

**MAJOR GENERAL ANANT VISHWANATH NATU (THEN
BRIGADIER)**

SERVICE NUMBER	IC-4703
RANK	Major General (Then Brigadier)
NAME	Anant Vishwanath Natu
SON OF	Vishwanath Natu
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Chalisingaon, Maharashtra
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	4/9 GORKHA RIFLES
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	13 October 1946
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra/ 03 December 1971
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	1971 Indo-Pak War
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	Param Vishist Seva Medal

Brigadier Anant Vishwanath Natu was born on 01 September 1925, to Vishwanath and Annapurna Natu, in Akola District of Maharashtra. He was born on the auspicious day of Anant Chaturdashi and was therefore named Anant. Brigadier Natu's belonged to a middle-class family, at the time of his birth, the family of six lived in a small room in Akola. He had two elder brothers, Sadashiv and Vasant, who helped the family by running a shop at the Sunday market in the city. As a child, Brigadier Natu was thin, at ten he started contributing in his own ways. He began his education in the nearby Municipality school in Marathi medium. After his matriculation exam, in 1942, his father decided to send him to Nagpur for further studies. At Nagpur, Brigadier Natu stayed in the students' home of the Ramakrishna Mission. He completed his intermediate examination in 1944 from Hislop College, Nagpur. In 1944, Brigadier Natu was selected to join the Royal Air Force, but he was found medically unfit for the Air Force and instead was given the option to join the Indian Army. He accepted the offer and did his training from Officer Training Academy Bangalore and was posted to 13th Frontier Force Rifles at Abbottabad in October 1946. After independence, he was posted to 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES.

Another officer who had served in the Frontier Force Rifles before independence and joined 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES was Eric A Vas. He was four years senior to Lt Anant Natu. Later, General Natu described his relationship with Eric Vas, "Eric (who later rose to the rank of Lieutenant General and Army Commander) was a Major in the Battalion. He was a friend, philosopher, and guide throughout my life." Lieutenant Anant was commanding Delta Company of 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES through 1948 and 1949 in the Naushera Sector. The first Battalion of 9 GORKHA RIFLES handed over its defences in Naushera to 6/5 GORKHA RIFLES in the middle of July 1949 and left for Pathankot. The Battalion remained at Ferozpur for five years. On return to Ferozpur, Captain Natu's company was deployed on the Indo-Pakistan border on the river Sutlej.

On 10 June 1950, Captain Anant tied the knot with Miss Manikarnika Gangadhar Gokhale at Pune. On 20 December 1951, the couple blessed with a son whom they christened as Vijay. From 1/9 GR, Captain Anant Natu was posted to the Indian Military Liaison Group in Kathmandu. The organisation was formed to implement the tenets of Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 to advise and train the Nepalese Army. Whilst serving in Nepal, he passed the entrance examination for the Defence Service Staff College, located at Wellington, Nilgiris, and attended the Course in 1956. Thereafter, Captain Anant Natu was posted on promotion as General Staff Officer Grade 2 (GSO 2) Headquarters (HQ) 15 Corps then located at Udampur. Meanwhile, there was happy news for the family when on 21st April 1957 Mrs. Sudha gave birth to a baby girl who was subsequently named Lalita. On completion of his staff tenure, Major Anant Natu was posted as company commander to 2/9 Gorkha Rifles and served with the Battalion at Ferozpur and Kargil.

In May 1960, Major Anant Natu was posted to 39 Gorkha Training centre, Dehradun as company commander on 12 June 1960, Sunita their youngest daughter was born. This was the time orders were received to re-raise the fourth Battalion of the 9 GORKHA RIFLES. In October of 1962, the Sino-Indian war took place with clashes between the two armies in Ladakh and NEFA. Consequently, the Unit was moved by air from Adampur to NEFA on board IAF.

Major Natu, as 2IC, would walk with the Battalion till the harbour and then would return to the start point to bring up the B echelon transport forward. Brigadier Sartaj Singh, Commander 77 Infantry Brigade would attend these collective training exercises. He was impressed by the commitment and physical fitness shown by Major Anant Natu. Major Anant Natu was promoted to the rank of Lt Col and took over the command of the battalion from Lt Col Nasib Singh on 14 August 1964.

The first battalion of Gurkha Regiment (now Gorkha Rifles) was raised in 1815 during the Anglo-Nepalese war. Impressed by the qualities displayed by Gurkhas during the war, the British started active recruitment of Gurkhas into the British Indian army. After the partition, in 1947 six Gurkha regiments viz, 1 GR, 3 GR, 4 GR, 5 GR, 8 GR and 9 GR remained with the Indian Army, while 2 GR, 6 GR, 7 GR and 10 GR were transferred to British Army as part of the Tripartite Agreement signed between India, Nepal and Britain. The 9 GORKHA RIFLES was raised in 1817 at Infantry Levy at Fatehgarh as Fatehgarh Levy. In 1823, it became 63rd Regiment a regular unit as part of the Bengal Native Infantry. Following the reorganisation after 1857, the designation was changed to 9th Bengal Native Infantry with one of its Companies formed by Gorkhas and other hillmen. In 1893, the regiment became a wholly Gorkha unit before finally designated as 9th GORKHA RIFLES in 1903. The Regiment fought in Europe during World War I and in Italy and North West Frontier during World War II. Since independence, the Regiment has proved its mettle in Sino-India War of 1962 where it fought under the most demanding conditions on the Namka Chu in NEFA (Now Arunachal Pradesh). Later, the Regiment was also involved in Indo-Pak War of 1965 and 1971. 1 The Regiment's motto is 'Kafar Hunu Bhandu Marnu Ramro' (Better to die than live like a coward). In the Sino-India war of 1962, the regiment was posted in the North-East Frontier Agency Sector (NEFA) and fought valiantly in the crucial battles in Namka Chu Sector. The Gorkha's have contributed many Chiefs to the Indian Army these include General SHFJ Manekshaw, MC who went on to become India's first Field Marshal, General GG Bewoor PVSM, PB, General Dalbir Singh Suhag, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC and General Bipin Rawat PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, VSM, ADC who was India's first CDS as well as General Anil Chauhan PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, the present CDS.

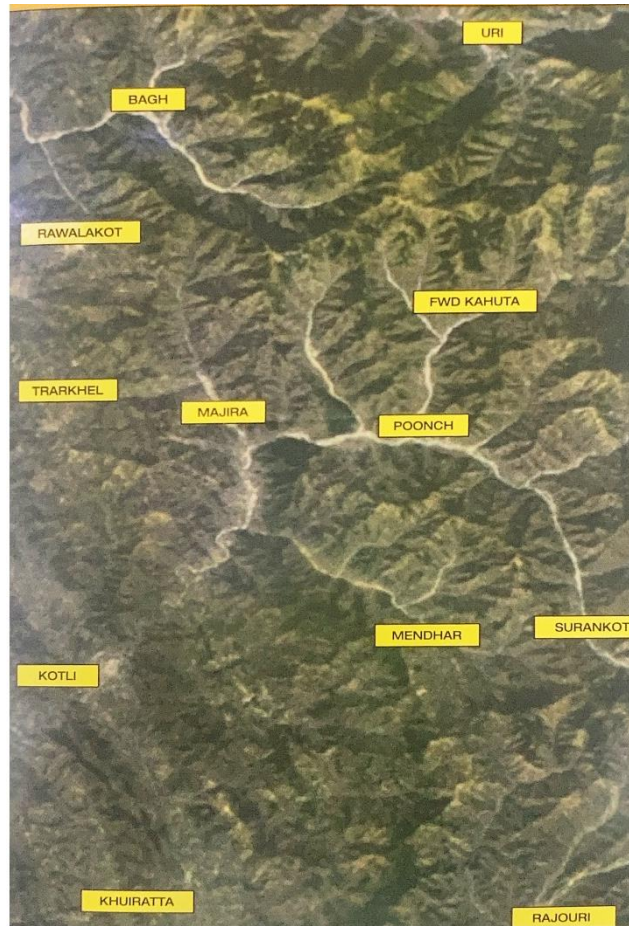
India gained Independence in 1947, and the partition resulted in the creation of Pakistan. The foundation of Pakistan was laid by the Muslim League based on the two-nation theory. Pakistan comprised two wings- East and West Pakistan which were geographically separated by 1600 kms Indian territory. The two wings of Pakistan were culturally and linguistically different and the diversities between the two wings could not be bridged by an emotional appeal to religion. Consequently, fissures started erupting in the political body of Pakistan soon after the Independence and with each passing year it widened. In the absence of appropriate defence arrangements, the people of East Pakistan felt isolated and abandoned. Finally, the malfeasance of Pakistani leadership during Cyclone Bhola and the overwhelming support for the Awami League in the 1970 elections, proved the proverbial last straw on the camel's back.² The Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (of East Pakistan) secured an absolute majority in the general elections held in December 1970. This entitled the League to form a Government in Pakistan. However, Pakistan's military rulers denied this democratic right to the Awami

League, in connivance with the PPP, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This arbitrary act of government caused deep resentment among the population of East Pakistan resulting in widespread protests. When the slide became unmanageable, the Pakistani rulers resorted to a midnight crackdown on 25 March 1971. The government ordered a military crackdown and the Pakistan army under Lieutenant General Tikka Khan unleashed a reign of terror and massacred thousands of Bengalis in a genocide codenamed 'Operation Searchlight'. Pakistan launched its attack against India on 03 December 1971. The Indo-Pak War of 1971 was the first war when the Indian Government engaged all three services on a large scale.

In December 1947, 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES was ordered to proceed to Jammu and Kashmir to fight the raiders. The Battalion reached Jammu on 05 December 1947, and was ordered to move to Akhnoor the next day. Brigadier Natu, a young Lieutenant then, was the Mechanised Transport Officer and had ensured that all the vehicles reach Jammu without any problems. After the Battalion was concentrated at Akhnoor on the banks of Chenab, he was made Company Commander. 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES saw action during 1948 and 1949 in the Naushera Sector.

After he completed his three years' tenure as Military and Air Attaché in the Indian Embassy at Kathmandu, Nepal in 1969, he took over as Commander 93 Infantry Brigade at Poonch.

The Brigade was the northern most Sector of 25 Infantry Division. The Poonch Sub Sector has one of the most difficult terrain south of Pir Panjal Range. Brigadier Natu knew that it was extremely essential for a commander to know in detail the terrain in which his formation was deployed. This was necessary because 93 Infantry Brigade was spread over a varied type of terrain. Poonch Sub Sector can be divided into three parts: high altitude, medium altitude and low altitude. The area east of Doda is high altitude and ranges from 3000 meters to 3800 meters in height and is covered with forests. The area between Doda/ Darungli Nala and Betar Nala is of medium altitude, and the area West of Betar N in the East to Poonch River in the South and dominates the Poonch town.



Terrain

Source:- Natu, Brig Vijay. Major General A.V Natu , a Soldier's Soldier, September 2023

On 03 December 1971, Pakistan opened Western Front with wide-spread pre-emptive strikes to gain impetus for the ground attacks that were to follow. At 0500 hours on the same day, two Pakistani aircraft flew over Poonch and fired a few rockets at the administrative base of 6 SIKH causing some damage. Pakistan's 12 Infantry Division had launched its offensive against 93 Infantry Brigade attacking the Durga, Banwat and Doda defences with the aim to capture Poonch. Throughout the night of 03 and 04 December, there was heavy shelling by enemy on all forward picquets.

Gulpur Subsector

At 2000 hours, on 03 December, Pakistan started heavy shelling of the Gulpur, Banwat and Doda. By 2030 hrs the mortar of 1/4 GORKHA RIFLES also started engaging the Pakistani troops while Indian artillery pounded the Pakistan position. In the Gulpur Battalion defended area Pakistan attacked twice. The first attack on the Langoor position overran the listening posts and penetrated the entrance but 1/4 GORKHA RIFLES, assisted by artillery, repulsed the attack, and drove the attackers out. The second attack was launched in the early hours of 04 December, was also repulsed by 0300 hours.

Banwat Subsector

The Banwat Sector included a hill complex that dominated the Poonch town. The defence of this Sector was necessary to protect the town from the East and North-East. Picquets 405, which covered Tund and Helipad. This Picquets and Picquets 406 and 406A were considered grounds of tactical importance and 6 SIKH was tasked to defend the area. To the south of 6 SIKH, 8 JAT were located. It was put under the command of the 93 Infantry Brigade to give depth to the defences of 6 SIKH.

Pakistan was well prepared to attack the Indian Brigade from the north-eastern side. Chand Tekri and Munawari Tekri, nicknamed Raja and Rani, were two vital positions held by Pakistanis in the area. 6 SIKH had anticipated an attack because of the Pakistani build up and the development of a road from Kahuta to Rani Picquets. Therefore, it had taken necessary measures to give depth to the defences. As expected, the Pakistanis launched an attack on Helipad and Tund on the night of 03/04 December, with three battalions. The Helipad fell to Pakistani troops at 1030 hours. In the view of mounting threat, two platoons of 8 JAT were sent to reinforce. The attacker tried to isolate the area at 1500 hours by inserting troops between Point 405 and Point 406, but the attempt was foiled by artillery and MMG fire.

Pakistani troops resumed the offensive on the night of 04/05 December, the attack was once again beaten back by air strikes and effective shelling. They could not make any further advances due to effective MMG and LMG fire. Artillery shelling continued from the Pakistani side also. All Pakistani efforts failed and 6 SIKH cleared the area North-East of Tund and Kasba Spur. Heavy Pakistani losses made them withdrew from Helipad at 0500 hours on 06 December 1971. The Helipad was reoccupied at 0900 hours by two platoons of 6 SIKH. The attacker tried to occupy Helipad again on 07 and 09 December, both attacks were repulsed.

6 SIKH and 8 JAT had fought with conspicuous courage and determination and foiled the Pakistani plan to take Poonch.

Doda Sub-Sector

11 JAK Militia was deployed in the Doda Sector, to the east of Dorungli Nala. Gutrian and Shahpur were two vital positions held by 'D' coy. On 03 December 1971, Pakistan started its offensive with the shelling of these positions at 1930 hours. Two attacks on Gutrian were beaten back, the third attack came at 0230 hours on 04 December. Indian troops responded with heavy shelling and small arms fire. The Pakistani troops attacked Shahpur with two companies at 2030 hours on 03 Decembee, even when the attack on Gutrian was in progress. All of the attacks were beaten back, including the three attempts made to capture the Shahpur Picquet and the Shahpur OP.

Battle of Thanpir

On the night of 03/04 December, as the battle was raging in other Sectors of the Brigade, Brigadier Anant Natu had spoken with the Company Commander of Thanpir Company to be vigilant and alert. Brigadier Natu took permission from the Division Commander to move two companies of the Division Reserve Battalion to Kalai Bridge. On 04 December 1971, at 0615 hours, Pakistani Force penetrated through the 11 JAK Militia Defended Area and surrounded

the Thanpir post with strength of two-three companies, the post fell to the enemy by 0800 hours. The Pakistani also occupied the Chandak village. The occupation of Thanpir by Pak troops endangered Poonch and the Brigade defended sector including Rajauri and Mandi valleys, and also threatened the strategic Kalai bridge, the lifeline of the Brigade.

13 MAHAR, which had been moved to Kalai Bridge Area, was ordered to attack and capture Thanpir. 'A' and 'D' Companies of the Battalion concentrated at Chandak and commenced the assault at 1500 hours on 04 December. The Chandak Spur was cleared of the infiltrators in about two hours. At 0700 hours, on 05 December, the Battalion was ordered to capture Thanpir.

The operation for the capture of Thanpir started at 0800 hours. The assault echelon ("A' coy) moved along the knife-edge ridge from Chandak to Thanpir to avoid enemy fire. Another company moved from the Chandak Spur to the northeast. Both companies finally converged on Thanpir from the south. A BSF company climbed up the spur and posed a threat from the eastern flank. A Para Commando Group climbed along the Nagali Spur, to threaten the stronghold from the west.

As Pakistanis did not expect an attack along this precipitous slope, they were taken by surprise. Thanpir was captured by the Indians at 1800 hrs on 5 December, thus removing the threat to Punch from the east. Pakistanis fled, leaving behind 20 dead, and many arms and ammunition, including one recoilless gun of Chinese make. The body of Lt Col Nazir Ahmed Khan, the CO of 26 POK Battalion, was recovered along with the body of Maj Javed, his Battery Commander.



Brigadier A V Natu being awarded MahaVir Chakra by President Shri V V Giri

Source:- Natu, Brig Vijay. Major General A.V Natu , a Soldier's Soldier, September 2023

Brigadier Anant Natu as Commander of 93 Infantry Brigade not only ensured that his brigade successfully defended its area of responsibility but after having done so, launched an offensive to capture a forward defended localities of Pakistan opposite his Brigade Sector. Brigadier Anant Vishwanath Natu who successfully organised the defence of Poonch was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.



Brigadier Natu MVC seen with Mrs Indira Gandhi after the ceremony.

Source:- Natu, Brig Vijay. Major General A.V Natu, a Soldier's Soldier, September 2023

Later, in 1972, Brigadier Natu was approved for the rank of Major General and, in September 1973, he was promoted to the rank of Major General. He immediately took over command of 4 Infantry Division at Babina Cantonment. He was asked to superannuate on 31 October 1979.

In 1979, the Government of India announced the award of Param Vishisht Seva Award (PVSM) to General Natu on his retirement for his distinguished and meritorious service of 33 years.



Major General Natu, MVC, receiving PVSM from Shri N Sanjeev Reddy, President of India.

March 1980

Source:- Natu, Brig Vijay. Major General A.V Natu, a Soldier's Soldier, September 2023

Although born and brought up in Akola, Major General Anant Natu after the superannuation settled in a small town of Chalisgaon in Maharashtra. General Anant Natu and Mrs Sudha Natu had three children, Lalita, Vijay and Sunita.



*Major General Natu and Mrs Sudha Natu with their kids Lalita, Vijay and Sunita, Dehradun
– 1961*

Source:- Natu, Brig Vijay. Major General A.V Natu , a Soldier's Soldier, September 2023

Education was very dear to General Natu. He and Mrs Natu started a kindergarten school in their house. They constructed a room on the balcony of their house for this purpose and named the school Vivekananda Balak Mandir. He also started a school project in the town. The school would have classes till standard 10. They decided to name the school Gurukul. Furthermore, General Natu became the president of the All-India Consumer Forum, Chalisgaon Chapter. He made consistent efforts to educate the consumers about their rights and duties. General Natu also decided to contribute to prevent/minimise the adverse effects of global warming. He bought 3-acre land and planted trees, mostly tamarind, to help absorb a bit of the carbon gases emitted by excessive industrial activity. General Natu tried to spread the message of global warming and highlighted to the people about its adverse effects.



Bust of Brigadier Anant V Natu, MVC installed at Udampur.

Source:- Natu, Brig Vijay. Major General A.V Natu , a Soldier's Soldier, September 2023

Major General Anant Vishwanath Natu passed away on 20 January 2016.

CITATION

Brigadier Anant Vishwanath Natu (IC- 4703),
(Effective date of award – 03 December, 1971)

Brigadier Anant Vishwanath Natu was commanding an Infantry Brigade in the Poonch Sector on the Western Front. The enemy launched a massive attack on the night of 3rd/4th December, 1971 with two infantry brigades supported by three artillery regiments against the sector defended by his brigade. Thereafter, for four days and nights the enemy repeatedly attacked the Gurpur and Banwat features held by his brigade. Brigadier Natu planned, organised and conducted the defences with great skills and professional competence. Cool and collected, this officer inspired his command with exceptional courage and total disregard for his personal safety and repulsed the enemy attacks. In the process of heroic defence of Pooch Sector, his brigade inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.

Throughout, Brigadier Anant Vishwanath Natu displayed exemplary courage, outstanding leadership and commendable devotion to duty.

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Natu, Brig Vijay. Major General A.V Natu , a Soldier's Soldier, September 2023.
2. The India-Pakistan War of 1971: A History. S.N Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal.(2014). Natraj Publishers and Ministry of Defence, New Delhi.