



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SINDHOLOGY

Sindhis in Military Services

A record of Sindhi officers of the Armed Forces of India

INDIAN NAVY

INDIAN AIR FORCE

INDIAN ARMY

THIS EDITION RECORDS

19 officers across three services

Five of whom did not return from service

DOCUMENTING SINDHI HERITAGE



ABOUT THIS RECORD

Sindhis in Military Services

This record gathers the Sindhi officers of the Indian Armed Forces whose service has so far been documented by the Indian Institute of Sindhology. It spans the Second World War, the wars of 1965 and 1971, and the Kargil conflict of 1999, and it reaches from Flying Officers in their early twenties to two officers who rose to the highest ranks of the Indian Navy.

The entries are grouped by service — Navy, Air Force and Army — and ordered by seniority of rank within each. Where the source material carried an officer more than once, the entries have been consolidated into a single profile.

INDIAN NAVY

3 entries

INDIAN AIR FORCE

12 entries

INDIAN ARMY

4 entries

A note on completeness

This is a working record rather than an official register, and it is not claimed to be exhaustive. A number of entries rest on family recollection and on dates supplied by relatives; where the sources disagree, the fuller account has been preferred. Corrections, service numbers, citations and additional names are warmly invited, so that future editions may be more complete and more precise.



SUMMARY

Roll of Service

#	RANK	NAME	SERVICE	NOTE
1	Admiral	Radhakrishna Hariram Tahiliani, PVSM, AVSM	Indian Navy	—
2	Vice Admiral	Gulab Mohanlal Hiranandani, PVSM, AVSM, NM	Indian Navy	Nausena Medal
3	—	Girdhar and Shyam Uttamchandani	Indian Navy	Died young
4	Air Marshal	Harish Masand, VM	Indian Air Force	Vayu Sena Medal
5	Air Marshal	Ajit Bhavnani, VM	Indian Air Force	Vayu Sena Medal
6	Group Captain	Kishin Advani	Indian Air Force	—
7	Group Captain	Narain L. Keswani	Indian Air Force	—
8	Wing Commander	Suresh Premchand Malkani	Indian Air Force	—
9	Wing Commander	Rajan Atturlal Jaisinghani	Indian Air Force	—
10	Wing Commander	Arun Tillay Samtani	Indian Air Force	—
11	Squadron Leader	Ajay Ahuja	Indian Air Force	Killed in action · Kargil, 1999
12	Flight Lieutenant	Indur Singh Bhavnani	Indian Air Force	—
13	Flight Lieutenant	Ram Netharam Advani	Indian Air Force	Died on active service, 1971
14	Flying Officer	Prem Ramsingh Ramchandani	Indian Air Force	Made the supreme sacrifice · 1965
15	Flying Officer	Kishan Lakhimal Malkani	Indian Air Force	Made the supreme sacrifice · 1971
16	Colonel	Naraindas Shyamdas Gidwani, MBE	Indian Army	Member of the Order of the British Empire
17	Colonel	Sunder Gidwani	Indian Army	—
18	Colonel	Ram Gulrajani	Indian Army	—
19	Captain	Gulzari Singh	Indian Army	—

Ranks shown are the highest recorded in the source material.



I

Indian Navy

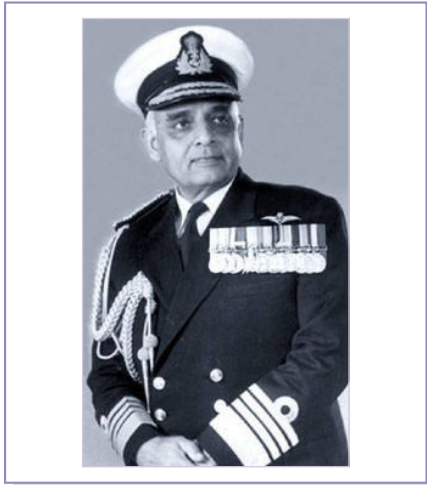
Sindhi officers who served at sea, including two who rose to the highest ranks of the Indian Navy.

3 ENTRIES IN THIS SECTION

01 • INDIAN NAVY • ADMIRAL

Radhakrishna Hariram Tahiliani, PVSM, AVSM

12 May 1930 – 14 October 2015 • 12th Chief of the Naval Staff



Indian Navy

Admiral Radhakrishna Hariram Tahiliani, PVSM, AVSM (12 May 1930 – 14 October 2015) was a flag officer in the Indian Navy. He served as the 12th Chief of the Naval Staff from 1 December 1984 until 30 November 1987.

A carrier-based aircraft pilot, he also served as the commanding officer of the aircraft carrier INS *Vikrant*.

After retirement, Tahiliani served as the Governor of Sikkim from 1990 to 1994. He was a founder member and chairman of the India chapter of Transparency International (TI), and also served on the board of TI.

02 • INDIAN NAVY • VICE ADMIRAL

Gulab Mohanlal Hiranandani, PVSM, AVSM, NM

29 June 1931 – 1 September 2009 • Vice Chief of the Naval Staff



Indian Navy

Nausena Medal

Vice Admiral Gulab Mohanlal Hiranandani, PVSM, AVSM, NM (29 June 1931 – 1 September 2009) was a flag officer in the Indian Navy. He served as the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff from 1987 to 1989. Prior to that, he served as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command.

He was the commissioning Commanding Officer of INS *Rajput* (D51), the lead vessel of the Rajput-class destroyers. He was awarded the Nausena Medal for gallantry during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971.

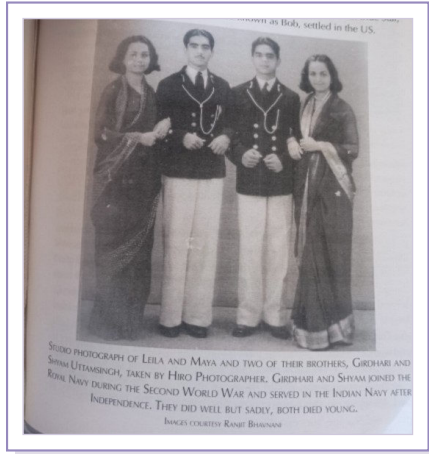
Hiranandani is also credited with the detailed planning of the Indian Naval Academy at Ezhimala and INS Kadamba at Karwar, the foundation stones for which were laid during his tenure as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command. During his tenure all naval training was centralised under the Southern Naval Command. A brilliant tactician, his work remains pivotal to Indian naval training on manoeuvres and operational tactics.

After retirement, Hiranandani served on the Union Public Service Commission. Later he was appointed the Official Historian of the Indian Navy. He authored three landmark books on Indian naval history — *Transition to Triumph*, *Transition to Eminence* and *Transition to Guardianship* — covering the history of the Indian Navy from 1965 to 2000.

03 • INDIAN NAVY

Girdhar and Shyam Uttamchandani

Royal Navy, Second World War



Indian Navy

Died young

Girdhar and Shyam Uttamchandani joined the Royal Navy during the Second World War, which was merged into the Indian Navy after independence. Both died at a very young age.



II

Indian Air Force

The largest group in this record — fighter pilots and commanders, several of whom did not return from operations.

12 ENTRIES IN THIS SECTION

04 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • AIR MARSHAL

Harish Masand, VM

Fighter pilot • 1971 Indo-Pakistan War

Indian Air Force

Vayu Sena Medal

On 4 December 1971, Flying Officer Harish Masand was on an aircraft strike mission to attack an enemy airfield. Just short of the target the formation was intercepted by two Pakistan Air Force Sabre aircraft. In the ensuing dogfight, he shot down one Sabre. He also undertook a number of fighter reconnaissance missions in enemy territory and completed the tasks assigned to him.

Throughout, Flying Officer Harish Masand displayed gallantry, professional skill and devotion to duty of a high order.

Wing Commander Harish Masand was the Commanding Officer of a fighter squadron from July 1986, when the squadron moved to a new location for conversion on the Baaz aircraft.

During the move of the squadron, and until the squadron received its aircraft in early October 1987, Wg Cdr Masand's sense of responsibility, devotion to duty and loyalty to the service were once again of a high order. Despite the inexperience of the personnel and operations from a number of bases, the squadron's performance in the air and on the ground was exemplary.

Despite his limited experience on type, he was specially chosen for displaying the performance of the aircraft. Wg Cdr Masand met this commitment with his characteristic zeal, initiative and skill.

For his exemplary devotion to duty, loyalty, leadership and personal example, the President was pleased to award the Vayu Sena Medal to Wg Cdr Harish Masand.

05 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • AIR MARSHAL

Ajit Bhavnani, VM*First Commanding Officer, Vajra squadron of the IAF*

Indian Air Force

Vayu Sena Medal

Wing Commander Ajit Bhavnani was posted as Commanding Officer of a premier front-line squadron on 28 January 1985.

As Commanding Officer of the first Vajra squadron of the IAF, his performance was truly outstanding. Having successfully led the team of Vajra pilots trained in France, he achieved the rare distinction of planning and successfully leading the first ferry of seven Vajra aircraft from France to India. Subsequently, he was involved in the successful ferry of three more batches of Vajra aircraft flown in by his squadron.

Having assumed command of his squadron, he shouldered the major responsibility of forming the squadron and inducting a very modern and sophisticated aircraft into the IAF. With his outstanding professional ability, he performed the arduous task in the most methodical and distinctive manner.

Working relentlessly, he ushered in a new era of concepts and tactics related to fighter operations. His selfless devotion to work was an exemplary source of inspiration and motivation for his personnel. Due to his deep personal involvement and exceptionally high level of professional competence, the entire Vajra force reached a distinctively high level of operational efficiency.

For his outstanding achievements as Commanding Officer of the first Vajra squadron, the President was pleased to award the Vayu Sena Medal to Wing Commander Ajit Bhavnani.



06 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • GROUP CAPTAIN

Kishin Advani

5 May 1927 – 20 August 2014

Indian Air Force

BORN	5 May 1927
JOINED THE AIR FORCE	23 December 1950
RETIRED	8 August 1976 (voluntary retirement)
DIED	20 August 2014, aged 87



07 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • GROUP CAPTAIN

Narain L. Keswani

11 November 1929 – 1 February 2008

Indian Air Force

BORN	11 November 1929
JOINED THE AIR FORCE	12 January 1952
RETIRED	30 November 1979
DIED	1 February 2008, aged 79



08 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • WING COMMANDER

Suresh Premchand Malkani

Later a pilot with Air India



Indian Air Force

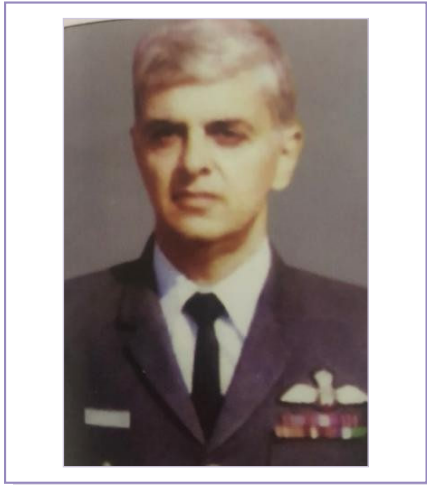
JOINED THE AIR FORCE	16 May 1965
RETIRED	31 December 1985
THEREAFTER	Joined Air India



09 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • WING COMMANDER

Rajan Atturlal Jaisinghani

7 November 1951 – 14 December 2022



Indian Air Force

BORN	7 November 1951
JOINED THE AIR FORCE	22 January 1972
RETIRED	31 October 1996
DIED	14 December 2022, aged 71



10 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • WING COMMANDER

Arun Tillay Samtani

Served 1982–2004



Indian Air Force

JOINED THE AIR FORCE 29 December 1982

RETIRED 30 April 2004

11 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • SQUADRON LEADER

Ajay Ahuja

22 May 1963 – 27 May 1999 · Kargil War



Indian Air Force

Killed in action · Kargil, 1999

Ajay Ahuja (22 May 1963 – 27 May 1999) was a fighter pilot of the Indian Air Force who was killed during the Kargil War between India and Pakistan in 1999.

His MiG-21 was hit by a surface-to-air missile fired by the Pakistan Army near the town of Kargil, in the Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Ahuja ejected from the aircraft and parachuted to the ground. According to Indian claims he was alive upon landing, before he was captured and subsequently killed by Pakistani troops — a claim rejected by Pakistan.

A post-mortem report conducted on Ahuja's body after it was recovered and returned to India showed that he had a fractured knee alongside two fatal bullet wounds to his head and chest. Reports by the Indian media of Ahuja's capture and killing by Pakistani troops during the conflict sparked a major uproar within India.

Kargil War and shoot-down. On 27 May 1999, as part of Operation Safed Sagar during the Kargil War, Sqn Ldr Ahuja was undertaking a photo reconnaissance mission. Another member of the mission, Flt Lt Nachiketa, ejected from his MiG-27L after an engine flame out. Sqn Ldr Ahuja stayed over enemy positions to help the rescue attempts, knowing full well the existence of enemy surface-to-air missiles in the area.

However, his MiG-21MF fighter, C-1539, was hit by a shoulder-fired FIM-92 Stinger. Ahuja gave a radio call — reporting that something had hit his plane, that a missile hit could not be ruled out, and that he was ejecting. IAF authorities lost track of his aircraft and all communication shortly afterward.

Circumstances of death. According to data released by the Indian Air Force, Ahuja's aircraft had crossed the Line of Control, the ceasefire line agreed upon by India and Pakistan in 1972 to maintain the status quo in Kashmir. It is claimed by the Indian Air Force that he was killed by Pakistani soldiers after landing safely, as his post-mortem report records two fatal bullet injuries and a fractured knee caused when he landed after ejection — indicating that he was alive when he landed. These claims were strictly rejected by Pakistan. Sqn Ldr Ahuja's body was recovered by the men of the 10th Battalion of the Garhwal Rifles.

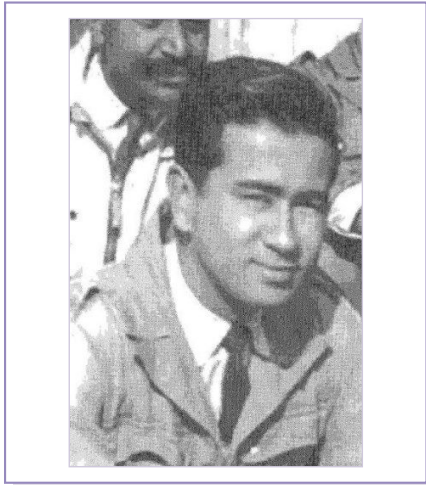
Return and cremation. On 29 May 1999, Ahuja's body was flown to a local Air Force station by the Indian Air Force. Angry public demonstrations broke out there, at his cremation, and near the Pakistani embassy in Delhi.



12 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • FLIGHT LIEUTENANT

Indur Singh Bhavnani

Served 1960–1968



Indian Air Force

JOINED THE AIR FORCE

28 May 1960

RESIGNED

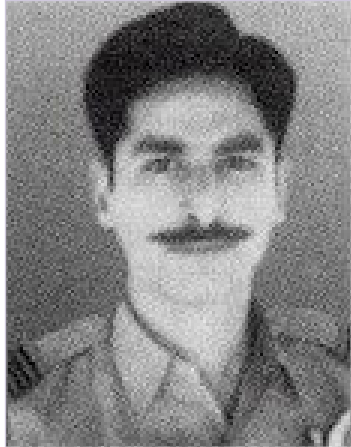
15 February 1968



13 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • FLIGHT LIEUTENANT

Ram Netharam Advani

11 January 1942 – 4 December 1971



Indian Air Force

Died on active service, 1971

BORN	11 January 1942
JOINED THE AIR FORCE	28 October 1963
DIED	4 December 1971, in an aircraft accident, aged 29

14 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • FLYING OFFICER

Prem Ramsingh Ramchandani

19 October 1941 – 26 September 1965 • Indo-Pakistan War

Indian Air Force

Made the supreme sacrifice • 1965

Prem Ramchandani Marg, Mumbai, named in the officer's memory.

Flying Officer Prem Ramsingh Ramchandani hailed from Mumbai in Maharashtra and was born on 19 October 1941. He was commissioned into the Indian Air Force on 22 June 1963 at the age of 22. He joined the flying stream of the IAF and trained as a fighter pilot as part of the 84th Pilots' Course. By 1965 he had put in barely two years of service when the war with Pakistan broke out, and he was involved in active operations very early in his career.

Offensive Air Operation, Indo-Pakistan War — 22 September 1965. During 1965, Fg Offr Ramchandani was serving with No. 3 Squadron, known as the “Cobras”, and was based at Air Force Station Pathankot. On 19 September 1965 he was part of many missions and played a crucial role in meeting the wartime objectives of the squadron.

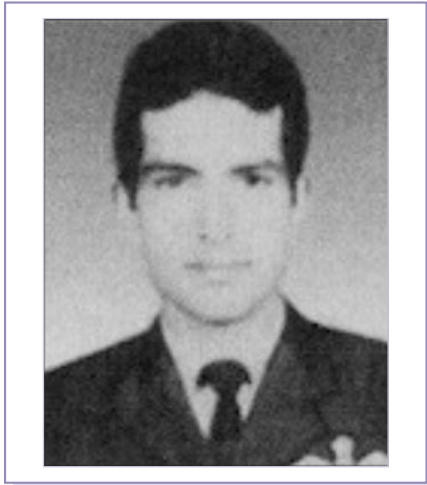
Flying Officer Ramchandani was tasked for another mission on 22 September 1965, with Flt Lt Doraiswami as the leader, who was flying his 21st operational mission. However, the targets that Fg Offr Ramchandani and his comrades had been assigned had changed hands in the swiftly moving battles. As a result the Mystères ended up attacking positions that were held by our own troops.

When the Indian forces returned fire, Flying Officer Ramchandani's Mystère was hit and caught fire. As the aircraft became engulfed in flames he ejected safely, but was fired upon while descending by parachute. He sustained injuries and was evacuated to the nearby military hospital. However, he succumbed to his injuries and was martyred on 26 September 1965, before he could turn 24.

Flying Officer Ramchandani was a gallant air warrior and a committed soldier who laid down his life in the service of the nation.

15 • INDIAN AIR FORCE • FLYING OFFICER

Kishan Lakhimal Malkani

Born 15 May 1945 • 1971 Indo-Pakistan War

Indian Air Force

Made the supreme sacrifice • 1971

Flying Officer Kishan Lakhimal Malkani was born on 15 May 1945 and joined the Air Force on 29 October 1966.

During the operations against Pakistan in December 1971, Flying Officer Malkani was serving with a fighter-bomber squadron. On 4 December 1971 he was detailed to carry out a dusk strike mission over an enemy airfield. In spite of poor visibility over the target he successfully carried out the attack and destroyed one blast pen.

On 5 December 1971 he was detailed as Number Two in a strike mission over an enemy signals unit. He attacked the radar unit and caused such extensive damage that the radar station never came on the air throughout the operations. In this operation he made the supreme sacrifice.

In this action, Flying Officer Kishan Lakhimal Malkani displayed gallantry, determination, professional skill and devotion to duty of a high order.



III

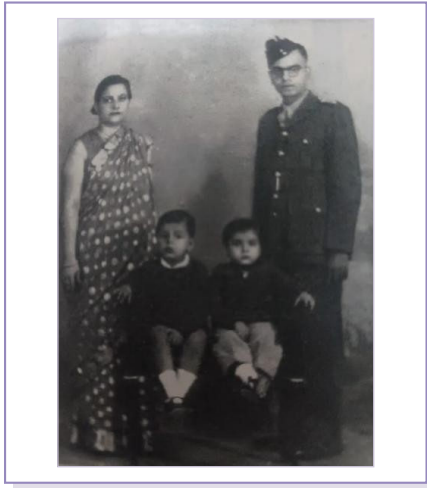
Indian Army

Officers of the Indian Army, from the Second World War through to the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

4 ENTRIES IN THIS SECTION

16 • INDIAN ARMY • COLONEL

Naraindas Shyamdas Gidwani, MBE

Second World War · Food Directorate, Army Headquarters

Indian Army

Member of the Order of the British Empire

He graduated from Bombay University and was offered a post at the Imperial Bank, Ahmedabad, which he did not take up, remaining instead at Karachi.

He joined the Indian Army in 1941 and was posted as a Captain in the Food Directorate at Army Headquarters, Delhi. Naraindas prepared the plan for the movement of food into safe areas during the Second World War, should sensitive areas fall under enemy control.

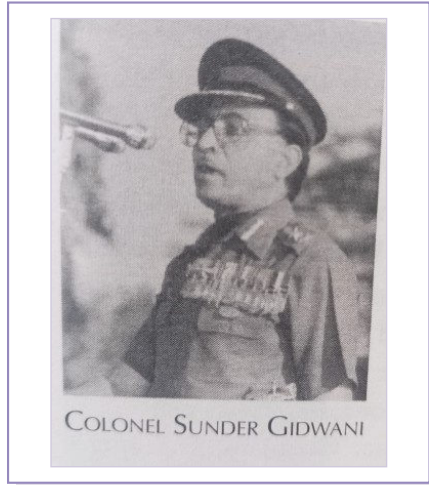
He was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire for the successful implementation of that food movement plan, and was promoted up to the rank of Colonel.

After retirement from the Army at the age of 48, he was appointed Joint Secretary on the Administrative Reforms Committee.

Reference: The Amils of Sindh by Saaz Aggarwal.

17 • INDIAN ARMY • COLONEL

Sunder Gidwani

1971 Indo-Pakistan War · Born in Hyderabad, Sindh

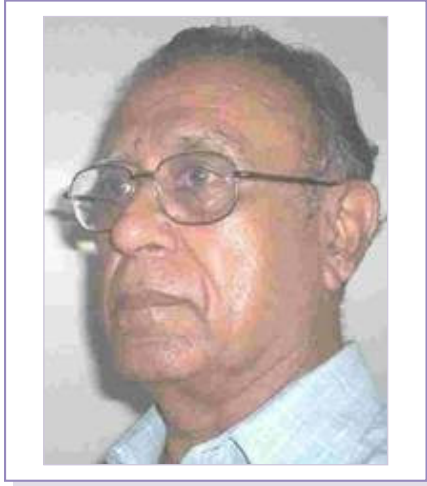
Indian Army

Colonel Sunder Gidwani was assigned to take the surrender of the Pakistani Army in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War. The Pakistani officers were surprised to find that Colonel Sunder was a Sindhi and spoke the same language as they did.

Colonel Sunder was born in Hyderabad, Sindh.

18 • INDIAN ARMY • COLONEL

Ram Gulrajani

Born 1935 at Hyderabad, Sindh

Indian Army

Colonel Ram Gulrajani was born at Hyderabad, Sindh, in 1935. He had his primary and secondary schooling in Sindhi at Karachi, and the rest of his education, up to post-graduation, in Chennai and Mumbai.

He is a proud Sindhi who loves the Sindhi language. After retiring from the Army in 1988, he settled in Chennai.

19 • INDIAN ARMY • CAPTAIN

Gulzari Singh

Sikh Regiment · born Gulrajani

Indian Army

Captain Gulzari Singh joined the Army in the Sikh Regiment; his actual surname was Gulrajani. In the Sikh Regiment he was a mona Sikh and needed to prove his credentials as a Sikh: he recited Gurbani and followed the rituals of Sikhs in the army.



COLOPHON

About this Compilation

Sindh in Military Services is published under the imprint of the Indian Institute of Sindhology as part of its work documenting Sindhi heritage. The biographical material is drawn from published accounts, official citations and records supplied by the families of the officers concerned.

PUBLISHED BY	Indian Institute of Sindhology
ENTRIES	Indian Navy: 3 · Indian Air Force: 12 · Indian Army: 4 · Total: 19
SOURCES	Official citations, published biographical accounts, and records supplied by families. <i>The Amils of Sindh</i> by Saaz Aggarwal is cited where used.
CORRECTIONS	Additions and corrections are invited for future editions.

In memory of those recorded in these pages who did not return.