

Indian Artillery in World War I

Major General Rajendra Prakash, VSM (Retd)@

“ They sends us along where the roads are,
but mostly we goes where they ain ‘t:
We’d climb up the side of a sign-post,
an’ trust to the stick o’ the paint:
We’ve chivied the Naga an’ Looshai;
we’ve given the Afreedemen fits,
For we fancies ourselves at two thousand,
we guns that are built ur two bits -- ”
(From “Screw Guns” by Rudyard Kipling, 1890)

Part 1 - Background

Introduction

The artillery of the British-Indian Army between 1858 and end of World War 1 (and beyond till 1935), consisted only of the Indian Mountain Artillery and latter’s history during this war can be taken to constitute the history of the Indian Artillery during that titanic struggle. Between 1880s and 1970s, the mountain guns in service evolved in design from ‘2.5 inch rifled muzzle loading (RML) gun’ (Kipling’s ‘Screw Gun’) to ‘3.7 inch howitzer’, but with the gun barrel always in “two bits’, so as to form a load, viable for a large and sturdy Mountain Artillery mule to carry in rough terrain. On coming into action, the two portions of the gun-barrel were screwed together by a threaded collar and a ‘junction nut’, and hence the mountain gun was known as the “Screw Gun”, be it a ‘2.5 inch RML’ (1879-1916), a ‘10 pounder’ (1901-18), a ‘2.75 inch breach loading gun’ (1914-19) or finally a ‘3.7 inch howitzer’ (1915-1970s).

Genesis of Mountain Artillery

Since mobility on the battlefield is essential for success in land combat, moving guns over country impassable for wheels must have been a problem ever since guns were invented. In India, in the 3rd Battle of Panipat (1761), Ahmed Shah Abdali’s Afghan army used its mobile light artillery to good effect - zamburaks, jazails, gajals and shutarnals carried atop elephants, camels or horse-back figure prominently in battle accounts. Then, there are records of ‘coolie’ transportation of guns as far back as 1772, during East India Company’s Bhutan Expedition, while Gurkha battalions in Assam (precursors of today’s Assam Rifles) kept using this mode till early 20th Century. This apart, use of elephants, bullocks, ponies and camels, has been made at many times and in many climes. But the 19th Century solution to this problem really came from Spain, famous for their mules. The efficiency and endurance of the sturdy mule, combined with an intelligent and often endearing nature provided the mountain artillery with a faithful servant for well over a century. It is sure-footed and no other animal can compare with it for carrying a heavy load in rough and precipitous terrain. It is not too fussy about its rations provided it gets good water, and it needs minimal care.

The first mountain battery as such came into being in the British Army in 1813, during Napoleonic Wars, when Duke of Wellington’s army reached Pyrenees in Spain and artillery support was badly needed. Two half-brigades (later termed a battery) of three 3-pounders each, carried on pack-saddled mules did good service there for the duration of that war. However, Capt JB Beckhouse of Bengal Horse Artillery can be considered to be the ‘Father’ of the Indian Mountain Artillery, after he formed a Native Mountain Train of six 3-pounder guns for service in Afghanistan in 1840, with guns carried on pack-mules and by mule-draft.

A Tradition of Excellence

Throughout their history, the reputation of the Mountain Batteries of the British-Indian Army was enhanced by the fact that they were exclusively officered by the very best the British Royal Artillery (RA) had to offer. Such talented men competed to join because a tour in an Indian Mountain Battery, unlike other branches of artillery, virtually guaranteed seeing active service. Viceroy’s Commissioned Officers (VCOs) (formerly known as Native Officers and today as JCOs) and other ranks were all Indian and the best available, and also of large build and stature, as the relatively small number of batteries and their role as the only Indian artillery meant that there was always a surplus of volunteers, and this in turn meant that only the highest quality of recruit was accepted.

The mountain gunners’ boast was that they could go anywhere, where a man and a mule could put a foot. It was a remarkable sight to see a good mountain battery coming into ‘crash’ action. What would appear to the uninitiated eye to be a disorderly assembly of mules and soldiers would suddenly stream into position, there would be a brief pause with much exertion and the heaving of lumps of metal and in a minute or two, the animals would be led off at a run leaving six or four sturdy guns with their detachments kneeling smartly round them. On the line of march, Mountain Gunners always out-marched the Infantry, keeping up a steady clip of up to four and a half miles per hour, mile after mile and day after day.

Indian Artillery, Pre-World War I

Artillery in India, employed in battle from 14th Century onwards (including the three battles of Panipat, in 1526, 1556 and 1761), seems to have no direct lineal link with the Artillery arm of post-1947 Indian Army, except perhaps some very tenuous connection through those old State Forces batteries, which remain on the order of battle (orbat) of the Indian Army today. Artillery support to the armies of East India Company (the forebears of modern Indian Army) was provided in early days, by guns landed from sailing war-ships and manned by naval ratings. However, by 1857, each of the three Presidency Armies had its own complement of well organised batteries, horse, field, siege, Indian and European, properly equipped and trained, the largest being the Bengal Artillery.

After the events of 1857, the British in India decided to disband and abolish the artillery arm of the Army in India, as the Indian gunners played a very prominent role in the so called 'Mutiny' and Indians were no more to be trusted with this potent weapon of war for next 77 years (1858-1935). However, an exception was made in case of six batteries of the old East India Company which were retained on the orbat, post-1858, manned by Indians and commanded by RA officers. These units were found from those portions of the Army in India which were considered not to have been 'infected' by the 'Mutiny'- two "Oohmdes" batteries of the Bombay Presidency Army and four batteries of the Punjab Irregular Frontier Force (PIFFER), latter being an adjunct of the Army in India but initially raised more or less as private armies, by enterprising military-cum- administrative officers who 'settled' Punjab and Hazara after the downfall of the Sikh Kingdom in 1849. These six (in order of raising, but using 1939 titles) were, two 'Bombay Foot Artillery batteries, viz, 5 (Bombay) Mountain Battery [raised in 1827, and thus the oldest and senior-most unit of the Indian Artillery today] and 6 (Jacob's) Mountain Battery [raised in 1843]; then four PIFFER batteries, ie, 2 (Derajat) Mountain Battery (FF) [raised in 1849 from the remnants of the Khalsa Army's horse artillery], 1 Royal (Kohat) Mountain Battery (FF) [raised in 1851, again from the soldiers of the disbanded Sikh Army], 4 (Hazara) Mountain Battery (FF) [also raised in 1851] and 3 (Peshawar) Mountain Battery (FF) [raised in 1853]. Bombay, Derajat and Hazara Batteries remain in the Indian Army today, while the other three are in the Pakistan Army.

Initially formed in varying and changing configurations as light and field artillery, by 1876, all these batteries had been organised on 'mountain' basis and ceased to draw their guns (ie, pull the guns on wheels, in draft) and henceforth the guns were carried on sturdy and strong mules [the mule artillery (MA)] and at times even by elephants or porters (coolies).

By 1886, when 7 (Bengal) and 8 (Lahore) Mountain Batteries were raised, the original six had seen much active service during 30 years since the 'Mutiny', mainly on the NW Frontier and Afghanistan, but also in Burma and Abyssinia. All the eight mountain batteries were back on the NW Frontier by 1897, and remained there till the outbreak of World War I, except for a foray by 8 (Lahore) Mountain Battery to Somaliland in 1901-04. However, before the outbreak of World War I, four more batteries had been added to the orbat, ie, 9 (Murree) in 1898, 10 (Abbottabad) in 1900, 11 (Poonch) and 12 (Dehradun) Mountain Batteries in 1907, the former two seeing active service in East Africa, Aden and Tibet, before 1914.

In 1914, apart from the six batteries inherited from the East India Company and six raised after 1858, there were two other mountain artillery elements on the Indian scene; firstly, eight or nine British mountain batteries of the RA, with British Gunners from the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA), but some with Indian mule-leaders (drivers MA). The other element was the Indian State Forces units, some of those with impressive service record, which were not a part of the Indian Mountain Artillery, but participated in many Imperial wars, over the years. These State Forces units were No 1 and No 2, J&K Mountain Batteries (raised in 1840s, which saw much service on the Frontier and in the two World Wars), Gwalior Mountain Battery (raised in 1865) and Bikaner Bijay Battery (initially raised in 1906 as camel pack artillery).

Further narrative confines itself to the Indian Mountain Artillery proper during World War 1, and also excludes operations on the NW Frontier of India during 1914-18. As the British-Indian Army reorganised itself many times between 1858 and 1947, battery designations/titles used are of 1939, for ease of comprehension.

Part 2 - Indian (Mountain) Artillery in World War I

Indian Army in World War I

Before the commencement of hostilities in 1914, Indian Army was operationally organised mainly in two main Army Commands - the Northern Command stretched from NW Frontier to Bengal, with five divisions and three 'loose' cavalry brigades, while Southern Army Command was responsible from Baluchistan to South India, with four divisions, some 'loose' brigades, as also overseas responsibilities for Burma and Aden. With a total Army strength of 240,000, there were 39 cavalry regiments, 138 infantry battalions, twelve batteries of mountain artillery, three Sapper regiments and administrative troops. 1.3 million Indians volunteered to serve during this war and Indian Army remained the largest volunteer army in the world. The contribution of India to the Allied war effort can be judged from these figures - 1 million Indian troops served overseas, 700,000 in Mesopotamia alone, a total of 74,187 dead (about 62,000 overseas), 67,000 wounded and 13 Victoria Crosses won (8 Indians and 5 by their British officers).

As a part of its Imperial service commitment during World War 1, Indian Army sent out six Indian Expeditionary Forces (designated from 'A' to 'G'). Force 'A' (four divisions, formed into two corps) fought on the Western Front on continental Europe from September, 1914 till infantry divisions were withdrawn to more familiar clime of Egypt in October, 1915 and cavalry divisions in March, 1918, having sustained about 9000 casualties against a strength of 130,000. Forces 'B' and 'C' (about two divisions in strength) fought in German East Africa from November, 1914 till November, 1918, with varying fortunes. Force 'D' the largest expeditionary force with up to eight Indian infantry and one cavalry division fought in Mesopotamia from November, 1914 till the end of the War, with a tally of over 89,000 casualties (including over 37,000 dead) and about 13,500 missing, apart from extreme privations like starvation. Force 'E' operated in Palestine, initially with two cavalry divisions transferred from France in March, 1918, plus an Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade of State forces lancers and was later boosted up with about five divisions

worth of Indian troops. About two divisions (Plus) forming Force 'F' operated in Egypt from 1914 to 1916 to defend the Suez Canal, till these were diverted to other fronts by 1916. Lastly, Force 'G' comprising an infantry brigade only, reinforced Gallipoli front and fought there from April, 1915 till withdrawal eight months later, suffering about 1350 dead and 3,400 wounded. This apart, Indian Army was kept busy on the NW Frontier fighting the tribals, and on Baluchistan and Persian frontier guarding against the infiltration and machinations of German agents. A small foray was made by 19th Punjabi's into Russian Transcaspia in 1918 to help in anti-Bolshevik activities there.

Indian Mountain Artillery

At the outbreak of World War I in July, 1914, six of the mountain batteries out of twelve were grouped under 1st, 5th and 7th Indian Mountain Artillery Brigades (two batteries each), a battery each in Burma and Hong Kong and four in NWFP. During 1914-18, seventeen new mountain batteries were raised and added to the orbit of the Indian Army (a total of 29 batteries) all officered by British RA officers as before. Of these, ten were reduced or amalgamated within a few years of conclusion of the war.

1 Royal (Kohat) (FF) and 6 (Jacobs) Mountain Batteries were the only Indian Artillery which fought in the European Theatre (Gallipoli in Turkey), being in support of Australian and New Zealand Corps (ANZAC), while the rest of the Indian Artillery operated in the other theatres of war, ie, East Africa, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Persia, apart from the their old beat of NW Frontier. Indian Mountain Artillery was then the only artillery which the Indian Army had possessed for 56 years (1858 - 1914), the other artillery in India during this period being the RA (including RGA, who manned the British mountain batteries also, as distinct from Indian mountain batteries).

Egypt and Gallipoli

After the outbreak of the War on 28 July, 1914, 7th Indian Mountain Artillery (IMA) Brigade comprising 1 Royal (Kohat) Mountain Battery (FF) and 6 (Jacob's) Mountain Battery were the first of the IMA to move overseas, sailing from Karachi in September, 1914. Next six months were spent in Suez, deployed in defence of the Canal against the Turks, who had allied themselves with Germany and declared war against the Allies, in November.

Early in 1915, with a stalemate on the Western Front in Europe, a plan was conceived by the Allies (basically a brainchild of Winston Churchill, then the First Lord of Admiralty) to capture Constantinople, the capital of Turkish Empire as a diversion to relieve German pressure on Russian allies in Caucasus, as also to discourage any German attempt to secure an outlet via Turkey, towards the Persian Gulf and India. After an unsuccessful naval attack in March to force a passage, it was decided to land an expeditionary force on the Gallipoli peninsula on the European side of the Dardanelles Straits, capture the capital city and allow the fleet to get through to Bosphorus and then to the Black Sea. The Gallipoli Campaign took place between 25 April 1915 and 9 January 1916. After the naval operation, an amphibious landing was undertaken on the Gallipoli peninsula, but after eight months of fierce and staunch resistance by the Turks, the land campaign also failed with many casualties on both sides, and the Allied invasion force was withdrawn to Egypt.

7 IMA Brigade joined the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) under Lieutenant General W Birdwood (later Field Marshal and C-in-C, India, 1925) on the Aegean Island of Mudros in April, 1915 and then on to assault on the Anzac Beach in support of ANZAC. Kohat and Jacob's Batteries fought alongside the ANZAC throughout this harrowing campaign, providing invaluable artillery support to them right from Anzac Beach landings on 25 April to the withdrawal from there on 18/19 December, 1915, Jacob's Battery being the last artillery unit to leave the beach-head. (As customary for the British military historians, this 'evacuation' also has been described as a "masterpiece of organisation"!). They were heavily engaged under continuous fire, day in and day out for eight months, but continued to provide dependable artillery support to the Australians and the New Zealanders as good Gunners should.

In a brief narrative, it is not possible to relate the story of each action of the Indian Mountain Gunners on Anzac beach and beyond, during eight months of fierce fighting, but sustained gallantry, fortitude and professionalism of the men and their RA officers is evident from the farewell message sent by the GOC, ANZAC to their Brigade Commander, in January, 1916 - "I want to thank you, both your batteries, and all your officers and men for the really magnificent work they have done for us during the months when, I am glad to say, we were all together at ANZAC, what a high regard the Australian troops have for your two batteries, and I am delighted this is the case, for they have thoroughly deserved their high reputation ". Illustrative of the combat performance of the Indian Mountain Gunners (Sikhs and Punjabi Mussalmans) in the Gallipoli Campaign (Kohat and Jacob's, both batteries now serving in Pakistan Army) are these figures - killed, 11 + 12 = 23 (including 2 officers), wounded, 134 + 144 = 278 (including 5 officers), mules MA killed, 35 + 27 = 62, mules MA wounded, 119 + 93 = 212, ammunition expended, 12,248 + 9135 = 21,383 rounds and over 60 gallantry and battle-field awards. Both the batteries, bear eight battle honours each for Gallipoli Campaign (today, Indian Artillery is given 'theatre honours', battle honours being reserved for the Infantry and the Armoured Corps only).

German East Africa

German East Africa was a colony of Imperial Germany, which came into existence in 1880s and included, what were Tanganyika, Rwanda and Burundi. After World War 1, Britain and Belgium apportioned the territory between themselves, till it came under the League of Nations mandate in 1922 and eventually formed the mainland portion of Tanzania in 1960s.

The story of German East Africa in World War 1 is essentially the history of the colony's military commander, Colonel (later General) Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, a vibrant and great military leader and brilliant trainer of troops. Von Lettow-Vorbeck's plan for the war was quite simple; knowing that East Africa would only be a side-show, he determined to tie down as many British troops as he could, and to keep them away from the Western Front, and in this way to contribute to Germany's eventual victory. Starting with about 260 Germans and 2,500 well trained and motivated Askaris (indigenous African soldiers) he harried the forces of the British Empire during all the four years of war, tying down with his band of 3,500 Europeans and 12,000 Askaris and porters, a British / Imperial army 40,000 strong, which

was at times commanded by the former Boer commanders, Lieutenant Generals Jan Smuts (later Field Marshal and Prime Minister of South Africa) and Van Deventer. One of his greatest victories was at the Battle of Tanga (3-5 November 1914), where von Lettow-Vorbeck beat a British force more than eight times the size of his own. His guerrilla campaign compelled Britain to commit significant resources to a minor colonial theatre throughout the war and inflicted upwards of 10,000 casualties. Eventually weight of numbers, especially after forces coming from the Belgian Congo had attacked from the West (battle of Tabora) and dwindling supplies forced von Lettow-Vorbeck to abandon the colony. He withdrew into Portuguese Mozambique, then into British Northern Rhodesia where he agreed to a ceasefire three days after the end of the war, only on receiving news of the armistice between the warring nations. His was the only German force during the War to have invaded a British territory and the only one, not to have been defeated in open combat.

On the British side, the combat in East Africa was basically a war of endurance in a vast terrain of great heat, humidity, unhealthy malarial climate, alternating seasons of heavy rains and drought, with mosquitoes, ticks, jiggers making life perpetually miserable for humans, and tse tse fly making it deadly for horses and artillery mules. As an example, 2 (Derajat) Mountain Battery (FF) lost 948 artillery mules to disease during two years and only 11 in action, while 4 (Hazara) Mountain Battery (FF) lost 75 per cent of its animals in one month. For humans, malaria and shortage of rations were persistent themes. With an agile, elusive and hard-hitting enemy, inured to hardships and deprivations of this country, which varied from open parkland' bush to dense forest or water-less desert, it was a war of movement and attrition, albeit constrained by a lack of roads.

Indian Mountain Artillery was in support of the two Indian Expeditionary Forces inducted in the theatre, and tasked to "secure the safety of British East Africa by occupying Tanga and Kilimanjaro". These units were 7 (Bengal) Mountain Battery from September, 1914 till January, 1918, 8 (Lahore) Mountain Battery from October, 1914 till end of 1917, 2 (Derajat) Mountain Battery (FF) from December, 1916 till November, 1918 and 4 (Hazara) Mountain Battery (FF) from April, 1917 till the war ended. No 1 J&K Mountain Battery also served very meritoriously in this theatre from December, 1916 to February, 1918. These batteries were continuously engaged in small and big actions during these long years, providing constant and reliable artillery support to infantry, resorting to many expedients and devices to keep doing so. The intensity of operations and degree of hardship undergone is illustrated by the case of great-hearted Lahore Battery, which had to be withdrawn to India to refit and recoup after it had worn itself out, with two years of unending toil; starvation and disease, with men weak, anaemic, and unfit.

Ten honour titles awarded to the Batteries, casualties incurred and numerous individual battle awards indicate the fine contribution of the Indian Mountain Artillery to the success of this arduous and long campaign in German East Africa during World War I.

Mesopotamia and Persia

In the vast arena of strife in World War I, the extensive territories of the weak and crumbling Ottoman Empire and its outliers attracted much geo-political interest from Britain and its European allies. As the War drew towards its close, the Czarist Russia also began to crack-up and its Southern periphery became an extension of Middle East in turmoil. During this period, various local, national and international factors and causes created or attracted armed intervention by Britain and allies in the various portions of (then) Turkish territories all over, some of such interventions carrying over or even commencing after the end of the World War 1 in November, 1918; such as, operations in Kurdistan, Iraq (known as Mesopotamia till 1922) and NW Frontier of India, after the Armistice in November, 1918 are not touched upon here.

Armed intervention by Allies in Mesopotamia ostensibly was to protect their vital oil fields opened there under British auspices in 1901, with a pipeline leading to Abadan in Shatt-al-Arab. The war in Mesopotamia lasted for four years from November, 1914 to November, 1918, till after the Armistice. After some initial successes, the campaign suffered setbacks in November, 1915 at Ctesiphon and forces withdrew to Kut-al-Amara, where Lieutenant General Townshend was besieged by Turks and eventually surrendered to them in April, 1916 with about 13,000 troops, mostly Indian (50 per cent of captured Indians died in Turkish captivity). By early March, 1917 a British-Indian Army force of a cavalry division and seven infantry divisions went on the offensive, capturing Baghdad by March, 1918 and took the surrender of Turkish forces by October.

This four year war, with all its campaigns and battles was fought mostly by about 700,000 Indian troops, with a total of over 89,000 casualties (dead and wounded).

3 (Peshawar) and 10 (Abbottabad) Mountain batteries were the first Indian Gunners to join the fray in Mesopotamia and had done their bit in the battles for Basra, Shaiba and Tigris till 1916, when they returned to India and thereafter were in action on the NW Frontier. 1 (Kohat) and 6 (Jacob's) Mountain Batteries refitted and recouped in Egypt after the withdrawal from Gallipoli and joined the fray in Mesopotamia, continuing there till the Armistice in November, 1918, Jacob's having a record of continuous service overseas for five and a half years. 5 (Bombay), 10 (Abbottabad), 11 (Dehradun), newly raised 14 (Rajputana), 15 (Jhelum) and 16 (Zhob) Mountain Batteries entered this theatre in 1918 and were in action in various battles in Mesopotamia.

Apart from operations in Mesopotamia, an offshoot of the campaign in Middle East was invasion of Persia, a series of engagements in northern Persian Azerbaijan and Western Persia between the British and the Russian Empires against the Ottomans, beginning in December 1914 and ending with the Armistice of Mudros on 30, October, 1918. The Russian operations were halted by the Russian Revolution on February 23, 1917 when the Russian Caucasus Army was replaced with Armenian units and an Allied force named Dunsterforce. 1 (Kohat), 6 (Jacob's), 11 (Dehradun), 15 (Jhelum) and 16 (Zhob) Mountain Batteries took part in prolonged but desultory operations in Persia, from time to time.

These nine batteries of Indian Mountain Artillery garnered 19 battle honours and titles for their gallant and devoted services during the war years in Mesopotamia and Persia.

Sinai and Palestine

Fighting in this campaign began in January, 1915 when German-led Ottoman forces invaded Sinai Peninsula, a part of British Protectorate of Egypt, with the aim of capturing the Suez Canal. By October, 1917 the stalemate in Sinai was broken by General Allenby's capture of Beersheba and thereafter he commenced his offensive cavalry operations in depth, culminating in capture of Aleppo and Damascus, and Armistice on 30 October, 1918. This campaign had the momentous outcome of ending the Ottoman Empire, mandates for Britain and France in the Middle East and creation of new nations then and subsequently - Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon.

Two Indian cavalry divisions were transferred from France in 1918, for service in Palestine, to form Indian Expeditionary Force 'E'. They were joined by the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade, formed by three regiments of lancers from the princely states of Mysore, Hyderabad, and Jodhpur followed by two infantry divisions from Mesopotamia. At the same time, 36 of Indian army battalions were sent to reinforce four British infantry divisions already in Palestine.

The Indian Artillery which supported General Allenby's mobile operations in Palestine were the 9 (Murree), 12 (Poonch) and 19 (Maymyo) Mountain Batteries, and they earned nine battle honours/titles for their services in Palestine, including "Megiddo" and "Nablus".

Conclusion

This narrative briefly highlights the important contributions of the Indian Mountain Artillery (which virtually constituted 'Indian Artillery' at that point of time) towards the war effort of the British Empire during World War 1. In earlier times, territories won or lost in a war constituted some sort of a measure of military success or defeat, but this is no more so in the more complex modern world, where geopolitics is a more potent determinant of territorial configurations, than military prowess. Perhaps in long retrospect, the figures of war dead and wounded, as also military honours and awards won by the fighting soldier could be some sort of an indicator of the professional competence, fighting spirit and battle prowess of an army.

The Indian Army fought in all the theatres of war in World War 1; ie, France and Gallipoli in Europe, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia and Palestine in the Middle East and in East Africa. Well over a million (about 1,300,000) Indians served overseas, 700,000 of them in Mesopotamia alone, and in all, the Indian Army suffered about 142,000 casualties (including over 74,000 dead, about 62,000 of them overseas) during this war. As to Indian Artillery, all the twelve old batteries existing in 1914, continuously fought in this long war, in all theatres of operations (except the Western Front in France, where no Indian Artillery seems to have gone with the Expeditionary Force 'A'). In addition, three of the mountain batteries raised after commencement of war went into action overseas, the other war-time raisings being deployed on the NW Frontier or held in India as reserves and reinforcements. Some of the fifteen mountain batteries which fought overseas, saw action in more than two theatres of operations. Records of dead and wounded suffered by the mountain batteries during the war are not readily available, but it would be fair to assume that these formed a slice of foregoing figures for the Indian Army, proportionate to the strength of the Gunners taking part in these operations. Full records of individual gallantry awards to Gunners are also not readily available (which in any case were very selective for the "natives" in the British Empire of those days), but it is on record that these fifteen small units of Indian Mountain Artillery won 32 battle and theatre honours and titles fighting overseas, while five were given for operations in NW Frontier and Baluchistan during 1914-18, attesting to the fighting qualities, gallantry and battle efficiency of this small arm of the large Indian Army, then.

Today, one can well wonder as to what was the motivation for these million plus Indians to undergo the danger, death, injury and prolonged privations of this war - loyalty to an impersonal King Emperor, George the Fifth, in far distant England and to an alien Union Jack, or an instinctive reaction to a call to arms in a traditionally martial culture, imbued with a sense of honour, "izzat-o-iqbal" and a sense of duty towards the Authority and towards (then subjugated) Nation, or even to earn a living and find an occupation? There is no doubt that after the trauma of 1857, the next 57 years leading to 1914 saw an ethos ruling the officer-man relationship in the British-Indian Army, different from the one which had prevailed in East India Company's armies by mid-19th Century. The British officer closely identified himself with his men, tried his best to understand and to an extent share their culture and mores and thus engendered mutual feelings of respect, camaraderie and loyalty. This relationship, cultivated over long years and the inherent notions of honour and "izzat" prevailing in India of 100 years ago may well have been the prime motivators for the massive mobilisation of war effort in India of 1914-18, with some leavening perhaps of other prevailing factors. In aftermath of the Great War, the province of Punjab, which had provided the major portion of the fighting strength for this War, certainly gained much from the British administration in India, in material terms.

In recognition of the services of the Indian Mountain Artillery in the Great War, the title "Royal" was conferred on 1 (Kohat) Mountain Battery (Frontier Force) by the King-Emperor on

31 January, 1922 and they became entitled to proudly wear the "Royal Rassi" on the right shoulder, when in uniform. (The whole of the "Regiment of Indian Artillery" became" Royal Indian

Artillery" in October, 1945, in recognition of its sterling services in World War II).

References

The author has extensively referred to invaluable, but somewhat discursive and meandering "The History of Indian Mountain Artillery"; by Brig-Gen CAL Graham (Gale & Polden, Aldershot, 1957) as also the more 'snappy' "India's Army" by Maj Donovan Jackson (Sampson Low & Marston, London, 1940), along with very sketchy (at least for years prior to 1918) "History of the Regiment of Artillery, Indian Army" (Palit & Dutt, Dehradun, 1971).' Wikipedia on the Internet has been a useful and interesting source of arcane information but contains frequent internal contradictions in its varied manifestations. The author is grateful for the information culled from all these sources, while writing this

article.

@Major General Rajendra Prakash, VSM (Retd) was commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery in December 1950. He commanded 14 Infantry Division (1979-82) and retired in August 1983 from UP Area.

Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CXLIV, No. 595, January-March 2014.