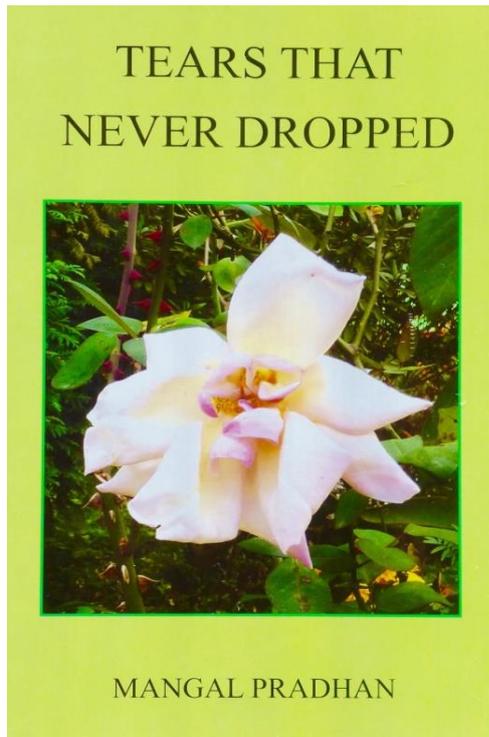


## 'Tears That Never Dropped'

By Mangal Pradhan



Copies of this book are priced at £5 including postage and can be obtained from Maj J Patchett by phoning 01540 661800.

Review by John Patchett

There have recently been published some very impressive autobiographical accounts by Gurkha soldiers about their war fighting and other operations. Here, for a change but equally welcome, is a short romantic novel by a Gurkha Colour Sergeant who has been retired for some time. I knew Mangal Pradhan when we were both posted to Brunei many years ago. He served his writing apprenticeship with carefully crafted magazine articles, based on his military experiences and his home life in Kurseong in Darjeeling District. This is his first work of fiction.

'Tears that Never Dropped' sets out to make us reflect on the military life we live and its impact on others, particularly our families and others we love. Mangal does not adopt a moralizing tone and he desists from

elaborating on the barracks existence of Gurkha soldiers overseas. He safely assumes the reader will know enough about that literally uniform experience. He expends his energy instead on relating how one individual finds that love and army life can often make difficult bedfellows. Here is the joy and hope of youth, offset by the sorrow and regret of later years.

In both action and appearance the main characters are convincingly developed, and their dialogue is well thought out. The rural setting is brought to life with a local artist's eye, whilst the hubbub of the towns passed through also rings true. The author shows with the end result that he spent a long time devising the strands that form a plot with considerable tension and true surprises. His use of idiom puts many native English writers to shame.

Mangal confused me by giving the hero his own first name. Once I realized it was clearly not an autobiography, I felt some relief and began to enjoy the story. My only other gripe is at the proliferation of minor characters whose role is sometimes unclear. But as a first novel this is very promising indeed. I thoroughly recommend it to all who want to read of the trials of a distant love and the pressures of separation, set in a wild and wonderful part of the world.

Mangal had this attractive little book printed in Kalimpong. All profits will be used in the Kurseong area to alleviate hardship for Ex Gurkhas, who are constantly repairing the damage caused by earthquakes and other natural disasters. As the long standing Secretary of the Kurseong Branch of the British Gurkha Ex Servicemen's Association, he is regularly involved in providing advice and assistance over a large area, along with Captain Tendup