



poem

Cry Bangladesh Cry

by Mohammad Rafiq

Cry, the way a mother cradling her son as he sets out on death's road
laments
the way a wife slapped by her drunken beast of a husband
howls
the way a disheveled girl repulsed by a lecher's probing tongue
shrieks
the way Amena, sweaty and distraught, hands blood-splattered
from breaking
bricks
walls
the spring tide rises, an owl's hoot fades in the depth of night
sandalwood glows on the pyre, clouds swallow the full moon of
Ashar.

scraps of iron are hammered flat over a red-hot
fire
kindled by fire-mantras, pyres burn down to ash
our primal mother
is stretched over dead coals, flowing hair and flesh
consumed
a million fire-needles stitch through trailing saris
through gutters
through blind alleys in the burn-out sockets of the
constellations.

Padma, Meghna, and Mayurakkhi toy with fate

tossing dice
a cunning princess shakes loose her thick plaited
hair
tossing a seductive noose around every neck
her lips scorch with curse-kisses of molten lava
tongues lap blood from poisoned manholes
in corpse-choked witches' cauldrons water boils
flesh
bloodied sweat and powdered mud smear the age-old future.
the nameless past slips away on the ebbtide
barely awake
mudflat homes are swallowed by the water sorcerer
the blaring
fanfare of progress carries silt, quicksand
seven hundred thousand
acres of soil and seed, water and wind, clouds and rain
torrents gobble up everything in a single gulp, cackling and
shrieking like witches

rabid, ravenous for meal of human heads

tasty
female flesh, especially breasts and succulent thigh bones
stinking
bits stuck to dribbling lips — such morbid
melas
happen only once in a long while, when there's enough demand
or
cash
pay it off fast, reduce the debt to
zero
until the new-rice festival, the last day of the month
or the market fair.

hopeless sighs
in the crush of the marketplace someone's shaking a rattle —
cheap noserings

shiny baubles in rainbow colors
baskets of bangles on display, a pair of performing snakes
sly snake charmers, no saviors among them — as the world
comes to an end
salvation is a matter of trading in flesh — or humankind
make-believe do-gooders masquerade
smugly
exploiting beggarwomen, muttering the mantra: principal and
interest
ay
a Vaishnavite, sacred marks on her forehead, abandoned her
village long ago
today
a beggar's bag in one hand and the remnants of modesty in the
other
clutching
her flapping anchal over her drooping breasts
teeth
flash in a tangle of vines, brambles, and creepers
a snake.

rheum
ruined eyes, ten fingers ripe with leprosy
ulcers
sewers, like dormant volcanoes brimful with lava, putrid with
10,000 years of
shit

squealing
bawling of a pig or a scrawny old ox, throat cut
wages
for digging ditches all day: a handful of rice — the foreman puffs
on a biri

at night
he seeks Rahima's shack and sucks ambrosia from her battered
breasts
heaven
will be damned off from hell, heaven on one side
an eternal
cauldron of fire on the other
mudslides

shatter every last rib across boundless fields or
in Bagdi
slums, in marshes and swamps — with the piercing call to
morning prayer Rahima's
eyes
open wide — back and forth an old turtleshell
rocks.

no
more cheap rides across the river, walk straight
ahead
knock at the doors of hell
if
they don't open, push hard
use your lathi, cry and cry face in your hands till you're
gasping with grief, let loose torrents of tears

fire
heaven and hell are burning, water woven with flames
and so
heaven will be damned off from hell
behold

you'll be raped — Pandava warriors break through the
barriques
the head Kauravas have fled to the forest, spears and axes over
their
shoulders
they've run away — Krishna's words of encouragement, love's
plaintive appeal
an enticing crown
a seductive flute's plaintive melody — trying to keep
time

it is absurd — now there's nothing but buying and selling rice and
dal

paving in cash is all that matters
Pandavas and Kauravas alike reach for their wallets.

cry Bangladesh, cry
raise the flag, who knows
how far away good times may be
though launched
the peacock boat is stuck in the
mud
optimism is a liar's game — the vermillion in your part is
crumbling
now the rivers cry too

keep on crying, turn to ashes
rip off the veil of centuries, learn to stand on two
feet
let the water sorcerer's curse be purged by fire

Translated by Carolyn B Brown Feb 15, 1997

anniversary

Liberation War Museum

AMUSEUM DEDICATE to all freedom-loving people of the world and victims of mindless atrocities and destruction committed in the name of religion and sovereignty. This museum is dedicated to all people of determination who can overcome all odds for freedom and liberty.

The museum located in the heart of Dhaka city near the National Press Club is open Monday through Saturday from 10:30 am to 06:30 pm. Closed on Sundays. Entry fee is taka three only.

After 25 years of Bangladesh's independence this museum makes an attempt to provide a comprehensive tour of our heritage and freedom movement covering period of over a thousand years. It is impossible to think that in a three storied house the total history of the Bangalee nation can be reflected. An attempt has been taken to present our past — the heritage, culture and the history of our freedom movement with special emphasis on our Liberation Movement. We take you on a tour of our past from circa 400 BC over the British colonial period and up through the Pakistani military hegemony to 1971. This is when the people of the eastern part of Pakistan, under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, opted to make the greatest sacrifice for a nation — Bangladesh.

On display are many rare documents and objects, carefully preserved and displayed to give you an understanding of the struggle for freedom.

The museum's six galleries are well lit with friendly guides to answer your queries. As you end your tour of the museum, you may relax in our outdoor cafe and reflect upon your thoughts. Our kiosk stocks books, photo-albums and souvenirs. The library is filled with books and documents on the Liberation War. Last but not least, is our video room, where one can see a 20-minute video documentary from the



throughout the world.

Gallery One gives the viewer a glimpse of the heritage and culture of the Bangalees. One moves on to the British colonial period and the struggle of Bangalees for freedom.

Gallery Two gives one a condensed historical tour of the Pakistan period ending with the 1970 election.

Gallery Three is dedicated to the clarion call of Bangabandhu on the 7th March 1971. This was his call to struggle for the rights of Bangalees. Thus was formed the mass movement of 'non-cooperation' with the Pakistanis to meet that end. The gallery includes a pictorial display of the dark night of March 25, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's call of Independence and the subsequent

walls are covered with more photographs documenting the early period of the Liberation War. The new recruits, the training, initial resistance and the freedom fighters. On the verandah there is more evidence of the genocide committed by the Pakistan Army as depicted by newspaper cuttings.

Gallery Four displays belongings and pictures of several Bangalees who lost their lives in the hands of the Pakistan Army in the most heinous ways. In addition, there are documents and belongings of the Provisional Government, its cabinet, and its administration. One can also see belongings of some of the sector commanders.

As one walks out onto the balcony one will see a large

purpose to focus our energies toward a more positive activity in order to encourage the younger generation and assist them in understanding and feeling the spirit of the Liberation War, and thus, make a more meaningful contribution to the nation.

We all had been reawakened by the call of Shaheed Jononi Jahanara Imam in 1991. This was at a time when the anti-liberation forces were beginning to consolidate their energy to strike at us, once again. We all had stood by her. It was her unending energy which gave us back our pride and belief in being able to accomplish our dreams. Therefore, after a great deal of soul searching and brainstorming at numerous meetings we, eight individu-

als, agreed to establish the Mukti Juddha Smriti Trust.

The MST chose as its first project, the establishment of Mukti Juddha Jadughar. The eight of us never, for one moment, thought that we, alone, could achieve what had not been done in the previous 25 years. All we claimed to be, as the MST, was a catalyst. This is because we knew once we started the ball rolling, we would get helping hands from everywhere. Of this we were correct. No sooner had

we started talking and meeting people, than we were overwhelmed with the support and encouragement. It was, and continues to be, unbelievable.

In the amazingly short time of 1 year and 9 months, we were able to open the Liberation War Museum. Of course, the museum located in a two storied, 6-room house is a very small tribute to the great sacrifice which the people of Bangladesh made for their freedom. We are confident that we, the MST, will be able to transform this into our larger vision of a complex which will accommodate everything from the museum to library, documentation centre, theatre, seminar room/s etc.

From the beginning we never doubted that our sincerity and labour which we had put into this project would make it happen. Each and every one of the eight Trustees had worked relentlessly. At last, on March 22, 1996 the Museum was opened. The opening was greeted by the first Kalbaishakhi of the season. That we felt was a blessing from the forces above us. Considering it was a time of political uncertainty with the non-cooperation movement at its height, we had an overwhelming presence of well-wishers (over 1500) at the opening ceremony. It was with the lighting of the eternal flame by the granddaughter of a martyr of the Liberation War, that the Museum was declared open.

Since then every day something new and wonderful is happening at the Liberation War Museum. A Mukti Juddha or his family is giving something. From the day we opened the Museum, it has been made much richer by the members of the public for whom this museum has been opened. As we celebrate the first anniversary of the Museum we are proud to say that over 60,000 people have visited the Museum. We have built a fully air-conditioned auditorium for seminar and dis-



events of 1971, collected from authentic media clippings.

The Liberation War Museum wants the future generation to know our rich heritage and draw from the spirit of the Liberation War the inspiration and pride to build a better future and make the dream of Golden Bengal become a reality.

As you enter the museum complex you see the eternal flame burning for all who laid down their lives for freedom and liberation

declaration made by Major Ziaur Rahman from Chittagong Radio on behalf of Bangabandhu. It shows through photographs, paper-cuttings, and other documents, the fleeing of thousands of refugees, their taking shelter in India and their sufferings in the refugee camps. The gallery further documents the historical oath-taking ceremony of the Provisional Government of Bangladesh on April 17, in Mymensingh.

As one walks upstairs, the reliefs map of Bangladesh divided into 11 sectors, a chart giving brief information of the major players in 1971, the pictures and details of all the sector commanders, the flag under which the Liberation struggle was fought.

Gallery Five gives witness of the participation of ordinary people in our Liberation War, the radio, the women, the foreign support, especially the government and the people of India.

Gallery Six is the finale.



being what the Bangalees faced in 1971.

Come join us today. Become part of our "pride and spirit of '71".

Mukti Juddha Smriti Trust

The Mukti Juddha Smriti Trust (Liberation War Memorial Trust) began in a very humble way. On a balmy, June evening in 1994 several like-minded people met. Most of us had been involved in the 1971 Liberation War. We felt it was our

mission to establish the Mukti Juddha Smriti Trust.

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Trustees: Dr Sarwar Ali, Aly Zaker, Asaduzzaman Noor, Rabiu Hosain, Sara Zaker, Ziauddin Tareq Ali, Mofidul Hoque and Akku Chowdhury.

Based on the Trust press release