



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



MAJOR GENERAL HARISH CHANDRA PATHAK (then LIEUTENANT COLONEL)

SERVICE NUMBER	IC-7114
RANK	Major General (then Lieutenant Colonel)
NAME	Harish Chandra Pathak
SON OF	BP Pathak and Kaushalaya Bai
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Mhow, Madhya Pradesh
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	8 SIKH LIGHT INFANTRY
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	04 December 1954
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra/ 11 December 1971
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	Indo-Pak War of 1971
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	Ati Vishisht Seva Medal

Major General (then Lieutenant Colonel) Harish Chandra Pathak was born on 30 June 1934, in Mhow in Indore District of Madhya Pradesh. He belonged to a illustrious family in Mhow. His father, Shri B.P. Pathak, was a respected lawyer and Magistrate in British India. His elder brother was a well-known Doctor in Mhow.

Lieutenant Colonel Pathak joined the National Defence Academy in 1951 and was commissioned into the Second Battalion of the Sikh Light Infantry Regiment on 04 December 1954.

He saw action in 'Operation Vijay' - the liberation of Goa in 1961. 2 SIKH LI was spearheading the operation under 50 (Independent) Para Brigade. He was the Adjutant of the Battalion when in December 1961, they crossed the Mandovi River, entered Panjim, and captured the seat of government. He had the honour of removing the Portuguese flag from Fort Aguada and hoisting the Indian Tricolour there. In 1966 he graduated from the Defence Services Staff College in Wellington.

In June 1970 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and took over command of 8 SIKH LI. This Battalion was raised in 1966 and he was the second CO of the Battalion. During the Indo-Pak War of 1971, Lieutenant Colonel Pathak's Battalion was part of 15 Infantry Division and fought in the Battle of Fatehpur-Burj. He was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra for his exemplary courage and leadership.

Lieutenant Colonel Pathak rose to the rank of Major General and commanded two Divisions; 21 Mountain Division and 7 Infantry Division. He commanded 21 Mountain Div from Feb 1985 to Feb 1986. He commanded 101 Area Shillong from March 1986 to December 1987. He then commanded 7 Infantry Division from Dec 1987 to October 1988. Thereafter he was Deputy Commander of the infantry School in Mhow till his retirement in June 1990. He is survived by his wife Mrs. Kanta Pathak, son Mr Rohit Pathak and daughter Mrs Shabnam Singh, who is married to an Army Officer. ¹

The Sikh Light Infantry previously known as the Mazabhi and Ramdasia Sikh Regiment is a Regiment of the Indian Army. Its name was changed to the Sikh Light Infantry in 1944. The Sikh Light Infantry inherited the battle honours, colours and traditions of the Mazabhi Sikh Pioneers on its merging with a few Ramdasia Companies in 1941. After serving under the British Raj for nearly a century they distinguished themselves with loyalty to the British Crown and Empire in numerous conflicts in and around the Indian Subcontinent including both the First World War and the Second World War. The Sikh Light Infantry has displayed immense versatility as the regiment conducted operations from Siachen Glacier to counterterrorism. The regimental motto is Deg Tegh Fateh, meaning prosperity in peace and victory in war. During the Indo-Pak War of 1971, 8 SIKH LI was awarded the Battle Honour "Fatehpur" for displaying exemplary courage and fortitude. The Regiment has given the Indian Army three Chiefs - General Ved Prakash Malik PVSM, AVSM who was the 19th Army Chief, General Bikram Singh PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, who was the 24th Army Chief and General Manoj Mukund Naravane PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, who was the 28th Army Chief and retired on 30th April 2022.

¹ Details provided by Maj Gen Pathak's son Mr Rohit Pathak and daughter Mrs Shabnam Singh



Source : Shri Rohit Pathak

The 1971 War was a military conflict between India and Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War from 03 to 16 December 1971. 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 4,090 Indian soldiers made the 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.

The Punjab Sector, which included Punjab, Haryana and the Ganganagar District of Rajasthan was the responsibility of the XI Corps commanded by Lieutenant General NC Rawlley, PVSM, AVSM, MC under the overall command of Lieutenant General KP Candeth, PVSM GOC-in-C, Western Command. The area of responsibility of the XI Corps thus extended over 640 km along the international border. Its Main HQ was at Amritsar from where it controlled

the Northern half of the Sector. The Corps consisted of three independent Sectors. It had assigned the following defended Sectors to its formations: Amritsar to 15 Infantry Division, Ferozepur to 7 Infantry Division and Ganga Nagar to Foxtrot Sector now 16 Infantry Division.

15 Infantry Division under Major General BM Bhattacharjea, MVC was to defend the Amritsar Sector, including the prominent towns of Amritsar, Dera Baba Nanak and Ajnala. Its Brigades were deployed as follows:

86 Infantry Brigade in Dera Baba Nanak area.

58 Infantry Brigade in Ajnala area.

96 Infantry Brigade in Fatehpur-Burj area.

54 Infantry Brigade in Atari-Ranian area.

38 Infantry Brigade in Neshta-Rajatal area.

96 Infantry Brigade commanded by Brigadier AE Joseph was given the responsibility of defending the area between Chann Malla and Bhindi Aulakh in the North-West of Amritsar. Across the Ravi, Pakistan had a sizeable enclave at Fatehpur and Bhago-Kamo and it could establish a Bridgehead there and pose a threat to Amritsar. The Indian Army, therefore, decided to capture the enclave.

On the night of 03/04 December 1971 Pakistan inducted the major part of their 88 Infantry Brigade belonging to 17 Infantry Division into this Enclave and under pressure from this force the Border Security Force was forced to vacate Ghoge, Behlol, Gulgarh, Burj and Fatehpur Posts. The Border Security Force, thus withdrawn, were re-deployed further back at Vara and the defences there were strengthened by the induction of two Platoons of 15 MARATHA LI and one Troop of 66 Armoured Regiment equipped with Vijayantha tanks with orders that there would be no further withdrawal.

Orders were then issued to 15 MARATHA LI to attack Tur and Burj and a Troop of tanks were placed under command for the attack. Before the attack could be launched a Company of 43 Baluch attacked Bhindi Aulak from Tur. The plan had therefore to be altered: to first contain the Pakistani attack. The attack was beaten back by Indian Artillery and armour and the attackers fled leaving behind their dead and some arms and ammunitions.

The attack was finally put in by Major Ranbir Singh, the Second-in-Command of 15 MARATHA LI, with two Companies, on 06 December 1971. The enemy taking shelter in bunkers bought down heavy fire on the assaulting troops. A close fight ensued. The Marathas fought their way doggedly from bunker to bunker physically. In many cases the enemy was dispossessed of his weapons forcibly. The Marathas recaptured Burj and paved the way for the success of 96 Infantry Brigade.

The Brigade Commander, Brigadier A E Joseph, then decided to put an end to the threat by capturing Pakistan's Fatehpur Post by using 8 SIKH LI for the purpose.

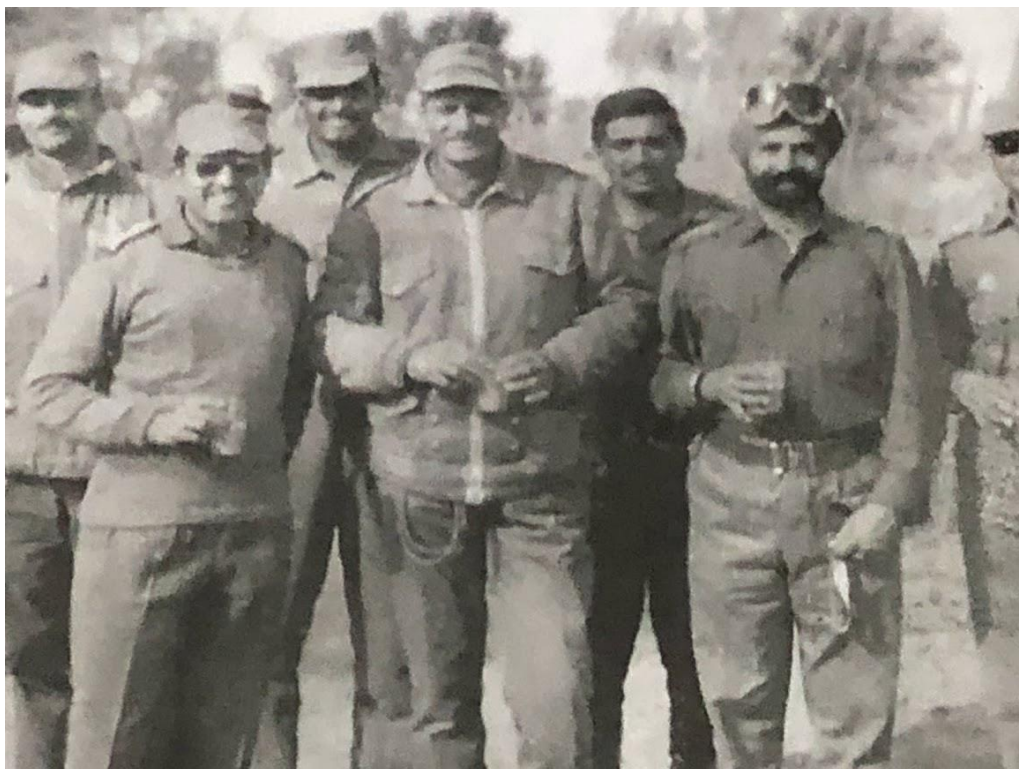
The plan of 8 SIKH LI, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel H C Pathak, was first to capture the Dussi Bund up to Fatehpur Post with two Companies by the midnight of 11/12 December

and then to push through the third Company To capture Dussi Bund Junction by 0100 hours on 12 December 1971 and after that to capture an area known as Twin Huts by another Rifle Company by 0230 hours on 12 December 1971.

On 11 December, Lieutenant Colonel Pathak gave his orders for a night attack to capture Fatehpur and regain the lost portion of Dussi Bund. The enemy positions were heavily defended and fortified, laid out with well-connected trenches and bunkers, mortars and anti-tank guns that formed a strong line of defense to be broken. Yet, determined to capture his objective, Lieutenant Colonel Pathak decided to push on with the attack. He himself led the charge, followed by his Rifle Companies.

The operation commenced with a seven-minute bombardment of the objective after which at 2300 hours on 11 December 1971 'B' and 'C' Companies crossed their start line moving on either side of the Dussi Bund with the Troops of 66 Armoured Regiment providing support by direct fire. The enemy Machine-Guns opened up from their bunkers, but 'B' Company under Major Ravi Kumar silenced them by lobbing grenades into them. Unmindful of enemy shelling 'B' Company pressed on and captured their first objective. They then moved towards Fatehpur Post led by their gallant Company Commander and captured the post by 0100 hours on the 12th after a fierce battle. The enemy counter-attacked but Captain Rajan, the FOO, brought down such accurate fire on the attacking troops that the counterattack broke up.

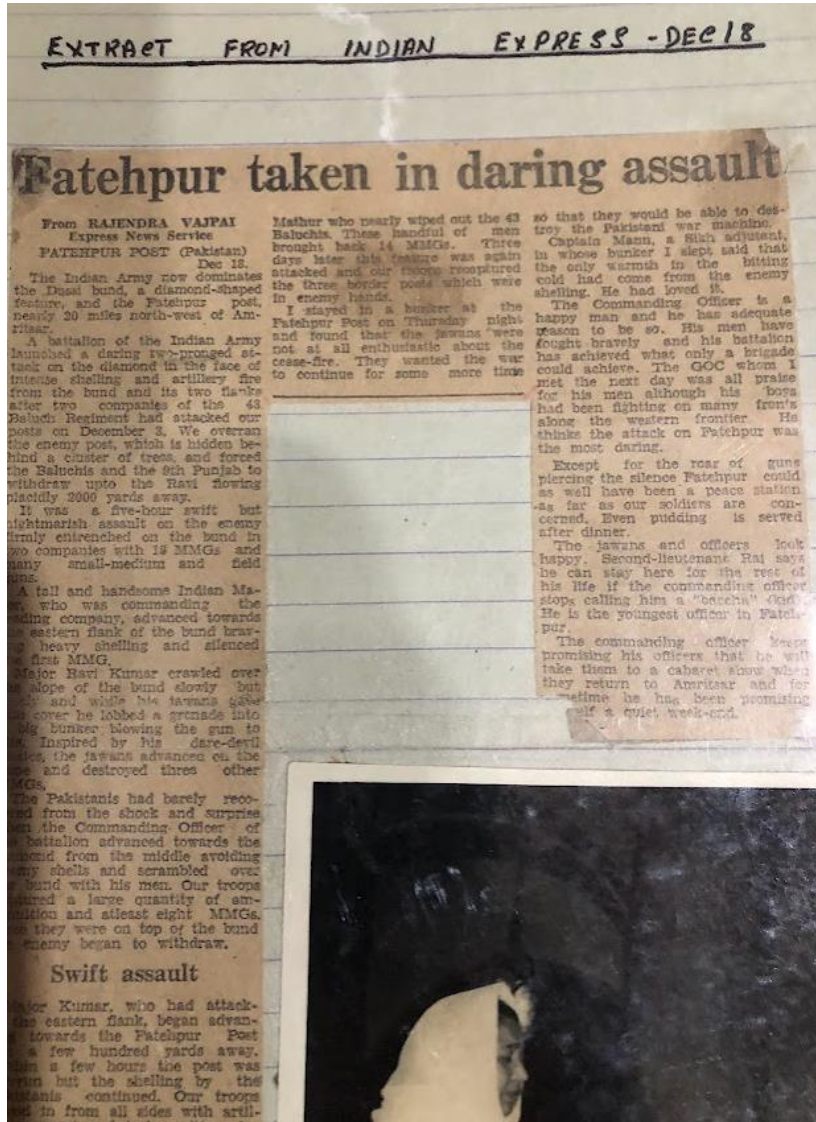
C Company made slow progress. Lieutenant Colonel Pathak came forward with his Intelligence Officer, Second Lieutenant Rai to see for himself what was really amiss. The Colonel's presence acted as a further stimulus for the C Company to press on. By 0015 hours, the Company captured its objective. was then pushed through and after some heavy fighting captured their objective BP 85.



Lt Pathak with Brigade Commander

Source: Shri Rohit Pathak

The second part of the plan was somewhat delayed as the enemy reacted violently and counter-attacked again and again. The attack was finally put in at 0115 hours on 12 December and 'A' Company, after heavy fighting, captured their objective by 0200 hours. During this attack Captain Karan Singh who was leading the attack showed exemplary courage and was killed while leading his troops. The enemy immediately counter-attacked and a fierce battle ensued.



Source: Shri Rohit Pathak

While directing the artillery fire on the Bund junction, Major Tirath Singh was killed. His bravery and devotion to duty earned him a Sena Medal posthumously. During this action, Lieutenant Colonel Pathak moved from one locality to another despite heavy shelling and small arms fire and encouraged his men to hold their ground and beat back the enemy attack inflicting heavy casualties. 'D' Company was then moved up to reinforce 'A' and 'B' Companies while 'C' Company set about clearing the remaining part of Dussi Bund and the whole area including Fatehpur post and Twin Huts was secured by the Battalion by 1400 hours on 12 December 1971.

The success of the Battalion was largely due to leadership, good planning and control by Lieutenant Colonel Pathak - and the excellent coordination between Infantry, Armour and Artillery and above all the gallantry shown by the men.

Throughout the entirety of the battle, Lieutenant Colonel Pathak, the Battalion Commanding Officer, personally engaged in combat alongside his soldiers, demonstrating exemplary leadership by leading from the front lines. His courageous conduct led to him being honored with the Maha Vir Chakra for his gallant leadership. Lieutenant Colonel HC Pathak subsequently ascended to the rank of Major General before retiring from the Army. Additionally, he was recognized with the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal for his exceptional service.

Major General Harish Chandra Pathak passed away on 22 June 2015.



President V.V. Giri Presenting the Maha Vir Chakra to Lieutenant Colonel Harish Chandra Pathak in January 1972

Source: Shri Rohit Pathak



*Lieutenant Colonel and Mrs. Harish Chandra Pathak
at The MVC Investiture Ceremony Rashtrapati Bhavan
January 1972*

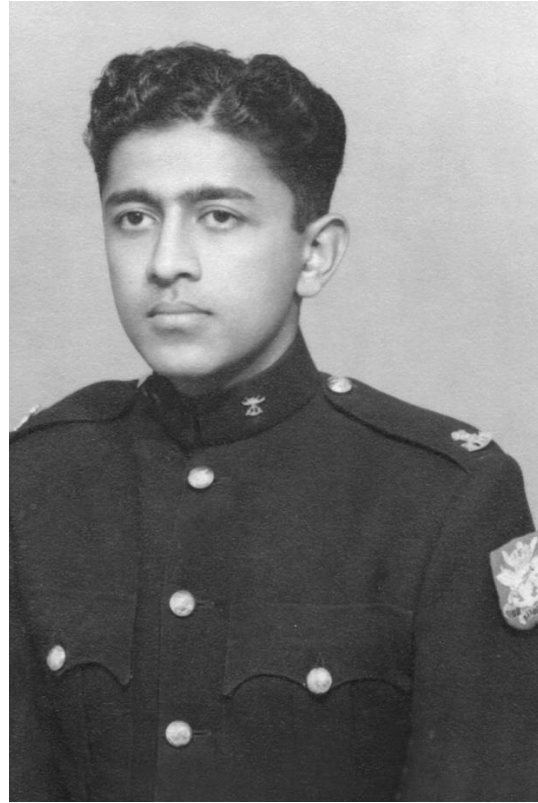
Source: Shri Rohit Pathak



Captain Harish Chandra Pathak
Source: Shri Rohit Pathak



Major Harish Chandra Pathak
Source: Shri Rohit Pathak



As a NDA Cadet
Source: Shri Rohit Pathak



Source: Shri Rohit Pathak



Mrs. Pathak Presenting Lieutenant Colonel Pathak's MVC to 8 Sikh Li In March 2019
Source: Shri Rohit Pathak

CITATION

Lieutenant Colonel HARISH CHANDRA PATHAK (IC-7114). Sikh Light Infantry.
(Effective date of award—11th December 1971)

Lieutenant Colonel Harish Chandra Pathak was commanding a battalion of the Sikh Light Infantry. His battalion was given the task of capturing the enemy post at 'Pak Fatehpur' on the Western Front. This was a well-fortified position held in strength by the enemy. During the attack, the enemy brought down very intense and accurate artillery and small arms fire on the assaulting troops inflicting heavy casualties. Lieutenant Colonel Pathak, with complete disregard for his personal safety and displaying rare courage, moved forward and led the charge and captured the objective after a fierce hand to hand fight. As soon as the objective was captured, the enemy launched two fierce counter-attacks from different directions. Lieutenant Colonel Pathak moved from one locality to another despite heavy shelling and small arms fire and encouraged his men to hold their ground and beat back the enemy attack inflicting heavy casualties.

In this action. Lieutenant Colonel Harish Chandra Pathak displayed conspicuous gallantry, exemplary leadership and devotion to duty in the best traditions of the Army.

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