The Sikh community is rendering great service to the Indian nation by providing the Indian Defence Forces with educated Sikh youths who are making themselves useful as efficient and brave officers as well as other ranks. The Defence Forces of India, at present, consist of Army, Navy and Air Force. The Sikhs are employed in all these three wings of the Defence Forces. In the absence of any information available in this respect, it is not possible to assess the number of the Sikhs taking part in each of these three services, but some facts are worth mentioning about the Army in which the Sikhs took part after the partition of the country.

Immediately after the partition of the Punjab and under the National Government, the Sikhs had the privilege to be first among the troops which were flown to Srinagar and thrown into battle for Jammu and Kashmir against the raiders in October 1947. It was during these operations that Jemadar (then L/Nalk) Karam Singh was awarded the nation's highest gallantry award, the Param Vir Chakra for supreme gallantry in the face of the enemy. Units of the
Sikh Regiment also took part in the Hyderabad Police action and in Naga Hills operations.

"From their very inception, the Sikh battalions have acquitted themselves magnificently both in peace and war and have always been held in high esteem among the armies of the world," states the Press communiqué issued by the Defence Ministry. It goes on to state:

"With their tall stature and beard and whiskers the Sikhs are a forceful personality in the army. They are now the only soldiers who wear the turbans. The late Field Marshal Lord Wavell who was Commander-in-Chief of India before becoming Viceroy, said of the bearded soldiers: 'The Sikhs contribute more soldiers to the Army in proportion to their numbers than any other class in India. They have fine physique and are first class soldiers in every way.'"

In unveiling the War Memorial (a circular white monument representing religious symbols of the Sikhs) on 14th April 1958 in honour of 2,652 officers and men of the Sikh Regiment who laid down their lives in the service of the country during the Regiments' 100 years existence, the Prime Minister Nehru recounting the brave deeds of the soldiers of the Sikh Regiment said, "If your regiment had reached a day late it would not have been possible to save the terror-stricken people of Kashmir. By your courageous
actions you have saved them."

In a message, Major General G.E. Key, a former colonel of the Regiment, said, "We pay tribute to our patriot comrades who gave their lives in World War II. Those who died are closely related to us - some were sons, some were husbands, fathers and brothers - some were not closely related -- all belonged to the brotherhood of the Sikh Regiment. They gave their lives in North Africa, Italy, the Middle East, India, Burma and Malaya, for the freedom of the country and to the glory of the Sikh Regiment."**

The Sikh Regiment also received 6 Mahavir Chakras; 29 Vir Chakras, 2 Asoka Chakra Class I, 2 Asoca Chakra II, and 5 Asoka Chakra Class III. Subedar Mard Singh who had won the Victoria Cross for valour in Arakan in the year 1944 also received the Vir Chakra (posthumous) for gallantry in Kashmir operations.

The Sikhs serving in the Defence Forces receive good salaries which conveys us the impression keeping in view the magnitude of the payments received by them that they must be economically well placed.

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**p.55.}