



A Talent for War- The Military Biography of Lt Gen Sagat Singh

Randhir Singh

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Lt Gen Sagat Singh is unarguably the only military genius post independence India has produced. He commenced his military career through humble beginnings in the Bikaner State Forces with only a smattering knowledge of English. At the outbreak of World War 2 he was commissioned as an officer and served in the Middle East with his Battalion and on staff. By the time the War was over he was the only officer to have done two staff courses, including the prestigious course at Quetta. On being absorbed into the Indian Army after Independence, he was transferred to 3rd Gorkha Rifles, where he commanded two battalions. He was given command of the Para Brigade on promotion and led it in the Goa Operations with aplomb. He was primarily responsible for liberating this Portuguese Colony. Sagat's drive and energy stood out. On promotion as Major General, he commanded 17 Mountain Division in Sikkim, where in 1967, in a bloody skirmish which lasted several days, he gave the Chinese a bloody nose, proving that the Indian Army was no pushover. That year he was transferred to Shillong and tasked to curb the Mizo Insurgency. In two years he succeeded in doing so effectively. In 1970, he was promoted to Lt Gen and given command of 4 Corps. It seemed his whole life was geared to leading a Corps into battle. In 1971, in a major logistic achievement he moved and staged his Corps at Agartala. When operations commenced to liberate Bangladesh, his Corps relentlessly attacked and defeated Pakistan forces, crossed river lines and terrain considered impassable. His innovative use of helicopters has never been repeated. His is the only example in the Indian Army of a successful corps level campaign, which can stand out historically. His knowledge of the operational art was perhaps without parallel. He retired in Dec 1974 and settled down in Jaipur, where till his death in 2001, he tried to ameliorate the lives of ex-servicemen and his people. His achievements were recognised by the Government of Bangladesh, when the President, publicly and formally honoured his son and daughter-in-law in Mar 2013.

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