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MINISTRY OF  
DEFENCE



**SECOND LIEUTENANT ARUN KHETARPAL**

<b>SERVICE NUMBER</b>	IC-25067
<b>RANK</b>	Second Lieutenant
<b>NAME</b>	Arun Khetarpal
<b>SON OF</b>	Brigadier M.L. Khetarpal
<b>RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE</b>	Pune, Maharashtra
<b>UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS</b>	17 HORSE (POONA HORSE)
<b>SERVICE</b>	Indian Army
<b>DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION</b>	13 June 1971
<b>AWARD/DATE OF ACTION</b>	Param Vir Chakra (Posthumous)/16 December 1971
<b>WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION</b>	1971 Indo-Pak War
<b>OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE</b>	



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Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal was born into a military family on 14 October 1950 in Pune. Second Lieutenant Arun was the older of the two sons of Brigadier M.L. Khetarpal and Mrs. Maheshwari Khetarpal. Several generations of his family had served in the military, he had a natural affinity for the Army. While his grandfather had served in the British Army during World War I, his great grandfather had been in the Sikh army and had fought against the British. He attended the Lawrence School, Sanawar, in the Himachal Pradesh state's Kasauli Hills, where he excelled in both academics and athletics. He joined the National Defence Academy in June 1967. He belonged to Foxtrot Squadron and was the Squadron Cadet Captain of the 38th Course. Later on, he went to join the Indian Military Academy and was commissioned into the 17 HORSE on 13 June 1971. Just six months later, 1971 Indo-Pak war broke out.<sup>1</sup>



*A family picture of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal*

Source: Honourpoint

17 HORSE which is known as POONA HORSE is an armoured regiment of the Indian Army. It was raised on 15 July 1817, as a result of the Treaty of Poona, concluded on 13 June 1817 between Lord Hasting and Baji Rao II, the Peshwa. The Honourable Montstuart Elphinstone, who later became the Governor of Bombay negotiated the Treaty of Poona. It was formed from the 3rd

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<sup>1</sup> Honourpoint: An Online Memorial for every Indian Soldier.2/Lt Arun Khetarpal, PVC (Accessed on 13 Dec 2022)  
<https://www.honourpoint.in/profile/second-lt-arun-khetarpal-pvc/>



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Regiment of Bombay Light Cavalry, raised at Sirur on 04 May 1820 by Major Peter Delamotte. The Cavalry element of this Force, which was known as the Poona Auxilliary Horse was later designated as (Prince Albert Victor's Own) Poona Horse. It was amalgamated in 1921 as The Poona Horse (17 Queen Victoria's Own). In the First World War, the 17 HORSE fought in France, Palestine and Mesopotamia. During the Second War, the regiment was part of the British Eighth Army. Post-Independence, the regiment was part of Op POLO in Hyderabad in 1948, India-Pakistan War of 1965 as part of 1 Armoured Division and 1971 as part of 16 (Independent) Armoured Brigade. The regiment was equipped with Centurions tanks in both these wars and fought in the Shakargarh Bulge. During the 1965 India-Pakistan War, 17 HORSE had displayed immense skill in the Sialkot Sector during the tank battle at Phillora, Wazirwali and Butur-Dograndi, and was awarded the Param Vir Chakra. In the 1971 War the regiment fought at Basantar and Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal won the Param Vir Chakra and the Commandant Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) Hanut Singh was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. The Battle of Basantar is considered one of the fiercest tank battles in Indian military history and the unprecedented bravery showed by 17 HORSE earned praise from Pakistan army and the title 'Fakhr-e-Hind'.

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.<sup>2</sup> 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 code-named 'Operation Searchlight'. Pakistan launched its attack against India on 03 December

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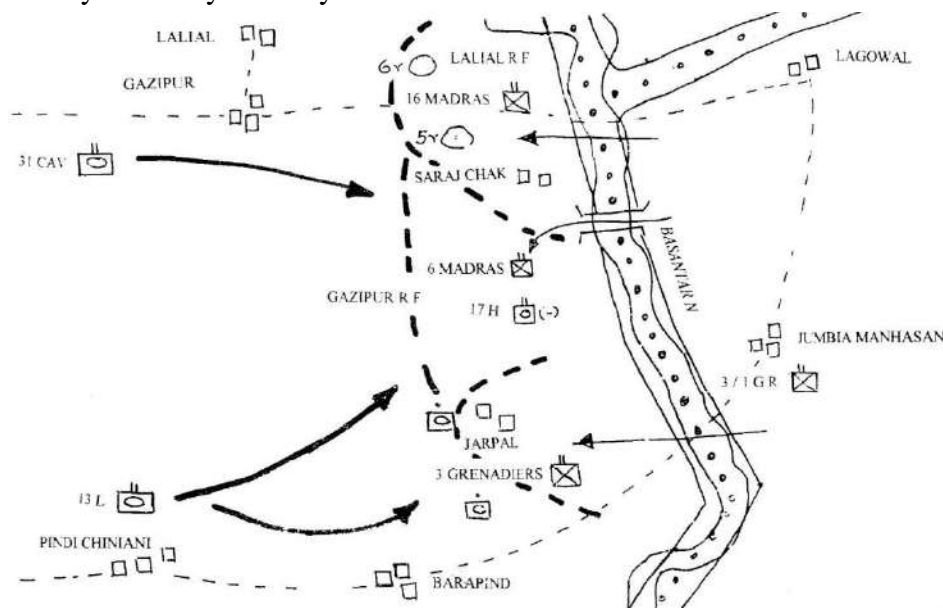
<sup>2</sup> The India-Pakistan War of 1971: A History. S.N Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal. (2014). Natraj Publishers and Ministry of Defence, India



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1971. The Indo-Pak War of 1971 was the first war when the Indian Government engaged all three services on a large scale. Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal was undergoing the Young Officers' Course at Ahmednagar at that time. He was recalled from the course and soon joined his unit to take part in the Battle of Basantar in the Shakargarh sector.

17 HORSE was under the command of 47 Infantry Brigade. They fought in the Battle of Basantar in Shakargarh Sector. The brigade had already established a bridgehead across the Basantar River which allowed induction of 17 HORSE tanks. The ensuing battle was among the fiercest of 1971 Indo-Pak war. While for Pakistan it resulted in an astounding loss of 48 Patton Tanks, India won a stunning victory in enemy territory.



*Battle of Basantara*

Source: Indian Defence Review

On 16 December 1971, Pakistani Armour launched their first counter attack under the cover of a smokescreen at Jarpal, targeting the 'B' Squadron. When our troops were heavily outnumbered by enemy forces, the squadron commander asked for reinforcements. Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, who was in 'A' squadron, after hearing this radio transmission responded to the call and led his troops toward the enemy attack.

On the way his troop were subjected to heavy fire from enemy strongholds and recoilless gun positions along the route which were still holding out in the bridgehead established by our men over the Basantar River. On realising that critical situation was developing and prompt action



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was to be taken, Second Lieutenant Khetarpal attacked the enemy strong points, physically overrunning them, and taking the enemy's infantry soldiers and weapon crews at pistol point.

The commander of one of the tanks in his troops was lulled during this action, but Second Lieutenant Khetarpal continued to attack fiercely until all resistance was vanquished and he broke through in the direction of our squadron. When enemy tanks started pulling back after their initial probing attacks, he chased the enemy tanks and destroyed one of them.

A fierce battle broke out when the enemy launched an armoured squadron attack against the sector held by three of our tanks, one of which was manned by Second Lieutenant Khetarpal. Ten enemy tanks were damaged and destroyed, of which Second Lieutenant Khetarpal personally destroyed four. During the battle, Second Lieutenant Khetarpal's tank was hit and caught fire, leaving him seriously injured. Upon realising that enemy was still pressing the offensive in this sector, disregarding his severe wounds, Lieutenant Khetarpal persisted in confronting the enemy despite the fact that his tank was on fire. Before his tank was hit a second time, he destroyed one more enemy tank but due to the hit Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal was fatally injured. Due to his supreme sacrifice, the enemy couldn't achieve the victory he was so desperately pursuing.



*Mother of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal receiving Param Vir Chakra from then President  
V.V. Giri*

Source: Honourpoint



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Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal's mother Mrs. Maheshwari Khetarpal calls her son a 'Tiger' and humbly mentions that 'My son did nothing extraordinary. This was his duty and he had joined the army to protect the nation. He did me proud. I am an equally brave mother.'

Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal demonstrated the most conspicuous bravery in the face of the enemy, an unyielding fighting spirit, and tenacity of purpose during 1971 Indo-Pak War. For his exemplary bravery and devotion to duty, he was awarded Param Vir Chakra posthumously.





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## CITATION

On 16 December 1971, when our position at Jarpal in the Shakargarh Sector was subjected to an attack by a Pakistani armoured regiment and our troops were heavily outnumbered by enemy forces, the squadron commander asked for reinforcements. Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, on hearing this transmission over the radio, answered the call and moved with his troop to meet the enemy attack. On the way, his troop came under fire from enemy strong points and recoilless gun nests that were still holding out in the bridgehead established across the Basantar River by our troops. Realising that a critical situation was developing and prompt action was to be taken, Second Lieutenant Khetarpal assaulted the enemy strong points, physically overrunning them and capturing the enemy's infantry and weapon crews at pistol point. In the course of this action, the commander of one of the tanks in his troops was lulled but, Second Lieutenant Khetarpal continued to attack relentlessly till all opposition was overcome and he broke through towards the location of our squadron. When enemy tanks started pulling back after their initial probing attacks, he chased them and destroyed one of them. When the enemy launched another attack with an armoured squadron, against the sector held by three of our tanks, one of which was manned by Second Lieutenant Khetarpal, a fierce battle ensued and ten enemy tanks were hit and destroyed of which Second Lieutenant Khetarpal personally destroyed four. In the fight Second Lieutenant Khetarpal's tank was hit and it burst into flames and he was severely wounded.

Second Lieutenant Khetarpal was ordered to abandon his tank but realising that the enemy was still pressing the attack in this sector and that if he abandoned his tank, the enemy would breakthrough, he continued engaging the enemy despite the grievous wounds and his own tank burning. He destroyed one more enemy tank before his tank was hit a second time, killing him. But the enemy had been denied the breakthrough he was seeking so desperately.

In this action Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal displayed the most conspicuous gallantry in the face of the enemy, indomitable fighting spirit and tenacity of purpose.

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Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No. \_\_\_\_\_ dated \_\_\_\_\_



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## REFERENCES

1. The India-Pakistan War of 1971: A History. S.N Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal.(2014). Natraj Publishers and Ministry of Defence, New Delhi
2. The Valiants: The Martyrs of Indo-Pak War 1971. JWO Sharadchandra D Phatak, Puja Shashank Phatak, (2021)
3. The Hero of 1971 War Gnat fighter Aircraft, (Accessed on 07 December 2022),  
<https://defencedirecteducation.com/2018/12/10/gnat-hal-ajeet/>
4. Param Vir: Our Heroes in Battle. Maj Gen Ian Cardozo. (2003). The Lotus Collection, Roli Books Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, India.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Stories of Heroism (PVC & MVC Winner). Dr. BC Chakravorty (1995). Allied Publishers Limited and Ministry of Defence, Government of India
2. Honourpoint: An Online Memorial for every Indian soldier (Accessed on 19 December 2022)  
<https://www.honourpoint.in/profile/second-lt-arun-khetarpal-pvc/>
3. Remembering Param Vir Arun Khetarpal, Second Lieutenant from The Poona Horse (Accessed on 19 December 2022)  
<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/features/remembering-param-vir-arun-khetarpal-second-lieutenant-from-the-poona-horse-218356>
4. Indian Army remembers the story of its braveheart PVC 2nd Lt. Arun Khetarpal (Accessed on 19 December 2022)  
<https://www.aviation-defence-universe.com/indian-army-remembers-the-story-of-its-braveheart-pvc-2nd-lt-arun-khetarpal/>
5. Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal (Accessed on 19 December)  
<https://nationalwarmemorial.gov.in/param-yoddhas/details/18>





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## VIDEOS

Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal – 1971 (Source: YouTube Indian Army ADGPI)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkdGWYL2fPo>

Param Vir Chakra 2nd Lt Arun Khetarpal (Source: YouTube AAJ TAK Vande Matram)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aq5jxH7GVJc>

Battle Of Basantar | Greatest Battles Of 1971 | India Today (Source: YouTube India Today)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXjLXpwbE\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXjLXpwbE_g)

1971 Indo Pak War: Arun Khetarpal, जिन्होंने Pakistan के चार टैंक तबाह किए. Vivechna (BBC Hindi) (Source: YouTube BBC India)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOIQ0B-MjWw>

अरुण खेत्रपाल Battle Of Basantar : Story Of A Man Who Defeated 7 Pakistani Tanks (Source: YouTube Sabdh Baan)

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

Battle Of Basantar : Story Of A Man Who Defeated 7 Pakistani Tanks | Indo-Pak 1971 War (Source: YouTube Defence Squad)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHK3FkHMHMc>

Disclaimer\*\*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Disclaimer: Photos, links to publications and videos presented here are not intended to serve as a substitute for consultation and should only be used at the user's own risk. These are primarily shared because of the extensive coverage available on the subject. No copyright infringement is intended and it is not intended to hurt anyone or make sales of any sort. All copyright belongs solely to the relevant owners/creators. Usage here is purely for Fair Usage in accordance with the Indian Copyright Act 1957.



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## MEMORIALS

- Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal war memorial unveiled at veer Bhoomi Sthal in Samba district in Jammu.



Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jammu/swarnim-vijay-varsh-lt-arun-khetarpal-war-memorial-unveiled-heroes-of-1971-war-felicitated/articleshow/88283283.cms>

- A bust of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal installed at the Pram Yodha Sthal in National War Memorial New Delhi.



Source: Official Website National War Memorial

- The parade ground at National Defence Academy has been named as “Khetarpal Ground”



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in his honour, while the auditorium and one of the main gates bear his name at the IMA.

- Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal's Centurion tank called "Famagusta" was restored after the war and is presently preserved in the Armoured Corps Centre and School in Ahmednagar.
- The Housing project of Arun Vihar in Noida was named after Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, PVC in his honour.
- A life size statue of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal has been erected at his alma mater, the Lawrence School, Sanawar in Himachal Pradesh. A stadium in the school has also been named after him.



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## OTHER INTERESTING RESOURCES<sup>4</sup>

- 1) A poetry dedicated to the valour and sacrifice of 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal "Kahaani Arun Khetarpal Ki" - Gaurav Tripathi (Source: YouTube UnErase)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12qXjl7uZ0M>
- 2) A dramatic depiction Major Dhan Singh Thapa life. It was televised by DD National and was directed by Chetna Anand.  
Param Vir Chakra Dhan Singh Thapa (Source: Youtube Remember theirsacrifices1)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0hjvm\\_71a4&list=PLqMM\\_ipMmTS8iQ5nCZGpKfKwxYj5x3g-1&index=8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0hjvm_71a4&list=PLqMM_ipMmTS8iQ5nCZGpKfKwxYj5x3g-1&index=8)
- 3) China से 1962 War में युद्धबंदी बनाए गए Indian Soldiers की दास्तां (Source: YouTube BBC Hindi)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TwpwR0NJJE>
- 4) Book- A book titled 'The Brave: Param Vir Chakra Stories' by renowned author Rachna Bisht Rawat narrates engaging tales of valour of our twenty-one Param Vir Chakra awardees. It was published by Penguin, India in 2014.



Source: <https://www.amazon.in>

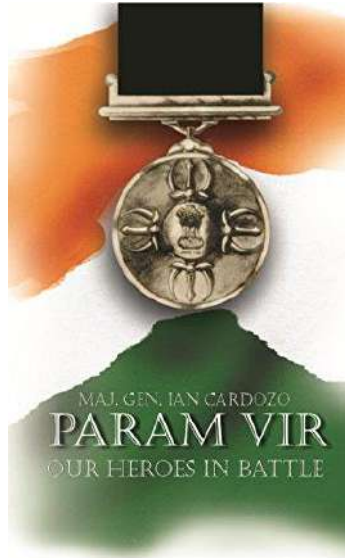
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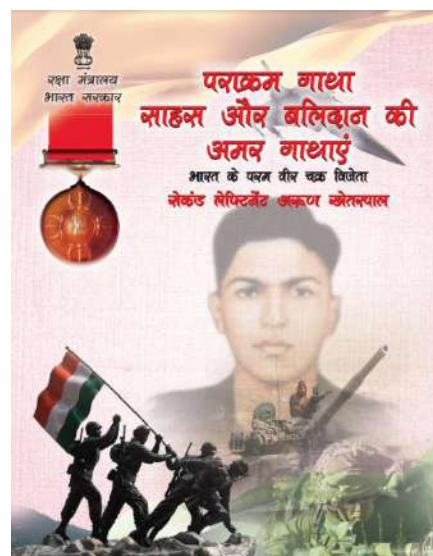
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- 5) Amar Chitra Katha- To honour 21 Param Vir Chakra Recipients, a special comic titled 'Param Vir Chakra: The Ultimate Honour' was published on 1 January 2015. The book is the result of combined efforts by the Indian Army and Amar Chitra Katha Pvt. Ltd.
- 6) Book- Param Vir: Our Heroes in Battle by Major General Cardozo was published in 2003 by The Lotus Collection, Roli Books Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi. The book provides its readers a vivid description of the gallant actions of India's Param Vir Chakra winners.



Source: <https://www.amazon.in>

- 7) Magazine: Published by Ministry of Defence on 2/Lt. Arun Khetarpal



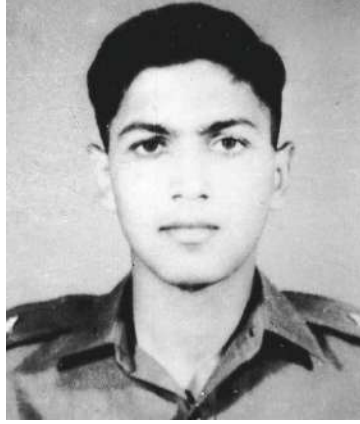
Source: [https://www.gallantryawards.gov.in/digital\\_library](https://www.gallantryawards.gov.in/digital_library)





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## DETAILS FOR USI FOR AN EXTENDED RESEARCH



**SECOND LIEUTENANT ARUN KHETARPAL**

<b>NAME CHANGE OF AWARDEE (If any, give references)</b>	
<b>DATE OF AWARD</b>	26 January 1972
<b>MOTHER'S NAME</b>	Mrs. Maheshwari Khetarpal
<b>DATE OF BIRTH/DEATH</b>	14 October 1950
<b>BIRTH PLACE</b>	Pune, Maharashtra
<b>SCHOOL/COLLEGE</b>	Lawrence School, Sanawar
<b>RETIRED/IN SERVICE</b>	
<b>NOK (NAME/RELATION)</b>	





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<b>NOK ADDRESS</b>	
<b>NOK PHONE NO./EMAIL</b>	
<b>REMARK (if any other)</b>	

**REFERENCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

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