



## Dr. Tamanna Haque Munira found dead by hanging, allegedly due to non-compliance of dowry demands

*Fact-finding Report*

Odhikar

On the morning of 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, Dr. Tamanna Haque Munira (28) was allegedly strangled to death by her husband Dr. Fakrul Islam Utpol, mother-in-law Salina Begum and father-in-law Farhad-Uddin Bhuiyan. Her body was found hanging from the ceiling of her bedroom at their residence in 'Dream View' at No.2 Bibir Bagicha 76/Kha/1, Jatrabari, Dhaka. Tamanna was employed as an honorary practitioner at Sir Salimullah Medical College in the Gynecology and Obstetrics department.

Tamanna's brother, Ahsan -ul Munir Manna, has filed a case with the Jatrabari police in this regard. The case is on trial at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court.

Tamanna's husband Dr. Fakrul Islam Utpol, mother-in-law Salina Begum and are out on bail from the High Court Division of the Supreme Court.



Photo: Dr Tamanna Haque Munira

Human rights organisation *Odhikar*, has conducted a fact finding investigation into the matter.

During this investigation *Odhikar* has interviewed-

- Relatives of the deceased.
- Eye-witnesses.
- Doctors who conducted the post-mortem investigation and morgue assistants.
- Members of the police.

### Ahsan-UI-Munir Manna (35), Tamanna's brother

Ahasan-UI-Munir Manna told *Odhikar* that, his sister Dr. Tamanna Haque Munira, after having completed her MBBS degree, was working at the Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital in the Gynecology and Obstetrics department as an honorary practitioner under training for part-2 of his FCPS. On March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007 Tamanna married Dr. Fakrul Islam, a member of the cardiology department of the same hospital. After the wedding, they began to live together at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of 'Dream View' at No.2 Bibir Bagicha 76/Kha/1, Jatrabari, Dhaka, which was a 6 storied building owned by Fakrul's family. Fakrul's father Farhad Uddin Bhuiyan, mother Salina Begum and younger sister Monalisa, lived in the same apartment with them. From the day after

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the wedding, Tamanna's mother-in-law, Salina begum, begin to press her for dowry. She began to tell her that Tamanna or her family had to buy them an apartment as dowry. She exemplified by saying how she bought her two daughters apartments as dowry during their marriages. She also demanded that Tamanna's family buy them a fridge, dining table and furniture for the house as dowry. Tamanna informed her family about the situation, but Tamanna's father expressed discontent about their dowry demands. As a result Tamanna's mother-in-law, father-in-law and sister-in-law began to assault her.

Manna told *Odhikar* that, Tamanna continued her work at Sir Salimullah Medical College, from her matrimonial home. Due to her failure to bring dowry from her father, on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, Salina Begum, grabbed Tamanna by the hair and threw her to the ground, she then punched, kicked and abused her both physically and psychologically. Tamanna called her father on his cell phone and told him about the violent episode of abuse. He rushed to her apartment and wanted to take her back to their house. However, Tamanna's mother-in-law and husband did not allow this.

Later, at around 5:45 am on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, Salina Begum called Tamanna's father - Professor Fazlul Haque and told him that Tamanna had slept in her bedroom the previous night, with her door locked. It was morning but Tamanna would not open the door. Without saying anything more, she hung up. Tamanna's father then called Ahasan-UI-Munir Manna, from Barisal, and gave him the same news. Receiving the news, Manna and his uncle Jafar Iqbal, went to Tamanna's residence in Jatrabari at 7:45 am that morning.

When they arrived, they learned from Salina Begum that, Tamanna had locked herself in her room and committed suicide. Manna then sent Jafar Iqbal to the police station. Upon his arrival at the station, Jafar Iqbal saw that Tamanna's sister-in-law Monalisa's husband Badiul Alam was discussing the situation with members of the police. They mentioned that, if it was necessary, they were willing to pay money to the police to ensure that Tamanna's family could not investigate her corpse.

Jafar Iqbal then took members of the police station and personnel from the Dholpur area Rab-10, and returned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Dream View. Members of the RAB and police broke in through the door of Tamanna's bedroom. When the door was taken down, Manna could see that Tamanna was hanging from the ceiling fan with her feet touching the mattress which was laid down on the floor. She was wearing a salwar-kameez and was hung from the fan by an orna (a long piece of clothing resembling a scarf). He noticed that the expressions on her face were normal and that both her feet were touching the floor mattress.

Manna then said that, no one could commit suicide by hanging herself while standing on a floor mattress. Judging by the position she was in, it did not look like she could have, on her own will, committed suicide.

He said that, Tamanna's in-laws had killed her as she did not oblige to their dowry demands. They strangled her with the orna and hung her from the ceiling fan, trying to make it look like she committed suicide.

SI A.Rahman brought down Tamanna's body and pronounced her dead. In front of everyone's presence, he prepared the inquest report of Tamanna's body. SI A. Rahman then advised Manna to file a case and took Tamanna's body to the police station. The same day at 2:30 pm in the afternoon, Manna filed a case with the local police, against Tamanna's husband Fakrul, father-in-law Farhad and mother-in-law Salina, for instigating suicide under section 9-Ka of the *Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain 2000*-as amended in 2003 -( The Prevention of Oppression against Women and Children Act 2000- amended 2003 )Date of complaint- 29/08/2009. Case number- 100.

On the other hand, the police took the body to Sir Salimullah medical college for post-mortem. After completion of the procedure, Tamanna's body was taken to south Rampura village in

Madaripur Shadar station, to her maternal grandfather's house. There, in the Bhuiyan family's graveyard, Tamanna was buried.

### Sadia Haque Shumona (22) Tamanna's sister and MBBS student

Sadia Haque Shumona told *Odhikar* that, since the day after Tamanna's marriage to Fakrul, his family had been psychologically abusing Tamanna for dowry. At a certain point Tamanna decided to leave the residence which she shared with Fakrul and his family, and to move to a rented house elsewhere. On one occasion Tamanna had also told her abusive mother-in-law, that she would file a case against her for demanding dowry. Shumona thinks that, this statement made by Tamanna is what frightened Tamanna's in-laws into killing her.

On the morning of 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, at around 7:00 am, her brother Manna called and told her that their sister Tamanna had been killed. He then asked her to go to Jatrabari. At around 8:00am she arrived at Tamanna's matrimonial home at Jatrabari. Upon her arrival, Tamanna's in-laws informed her that she had locked herself in her bed room and committed suicide. She was told that Tamanna had done so by hanging herself from the ceiling fan by means of her orna. Shumona then demanded to know from Salina Begum how she knew that while the door of Tamanna's room remained closed. Salina Begum refused to answer Shumona's questions and began to swear at her.

Judging from Salina's reactions, Shumona suspected that they had murdered Tamanna during the night and hung her from the ceiling fan, locked her bedroom door and escaped through the ventilator. She then called her uncle Jafar Iqbal and asked him to bring the police and RAB to the place of incident. At around 9:00am police and RAB officials arrived and broke down the door to Tamanna's bedroom. She saw Tamanna hanging with her orna tied around her neck and attached to the ceiling fan. Shumona told *Odhikar* that, no one could, on their own will, commit suicide while standing in such a position. As a student preparing for her MBBS degree, Shumona, after having examined the body, stated that it looked like Tamanna had been strangled to death with her orna (a long piece of clothing resembling a scarf) and later hung from the ceiling fan. She further said that, none of the indications or evidence that would have existed if one was trying to willingly commit suicide, were present in this scenario. She demanded that her sister's murderers be brought to justice.

### Salina Begum, Tamanna's mother-in-law

Salina Begum refused to cooperate with *Odhikar's* fact finders and behaved ineloquently with them. In a press briefing at Crime Reporter's Association Auditorium, she made a statement which *Odhikar's* investigation officer has collected.

### Summary of statement made at press briefing:

In her statement, she refused to give a detailed account of Tamanna's suicide. She had said that, early on the morning of 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, she knocked on Tamanna's door and called her. When Tamanna did not reply, she called the Jatrabari police station and informed them about the situation. Officer-in-charge of the police station advised her to call one of Tamanna's siblings and said that she might reply to their call. Salina then called Tamanna's father, Professor Fazlul Haque, who was at Barisal at that time. She asked him to come to their Jatrabari residence. At around 8:30 am on the morning of the incident, Tamanna's brother arrived at their residence with the police. With her permission, the police officers broke down the door to Tamanna's bedroom and entered. She saw that Tamanna was hanging from the ceiling fan with her orna tied around her neck. SI A. Rahman of Jatrabari police station brought her body to the ground, pronounced her dead and prepared the inquest report in front of everyone present at that time. The officer then advised Manna to file a complaint and took Tamanna's body to the police station. At 2:30pm in the afternoon, Manna filed a case against her, her husband Farhad and her son Fakrul, for instigating suicide, under section 9-Ka of the *Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain-2000* (as amended in 2003). Date of complaint- 29/08/2009. Case number-100.

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Later after repeated effort of Odhikar to talk to her she consented to talk briefly and via cellular phone, she informed that after Tamanna's death she was then arrested and taken away by the Jatrabari police station. She served one month in prison and then was granted bail by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. She also mentioned that she was already an employee at a private bank and owned a 6 storied apartment building, therefore, it was not believable that she would kill Tamanna out of greed for wealth. She stated that Tamanna was not murdered and had committed suicide; however, she said she did not have an idea as to why she would do so.

**SI Mohammad Abdul. Rahman, First Investigation Officer in to the case**

SI Mohammad Abdul Rahman told *Odhikar* that, on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2010, Tamanna's brother, Manna, filed a case with the Jatrabari police. Case number-100. A few days after filing of the case, upon the complainant's request, it was transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). The case was now being investigated under the authority of inspector Ershad Ali. He said that he had no further information about the case.

**Inspetor Ershad Ali, Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Malibaagh, Dhaka**

Inspector Ershad Ali told *Odhikar* that, a case was filed at the Jatrabari police station, under 9-Ka of the *Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain-2000* (as amended in 2003), Date of complaint- 29/08/2009. Case number- 100. Upon the complainant's request and the court's order, the case was transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2009. Inspector Ershad Ali had been handed over the responsibility of investigating the case. On the complainant's objection to the first report, and in order to obtain further evidence, the court had ordered a full post-mortem investigation of Tamanna's body, independent of those carried out at Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital.

Dhaka's CMM court, via memorandum number- 26418(4)1, Date- 10/09/2009, ordered Inspector Ershad Ali to exhume Tamanna's body from her grave. On 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2009, he went to Madaripur with the court order and met with executive magistrate Mizanur Rahman Sharkar to discuss the procedure of exhumation.

Executive Magistrate Mizanur Rahman Sharkar, picked up another court order for the retrieval of Tamanna's body from the Maradipur sub-district administrator, memorandum number- JPRAMA/JM -1-27/2009/639/1/(5), Date- 1/10/2009. Ershad Ali, along with executive magistrate Mizanur, went to the Bhuiyan family graveyard in south Rampura of Madaripur shadar station. At 2:05pm on the day, they dug up her grave and retrieved her body. On the order of executive magistrate Mizanur Rahman Sharkar, SI. Muhammad Salim Shanawaz, prepared the inquest report of the body.

Inspector Ershad Ali further said that, the body was then taken to Barisal Shere Bangla Medical College Hospital for post-mortem investigation. On 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2009, a board of doctors from the forensic and medicine department of Barisal Shere Bangla Medical College Hospital were assembled to carry out the investigation. The report concluded that Tamanna had committed suicide. He further informed that, after the investigation, he went to the court and filed a complaint against Tamanna's husband Dr. Fakrul Islam Utpol, mother-in-law Salina Begum and father-in-law Fazlul Haque Bhuiyan, for instigating suicide.

**Dr. Mazharul Islam, Lecturer of Forensic and medicine department, Sir Salimullah Medical College, Dhaka.**

Dr. Mazharul Islam told *Odhikar* that, on the afternoon of 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, members of the Jatrabari police station brought Tamanna's body to the hospital morgue. He conducted the first post-mortem investigation report into the body. He informed *Odhikar* that, there were dark scars on her wrists and around her neck was an arc shaped scar.

He also said that, a second post-mortem investigation was ordered when a case was filed in court, regarding the incident. On 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2009, a 2<sup>nd</sup> post-mortem investigation was conducted at Barisal Shere Bangla Medical College Hospital.

**Afzal Hussein, Morgue Assitant, Sir Salim Ullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital, Dhaka**

Afzal Hussein told *Odhikar* that, on the afternoon of 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, members of the Jatrabari police station, brought Tamanna's body to the morgue. Dr. Mazharul Islam conducted the post-mortem report of the body. Post-mortem investigation report number- 349/09. Date- 29/08/2009. Jatrabari police station command certificate number 1038/09; GD number- 2185, Date- 29/08/2009. He and morgue-assitant Shamol Datta assisted the doctor during the post-mortem.



A picture of deceased Dr. Tamanna Haque Munira hanging from the ceiling fan, is attached with the report.

**Odhikar demands a fair trial in this matter.**

End of Report