



Tuli Rani Saha was allegedly killed over dowry demands

Fact Finding Report

Odhikar

Tuli Rani Saha (19) was from Holudia village of Louhojong thana in Munshiganj district. On November 13, 2011, at dawn, Tuli Rani was allegedly suffocated and killed by her husband Mohammad Zahid Sheikh (25), mother-in-law Jostna Begum (50) and father-in-law Mohammad Joinal Sheikh (60). Tuli's elder brother, Sagor Saha filed a case in Louhojong Police Station as a plaintiff. The case number is-02, dated-13/11/11 under section 11(ka)/30¹ of the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain 2000 (Amended in 2003).

On January 31, 2012, the Investigating Officer, Sub Inspector (SI) Abul Kalam submitted the charge sheet to the Court. Tuli's family was dissatisfied concerning the charge sheet and filed a Naraji petition. However, the Court dismissed the Naraji petition and took the charge sheet into consideration.

The police arrested Mohammad Zahid Sheikh when he appeared before the Court although the exact date could not be found.

Odhikar conducted a fact finding mission into the matter. During this they interviewed:

- Relatives of the deceased, Tuli Rani Saha
- Doctor who conducted the post-mortem
- The investigation officer and
- Neighbours

¹ Section 11 (ka) of Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain, 2000 (Amended 2003) talks about the punishment for causing death in demand of dowry and section 30 of the said Act talks about the punishment for abetment.



Picture- Tuli Rani Saha

Sagor Saha, Tuli's elder brother

Sagor Saha told Odhikar that Tuli was a student of class ten of Holudia Higher Secondary School. He said that on her way to school, Zahid used to talk to her and built up a relationship with her. Sagor could not recall the exact day, but recalled that in October, 2010, Zahid abducted Tuli and took her to his grandfather's home at *Dokkin (south)* Holudia. On that day, Zahid forced her to convert to Islam and gave a new name, Mim. Moreover, on that day he married Tuli orally. Zahid's mother, Jostna Begum started beating her for dowry about a month after the marriage. Tuli's *Ukil baba*², Mohammad Keramot knew about her condition and informed Sagor. To stay informed about his sister, Sagor used to send his mother to Zahid's house occasionally. One day Sagor went to the home of Tuli's in-laws after Tuli was beaten excessively. At that time, Tuli's in-laws demanded one lac taka, a television, fan, and furniture as dowry. Sagor informed his parents about their demand. Tuli's father, Shopon Saha refused to pay any dowry. As a result, Tuli's in-laws repeatedly assaulted her physically and mentally. At one point, they threw Zahid and Tuli out of the home. Zahid went to a friend's house with Tuli. They started living there and Zahid started working as a carpenter. After two months, Zahid's parents brought them back home. But they kept beating Tuli for dowry, even after she got pregnant. Sagor said that one month before the delivery of the baby, they went to bring Tuli back to her father's house, but Zahid's mother demanded 50,000 taka. When they refused to give any money, Zahid beat Tuli in front of Tuli's mother. Then Sagor promised to give them the money and brought Tuli home. On September 23, 2011, Tuli gave birth to a girl at the Mitford Hospital, in Dhaka. From the hospital, Tuli and Zahid came to Tuli's father's house. At around 6 in the evening of

² Witness to the marriage on the bride's side.

November 12, 2011, Zahid's father Joinal Sheikh and mother Jostna Begum came to Shopon Saha's home and demanded two lac taka as dowry. When Tuli's father refused to give dowry, Zahid forcefully took Tuli and their daughter to his house. At around 7 in the morning of November 13, 2011, Tuli's friend Lata called her mother and informed her that Tuli was very ill. Then, Sagor along with his parents went to Zahid's house. They saw Tuli's body on a bed in a room on the 1st floor of the house. They noticed a slight mark on Tuli's neck and an *orna*³ hanging from the ceiling. They informed the police at 7.30 am and the police arrived at the house at around 10 am. Sagor came to know from Zahid's neighbours that on that very morning, Zahid along with his father, mother and daughter, had fled. Police prepared an inquest report in the presence of the eye-witnesses and sent the body of Tuli to Munshiganj District Hospital morgue for post-mortem. Sagor and his parents wanted to file a case but the police said that no case would be filed until the post-mortem report came. At 7 in the evening, after the post-mortem report, a case was filed under section 11(ka)/30 of the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain 2000 (Amended in 2003).

On May 6, 2012 Tuli's brother, Sagor informed Odhikar that the date of the next hearing of the case is fixed on May 27, 2012.

Hema Rani Saha(60), Tuli's mother

Hema Rani Saha told Odhikar that after one month of Tuli's marriage, her husband, mother-in-law and father-in-law started beating her for dowry. When Tuli and Zahid started living separately from his parents, Zahid demanded furniture for their house from Hema. Hema Rani gave them a trunk, a stove and crockery secretly, since her husband refused to give anything. Afterward, when Zahid's parents took Zahid and Tuli back home, they demanded one lac taka. She gave 50,000 taka by selling her ornaments secretly. Then they demanded 50,000 taka again. At first, she gave 30,000 and then 20,000 taka. Even after fulfilling their demands, they used to beat Tuli. One month before Tuli's delivery, Hema Rani along with her son brought Tuli back home from her in-laws home. On September 23, 2011, Tuli gave birth to a girl. From the hospital, Hema took her daughter and the infant back to the home of Shopon Saha. On

³ A long scarf worn by women as part of their *salwar kameeze* dress. Common in South Asia.

November 12, 2011, Tuli's in-laws again demanded two lac taka as dowry. When Tuli's father refused to pay, Zahid forcefully took Tuli and the baby with him to his father's house. On November 13, 2011, Tuli's friend informed them over phone about Tuli's illness. Hearing the news, they went to Zahid's home. Arriving there, they found Tuli's body lying on a bed. She alleged that her daughter was killed for dowry.

Jorina Begum (45), Zahid's neighbour

Jorina Begum told Odhikar that Tuli was a very calm and friendly young woman. She also commented that Zahid used to beat Tuli quite often. On November 12, 2011, Zahid played loud music and had a party with his friends that lasted almost all night. The next morning, Jorina went to Zahid's house after hearing some chaos and saw Tuli's body lying on a bed in a room on the 1st floor. She also informed Odhikar that Tuli's bedroom was on the ground floor, but her body was found on the 1st floor of the house.

Mohammad Zakir Hossain (45), neighbouring shopkeeper

Mohammad Zakir Hossain told Odhikar that from the evening of November 12, 2011, Zahid was having a party with 10/12 friends in his house. He said that his family used to beat the girl (Tuli). He used hear the sound of screaming. He was not sure whether Tuli could commit suicide. Zahid played music very loudly all night which seemed suspicious to him.

Dr. Mohammad Ehsanul Karim, Residential Medical Officer (RMO), Munshiganj District Hospital (who conducted the post-mortem)

Dr. Mohammad Ehsanul Karim told Odhikar that at around 12 pm of November 13, 2011, police of Louhojong Police Station brought the body of a girl to the morgue. Later on, he came to know that her name was Tuli Rani. He said that he saw a slight mark on her neck.

Sub Inspector Mohammad Abul Kalam, Louhojong Police Station, Investigating Officer

Mohammad Abul Kalam told Odhikar that on November 13, 2011, he got the news of the death of Tuli Rani Saha from SI Julhas Uddin and went to Zahid's house at 10 am. He found the body of Tuli lying on a bed on the 1st floor. He saw a slight mark on her neck and an *orna* hanging from the ceiling. He also said that there was no sign of hanging. Then he sent the body of Tuli to the morgue of Munshiganj District Hospital. Tuli's elder brother, Sagor filed a case as a plaintiff. The case number is: 02, date: 13/11/2011 under section 11 (ka)/30 of the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain 2000 (Amended in 2003).

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