



# Armed forces parade draws New Delhi crowd

**Indo Canadian**

Joan Mayo



## THIRD IN SERIES

What luck that my last day in a downtown hotel should be the day the armed forces of India marched through the streets in a full dress rehearsal for the Republic Day ceremonies, which were to take place January 26.

This year marked the 37th anniversary of India's Republic Day and the celebrations continued for a whole week.

The whole world loves a parade, but surely none as much as me, and by far the most colorful and exciting parade I'd ever seen marched through New Delhi that day. What a treat for the ordinary working people who might not be able to take the time off to line the parade route between the parliament building and India Gate on Sunday. Thousands crowded the sidewalks to watch and cheer as the horses, bands and marchers came by.

Brass buttons and gold braid sparkled in the bright Indian sun as the marchers passed, their faces stern, eyes straight ahead, left arms swinging and right arms holding polished rifles or swords erect. It is impossible to properly describe the colorful headgear. First were the green turbans worn by the sikhs, each with white fringe along the sides, followed by several more regiments wearing various shades of red, orange and blue turbans, all with either white or gold fringe. Then the fan shaped turbans of the other regiments, in so many bright colors. Next came a battalion wearing flat topped hats with wide brims, and then so many colors of military tams, each with a brightly colored plume in front to

distinguish their regiments.

Between the various marching regiments came the smartly dressed brass bands, marching in the best British military fashion. The most amazing sight was a whole contingent of colorfully attired soldiers from Rajasthan riding atop gaily decorated camels, each with its head held at exactly the same proud height, as they passed quietly by on their huge padded feet.

The cavalry troops were small and slightly built, most likely from southern India. They were riding well groomed and perfectly matched dark brown horses and were led by their proud commander on a white stallion.

There were several contingents of navy personnel keeping perfect time in their navy blue uniforms and wearing white flat topped caps and white spats, and led by a tall sikh in a white turban.

The sound of the bagpipes further up the street stirred my Scottish blood and suddenly I found myself pushing through the crowd for a closer look. The pipers and drummers wore long pants, but with long, flowing plaid over one shoulder, and marched with shoulders swaying to the music.

On the Sunday, the official parade as seen on the T.V. included a remarkable display of tanks and heavy guns and other mobile units. Thousands lined the streets, some as early as 5 a.m. I was awakened at 5 a.m. that day by a small boy crying and pleading with his daddy to let him come, too, and I know how he felt, as I wished I could go, too.