



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



MAJOR SATYAPAL CHOPRA

SERVICE NUMBER	IC – 1333
RANK	Major
NAME	Satyapal Chopra
SON OF	Gouri Nath Chopra
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	3 (PARA) MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	01 July 1942
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra (Posthumous) / 15 March 1948
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	1947-48 Indo-Pak War
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	



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Major Satyapal Chopra was born on 12 November 1922 and had an inclination to join the Indian Army since his childhood. His father was Shri Gouri Nath Chopra, Major Satyapal Chopra was commissioned into the Indian Army at a young age of twenty years on 01 July 1942. He was commissioned into the MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY, a Regiment known for its intrepid soldiers and gallantry in various operations. In the 1947-48 Indo-Pak War, 3 (PARA) MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY fought under the leadership Brigadier Mohammad Usman who was commanding 50 Para Brigade. 50 Para Brigade was responsible for multiple successful endeavours during the war. The recapture of Jhangar remains one of the crucial wins of the brigade.

The MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY was formed as the 103rd Mahrattas in 1768, making it the senior most light infantry regiment of the Army. Their Regimental Centre has been Belgaum, Karnataka, since 1922. The battle cry of the MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY is, '*Bol Shri Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj ki Jai!*' (Cry Victory to Emperor Shivaji!) in tribute to the Maratha Emperor Shivaji. Indian independence saw the Regiment reverting back to the original five battalions, with the 3 MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY converting to the airborne role and becoming 2 PARA in April 1952. With the integration of the erstwhile Princely States, the 19th, 20th, 22nd battalions were amalgamated, from the State Forces of Kolhapur, Baroda, and Hyderabad, with the Regiment. The expansion of the Indian Army to meet the omnipresent threat to its borders has seen the Regiment grow to its present total of 18 battalions and two TA battalions whilst the period also saw the conversion of 21st Bn into 21 Para (Special Forces) and the 115 Infantry battalion (TA) being grouped under the MAHAR Regiment. The five Mahavir Chakras and the numerous other war and peace time gallantry awards bear testimony to the front-line leadership and courage of the Regiment's Officers, JCOs and NCOs. Gen J.J. Singh (9th and 5th) became the first Chief of Army Staff from the Maratha Light Infantry in Feb 2005. ¹ During the 1947-48 Indo-Pak war, 3 (PARA) MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY was a part of 50 Para Brigade commanded by Brigadier Usman Mohammad. The battalion participated in the crucial battles of Jhangar and Naushera. General JJ Singh, who was the Chief of Army Staff from to belongs to the MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY and has been their Colonel of the Regiment.

The first Indo-Pak War fought between the independent countries of India and Pakistan began in 1947. The bone of contention between India and Pakistan were the attempts by Pakistan to annex the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir by any means. On the map of India, the state of Jammu and Kashmir appeared as a somewhat rectangular projection in the extreme North-West

¹ Ballabh, Anand. Insights into Indian Infantry Regiment: A Basic Factbook. Forward Books publication. New Delhi



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corner of the sub-continent. In size it was the largest of the Indian 'Princely States' during the pre-independence era. It was 222,870 sq km or roughly double the area of Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg combined. The state was important because of its strategic location. Even before the birth of Pakistan, Jammu and Kashmir was surrounded on almost three sides by foreign states. Today, its importance has been accentuated by recent international developments. To the East lay Tibet; to its North lies Chinese Turkestan or Sinkiang (Xinjiang); to West is Afghanistan; to South-West and South was Pakistan; and to the South and South-East lay the states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh of India.² The narrow Wakhan corridor, a narrow strip of territory in Afghanistan, extending to China and separating Tajikistan from Gilgit-Baltistan, was to the North West. Some of the significant battles that took place in Jammu and Kashmir were, the Battle of Badgam, capture and recapture of Jhangar, battle of Naushera, the advance to Tithwal, the relief in Punch and the fight of Chhamb to Tithwal.

The attack by Pakistani raiders on Jammu and Kashmir which commenced in Oct 1947 continued unabated and they captured Jhangar on 24 Dec 1947. The capture of Jhangar gave them the strategic advantage to push for their advance to Naushera and Poonch. Thus the recapture of Jhangar became very important to thwart the advance of enemy forces to Naushera. In order to recapture Jhangar, On 14 March 1948, 50 Para Brigade and 19 Infantry Brigade launched Op VIJAY to capture Jhangar from two axis. 19 Brigade took the North axis while 50 Para Brigade consisting of 3 PARA (Maratha), 3 PARA (RAJPUT), 1 PATIALA and one Company of 3/1 PUNJAB attacked from another direction.³

Brigadier Usman Mohammad had worked out a very detailed Artillery Fire Plan for the battle of Jhangar. He had brigaded all the twenty-four field guns and the Mortars of the three Battalions. He had concentrated them on a limited front targeting the highest point of the feature, which was attacked first. Once the barrage lifted, the troops were already at the enemy trenches taking them by surprise.

On 15 March 1948, at about 0830 hours, the two 3 (PARA) MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY Companies moved out on offensive reconnaissance to locate enemy positions in the Pir Thil area. The area had a dominating hill feature, Pir Thil Nakka where the enemy forces had entrenched themselves and were keeping a close watch on Indian forces. The movement did not go unnoticed and the enemy forces waited for the companies to come closer. They held fire till companies reached the open ground within 185 meters of their position. The Companies were

² Operations in Jammu and Kashmir S.N. Prasad. Dr. Dharam Pal (2005). Natraj Publishers and Ministry of Defence, Government of India

³ Ibid (Pg no. 158)



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caught unawares on this open ground and were attacked with four machine guns and six light automatics.

Major Satyapal Chopra was commanding the left forward Company during the advance. The hostiles lay strongly entrenched on Pir Thil Nakka, a formidable hill feature, with their bunker well camouflaged. Both the companies came under heavy fire and were pinned to the ground. In a complete disregard for his personal safety, Major Chopra rushed forward with one platoon to an intermediate position from where he gave his troops covering fire. He was wounded in the face but he kept on fighting. He then turned to the evacuation of his wounded men who were lying on the exposed ground swept by enemy machine guns. He managed to remove three of his men but as he was trying to remove the fourth man, he was shot through the head and he succumbed to his injuries. This brave commissioned officer displayed conspicuous courage, exemplary leadership and made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty.

3 PARA (MARATHA) secured Pir Thal Naka on 17 March 1948 and Uparli Karhali on 18 March and then pressed on to Susloti Dhar along with a Company of 3 PARA (RAJPUT). Brigadier Usman soon followed up with his Headquarters (HQ). 3 PARA (MARATHA) and 1 PATIALA advancing on a two battalion front secured Pt 3399. 19 Infantry Brigade had already entered Jhangar and 'Op VIJAY' was complete.⁴

Major Satyapal Chopra was awarded Maha Vir Chakra for his gallantry and devotion.

⁴ Brigadier Mohammed Usman, MVC: The Lion of Naushera. Rohit Singh.(2010). Scholar Warrior. CLAWS



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CITATION

Major Satyapal Chopra (IC-1333) 1 (Para) Maratha Light Infantry (Posthumous)
(Effective date of Award:)

On 15 March 1948, Major Satyapal Chopra was commanding the left forward company during the advance on Jhangar. The hostiles lay strongly entrenched on Pir Thil Nakka, a formidable hill feature, with their bunker well camouflaged. They held their fire until Major Chopra's company and other company on the right were in the open space of ground nearly 200 yards away from their position. Both the companies came under heavy fire and were pinned to the ground. The enemy swept the area with four machine guns and six light automatics. Without caring for his personal safety, Major Chopra rushed forward with one platoon to an intermediate position from where he gave his troops covering fire. He was wounded in the face but he kept on fighting. He then turned to the evacuation of his wounded men who were lying on the exposed ground swept by enemy machine guns. He managed to remove three of his men but as he was trying to remove the fourth man, he was shot through the head and fell mortally wounded.

He made the supreme sacrifice in order to save the lives of his comrades and displayed leadership qualities and devotion to duty of the highest order.

Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No. 6 Pres/50,26.6.50



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3. Portraits of Valour: India's Highest Gallantry Awards And Their Recipients. S S Gandhi.(2006). The Defence Review Publication

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VIDEOS

1. Kashmir 1947: Anatomy of an invasion (Source: WION YouTube)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5PKINSqVdU>
2. Kashmir पर जब 1947 में कबायलियों ने हमला कर दिया था. Aisa Kaise Hua (Source: BBC Hindi YouTube)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehHWCpZh1IQ>
3. Gravitas: The story of the 1947 tribal invasion of Kashmir (Source: WION YouTube)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4n1L7HV7rdI>

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