

Trooping the Colour: Victoria Cross Part Two: Second World War to Iraq. By Elayne Jude

The Victoria Cross (VC) is awarded for valour in the face of the enemy. Members of armed forces of some Commonwealth countries and previous British Empire territories are eligible. It may be awarded to a person of any rank in any service, and to civilians under military command, and is presented by the British monarch. It is jointly, with the George Cross, the highest award for bravery bestowed by the United Kingdom.

This is the second part of a list of those soldiers of colour whose extraordinary character, courage and loyalty won them this highest honour. From the first recipients of WWI to Johnson Beharry in Iraq, these are beyond question role models for all of us, British Muslims and ferengi alike.

1941: Richhpal Ram VC (1899 – 1941)

An Indian, and a Subadar in the 6th Rajputana Rifles, in the Indian Army. At Keren, Eritrea, Subadar Richhpal Ram led a successful attack on the enemy and subsequently repelled six counter-attacks and then, without a shot left, brought the few survivors of his company back. Five days later, when leading another attack, his right foot was blown off, but he continued to encourage his men until he died.

1941: Premindra Singh Bhagat PVSM, VC (1918 – 1975)

An Indian, and a second lieutenant in the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners. A mobile column of 3/12 Royal Frontier Force Rifles, including a detachment of 21 Field Company under Second Lieutenant Bhagat, was sent on a reconnaissance mission towards Metemma. Bhagat's Bren carrier passed through a heavily mined stretch of road and detonated two mines, the second of which destroyed the carrier and killed the driver and a sapper. Bhagat continued in another carrier, defusing mines by hand as the column moved down the road. Under close enemy fire and without food or rest, he worked for four days, clearing a total of 15 minefields over a distance of 55 miles. After another Bren carrier was blown up under him, puncturing his eardrums, he was relieved of further duties and evacuated to Khartoum for treatment.

1943: Chhelu Ram VC (1905 – 1943)

An Indian, and a Company Havildar-Major in the 4/6th Rajputana Rifles, in the Indian Army. At Djebel Garci, Tunisia, the advance of a battalion of the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade was held up

by machine-gun and mortar fire. Company Havildar-Major Chhelu Ram dashed forward with a tommy-gun and killed the occupants of a post and then went to the aid of his injured company commander. He was himself wounded, but taking command of the company, he led them in hand-to-hand fighting. He was again wounded. He continued rallying his men until he died.

1943: Parkash Singh VC (1913 – 1991)

An Indian, and a Havildar serving in the Bren Gun Carrier Platoon of 5th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment, British Indian Army (now 5th Battalion The Baloch Regiment of Pakistan Army). The Bren Gun Carrier Platoon of 5/8th Punjab was attacked by a strong Japanese patrol near Donbaik on the Mayu Peninsula. The Platoon Commander was wounded and was forced to retire, handing over the command to Havildar Parkash Singh. Parkash Singh rushed to the rescue of two bogged down carriers. When his Bren gunner was wounded, he took control of the gun from him, and charged towards the enemy. Driving with one hand and firing the Bren gun with the other, he drove them out of their fixed positions. As he returned to pick the crews of the stranded carriers, he came under heavy enemy fire, but calmly rescued all eight men. The battalion carriers later came under heavy anti-tank fire in the same area. The crews of the destroyed vehicles were given up for dead, and the rest of the carriers withdrew. But Parkash Singh drove down the beach under intense enemy fire, and found the missing officer and his driver in their badly damaged carrier. He decided to tow their vehicle to safety. Despite the order of his Platoon Commander to go back and save himself, he rigged a makeshift tow chain and secured it to the damaged carrier, all the time exposed to enemy fire, and then towed it back to safety. He was awarded the Victoria Cross, although the initial recommendation was for a VC and Bar.

1943: Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu VC (1918 – 1943)

A Maori, and platoon commander of the 28th (Māori) Battalion, embarked with the 2nd Echelon of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force. His company was tasked with the capture of the Tebaga Gap, overlooked by the hill Point 209, held by the 2nd Battalion, 433 Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 164 Light Division. He led his men up the slope and captured what was believed to be the top of Point 209, although it transpired to be a false summit. Fierce fighting transpired as the Germans attempted to drive Ngarimu's forces off the hill. Twice wounded, he and his men defended their position from several counter-attacks during the night. His position reinforced the following morning, he was killed during the next counter-attack. The false summit remained in the hands of Ngarimu's company, and the Germans still on Point 209 itself surrendered the same day once artillery support had been brought to bear on Point 209. Ngarimu is buried in the British Military Cemetery at Sfax, Tunisia, and is commemorated by a scholarship promoting education of Māori.

1944: Agansing Rai VC MM (1920 – 2000)

A Nepalese, and a Naik in the 2nd Battalion, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, in the Indian Army. near

the town of Bishenpur in the state of Manipur, India. Under fire, he and his party charged a machine-gun. Agansing Rai himself killed three of the crew. When the first position had been taken, he then led a dash on a machine-gun firing from the jungle, where he killed three of the crew, his men accounting for the rest. He subsequently tackled an isolated bunker single-handed, killing all four occupants. The enemy fled, and the second post was recaptured.

1944: Ganju Lama VC MM (1924 – 2000)

A Nepalese, and a rifleman in the 1st Battalion, 7th Gurkha Rifles, in the Indian Army. At Ningthoukhong, India, 'B' Company was attempting to stem the enemy's advance when it came under heavy machine-gun and tank machine-gun fire. Rifleman Ganju Lama, with complete disregard for his own safety, took his PIAT gun and, crawling forward, succeeded in bringing the gun into action within 30 yards of the enemy tanks, knocking out two of them. Despite a broken wrist and two other serious wounds to his right and left hands he then moved forward and engaged the tank crew who were trying to escape. Not until he had accounted for all of them did he consent to have his wounds dressed.

1944: Ram Sarup Singh VC (1912 – 1944)

An Indian, and an Acting Subadar in the 2nd Battalion, 1st Punjab Regiment, in the British Indian Army. At Kennedy Peak in the Tiddim area, Burma, two platoons were ordered to attack a strong Japanese position. The platoon commanded by Subadar Singh attained its objective. Singh was wounded in both legs but insisted on carrying on. The enemy's counter-attack was halted by Subadar Singh's dashing counter-charge, in which he killed four of the enemy himself. He was again wounded, but continued to lead his men, killing two more of the enemy, before he was mortally wounded.

1944: Kamal Ram VC (1924 – 1982)

An Indian, and a Sepoy in the 3rd Battalion, 8th Punjab Regiment, British Indian Army (now 3rd Battalion of the Baloch Regiment of Pakistan). In Italy, after crossing the River Gari overnight, the Company advance was held up by heavy machine-gun fire. The Company Commander called for a volunteer to get round the rear of an enemy post and silence it. Sepoy Kamal Ram attacked the post single handed and shot the first machine-gunner, then killing two more Germans. He attacked the second machine-gun post, shooting one machine-gunner, and throwing a grenade. After the remaining enemy surrendered, Kamal Ram attacked the third post, enabling his Company to charge and secure the ground vital to the establishment of the bridgehead and the completion of work on two bridges. He was the youngest Indian recipient of Victoria Cross.

1944: Sefanaia Sukanaivalu VC (1918–1944)

Fijian soldier and a posthumous recipient. Died under Japanese fire on 23 June 1944, at Mawaraka during an attempt to rescue his comrades.

1944: Abdul Hafiz VC (1925 – 1944)

An Indian Muslim from present-day Pakistan, a Jemadar in the 9th Jat Regiment, in the Indian Army. Ordered to attack with his platoon a prominent position held by the enemy, the only approach to which was across a bare slope and up a very steep cliff. He led the assault, killing several of the enemy himself and then pressed on regardless of machine-gun fire from another feature. He received two wounds, the second of which was fatal, but succeeded in routing an enemy vastly superior in numbers and capturing a most important position.

1944: Bhandari Ram VC (1919 – 2002)

An Indian, and a sepoy in the 16th Battalion 10th Baluch Regiment, British Indian Army (now Baloch Regiment of Pakistan Army). At Arakan, Burma, No. 24782 Sepoy Bhandari Ram's platoon was pinned down by the intense enemy fire. Wounded Bhandari Ram crawled up to the Japanese machine-gun, in full view of the enemy and sustaining more wounds, and threw a grenade into the position, killing the enemy gunner and two others. Only after the position had been taken he lay down and allowed his wounds to be dressed.

1944: Umrao Singh VC (1920 – 2005)

An Indian, and Havildar (Sergeant) in the Royal Indian Artillery, Indian Army. In the Kaladan valley, Burma, he was a field gun detachment commander in an advanced section of the 33 Mountain Battery, supporting the advance of the XV Corps on the Arakan. His gun was in an advanced position, supporting the 8th Gold Coast Regiment. After a 90 minute sustained bombardment from 75 mm guns and mortars, his position was attacked by infantry. He used a Bren light machine gun to off the assault. A second wave of attackers killed all but Singh and two other gunners, but was also beaten off. A third wave followed. Out of ammunition, Singh engaged in hand to hand fighting. He was seen to strike down three infantrymen before succumbing to a rain of blows. Six hours later, he was found alive but unconscious near to his artillery piece, almost unrecognisable from a head injury, still clutching his gun bearer. Ten Japanese soldiers lay dead nearby. His field gun was back in action later that day.

1944: Yeshwant Ghadge VC (1921 – 1944)

An Indian, and a naik in the 5th Mahratta Light Infantry, in the Indian Army. In the Upper Tiber Valley, Italy, a rifle section under his command came under heavy machine-gun fire at close range. All were killed except the commander. He rushed the machine-gun position, first throwing a grenade which knocked out the machine-gun and firer, and then he shot one of the gun crew. Finally, having no time to change his magazine, he clubbed to death the two

remaining members of the crew. He fell mortally wounded, shot by an enemy sniper. With no known grave, Ghadge is remembered at the Cassino Memorial.

1944: Nand Singh VC MVC (1914 – 1947)

An Indian, and an Acting Naik in the 1/11th Sikh Regiment, in the Indian Army. On the Maungdaw-Buthidaung Road, Burma, commanding a leading section of the attack, he was ordered to recapture a position gained by the enemy. He led his section up a very steep knife-edged ridge under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. Wounded in the thigh, he captured the first trench, crawled forward alone and, wounded again in the face and shoulder, captured the second and third trenches.

In 1947 Nand Singh led his platoon in a desperate but successful attack to extricate his battalion from an ambush in the hills SE of Uri in Kashmir. He was mortally injured by a close-quarters machine-gun burst, and posthumously awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC), the second-highest Indian decoration for battlefield gallantry. This makes Nand Singh unique in the annals of VC winners. The Pakistanis recognised Singh because of his VC ribbon. His body was taken Muzaffarabad, where it was tied spreadeagled on a truck and paraded through the city with a loudspeaker proclaiming that this would be the fate of every Indian VC. The soldier's body was later thrown into a garbage dump, and was never recovered.

1944: Netrabahadur Thapa VC (1916 – 1944)

A Nepalese, and an acting subadar of the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles in the Indian Army. He was in command of a small isolated hill post at Bishenpur, India, when the Japanese army attacked in force. The men, inspired by their leader's example, held their ground and the enemy were beaten off, but casualties were very heavy and reinforcements were requested. When these arrived some hours later they also suffered heavy casualties. Thapa retrieved the reinforcements' ammunition himself and mounted an offensive with grenades and kukris, until he was killed.

1944: Gaje Ghale VC (1918 – 2000)

A Nepalese, and a Havildar in the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles. In the Chin Hills, Burma, he was in charge of a platoon of young soldiers engaged in attacking a strong Japanese position. Wounded in the arm, chest and leg he nevertheless continued to lead assault after assault, encouraging his men by shouting the Gurkha's battle-cry. Spurred on by the irresistible will of their leader, the platoon stormed and captured the position which the havildar then held and consolidated under heavy fire, refusing to go to the Regimental Aid post until ordered to do so.

1944: Sher Bahadur Thapa VC (1921 – 1944)

A Nepalese, and a Rifleman in the 1st Battalion of the 9th Gurkha Rifles, in the British-Indian Army. at San Marino, Italy, when a company of the 9th Gurkha Rifles encountered bitter opposition from a German prepared position, Rifleman Sher Bahadur Thapa and his section commander, who was afterwards badly wounded, charged and silenced an enemy machine-gun. The rifleman then went on alone to the exposed part of a ridge where, ignoring a hail of bullets, he silenced more machine-guns, covered a withdrawal and rescued two wounded men before he was killed.

1944: Thaman Gurung VC (1924 – 1944)

A nepalese, and a Rifleman in the 1st Battalion, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, in the Indian Army. At Monte Pompegno, Italy, he was acting as one of two scouts to a fighting patrol. He charged a concealed enemy who, taken by surprise, surrendered without opening fire. He crept forward to the summit of the position, from which he saw a party of Germans, well dug in, preparing to throw grenades over the crest. Devoid of cover and under fire at close range, he fired on the German position with his Tommy gun, allowing the forward section to reach the summit. In full view of the enemy and constantly exposed to heavy fire at short range, he methodically put burst after burst of Tommy gun fire into the German slit trenches, until his ammunition ran out. He threw two grenades, collected more grenades and again doubled over the hill top and hurled them at the remaining Germans. Shouting to the section to withdraw, he seized a Bren gun and a number of magazines, ran to the hilltop and, although his action meant almost certain death, stood up on the bullet-swept summit, in full view of the enemy, and opened fire at the nearest enemy positions. He emptied two complete magazines, and the remaining section was well on its way to safety, when he was killed.

1944: Tul Bahadur Pun VC (1923 – 20 April 2011)

A Nepalese, and a Rifleman in the 3rd Battalion, 6th Gurkha Rifles, in the Indian Army. Ordered to attack the Railway Bridge at Mogaung. His company sustained intense cross fire at close range. Both the leading platoons of 'B' Company, one of which was his, were pinned to the ground and the whole of his Section was wiped out except himself, the Section commander and one other, who were quickly seriously wounded. He seized the Bren Gun, and firing from the hip as he went, continued the charge on this heavily bunkered position alone, in the face of the most shattering concentration of automatic fire, directed straight at him. Despite overwhelming odds, he reached the enemy position and closed with the Japanese occupants, killing three and put five more to flight and capturing two light machine guns and ammunition. He gave supporting fire which allowed to the remainder of his platoon to reach their objective.

He was refused entrance to the UK by British officials in Nepal as he was unable to

demonstrate strong enough ties with the UK for him to be allowed to settle there. In 2007 this decision was overturned by the British Asylum & Immigration Minister, due to the exceptional nature of the case.

1945: Lachhiman Gurung VC (1917 – 2010)

A Nepalese, and a Rifleman in the 4th Battalion, 8th Gurkha Rifles, in the Indian Army. At Taungdaw, Burma, he was manning the most forward post of his platoon which bore the brunt of an attack by at least 200 Japanese. Twice he hurled back grenades which had fallen on his trench, but the third exploded in his right hand, blowing off his fingers, shattering his arm and severely wounding him in the face, body and right leg. His two comrades were also badly wounded but the rifleman, now alone and disregarding his wounds, loaded and fired his rifle with his left hand for four hours, calmly waiting for each attack which he met with fire at point blank range. Afterwards, when the casualties were counted, it is reported that there were 31 dead Japanese around his position which he had killed, with only one arm.

1945: Naik Fazal Din VC (1921 – 1945)

A Punjabi Muslim and an Acting Naik in the 7th Battalion 10th Baluch Regiment, British Indian Army (now 15th Battalion The Baloch Regiment of Pakistan Army). Near Meiktila, Burma, No. 18602 Naik Fazal Din was commanding a section during a company attack on a Japanese bunkered position. His section was held up by machine-gun fire and grenades from several bunkers. He attacked the nearest position with grenades and silenced it. A Japanese ran his sword through Fazal Din's chest. Despite his terrible wound, he seized the sword and killed his assailant with it. He then killed two more Japanese soldiers with the sword. Continuing to encourage his men, he staggered to his Platoon Headquarters to make his report. He collapsed there, and died soon after reaching the Regimental Aid Post.

1945: Naik Gian Singh VC (1915 – 1996)

An Indian, and a Naik in the 15th Punjab Regiment, in the Indian Army. On the road between Kamyé and Myingyan, Burma, where the Japanese were strongly positioned, Naik Gian Singh, in charge of the leading section of his platoon, went on alone, firing his tommy gun, and rushed the enemy foxholes. In spite of being wounded he went on, hurling grenades. He attacked and killed the crew of a concealed anti-tank gun, and then led his men in clearing all enemy positions.

1945: Ali Haidar VC (1913 – 1999)

A Pakistani Pashtun and a Sepoy in the 6th battalion 13th Frontier Force Rifles, in the British Indian Army. Haidar's battalion was tasked with crossing the Senio River. Only Sepoy Ali Haidar and two others men got across, under heavy machine-gun fire. Without orders, and on his own

initiative, Sepoy Ali Haidar charged the nearest post and was severely wounded. With utter disregard of his own wounds he continued and charged the next post. He was again wounded, but crawled closer, threw a grenade, and charged into the second enemy post. Two enemy were wounded and the remaining two surrendered. Taking advantage of Sepoy Ali Haidar's attacks, the Company charged across the river and established a bridgehead. His heroism saved the rest of his company.

1945: Karamjeet Singh Judge VC (1923 - 1945)

An Indian, and a lieutenant in the 4th Battalion, 15th Punjab Regiment, in the Indian Army. Near Meiktila, Burma, he was a platoon commander, ordered to capture a cotton mill. Though facing stiff enemy resistance (a total of almost 200 enemy shells fell around the tanks and infantry during the attack) and inoperable terrain for tanks, he dominated the battlefield by his numerous and successive acts of superb gallantry.

1945: Namdeo Jadav VC (1921 – 1964)

An Indian, and a Sepoy in the 5th Mahratta Light Infantry, in the Indian Army. At the Senio River, Italy, when a small party were almost wiped out in an assault on the east floodbank of the river, Sepoy Namdeo Jadav carried two wounded men under heavy fire through deep water, up a steep bank and through a mine belt to safety. Then he eliminated three enemy machine-gun posts. Finally, climbing on top of the bank, he shouted the Maratha war cry and waved the remaining companies across. He not only saved many lives but enabled the battalion to secure the bridgehead and ultimately to crush all enemy resistance in the area.

1945: Sher Shah Awan VC (1917 – 1945)

Born in present-day Pakistan, and a Lance Naik in the 7th Battalion of the 16th Punjab Regiment, in the Indian Army. at Kyeyebyin, Kaladan, Burma (now Myanmar), Lance Naik Sher Shah was commanding a left forward section of his platoon when it was attacked by overwhelming numbers of Japanese. He broke up two attacks by crawling right in among the enemy and shooting at point-blank range. On the second occasion he was hit and his leg shattered, but he maintained that his injury was only slight and when the third attack came, he again crawled forward engaging the enemy until he was shot through the head and killed. Sher Shah's Battalion 7/16 Punjab Regiment, is now a part of the Pakistan Army, and proudly known as the "Sher Shah Battalion".

1945: Bhanbhagta Gurung VC (1921 – 2008)

A Nepalese, and a Rifleman in the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Gurkha Rifles, British Indian Army. Near Tamandu, Burma, Gurung's company was pinned down by a sniper. Being unable to fire from the lying position, he stood up fully exposed to the heavy fire and calmly killed the enemy sniper

with his rifle. The section advanced but came under heavy fire once again. He dashed out alone to attack five enemy fox-hole with bayonet and grenades, subjected to almost continuous and point-blank Light Machine Gun fire. His regiment gained the battle honour "Tamandu" as a result of the engagement.

1965: Rambahadur Limbu, VC, MVO (1939 -)

A Nepalese, and a Lance-Corporal in the 2nd Battalion, 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, British Army. In Sarawak, Borneo, he was in an advance party of 16 Gurkhas when they encountered about 30 Indonesians holding a position on the top of a jungle-covered hill. He advanced with two men, but at 10 yards from the enemy machine-gun position, the sentry opened fire on them, whereupon Limbu rushed forward and killed him with a grenade. The remaining enemy combatants opened fire on the small party, wounding the two men with the lance-corporal who, under heavy fire, made three journeys into the open, two to drag his comrades to safety and one to retrieve their Bren gun, with which he charged down and killed many of the enemy. His original Victoria Cross was stolen while he slept on a train on his way to Nepal in 1967. He was issued with a replacement.

2005: Lance Sergeant Johnson Gideon Beharry VC (1979-)

Grenadian. For twice saving members of his unit, the 1st Battalion Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, from ambushes, on 1 May 2004 and on 11 June 2004, at Al-Amarah, Iraq. He sustained serious head injuries in the latter engagement.

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