

## What's my name?

the story behind Victor & Paramvir



I have often been asked did I change my name after I moved to the US, the answer is no I did not change my name. Victor is my original name and here is the story behind it –

My parents named me Victor because on the day I was born India defeated Pakistan 1-0 in the Tokyo Olympic Games to win her 7th Olympic Hockey Gold Medal. The victory was very sweet and important to India because Pakistan had defeated India 1-0 in the 1960 Olympics final game ending India's dominance in the sport. Before that loss, between 1928 and 1956 India had won six Olympic gold medals, they were undefeated in 30 consecutive games, scoring 197 goals giving away only 8. So, the 1964 victory was especially sweet, the

nation was jubilant and my parents, caught up in the moment, were very happy as well -- hence the name Victor.

Here's what my elder brother had to say about this: *"we were driving in our Landmaster on Mathura Road, having just passed the Lodi Road Crossing in New Delhi, when we decided on the name Victor. The news of India having won the hockey Olympic Gold was on all radio channels and people were ecstatic. We ourselves were already very excited about the new addition to the family and had been thinking hard about the name when we heard of this great victory and so immediately decided to call Victor 'Victor'."*



I officially became Paramvir when my parents went to register me in Modern School. I was around 6 years old. While filling the admission form the registrar commented that I had a very western name. My parents reacted by changing it to "Param Vir".

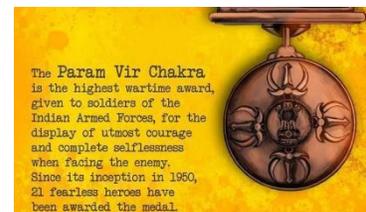


**Param** means highest and **Vir** means brave (warrior), put together **Param Vir** means "Bravest of the Brave" in Hindi. The PVC or Param Vir Chakra is India's highest military decoration

awarded for the ultimate degree of valor or self-sacrifice in the presence of the enemy. It is similar to the British Victoria Cross, US Medal of Honor, French Legion of Honor, and Russian Cross of St. George. Notice, Victor is part of Victoria Cross; Param Vir is part of Param Vir Chakra; and the British



Victoria Cross is equivalent to India's Param Vir Chakra. This connection was probably very real for my parents who had grown up in pre-independent India, under the British Raj. So Param Vir and Victor are fairly close. (For years, my parents wrote Paramvir with a space between "m" and "v" but over time I removed the space and turned it into its current form.)



These days I use them interchangeably, most of my award certificates and plaques have "Victor Bahl" on them and almost all my scientific publications and patents have "Paramvir Bahl." For those who do not know me this causes confusion, but I have come to accept and even enjoy it. I respond to both names and like them both, you can use the one that you like better.