



रक्षा मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
**DEFENCE**



**MAJOR GENERAL (Then LIEUTENANT COLONEL) CHITTOOR  
VENUGOPAL**

<b>SERVICE NUMBER</b>	IC-5096
<b>RANK</b>	Major General (then Lieutenant Colonel)
<b>NAME</b>	Chitoor Venugopal
<b>SON OF</b>	Chitoor Chinna Swami
<b>RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE</b>	Chennai, Tamil Nadu
<b>UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS</b>	5/1 GORKHA RIFLES
<b>SERVICE</b>	Indian Army
<b>DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION</b>	10 December 1950
<b>AWARD/DATE OF ACTION</b>	Maha Vir Chakra/ 07 December 1971
<b>WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION</b>	Indo-Pak War of 1971
<b>OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE</b>	Param Vishisht Seva Medal

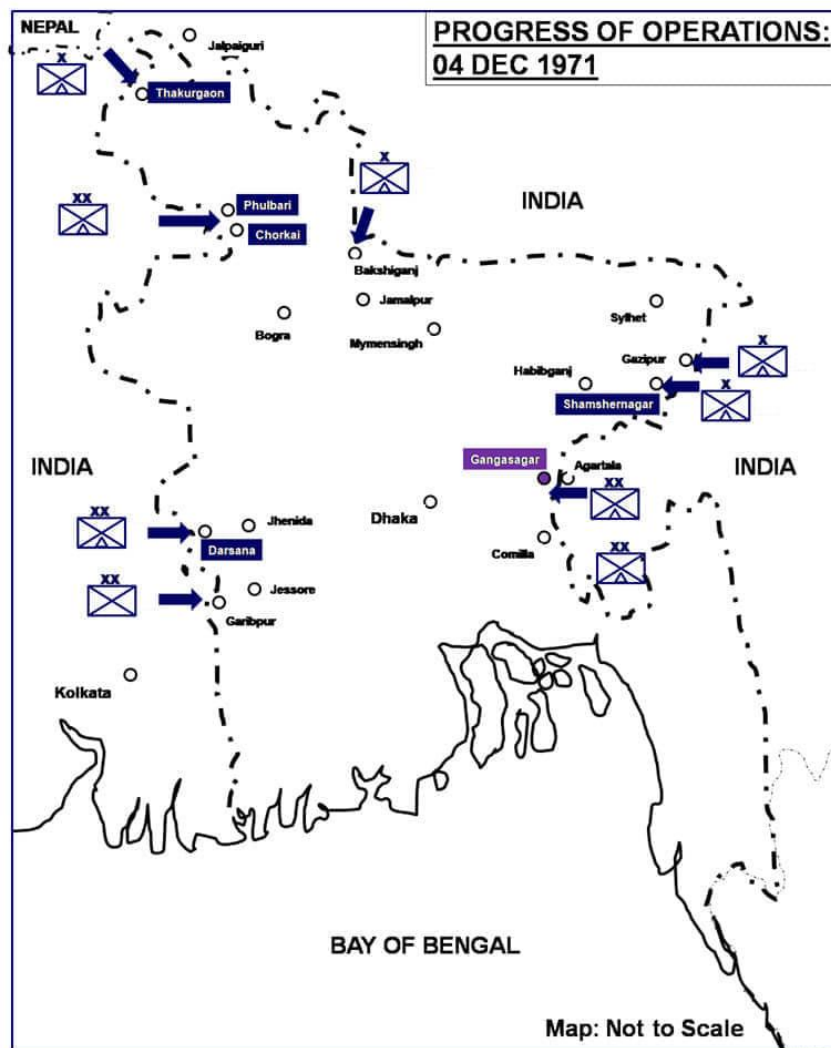
Major General (then Lieutenant Colonel) Chittor Venugopal was born on 14 November 1927, to Shri C Chinna Swami, in Tirupati District of Andhra Pradesh. He was commissioned into the First Regiment of the Gorkha Rifles on 10 December 1950. In the Indo-Pak war of 1971, Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal was commanding 5/1 Gorkha Rifles in Jessore Sector on the Eastern Front.

The first Battalion of Gurkha Regiment (now Gorkha Rifles) was raised in 1815 during the Anglo-Nepalese war. Impressed by the qualities displayed by Gurkhas during the war, the British started active recruitment of Gurkhas into the British Indian Army. After the partition, in 1947 six Gurkha Regiments viz, 1 GR, 3 GR, 4 GR, 5 GR, 8 GR and 9 GR remained with the Indian Army, while 2 GR, 6 GR, 7 GR and 10 GR were transferred to British Army as part of the Tripartite Agreement signed between India, Nepal and Britain. Post-independence 11 GORKHA RIFLES was re-raised on 01 January 1948. Since independence, the Gorkhas have proved their mettle in Sino-India War of 1962 where a Gorkha Battalion fought under the most demanding conditions on the Namka Chu in NEFA (Now Arunachal Pradesh). Later, the Gorkha Battalions also involved in Indo-Pak War of 1965 and 1971. Their motto is 'Kafar Hunu Bhandu Marnu Ramro' (Better to die than live like a coward). In the Sino-India War of 1962, the regiment was posted in the North-East Frontier Agency Sector (NEFA) and fought valiantly in the crucial battles in Namka Chu Sector. The Gorkha's have contributed many Chiefs to the Indian Army these include General SHFJ Manekshaw, MC who went on to become India's first Field Marshal, General GG Bewoor PVSM, PB, General Dalbir Singh Suhag, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC and General Bipin Rawat PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, VSM, ADC who was India's first CDS as well as General Anil Chauhan PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, the present CDS.

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. 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 1971. The Indo-Pak War of 1971 was the first war when the Indian Government engaged all three services on a

large scale. India unfolded its plan of attack in East Pakistan following pre-emptive air strikes from Pakistan on 03 December 1971. Jessore was one of the most fortified positions in East Pakistan. The Indian II Corps was pitted against Pakistan's force in the Jessore-Jhenida sector.

After pre-emptive Pakistan air strikes of 03 December, India unfolded its plan of attack in East Pakistan. Indian II Corps, IV Corps, XXXIII Corps and 101 CZA squeezed Pakistan from four directions and in a lightning attack captured East Pakistan in 13 days. To begin with, the Indian II Corps was pitted against the following Pak forces in Jessore-Jhenida sector.



Map

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4 Mountain Division, under Major General MS Brar, was given the operational responsibility of the Jhenida-Kushtia Sector, which was bound in the north by the Ganga, and in the south by the Jibannagar-Kaliganj-Jhenida-Faridpur road. The important north-south highway in this sector passed from the Hardinge Bridge in the north to Jessore in the south-east, via Kushtia and Jhenida.

The border area on the Indian side was well linked with a network of roads. While Hardinge Bridge provided the railway link between the north-western and south-western sectors, the ferries at Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat located in this area, provided suitable approaches to

Dhaka. There were two main river obstacles in this Sector, viz., Ganga in the North, and Garai-Madhumati in the East. The latter had a span of approximately 1,200 feet, and a depth of 40 feet in December and was not bridged anywhere along its course. Although the border area from Meherpur to Chaugacha, along the general line Chuadanga-Kotchandpur-Chaugacha was dotted with bils (marshes) for about 20 km, this Sector was better suited for tank operations as compared to the 9 Infantry Division area, South of Jessore. Jhenida was the most important communication centre in this Sector, as it lay at the junction of the Kushtia-Jessore and Meherpur-Faridpur highways. It was built as a theatre fortress. Kushtia was another important nodal point, linking up Hardinge Bridge in the Northwest and Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat ferries in the East with railways. Besides, there were two main lateral roads running east-west to the main ferries on the Ganga.

4 Mountain Division less one Brigade had been tasked to capture the nodal points at Jhenida and Magura with a view to securing the ferry sites on the Madhumati River and thereafter, those on Padma River at Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat. It was to capture Jibannagar by D plus 2, Kotchandpur by plus 4, Kalinganj by D plus 6, Jhenida by D plus 8, and Magura and ferry sites on the Madhumati River by D plus 11. Subsequently, the Division was either to secure Faridpur and the main ferry site at Goalundo Ghat, or to carry out mopping up operations in area Kushtia and Hardinge Bridge. If necessary, it could also be moved to Bogra Sector under XXXIII Corps for mopping up operations.

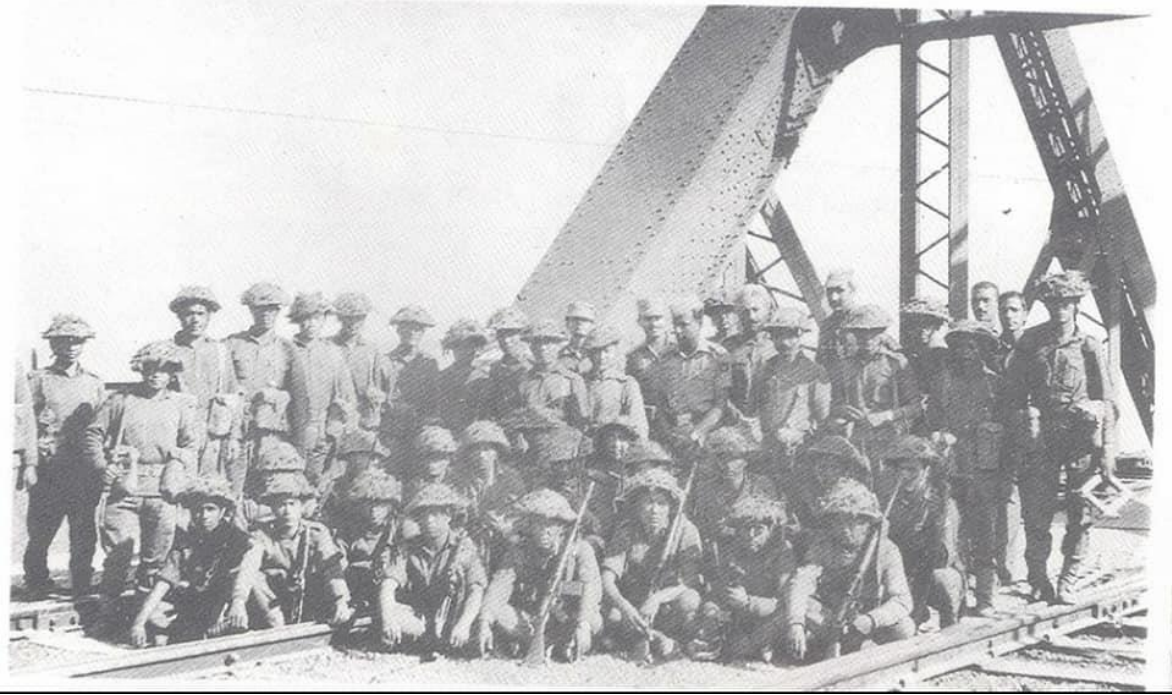
One Mountain Brigade, with a Mountain Battery was to act as Corps reserve. Initially, one Battalion each from this Brigade was to be deployed to guard the Shikarpur-Bheramara and Meherpur-Kushtia axes, and one Battalion was to be placed under command 9 Infantry Division for securing the Northern flank of its thrust. The latter Battalion was to revert to its parent brigade on the capture of Jhingergacha.

4 Mountain Division had secured some Pak BOPs, East of Karimpur before 03 December. Reacting to this, Pakistanis reinforced their positions covering the approaches to the Hardinge Bridge. There were two axes available to Major General Brar to reach the ferry sites of Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat:

Meherpur-Chuadanga-Jhenida-Faridpur.

Jibannagar-Kotchandpur-Kaliganj-Jhenida-Faridpur.

As the latter was shorter of the two, the Divisional Commander decided to launch his main thrust along this axis. But to advance on this axis, the Darsana BOP had to be neutralised. The Division Commander, therefore, ordered 41 Mountain Brigade, under Brigadier AHE Michigan, supported by armour, to reduce Darsana by last light on 04 December. The 41 Mountain Brigade had three Battalions, 5 GUARDS, 9 DOGRA, 5/1 GORKHA RIFLES, including the allotment of a Troop of PT-76 light amphibious tanks from the 45 Cavalry, and one of these three Battalions was the 5/1 GORKHA RIFLES—commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal.



*Gorkha Regiment in Darsana*

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1511574812372476&set=pcb.1511574922372465>

As 62 Mountain Brigade aimed to capture Kotchandpur and push towards the city of Faridpur and Magura further East, 41 Mountain Brigade poised for the capture the border town of Darsana in Bangladesh and push towards the city of Jhenida. Brigadier Toni Michigan—assigned this tough job of drawing first blood to Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal’s Gorkhas.

On 04 December 1971, 5/1 Gorkha Rifles launched an assault on the border town of Darsana, successfully displacing the well-fortified Pakistani defenders who had strong pillboxes and interconnected communication trenches. With intelligence from the Mukti Bahini, Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal meticulously planned the attack and led the charge himself. He coordinated with the 22 Rajput, and together with his own Battalion, they captured both Darsana and Akandabaria. Despite the fierce fighting, the newly raised 5/1 Gorkha Rifles triumphed under Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal's brave leadership, supported significantly by a small contingent of PT-76 tanks.



*Indian troops in front of the Darsana railway station*

Source: [https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2728621704068572&set=pcb.2728621797401896&locale=pt\\_BR](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2728621704068572&set=pcb.2728621797401896&locale=pt_BR)

Next, 5/1 Gorkha Rifles captured the town of Uthali, overcoming its concrete pillboxes and trenches, all strategically planned by Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal. By the night of December 5, Uthali was firmly under the control of the 5/1 Gorkha Rifles and 41 Mountain Brigade. After the fall of Darsana, Brigadier Manzoor Ahmed, commanding Pakistan's 57 Infantry Brigade, anticipated that 4 Mountain Division would advance North to take the border town of Chuadanga. In preparation, he repositioned his troops from Darsana towards Chuadanga, planning to abandon Jhenida. However, 4 Mountain Division had actually decided to move East instead of North.



*Brigadier Anthony Harold Michigan and the troops of 5/1 Gorkha Rifles in front of the Darsana Railway Station during the Bangladesh Liberation war of 1971.*

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5 GUARDS of 41 Mountain Brigade positioned themselves along the Chuadanga-Jhenida road, setting ambushes for Pakistan's retreating 57 Infantry Brigade. They were supported by a Squadron of PT-76 tanks from the 45 Cavalry. At dawn on 05 December, Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal's 5/1 Gorkha Rifles departed from Uthali, and headed towards Jhenida. Their first stop was Kotchandpur, about 40 miles on foot, after which they needed to cross the Chitra River. Despite the biting December cold, the Battalion successfully crossed the river, reinforced by the 9 DOGRA on 06 December 1971. Together, these two Battalions, with the backing of a troop of PT-76 tanks, launched their assault on Jhenida.

Disregarding his own safety, Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal led his Battalion during the assault on Jhenida, overwhelming the Pakistani defenders. The troops from Pakistan's 57 Infantry Brigade were taken completely by surprise, as they had only anticipated raids along the Chuadanga-Jhenida road, expecting Chuadanga to be the next target. 5/1 Gorkha Rifles spearheaded the 41 Mountain Brigade's attack, breaking the resolve of the Pakistani defenders and forcing them to retreat. By 0230 hours on 06 December, Jhenida was liberated, with the Gorkhas receiving a jubilant welcome from the local Bengali population. As the balance troops of 41 Mountain Brigade arrived, they captured 30 Pakistani vehicles, 500 truckloads of ammunition, the Headquarters of the Pakistani 57 Infantry Brigade, and important documents from the city.



*Capture of Jhenida*

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*Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, GOC Eastern Command, visiting the border town of Darsana, following its liberation by the 5/1 Gorkha Rifles during the Bangladesh Liberation war of 1971.*

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The Pakistani casualties were reportedly 29 killed. During this battle 5/1 GORKHA RIFLES earned two Maha Vir Chakras. Lieutenant Colonel C Venugopal was awarded Maha Vir Chakra for exceptional bravery and leadership during the capture of Darsana, Uthali and Jhenida. When Brigadier Manzur Ahmed of Pakistan's 57 Infantry Brigade learnt about the loss of Darsana, he ordered his troops to fall back on Chuadanga and hold it firmly as its fall would open the road to Jhenida or Kushtia to Indians. He moved his tactical HQs from Jhenida to Chuadanga to personally supervise operations around Darsana and Chuadanga.

Lieutenant Colonel Venugopal meticulously planned his Battalion's assaults and displayed extraordinary courage in the face of danger to secure Jhenida. For his bravery and gallant action throughout, he was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. He continued to fight under Brigadier Michigan's command, advancing to capture the city of Kushtia and crossing the Hardinge Bridge into Bhermara by 10 December 10/12, 1971. Lieutenant Colonel Chittoor Venugopal continued his service in the Indian Army and retired as a Major General. He was awarded with the Param Vishisht Seva Medal for distinguished service of exceptional order.

Major General Chittoor Venugopal died of cardiac arrest at the age of 93 on 27 April 2021 in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.



## **CITATION.**

Lieutenant Colonel Chitoor Venugopal (IC-5096) Gorkha Rifles  
(Effective date of award– 7th December 1971)

Lieutenant Colonel Chitoor Venugopal was commanding a battalion of the Gorkha Rifles during the operations on the Eastern Front. On the 4th December 1971, the battalion came against well-fortified enemy defences at 'Uthali' and 'Darsana'. The position had a series of concrete pill-boxes interconnected with elaborate communication trenches. Lieutenant Colonel Chitoor Venugopal planned the attack with great professional skill. Showing complete disregard for his personal safety, he led the attack and by his presence inspired his men to achieve the objective. After the capture of these two positions the battalion relentlessly pursued the withdrawing enemy giving him no rest or time to regroup till 'Jhenida' was captured three days later.

Throughout, Lieutenant Colonel Chitoor Venugopal displayed conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in the best tradition of the Army.

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Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No. 18-Pres./72.—dated FEBRUARY 12, 1972

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