



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



CAPTAIN (Then COMMANDER) MOHAN NARAYAN RAO SAMANT

SERVICE NUMBER	00124-F
RANK	Captain (Then Commander)
NAME	Mohan Narayan Rao Samant
SON OF	Subedar Major N R Samant
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Mumbai, Maharashtra
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	INS Karanj
SERVICE	Indian Navy
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	01 January 1952
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra/ 1971
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	1971 Indo-Pak War
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	

Commander Mohan Narayan Rao Samant was born on 19 October 1931, to Subedar Major Narayan Rao Samant, in his grandmother's home in Vasai, north of Mumbai. His father, Narayan Rao Samant, was a Viceroy's Commissioned Officer in the Indian Army. Subedar Major Samant's family hailed from Parule Village in Sindhudurg District, along the Konkan Coast in Bombay state. Commander Samant was the eldest of the five children. Commander Samant studied at Wilson College in Mumbai, where he passed the Intermediate Science Examination. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 January 1952, after which he underwent basic training at the Royal College at Dartmouth and Greenwich. Six years later, in 1958, Commander Samant again went to the United Kingdom (UK) for the Long Navigation and Direction Course. One of the important events in his career was the Expedition "Survival" of 1960. It involved sailing on a cutter from Vishakhapatnam to Port Blair and back to Madras braving many storms on the rough seas.

In 1965, Commander Samant underwent submarine training in the UK, thereafter he was sent to Russia, where he spent two years. Commander Samant commissioned India's first submarine, INS Karanj, in 1969 and commanded the submarine till the end of 1970. He has also served aboard INS Amba, and INS Vikrant.

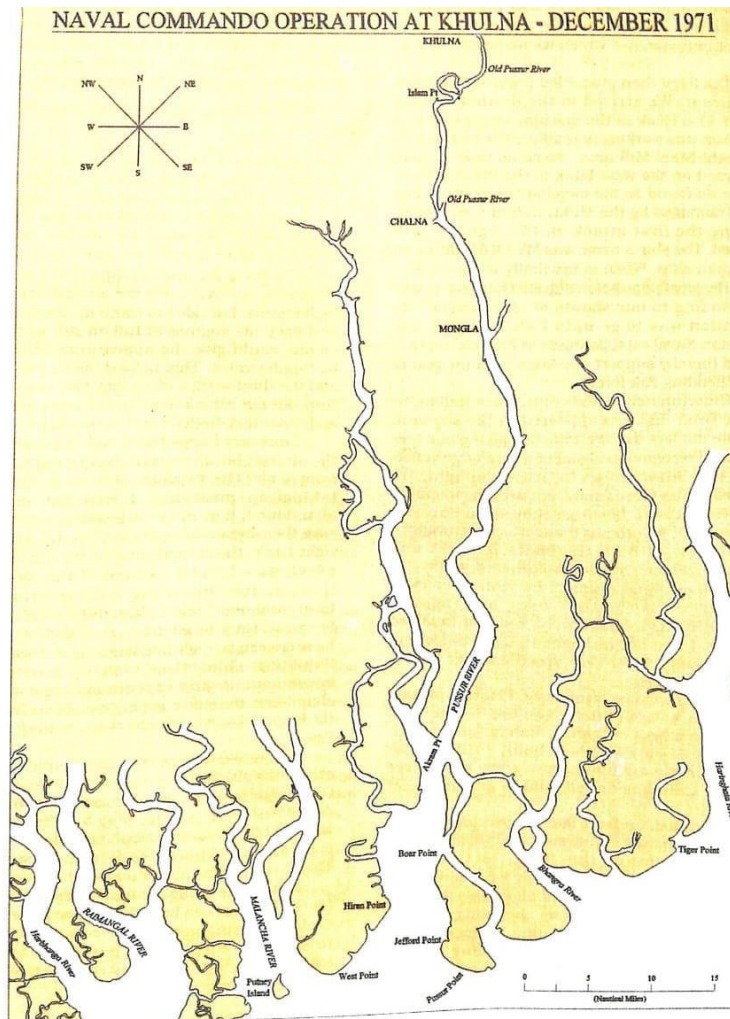
The third India-Pakistan war began on December 03, 1971, when the Pakistan Air Force launched pre-emptive air strikes against Indian airbases. The war was forced upon India due to the widespread genocide of people in East Pakistan carried out by the military regime under General Yahya Khan of Pakistan. As a result, an estimated ten million refugees took shelter in India within a space of nine months, leading to a war between the two countries. The Indo-Pak War of 1971 was the first war when the Indian government employed all three services on a large scale in two theaters. The Indian Navy played a crucial role in securing victory for India in a short and intense war fought on both the Eastern and Western fronts. Every December 04 is celebrated as Navy Day to commemorate Operation Trident during the 1971 War.



Mukti Bahini fighters

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1432221607210225/permalink/1797395474026168/>

Commander Samant was an officer attached with the Eastern Naval Command. Before the war, in April 1971, he and his team had begun training over 400 Bengali College students as maritime marine commandos. The commandos were to carry out covert maritime operations inside Bangladesh, then East Pakistan, in support of the Bangladesh government-in-exile. They were trained by a covert naval warfare unit — the Naval Commando Operations (X), NCO(X), set up by Director of Naval Intelligence, Captain MK Roy, and the Navy Chief Admiral SM Nanda. The training included carrying limpet mines that the trained commandos could swim with on their bellies and plant on Pakistani ships.



Map of the Operation

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/IndianNavy/posts/reliving1971-navalleadership-today-weremember-the-commando-operations-which-were/1678910199130500/>

With the outbreak of hostilities between India and Pakistan on 03 December 1971, two Mukti Bahini vessels arrived at the Border Security base at Hasnabad on 06 December 1971. The Commandant of the 72 Battalion Marine Special Force, Commander HK Mukherjee fuelled, stored and provided guides to the two Mukti Bahini vessels which were provided with communication sailors and wireless sets. The BSF vessel, MV Chitragada and the Naval Seaward defence boat, INS Panvel, were added to this force.

Commander MN Samant was appointed as the senior officer of 'Force Alpha'. The Force was tasked with attacking the enemy targets at Mongla and Khulna. The Task Group comprised of four vessels: INS Panvel, Mukti Bahini tugs Padma and Palash (which were converted into gun-boats) and MV Chitragadha, a pusher tug of the Border Security Force. Padma and Palash were retrofitted with L-60 Bofors guns, machine guns on their bridges and had their decks reinforced. They were manned mostly by Mukti Bahini men. MV Chitragada was fitted only with machine guns.

INS Panvel appeared relatively more formidable due to her two 40 mm Bofors guns, despite being one of the smallest vessels in the Poluchat Class obtained from the former USSR. Weighing only 90 tons and measuring just 29 meters in length, it had minimal facilities, with a single toilet, shower, and kitchen shared among all crew members. Originally manned by a crew of 16, this was increased to 30 after the installation of the Bofors guns. Additionally, the vessel was equipped with limpet mines, explosives, small arms, and other necessary gear for conducting underwater sabotage, scuttling, and boarding operations.

The Force set off on 07 December 1971, from Hasnabad, a river port in India, and journeyed through the Sunderbans Delta, covering several miles. They faced numerous challenges, such as Pakistani teams attempting to locate them using direction-finding equipment, a lack of precise navigation charts forcing them to rely on Indian Army Maps, and navigating through the unfamiliar, narrow, and intricate waterways of the Sunderbans, sometimes in complete darkness. At one point, Palash ran aground on a sandbank shortly after departure and had to be pulled free by Padma using her tow rope.

Around 0300 hours on 08/09 December, 1971, The entire force arrived, without opposition, at Akram Point. INS Panvel spotted two medium-sized ships attempting to flee the conflict zone. Since these ships were faster than Panvel and were beyond the range of the force's weapons, Commander MN Samant, the Force Commander, passed on information about them to the Eastern Fleet (Rear Admiral SH Sharma) flying the flag on board the aircraft carrier Vikrant. As a result, the Pakistani freighters MV Baqir and MV Anvar Baksh were intercepted and became prizes of war. These ships were carrying Pakistani military personnel, their families, as well as significant quantities of weapons and ammunition.

The Task Force then started heading Northwards into the Pussur River. This river was vital for Khulna, hosting East Pakistan's largest inland port complex, Chalna-Mongla Port. These ports played a crucial role in Pakistan's waterborne trade, generating significant government revenue and supplying essential supplies to the heavily guarded military garrisons in Khulna from West Pakistan via maritime routes. To maximize the element of surprise, Force Alpha reached Mongla at dawn on 10 December.

Some senior officers of the Force landed ashore at Mongla and were cheered by a large crowd. The Pakistani forces had already left the place and two Pakistani Naval officers had been taken prisoner by the Mukti Bahini. Commander MN Samant then ordered Panvel, Padma and Palash to proceed to Khulna. The fourth ship, Chitrangada, remained behind to render assistance and search for survivors. The three ships sailed from Mongla at 0820 hours on 10 December, and arrived at Khulna at 1120 hours.

Khulna, besides its commercial significance, was home to PNS Titumir, a crucial naval base in East Pakistan. The besieging of Titumir would have significantly impacted the morale of Pakistani forces in the area. As the ships moved along the Rupsha River, Pakistani soldiers emerged from bunkers on the Western bank and opened fire on the ships with rifles and machine guns.

While the ship began silencing the enemy, three IAF Gnats appeared in the sky. Even though the ships displayed large yellow piece of cloth on top of their bridge as identification mark, Padma and Palash got hit by rockets. The crew abandoned the ships by diving into the water. The third Gnat attacked Panvel but missed her narrowly. Commander Samant ordered the ships to be abandoned.

After the Indian Air Force fighters disappeared, Commander Samant, Lieutenant Commander Noronha, and the rest of the crew re-boarded Panvel. With effective use of her engines, Panvel managed to free herself from being beached and resumed her journey. Samant made the decision to turn back and rescue the survivors of Padma and Palash, who were stranded in the river and under heavy fire from the Pakistani Army and militia. As Panvel approached to rescue the crew, she simultaneously engaged the enemy bunkers on both riverbanks, suppressing their fire.

During this rescue operation, a second wave of Gnats arrived, prompting Panvel to manoeuvre evasively once again, ultimately avoiding further harm. After the Gnats disappeared, Panvel continued with the rescue efforts, successfully picking up 14 crew members from Palash and Padma by the end of the day's action.

INS Panvel proceeded to carry out the task assigned to her. During the attack on Khulna, she came under heavy small arms and machine gun fire from buildings on either side of the waterway, but she effectively neutralised them with the Bofors guns and small arms. As a result, the Police HQ, Khulna shipyards steel mills, gun emplacements, fortifications were either damaged or destroyed. After the engagement was over, the ship sailed for Hasnabad where she arrived at 1845 hours on 11 December 1971.



Commander Mohan Narayan Rao Samant

Source: <https://bdnews24.com/neighbours/indias-captain-samant-honoured-by-bangladesh-as-friend-of-liberation-war-dies>

Commander Samant was made the first temporary Chief Of Staff of the Bangladesh Navy under Colonel MAG Osmani in 1971 following Bangladesh's independence. He was succeeded by Nurul Huq in April 1972. Commander Samant was conferred with the honour 'Friend of Liberation War.'

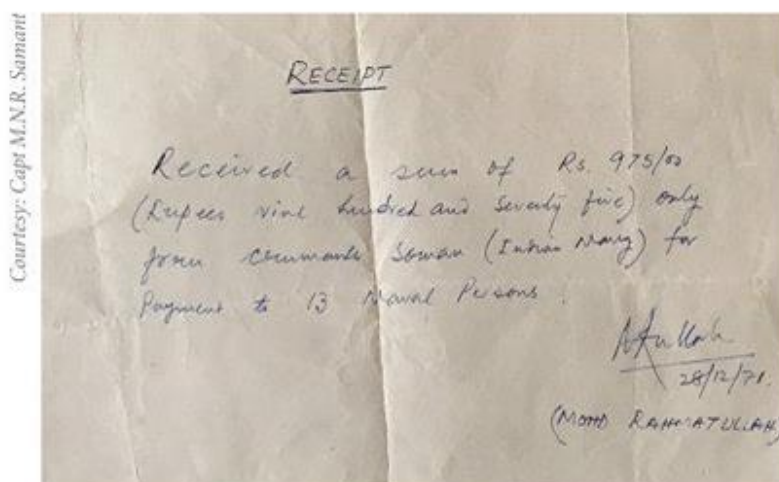


Commander Samant

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=366480952157928&set=pcb.366481138824576>

Thus ended the remarkable conflict in inland waters with 400 Mukti Bahini frogmen sinking or damaging over a lakh ton of shipping in the embayed Indian Ocean.

Commander Samant was married to Nirmala Samant and had three daughters Ujjwala, Natasha, Meghna. He passed away at the age of 89 on 20 March 2019.



Handwritten receipt from Rahamtulla to Commander Samant

CITATION

Commander Mohan Narayan Rao Samant (00124-F)

Commander Mohan Narayan Rao Samant was the senior officer of force consisting of craft, which carried out most daring and highly successful attacks on the enemy in Mongla and Khulna ports. Manoeuvring his squadron through a most hazardous and unfamiliar route, Commander Samant achieved complete surprise and routed the enemy in Mongla inflicting heavy losses. Commander Samant then proceeded to attack Khulna to destroy the enemy entrenched in strength in the port. A bitter fight ensued in which the force was subjected to incessant air attacks. Two boats belonging to the Mukti Bahini operating with the force were sunk. In utter disregard of his personal safety, the officer not only managed to pick up a large number of the survivors but also persisted with fierce attacks on the enemy with devastating results. Commander Samant had a number of narrow escapes, but refused to withdraw to safer waters. By his personal example and high qualities of leadership, Commander Samant inspired his men to rise to the occasion and fight most gallantly.

Throughout the operations, Commander Mohan Narayan Rao Samant displayed conspicuous gallantry, dedication and leadership.

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