



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



Parakram Gatha

IMMORTAL STORIES OF COURAGE AND SACRIFICE

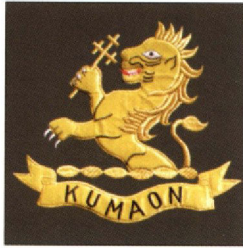
Param Vir Chakra Awardee of India
MAJOR SOMNATH SHARMA



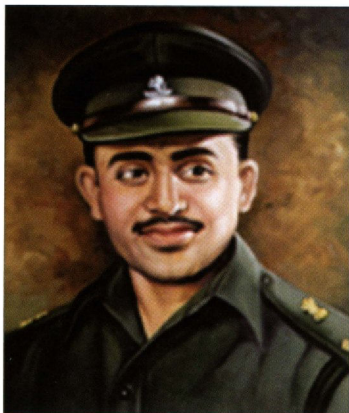


Major Somnath Sharma

Param Vir Chakra (Posthumous), Kumaon Regiment



Kumaon Regiment




January 31, 1923 - November 3, 1948

Major Somnath Sharma (IC-521), son of Major General A N Sharma, was born on January 31, 1923, at Dadh, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. He was commissioned in the Kumaon Regiment on February 22, 1942. During the Second World War he had fought in the Arakan Operations. He was the first Indian to be honoured with Param Vir Chakra. His younger brother General V N Sharma served as Chief of the Army Staff, Indian Army, during 1988-1990.

Pakistan launched a tribal invasion of Jammu and Kashmir on October 22, 1947. The intention was to grab the Kashmir Valley by force. As the State became a part of the Indian Union on October 26, her protection became the responsibility of India. To save the State from this tribal invasion, India despatched troops to Srinagar. The first batch of Indian troops reached just in time on 27th morning to stop the invaders on the outskirts of Srinagar.

The D Company of 4 Kumaon, led by Major Somnath Sharma, was airlifted to Srinagar on October 31. When his Company was asked to move to Srinagar, Major Sharma's arm was in plaster. He had been advised rest. But he insisted on being with his Company at this crucial hour and was allowed to go.

Meanwhile, the main thrust of the tribal invasion of Srinagar had been blunted by 1 Sikh at Patan. The enemy now resorted to guerilla tactics to sneak into the Valley. But the induction of more troops into Srinagar enabled the Indians to take care of the surrounding areas better. On November 3, a strong fighting patrol comprising



3 companies was despatched to reconnoitre the Badgam area to look for raiders approaching Srinagar from the northern direction. By 0930 hours the troops had established a firm base at Badgam. As no enemy was seen during patrolling, two companies moved back to Srinagar by 1400 hours. D Company led by Major Sharma which had taken up position south of Badgam was, however, asked to stay on in the area till 1500 hours.

At 1435 hours D Company was subjected to firing from some houses of Badgam village. The Company did not return the fire for fear of killing innocent people of the village. While Major Sharma was discussing this threat with the Brigade Commander, suddenly a large force of the enemy, about 700 strong, appeared from a depression to the west of his position. It attacked the Company with small arms, mortars and heavy automatics. The accurate and devastating fire of the enemy inflicted heavy casualties on the Indians. Major Sharma understood the gravity of the situation and the imminent threat to both Srinagar town and the airfield. He urged his men to fight doggedly and laid out panels to guide own aircraft to their targets in the face of enemy fire.

The company held on for six hours against heavy odds. When heavy casualties adversely affected the firing power of the company, Major Sharma, with his right hand in plaster, took upon himself the task of filling the magazines and issuing them to men, operating light machine guns. While he was busy fighting the enemy a mortar shell exploded on the ammunition near him. That ended the promising career of young Major Sharma who had not yet completed twenty five years of his life. In his last message to the Brigade Headquarters he said "I shall not withdraw an inch but will fight to the last man and the last round". In the battle of Badgam Major Sharma, one JCO and 20 other ranks of the D Coy



were killed. But their sacrifices did not go in vain. Major Sharma and his men stemmed the tide of enemy advance on Srinagar and the airfield for some very crucial hours.



Major General AN Sharma,
Father of Major Somnath
Sharma, receiving PVC
from the President
Dr Rajendra Prasad

Major Somnath Sharma set an example of fine leadership and great courage. He was awarded Param Vir Chakra, posthumously.