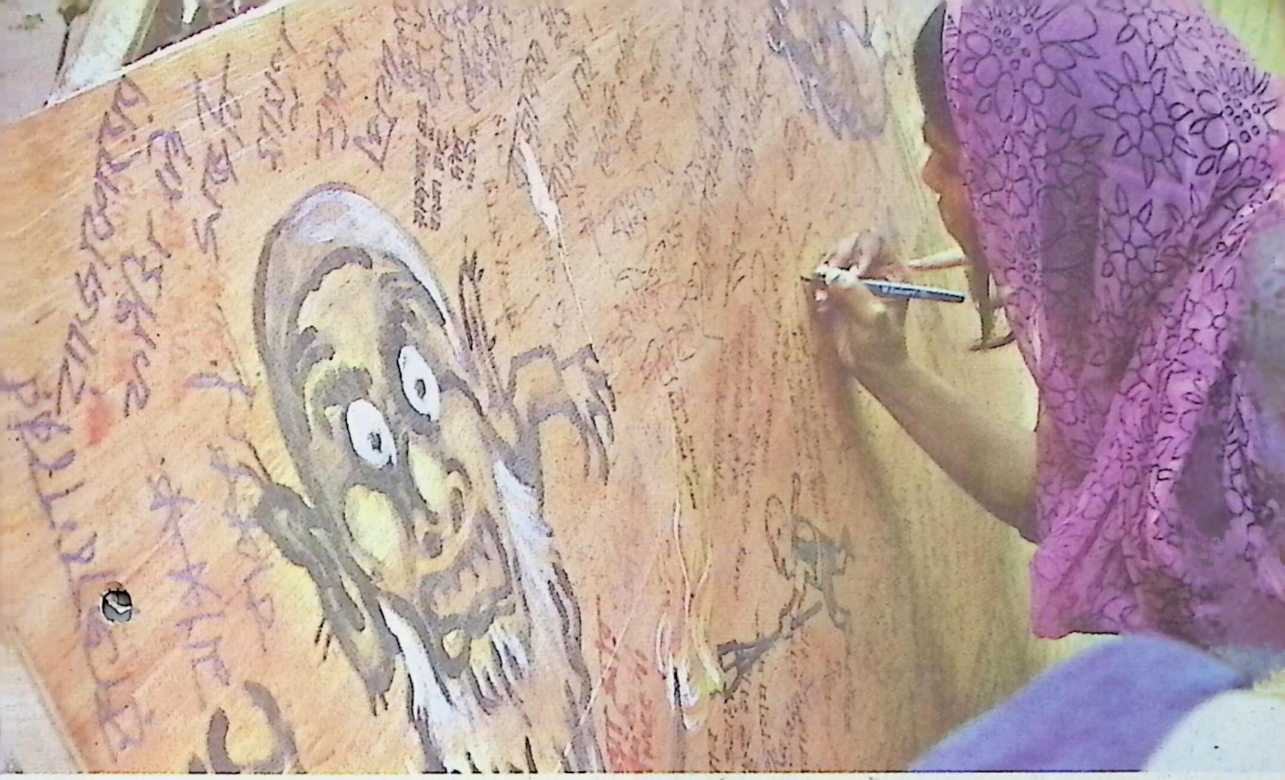


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

terror tactics. Even if the Jamaat came to power by so-called peaceful means, they would never let minority people live normal lives. Those belonging in that category of Bangladeshi citizens would always have to live in fear.

Fourthly, there are those despicable individuals who post misinformation about how defenceless citizens are being subjected to 'genocide' and crimes worse than what happened in this country in 1971. That kind of propaganda is too disgusting to bother commenting on, so I have just begun to remove such people from my friends list. A side-aspect of this is posting about how so-and-so's father, grandfather, sixth grand-uncle on the mother's side and so on was a razakar. How is this relevant, even if it had been true, which ninety per cent of the time it isn't? A man's measure is taken by what he does, by who he is, not who his forefathers were or weren't!

I would like to see the same or preferably greater outrage over the current targeting of minorities and innocents by the fundamentalist forces, as I see in these questions about death penalty and fair trials. What the government and the people of Bangladesh must do now is to stand by their neighbours from other communities, not argue that somehow the protesters at Shahbag are responsible for the behaviour of the Jamaat. Stop blaming the victims, including the victims who are tired of putting up with this terrorism and have spoken out at Shahbag, for the actions of the attackers. By doing this you play into the hands of the fundamentalists.

Finally, this endless stream of Facebook posts which talk about how terrible violence is, how we should never resort to violence, how violence never solves anything, seems to be from people who forget that fighting back during the war in 1971 also involved violence. Nobody in their right mind wants violence, so do not think you are the only ones who abhor it, or that voicing such sentiments give you the right to capture the moral high ground. The truth is that fighting back against fundamentalist forces cannot be done successfully through pacifism or passivity. To suggest this is profoundly unrealistic. You have to be willing to stand on the frontline to defend your stance, not only to sit at home and write long treatises on the internet.

Finally, I wish that my Facebook friends would remember one thing. While the "liberals and progressives" category that I also belong to are spending all their energy on arguing about death penalty and fair trials, those on the other side are not divided by such concerns. The bloodthirstiness that some liberals accuse the Shahbag protesters of is in fact clearly visible in the actions of their opponents. And their bloodlust is single-minded, not hindered by concerns about fairness, rule of law or even basic human decency.

I am not one of those who believe that 'if you are not with us, you are against us'. But I believe that those of us who want to see a peaceful, secular Bangladesh where all citizens live free from fear do not have the luxury of this kind of endless internal debate. It is actually self-sabotage. Please take a good look around you and try to understand who the real enemy is. Otherwise we risk losing the war in the midst of fighting our petty battles about who is right about what.