



My husband Moazzem Hossain

Here we publish an account of Kohinoor Hossain, wife of Lt Commander Moazzem Hossain, who was killed on March 25 by the Pakistani occupation army. He was the number two accused of the Agartala Conspiracy case.

KOHINOOR HOSSAIN

My husband Moazzem Hossain came to my life silently and went away the same way. As it took some time for me to feel the joy of his presence in my life, it also took some time for me to feel the pain of his departure from my life. His love for me was endless. ... I have never seen anyone as dutiful and generous as Moazzem in my life. His respect for his parents, love for his wife, offspring and siblings was incomparable. But above all, his patriotism and love for the people of the country surpassed everything.

One year after my marriage, he went to Bilet (England). He was a mechanical engineer and an employee of Pakistan Navy. He completed his studies from the Royal Naval College of Manadon, UK. He was a first class Marine Specialist. He took me with him when he was doing that special course. I noticed his anti-Pakistan mindset. Whenever there was any talk about the Pakistanis he would say, "You don't know how much they hate us, mistrust us! They say we are the illegitimate children of the Hindus and we have no right to call ourselves Muslims. They call us *kutta* (dog), *gaddar* (traitor). We don't get promotion -- they say we are "inefficient". We get punished for making even a small mistake."

After completing his training in England's Royal Navy College, Moazzem joined Pakistan's only cruiser ship named "Babar," as a junior engineer. He was a sub-lieutenant then. Soon he became lieutenant. Then he became the chief engineer of a destroyer ship. I have seen how responsible, dutiful and hardworking he was. Although he didn't like Pakistan and the Pakistanis, nobody ever saw him ignoring his official responsibilities. If there were any trouble in the engine or boiler of the ship, he himself would get to work. There were many times when I waited for him to have lunch together, but he wouldn't come home. He wouldn't even come at night. Then the next day, at midnight, he would come home, covered in soot. ...

(...) The Bangalis had to face many adversities at their work. The Pakistanis never wanted the Bangalis to get promotion or earn a good reputation for their hard work. The Pakistani officers would get promotion bypassing the Bangali officers. This happened not only in case of the officers, the same happened to the "non-commissioned officers" as well. The lower ranking Bangalis had to face the worst type of discrimination. A Panjabi sepoy would clean the table while a Bangali sepoy had to clean the toilet. He could not tolerate such discrimination. Little by little, the fire of revolution sparked in his heart. Living in a lion's den, ignoring the fear of death, he started arranging a revolutionary organization. At first he was the number one accused in the Agartala Conspiracy

Case, later his name came second. Because the prominent leaders of Pakistan said, "If a young man like Moazzem (he was 35 then), working in the Pakistan Navy, revolts against us, how do we face the world? Everybody would say was the Pakistan Intelligence Branch sleeping on the job?" Agartala Conspiracy Case was first named "State versus Commander Moazzem Hossain." Around May of that year, they released Sheikh Mujib from the central jail and then arrested him again from the jail gate in the Agartala case and changed the name of the case to "State versus Sheikh Mujib."

(...) But in whichever way they prepared the case, they knew very well who the main person was behind this. So they could not forget or forgive Moazzem. They didn't want to make the same mistake twice by letting him live. So in March 1971 they ordered the sepoy to catch him dead or alive. Many of his well wishers told him to run away. He said, "Why will I run away leaving behind the innocent people of my country?" Many suggested that he should go to India. He got very angry at this and said, "I will not go to India or let anyone from India come to this Bangla. If I must die, I would die in my own country along with my own people. That would be a happy death. And why would they kill me? I am no leader, I am a very ordinary person."

(...) After being freed in the Agartala conspiracy case, he lived for only two years and one month. During this time he travelled through all the *zillas* of Bangladesh like a meteor, in order to inspire people in the spirit of nationalism. And the common people responded to his call. ... He didn't have much time left. One thing I want to make clear here -- Moazzem was never involved with the Awami League, or any party for that matter. None of the parties' policies ever impressed him. So he started his journey based on the Lahore resolution of 1940 and formed a committee in 1970 named the Lahore Resolution Implementation Committee. Members from many prominent parties joined the committee, believing in his ideals. So within one year the committee turned into a party. He named it the Nationalist Party (Jatiyotabadi Dal). I am unable to show any proof of this today because I do not know the whereabouts of the journalists who were present at that press conference. I had kept all the papers, leaflets, pamphlets, booklets, constitution, a map of Bangladesh, written and drawn by my husband, safe for all these years. But on March 5, 1970, after nineteen years of my husband's death, Mr. Rezaur Rahman came to take my interview. He took away all the papers (all of those were kept in a file) in order to present those on TV. It all happened in a very short time. So I gave him the main copies of the papers, not the photocopies. Now I don't have any documents. That interview was never aired on TV. I told Mr. Rezaur, "There is no point in taking my interview; you will not get permission to air



Moazzem Hossain (1933-1971)

it." But he said he would make sure that the interview would be telecast. I didn't mind that the interview was not aired, but it hurts me more than his death could hurt me that I lost all the documents which were the last memories of my husband. ...

(...) The Pakistanis were very angry with Moazzem because he was freed in the Agartala case. They knew that he would not sit idly. So they planned to kill him. ...

(...) We passed the night of March 25, 1971 in anxiety. Although somehow we passed the night, the morning of March 26 still remains in our (my three children and my) memories. It appears as a terrifying nightmare. Around 6 in the morning, a team of army officers, assisted by a betrayer collaborator, surrounded our house and some of them entered the house. It was a three-storey building. We used to live on the ground floor, on the first floor lived my niece and her husband. That night we took refuge at the first floor. The whole place was wrecked within minutes by the army. Unable to escape, Moazzem hid in the bathroom. A group of army lined up all the men of the building outside while another group came to my niece and asked, "Bol Moazzem Shaheb Kanha?" (Where is Mr. Moazzem?) She looked at me and said, "Unlok niche rahta hay" (He is downstairs). They got angry at her answer and said, "Bol Mrs. Moazzem kanha?" Then added: "Moazzem ka Bangali banneka bohut shokh tha unko aachchhi tarha Bangali bana denge." (Moazzem was very interested in being a Bangali. We'll ensure that he becomes a Bangali).

Till today I feel myself going numb when I remember those words. It was beyond my imagination that humans could be so cruel to one

another. My niece Manju's answer was the same as before: "They live downstairs." I wanted to say: "I am Mrs. Moazzem" but couldn't find a word. My younger son was asleep, the elder one was standing by the window... my six-year-old daughter was sitting beside me.

The army officers were firing continuously without any apparent reason. When it stopped, I thought they went away failing to find Moazzem. Then I pulled the curtains, looked through the window and said, "Manju, it is all over with me." Saying this, I fell on the floor. Manju came running to me, covered my mouth with her hands and said, "Don't cry aunt, they were looking for you, if they hear your cry, they may come back and hit you and the children." (...) Moazzem heard that the army officers were shouting my name. So he went to the army and said, "I am Commander Moazzem Hossain." One of the army men said, "Apna jaan leke bhago" (Run for your life). Then they let all the men go. Five of them targeted their rifles towards Moazzem and said, "Bol Pakistan Zindabad." (Say Pakistan zindabad) He proudly pointed his index finger towards them and said: "Ek dofa zindabad." For he had only one dofa (demand) -- to liberate Bangladesh. Five rifles started shooting at once. He fell on the ground and said again, "Ek dofa zindabad." (...) When I looked through the window, I saw that they were carrying him away. Although I looked for only one moment, I could see his shirt was totally soaked in blood. I couldn't see more as Manju called me at that time. I couldn't cry, but a fire was raging in my heart and eyes. I forgot to cry, forgot to pray or recite the Quran. ...

(...) It was like my life ended within a moment. My younger son was asleep. He knew nothing of what happened. When he woke up, everything was normal, nobody was crying. My elder son told him, "Bhaiya, they killed daddy and took him away." My 8-year-old son looked at us with a blank expression; he couldn't understand what he had lost. But it was a severe blow for him to bear. Within 15 days he almost lost his ability to walk. Doctors said this could happen due to sudden grief. Nothing happened to me though. But till today I am tormented by pain and anguish. This pain may never go away. Is this the face of freedom for which my husband sacrificed his life and the soil of this country got drenched in his blood like the rising sun? Is this the liberation that he so yearned for, where there is no respect and security of women and no safety of people? Why the clamour of arms in our campuses? Does this mean that we are still not free, liberated? Who will answer my question?

Source: *Smriti: Ekattar*, Volume IV, edited by Rashid Haider published by Bangla Academy in 1991.
Translated from Bangla by Naznin Tithi of The Daily Star.

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Workers' rights through a gender lens

Bangladeshi women workers find themselves vulnerable in the export oriented industries of the garment sector as well as migrant workers, and a whole host of other workplaces.

CHAUMTOLI HUQ

SINCE Rana Plaza, there has been a laudable focus on workplace safety in Bangladesh. There are two international safety agreements that are leading efforts to inspect the electrical, fire, and structural safety of buildings; however, these efforts are limited in addressing key issues impacting the workplace safety of women workers and their overall rights.

In the summer of 2013, I interviewed survivors of the Rana Plaza tragedy and learned that pelvic fractures, injuries to reproductive organs and urinary tracts were common due to the building collapsing on their bodies. Media and advocates focused on limbs lost and campaigns to get prosthetics, but there was no mention of the impact on women's reproductive health or inability to maintain marital relations. Women confided to me that they feared their husbands would abandon them; neither can they work nor can they bear any children. The majority of the women working in the industry are at the peak of childbearing age, between their teens and thirties, and so, this fear is a real concern.

The focus solely on workers' rights, and not the specific way in which women workers are impacted has resulted in the failure of providing reproductive and also mental health services for women. Still, we have not researched the ways in

which women are coping in their families, and how their social status has diminished due to their injuries. Working in the garment industry gave women a certain level of economic freedom because they were able to contribute income to the joint households. To resume to a dependent status on their family members surely will cause emotional and psychological distress.

Aside from the survivors of Rana Plaza, women workers' needs and concerns are routinely ignored in the workplace, such as maternity leave, child care on site, and sexual and verbal harassment. Many working women are still required to maintain household duties such as cooking, cleaning, and child care, and workers' advocates need to think about women's rights beyond the factory. Conscientious and business savvy owners provide on-site child care because they know if a worker's child is nearby she will be productive and will not be absent. In an industry driven by targets and deadlines, absences hurt the bottom line and it is cheaper to provide child care onsite. Some forward-thinking owners also provide free schools for the children of garment workers as a benefit.

Trade unions have benefited women workers. Women workers I have interviewed have used the trade union structure to collectively obtain maternity benefits. This is probably why women workers are unions' most vocal supporters. While

Bangladesh labor law allows for maternity leave benefits, it is rarely enforced in the garment industry. As soon as an owner learns a worker is pregnant, she is terminated. Even if she is not, she is not given the legally owed benefits, which can have deadly consequences. In one case, the mother was unable to afford quality prenatal care, because her employer did not provide her maternity leave benefits, and as a result, she died during childbirth.

Also not often discussed is the work-life span of women workers. Sekender Ali Mina, Executive Director of Safety & Rights, shares "there is no systemic investigation on when women leave the workforce or programs to assist with the transition. After their labor is used in their youth, they are forgotten." But, he estimates by their thirties, women leave the garment industry. Younger workers eager to earn money replace them. Older women are capable of working; yet, there are few programs to provide any safety net once they leave garment work or programs to retrain them to do other work. Back home, they are often viewed as an economic burden.

Outside of the garment industry, in designing migrant worker programs, the Bangladesh Government fails to take into consideration unique issues women workers face. In the recent MOU with Saudia Arabia (KSA) where female workers will be hired as domestic workers, the Government has not taken steps to protect the

rights of women. Human rights lawyer and program manager with Manusher Jonno Foundation, Sarawat Binte Islam, notes that the Government should investigate why other countries have withdrawn female workers from KSA and should have discussed remedies for those issues with them. These programs as they stand may violate ILO Migration for Employment Convention since the jobs are restricted based on sex and the remuneration is lower than that provided to nationalities from other labor sending countries. Some steps that could have been taken are to demand wages on par with other migrant sending countries, designating safe houses in case of harassment by an employer, contacts for social service organizations, mobile phone so that women can call home for free or programs to allow women to meet each other so that they are not isolated. Also, Ms. Islam recommends skills training for jobs other than domestic work.

Bangladeshi women workers find themselves vulnerable in the export oriented industries of the garment sector as well as migrant workers, and a whole host of other workplaces. In conceptualizing workers' rights and designing workers' programs, if we use a gender lens then we can begin to identify and address some of the issues they may encounter in the workplace.

The writer is a senior researcher with the American Institute for Bangladesh Studies (AIBS). You can follow her @lawmargins on Twitter.

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
- 1 Ticked off
 - 5 Daytona entrant
 - 10 Manhattan Project product
 - 12 Unaided
 - 13 Buccaneers' base
 - 14 Devilfish
 - 15 Ethan's "Gattaca" co-star
 - 16 Wrench, to a Brit
 - 18 Seeker of gold
 - 20 Bonanza stuff
 - 21 Resting on
 - 23 Rocker Nugent
 - 24 Remote button
 - 26 Commentary piece
 - 28 Chess piece
 - 29 Khartoum's river
 - 31 Try out
 - 32 Preserving expert
 - 36 Checkout device
 - 39 Groom's answer
 - 40 Newscaster Couric
 - 41 Bisected
 - 43 Put up
 - 44 Letter stroke
 - 45 Refinery sights
- DOWN**
- 1 Showed sudden interest
 - 2 Bush's successor
 - 3 Eternal City resident
 - 4 Napoleon or Nero: Abbr.
 - 5 Hindu hero
 - 6 Cumming of "The Good Wife"
 - 7 Signify
 - 8 Came in
 - 9 Brought up
 - 11 We count in it
 - 17 Debate side
 - 19 D.C. baseballer
 - 22 Sailor's star
 - 24 Makeup buy
 - 25 Left on the plate
 - 27 Signing need
 - 28 Colonial weapon
 - 30 Motel freebie
 - 33 Blasting staff
 - 34 Moses of the track
 - 35 Thatcher creations
 - 37 Shaving mishap
 - 38 Brooklyn team
 - 42 Homer's neighbor

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45

Yesterday's answer

HOO FIT SCAT
INVITE TORE
MEANER ONCE
IMPROV
ALPS AGILE
PAR OFTENER
AGO BEE CAR
REVIEWS EVE
TRIMS USED
NEESON
PICA ARCADE
IDES TEASET
NOSY ESPANA

CRYPTOQUOTE 2-10
YCNMAL BYHXXB KACJ MON RAZRQB CK
Z VACQNP ONZAM, VTM KXCSB KACJ CPN
SOHRO HBXCWNE.
- ROAHBMCYONA YZIX ATVNAC

YESTERDAY'S CRYPTOQUOTE:
LOVING IS NOT JUST LOOKING AT EACH OTHER, IT'S
LOOKING IN THE SAME DIRECTION.
- ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY

BEETLE BAILEY



HENRY



QUOTABLE Quote

Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.

Oscar Wilde