

Indian Wars - As Seen Through Soldiers' Eyes

(Based on their personal experiences)

From this Issue onwards, we are carrying various accounts of Indian Wars as seen through Soldiers' Eyes based on their personal experiences in battle or a conflict situation. These accounts capture the essence of a soldier's feelings: the zeal to achieve the mission, his duty to the country, *izzat* of his regiment, camaraderie, motivation, travails of leadership, feelings towards the family, fear of the unknown, assessment of the enemy and a myriad of other emotions.

Many historians, academics, strategists, defence analysts and scholars have written about wars / battles / campaigns and have inferred about what was done and what ought to have been done, without ever experiencing the heat or cold, dust and din of a battle. To that extent, such accounts remain academic and theoretical. In a battle, it is important to visualise the situation and the environment to be able to appreciate the decision dilemmas of the commanders and the actions of the combatants.

With the above in view, we have invited first hand experiences of soldiers from Indian wars, conflict situations and deployments to be able to recreate and share with our readers – as to what a soldier, from the lowest to the highest level, goes through in battle. These are stories of humans and their emotions in 'do or die' situations without an attempt to justify any actions or denigrate anyone. Through these accounts, the soldiers share their thoughts and emotions while fighting India's wars. The words of Captain Shekhar Dutt, SM (later joined IAS and became India's Defence Secretary, and is presently Governor of Chattisgarh) whose experience of 1971 war is being carried in this issue capture quite succinctly the essence of a soldier's feelings. I quote :-

".....There was a sense of adventure, an enthusiasm for combat and a great sense of team spirit in the youngster.....History was being made but this was the last thing in our minds when actual tasks and combat were an obsession.....I have purposely denied myself the benefit of hindsight and experience so as to retain the flavour of youthful participation...."

Editor