



PETTY OFFICER CHIMAN SINGH (THEN LEADING SEAMEN)

SERVICE NUMBER	CDI-87600
RANK	Petty Officer (then Leading Seamen)
NAME	Chiman Singh
SON OF	Rao Nand Kishore Yadav
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Rewari, Haryana
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	Indian Navy
SERVICE	Indian Navy
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	12 June 1961
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	08 December 1971
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	1971 Cactus Lily
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	

Petty Officer Chiman Singh was born on June 1, 1945, in Gokal Garh village located in the Gurgaon district of what was then undivided Punjab. He had a deep passion for swimming and diving in the local pond. Completing his matriculation from BS Ahir High School in Rewari, Petty Officer Chiman Singh embarked on an extraordinary journey when he joined the Navy as a sailor on June 12, 1961, at the remarkably young age of 16.

In late March in 1971, Petty officer Chiman Singh was an instructor in the Kochi diving school, when the news of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declaring independence was broadcasted. The 1971 war was the third war between India and Pakistan, and the Indian Navy played an important role in securing Indian victory in the war. During the initial days of the war, the Eastern Command deployed a few ships on patrol across the sea lane to Chittagong and Khulna. In May, Naval Headquarters started formulating the tasks to be assigned to the Western and Eastern Naval Commands and deciding the allocation of forces. These tasks had to derive from the capabilities and limitations of the ships, submarines and aircraft at that point in time.¹

After undergoing refit for two years, in October 1971, the INAS 300, the premier Fighter squadron of the Indian Navy embarked INS Vikrant with 15 pilots and 19 Sea Hawks, as the Navy was suspecting an outbreak of hostilities in the Bay of Bengal. On receiving war orders, Vikrant, with Kamorta, Brahmaputra and Beas in company, sailed out from Port Blair towards East Pakistan on the night of 2/3 December. The Fleet made night passage through the Coco Channel to avoid possible detection by other merchant ships. On 4 December 1971, Vikrant launched 12 Sea Hawks, 140 miles from Cox's Bazar.²

The relentless round-the-clock attacks by naval aircraft resulted in significant damage to Pakistani military installations and harbours. Cox's Bazar airfield was among the targets that sustained damage, and a total of fourteen Pakistani ships/coasters and six gunboats were destroyed. Notably, the Pakistani submarine Ghazi was also sunk off the coast of

¹ Hiranandani, Gulab Mohanlal. Transition to Triumph: History of the Indian Navy, 1965-1975. Lancer Publishers, 2000.

² INAS 300: The White Tigers, Swarnim Vijay Varsh edition, Quarterdeck 2021 , <https://nfpc.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/QD-2021.pdf> p. 46

Visakhapatnam. On the Western front, the Indian Naval Task Group executed a daring attack on Karachi between the nights of December 04 and 8, causing panic among the enemy and inflicting massive damage to the Karachi harbour. However, the Indian Navy suffered a loss during the operations in the Arabian Sea when the anti-submarine frigate Khukri was sunk. The captain of the ship, Captain MN Mulla, displayed utmost courage and loyalty to the navy by refusing to be evacuated and going down with the vessel. He was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra posthumously.

Initially, many young Bengalis, in a bid to become ‘freedom fighters’, were eager to be trained in guerrilla warfare. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral S M Nanda and Captain Mihir Roy (later Vice Admiral and Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief East), Director Naval Intelligence, swiftly orchestrated the training of these freedom fighters to turn them into naval commandos. The site selected was a location in Plassey on the banks of the Bhagirathi. Seven Bengali submariners from a Pakistani submarine docked at Toulon, France, shocked upon hearing about the atrocities of the Pakistan Army, flew to Delhi and were inducted into the group of Mukti Bahinis being trained—Roy and Samant enrolled them as team leaders for the operation. The training team also included Commander V K Kapil and leading Seaman Chiman Singh.³

The Indian Navy trained more than 400 young men. The trainees trained by the team of Petty officer Chiman Singh were dispatched all over East Pakistan –Narayanganj, Mangla, Chalna, Chittagong, and Cox's Bazar etc. Chiman Singh personally went to Barishal for an operation in October.⁴

A plan was carved out to attack Narayanganj, Mangla, Khulna ports on the night of 14/15 August 1971, the young men did a very good job and the attack was successful. In the next attack, Chiman Singh was himself involved. Chiman Singh was part of the inaugural batch of clearance divers, a newly introduced cadre in the Indian Navy in 1965. Clearance Divers play a major role in clearing out mines from warships, installations, merchantmen etc.⁵

³ Swarnim Vijay Varsh edition, Quarterdeck 2021 , <https://nfpc.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/QD-2021.pdf>

⁴ Chiman Singh Yadav, “I went for operation in Barishal though not ordered by Indian Navy Chiman Singh Yadav”, Choking Pakistan’s Artery: A Naval Commando Story, The Business Standard, 25 March 2021 <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/50-years-freedom/choking-pakistans-artery-naval-commando-story-222142>

⁵ Interview Chiman Singh Yadav, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T75cNsctpOU>

Later, Petty Officer Chiman Singh was part of the force entrusted with the task of attacking enemy targets in Mangla and Khulna area during 08-10 December operation. Among others Chiman Singh boarded the ship Padma — it was a gunboat turned into a mine laying ship — and sailed through Sundarbans en route to target enemy installations in the Mangla and Khulna bays in East Pakistan. Their plan was to bombard Khulna and use limpet mines to destroy barges and whatever targets were available.⁶ The three boats departed for Chalna, Mangla and Khulna. However, their vessel came under enemy air attack while operating near Khulna and since the boat was carrying a load of mines; there was a real danger of these mines detonating, putting everyone onboard at risk. Consequently, they left the ship.

Petty Officer Chiman Singh was very badly wounded by the shrapnel. Meantime, enemy shore defences started firing at the survivors in the water. Petty Officer Singh found that two survivors were finding it difficult to keep afloat. Unmindful of his injuries and personal safety, he went to their rescue and escorted them to the shore through heavy enemy fire. Once on the shore, he rushed at the enemy exposing himself to the enemy fire, thereby making it possible for his two colleagues to escape from being captured by the enemy. He was overpowered by the Pakistani Army and was taken prisoner of war. He remained PoW for nearly eight days and was later released upon the liberation of Bangladesh. Chiman Singh's heroic actions serve as an inspiration to all and reflect the indomitable spirit of the Indian Navy. For his action he was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. As an honour to his brave deeds the Naval Deep Sea Diving School named a Block after him.

Chiman Singh's actions during this mission exemplified the core values of the Navy, including duty, honour, and courage. His unwavering determination to succeed against overwhelming odds and his willingness to put his life on the line behind enemy lines demonstrated the highest ideals of the diving cadre. Chiman Singh's heroic actions serve as an inspiration to all and reflect the indomitable spirit of the Indian Navy.

The Indian Navy successfully achieved its primary objective of establishing effective supremacy over the Arabian Sea. Throughout the duration of the war, the Pakistan Navy

⁶ Chiman Singh Yadav, "I went for operation in Barishal though not ordered by Indian Navy Chiman Singh Yadav", Choking Pakistan's Artery: A Naval Commando Story, The Business Standard, 25 March 2021 <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/50-years-freedom/choking-pakistans-artery-naval-commando-story-222142>

remained confined within the sanctuary of Karachi harbour. In addition to safeguarding Indian merchant ships, the Indian Navy also enforced Contraband Control over merchant vessels approaching Pakistani harbours.

Leading Seaman Chiman Singh's exceptional bravery and unwavering courage did not go unnoticed. In recognition of his outstanding actions, he was honoured with the prestigious Maha Vir Chakra. The award was presented to him by the President of India, Sri VV Giri, during a solemn investiture ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on March 31, 1972.

Following the heroic actions of Leading Seaman Chiman Singh during Operation 'Cactus Lily', he was duly recognized and honoured for his exceptional service. He was promoted to the rank of Petty Officer. This promotion is a testament to his skills, dedication, and bravery within the Indian Navy. Furthermore, in 2013, Chiman Singh was awarded the Friends of Liberation War Honour by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. This prestigious honour acknowledges his significant contribution and support during the Bangladesh Liberation War, highlighting his commitment to the cause of freedom and his invaluable role in the conflict. A newly constructed modern dive-training facility at the Diving School, of the Southern Naval Command (SNC) was named as the "Chiman Singh" Block on 15 December 2017 at naval base, Kochi.

CITATION

Leading Seaman Chiman Singh (CDI-87600).

(Effective date of award - 08 December 1971)

Leading Seaman C. Singh (OD 2), No. 87600 was a member of a ship which formed part of a force, entrusted with the task of attacking enemy targets in MONGLA and KHULNA area during the period 8th to 11th December, 1971. The force was subjected to air attack while operating off Khulna and his was sunk. He was very badly wounded by shrapnel. The enemy shore defences opened fire at the survivors in the water. Leading Seaman Singh noticed that two survivors, including an injured officer were finding it difficult to keep afloat. In spite of the injuries and unmindful of his personal safety, he went to their rescue and escorted them to the shore through heavy enemy fire. On reaching the shore, inspite of his wounds, he rushed at the enemy exposing himself to the enemy fire, thereby making it possible for his two colleagues to escape from being captured by the enemy. Leading Seaman Singh was eventually overpowered and taken prisoner by the enemy. On the liberation of Bangladesh, he was recovered and admitted to hospital.

Throughout, Leading Seaman C. Singh displayed conspicuous gallantry and determination.

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

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4. Vice Admiral N Krishnan, No Way but Surrender, An Account of the India-Pakistan War in the Bay of Bengal, 1971, Vikas Publishing House
5. Ranjit Rai, A Nation and Its Navy at War Author, Lancer International, 1987
6. Rachna Bisht Rawat, 1971: Charge of the Gorkhas and Other Stories, Penguin Veer, 2021