



SECTION VIII

Motivation



Lieutenant Colonel Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore, Param Vir Chakra

Team Poona Horse

Family Background and Childhood

The family chronicles say that Colonel Ardeshir (Adi) B Tarapore's ancestor, Ratanjiba, eight generations removed, was one of the military leaders under Shivaji. In appreciation of Ratanjiba's services, loyalty and bravery, Shivaji had given him the *mansab* of 100 villages. The premier village in this *mansab* was called Tarapur and it is since then that the family name of Tarapore came into use. Adi's grandfather, Pheroazshaw, migrated to the Deccan, where he obtained a junior post in the Customs Department of the erstwhile Hyderabad state. Adi's father, Buzorji also joined the Customs Department and rose to be the Mohatim or Superintendent of the Department; he was also an erudite scholar of Persian and Urdu and was the author of numerous Urdu books.

Adi was born at Bombay on 18 August 1923. He was the second of three children. He had a sister who was elder to him and a younger brother. An

Lieutenant Colonel Shivraj Singh writes: It is a sobering reflection that Adi Tarapore, who had nearly been rejected because of the narrow-minded prejudice of his first squadron commander, rose to be the Commandant and brought such glory to the Regiment. And had he been given a choice, he would not have asked for a better way to die.

incident from his childhood bears recounting as it shows the courage and presence of mind that the boy possessed, even at that early age. Yadgar, his sister, who was then 10 years old, and Adi aged 6, were playing in the backyard of the house when the family cow broke loose and charged at Yadgar. The frightened girl screamed for help. Seeing her predicament, young Adi picked up a stick and briskly stepping in between his sister and the charging cow, deflected the charge by smartly smiting the cow on its nose. Adi was enrolled as a boarder in Sardar Dastur Boys' School, Poona at the age of 11. Though not an exceptional student academically, he distinguished himself in athletics, gymnastics, boxing, swimming, tennis, and cricket. He did his matriculation from the school.

Early Army Career

After leaving school, Adi applied, and was selected for a commission in the Hyderabad State Army. He did his initial training at the Officers Training School (OTS), at Golconda in Hyderabad state. On completion of this training, he was sent to the OTS, Bangalore. On completion of his training at the OTS, Adi was commissioned on 1 January 01, 1942, in the 7th Hyderabad Infantry, as a Second Lieutenant. He did not like this posting much as his heart was set on joining the armoured regiment of the Hyderabad State Forces, which in those days was equipped with Scout Cars. Adi would probably have continued to languish in the infantry but for an incident that took place when his battalion was being inspected by Major General El-Edroos, the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of the State Forces. Adi's company was carrying out routine training at that time at the grenade throwing range. One of the sepoy—a fresh entrant—momentarily panicked and failed to lob the grenade correctly, resulting in the grenade falling at the throwing bay. Adi immediately jumped into the throwing bay and picking up the grenade, threw it away to safety. However, the grenade burst as it left his hand, and he was peppered with flying shrapnel in his chest. General El-Edroos, who had witnessed this incident, summoned Adi to his office after he had recovered from his injuries and personally congratulated him for his courage and presence of mind. Adi used this opportunity to request for a transfer to the armoured regiment of the State

Forces. General El-Edroos accepted his request and Adi was transferred to the 1st Hyderabad Imperial Service Lancers.

During World War II, the 1st Hyderabad Lancers saw service in the Middle-East. At that time, the Regiment was commanded by a British officer, with an indifferent family background and social status, whose manners and conduct left much to be desired, particularly when compared with the rest of the Hyderabad officers, who mostly comprised the aristocracy of Hyderabad state. The Commanding Officer (CO) was rude in his behaviour and often commented adversely on the fighting capabilities of the Indian soldier. On one occasion, he even insulted the Nizam, by using derogatory language. Adi, who was present, took strong exception to this and told his CO, 'You have insulted my country and my King—and I do not mean George VI.' This incident created quite a flurry—the Regiment was kept in isolation and all the ammunition withdrawn. The matter was finally sorted out after a personal visit by General El-Edroos to General Montgomery. After the merger of Hyderabad state with the Union of India, Adi was selected to serve in the Indian Army. His date of commission was revised to 1 January 1945 and he was posted to the Poona Horse.

Service with The Poona Horse

The Poona Horse had, very recently, played a leading role in the successfully concluded Police Action in Hyderabad and the talk at the mess bar was still of Kasim Rizvi, Razakars, Bezwada, and Naldurg. Sometime in late 1951, news was received that an officer ex-Hyderabad Lancers was being posted to the Regiment; he would be on probation for two years and would be given a permanent commission in the Army only if he was found fit for retention in service. This news evoked a mixed reaction. A number of officers present in the Regiment at that time had been commissioned from the ranks; they were inclined to be somewhat narrow minded and as far as they were concerned, officers of the Hyderabad State Forces were still the 'ex-enemy'. Others, particularly those commissioned from the Indian Military Academy (IMA), were unbiased in this regard and had an open mind in this issue.

Lieutenant Colonel Shivraj Singh, who was a subaltern in the 'A' Squadron when Adi joined it as Squadron 2IC, writes: One fine day, when the officers were all sipping their beer or nimbupani under the shady mango tree near the mess-hutment, a well-built young officer, of medium height, walked in along with the 2IC and was introduced as Captain Ardeshir B Tarapore, ex-Hyderabad Lancers. The officer was very neatly and correctly dressed in the olive green uniform. He appeared somewhat shy and reticent, but did not feel inferior or apologetic in anyway, and was very polite and correct in his manners and in his conduct. Captain Ardeshir Tarapore came to be known as 'Adi' to his friends. As we had not yet outgrown the habit of Anglicising Indian names, he was also called 'Teddy' Tarapore by some. Adi was posted initially to 'B' Squadron, which was commanded by Major Pratap Singh, who had been commissioned from the ranks. Because of his bias, Pratap did not take kindly to Adi, and Adi had a rough time under him. The first fitness report he received from Pratap was lukewarm. Major Balli Virk, who was commanding 'A' Squadron, felt that Adi had not been given a fair deal. He requested the commandant to give Adi another chance and to post him in 'A' Squadron, to which commandant agreed.

Adi took to 'A' Squadron like a fish takes to water. He soon established a close rapport with the proud and tradition-bound Rajputs. To him, the squadron was like his own 'community'. Being himself a firm believer in traditions, his behaviour with everyone was most appropriate and correct; a newly joined *sowar* was treated with sympathy as a young boy of the family and often addressed by Adi off parade as *baccha* meaning 'young lad'; in fact, this mode of address became a habit of Adi and in later years, he addressed even the elderly grey beards as *bacche*, which was a source of never failing amusement for the Regiment. The Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) were always addressed by their rank and name and no Other Rank (OR) was addressed except as *aap*. In accordance with the custom prevalent in Rajasthan, the names of older *sowars* were suffixed with *jee* which is a mark of respect, and were addressed as 'Gopal-jee', 'Hanuman-jee', etc.

The then senior NCO of 'A' Squadron, SDM Bahadur Singh though virtually illiterate, was a towering personality. Adi was so taken in by

Bahadur Singh's old-tradition bearing and personality that he too started growing a Cavalier moustache in, what he called the true 'A' Squadron tradition. This moustache was sported even when he commanded the Regiment. In Adi's reckoning, the commandant of the Poona Horse only looked like a commandant, if he sported a Cavalier moustache. Adi developed such a close rapport with 'A' Squadron, the Rajput Squadron, and such deep affection for the men that he was, in later years, given the unofficial designation of Colonel of 'A' Squadron. Of course, Major Balli had no hesitation in giving Adi a fitness report which got him a permanent commission in the Poona Horse.

Till well into the 1950s, most officers who joined the Army looked upon it not as a profession, but as an occupation for gentlemen. And Adi was an officer and a gentleman in the true sense of the term. He was a loyal friend, and was very sensitive to the moods and feelings of those around him. Lieutenant Colonel Shivraj Singh writes: I remember on one occasion in Jammu when I had received news of the passing away of a favourite uncle of mine. I was sitting quietly under the mango tree outside our mess, and Adi must have sensed from my looks and my mood that I was upset. He walked up to me and said, "Shivji, what's wrong? Why are you so upset? Tell me. Sharing your troubles with a friend may lighten your heart." He was so understanding and caring. Adi had a well cultivated sense of humour and could always see the lighter side of things. He idolised Napoleon, reading extensively about him and often quoting him. Once in the mess, after everyone was quite in high spirits, Adi suddenly declared that he was the reincarnation of Napoleon and to prove it, he proceeded to strike a pose like the hero. Looking around for a suitable head-dress, he picked up the silver bowl with the rose petals and inverted it over his bald pate, to represent Napoleon's hat; he stuck his right hand into the jacket of his mess dress and adopted a typical Napoleonic stance. Of course, he was thoroughly drenched but that did not dampen his spirits one bit.

Though Napoleon was his ideal, Adi was no professional Napoleon. But he was a good, steady, regimental officer. And, he could take decisions and adopt unorthodox solutions when the occasion demanded it. In 1962, Adi was officiating as commandant, when the Regiment received orders

to entrain and move to its operational location within 24 hours. If normal procedures were followed, there was no way that the Regiment could have got ready on time, so Adi ordered the security fencing round the Quarter Guard, the regimental stores and the ammunition dump to be broken. Vehicles were driven up to the stores and loaded, and the tanks taken right up to the ammunition bays and stowed with ammunition. The Regiment worked through the night and was able to move on schedule. The Military Engineering Services (MES) could go on raising damage reports, which could be sorted out later. Because of his State Forces background, Adi's professional education was limited. But he made up for this by dint of hard work. His application and zeal were rewarded when he was selected to do an Automotive Course in England on the newly acquired centurion tanks. He was later posted as DC of the Automotive Training Wing of the Armoured Corps School. In the tactical sphere, he was slow and methodical but was a very steady and courageous commander.

The Battle

Lieutenant Colonel Tarapore personally led the regiment into the thick of the fighting in the Battle of Phillaurah, when the Regiment broke through the defences held by a superior force of armour and infantry. Though he was wounded in this action, he carried on commanding the Regiment through some very intense fighting, carrying his arm in a sling. Lieutenant Colonel Shivraj Singh, who was the Staff Officer with 43 Lorried Infantry Brigade during the operations, writes: My Brigade Commander told me that Col Tarapore, the CO of my Regiment, was wounded and I should arrange to evacuate him. Our Brigade ADS was the forward-most medical unit in the sector. Moving my jeep towards the general sound of the battle, I suddenly came across another jeep coming from the opposite direction on the same track. It was Col Tarapore, his arm in a triangular sling from his tank first-aid box, accompanied by his driver and operator. As soon as he saw me, he stopped his jeep and in his usual jovial way said, "Hello Shivji! How are you? Where are you off to?" I told him I had come to evacuate him. "What? For this scratch? Don't be stupid. I am not leaving the Regiment and all the fun because of this minor thing." And off he went

to see the battle raging in another part of the sector where his Regiment was fighting.

In the Battle of Chawinda, he twice led the tanks of the Regiment right into the middle of the enemy's killing ground, defying the enemy's violent efforts to prevent the outflanking of Chawinda. The second attack had just commenced and favourable reports were being received of its progress. Adi came out of his tank to get some fresh air and tea. At 1720 hours, on 16 September just as tea was being passed around, an enemy medium artillery shell landed on the off side of the tank. Adi and two jawans of 'B' Company 9 DOGRA died instantaneously, due to concussion. It was his leadership and decisiveness at the right moments that Pakistan's media referred to the Regiment as—FAKHR-E-HIND (Pride of India) after the war. For his inspiring leadership, gallantry and determination, he was posthumously awarded the Paramvir Chakra, the country's highest award for Valour. The Poona Horse earned the battle honours PHILLAURAH and BUTUR DOGRANDI in 1965.