

TODAY'S PAPER

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The saviour who lost his life at CST firing



ACTED IN CRISIS: Constable Ambadas Pawar takes aim at terrorists at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus on November 26.

Lyla Bavadam

Ex-Army man and constable Ramchandra Pawar was awarded Kirti Chakra

MUMBAI: At first, constable Ambadas Ramchandra Pawar was thought to have died in the random firing by the two terrorists at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus here on November 26. Wearing ordinary workday clothes, he was one among the 56 killed there.

But a photograph which the Mumbai police received much after the attacks, told a different story. It showed a plainclothes Pawar holding a gun. Suddenly, from being just one more victim Pawar became a hero. He was killed in the line of action and for this, he was posthumously awarded the Kirti Chakra, the country's second highest gallantry award in peacetime.

The medal is awarded for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from a battlefield. Kirti Chakras were awarded to 13 persons in this Republic Day.

Crucial photo

Assistant Police Inspector Sandeep Bhagwat, who is the Liaison Officer at the Protection Branch of the Mumbai police, said that to the best of his knowledge Pawar was the first Kirti Chakra awardee among the city police force. He says the crucial photo was brought to his attention by reporters. "They wanted to know who the man in civilian clothes firing a rifle was. We identified him immediately as Pawar," he recalls.

Pawar was a constable attached to the Protection Unit of the police at Ballard Pier. On the night of November 26 he was due to report for duty at his unit's office. When he got off the train on platform 1 he must have heard the firing from platform 7. It is believed he rushed there, alerting commuters en route about available exits. He found an injured Railway Police havaldar, took his rifle after informing him that he was also from the police and fired two shots at one of the gunmen. The other terrorist, who was covering his partner, fired back and bullets hit Pawar's head and stomach. The killing shots were fired by Ajmal "Kasab," the terrorist who was later captured.

Perhaps it was this small show of strength by Pawar that made the gunmen flee the station and make their way towards the Cama hospital. Whatever is the reason for their departure, there can be no denying Pawar's valour. Facing two gunmen wielding automatic weapons with nothing more than a .303 rifle which had three remaining bullets can only be ascribed to bravery and an innate sense of duty. His intervention saved many lives, but cost him his own.

Sudam Pandharkar, the havaldar from whom Pawar took the gun, survived his wounds and went home to his native Ahmednagar to recuperate. He told his superiors of what Pawar had done and of how he himself was struggling to unlock his rifle after firing two rounds unsuccessfully at the terrorists. Struggling to remain conscious, Pandharkar says he recalls Pawar smoothly unlocking the weapon and firing. He lost consciousness briefly and says when he came around again he saw Pawar lying in blood. Firing the rifle was the last thing Pawar did before he was shot dead by Ajmal.

Compensation

The family has received compensation from numerous agencies, individuals and organisations that totals to almost one crore plus a flat from the State government. Pawar, married about three years ago, is survived by his wife Kalpana and one and a half-year-old son Vivek. He was due to go on leave to attend his younger brother's wedding and had used his off-duty hours to make purchases for the wedding.

Pawar was said to be someone who had a sense of social commitment. This perhaps explains why when his career in the Army was cut short due to an injury, he joined the police force in 2005.

He enjoyed his work as a policeman and wanted his son to join the force after he graduated. Pawar was from Kavthe in Wai taluka of Satara district. He was 29 when he died.

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