

Rifleman Suraj Gurung was 22 years old and born and raised in the hill town of Gorkha in Nepal. He passed the notoriously gruelling process for Gurkha selection into the British Army in December 2007; becoming the first member of his family to achieve this feat.

In early January 2008 he made the journey from the tranquil foothills of the Nepalese Himalaya to Catterick in North Yorkshire as a trainee Rifleman ready to begin the arduous months of Gurkha infantry training.

In October 2008 he completed this training and travelled to Brunei to join 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles. As a result of his good command of English and his obvious intelligence he was immediately selected to be the Platoon Radio Operator. This position is normally reserved for a senior Rifleman and as such it was testament to the high regard in which he was held so early on in his career.

Rifleman Suraj returned to the United Kingdom in August 2009 and was selected as the lead man in his patrol, known as the vallon man, for the upcoming tour to Afghanistan. His ability had again been singled out.

He deployed on Op HERRICK 12 in April 2010 and even from the start of the tour he was always confident and calm under pressure. As a soldier he excelled here in Afghanistan. As the point man of every patrol he led his multiple unflinchingly across some of the most daunting and uncertain terrain, day after day, time after time.

For six months he had been finding IEDs and selecting safe routes, keeping those following behind safe.

Only recently married he leaves behind his wife and family in Nepal.

His family said:

"Our family is devastated with the news of Suraj's death in Afghanistan on 2 October 2010. He was a very caring son and loving husband. He followed his forefather's footsteps as both his grand father and father served with the British in India: and his father- in- law served in the British Army.

"He loved the army and was very proud to be a Gurkha: and died doing a job he loved. His family members are very proud of him."

Lieutenant Colonel G M Strickland MBE, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"Rifleman Suraj Gurung was the Vallon man for my Tactical Headquarters Team. Throughout this tour, he led the way through areas of high Improvised Explosive Device risk with fortitude and courage. Never once did he complain or shy away from his duty, despite the fact that his team had suffered a partial detonation of one device and found several others during their time in Afghanistan.

"This was his first operational tour. It is telling that when we trawled the battalion for photographs of Suraj, the ones that came forward showed him with his arms around groups of grinning local children. He had a good heart, and was here to help the Afghan people.

"He was a very fine Gurkha soldier; tough but compassionate, and always there for others. To all around him he was a source of strength. His ready smile is now gone from us, but his memory remains. We mourn his passing, and share in the grief of his family who have lost a very special man. I am intensely proud to have served with him."

Major David Jones, Officer Commanding C (Mogaung) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"Rifleman Suraj Gurung was killed in action whilst on patrol in the Nahr-e Saraj District of Helmand Province. As he was returning to his base he was caught in the blast of a suicide bomber.

"Rifleman Suraj was everything that the man who killed him was not. He was brave, courageous, considerate, compassionate and kind. He truly believed in the job that he was doing and took immense pride in the fact that he was helping people less fortunate than himself every single day.

"A cracking soldier, respected by all, he had unflinchingly led his multiple down some of the most daunting alleyways and across some of the most haunting ground, every single day for the last six months. He was one of the very best of his generation and almost certainly destined for promotion.

"I personally will remember him for his trademark booming voice cheerfully singing out 'morning

sahib' as he passed my office on his way to breakfast each day. Tomorrow there will be no such greeting. Rifleman Suraj was the life and soul of his multiple.

"There was nothing that he would not do for anyone. A gentle character, yet incredibly brave, he will be sorely and sadly missed by every single man in the Company. He had an exceptionally bright future, but we should treasure his past, because he made a difference, he contributed, and the world is a better place for him having been in it."

Major Khusiman Gurung MVO, Gurkha Major, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"A dark cloud has been cast over us all by the tragic loss of Rifleman Suraj Gurung. His life was taken in a cowardly act whilst he was carrying out an important role for the security and development of Afghanistan. In my view Rifleman Suraj was a true Gurkha soldier with a promising future.

"He was utterly loyal and dedicated to his profession; it was a job he loved. He was known for being courageous, selfless and ambitious and he will be remembered as such. He will always remain in our hearts and memories. Our thoughts and prayers go to his wife, Permila, and family currently in Nepal."

Captain Rupert Anderson, Adjutant, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"In 2007 I was working as part of the Gurkha recruiting and selection team in Pokhara, Nepal. I remember Rifleman Suraj Gurung sitting in front of me, awaiting interview, as a potential recruit hoping to make the grade and be one of the 230 selected to join the British Army.

"I cannot remember all of the 17,349 potential recruits that year but Rifleman Suraj Gurung stood out from the moment he appeared. When I returned to regimental duty in the 1st Battalion it was no surprise to discover that he had gone on to become an outstanding Gurkha soldier forging his own path by leading from the front.

"His dedication to his wife, family and friends was evident from his nocturnal internet usage here in Afghanistan. My walk back to the accommodation from the office late each night will not be the same without his enthusiastic 'goodnight sahib' booming out from the internet room here in the patrol base.

"Rifleman Suraj grew up in the very place from which our Regimental history began almost 200 years ago. He now enters that history and we shall remember him as a Gurkha who truly upheld the traditions of courage, pride and loyalty."

Captain Rambahadur Pun, Company Second in Command, C (Mogaung) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"C Company has lost one of its finest soldiers. Rifleman Suraj Gurung was an outstanding

member of this Company. He was bright, proactive, energetic and compassionate.

"I have been entirely impressed by Rifleman Suraj Gurung since the day he joined the Company. Within a few months his Platoon Commander had identified him as a candidate for a Direct Entry commission. That is how good he was. Like every member of the Company, I am stunned by his unexpected passing.

"Our pain, however, is nothing compared to what his wife, Permila, and his family are going through. He will be sorely missed by all members of C Company but his memory will always remain. May god give strength to his wife and his family during these tragic days."

Captain Shureshkumar Thapa, 7 Platoon Commander, C (Mogaung) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South wrote on behalf on his Platoon:

"Rifleman Suraj Gurung was one of the best soldiers within C Company. Although he was in a different platoon his work and talents were well known about and acknowledged by everybody in 7 Platoon.

"He was a distinguished character and stood out from the crowd immediately. On operations he was working as a vallon man and leading the patrol. Everybody trusted his judgement and skill.

"Rifleman Suraj was a loyal, happy and well disciplined man. He served with a positive attitude and all members of the Company are struck with the grief at his passing.

"May God bless his family, especially his wife back in Nepal, with the power to escape from this sorrow. May his soul rest in peace. Suraj, we will remember you with all of our hearts."

Warrant Officer Class 1 Kushalkumar Gurung, Regimental Sergeant Major, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"Rifleman Suraj Gurung was utterly professional and through being so he was well known across the battalion. He was very intelligent and this resulted in his potential being clearly visible to the chain of command.

"We are deeply saddened by his tragic death and he will be greatly missed by us all. We offer our condolences in this difficult hour to his wife and family. We pray for the peace of the departed soul."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Lalitbahadur Gurung, Company Sergeant Major, C (Mogaung) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"Rifleman Suraj Gurung was one of the best vallon men and radio operators in the Company. He was naturally active and would always volunteer himself for every event either in the

barracks or on operations. We have been devastated by the news that he was killed.

"He will be missed by all of the company personnel, his soldiering skills, personality and enthusiasm are irreplaceable. He will be always remembered and my deepest condolences go to his family and wife during this tragic time."

"We were shocked by the death of our namberie Suraj Gurung. He was a very helpful, talkative and cheerful person."

His friends Rifleman Subash Gurung, Rifleman Pradeep Gurung and Rifleman Naresh Rai, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South

Corporal Padambahadur Pun and Corporal Bharatkumar Pun, his Section Commanders, C (Mogaung) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"Rifleman Suraj Gurung was the most active soldier in 9 Platoon. He was always a volunteer proving to be a highly motivated soldier. During Pre-Deployment Training and on operations he demonstrated that his basic skills and drills were of the highest of standards.

"Under the direction of the multiple commander he has led the team expertly over the past six months. Rifleman Suraj was a cheerful and friendly soldier and was highly regarded among his friends and commanders. He was an optimistic soldier who was always ready to tackle any problem.

"He was a true infantryman. We express our deep sympathy and condolences to his wife and family following this untimely tragedy. He will always remain in our hearts and minds."

His close friends Rifleman Asham Thapa and Rifleman Santosh Gurung, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"Rifleman Suraj Gurung was frank and friendly to all of us; he never hesitated to talk to his senior gurujis and was always a very honest and hard working person. He was a brave soldier, always wanting to lead the multiple from the front and loved the responsibility of being the vallon man, the job he was doing when he died.

"He would always help and mentor those junior to him and provide advice to his commanders. He was a very good shot, competing at Bisley in the annual shooting competition for the Battalion. He could often be found messaging his wife on the internet, picking up the nickname 'netboy'.

"He will be sorely missed by all those in C Company, particularly his namberies, he will always be remembered in our hearts and he his actions throughout this tour have made us proud. Our deepest condolences go out to his wife and family at this time."

His friends Rifleman Subash Gurung, Rifleman Pradeep Gurung and Rifleman Naresh Rai, 1st

Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e Saraj South said:

"We were shocked by the death of our namberie Suraj Gurung. He was a very helpful, talkative and cheerful person. He was a well known member of our intake and a good professional soldier within the Battalion.

"He always supported his colleagues, ensuring he was in a position to help. May God give strength to his family to fight through this tragedy. He was a good namberie and he always will be. May his soul rest in heaven."