

## Battle of Basantar, 1971

*Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Bilateral relations*

### Why in News?

Titled *Ikkis (Twenty-one)*, the film hit theatres on New Year's Day and traces the valiant journey of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, who laid down his life in the 1971 India-Pakistan war.

- **Battle of Basantar** - It was fought on the Western Front of India during the **Indo-Pak war of 1971**.
- **Location - Shakargarh Buldge**, a strategic area in the Punjab & Jammu Sector, with road links important for both India and Pakistan.

The **Basantar River** is a tributary of the Ravi, flowing through Shakargarh in North Punjab.

- It is considered to be one of the **Fiercest Tank battles** ever fought between two countries.
- **The Minefield Challenge** - The 9th Engineer Regiment (known as the "Thambi Regiment") performed a legendary feat by manually and trawl-clearing deep minefields (over 1,400 metres) under heavy fire to allow Indian tanks to advance.
- It was a **decisive Indian victory** that secured the vital Pathankot-Jammu axis, preventing Pakistan from cutting off Jammu and Kashmir from the rest of India.
- **Heroes and Honours** - The battle is renowned for extraordinary acts of gallantry, resulting in two Param Vir Chakras (PVC), India's highest military decoration.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Arun Khetarpal (Posthumous).
  - Major Hoshiar Singh.

### Quick Fact

**Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal**

- **Early Life** - He was born on October 14, 1950, in Pune into a distinguished military family.
- **Commissioning** - After joining the National Defence Academy in 1967, he was commissioned into the **17 Poona Horse** Battalions on June 13, 1971.
- During the 1971 Indo-Pak War, he commanded two tanks against a superior Pakistani force.
- He died in the war on December 16, 1971, a day before the ceasefire.
- **Award** - He was posthumously awarded the **Param Vir Chakra**, India's highest wartime gallantry award (the **youngest Param Vir Chakra awardee**).
- He is remembered as a symbol of courage and sacrifice in Indian military history.

## References

1. [Indian Express | Ikkis: Real-life story of Arun Khetarpal](#)
2. [Aviation Defence Universe | Battle of Basantar 1971 War](#)

