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## Reflections on the Victory Day

It was a small slogan. But it changed everything within moments. The brutal repressions of the Pakistani army over the preceding nine months, the monstrous cruelties of traitors like Razakars and Al-Badr, our sorrows, sufferings, pains and vulnerabilities, panic and uncertainties - everything evaporated in a single blow. I was transformed into a new man within a second; I was now a free man of an independent nation - whose head appeared to touch the sky. The memories of the dear ones I lost during the nine months of the war, now crowded my mind. Wiping off the teardrops from my eyes, I felt an intense love for my newly-born motherland. None were as lucky as our own generation, as we had witnessed the birth of our dearest motherland. The new generation can never comprehend or imagine the mirth we derived from our deep love for the country.

Inside us, our generation shares a type of intense emotion for the liberation war, which cannot be found among the new generation. The whole country was later thrown into an abyss of darkness after 1975. We are coming out of that darkness very slowly. A new generation is growing older, having deep affection for the motherland. I have watched with amazement the love of the new generation for their country, and the great feeling they have for the liberation war. So, when a pledge was made during the last election for holding the trial of the war-criminals, they enthusiastically reposed the responsibility of running the country on the grand alliance. They are now waiting patiently to witness the trial of the seditious war-criminals, and get back a motherland which has been freed from a stigma.

We all dream about a Bangladesh of our dreams. I believe, our new generation can gift us that country. That is possible only with a genuinely patriotic generation. It is therefore very important that our new generation knows the history of the liberation war. This country was not born by signing deeds or documents after holding diplomatic negotiations. The country was freed by evading the clutches of the greatest super-power on earth and by defeating the world's cruellest army in a face to face war. That liberation war was at the same time a tale of great sacrifices, of unbelievable courage and valour, and the chronicle of a huge accomplishment. When a person comes to know the history of that sacrifice, heroism and achievement, then he would not only feel great affection for the country, his chest would swell with pride. He would not then require inspiration from outside to build this country, rather he would feel that urge from within.

We can feel the liberation war anew with the heralding of each Victory Day; our new generation will also have to comprehend that. They will have to know that the complete history of the liberation war is not confined to merely nine months of armed struggle in 1971. It started with the struggle against communalism and religious fanaticism after the partition of the sub-continent in 1947. The Bengalee nation started to get its self-identity from the language movement of 1952. Bangabandhu's 6-point movement during the decade of 1960s had united the whole country. We are still thrilled by the memory of the 1969 mass upsurge, the incredible election of 1970, the tyranny of the Pakistanis and the non-cooperation movement led by Bangabandhu. Can we ever forget that historic speech of Bangabandhu, which he delivered by ignoring the raised weapons of the Pakistani military?

All these combined to give shape to the history of our liberation war. Not only the past - our future should also be a part of it. When we succeed in ridding ourselves of a stigma by holding the trial of the war-criminals, when we take the country to the doorsteps of a land of our dreams, only then will our history assume a complete shape.

We are waiting for that cherished motherland of our dreams on this Victory Day.

Translation: Helal Uddin Ahmed

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## Friends, near and far

The war for Bangladesh's independence was not a classical anti-colonial war, but its legal basis was no different. A minority ruling class, using their superior military might, wanted to keep in shackles the people of then East Pakistan by imposing its political and economic control and narrow worldview. Rejecting this, the Bengalis took up arms and demanded their right to self-determination. This right, a cardinal principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, lay at the very foundation of the anti-colonial struggle of the last century. At the United Nations, where the Bangladesh question generated heated debates, many reiterated Bangladesh's right to self-determination.

For example, addressing the Security Council on 12 December 1971, the Permanent Representative of the (former) Soviet Union, Ambassador Yakov Malik reminded the Council members that under international law, every nation was assured of its right to self-determination. Only the people of Bangladesh, through their elected representatives, could decide whether they wanted to remain part of Pakistan or to secede from it to form their own independent State, he said. The representatives of India and Poland also made the same argument.

The legal basis for Bangladesh's independence struggle was also reflected in numerous international legal instruments proscribing genocide and other crimes against humanity. Legal scholars agree that what happened in Bangladesh in 1971 was one of the worst genocides in human history. Later in the 1980s and 1990s, the international community developed the concept of "responsibility to protect," which stipulates that every State is responsible to protect its own citizens from persecution and to respect their human rights. In case the state itself is the perpetrator, the international community reserves the right to intervene to help protect those people.

But the real strength behind Bangladesh's liberation war lay in its people's moral fortitude. In 1971, the people of Bangladesh were engaged in a just struggle. Explaining why he wanted to join the Bengali freedom fighters, the octogenarian Malraux said, the Bengalis were being butchered by a superior military machine. The 3,000-year-old Bengali Civilization was under attack. Everything must be done to save this civilization and to assist the Bengalis.

When they heard these words, Bengali freedom fighters felt emboldened. They knew they were not alone. Mr. Malraux later visited liberated Dhaka and strongly advocated for international recognition of the newly independent nation.

The same sense of solidarity was echoed by Richard Taylor, who led the blockade of the Pakistani vessel in Baltimore. In 2000, at a conference of expatriate Bangladeshis at Madison Square Garden, he was introduced as a great hero. Mr. Taylor disagreed. "I am no hero," he said, because what he did was only the fulfilment of his duty.

"People were dying at the hands of a military regime. Those dying and those fighting were my brothers. After all, we are part of a global community that we call humanity," he said, as a drop of tear glistened in his eye.

Today, forty years later, a grateful nation salutes all its friends for standing by the people of Bangladesh in its darkest hours. Indeed, they, too, are our freedom fighters.

Hasan Ferdous is a writer and journalist based in New York

D F P NO. 03-14/12/10

## When Niazi was Signing the Surrender

Kamal Chowdhury

When Niazi was signing the deed of surrender with his genocidal hand  
His shakiness could be felt then  
Niazi was at that moment a lonely and distraught man  
Neither pen, nor firearm, neither the drunk Yahya, nor Bhutto  
None were his friends then  
Standing nearby were the marauding Pakistani soldiers - all silent  
Their eyes gazed downwards; their murderous fingers were numb  
There were excitements all around  
The freedom-loving people were waiting for a historic moment  
The valiant freedom-fighters and the soldiers of the joint command  
In the last scene Niazi picked up his pen  
With trembling hands he wrote his ultimate defeat.

The colour of Bangla's sky changed at this sight on the Racecourse ground  
We returned from the land of the dead  
After a long stay abroad, sleepless nights in exile  
The corpses of fellow warriors on our shoulders, rifles in hand  
Shouting 'Joy Bangla' 'Joy Bangla' with an invincible elation  
We came back -  
At that moment the Racecourse meant Independence  
At that moment the Racecourse meant the flag of a sovereign nation  
At that moment the Racecourse meant the celebration of victory.

This scene is now written in the river-currents, the flows of water  
This scene is now etched in the colour of alphabets, red roses  
This scene is the 'shahed' minar', the martyrs' monument,  
This scene is the face of our near ones on the mass-graves  
This scene is our golden Bangla  
This scene is a thunderous voice, the courageous fore-finger of Mujib  
This scene is my head forever held high -

We did not capitulate. This sight is that of a triumphant nation.

Translation: Helal Uddin Ahmed

## From the Cradle to the Grave

Kazi Rosy

Sensational Sacrifice is needed  
To gain any victory  
Endless efforts to be given  
To get any success  
Selfless soulful love to be devoted  
To gain any achievement

When the crops harvested  
Makes those people indomitable  
For the patience  
They have shown for.  
Touch they the flag to raise in honour  
With the tender love from the nature.  
Bangla in Mother Bangla, and on this very earth  
Victory and liberty they are marching with  
Walking, slowly,  
From the cradle to the grave/Dawn to dusk.

Thirty lakhs freedom fighters martyred  
Three lakhs women, the humiliation, the disgrace  
Bubbling blood  
To utter the name Bangladesh.

May be any mother or father  
Or brother sister  
Still staying behind the doors  
For the hope of change.  
The war was over though they  
Continue counting the after days of '71  
To be changed.

We have to perceive, we have to apprehend  
Any shout, slogan or lament  
What it is from and why.

Translation: Fatema Zohra Haque

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## Victory of Joy Bangla

amity'. Besides, the editorial wrote "the door was broken asunder bringing the hope and light in the life of people." The editorial said "On this sacred dawn of Independence, we remember with gratitude the tears of our mothers and the bloodshed of our millions of heroes."

After the 16th December, the 'Dainik Pakistan' was published as the 'Dainik Pakistan Bangladesh' on the 18th December. This was the single chief newspaper published in independent Bangladesh. On that day the paper headlined "Joy banglar joy" under eight columns. It wrote.... "Oh my golden Bangla, I love you". My motherland, every inch of it is sacred and holy today. This is my dream homeland. Hats off to you - hey my motherland touched with the burning passion of freedom and throbbing hearts of seventy five million people. Your name is Bangladesh written in red letters of blood of millions of lives. ....Not only the marauding Pakistan army, but also their armed

collaborators have snatched away millions of lives by their cruel, beastly assault which destroyed millions of households, looted honor of women'.

On that day, another news was published under the headline "We will definitely bring back Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib." The paper reported that Prime Minister Tajuddin in a radio broadcast on the 17th December said 'the cruel genocide, repression and violence, unleashed by the Pakistan army in the last March on Bangladesh ended with the surrender of Pakistan army. ....This victory was victory of truth, justice and democracy. Yet the victory has remained incomplete, because the father of new Bangladesh, the apple of eye of seventy five millions Bangalis has remained a prisoner in the hands of colonial rulers. We will try our level best to make him free'.

Besides, in an editorial entitled, "Joy independent Bangla", it was written.... "We have to reconstruct this

devastated Bangla. We have to make still more sacrifices and do hard work, have to face every challenge with resolve. Our sole aim is to achieve secularism, democracy and socialism. We have to realize that goal. Our sincere hope is that Bangladesh may blossom into a golden flower by its own glow".

On 19 December, 'Dainik Pakistan Bangladesh' under an eight column headline entitled "Free Bangabandhu" wrote, " A mammoth meeting held at the Palton maidan organized by the freedom fighters sent an ultimatum to the Pakistan military Junta that if Bangabandhu was not returned to the soil of Bangladesh by the 31st December, the freedom fighters would launch an attack on Pakistan. Besides, the freedom fighters refused to surrender their arms until the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was returned free to Bangladesh".

Another report on that day was deeply disconcerting. It said "the Al-Badr bestial forces have committed the worst genocide of the century. Many dead bodies have been recovered". It reported that the genocide has been perpetrated in Dhaka and outside since the last February. It reached its peak on the eve of liberation. Al-Badr, an off-shoot of Jammal-e-Islam carried out this heinous crime. They mercilessly killed hundreds of intellectuals and youths of the city. Yesterday a large number of disfigured dead bodies were recovered from the lowly areas of Rayer Bazaar in Dhaka.

We shiver in our bones by chilling news on that day. It said Begum Mujib's life was saved narrowly by presence of mind of an Indian Major. It said seventeen hours after the surrender of Pakistan Army on last Friday, Begum Mujib, wife of Father of the Nation was rescued from detention of Pakistan army. The Major in a valiant effort rescued her. This brave lady who has all through been the mainspring of inspiration of Father of the Nation to bring about the emergence of the independence deserve all our profound respect.

Besides, that day an editorial captioned "Wipe out the Al-Badars" said.... there is no doubt that unless the vicious 'Al-Badars' and 'Al-Shams' and other reactionaries are eliminated, the lives of people, particularly the intellectuals will be in danger. ....Therefore it is essential to be active to wipe them out".

On 20 December, the 'Purbodesh' published a report headlined "Weep blood soaked Bangladesh". This was the first edition of the paper after independence. It wrote "on this auspicious moment of Independence, don't forget those dear persons ....with whose blood the golden Bangla has become red. ....On the one hand there is joy of independence, on the other there is grief for sacrifice of lives of millions of people. ....Let us take a pledge that we'll never forget those martyrs who have given us freedom at the cost of their lives".

That day the paper published the second lead news demanding trial of the war criminals. Besides, the first editorial under the headline "oath to reconstruct Bangladesh" said 'we will rededicate ourselves to remain constant to every directives of the government, build our country with unity and fraternity to erase out the horrors of oppressive Pakistani rulers. ....The struggle for our liberation has been successful. This new struggle to reconstruct the country will be successful too'.

That day the paper published a report under the caption, 'There is no force which can keep Bangabandhu detained.' A special article describing Bangabandhu as an extraordinary person of invincible power was also published in the paper.

The 'Dainik Pakistan Bangla' in its editorial on 21 December, entitled 'responsibility of the moment' said 'the invincible people have hoisted the flag of freedom by wading blood of river and sea of tears. ....People now stare at a happy society. In their hearts they nurture hopes of a bright future. ....The map of independent Bangladesh has emerged out overcoming a great challenge. It is the duty of every citizen to make meaningful the hard earned independence ....what is needed now is united and undiminished work. The unity forged during the liberation war has to be harnessed to build the country. Every man must contribute to the reconstruction of the country; we have to tell the world that we have survived the war to have a beautiful and bright future of Bangladesh'.

Another article entitled 'programme of the moment' was also published. Hasan Hafizur Rahman in a poem 'The Triumph of a People's War' wrote about the resolve to



remain as a front ranking nation at this moment of crowning victory. The concluding part of the poem was:

Now in this flow of blood of people's war  
if you cannot wipe out all your blemish  
you are nobody  
This is why in this people's war  
with the garland of victory  
we are first everywhere.

The 'Purbodesh' on 21 December headlined 'how many people of Bangladesh have been killed?' That heart rending report said that if the true account of lives lost in the premeditated 9-month genocide was taken, it would be horrendous. There is no document available with us about the extent of genocide carried from Teknaf to Tetulia by Yahya-Tikka-Niazi clique. But we must get hold of that document. Otherwise the complete history of our liberation war will remain obscure. Our posterity will blame us. Another report was published that day

captioned "call to reveal the correct information about the genocide". A condolence meeting was held at the press club.

An editorial, "No more destruction, now is the phase of rebuilding" said 'just as example of our winning independence is exceptional in annals of liberation war of the world, so our struggle to build a new Sonar Bangla is also bound to be unique'.

On December 22, the 'Dainik Bangla' was published by deleting the word Pakistan. The lead news was carried in the paper under the heading "The leaders return to Dhaka as Heroes, a warm welcome at the airport". Another news item published in the paper said that there will be demand for the release of Bangabandhu before the exchange of prisoners of war. 'The Purbodesh' of 22 December headlined "the list of war criminals has been obtained, no way they can escape". An extensive editorial demanded the trial and execution of Yahya junta. A second editorial that day said that the liberation war had now transformed into a struggle for rebuilding the country.

On 23 December, the 'Purbodesh' reported "Liberation leaders have returned to Dhaka like heroes; journey has started, there is a floodgate of joy of people in a liberated city. A big headline reported about a historic public reception at the airport. The acting President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh returned to a hearty reception by millions of people in Dhaka. Consequently, the capital of Bangladesh was shifted to Dhaka from Mujib nagar. Thus began our new journey".

"If need be we will sacrifice more blood; acting President", headlined a story. Syed Nazrul Islam said we have won the war of liberation but another war is before us - the war is against ignorance, poverty and petty-mindedness.... our independence will not be complete without achieving social revolution by eradicating these evils from the society".

On 23 December, the 'Dainik Bangla' published a lead news captioned "implement the dream of Bangabandhu-address by the acting president in the capital of independent Bangladesh". Besides, both 'Dainik Bangla' and 'Purbodesh' published editorials welcoming the brave sons of the nation to the soil of Bangladesh. On that day the last page of the Dainik Bangla published a report about a condolence meeting in Bangla Academy calling for writing a complete history of the liberation war.

On December 24, the 'Purbodesh' and 'Dainik Bangla' published a lead news about some very significant decisions taken by the cabinet meeting. The decisions included the use of Bangla language as the official and state language of Bangladesh, introduction of Bangla language at all levels, changing the forenames of Pakistan and East Pakistan corporations and organizations into Bangladesh corporations. The state bank was named as Bangladesh Bank. The decision also included the construction of a martyr war memorial in the city and raising a war memorial fund to offer help to the families of martyrs of the liberation war.

On 25 December, 'the Dainik Bangla' and 'Sunday's the Purbodesh' headlined "fight will continue until Bangabandhu's return, determination of student force to establish an exploitation free society". The editorial in the Purbodesh that day under the headline "post revolutionary new pledge" congratulated the decisions to bring the fruits of independence to the doorstep of people.

On 26 December, the 'Sunday's Dainik Bangla' and the 'Sunday's Purbodesh' front page a headline that a constitution will be adopted soon. The 'Purbodesh' published a lead news captioned "trial of Bhutto, Tikka wanted". The paper in an editorial said "we need two thousand crore taka for economic reconstruction and rehabilitation of war affected people. ....We have to carefully make the best use of our limited resources and external help to compensate the irreparable loss and damage to the country". 'The Purbodesh', that day evaluating the international significance of our independence wrote "this victory is a victory of all freedom loving people of the world. ....It will remain as a perpetual source of inspiration for future struggles for independence". The news papers world wide echoed the sentiment.

On December 17, the 'Times of London' in a headline 'the Fallen General' wrote that General Niazi looked near about crying and ferocious while signing the deed of surrender of defeat at the table of Racecourse field at the distant thunder of gunshots. He looked pale and crestfallen in the midst of jubilation and joy of people overwhelmed with excitement of the victory.

'The New York Times' under the headline 'Garland of Victory' wrote, 'there is a floodgate of joy of victory on the streets of Dhaka, the people of Dhaka are expressing their warm greetings to their freedom fighters and Indian soldiers by showers of flowers, the picture of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is held aloft the heads of people, the air is rent with slogans of 'joy Bangla' and 'long live Bangabandhu'. 'The New York times' published another report entitled 'No more rule by Pakistan'.

'The Christian Science Monitor' on 17 December in a headline 'the best memorable victory' wrote, 'from now two Pakistans have ended'. 'Al Ahrum' of Cairo in a report entitled 'compromise impossible' wrote that it became impossible to bring about a compromise between two parts of Pakistan on account repression and exploitation on Bangalis by Pakistan Army and Punjabis.

On 27 December, the 'Purbodesh' published a report about the demand for release of Bangabandhu from detention and the joint initiatives of Soviet Union, Britain and France. On December 28 the 'Purbodesh' published a report about an interview of the mother of the nation expressing hope of a safe return of her husband. The interview by Begum Fazilatun Nesa spoke of her frightful experience in the dark night of March 25.

In a headline captioned "Bangladesh will last forever", the 'Purbodesh' on 29 December wrote Bangladesh has come to stay. ....It will last for centuries. That day the 'Dainik Bangla' reported that Bangladesh Awami League will observe 9 January as 'Sheikh Mujib day' to strengthen efforts for his release.

The 'Dainik Bangla' on December 30 published a news captioned 'blood of martyrs has not been shed in vain'. The 'Dainik Bangla' that day published a picture of women to portray the direct and indirect contribution of women in the war of liberation. The newspapers published after the December continued to reflect the grief and sufferings of people for death and devastation of war.

It is true that the victory day has given us the geographic independence, but we are yet to achieve a lot. Let the revolutionary spirit which liberated the soil of Bangladesh command our efforts today on the fortieth anniversary of our Independence to build the country for which the freedom fighters made their supreme sacrifice.

Translation: Md. Abdul Hannan