



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



HAVILDAR SATINGIAN PHUNCHOK

SERVICE NUMBER	9100170
RANK	Havildar
NAME	Satingian Phunchok
SON OF	Wangial
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Sissu, Keylong Lahaul Spiti, Himachal Pradesh
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	7 J&K MILITIA (Later LADAKH SCOUTS)
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/COMMISSION	17 June 1948
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra (Posthumous) / 27 October 1962
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	1962 Indo China War
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	



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Havildar Satingian Phunchok was born on 17 June 1929 to Shri Wangial in Sissu village in Lahual Spiti District of Himachal Pradesh. He was enrolled in 7 J&K MILITIA (later LADAKH SCOUTS) of the Indian Army on 17 June 1948 at the age of seventeen. During the Sino India War of 1962, Havildar Satingian Phunchok was deployed in the Chushul Sub-Sector where he fought the Chinese in the battle of Changla Post and sacrificed himself for the nation. He was awarded Maha Vir Chakra posthumously.

The LADAKH SCOUTS known as the “Snow Warriors” were initially raised as a Paramilitary Force formed of the Ladakhi locals known as Nubra Guards to save Ladakh from intruders in 1948. It comprised of Ladakhi locals who are physically fit and attuned with the rugged terrain and hostile climate. In 1952, the Nubra Guards were merged as the 7th Battalion of the Jammu & Kashmir Militia, which later became the Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry (JAK LI) Regiment. The Ladakh Scouts was raised in 1963, following the Indo China War of 1962. It was formed by spinning off the 7th and 14th Battalions of J&K MILITIA. LADAKH SCOUTS had two Wings- the Karakoram Wing, defending the Eastern front facing China and the Indus Wing facing Pakistan. They fought in the 1965 and 1971 India Pakistan War and were also part of Operation Meghdoot in 1984. They also played a significant role by achieving one of the earliest victories during the Kargil War of 1999 and also received the Unit Citation from General VP Malik, the then Chief of Army Staff.¹ The Ladakh Scouts was converted into a Regiment in the year 2000 and currently consists of five battalions.

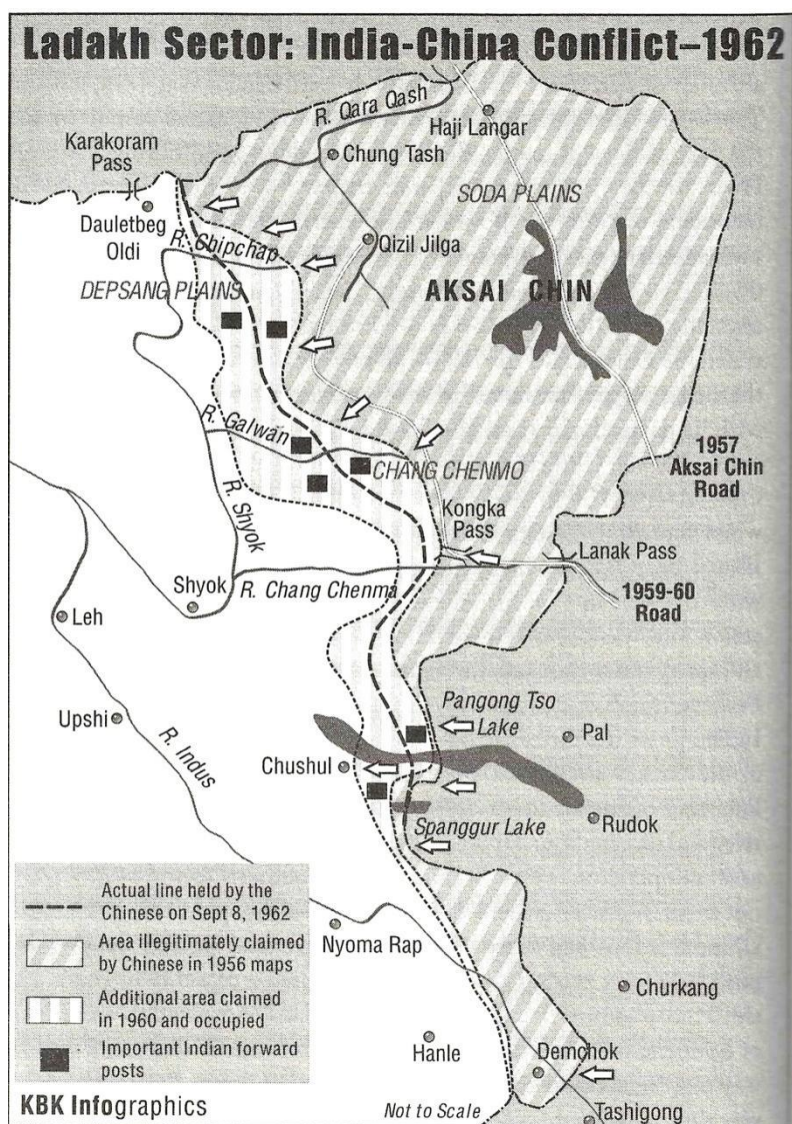
Since its independence, India followed a foreign policy of maintaining cordial relations with China. It wanted to revive its ancient contacts with the people of China. Therefore, soon after its establishment on 01 October 1949, India was one of the first few countries to grant diplomatic status to the People’s Republic of China (PRC). India supported the demand of state recognition of PRC on various international platforms. India took the initiative to enter into negotiations with China on the question of Tibet and entered into the Panchsheel Agreement in 1954. Within a few weeks of Chou Enlai’s visit to India in 1954, the Chinese launched a protest against the presence of Indian troops in Barahoti, three kilometers south of a border pass, Tun Jun La in Uttar Pradesh. This was the first time, the Government of China laid claim to any part of Indian territory formally. The construction of the Tibet-Sinkiang Road in 1957 marked a turning point in the Sino-India relations as the Chinese occupied a large part of the Aksai Chin. This opened an opportunity for China to come out with territorial claims against India openly. By 1959, Chinese soldiers moved in further into Ladakh and established themselves at Chushul- Rezag La, and at Mandal, just South of Dambu Guru. On 08 September 1962, about 600 Chinese troops encircled the Dhola Post in the Eastern Sector and began firing. The Chinese launched simultaneous attacks in the Eastern Sector in Namka Chu

¹ Ballabh, Anand, Insights into Infantry Regiments: A Basic Factbook. Forward Books publications. New Delhi (2013)



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Sector as well as in the Western Sector in Ladakh. The overwhelming number of the Chinese troops attacked the Indian soldiers but they fought the enemy with grit and determination. The Chinese announced the cease-fire at midnight of 21/22 November 1962.²



Ladakh sector during Sino India War 1962

Source: India's Wars: A Military History 1947 - 1971. Arjun Subramaniam (2016) Harper Collins Publishers. Uttar Pradesh, India.

The fighting in Ladakh during the 1962 War was in three distinct phases. The first Phase began on 19 October night when Chinese commenced their attacks against the isolated 'Forward

² History of the Conflict with China, 1962. P.B Sinha. Col A.A. Athale (1992). History Division, Ministry of Defence, Government of India.



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Policy' Posts. This Phase lasted till 27 October. Between this time and 18 November there was a 'lull' in fighting. This period was utilized by both sides to build up their strength, while the Chinese build up was mainly opposite Spangur Gap, the Indian side strengthened defences in depth. In the third and final phase the Chinese overwhelmed the Indian defences on the Eastern edge of Chushul airfield. On declaration of Cease-Fire on 21 November 1962, the Chinese had rendered the airfield unusable for use.

In this Sector, the peculiar geography of Ladakh made it doubly difficult for the soldiers as the struggle was not just with the enemy but also with the high-altitude terrain. In September 1962, Ladakh was defended by 114 Brigade consisting of 5 JAT, 1/8 GORKHA RIFLES, 7 and 14 JAMMU & KASHMIR MILITIA located at Leh. 14 J&K MILITIA with a Company of 5 JAT was in Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) Sector. The remaining elements of 5 JAT were in Changchenmo Sector, 1/8 GORKHA RIFLES was in Chushul with 7 J&K MILITIA at the Indus Valley Sector. The Indus Valley Sector lies south of Chushul. Dungti was an important location from where a road went North to Chusul, West to Leh and South along the Indus to Demchok. The Indus River valley South of Dungati is a flat open area flanked by low hills on the East. The international boundary followed the Eastern hills. These hills had several passes opening to Tibetan Plateau. Vehicular movement along presented no problems and excellent airfield existed at Fukche. The road communications on the Chinese side were not well developed and the only approach was from the South. The Chinese were estimated to have had a Battalion located in Tashigong.

On the Indian side 7 J&K MILITIA was responsible for the defence of this Sub-Sector with its Headquarters at Koyul with one Company strength at Dungti and the rest of the troops being deployed along the passes and bottlenecks along the international border. The Chinese attacks in this Sector started on 27 October. They attacked simultaneously at Changla, Jarala, New Demchok and High Ground (North West of Demchok). The Chinese plan of attack followed the pattern established elsewhere. They launched simultaneous attacks on Changla and Jarala Posts that held the line of low hills on Eastern side of the Indus valley. Once having tackled these Posts they then infiltrated between Fukche and the extreme Southern Posts of New Demchok and High Ground, thus making these untenable. Once having occupied the Kailash Range that dominated the Eastern bank of the Indus valley, they in effect denied its use by the Indians.

Changla Post was well dug-in with wire obstacles around it. It was defended by seventeen men of 7 J&K MILITIA. In the early hours of 27 October, the Chinese approached the vicinity of the post in thirty odd vehicles. The vehicles were mounted with Machine Guns, which opened fire on the Indian Post. The response from Indians was quick in coming using 2-inch Mortars the two Chinese leading vehicles were set on fire. The men held their fire till the Chinese came close and within their rifle range. The two Light Machine Guns (LMG) effectively engaged



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attacking Chinese. After nearly three hours of fire fight, the vastly outnumbered Post Commander decided to withdraw his men.

Nearly 300 Chinese soldiers had surrounded the Post. The Post Commander divided his party in two. and while one party moved, he himself gave covering fire with LMG. The threat to Dungti and Koyul also needed to be averted and therefore the troops in conjunction with those at High Ground were asked to carry out a withdrawal by night on 27/28 October. The withdrawal was successfully completed by 2330 hours. The defenders successfully evaded the Chinese roadblock under the cover of darkness and arrived in Koyul in good spirits. The newly established 3 Himalayan Division as well as 15 Corps gave a serious thought to order withdrawal from Koyul as well, but in the end left the decision to the Commander on the spot, Lieutenant Colonel RM Banon. He preferred to stay put and strengthen the defences rather than withdraw. The Indians continued to occupy these positions. There was some confusion regarding outposts at Hanle and Zarser and Chumar lying to the South West of this Sector. These posts were held by CRP/ITBP and went out of communication on 27 October. These were also presumed to have fallen to the Chinese. But by 31 October it; transpired that all these Posts were intact. At the end of the fighting on 28 October, the Chinese had established control of the Eastern hills flanking the Indus valley. Havildar Satingian Phunchok came under heavy shelling when Chinese started their attack with overwhelming number of soldiers on 27 October 1962. Havildar Phunchok showed unflinching courage and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. He did not yield an inch until he was overpowered in his trench and killed. He displayed courage and devotion to duty of a high order.

Throughout the action, Havildar Satigian Phunchok showed courage and devotion to duty in the best traditions of Indian Army. He was awarded Maha Vir Chakra posthumously.



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CITATION

9100170 HAVILDAR SATIGIAN PHUNCHOK, J. & K. Militia. (Posthumous)
(Effective date of award-27th October 1962)

Havildar Satigian Phunchok was second in command at the Changla Post in Ladakh. The post was heavily shelled and attacked by the Chinese in overwhelming numbers on the morning of 27 October 1962. Havildar Phunchok showed unflinching courage and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. He did not yield an inch until he was overpowered in his trench and killed. He displayed courage and devotion to duty of a high order.

Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No dated



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4. Param Vir: Our Heroes in Battle. Maj Gen Ian Cardozo. (2003). The Lotus Collection, Roli Books Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, India.
5. The Military Heroes of Haryana. Gallantry Award Winners. Volume 1. Lt Col Dilbag Singh Dabas. (2021) Roller act Press Services, A84, Naraina Ind. Area Phase-1, New Delhi, India