

The ultimate sacrifice

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.

4th May 1978. Queen of the four seasons, the Spring, pushed away the gloomy winter over two months earlier and established its reign in full swing. The nature was at its best displaying its eye catching beauty. Spring gardens were dazzling in the warm sun and the atmosphere gave a sense of relief from the miserable winter. However, 4th May 1978 was an exception. The day started with a depressed outlook. The Sun was hiding behind pale cloud and the occasional drizzle made the atmosphere only worse. There was no gentle spring breeze to caress the freshly grown tender green leaves. The flowers did not have the mood to seduce the buzzing bees. There appeared restlessness everywhere. Suddenly the time stopped. Everything stopped. Even the air appeared to have been frozen. The birds stopped singing, they took a deep breath and closed their eyes, as if they received a signal of an evil incident was going to happen. Then came a deafening noise which shattered everything around. The loud sound was made by Altab Ali who was stabbed to death by the fascists at Adler Street. It was not moaning or screaming to express his pain; but it was a thunderous objection to the evil act of the coward fascist which shook the racists. Altab Ali made a plea to everyone to oppose the fascists once for all. Altab Ali's blood flowed everywhere in East London which sparked and ignited the fuse of the inactive dynamites within us and caused a huge blast. We all took to the street. Men - women, old and young - everyone responded to Altab Ali's plea and we all resolved to win the battle of Brick Lane. It was Altab Ali's death which brought the beginning of the end of racial attacks in East London. We owe to Altab Ali and we will remain indebted to him for a long time to come. It was Altab Ali's death which united our divided community and inspired us to establish ourselves in the UK by securing dignity and respect.