

The importance of the Altab Ali Park

Jamal Hasan



Jamal Hasan was a leading anti-racist activist in East London during the 1970s. He was the General Secretary of the Action Committee Against Racial Attacks which organised the National Demonstration following the murder of Altab Ali.

The memory of living in fear of racist attacks in East London during the 1970s is so vivid that after so many years it still haunts us and sends a shiver down our spines. However, it is reassuring that the presence of Altab Ali Park helps us to offset this fear by giving us a sense of victory and achievement. The park symbolises our struggle against intolerance and is an enduring legacy of Altab Ali's ultimate sacrifice. It is a reminder of the formidable resistance against racist attacks shown by peace-loving Bangladeshis.

I feel fortunate and proud to have been in East London during this crucial time and to have had the opportunity of playing an active role in the anti-racist movement. I had the privilege of serving as the General Secretary of the Action Committee Against Racial Attacks which was formed to organise a National Demonstration against Racial attacks. Soon after the demonstration was over I planned a Carnival Against Racial Attacks in the disused St Mary's Churchyard near to where Altab Ali was murdered on 4th May 1978. I produced leaflets publicising the carnival and it seemed appropriate to describe the address of the venue as 'Altab Ali Park', rather than 'St Mary's Churchyard' (which I included in brackets). At that time, it was beyond our imagination that the area would become officially named 'Altab Ali Park'. However, I thought that if we started calling it Altab Ali Park, it would help us to remember our struggles against racism and would remind us how the ultimate sacrifice by Altab Ali changed our attitudes and helped us to regain security and dignity.

Various bands and groups from all different ethnic communities performed at the carnival. Our home grown 'Dishari Shilpi Gosthi' and a Bhangra group from Southall were among many other groups from Notting Hill Gate, Hackney and other places. Below is a press cutting in a Bengali newspaper highlighting the 'Carnival Against Racial Attacks' at the Altab Ali Park in 1978.



।। পূর্ব লন্ডনে 'হাণ্ডিভান গেইনস্ট রেসিডেন্সিয়াল অ্যান্ডিগে অনুষ্ঠিত প্রথম বাঙালী কার্ণিভালে একটি বাঙালী দল। স্বর - ১০ পৃষ্ঠা।।