

I CAME IN DARKNESS, AM LEAVING WHEN IT'S STILL DARK....

Almost all the characters of extremists that we have seen in Tripura belong to the tribal community. Only a few small countable numbers are from the Bengali or tea garden labourers' community. Again, among the Bengalese, majority are from the Muslim minority. One such character was Dilwar Hossain. His house was situated in a police station area in the Indo-Bangla border. What was his actual age probably Dilwar himself didn't know. With a slim and agile body which made guessing his age difficult, Dilwar Hossain looked like young man of thirty or forty years.

Dilwar's better half Jahanara Bibi was just his opposite, tall and robust. Dilwar loved his wife a lot. There were two phases in his life as a criminal. I came to know about the first one from one of my doctor friends who was of my age. This was towards the end of eighties, after his degree he was posted in the same police station area near the Indo-Bangla border in a government dispensary. He was the only physician there and was assisted by a pharmacist and a GDA. My doctor friend stayed in a rented house adjacent to the dispensary. He would go down to Agartala on Saturday and return on Monday morning. The last vehicle to Agartala left around three in the evening. This was a mofussil town and everyone knew the doctor. Even the driver knows and on every Saturday would come to the doctor's house and honk his horn at the right time. On that particular Saturday it was cleared by 2 pm. The doctor had packed everything and was waiting for the horn of the jeep. At that moment a man entered his room. He was a Muslim. He told his name and the name of the village to which he belongs and then crying to the doctor, "Doctorbabu, my wife is no more."

- What do you mean no more?
- Almost dead! No sex. Please come with me.
- What do you mean by no sex?
- Has become one with the bed. Repeatedly unconscious.
- Oh! You mean no sex! What happens?
- No appetite. Doctorbabu, please come with me. If you go, my Bibi be alright.
- Now its my time to go to Agartala. I am prescribing a medicine. Administer one tea spoon twice daily before meal. I am returning on Monday morning. Bring her to the dispensary in the morning itself.

The man agreed. My doctor friend took the last jeep to Agartala. The next two days he spent in great anxiety. This was his new job. If for any reason the patient died he would be in great danger. He returned Monday, a bit early. But neither the man nor his wife came. It was already one. There was no patient in the

dispensary. The pharmacist and the GDA were already restless to close shop but the doctor said, "A bit longer!"

It was two and still they didn't turn up. Therefore they returned home closing the dispensary. Right at four in the evening the doctor went to the dispensary again. By five the dispensary was empty. Again the pharmacist and GDA became fidgety to shut down. Again the doctor said, "A bit longer!"

Just at the dusk two visitors could be seen approaching in semi darkness. The doctor asked the pharmacist to find out who they were. At a glance the pharmacist said, "He is Dilwar Hossain from Jaleya."

The place name reminded the doctor of the man and his name. Then Dilwar came before his table and the doctor asked him about his wife's condition. Dilwar started saying that his wife was better. Right at that moment, he was shoved aside by a hand. Dilwar's tall and broad wife was now in front of doctor's table. There was a thud! Dilwar's wife put down an empty bottle on the table and said, "I have come back to life. I have come back to life because of this."

Doctorbabu was startled and shivered at the empty bottle of Bayers' tonic. He asked the patient, "Empty bottle! I have prescribed one tea spoon twice daily before meal. That would mean it last at least ten days!"

Dilwar's wife said, "Hay Allah! I had two lid full twice daily."

Now doctorbabu did the calculation. One lid would be 15 ml, that means 30 ml each time, Bayers' tonic also had a large amount of alcohol. These doses had set Dilwar's wife's appetite right. Since then she became regular patient and visitor. One day she started nagging the doctor for giving sex enhancement medicine because after every twenty twenty-five days when Dilwar comes home, he becomes uncontrollable. Doctorbabu then asked what Dilwar's job was. She replied without any hesitation that he was a cattle thief and he would often go to Bangladesh with stolen cattle. Doctorbabu said, "I don't prescribe steroid. For that you have to go to bigger doctor in Agartala."

That Dilwar was a cattle lifter, everyone in the area more or less knew. But when he had joined the extremist group no one knew. After a few incidents of kidnapping in the village, they first guessed that Dilwar was an accomplice of the extremists. We used to find him in his house and he would vehemently deny that he was involved in any extremist activity. He would say that he worked in a brick kiln and stayed next to one. I became confirmed about his association with the extremists almost fifteen years back in a month of October. The self-declared major of an extremist group Paresh Sangma@ Pilot Marak was arrested. In his confession he had taken Dilwar Hossain's name. Dilwar was directly involved in

an extremist attack on the police. After Paresh Sangma's arrest Dilwar was absconding. We used to raid Dilwar's house at odd hours. That was the month of December, probably 10th or 11th we were desperately looking for Dilwar. A few days back, the extremists had kidnapped two small boys of ten eleven years old on the Manu-Bankul road of Silachari in Sabroom Sub-Division. We had information that Dilwar knew the whereabouts of the kidnapped though his house was thirty to forty kilometres away from the place of kidnapping. That day at noon time we surrounded his house. Our circle was quite big. He hid himself in the adjacent *sha*/forest. The terrain was undulating. He had hidden him under dry leaves in such a manner that we could not find him. But we were assured of the area where he was hiding. After strengthening our circle we put the leaves cover on the ground on fire. The dry leaves lit to flames instantly. After about ten minutes unable to withstand the heat further, Dilwar surrendered.

This time he confessed his involvement in extremist activities. This tallied with the Paresh Sangma's confession. The two kidnapped boys were with the group. He had taken a day's leave from the group which was right on Gunjarima tilla in Silachari-Ghorakappa area. The boys were with them. Dilwar had told them that he would return and join the group within 8 pm. Ghorakappa was a part of Badamura Hill ranges and was 400 to 500 meters high. The Mahuri River dissected the Badamura Hill range from East to West. The Southern part is known as Tulamura range and Gunjarima tilla is the highest peak. We decided to carry out our operation that very night.

After mobilizing the force when I reached Silachari, it was already one at night. We decided to go on foot from Silachari since taking vehicles for night to the Ghorakappa would make the extremists of our advancement. The road Silachari means that river in which stone and rocks come floating by. There were dry, streamlets on the way. It was a hilly area. The wind from the river made us shiver. After some time it was pleasant. Our path was very close to the Indo-Bangla border. There were BSF posts every now and then, we had to stop. They had been informed earlier and so they were not challenging us. I do not know why the village is named Ghorakappa, but from my childhood had known that it topped the list of punishment postings for Tripura government employees. In that operation I had no scope of collecting information of the area. We were following Dilwar who was leading us. At one point, we started climbing the gradient of Gunjarima tilla. It was a dew-drenched soft moonlit night. The hills appeared like a huge dome. The foot-track was winding up the hills. Then we reached the peak. It was almost two at night. The top of the hill was quite spread out with bamboo grooves on the fringes. Dilwar took us to the extremist camp

but we could see only a few poles, the polythene sheets were gone. There was no extremist either. Suddenly, Dilwar thrust his hand inside a *chula* and felt the heat. We could also see the fire within. A letter was recovered addressed to Dilwar from his extremist accomplices. They had waited for him and had moved away with the kidnapped children.

Before we could even finish reading the letter we heard the sound of suppressed weeping. Someone said, it was the call of a deer. Other said, it must have been rustle of bamboo leaves moving in wind. We lay down silently for almost ten minutes. There was nothing but the sound of morning wind. Then we decided to execute another plan. I asked three jawans to fire a few rounds in air. The resonance of bullets shattered the silence of night. There was no reply. Then we started calling out at the top of our voices. In the air heavy with dew drops there was no echo even. After almost an hour of futile exercise we started climbing down. Then I thought why the hill was named Gunjarima tilla.

A lot of ideas crowded my mind. But only one gained priority. This hill was actually a woman separated from her beloved, who stands away from Ghorakappa and goes on weeping continuously. To that lady I sang the song in mind:

I came in darkness,
Am leaving when it's still dark....
Have loved for the moment,
If not for eternity...
Our meeting and seeing has been inscribed in tears.
The distant peacock cries in separation in the month of rains,
Forget the dream of Fagun, bid we farewell...
My time has come, bid we farewell.

Our cars were waiting at Ghorakappa and we reached Nutanbazar before dawn. The kidnapped boys were rescued from the clutch of extremists who had taken them to Bangladesh. They had however, heard the sound of our bullets.

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About author: Arindam Nath is a renowned IPS officer of Tripura police administration, presently posted as IGP(Administration) who has written many articles and books.