

## Bash On Regardless\*

Lieutenant General Milan Lalitkumar Naidu,  
PVSM, AVSM, YSM (Retd)\*\*

The book has been written by Lieutenant General WAG Pinto who commanded the famous 54 Infantry Division during the 1971 War with Pakistan. He coined the motto "Bash on Regardless", when he assumed command of the Division. The Operations by the Division were one of the most successful actions in the Western Theatre. The formation made substantial gains in the strategically important Shakargarh Sector and remained there, to defend the gains at the time of cease fire. The Battle of Basantar fought on 15/16 December 1971 was the crowning glory of 1 Corps operations, wherein Pak's Theatre reserves stood completely mauled and the road for further operations into the heartland lay open.

The book has been dedicated to the period from 21 April 1971 to 10 April 1974 which was the period of General Pinto's command of the Division. In his book, though, he covers the period from early childhood to his last day in uniform; the central theme, however, remains the conduct of 1971 war.

The book has been written in a simple style and fluid language. He commences his story from 01 July 1924 at Pune, where he was born. The description of his childhood and subsequent experiences as a young officer in the British Indian Army, vividly bring out the culture and ethos that was prevalent at that point of time.

General Pinto has described the tribulations of transfer to the Brigade of Guards and his tenures in the East, sojourn in Wellington at the Defence Services Staff College, subsequent tenures as an Instructor and as a Staff Officer, in a most interesting manner.

---

\* **Bash On Regardless.** Published by Lieutenant General WAG Pinto, PVSM (Retd), (Printed by : Repro India Ltd., Plot No.50/2, T.T.C. MIDC Industrial Area, Mahape, Navi Mumbai, 2012), 145p, Rs 300, ISBN N.A.

\*\***Lieutenant General Milan Lalitkumar Naidu, PVSM, AVSM, YSM** was commissioned into the Rajput Regiment in December 1967 and retired as Vice Chief of Army Staff on 31 December 2008. Presently, he is Member Armed Forces Tribunal (Delhi Bench) and an elected member of USI Council.

Chapter 5 is devoted to Command of his Battalion i.e. 4 GUARDS (1 RAJPUT). This chapter illustrates the character of this great General.

The Chapter on 1971 war brings out the military leader in General Pinto and the manner in which he succeeded against all odds. It was not just success that has been described by him but he has also described the frustrations that he faced during the conduct of battle in a forthright manner. He illustrates certain personalities tongue-in-cheek, like 'Lakeer ke Fakeer' who were very difficult to convince, and would not accept any unconventional thinking. Here the author could have perhaps dealt with the overall concept of operations and its execution at the Corps level in some detail.

Chapter 9 has a description of his higher command assignments as Director of Military Training, GOC 33 Corps, Colonel of the RAJPUT Regiment, Commandant National Defence College and finally as the Army Commander. His observations on leadership style in higher command are very pertinent and relevant. It is essential that one understands and differentiates between leadership traits which should get prominence at higher command level vis-à-vis, as a regimental officer. The General understood the difference and modified his leadership style to suit the task at hand.

The last chapter is titled 'Sunset and Twilight' and it contains several valuable nuggets of wisdom. Here, he writes "*Do your work honestly, sincerely, without worrying too much of the consequences or effect on your career, but at the same time, recognize the problems of your superiors as well as subordinates, and you will never go wrong. Then even if you do make an honest mistake, face up to it, usually it will come out all right in the end.*" He goes on to make certain down to earth observations which include fears and apprehension as a young man and subsequently as a senior officer in the Indian Army.

The book is fun to read, with candid description of fun and frolic that takes places in Regimental life. He has not minced words and comes out as a great character whose life as a Soldier, as an Officer and as a General needs to be studied in great detail so that we may learn from his experiences. The book is highly readable and is strongly recommended for study by all professional soldiers.