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It is not that we appreciate war crimes. Far from it. We do not hesitate to speak highly of the Jews who are hunting war criminals even fifty years after the holocaust. Was the systematic annihilation of Bangaless in 1971 any less than Hitler's despotism? Are the sinners of our Muktijudhdho 'more difficult to locate than Nazi criminals? I say sinners because it is a grave sin for a Muslim to kill another of his own faith. And, let it never be said that East Pakistanis were lesser Muslims.

Following the surrender of the defeated Pakistani forces to the joint command of Bangladeshi and Indian forces, subsequent governments in Pakistan have extended the olive branch of friendship to Bangladesh. Every government in Dhaka has responded emphatically but only by treading over our dead.

It is understandable that Pakistan will want to foster friendship with us for deep inside they must be haunted by fearful guilt. It is, however, difficult to comprehend why we should respond unconditionally. No person can kill my brother and then sit across the table pretending that nothing has happened, that we should be friends from that moment onwards. Between two nations, such camaraderie after one has tried to exterminate the other has no precedence.

Let us not await the visit by another Pakistani head of state. Let the demand for an immediate Pakistani apology for all its atrocities resonate across the globe. Let us remind ourselves that we were victims of truly a gruesome crime. We are here only because we triumphed. We are here to demand an apology, now.

On 14 November 2005, in **Apologise they must**, Chintito wrote:

While today visiting Pakistani leaders conveniently salute the martyrs of this land that verily their soldiers killed, it has evaded apologising and financially compensating (for moral compensation is impossible) for one of the most grisly crimes in the history of mankind. In fact, Pakistani leaders should not be allowed to set foot on the Jatiya Smriti Soudha, bathed in sacred blood of countless shaheeds, until they (Pakistan) have asked for forgiveness for their sin.

The mother of the child lost in 1971 still wipes a tear. The widow hopelessly longs for the return of her loved one. The child of a shaheed expects every other living parent to at least feel, if not fight for the cause his father laid down his life.

The cruelty of the Pakistani junta aided by a predisposed civil service of the 1960s and 70s may be gauged to some extent by the treatment it is meting out to its supporters, languishing in subhuman conditions in the so-called Bihari camps in Bangladesh. A country that cannot shoulder its responsibility for its opted citizens for 35 long years has a lot to learn about Islamic values and brotherhood – two of the many blames the mainly West Pakistanis levelled against the Bengali population in pre-1971. Let us pick up the folk tune and sing in chorus, 'Feel like laughing when we hear…' If that does not ring a bell, try "*shunle moder haashi paay…*"

On the night of 25 March 1971, the Pakistanis unleashed a reign of brutality unparallel in human history. Their heavily armed soldiers and militia fired indiscriminately on innocent civilian Bengali, (many in their sleep in slums, dormitories and barracks) in a bid to quell a civil movement led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Futile has always been the exercise of the despot.

Let only those set foot on the holy martyrs' memorial who believe that the then Pakistanis had severely wronged us Bengali.

Let only those salute the martyrs of Bangladesh who understand the grief of the mother.

Let only those lay floral wreaths on 26 March who share the anguish of the bride waiting for someone who shall never return.

Let only those call themselves Bangladeshis who value the distress of the child who tries to grasp the reality why his father never returned from the War of Liberation. ■