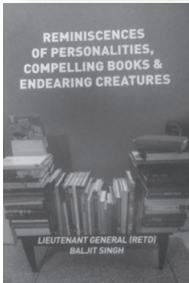




SECTION IX
Miscellaneous

Book Reviews



Reminiscences of Personalities, Compelling Books & Endearing Creatures

Lt Gen Baljit Singh
Creative Crows Publishers, New Delhi
Hard Cover, 445 pp, Rs 2,995

There could be no better advertisement for the Indian Army, and indeed for the Indian Armed Forces than *Reminiscences of Personalities, Compelling Books & Endearing Creatures* by General Baljit Singh. A melange of 101 short stories, written with consummate passion and skill, takes the reader to places very few have been privileged to see and brings forth vivid experiences of life in uniform, in all its resplendent multi-coloured hues. Only a person as erudite as the General, with his love for nature, passion for the uniform, and literary skills could have put forth his experiences in such a unique manner.

The very first story, 'Two Voices from Kargil Battlefield', gets the reader hooked to the book. Told with charming simplicity, the first of the 'voices' was a telephone call from his erstwhile sevadaar in 1982-84, who had by 1999, risen to the rank of havildar. Over the telephone, he proudly related how he had led his team of soldiers from 3/3 GR to capture the feature assigned to them in the Dras Sector, during the Kargil conflict in 1999. The second voice was another telephone call, this time from a young captain, who had directed artillery fire on to the enemy positions, while perched at a height of 15,000 feet atop an exposed mountain top! 'You fire a round at him and sure enough, you can expect him on your location in precisely one minute', said the young Captain with disarming candour. Somewhere in the middle of the book is an equally gripping story titled, 'The Long Road to Siachen', which gives a vivid account of the race to the Siachen Glacier, which culminated in the capture of the Qaid post by Sub Bana Singh, who was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for this feat, the Qaid post thereafter being renamed as 'Bana Post'.

Equally compelling are the stories penned of famous personalities. The authors meeting with General Jameel Mehmood, when the latter visited him in his retirement home in the pristine forests of the Adivasis, making the locals wonder what the strange bird was that had landed in their midst, throwing up a cloud of dust! Or of his account of the life and times of Brigadier Sir John Smyth, which gives the reader a peep into history and of life in the Army a century ago. The short story of Adela Florence Nicholson (1865-1904) also makes for fascinating reading. Adela was the first woman, admittedly not a native but Indian domiciled, who published poetry in English, long before Sarojini Naidu!

The personalities covered in *the book* are diverse. Subedar Major Umrao Singh, a Victoria Cross winner, the indomitable Air Commodore Mehar Singh, DSO, MC, who flew the first Dakota in to Ladakh, landing at Leh on an unprepared surface, along with General Thimaya, to 'prevent the fall of Leh', are but two heroes written about in this book. Also covered is the life of General EF Norton (1884-1954), a great soldier and an iconic mountaineer, a story on Queen Elizabeth, another on General Jacob, and a most captivating story of India's beloved former President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam.

Reminiscences of Personalities, Compelling Books & Endearing Creatures is not just about famous personalities. It is also replete with stories which bring out the authors' affair with nature and wild life. His abiding commitment to the promotion of nature conservation in general, but more so both within and by the Armed Forces found recognition, when he was invited to serve on the Board of Trustees, of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature's India Chapter. Anecdotes of the author's travels are interspersed in the book, which make for delightful reading. These include visits to the Kanha National Park and stories of a variety of birds and animals, butterflies, and other tales of wildlife. Being in the Army gives a soldier numerous opportunities to interact with nature, but one does need a discerning eye and a passion to truly revel in its beauty.

There are also stories of a general nature, interspersed in *the book*. The topics are diverse—from talking about 'Siachen Allowance to Soldiers', the author shifts to 'India's Vanishing Birds', and then on to 'Earliest Dalliances with Everest' followed by 'Vignettes from the Swat Valley'. This is what makes the book endearing. It is a collection of stories written by the author over a period of time, some of which have now found their way into this book—most interesting potpourri, which the reader can flavour from whichever page she or he chooses to open.

Priced at Rs 2,995 in hard cover, *Reminiscences of Personalities, Compelling Books & Endearing Creatures* is perhaps out of reach for the young reader and would most likely find a place only in libraries. Perhaps a cheaper soft copy edition, priced less than Rs 400 would make for a wider audience, comprising largely India's youth in schools and colleges across the country. It also suffers from some minor infirmities. The copy editing could have been far better, as wrong spellings occasionally mar the enjoyment of the book. A simple spell check could have dealt with most such issues. The title also is a bit long winded, which does not catch the eye. But that notwithstanding, it is a book which makes the Army come alive. What is it that captivates young men and women to give their all for the uniform, in service to the nation? After reading the book, the answer becomes self evident. *Reminiscences of Personalities, Compelling Books & Endearing Creatures* is a book which will be enjoyed by the veterans and

those in uniform, and also by India's youth, which will enable them to see the personnel of their Armed Forces in a different light.

Book reviewed by Major General Dhruv C Katoch

In Quest of Freedom The War of 1971: Personal Accounts by Soldiers from India and Bangladesh

Major General Ian Cardozo
Bloomsbury India, New Delhi, 2016, 324 pp, INR 399 (PB)

The 1971 Indo-Pak War which led to the creation of Bangladesh was the finest war the Indian Army fought in the post-independence India, with a spectacular victory over Pakistan after the near-stalemate of 1965. The War is known for the Pakistani pre-emptive air strikes in north-western India, prompting a lightning campaign in the east and the race to Dhaka, the 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war and the gains of the victory squandered away in Shimla without settling the Kashmir issue with Pakistan. In Bangladesh, the liberation war is almost a myth about the great valour of the Mukti Bahini and help from the Indian friends. The military leaders of the war are well-known too—the audacious Army Chief General SHFJ Manekshaw, the Eastern Army Commander Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, and Lieutenant General JFR Jacob who coordinated the three corps spearheading the operations in Bangladesh, as also the war heroes like Lance Naik Albert Ekka, Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, Major Hoshiar Singh, and 2nd Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal. But there is no account of the countless others who valiantly took part in the war, fought for their country and the flag, and often risked their lives for the love of humanity. *In Quest of Freedom* fills this crucial gap from both sides of the Indo-Bangladesh border.

The book is a first-hand and highly personal account of the experiences of the people from India and Bangladesh who took part in the 1971 War, providing the reader with a closer look at the War, particularly from a human perspective. *In Quest of Freedom* is divided into five distinct parts. The first part, titled ‘Carnage in Bangladesh, and the Quest for Freedom’, covers the atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army across the towns and villages of the then East Pakistan, including the mass killings at Gandhi Ashram in Noakhali and at Chawk Haldi which left 350 women of the village widowed. Among the fading voices in this part are the many narrations by Lieutenant Colonel Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir who has provided an account of the murder of Imam Safiruddin Munshi and his children in Mymensingh by Pakistani soldiers, apart from a description of Asgar Baluch, a soldier and survivor of the War, and another one on the killing of the best Bengali pilots of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) by Pakistan.

The second part is titled ‘The War on the Eastern Front’ and gives a fascinating account of the role played by the Indian Army, particularly by individual units, like The Stories of 18 RAJPUT, by Brigadier Balraj Kapoor, on the Battle of Hilli by Brigadier VR Swaminathan and Brigadier Prakash Tularam Ghogale, and others on the daring paradrop at Tangail, the battles of Pirganj and Bogra, and of an ambush at Milestone 10. The writers describe how the obstacles faced by the battalions on their march to Dhaka were quickly, and often innovatively, overcome. They also unfailingly mention the overwhelming local support from the Bengalis. Appropriately, the surrender of the Pakistan Army units at Comilla is also vividly covered.

The third part of the book, ‘The War on the Western Front’, focusses on the war in the west, particularly the land battles on the borders like at Sangam, Gadra city, and Burj. Among others, the skirmish at the Chicken’s Neck has been described by Colonel SV Kotwal, the ex-Regimental Medical Officer of 11 GUARDS and the Battle of Khem Karan, mainly from a Staff Officer’s perspective, by Colonel Gurdeep Singh Gill. The fourth part focusses on the role played by the Indian Air Force and is thus, titled ‘The Air War’. Air Commander Ashok P Shinde,

who undertook a dangerous mission to help Army units in the Chhamb Sector on 6 December 1971, brightly recreates the air war of that sector while Air Commander Manbir Singh has narrated the role of the Indian Air Force in neutralising the Pakistan Air Force in the eastern sector, with an account of the night bombing of Dhaka. The other contributors are Wing Commander Raghunath on the role Canberra bombers on both fronts and Wing Commander Kulbir Singh Harnal who fondly dwells on the role of his unit in 'December Diary: Flying with the Battle Axes'.

The fifth and the last part is titled 'Maritime Operations' and covers the war at the sea. In this, Rear Admiral S Ramsagar narrates the key role of the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, which sailed east well in time and, therefore, during the war, the Seahawk and Alize aircraft operating from the INS Vikrant were able to effectively neutralize Pakistani submarines as well as the Pakistan Air Force units operating from Dhaka and Chittagong. Two other Indian Navy officers have written about the PNS Ghazi—its riddle, movements, and clearing the many minefields laid by it.

The book maintains an easy flow. In addition, the narrations have been classified into five parts, with each narration complementing the other, and, thus, presenting a holistic picture of the men behind the machines and their challenges, hopes, and fears. The narratives of cold-blooded killings and other human rights violations by the Pakistan Army in East Bangladesh shall help to document many untold stories and throw greater light on this aspect, particularly with Pakistan still in denial over the mass murders. Unless these survivor accounts are well-preserved and irrefutable, as in this book, Pakistan shall continue in the perpetual denial mode with India and Bangladesh over the events preceding the outbreak of the war. *In Quest of Freedom* fulfills this important task for future generations.

The author, Major General Ian Cardozo was born in Mumbai and studied at St Xavier's School and College. He was commissioned into the 5th Gorkha Rifles (FF) and took part in the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and Indo-Pak Wars of 1965 and 1971. He was the first officer of the Indian Army to be awarded the Sena Medal for gallantry on a patrol on the Sino-Indian border in 1960. Wounded in the 1971 War, at Sylhet in Bangladesh,

he overcame the handicap of an amputated limb and became the first disabled officer of the Indian Army to command an infantry battalion, a brigade and a division stationed in the border areas. He retired in 1993 and thereafter has been involved in working with disabled persons, apart from authoring many interesting and informative books. These include *The Sinking of INS Kukri—Survivors Stories* and *Param Vir—Our Heroes in Battle*, and have been well-received. The Officer has also authored two books on the role of Indians in World War I, viz, *India in World War I—An Illustrated Story* and *The Bravest of the Brave—The Extraordinary Story of Indian VCs of World War I*.

Major General Ian Cardozo, being himself in action in Bangladesh and wounded at Sylhet, has been in a unique position to interact with others who participated in the war, and obtain first-hand accounts. Resultantly, the book provides an inimitable and human perspective to the war. For many, the war was a call of duty, for some it was for humanity, and for others it was for the thrill of fighting and being in action. But for the victims of Pakistani brutality in East Pakistan, it was a tragedy. *In Quest of Freedom* is a useful addition to all military and personal libraries. It shall interest those who are keen on personal and divergent narrations of a major event which touched millions of lives and irrevocably changed the political boundaries in the Indian subcontinent. The book is also recommended for a younger generation who may be interested in knowing more about the defence services and a brilliant war, possibly motivating a few to don the uniform.

Reviewed by Colonel Shailender Arya

This Brave New World

Anja Manuel
Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Anja Manuel is co-founder and partner with the former Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice, National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, and Secretary of Defence Robert Gates in Rice Hadley Gates LLC, a strategic consulting firm. She served as an official at the US Department of State from 2005 to 2007. During her tenure she was responsible for South Asia policy. In *This Brave New World*, Anja Manuel offers a thoughtful analysis of Asian contest and a strategy for maintenance of calm and keeping it from turning violent. As a co-founder of the consultancy, she enjoyed access to top policy figures, and much of what is new in the book comes from her conversations with senior officials in China and India. Anja Manuel quotes both in her new book about China and India. She has adopted the phrase 'Brave New World' for her title. Fittingly, but perhaps unwittingly, she also uses it to refer to an old world; in this case, the world of global accords and interdependencies, shakily founded in Western liberal values, that has now prevailed for over half a century. The author hopes this regime can be adapted to accommodate the rise of two great eastern powers, whether it deserves to be so adapted is not question she considers. She states that in the next decade and a half, China and India will become two of the world's indispensable powers whether they rise peacefully or not. During that time, Asia will surpass the combined strength of North America and Europe in economic might, population

size, and military spending. She goes on to add that the West wrings its hands about China and, at the same time, underestimates India, which will be the most important country outside the West to shape China's rise. The author shows that a different path is possible and China and India can be brought along as partners rather than alienating one or both, and, thus, extending the United States leadership in the world.

With this introduction, Anja Manuel moves ahead to give an overview of the dynamics among India, China, and the United States. The book can be apparently broken into three parts, roughly corresponding to the past, the present, and the future.

Part 1: This begins with a refresher in Chinese and Indian history. Confucius, the Ming dynasty, Mao, the Great Leap Forward, Hinduism, the Mughals, Gandhi, India's partition, and the Nehru clan. Then mini details of the countries' current leaders, Li Keqiang and Narendra Modi, which are timely, but cursory. However, it does give the author an opportunity to set her major themes: China emerges as a disciplined, industrious but cool and standoffish country; India as a raucous, erratic but warm and welcoming nation.

Part 2: This looks at internal issues troubling both countries: inequality, corruption, inadequate care for children and seniors, sexism, pollution, and political unrest. Anja Manuel highlights the mounting dissatisfaction with corruption among the upper and middle classes of both the countries. The Chinese government, whose autocratic ways permit it to combat corruption more vigorously than India's constitutionally limited government, has imprisoned high profile generals and officials. However, the author is still not convinced if this method of functioning will bring about major institutional reforms. The author then compares the economic models of India and China. China has an economic model of top-down control to build infrastructure which has resulted in its stunning economic growth, which emboldens the belief that autocracy beats democracy, which serves to squelch the democratic impulse.

Part 3: In this part, Anja Manuel has exploited her expertise in the field of strategic analysis. How are India and China positioning themselves on the world stage? How do they exert power economically? What are

their military strengths? Their geographic concerns? How can the United States intervene? It is here that the author makes the most of her experience in statecraft as she sorts through a jumble of trade agreements and international banks. And it is here that she makes the best use of her earlier country profile—when she covers, for instance, the geo-strategic concerns that drive even a mighty hegemony like China to exhibit furtive and skittish behaviour.

The author believes that Washington's geo-political interest is more likely to align with India's than with China's. The United States would want India's help to solve global problems and shape the rise of China. Consequently, the United States would have to assist, and be patient enough to wait for a parliamentary and decentralized system as India to become a superpower. Anja Manuel makes a stunning correlation of China's rising xenophobia and increasing military power to Nazi Germany and imperial Japan in the 1930s, suggesting that the United States would be well-advised to adopt a strategy of containment and unequivocally ally with India and other Asian countries against China. The author invokes a different analogy; however, likening today's China to pre-World War I Germany. In her view, Britain's decision to side with a rising United States against a rising Germany was a strategic disaster, since it caused Germany 'to feel insecure and friendless and to act like an opponent'. If the United States were to side with India against China, she believes, China could develop like the autocratic, insecure, and bravado-filled Germany of the early twentieth century.

This Brave New World proposes increasing Western commerce with China by including the Chinese in free-trade deals like Trans-Pacific Partnership. She calls for greater dialogue with China on security matters to prevent a minor incident from turning in to a war.

Anja Manuel thereafter brings out the analysis of the some of these prescriptions. Advocated, stating that public harangues and flexing of muscles have seldom caused the Chinese to do much more than dig in their heels, and better communication between the American and Chinese militaries could forestall an incendiary clash. The safest American strategy is one in which the United States and its allies increase their military power

to offset China's rising power while showing the Chinese that violations of international norms will not be tolerated.

This Brave New World is wonderfully written, with compelling stories and a powerful thesis, it combines the history, politics and economy of both the countries, and the driving force which makes India and China tick. It is the portrait of the century to come and the vital role that the United States must play in the world's most important diplomatic dynamics. The book is recommended for getting a researchful insight into the world affairs and the forces governing future dynamics.

*Colonel OP Singh is commanding an Engineer Regiment in the North-east.
The views expressed are personal.*

