



# Remembering ...

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Aftab saw the Mizos in black uniform followed by commandos within about 200 yards of his company position trying hard to come to the higher ground. Time had come for Aftab to take a firm decision. Within seconds, he took up his sten gun, told students Fazlur Rahmam and Shawkat in the trench to hold onto the position and keep firing on the enemy, and ran fast to reach the light machine gun post through the fire of the enemy.

Everyone watched Aftab's move with spellbound silence and appreciation. He took control of the light machine gun by removing the shell-shocked gunner to the side. With profound accuracy, he started firing on the enemy. Mukti Bahini soldiers



a state of utter disbelief. Seeing him in action, they had thought that Aftab was invincible and were shocked to see him fall. They ran towards him and could hear his last word, 'Ma.' The soldiers present did not understand whether he called for his mother or his motherland or both before he died. By this time, the Mizos and commandos had withdrawn from the battlefield.

The battle of Mahalchori was over. The victory of the day for Mukti Bahini came at the cost of the life of Captain Aftab Qader. The battle had far-reaching effects in the history of the Liberation War. The notable achievement was that after suffering heavy casualties, Mizos refused to take part in any major operation alongside the Pakistan Army. Their leaders were not prepared to endure so many casualties caused in frontal attacks and the inhumane treatment by the Pakistan Army who put the Mizos in the line of fire threatening to kill them if they fell back.

Shaheed Captain Aftab Qader was awarded Bir Uttam for his gallantry in the battle of Mahalchori on 27 April 1971. He not only demonstrated loyalty to his comrades but also exhibited extraordinary courage and leadership under stress.

*The writer is a Freedom Fighter, recipient of Swadhinata Padak and a researcher on Liberation War.*

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saw about twenty dead bodies of Mizos fall in the line of the light machine gun fire. Mizos tried to advance further, but Aftab being an efficient machine gunner, was mowing them down. Magazines after magazines were being exhausted of the light machine gun. The enemy was seen retreating and all the threats of the commandos did not help. Aftab picked up the light machine gun in his hand, got out from the trench, kept advancing and

came to the edge of the high ground. He was still causing heavy casualties on the fleeing enemy. It appeared his only mission was to destroy the enemy and he did not care to save his own life. He exposed himself to the enemy by going forward and firing on them from a vantage ground. Suddenly a burst of bullet hit Aftab's chest and he shouted, "I have been hit", and fell to the ground. The amazed Mukti Bahini soldiers were in



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