



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



LIEUTENANT BALWAN SINGH (Later, COLONEL)

SERVICE NUMBER	SS-37691 (Now IC-56218Y)
RANK (At the time of Award)	Lieutenant Balwan Singh (Later, Colonel)
NAME	Balwan Singh
SON OF	Late Shri Sobha Chand
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Village Sasroli, Jhajjar, Haryana
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	18 GRENADIERS
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	6 March 1999
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra / 3 July 1999
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	Kargil War/ Op VIJAY
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	



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Colonel Balwan Singh (then, Lieutenant) was born on 17 October 1973 to ex-serviceman Late Shri Shobha Chand, a decorated veteran of 2 Jat Battalion of the Indian Army and mother Smt Pateri Devi. He is native of a small village named Sasroli near Jahjhar, Haryana. His father served in the 2 JAT Indian Army, as a soldier. He grew up listening to stories of Indian Army's valour and sacrifice. Since childhood, Lt Singh knew he was destined to be a soldier. He did his primary education from a small village school and completed his secondary schooling from Sainik School Kunjpura, Karnal. Later, he went on to pursue a bachelor's degree and graduated from the University College Rohtak. Fulfilling his dream of joining the army, Lt Singh joined Officers Training Academy, Chennai, and was commissioned into the Indian Army on 6 March 1999. During the Kargil War, Lieutenant Balwan Singh was Ghatak platoon commander of 18 GRENADIERS.

The genesis of Indo-Pak conflict can be traced back to the year 1947. The bone of contention between India and Pakistan are the attempts by Pakistan to annex the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir by any means. The Kargil war of 1999 was fought 52 years after independence. The war commenced shortly after the signing of the Lahore declaration in 1999, when the Pakistan army surreptitiously occupied the winter vacated posts of the Indian Army. This act is thought to be the brain-child of General Pervez Musharraf, then chief of the Pakistan Army. On 3 May 1999, intrusions were detected. On 26 May ¹, the first air to ground strike was launched by the Indian Airforce (IAF), followed by Operation Vijay, by the Indian Army to evict the intruders from the Indian territory².

The Kargil war was fought in one of the most inhospitable terrains in the world. Lt Balwan Singh was a part of the 18 GRENADIERS during the war. The Grenadiers are an infantry regiment of the Indian army, which was formerly part of the Bombay Army and in pre-independence India, the regiment was known as the 4th Bombay Grenadiers. They distinguished themselves in two world wars and have won battle honors Gurez, Assal Uttar, Jarpal and Chakra among others. During the Kargil War, 18 GRENADIERS distinguished themselves for capturing the formidable Tiger Hill and for their successful attack on the Hump. Along with the remarkable contribution in the recapture of Tiger Hill, 18 GRENADIERS also aided the capture of Tololing heights.

¹ Kargil 1999: The Impregnable Conquered Lt. Gen Y M Bammi. (2002) Gorkha Publisher

² From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report (2000) Sage Publications, New Delhi (Pg no 104-105)



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18 GRENADIERS, which is also known as the 'Pole Star Battalion' had already lost two valiant officers, Lt. Col R. Viswanathan and Major Rajesh Singh Adhikari, when they were assigned the task to capture the Tiger Hill. The Tiger Hill complex is one of the most dominating and awe-inspiring features in the Dras sector. The Pakistani soldiers who had occupied the Tiger Hill complex in strength were bringing effective artillery on large tracts of the National Highway 1A. Eviction of the enemy from this feature was urgent and necessary. The Tiger hill was the key to enemy position in the Dras Sector. The tiger hill complex was isolated from the North, South and East by 8 SIKH on 21 May 1999. However, the isolation from the West could not be done as the complete ridge line was occupied by the enemy. The Indian Army moreover was not permitted to cross the Line of Control to get behind the enemy to cut his line of communication.³ To completely isolate the enemies on Tiger Hill, Colonel Kaushal Thakur the commanding officer of 18 GRENADIERS, applied the lessons learnt earlier at the Tololing and Hump and decided a multidirectional attack, with the majority of force level assaulting from unexpected direction. The attack on Tiger Hill commenced on 3 July 1999 at 2030 hours. By 0400 Hours of 5 July 1999, 18 GRENADIERS and 8 SIKH were able to capture several important features of Tiger Hill and succeeded in completely isolating the enemy sitting at the Tiger Hill top.

Lt Balwan Singh was leading the Ghatak Platoon of 18 GRENADIERS which was assigned the task to assault the 'Tiger Hill Top'. The Ghatak Platoon is a special platoon present in every infantry battalion of the Indian Army. Only physically fit and motivated soldiers make it to the Ghatak Platoon. 'Ghatak' means 'fatal' in English. The Ghatak soldiers are well-trained, well-armed and equipped to handle situations like terror strikes, and counter-insurgency operations. They are also capable of directing artillery and air attacks on targets deep within enemy lines. This platoon is usually 20-man strong, including an officer and 2 JCOs.

Lt Balwan Singh and his Ghatak platoon were entrusted with assaulting the 'Tiger Hill Top' from the north-east as part of a multi-pronged attack on 3 July 1999. The path to the objective, which was at a height of 16,500 feet, was snow-covered and dotted with precipitous drops. The officer, with just three months service, set about his task with single-minded determination. To reach the designated spur, the team led and exhorted by him marched for over twelve hours via an extremely difficult and precarious terrain and under intense artillery shelling.

³ Cardozo, Ian. (2003). Param Vir : Our Heroes In Battle (pg no-172)



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This move caught the enemy completely off guard, as his team used cliff assault mountaineering equipment to reach the summit. The enemy panicked when they saw the Ghataks and attempted to repel them in a desperate firefight. Lieutenant Balwan Singh was critically injured in the ensuing combat. Lt Balwan Singh's will to finish the enemy remained unshaken despite his injuries. He refused to be evacuated and, despite his injuries, went quickly to encircle the enemy and confront them in close combat, killing four enemy soldiers single-handedly. The remaining enemy soldiers chose to flee rather than face the impending death.

The officer's inspiring leadership, bravery, and daring were vital in the conquest of Tiger Hill, which was the Drass sector's most critical operational objectives. On 11 July 1999, the Ghataks captured the Tiger Hill Top, a national objective.

The determination, raw courage, and grit displayed by all ranks of 18 GRENADIERS during the capture of Tiger Hill was exemplary and worthy of emulation. The capture of Tiger Hill remains among the most difficult objectives to be captured by the Indian Army.



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CITATION

Lieutenant Balwan Singh (SS-37691), 18 Grenadiers
(Effective date of the Award: 03rd July, 1999)

On 03 July 1999 Lieutenant Balwan Singh with his Ghatak platoon was tasked to assault the 'Tiger Hill Top' from the North Eastern direction as part of a multi-pronged attack. The route to the objective situated at a height of 16,500 feet was snowbound and interspersed with crevasses and sheer falls.

The officer, with just three months service, set about his task with single-minded determination. The team led and exhorted by him, moved for over twelve hours along a very difficult and precarious route and under intense artillery shelling to reach the designated spur.

This move took the enemy by complete surprise as his team used cliff assault mountaineering equipment to reach the top with stealth. On seeing the Ghataks, the enemy panicked and in a desperate firefight attempted to repulse the Ghataks. In the ensuing firefight, Lieutenant Balwan Singh was himself seriously injured. Though injured, Lieutenant Balwan Singh resolve to finish the enemy remained unshaken. He refused to be evacuated and unmindful of his injury, moved swiftly to encircle the enemy and engaged them in close combat and single headedly killed four enemy soldiers. The remaining enemy personnel opted to flee rather than face the fury of the fierce officer.

The officer's inspirational leadership, conspicuous courage and bravery were instrumental in the capture of Tiger Hill, which was operationally one of the most important objectives in the Drass sector.

Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No. _____ dated _____



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2. Kargil 1999: The Impregnable Conquered Lt. Gen Y M Bammi. (2002) Gorkha Publisher
3. From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report (2000) Sage Publications, New Delhi

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3. Tyagi, Satish Chandra. (2019). The Kargil Victory Battles From Peak to Peak. The Speaking Tigers in association with The United Service Institute of India
4. Bharat Rakshak (Accessed on 9 April 2022)
<https://web.archive.org/web/20050301190336/http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/LAND-FORCES/Army/Regiments/Grenadiers.html>
5. Jhajjar's Balwan who hoisted Tricolour atop Tiger Hill (Accessed on 9 April 2022)
<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/archive/haryanatribune/jhajjar-s-balwan-who-hoisted-tricolour-atop-tiger-hill-606150>
6. The War Decorated India & Trust (Accessed on 4 April 2022)
<https://twdi.in/node/1319>



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VIDEOS

Indian heroes of Kargil war recount tales of valour (Source: ANI News)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SC-ft65XKKY>

Tiger Hill: Kargil's turning Point (Source: NDTV)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-rZl-DWcyg&t=34s>

Capture of Tiger Hill [Source: Youtube Kushal Thakur (CO 18 GRENADIERS)]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTJK5AqeTWo>

Story of 18 Grenadiers during Kargil War 1999 (Source: Twitter Account: Brig Khushal Thakur, Retd)

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1532403822307397634>

OTHER RESOURCES

विजय के बाद पिता से क्यों डर रहे थे बलवान सिंह ? | (Source: Bharat Tak)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7Im3umnlQw>

Vande Mataram: Artillery opens fire at Tiger Hill (Source: Aaj Tak)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxS-dX5LDVc>

20 years after Kargil War: Man who bombed Tiger Hill (Interview with Air Marshall Raghunath Nambiar) (Source: SP Guide Publications)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_1XIJMDWSA

Kargil War 1999 Rare Footage||Capturing of Tiger Hill (Source: Defence Guide Portal)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A19QJRi_QwU

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