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<div style="text-align:center">**12**</div>

INDIAN ARMY IN WORLD WAR I AND II

India Troops under the British, participated in both the World Wars. As you have learnt that, the native Indian sepoys were organized into 'Regular Army' after the First war of Independence in 1857, and they trained and practiced the art of fighting under the British troops and officers. It was during the First World War that they got a real feel of the battle and faced the tough conditions of war. They were away from their homes and in foreign land, braving the difficult conditions and the cold weather in Europe and later in Afghanistan, Africa and Burma. Indian soldiers won many gallantry medals and were among the highly decorated soldiers. Their disciplined conduct made them favourites in all the countries they had gone to. It is therefore important to know the sacrifices made by our brave soldiers and officers who actually helped the allied powers win the wars.

Objectives

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain why the first and the second World Wars were fought;
- explain India's contributions in the battles of the WW-I;
- list the major battle of World War-I and
- assess the role to Indian army in World War-II.

12.1 World War I

For the first time in the history of the world, many countries took part in a major war that extended for four years from 28 July 1914 to 11 November 1918 and which affected several countries of the world as well. It was called the Great War or the First World War. Before we see why the war was fought let us see the countries involved in the conflict. These weres Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (called the Central Powers) against Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan and the United States (called the Allied Powers). It was a war on very large-scale. Thousands of troops were involved and a large number of battles were fought, which caused extensive damage, destruction of property and death of numerous civilians

Note

and soldiers. As a Colony of Britain the British Indian army too was involved in the war. Let us study the major wars and find out why it was fought and how did the British Indian army contribute to the war effort of the British and allies.

12.1.1 Reasons for the war

Many causes can be attributed to the outbreak of the war. Of the several causes for the starting of the war, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir apparent to the Austrian Empire, on 28 June 1914 at Sarajevo in Bosnia is considered as the spark. By this time, there was tension between the major European powers fuelled mainly by Germany's ambition to be a major power in Europe and as a competitor to Britain in commerce and trade. This had led to the formation of two power blocks in Europe, the Triple Alliance comprising Germany, Austria and Hungary; and the Triple Entente (entente means a friendly and informal understanding between countries) of England, France and Russia. Few would have imagined that the pistol shots in Sarajevo would lead to a brutal four-year war and would draw in most of the world. The countries had high nationalistic feelings, which contributed to economic policies, which caused competition with one another. Besides, there was no effective international organization that could serve to a arbitrated between the nations.

The other reason was that countries were entering into secret alliances (alliances means tractics between countries to help each other militaries) based on the personal ambitions of the political leaders. Such secret alliances further contributed to suspicions about the activities of the other country. Although many reasons contributed, the immediate cause as noted above was the Sarajevo incident in which the Crown Prince of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated along with his wife on 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo. Where was the war fought? See the map (Map 12.1) below to understand the countries where this war took place.

Map 12.1 The spread of world war-I

Module - III

Military History of the Colonial Era

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12.1.2 India's Participation in World War I

Let us now see the contribution of the Indian troops in World War I. At that time it was known as the British Indian Army or British Indian troops. The Indian troops were deployed in war without preparation and without proper clothing in a foreign land, in winters. Yet they played an important role as part of the allied forces and their performance in battle was remarkable and praised by all countries. Over 1.5 million soldiers from various parts of India including Punjab, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Tamil Nadu volunteered to take part in Britain's war effort. They fought both in the Western Front and in the Eastern theatre of war and continued even beyond 1918 in Afghanistan & Persia (up to 1920). The gallant Indian soldiers earned various medals and honors for their services. These include: 11 Victoria Cross, 5 Military Cross, 973 Indian Order Of Merit & 3130 Indian Distinguished Service Medals during the WW I. As far as the number of regiments that took part in the war is concerned about 12 Cavalry Regiments, 13 Infantry Regiments & several other units of other Arms / Services participated in the 13 Campaigns of WW 1. India was fighting on the British side and the only satisfaction that Indians could have was that the war served as 'training ground for fighting in a modern warfare'. In 1914, at the outset of the war, the strength of the British Indian army was 23,000 British and 78,000 Indian soldiers. India sent the following contingents to various theatres at the outset of war:

France	2xInfantry Divisions; 2xCavalry Divisions 4xArtillery Brigades
Persian Gulf Egypt	1xInfantry Division 6xInfantry Brigades; 1xCavalry Brigade

India provided Britain with not just men and material, but finances as well to fight World War 1. India gave £100 million towards the cost of the war. An initial offer of a lump sum of £100 million was made in 1917. Three quarters of this amount was raised through War loans or bonds and the rest given by the Government of India. In terms of direct monetary contribution India gave £146.2 million from its revenues. According to one account, there were approximately 172,815 animals, which included 85,953 horses, 65,398 ponies and mules, 10,781 camels, 5,061 bullocks, 5,692 dairy cattle and 369.1 million tons of supplies and stores, which left the ports of India for various destinations. Within the first few weeks of the war, India supplied 70,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 6,00,002 rifles, mortars and machine guns. Considerable quantities of shell cases were manufactured. The Army Clothing Department produced 41,920,223 garments between 1914 and 1918. Raw materials like rough tanned hides; wool, manganese, mica, salt, timber, bamboo, raw silk, hemp, coir, tea, rubber,

petroleum oils and foodstuffs were supplied. A total of 2,737,862 tons of items such as rice, flour, atta, ghee, sugar, tea, tinned meat, grain and hay for animals, jam, biscuits and firewood were shipped from India up to March 1919. You can see the huge effort that is required to maintain troops in war. More importantly, India had all these even in those times and could proudly give to the countries that needed them.

Intext Questions **12.1**

1.   Which incident in Sarajevo in Bosnia started the WW I?

2.   Name any three countries which were part of an Alliance in World War I?

3.   Approximately how many Indian soldiers took part in World War I?

12.2 Major Battles of World War I

Let us now see the battles in which the Indian soldiers were deployed. These are given in a chronological order of month and year. Indian forces were deployed during the War. There were 7 forces, created to fight in different parts of Europe and Africa. The Indians managed to either win in attack operations or defend effectively a given area of ground. The war had new weapons, new tactics of fighting from a trench which is also called Trench warfare. Imagine if enemy is sitting inside a dug out and you have to attack and capture him. The attacker is exposed and the defender is well protected inside the trench. That is why sheer bravery was required to win a battle. But it also caused huge casualties in the form of death and injuries. What is Victoria Cross? It is the highest medal given for an act of exceptional courage shown in battle. It is an award given by the Government of Britain. 11 Indian soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross for their courage and bravery in battle during the Fist World War.

(i)   Role in YPRES (BELGIUM)

The first major battle in which Indian troops took part was the First Battle of Ypres, a small market town in Flanders bordering present day Belgium. In Ypres, Belgium, the allies consisting of British Expeditionary Force(BEF), French and Belgium troops took part in the attack against Germans. There were five battles fought in Ypres and the Indian army now called BEF fought in all the battles. Troops of the Indian Corps were fully committed there and suffered heavy causalities.

On 22nd April 1915 the second Battle of Ypres began with the first gas attack in the history of warfare. Again the British Indian Corps was called upon to fill the gap in the lines. Among the British Indian troops the warning was spread. In those days there was no gas mask to defend against such gas attacks. The Indian army gave a good display of fighting skills and brave actions enabled the

allies to gain victory over the Germans.

(ii)   Role In France

With Britain entering the War on 4 August 1914, the Indian Army was soon drafted to fight in the battlefields of France and Flanders on 6 September 1914, this being the first time that Indian soldiers were deployed in Europe. The Indian Corps comprising of the Lahore and Meerut Divisions fought in the Battle of Somme, Passchendaele, Ypres, Neuve Chapelle where they provided half the attacking force for the British. Indian troops fought in Flanders where the bravery of Sepoy Khudadad Khan earned him the prestigious Victoria Cross (VC), the highest decoration for bravery in war awarded by the Queen of England. He became the first Indian to receive this honour.

(iii)   Battle of Neuve Chapelle

The Battle of Neuve Chapelle, which took place in March 1915 was a British offensive in the Artois region of France and broke through at Neuve Chapelle. On 10 March, the British began a thirty-five minute Artillery bombardment by 90 x 18 pdr field guns of the Indian Corps and the IV Corps, on the German wire, which was destroyed within ten minutes. The bombardment was followed by an infantry assault.

The Garhwal Brigade of the Meerut Division, Indian Corps attacked with all four battalions on a 600 yards front, from Port Arthur to Pont Logy. The Indian troops forced their way through the German wire and took 200 yards of the German front trench, despite many casualties. 40,000 Allied troops took part during the battle and 7,000 British and 4,200 Indian suffered casualties. The 7th Division had 2,791 casualties, the 8th Division 4,814 losses, the Meerut Division 2,353 casualties and the Lahore Division 1,694 losses. German casualties from 9-20 March were 10,000 men. Indian army soldiers won many Victoria Cross.

Khudadad Khan (129 Duke of Connought's Own Baluchis), Rfn Gabar SinghNegi, (2nd Battalion 39 Garhwal Rifles), Subedar Mir Dast (55 Coke's Rifles Frontier Force), Naik Darwin Singh Negi (1st Battalion 39 Garhwal Rifles), Lance Dafadar Gobind Singh (2nd LANCERS), and Rifleman Kulbir Thapa (2nd Battalion 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles) are few of them.

(iv)   Role in Gallipoli Peninsula

The first Indian troops involved in the initial landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula in April 1915 were the 21st Kohat Mountain Battery and the 26th Jacob's Mountain Battery. On 4 June 1915, the 14th Sikhs comprising 15 British Officers, 14

Indian Officers, and 514 men, moved out to attack and capture Turkish trenches. The 14th Sikhs won glory in this advance and several soldiers won the Indian distinguished Service Medal. The performance of the 14th Sikhs in the assault of Koja Chaman Tepe, which they failed to reach, was described by General Birdwood as "A feat which is without parallel". Though no decisive result was obtained and the Allies had no substantial gains from the Gallipoli Campaign, the Indian troops, including the Medical Services, displayed great bravery and courage in the rest of the operations on the Peninsula and several were granted the Indian Order of Merit.

(v) Indian Army in Mesopotamia

The largest Indian Army force to serve abroad was the Indian Expeditionary Force D in Mesopotamia, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir John Nixon. The Mesopotamian campaign was largely an Indian campaign and saw deployment of the largest Indian Army force abroad. The 16th Infantry Brigade of the 6th (Poona) Division was sent from Bombay for the Mesopotamia Campaign, under General Sir Arthur Barrett, when War was declared with Turkey in November 1914. A series of success followed including the capture of the port of Fao, dislodging of the Turks at Sahil; capture of Basra, which was a major step in protecting oilfields and refineries; storming of Shaiba-Barjisiyah; and the submission of Khafajiyah, Amara, and Nasariyah. The campaign experienced a setback at the Battle of Ctesiphon and the Indian troops retreated to Kut-al-Amara, where General Townshend decided to hold the position instead of marching down river towards Basra and thus, began the siege of Kut. Several unsuccessful attempts to lift the siege resulted in the Battle of Sheikh Sa'ad, Battle of Wadi, Battle of Hanna, and the relief attempt by General George Gorringe, usually referred to as the First Battle of Kut. The total casualties during Mesopotamia Campaign amounted to 92,501. Nayak Shamad khan (89 Punjab regiment,), Lance Nayak Lala (41Dogra Regiment) and sepoy Chhata Singh (9 Bhopal Infantry) won prestigious Victoria cross in Mesopotania.

(vi) Indian Army in Egypt and Palestine

Indian soldiers of the Sirhind Brigade were part of the first troops providing the defence of the Suez Canal. Troops from the Imperial Service Troops, which comprised men from the Armies of the Indian states, were part of the Indian effort in Egypt, alongside the 10th and 11th Indian Division, the Bikaner Camel Corps and three batteries of Mountain Artillery. By 1917, Indian troops were a significant part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. On 23 September 1918, the 15th Imperial Service Brigade comprising of the Mysore and Jodhpur Lancers undertook one of the most famous cavalry actions in the Great War and recaptured

the city of Haifa in Palestine. One of the lesser-known units of the Indian Army was the Bikaner Camel Corps. formed before the Great War. They later fought in Palestine and some of its personnel became part of the Imperial Camel Corps formed later in the conflict. Rifleman Karan Bahadur Rana (3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles) and Risaldar Badlu Singh 2nd Battalion (14 Murray Jat Lancers (Deccan Horse) won the Victoria cross for their extra ordinatory services at the front of Egypt/Palestine.

(vii) Indian Army in East Africa

Initial attempts at attacking German East Africa were foiled, until the arrival of the Indian Expeditionary Force B consisting of the 27th (Bangalore) Brigade from the 9th (Secunderabad) Division and an Imperial Service Infantry Brigade, a pioneer battalion, a Mountain Artillery battery and Engineers were sent to Tanganyika with the task of invading German East Africa. The force under the command of Major General Arthur Aitken landed at Tanga on 2-3 November 1914. In the following Battle of Tanga, Aitken's 8,000 men were badly beaten by the 1,000 men under their German commander Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck. The force re-embarked on 5 November 1914, having suffered 817 casualties and the loss of several hundred rifles, 16 machine guns and 600,000 rounds of ammunition.

Activity   12.1

Take a world map and locate the places where the Indian soldiers fought a battle during World War I. Name the countries where the wars were fought.

Intext Questions   12.1

1.   How many Indian soldiers won the Victoria Cross in World War I?

2.   How many expeditionary forces were formed for the war?

3.   In which countries did Indians take part in the battles?

4.   From which year to which year did the War take place?

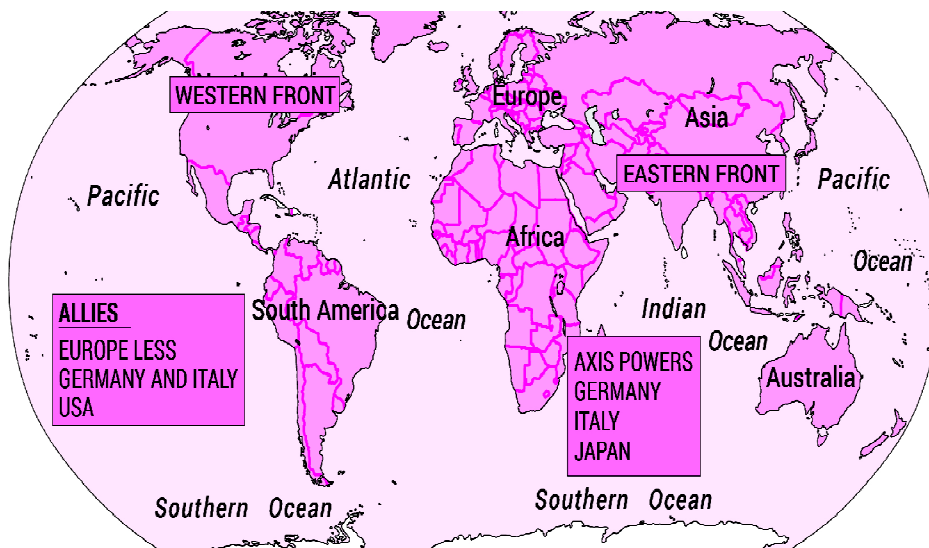## 12.3 Indian Army's Participation in World War II

We have learnt that the First World War was fought because countries did not trust each other and wanted to establish their power over others. Something similar happened during the Second World War. Adolf Hitler wanted to establish the German might and power over entire Europe and Russia. Mussolini of Italy joined Hitler and later the Japanese also accepted this idea to form an Axis of power in Asia. That is why we had

two fronts where the war was fought. One was in Europe and Russia and the other in SE Asia. This war lasted from 1939 to 1945 and was called a Global War. This was the war, which witnessed the dropping of the first atomic bomb at Hiroshima and then at Nagasaki by the Americans. At the start of the war in Europe, Japan had already invaded China and captured most major cities of China including Shanghai, Nanking and Wuhan.

The Second World War (Map12.2) is said to have broken out with German aggression on Poland on 1 September 1939. The war was fought between the Allies (Britain, France, Soviet Union, USA and their friends) on the one side and Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) on the other. World War II was a titanic conflict that dwarfed even WW-I in scale and magnitude. Over 30 countries fought in this war and the damage and destruction including deaths was colossal. Let us identify the continents and countries involved in this war. This war can be divided into battles on two Fronts, viz; Western Front (Europe and Africa) and the Eastern Front (SE Asia). Accordingly the countries formed alliances with the Axis Powers consisting of Germany, Italy and Japan and the Allies with balance of Europe, Russia and USA.

Map 12.2 Map of the World War II 1939-1945 - World Atlas

As we have seen in WW I, Great Britain became an automatic ally and got involved in the war. Therefore, Indian troops, which had contributed tremendous to success in the previous war, became a natural choice because of their courage, loyalty and discipline. Indian army by then had earned the privilege of being a very reliable and much needed force for any war. Let us see how and where did all the Indian soldiers fight this time.

But before that you must understand some words used in military to describe wars and battles. What is a Theatre of Operation? In the context of military it signifies an area where war is fought. In ancient times there was a chosen battleground to fight. As forces became large and countries got involved, the capture of large areas required separate planning and coordination. The term Theatre of Operation was coined to signify specific areas where battles will be fought in order to achieve the desired aims.

Indian army was deployed for war in Europe, Africa, Middle East and SE Asia. The war happened in three continents. In SE Asia they fought against the Japanese, In Ethiopia against the Italians, in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt against both the Italians and the Germans, and in Italy against the Germans.

12.3.1 Eastern Theatre

Having planned the operations in detail and mustered adequate forces, the Japanese offensive commenced on 8 December 1941, by a simultaneous air and naval bombardment of Hong Kong (from mainland China) and Malaya peninsula (from Thailand), along with the attack on Pearl Harbor a day prior. The Allies were deceived into believing the direction of attack and were surprised when the attacks took place. The Japanese quickly captured parts of Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Burma. They had reached Manipur, Mizoram and Imphal. It is here that Indian troops halted the advance of japanese by theirs sheer grit and determination and turned the course of the war.

In Malaya, the Allied troops fought to stop the offensive by occupying successive delaying positions based on rivers, road communications, towns and villages, but were by-passed by the Japanese Forces, who adopted the tactics of infiltration (moving inside enemy territory quietly in small groups of men), encirclement (surrounding enemy from attacking from unexpected directions), establishing road blocks for cutting routes of withdrawal and launched multi-directional attacks, often through thick jungles, swamps and rubber plantations.

Fighting was severe from both sides, casualties heavy, but Japanese troops pressed their attacks fiercely, especially at night. The British under Field Marshal Slim started an offensive to drive the Japanese back. Five Divisions of Indian Army took part in the operations in the Arakans (Burma).

The US Air Force provided air support as well as Special Forces. The attacks were very fierce and there were numerous casualties on both sides. Indians won 18 Victoria Cross and many other awards for their bravery. The Indian army was well trained now to fight in the jungles and used the same tactics of the Japanese to infiltrate and hit the enemy from the rear. The well-planned and brave actions made the Japanese to surrender, thus ending the war in this part of the globe.

Among the battles fought against the Japanese, the Battle of Kohima (present day Nagaland) and Imphal (Manipur) are considered the fiercest battles in modern history. "The Japanese regard the battle of Imphal to be their greatest defeat ever," said Robert Lyman, author of "Japan's Last Bid for Victory: The Invasion of India 1944." "And it gave Indian soldiers a belief in their own martial ability and showed that they could fight as well or better than anyone else."

Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1942, asserted that the British "couldn't have come through both wars (World War I and II) if they hadn't had the Indian Army."

12.3.2 Western Theatre

Let us shift attention to Africa where the Allies were fighting the Germans and Italians. Indian troops were shifted from Asia to Africa where some of the most remarkable battles were fought.
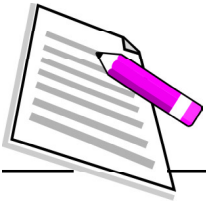
(i) In Africa, the Italians and Germans had established bases in East Africa (Somalia, Eritrea, Abyssinia) and North Africa (Libya, Tunisia etc). These bases threatened the sea routes of merchant ships and would seriously affect trade and commerce of European nations. Hence, capture of these countries became a necessity. As part of Allied forces, three Infantry Divisions were deployed to fight and defeat the Axis powers of Germany and Italy. Battles were fought in the Saharan deserts, Egypt, Sudan and Somaliland.

(ii) Iraq and Persia were the next areas of battle where the oil fields were to be protected against Germans. The Germans at that time were advancing into Russia. Indian army captured oil fields at Basra, Abadan. After the surrender of Iraq and Iran, the Indian forces were deployed in Iraq for internal security duties. The Allies did not want the Germans to control Syria and Lebanon. These two countries would also control the vital sea link of Suez Canal. Therefore, they launched an offensive to take control of these two countries. This attack was very successful and Syria and Lebanon were quickly captured.

(iii) In Europe, the Germans had taken control of France, Poland, Hungary and were in the process to capture, Greece and Cyprus. By this action they would create a link between Africa-Europe and Iraq. Indian army took part in the capture of Italy in October 1943, and later of Greece in 1944.

INDIAN ARMY VICTORIA CROSS WINNERS IN WORLD WAR II

WWII - East Africa 1941			
Rank	First Name	Last Name	Regiment
2nd Lieutenant	Premindra Singh	BHAGAT	Royal Bombay Sappers & Miners 4th Bn (Outram's),
Jamadar	Richpal	RAM	6th Rajputana Rifles

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Military History of the Colonial Era

Note

WWII - North Africa 1943			
Rank	First Name	Last Name	Regiment
Coy Havildar Major	Chhelu	RAM	4th Bn (Outram's), 6th Rajputana Rifles
			1st Bn, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles
Subadar	Lalbahadur	THAPA	(The Sirmoor Rifles)
WWII - Burma 1943 - 1945			
Rank	First Name	Last Name	Regiment
Sepoy	Fazal	DIN	7th Bn, 10th Baluchi Regiment 2nd Bn, 5th Royal Gurkha
Havildar	Gaje	GHALE	Rifles (FF) 3rd Bn, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles
Rifleman	Bhanbhagta	GURUNG	(The Sirmoor Rifles)
Rifleman	Lachhiman	GURUNG	4th Bn, 8th Gurkha Rifles
Jamadar	Abdul	HAFIZ	3rd Bn, 9th Jat Regiment
Lieutenant	Karamjeet	JUDGE	4th Bn, 15th Punjab Regiment
Rifleman	Ganju	LAMA	1st Bn, 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles
Rifleman	Tulbahadur	PUN	3rd Bn, 6th Gurkha Rifles
Rifleman	Agansing	RAI	2nd Bn, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles
Sepoy	Bhandari	RAM	16th Bn, 10th Baluchi Regiment
Lance Naik	Sher	SHAH	7th Bn, 16th Punjab Regiment
Naik George's	Gian	SINGH	4th Bn, 15th Punjab Regiment 1st Bn (King Own) (Ferozepore Sikhs),

Lance Naik	Nand	SINGH	11th Sikh Regiment
Lance Havildar	Parkash	SINGH	5th Bn, 8th Punjab Regiment
Jamadar	Prakash	SINGH	14th Bn, 13th Frontier Force Rifles
Jamadar	Ram Sarup	SINGH	2nd Bn, 1st Punjab Regiment 33 Bty, 30 Mountain Regiment,
Havildar	Umrao	SINGH	Indian Artillery
Jamadar	Netrabahadur	THAPA	2nd Bn, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles
WWII - Italy 1944 - 1945			
Rank	First Name	Last Name	Regiment
Naik	Yeshwant	GHADGE	3rd Bn, 5th Mahratta Light Infantry
Rifleman	Thaman	GURUNG	1st Bn, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles 6th Royal Bn (Scinde) 13th
Sepoy	Al	HAIDER	Frontier Force Rifles
Sepoy	Namdeo	JADHAV	1st Bn, 5th Mahratta Light Infantry
Sepoy	Kamal	RAM	3rd Bn, 8th Punjab Regiment
Rifleman	Sherbahadur	THAPA	1st Bn, 9th Gurkha Rifles

Intext Questions **12.2**

- The Second World War was fought from _____ to _____.

- The two Theatres of war were, _____ and _____.

- _____ number of Indians were awarded Victoria cross in WW II.

What you have learnt

- In both World Wars Indian army from all parts of the country was involved and they were trained and practiced the art of fighting in major conflicts

- Indian army fought bravely along with allied forces at both the western and eastern fronts

- The British who gave them various medals and honors for their services recognized the bravery of Indian soldiers.

- In view of the participation in the world war, Indian army had the experience of fighting modern warfare

- India contributed to the war effort of Britain not only by sending troops but also money and material

- In the Second World War II also Indian army took active role along with British side

- The war was fought between the allied troops of Britain, France, Soviet Union on one side and Axis powers comprising of Germany, Italy and Japan on the other side.

- The Second World War was also fought in all theatres and Indian army was utilized in all places

Terminal Exercises

1. Write a brief story on why World War I was fought?

2. State any two reasons why WW II to was fought?

3. Write short notes on following battles: Battle of Ypres, Battle of Neuve Chapelle.

4. Write short notes on Western theatre and Eastern theatre in World War II.

Answers to Intext Questions

12.1

(i)   11 Victoria Cross

(ii)   7

(iii)   France, Persian Gulf and Egypt

(iv)   1914-1918

Module - III

12.2

(i)   1939 to 1945

(ii)   Western and Eastern theatres.

(iii) 28

Note