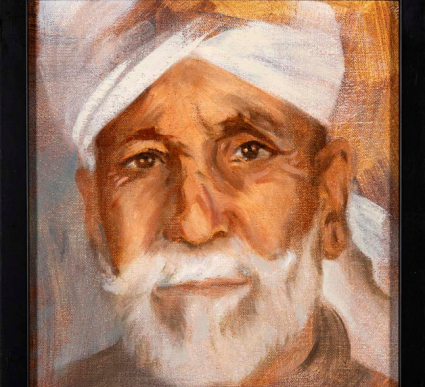




# Subedar Liaqat Hussain MC

## Inherited Service, Inherited Silence: A Postcolonial British Story

Written by Tahira Manzoor Ahmad (Glasgow), granddaughter of late WW2 veteran Subedar Liaqat Hussain MC

I was born in Britain to Pakistani parents, but my story like so many others shaped by empire, began long before I ever took my first breath. It began in a land that was once ours: rich in culture, resources, and beauty, before it was invaded and systematically stripped under the shadow of colonisation. My family's roots were embedded in that soil, soil that bore witness to both love and loss, continuity and rupture.

Colonisation did not merely dispossess land. It confiscated futures, eroded dignity, and recast history through an imperial lens that marginalised the voices of those to governed. My family imposed and the resilience it demanded.

My maternal grandfather, **Subedar Major Liaqat Hussain, MC (Honorary Captain)**, stands another pillar of this inherited legacy of service. A second World War veteran, he rose through the ranks to become a **Subedar Major**, one of the most senior and respected non-commissioned positions available to Indian soldiers. This rank was not given lightly; it was earned through years of discipline, leadership, and the trust of both those he commanded and those he served under.

He was awarded the **Military Cross (MC)** for bravery, a decoration that speaks not only to courage under fire, but to extraordinary conduct in the face of danger. Yet even this honour, bestowed during war time, did not translate into lasting recognition or security in peace. Though later granted the title of **honorary Captain**, he like so many colonial soldiers, found that symbolic honours rarely dismantled the structural inequalities they were meant to obscure.

He left military service at the age of **50**, having devoted the majority of his adult life to an army and an empire that relied heavily on men like him, while seldom fully acknowledging their humanity, leadership, or sacrifice. His story reflects the paradox faced by many colonial soldiers: trusted to lead in war but marginalised in memory.

The following is a description of his bravery that was printed in the London Gazette 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1946 citation for which he was awarded the Military Cross (MC) medal: once when returning from WETLET to MEIKTILA with his battery it was ambushed, the enemy firing machine guns on to the battery transport. Then an enemy section charged towards the vehicles throwing

grenades. Subedar LIAQAT HUSSAIN, taking a Bren gun killed three of them and wounded one the remainder fled. He then got his gun in to action and held the enemy until help from the infantry arrived.

My paternal grandfather **Karamat Hussain**, served as a Sepoy in the British Indian Army for fifteen years, from 12 august 1916 to 12 August 1931, and hailed from Gujar Khan. He enlisted young and was discharged at just **33** years of age, having given the prime years of his life to the military service during a period defined by global conflict and imperial control. Like countless soldiers from the Indian subcontinent, he served with courage and discipline, yet returned home without the security, honour, or institutional recognition afforded to his British counterparts. His service was essential to the empire's survival, yet his sacrifice was rendered largely invisible once his duty had been fulfilled.

My father, **Manzoor Hussain**, followed in the footsteps of these men at just 18 years of age, serving in the British Indian Army under a flag that symbolised both duty and domination. During active service in **Burma**, he was injured when shrapnel from a bombing struck his leg a wound that marked him physically and shaped the course of his life thereafter. Despite this injury, and despite all he had already given, he was left with no options. He left his homeland not in pursuit of opportunity or adventure, but out of necessity for his young family.

He came to Britain and worked in a **factory**, contributing to the post-war reconstruction of the very nation whose imperial system had fractured his own. This was not an uncommon story. It was repeated in countless households across Britain; life built on the labour of men who were essential to rebuilding the country yet rarely embraced by it.

For all the sacrifice, loyalty, and labour extended by my family, there was no genuine welcome. Like many immigrant families, we lived with the enduring ache of displacement a longing for a homeland altered by history, and a persistent search for belonging in a society that often positioned us as perpetual outsiders.

I grew up believing in the values Britain professes: equality, fairness, and freedom. Yet lived experience revealed the distances between principle and practice. I worked relentlessly, driven by both pride and necessity, only to encounter silent, systemic barriers. I was assessed not solely on ability or character, but on race, belief and surname. The discrimination I encountered was not always overt, but it was consistent embedded within institutions, workplace, and social structures, forming an invisible ceiling encountered by many who share my background.

This account is not offered in bitterness but in truth. The harm is real, and it extends across generations particularly among those repeatedly instructed to be grateful for inclusion that remains conditional. Our history did not begin in Britain, nor does it conclude here. The longing for land, for rootedness, for a place where belonging is not interrogated, persists.

**Yet so does hope**

I continue to believe in the goodness of individuals, having encountered kindness many times. At the same time, I believe it is imperative that stories such as mine and those of my parents and grandparents are heard. These are stories service, survival, and quiet resilience. They speak to the enduring strength required to love a nation that may never fully reciprocate that love.

This is for all those still searching for home.

For those who carry the weight of history and stand with dignity.

Our story matters and it must continue to be told.