



The medal that saved my life – a beneficiary of the charity The Gurkha Welfare Trust tells her story

Like most widows Tulsidevi Danai is very proud of her late husband and the bravery that earned him his war medal.

But as she holds up the battered broken medal bearing the likeness of King George VI, she appreciated its other significance: to her it is the difference between life and death.

She explains: “This medal is the evidence for getting my Welfare Pension from The Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT),” a pension which enables her to survive.

Tulsidevi’s husband Bakhansing Khatri was a Rifleman who earned the medal for his service as a Gurkha during the Second World War, where he fought in the jungles of Burma.

She still recalls the some of the stories her late husband told her about what he endured, fighting and serving in difficult terrain.

She said: “It was very hard for them. They didn’t have enough supplies. When he used to fill his water bottle in the jungle it was dirty and full of leeches but they had no choice but to drink it.”

During the war, her husband also faced poor and dangerous conditions when he later became a prisoner.

She explains: “He was taken prisoner by the Japanese soldiers. He told me that he and the other Gurkhas were surrounded and that, when their bullets ran out, they were captured. Life at the camp was hard and he was beaten and they often had no food for days.”

After the war, Bakhansing returned to his home district of Lamjung, Nepal where the couple were eventually married and went on to have three children together. Bakhansing supported his family by working as a subsistence farmer, growing enough food to feed his family but with no way of saving for retirement.

She remembers: “Some thieves once came and stole his other medals. This is all I have left.

“Bakhansing made a big sacrifice to earn this. It means a lot to me. It’s a memory of him. It’s been nearly 20 years since he died.”

Bakhansing and his wife first received some support in the form of a GWT Welfare Pension in 1994. But it was when the former Rifleman passed away in 1999 that his widow began to rely heavily on the support of GWT and the pension they provide.

The Welfare Pension is awarded to impoverished Gurkha veterans or widows who aren't eligible for the standard Army pension. It currently stands at 10,500 Nepalese Rupees per month (around £76).

The rate is calculated each year using a 'shopping basket' of basic goods such as rice, vegetables and cooking oil. While modest, it provides enough to get by in Nepal.

As an elderly lady, unable to work in one of the poorest countries in the world with no social welfare system, a GWT pension makes all the difference.

Tulsidevi said: “Without the pension, what could I do? I can’t steal to live. This is all I have. It is very hard to get by.”

As well as receiving a pension, Tulsidevi also gets support in the form of free local healthcare.

She said: “I often go to The Gurkha Welfare Trust doctors as they are close to where I live. It’s very useful to have this free healthcare.”

Today, GWT provides financial, medical and development aid to Gurkha veterans, their families and communities.

The charity is critical for ex-servicemen and their dependants, who are often unable to work through age, illness or injury. For many, the GWT Welfare Pension is often all that stands between a Gurkha veteran and their family and destitution.

Beneficiaries like Tulsidevi understand this implicitly. She said: “There’s not a lot I can say to those who are supporting me other than thank you. You are doing a good thing.”

For more information about The Gurkha Welfare Trust please visit www.gwt.org.uk.

- ENDS -