

# Naser Bukhtear Ahmed

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*Naser Bukhtear Ahmed, now the Deputy Managing Director of Prime Bank Limited, was a Grade-1 Officer of the State Bank of Pakistan in 1971. He was arrested on August 30, 1971 by the Pakistani occupation forces. He fell victim to inhuman and barbaric torture by the Pakistan Army. His statement was recorded on September 9, 1999.*

We were neighbours of noted music director Altaf Mahmud. It was early August 30, 1971. The time was 5 or 6 a.m and I was still asleep. All on a sudden I heard shouting outside my house. I saw large army contingent coming towards our house. I jumped out of bed, and came to the veranda on the first floor. I noticed that an eight-member group of Pakistani army men, led by one captain, were proceeding towards my house. I saw Samad and Altaf Mahmud along with the troops.

They came near a tubewell in the backyard of my house and started digging the earth. We did not know what they were looking for. My elder brother shouted, “Why are you digging there? There is nothing.” The army jawans pointed their rifles at our house. The captain was hurling abuses. He ordered my brother to come down.

A big trunk was found under the soil. It was full of explosives and arms. Possibly these were kept there to conduct an attack on the Pakistani army troops staying at Rajarbagh police line.

The army personnel took away 11 people, including me, my brother, Altaf Bhai and some others aged between 15-50 from the houses in the area to the cantonment.

As the space in the two vans was not enough to accomodate all of us, an army man kicked out Tonu, brother-in-law of Altaf Bhai from the vehicle. Our names and addresses were recorded in the cantonment.

We were kept under detention for hours. Later, we were taken to Nakhalpara MP Hostel. It was used as a martial-law court at that time.

At first we were ordered to stand up in a line. There were some others who were picked up earlier. All of us were later taken to the kitchen on the first floor. We were beaten up mercilessly after being taken there. The size of the kitchen was 10 feet X 12 feet. They started to call us out one after another, according to a list. As the torture session started, we heard the groaning of victims that made us freeze in fear.

At one stage, I was called in. One of the 5-man army group sitting in the room asked in Urdu — “Where are the arms? Who were with you? Tell me names of Muktijoddhas. Tell us their addresses.” I said, “I know *nothing*. I do a government job. I don’t know

*anything.” The army captain got angry. “Suarka bachcha tum governmentka nokri karta aur rat me Muktibahini ki sath deta (Son of a bitch, you’re a government employee and you cooperate with the Muktibahini at night).”*

I cannot recall the name of the colonel. May be Colonel Rashid. Whatever his name is, I was forced to lie down. Two jawans kept my hands under their boots applying heavy pressure. A jawan kept my head down

also by pressing his boots. Another started beating me severely with heavy sticks. I could not move for a single moment and started groaning following the inhuman torture that continued for 20 to 25 minutes.

I was attired in a trouser and T-shirt. My arms, hips and back had become blood-stained by the mercilessly beating. Bleeding started also from other parts of the body. I could feel drops of blood coming out from my nose and dropping on to the floor. At one stage I fainted. When I regained sense, I found myself lying in the kitchen. The Pakistani army used to continue beating a man even after he lost sense. The torture continued on one person after another. The victims used to fall unconscious due to the inhuman torture. They were again taken to the torture room 3 or 4 hours after regaining sense, and the army person asked them the same questions.

They used to push needles into the fingers, while nails were uprooted by something like an iron-hook. We heard groaning from the kitchen. My brother’s fingers were seriously injured following the torture. Uprooting nails was the second phase of torture. The third stage was more serious, just putting burning cigarette butts on the flesh. I still feel the pain at my back, which I received during the torture by the Pakistani forces.

Besides, they used to put off burning cigarette by pressing it on my body. Punching, slapping, kicking and hitting with the butt of the rifles were very common at any time. The method of torture was more ferocious on others than on me. Even, burning cigarettes were pushed into the rectum of some of us. Renowned artist Alvi was also among us. He was picked up from the residence of Altaf Mahmud. When he said he is an artist, the Pakistani army uprooted his nails. I heard him groaning.

The torture unleashed on Altaf Mahmud was very serious, inhuman, and terrible. I saw him being repressed. He was hung keeping his head down and tying his legs with the ceiling fan in the adjoining room.

They used to keep his face dipped in boiling water. I saw Altaf Bhai murmuring and taking long breaths.

*Then he was asked, “Bol sala, mal kahan rakkha hai? Koun lok tera sath tha? (Son of a bitch, where are the arms? Who are with you?)”*

For the sake of our lives, we used to reply in broken Urdu. But Altaf Bhai was the exception. He gave all replies in Bangla. He said, *“Tomra ja ichchha tai koro. Ami Kichchhu janina” (Do whatever you want to. I know nothing.)* I remembered those

horrible memories for a long time — the blood stained body, continuous bleeding from his face. I can feel the pain of Altaf Bhai while describing the situation even after 28 long years. During the first year, I could not sleep well. Sometimes I saw him in my dreams and I used to get up screaming.

The torture had no end. It continued all the day and without any break. One group was coming from the beatings, followed by another group. The Pakistani troops used to throw their leftover food to us and asked us to eat those. If someone refused, he was given extra torture.

We were taken to Ramna police station after being tortured throughout the day. The Bangalee policemen supplied us medicines like pain-killer tablets and ointment. They also supplied bread and tea. However, they requested us not to disclose about the medicines and food.

The next day when we were being beaten up again, the army personnel smelled the ointment, but they did not question the matter. The army men while unleashing torture on us, used to remove this nameplate and cap.

We were tortured for four consecutive days. At that time I did not see anyone to die, but several were missing.

Among them were Rumi, Jewel, Badi, Baker, Azad, Bashar and some others. Later we came to know that they were killed after being taken to the cantonment. Following the daylong continued torture, I had no strength to stand up.

At about 12 p.m. on the fourth day, we were taken to the cantonment from the MP Hostel. We sat there for *half an hour*. *At that time one captain, may be Captain Hezazi, asked me, "Ghar ja na mangta (Do you want to go home)?"* I said, "Yes."

The captain said, "Okay. You are free for the next two weeks. You don't need to go to office during the period. You'll have to monitor the activities of others. You'll be brought back if you don't follow the order.

Our people will follow you. Go straight home, but don't disclose it to anyone."

Then the captain ordered a jawan, "Get him a rickshaw." For the first time an army officer used a respectable word to address me - Shaheb. Earlier, they used to abuse me by calling me 'suyar ka bachcha,

'kafer', 'munafek', 'gaddar', whatever they liked. A search light was projected on my face so that I could not see anything.

As I reached my home by a rickshaw, I found my elder brother also coming. I told the rickshawpuller,

"Wait for a while. I have no money. I'm bringing it."

The puller burst into tears saying, “Sir, they asked me not to take money from you.” After I came back with money, I did not find the rickshwpuller. As I was not prepared to go to any doctor, my mother and grandmother gave me some quick treatment that healed me a little.

At that time, we provided the freedom fighters with clothes, money and food. We also used to supply information that the freedom fighters needed.

I do not blame Muslim League or others, who were supporting Pakistanis out of political conviction. One may have personal liking or disliking. The most heinous criminals were those who killed millions of innocent people, raped our mothers and sisters, and unleashed atrocities on our towns and villages. They must be tried.

The war criminals of 1945 World War are being punished even till today. I know even in 1998, one General was picked up from Argentina and was punished. I don't know why we could not try the war criminals for the last 28 years. Those who were in power and now are in power must answer for this.

*Interviewed by Ruhul Motin*

**Before hearing the sound of firing we thought**

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