



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



**SUBEDAR MAJOR & HONY CAPTAIN THOMAS PHILIPOSE (then
HAVILDAR)**

SERVICE NUMBER	2550166
RANK	Subedar Major & Hony Captain (Then Havildar)
NAME	Thomas Philipose
SON OF	PT Philipose
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Alleppey, Kerala
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	16 MADRAS
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	08 July 1961
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra/ 15 December 1971
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	Indo-Pak War of 1971
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	

Subedar Major & Hony Captain (Then Havildar) was born on 08 July 1940 to PT Philipose, in Edayaranmula village of Alleppey District in Kerala. His father, PT Philipose, was a farmer in the village. Havildar Thomas Philipose was married to Chinnmma Philipose and had two children.

Havildar Philipose was enrolled into the Indian Army on 08 July 1961, after training at the Madras Regimental Centre at Wellington, he was posted to the 16 MADRAS. In 1962, he was posted in Sikkim. Post a three-year stint in Sikkim, he was moved to the Eastern border. After seven years into the service, Philipose earned the coveted three strips and became a Havildar. During the Indo-Pak War of 1971, Havildar Philipose was part of C Company of the 16 MADRAS.

The origin of the MADRAS Regiment in its present form can be traced to the time when the Levis were organised into companies of 100 men each, and two Battalions were thus raised on 4 December 1758 and placed under the command of Lord Robert Clive to defend Fort St. George at Madras. Thus, the Madras Regiment is one of the oldest Regiments of the Indian Infantry. The Regiment recruits its soldiers from the five Southern states – Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka. The valour of the Madras Regiment was seen when it fought fierce battles during most military operations of independent India. Their Regimental war cry is **“Veer madrassi, adi kollu, adi kollu, adi kollu ”** meaning **“O brave Madrassi, hit and kill, hit and kill, hit and kill.”** The Regimental Centre is located in Wellington, Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu. In glorious 265 Years of its existence, the Regiment has a total 45 Battle Honours, 14 Theatre Honours, 11 COAS unit citations, 52 GOC-in-C Unit Appreciations, 5 UN Force Commander Citations, One Ashoka Chakra, 5 Mahavir Chakra, 11 Kirti Chakra, 36 Vir Chakra, 49 Saurya Chakra, and many other gallantry & distinguished awards.

The Madras Regiment (Travancore) was raised on 28 January 1819, as 2nd Travancore Nayar Infantry. The regiment, since its inception, has taken part in numerous campaigns with both the British Indian Army and the post-independence Army.

The 1971 War was a military conflict between India and Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War from 03 to 16 December, 1971. India gained Independence in 1947, and the partition resulted in the creation of Pakistan. It began with preemptive airstrikes by the Pakistan Air Force on Indian targets, leading to India's involvement in support of Bengali nationalist forces. Pakistan suffered a significant defeat in this War. The Indo-Pak War of 1971 was the first war when the Indian Government engaged all three services on a large scale. A total of 4090 Indian soldiers made supreme sacrifice during this war and about 600 officers and men of the Indian Armed Forces were decorated with Gallantry awards. Of these, 04 were Param Vir Chakra, 76 Maha Vir Chakra and 513 Vir Chakra. In the Battle of Basantar, the Battalion was awarded two Maha Vir Chakras, five Vir Chakras, two Sena Medals and five Mention-in-Despatches.

On 08 October 1971, 16 MADRAS moved to Samba from Hyderabad along with the rest of 54 Infantry Division to take part in 'OP Cactus Lily' against Pakistan. Hostilities with Pakistan broke out on 03 December 1971 and after crossing the International Border on 05 December 1971 the Battalion fought its first major battle at Basantar Nallah in Shakargarh Bulge in the Sialkot District of West Pakistan from 15 December 1971 to 17 December 1971.

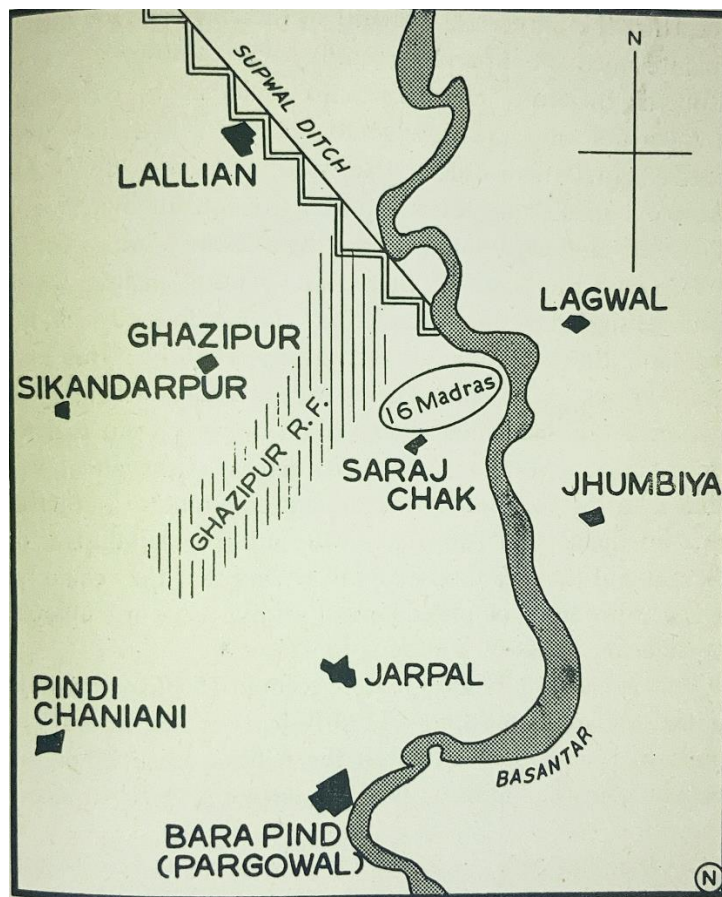
54 Infantry Division earmarked 47 Infantry Brigade with 17 HORSE to establish a Bridgehead in the Lalian Reserve Forest area across the Basantar River.

The plan of 47 Infantry Brigade was as follows:

Phase 1 – 16 MADRAS to capture Sarajchak and Lalian by 2230 hours 25 December.

Phase 2 – 3 GRENADIERS to capture Jarpal on completion of Phase 1.

Phase 3 – Induction of 17 HORSE into the bridgehead.



Map

Source: Bhargava, G. S. Their Finest Hour: Saga of India's December Victory. India: Vikas Publishing House, 1972.

The Commanding Officer 16 MADRAS, Lieutenant Colonel VP Ghai, decided to carry out the assigned task as under: Phase 1 – capture of Lalian RF and Sarajchak by C and D Companies; Phase 2– Capture of 6r and 5r by A and B Companies.

The enemy defences were based on the obstacle, Basantar River, which was reinforced by a deep minefield on either side, the depth of which was over 1600 yards. Crossing the river was a relatively simpler task than negotiating the thick minefield which the Pakistanis had laid in

several layers between the river bank and their positions. But to the credit of 9 Engineer Regiment the obstacles were speedily surmounted. 1000 yards from the Western bank of the Basantar river the enemy had his defences covering the minefield effectively with MMGs and Recoilless gun fire. In the area of the objective of the Battalion, the enemy had more than a Rifle Company reinforced by elements of recce and support Battalion. The deployment of the enemy Company was as under: Lalial RF – Platoon plus; Sarajchak – Platoon; 6r – Platoon; and 5r – Platoon.



General (later Field Marshal) SHFJ Manekshaw with the officers of 16 MADRAS

Source: Lt Col JR Daniel. *The Black Poms Poms: History of the Madras Regiment*. Published by Commandant, The Madras Regiment Centre Wellington.

The enemy position consisted of bunkers, connected by a network of communication trenches and alternative positions. Elements of the recce and supporting Battalions were deployed to cover gaps in Platoon localities and the flanks. In order to cover the minefield effectively, MMGs and infantry were deployed in between the minefields. Enemy fire was well coordinated with artillery and OPs positioned in the village. These positions also had mutual fire support from his location on the Supwal Ditch.



The MMG detachment of C Coy

Source: Lt Col JR Daniel. *The Black Poms Poms: History of the Madras Regiment*. Published by Commandant, The Madras Regiment Centre Wellington.

The attack started at 1930 hours on 15 December with C Company on the right under Maj PV Sahadevan going for Lalial RF and D Company on the left under Maj CBS Krishnia for Sarajchak. Soon after leaving the FUP, the enemy started engaging own troops with artillery fire. The MMGs from the enemy nests brought down menacing fire during the crossing of the Basantar river. During each stage of the battle, he made good use of his alternative positions.

On reaching the far side of the obstacle, the Pakistanis attacked in strength. An early casualty was the Platoon Commander, Naib Subedar Bhaskaran, who was wounded and disabled. It was only at this stage that the Company Commander realised that the assessed Pakistani defences based on Supwal Ditch were extended so much towards the Lalial RF as against the information available earlier. At least four MMGs including those from the concrete pillboxes of Supwal Ditch opened up over a frontage of 1000 yards almost halting the progress of the attack. The Forward Observation Officer was asked to direct artillery fire closer. Under its cover, the assaulting Platoons kept inching forward just 50 yards behind the artillery barrage. When within 400 yards of the objective, the enemy fire was so intense and accurate that move forward was almost stalled.



Havildar Thomas Philipose

Source: <https://x.com/JoBeingjoe/status/941543103558836225/photo/1>

One of the Pakistani Browning was wreaking havoc, as a result, Havildar Philipose decided to silence it. Together with Lance Naik Govindan, he crawled and caught the Pakistani by surprise. The Browning along with its ammunition was captured.



Thomas Philipose with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi

Source: <https://x.com/vijayhemas/status/1520031481913311237>

The Platoon was low on ammunitions, and before the supplies could arrive the Pakistanis counterattacked, at midday on 16 December. Havildar Thomas Philipose, having taken over the Platoon, thought on his feet and took the decision which proved a turning point in the long drawn-out battle. Havildar Philipose and his men were only fifteen as against sixty Pakistanis, in a hand-to-hand fight. He and his men led a brave charge with fixed bayonets against the enemy. He enthused and inspired this small force. Although, he received a bullet wound himself, the charge led by him was so determined and brave that the enemy got demoralized

and fled.



The Chief of Army Staff with the men of 16 MADRAS after the successful Battle of Basantar

Source: Lt Col JR Daniel. *The Black Poms Poms: History of the Madras Regiment*. Published by Commandant, The Madras Regiment Centre Wellington.

Throughout the operations, Havildar Thomas Philipose displayed resolute leadership under adverse conditions, and set a brilliant example of courage and devotion to duty in keeping with the highest traditions of the Army. He was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.



Battle of Basantar

Source: <https://theguardian.com/the-battle-of-basantar-a-saga-of-valour-and-determination/>



Havildar Thomas Philipose

<https://x.com/Vickypats66/status/1004949125245255680/photo/3>

Earlier in 2017, Captain Thomas Philipose built a War Memorial in honour of 20 soldiers who lost their lives while serving the nation. This, he built in a three-cent plot at Aranmula in Pathanamthitta. His bust and the names of all those who laid down their lives is also there at the MADRAS Regimental War Memorial which is at entrance of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington.



The victory Flame reached Erumakaddu, Kerala & was received by Veer Nari Smt Chinnmma Philipose wife of Late Hony Captain Thomas Philipose #MahaVirChakra of 16 Madras Regiment.

Source: <https://x.com/laSouthern/status/1411341475317649411/photo/2>

After fighting a fierce battle with cancer, the 79-year-old Captain Thomas Philipose, breathed his last on 09 June 2018.

CITATION

2550166 HAVILDAR THOMAS PHILIPOSE

Madras Regiment.

(Effective date of award—15 December, 1971)

Havildar Thomas Philipose was a platoon Havildar in a Battalion of the Madras Regiment during the battle of Basantar on the night of the 15th/16th December, 1971. During the assault, his platoon Commander received a bullet wound and could not proceed further. Havildar Thomas Philipose then took over the command of the platoon. Casualties in the platoon were so heavy that, by the time the objective was captured, the Company strength had been considerably reduced. At this time, they were counter-attacked by enemy Infantry. Notwithstanding the depleted strength of his Platoon Havildar Thomas Philipose displayed conspicuous bravery, devotion to duty and leadership of the highest order; he led a brave counter charge with fixed bayonets with his meagre strength. He enthused and inspired this small force. Although he received a severe bullet wound himself, the charge led by him was so determined and brave that the enemy got demoralised and fled.

Throughout, Havildar Thomas Philipose displayed resolute leadership under adverse conditions and set a brilliant example of courage and devotion to duty in keeping with the highest traditions of the Army.

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