into the open between intense bursts of automatic fire, which could be seen striking the grounded all round him, until he eventually reached the second wounded man. Picking him up and unable now to seek cover, he carried him back as fast as he could through the hail of enemy bullets. It had taken 20 minutes to

complete this action. For all but a few seconds he had been moving alone in full view of the enemy and under the continuous aimed fire of their automatic weapons. Finally rejoining his section, he was able to recover the light machine gun abandoned by the wounded and with it won his revenge, initially giving support during the later stages of the assault and finally killing four more enemy as they attempted to escape across the border. The hour-long battle fought at point-blank range with the utmost ferocity by both sides was finally won. At least twenty-four enemy were killed at a cost to the attacking force of three killed and two wounded.

Lance Corporal Ram Bahadur Limbu was presented with his Victoria Cross by the Queen at Buckingham Palace in 1966. He was accompanied only by his young son Bhakta, five years old, as that year. Ram Bahadur Limbu became a QGO and, in the rank of captain, was appointed to be one of Her Majesty's Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officers (AGOO) in 1983. On completion of his duty, he was made an MVO and retired in 1985 with the honorary rank of captain (GCO).



Lance Corporal Ram Bahadur Limbu arresting the Indonesian terrorist

In a way, the citation to the Gurkhas's last VC was itself a tribute to the overall administration of the Indonesian Confrontation by Walter Walker and his successor, General George Lee. In the entire campaign, lasting almost four years, 2,000 Indonesians troops and guerrillas were killed in action British losses were spectacularly light: 19 killed and 44 wounded, while the Gurkha battalions suffered 40 dead and 83 wounded. Defense Minister Denis Healey went on record to describe it as one of the most efficient uses of military force he had ever seen and averted 'a

tragedy that could have befallen the whole corner of a continent if we had not been able to hold the situation and bring it to a successful termination.

It is obvious fact the Gurkhas are the frontline warriors of the every major battle of the world general sir James Willcocks was unequivocal in his praise, stating that the Gurkhas were undoubtedly his best soldiers. There could be no doubting the Gurkhas Contribution to pave the glorious history of Britain. About the Gurkhas, field marshal lord slim says, ' They are the ideal infantry man, an ideal rifleman they are brave, tough, patient adaptable, skilled in the field craft, intensely proud at their military record and answering in their loyalty . Add to this his honesty, parade perfection and unquenchable cheerfulness and service with the Gurkha is, for any soldier an immense satisfaction. But British government is not being so generous to such brave fighting men. 'Victoria Cross' can not console their aching heart. Victoria Cross was given to the Gurkhas to make them courageous and skilled warrior. It was managed to provide by the Queen Victoria after the great loss of Crimea war. She would like to console the soldiers who were badly wounded and feeling extreme pain by the war. Her only aim was to make the British history victorious in the world.

The agreement on Gukhas army was held in 1885. Bir Samser was the first prime minister who agreed on British government for the new recruitment of young Gurkhalies in British army. This agreement is full of deceive for Nepalese people we are sending them in the foreign land as Mercenaries. It is necessary to make them responsible for the Nepalese government. Our government has never cared properly about the problems at Gurkhas army. There is great discrimination between the white British soldiers and Gurkhas. Gurkhas are getting very low salary and pension in comparison of the native British soldiers. Is it justice to the front-line warriors?

The Gurkhas are largely from Mongolian stock. Mongolians were regarded as the warrior castes by the British government. So, they were focused to join the British army. Their name also signifies the region of Nepal from which they were recruited. The Gurung, Thakurs, Puns, Tamangs and Magars from west who would be assigned to 'western' battalions and the Rais, Limbus, Tamang and Sunwars from the east, along with some Sherpas. They are largely for export only: to India, the United Kingdom, Brunei and Singapore. They join the army aiming to earn enough money. But it has been very problematic earnings. Life standard is being expensive day to day but the facility is same.

### **Ethnic Recruitment Report**

(1904/05-1937/35)

S.N.	Caste	No. of People	Percentage
1	Magar	38,391	33.5
2	Gurung	22,947	20.0
3	Rai	13,830	12.0
4	Limbu	8,989	7.8
5	Tamang	2,565	2.2
6	Sunuwar	1,406	1.2
7	Newar	918	0.8
8	Thakuri	3,615	3.1
9	Chhetri	14,358	12.5
10	Others	3,615	3.1

Source: - C.J. Morris, Gurkhas:

Handbook for the Indian Army, Delhi, 1936, Appendix, PP. 173-179

This report shows that 85% of Gurkha armies are Mongolians. Dr. Harka Gurung says, "Gurkhas' problem is the problem of *Matwali* (Mongoloids). In every respect army society is in backwards educationally, politically etc. Education is only the gateway to revolutionize the society. Harka Gurung writes that the army society should follow the education to aware their children and families about the truth. It is better to get job here in Nepal rather to carry guns of others. Mongolians should come in our own country for the competition of job and politics.

## CHAPTER - 5

### Conclusion

Gurkha accounts of bravery focused on the quotidian aspects of the military campaigns in which they participated; they spoke of the places they visited, nights spent in the jungle, the food they ate, the skill of their opponents, the destruction of enemy tanks and guns, as well as of their own losses. They were seldom aware (and were frequently uninformed) of the precise political circumstances giving rise to these engagements.

The second theme emerging from Gurkha comments is that fear (*dar*) is regarded as a normal part of being a soldier, but in time is thought to be controllable (see Parkin 1986). One man who had fought in Burma during the Second World War put it like this:

At first I was afraid for my life. But later I wasn't frightened.

After getting used to war we no longer fear.

Another, who had seen action during the Malayan Emergency, commented:

The first time they told us we had to go to fight I was very afraid. The second time too. Thereafter I knew how bullets came and where to look, how to avoid them. So then I wasn't afraid.

A third, who had been in the same campaign, admitted to 'shaking with fear', but found the emotion invigorating.

A lot of excitement comes when we go to kill someone, but we know if we don't kill him, we're finished. When we go to war someone has to die.



Death in battle is not regarded as a 'bad death', and thus to result in a dissatisfied ghost (*bhut*), liable to attack the living—a common source of fear in Nepalese villages. 'A man killed by a bullet will not leave a *bhut*', I was told repeatedly. According to one former Gurkha:

In a war I know in advance I may die. So my death is my responsibility (*iccha*). Those who die in do not leave ghosts.

Several attributed their ability to cope with fear to their training and weapons, others to the wider South Asian notion of serving unquestioningly the one whose 'salt' you have eaten. Among the older ex-Gurkhas, who entered service before the advent of schools in Nepal, education is thought to increase men's fear. One former subedar (Gorkha Officer) put it like this:

Before, in our fathers' time, and in ours, they were told to go and do something and they did it. Now they don't. Why? Before they were not educated, now they are a little educated and an educated man is afraid, 'A bullet will get me', he thinks. That's my opinion.

While few noted that uncontrolled fear would inhibit courageous action, none of these ex-soldiers suggested that courage consists essentially in managing fear. I was told that Gurkhas are regarded as brave because they are always obedient and therefore ready to follow whatever orders they receive, which is not something soldiers in other armies are thought to do. Several older men noted that of late even Gurkhas had begun to disobey orders, again the reason being because they are now better educated. Another who had retired on a private's pension, laughed at the suggestion that Gurkhas are invariably brave.

Only stupid (*lato*) ones are brave. 'Foolish, foolish', they say about us. 'They never care, just go to fight'. In my view, the clever (*bato*) ones are afraid.

The theme of Gurkhas as obedient as a result of lacking intellect recurs in these ex-Gurkhas' explanations of their reputation as courageous.

We are the strongest; it's good to be strong, but we have no *dimag* (brain). If we are told to kill, we go and do so, and come back. That's why the British trust us. We obey orders.

But in numerous contexts these men made it abundantly clear that obedience, along with the acceptance of hardship and danger, are explicable in terms of obligations towards kin and family; the compelling need to provide support for the household. Ultimately, these are the paramount values for which they are willing, albeit reluctantly, to sacrifice everything.

A third theme, which in part explains the dissociation of fear and courage, is that for virtually all the ex-Gurkhas I spoke to, courage (*bahaduri*) is not seen as an abstract property of action, or even a distinctive and definable form of behavior, but a judgment of individual action arrived at retrospectively by others. In other words, the act or person can only be *bahaduri* if it is so recognized by military superiors, in the form of an appropriate decoration. One ex-Gurkha, who saw action in the Falklands, remarked:

Whoever kills the enemy in war, and the British get some benefit, that one is given a medal, and called *bahaduri*.

Another, who served in Burma during the Second World War, suggested that to be regarded as brave, you had to kill a lot of the enemy (*dusman*), and destroy or

capture their weapons. But he insisted that such actions did not constitute bravery unless they were officially recognized:

I wanted to bring a medal, but the *Havildar* [Gurkha NCO] was wounded and he couldn't give my name. Only when you get your medal everyone knows about your *bahadur*.

Bravery awards, moreover, have a monetary value, so that the recipient receives a monthly payment for life. Awards and the degree of bravery they imply are occasionally referred to assess in terms of their rupee value. ('For the MM we get Rs 25, for the DSM Rs 28, then the MC...'). Most Gurkhas I talked to attributed the award of medal to *bhagya* (fate, fortune, 'luck').

The Gurkhas are marginalized at home and abroad. At home, they were used as diplomatic currency to align the rulers with an imperial power. Even today, they remain marginal since the Gurkhas are primarily ethnic tribal while the power structure is monopolized by the high castes. As for the external context, the myth of unique loyalty is now being challenged in British courts through lawsuits claiming racial discrimination.

The Gurkhas are valued as infantry soldiers, yet they are now contesting legal battles not only in Britain but also in Nepal.

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