pouring more than the West Pakistanis into the Pak national exchequer through 50-70% of the total export earnings but were offered the lesser share; them 70% to our 30. Fewer Bangalees were employed in the Pakistan military and civil services. Bangalee were not financed to build large industries. Electricity, water, and telecommunications were mere alms at their mercy. We had much fewer doctors and hospital beds, and poorer health facilities. Our education system was steadily crippled while theirs was making progress in leaps and bounds. We did not get a single Pakistani (our) military helicopter to manage relief operations after the November 1970 Bhola cyclone, the deadliest tropical cyclone ever recorded (185km/hr), and one of the deadliest natural disasters in modern times (5 lakh dead). With $3.6 billion US Aid for flood management, the West Pakistanis took $2.7 billion to construct their Tarbela dam while we got $0.9 billion for flood control. We were supposed to be one country.

They frivolously labelled us Bangalees as anti-Islamic. But we East Pakistanis were by far the more conservative. As for example, Karachi newspapers then advertised their night clubs in daily newspapers. We were proud of Dhaka as the city of masjids.

Against this background in 1966 came Sheikh Mujib-led Awami League's six-point programme, which demanded (for our very survival) autonomy for East Pakistan, and which West Pakistan perceived as separatism. The Pak junta invented the Agartala conspiracy case 1968 and put Sheikh Mujib and thirty-four others on trial. Bangalees arose in a mass movement in 1969 propelled by the January 11-point demand of the Student Action Committee, which included release of all arrested in the Agartala case. Amid vehement public demand, on 22 February the case was withdrawn. Freed Mujib was pronounced 'Bangabandhu' at a reception at today's Suhrawardhy Udyan the day after. A month later the tyrannical government of despot Ayub Khan fell.

The first ever Pakistan general elections were held in 1970 under General Yahya Khan whose publicised personal life was hardly Islamic. Considered one of the most fair and clean elections in the history of Pakistan, Awami League won 160 seats (all in East Pakistan) and was the single largest party in the 300-seat Pakistan parliament. But, Sheikh Mujib was not being invited to form the central Pakistan government. Yahya hobnobbed with West Pakistan's majority leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto; his People's Party won 81 seats in the West. Jamaat-e-Islami won 4 (four) seats. In the simultaneous provincial elections, Awami League won 288 of the 300 seats in the East Pakistan Assembly.

After months of delay and surreptitiously amassing West Pakistani troops and hardware in the East, the extremely ruthless Pakistan Army unleashed on the black night of 25 March 1971 the most cowardly and heinous attack to annihilate the Bangalee nation; one of their lame pretexts was that Islam was in danger, *khattra*. Does not that sound familiar even today? Bangabandhu declared independence on 26 March before he was arrested by Pakistani forces.

Ghulam Azam and his cohorts nakedly backed the ruthless and inhumane Pakistan army and regime against the Bangalees. Newspapers and documents, local and international, carry reports of their meetings and commitment to bring down their wrath on the freedom-loving Bangalees, deprived by the Pakistanis for 24 years. They gave birth to razakars, al-badr, al-shams, and the *shanti* (peace) committees to kill, rape, loot and destroy Bangalees. One crore victims of those atrocities took refuge in subhuman Indian camps.

Bangalees took up arms, organised the freedom fighters (declared by Ghulam Azam as 'enemy force') with regular Bangalee armed forces personnel and civilians. The nine-month long war of liberation ensued with training and operation camps based in India along the Bangladesh border.

When the Bangalee nation's victory was imminent in mid-December with auxiliary support from Indian Army and Air Force, as their borders were threatened, the anti-liberation forces, patronised by Ghulam Azam and others, took to kidnapping, blindfolding, torturing, killing and throwing the bodies of some of our greatest sons, the intellectuals, in a flooded brickfield. They left their Bangalee Muslim so-called 'brothers' unwashed, unburied, and themselves unrepentant.

Scores of mass graves have been unearthed all over the country. Many remain missing till today. And all the time Ghulam Azam and the likes of him had lent total unabashed support to the mindless killing and maiming, raping and looting.

It is in relation to those nefarious activities then that Ghulam Azam and others like him are being found guilty in the on-going trials through witnesses, testimony and evidences, and after being provided with full defence protocol inclusive of defence lawyers.

Even today they do not for one moment regret their 1971 action, apology is a far cry. We note with considerable consolation that some Pakistanis, although not through government channels, have apologised for the atrocious deeds of their countrymen.

Even after 30 years, the tears of those Bangalees who lost their near and dear ones to the maniac lust of the killers shall not dry.

Even after 30 years the eerie scream of the women being violated shall render our skies red.

Even after 30 years, this nation may not get the justice it so painfully awaits. ■