

# The Birangona beyond her wound

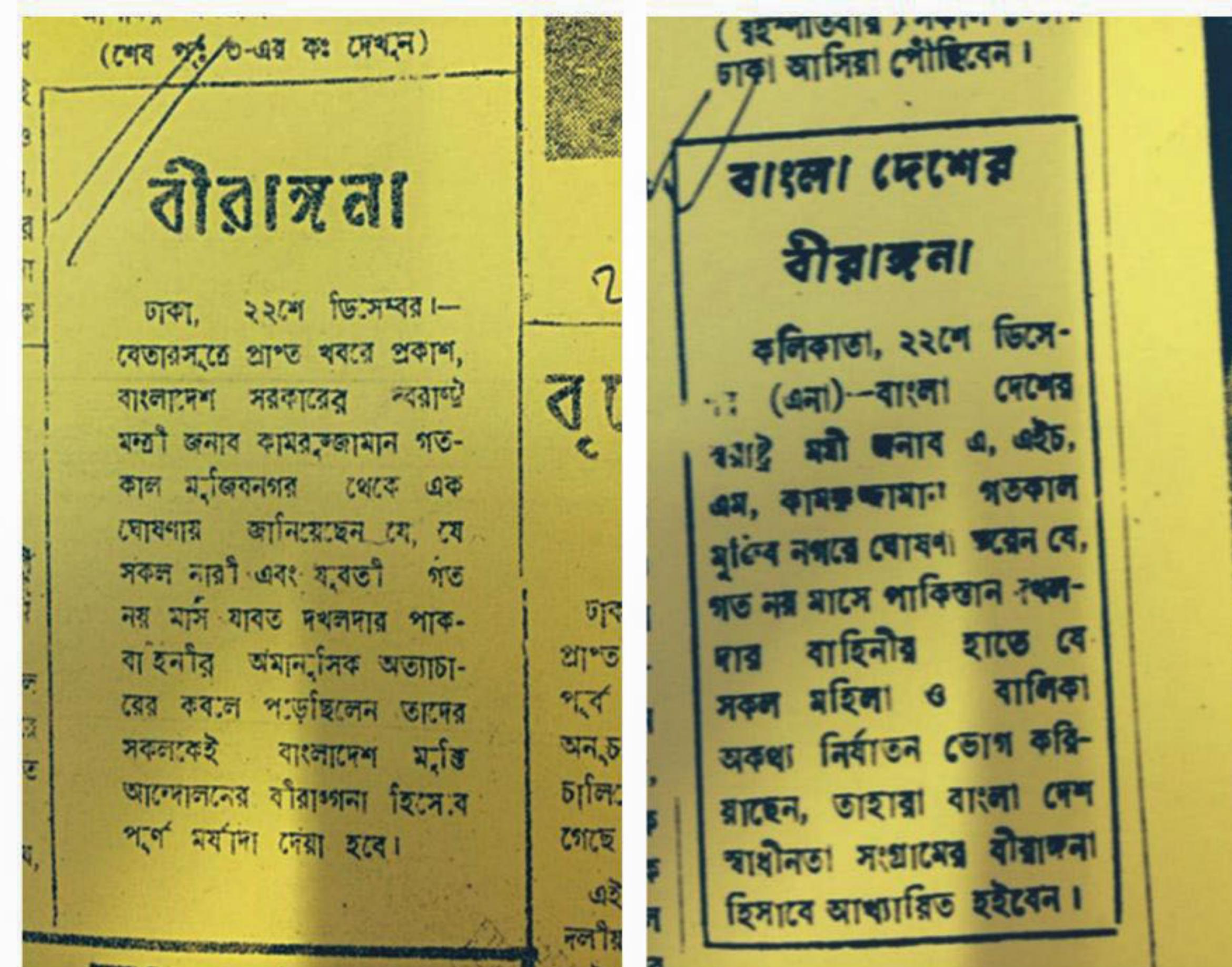
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talk about what they wanted to speak about. There are other ethical concerns one has. I constantly wondered if I am also doing the same thing that I am arguing against and hence constantly tried to ensure that I was being ethical.

I met this man who told me that his mother was a *Birangona* and that she wanted to talk to me. I went with him, and asked his mother would she want to talk about this. She gets completely angry with me, she asks me to leave. She says if she talks about her account she will be pulled onto a stage, and her younger son won't give her *bhaat*. So it turns out the older son is jobless, and the mother is looked after by her younger son. She is looking out for her sustenance and talking about her rape might bring out problems for her. One can say to women: you shouldn't be thinking like this, everyone should be talking about this but only if they want to. Women also need to have the right to be silent, if that is what they wish as I have shown in my book. Overall we should do a risk analysis, before we work with *birangonas*.

**TDS:** How do you view the post-71 efforts of rehabilitation and adoption programmes, where the new state played a controlling role over the experiences and body of the *Birangonas*?

**NM:** What needs to be understood is, in the words of a social worker I closely



**Newspaper clippings from 22nd December reporting that Home Minister Qamaruzzaman had declared from Mujibnagar that all women subjected to 'inhumane torture' by the Pakistan forces in the nine months of the war will be given the status of *Birangonas*.**

PHOTO COURTESY: NAYANIKA MOOKHERJEE

the parents. She was a young, teenage mother, who said she needed to get on with life. But she wanted to see who this

couple was. So at one level, women were happy to be able to get on with their lives. At another level, they did not want

to look at the child at all because of its origin. At another level, as social workers would say, 'they had to protect women from the emotions of motherhood.' It's such a stark statement. We have to protect women from their own emotions of motherhood. You have to make them detached from their children so they can let them go.

In the newspapers in the early 70s, there was quite a lot about these children. While the state was willing to rehabilitate the women because of the sheer numbers of the women itself, it was very clear that the children had to be 'sent away', adopted away from the country.

There's one story told by a social worker, Maleka Khan about how they changed the age of women so that they could get jobs. There was this batch of nine women who got jobs, and today they are officially approaching retirement. These women are now coming back to the social worker and saying, "Remember you changed our age. You increased it. We are not at our retirement age yet, we have a few more years to work."

So there are these different ways that people are negotiating their history. So we need to think of the *Birangonas* not as a horrific wound and by not negating their complex life experiences. Instead we need to understand how their violence of wartime rape is folded in innumerable ways in the minutiae of their everyday life.



(বাংলার বাণী রিপোর্ট)  
সমস্যা অনেক, অর্থাত্ব আরও বেশী ত্বুও সবার অন্তর্ক্ষেত্রে মুক্তি যুক্তের সময় বাংলাদেশের নির্যাতিতা নারীদের পুনর্বাসন কাজ বর্তমানে এক উৎসাহজনক পর্যায়ে উপনীত হয়েছে।

পরিকল্পনা ১০ কোটি টাকার; কিন্তু এ পর্যন্ত পাওয়া গেছে আজ ১২ লাখ টাকা, তা হলেও কাজ স্থির হয়ে তাঁ অর্থের পরিমাণে বিচার করা যাবে না, এ ব্যাপক ও মহৎ পরিকল্পনার প্রাথমিক সাফল্য উপলক্ষ্যে করতে হলে চাকুর দেখতে হবে।

ব্যাধীনতা সংগ্রামে বর্বর লাক্ষ-ধারীর হাতে বাংলা-

নির্যাতিতা নারী পুনর্বাসন উৎসাহজনক পর্যায়ে উপনীত হয়েছে।

দেশের যে অসংখ্য নারী নির্যাতিতা হয়েছিলেন, সমাজে তাদের প্রতিষ্ঠিত করার জন্য বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় নারী পুনর্বাসন বোর্ড' স্থাপন করা হয়েছিল।

বজ্রবন্দু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান

বিশেষ উৎসোগ নিয়ে গত ১৮ই ফেব্রুয়ারী এই বোর্ড'

বোর্ডের পর্যবেক্ষণ কর্তৃত মহিলাদের চিকিৎসার উপর অধিকতর উৎকৃষ্ট আবৃত্তি করা হয়েছে। বিভিন্ন পর্যায়ে রয়েছে কর্তৃত মহিলাদের পুনর্বাসন পরিকল্পনা।

আধিকারিক পর্যায়ে কর্তৃত মহিলাদের চিকিৎসার জন্য টাকা সহ দেশের প্রতিটি জেলার ক্লিনিকে (৫৫ প্রাতার মুঠো)

worked with, Maleka Khan: "What were we to do? There were so many women. We had to bring them back to the framework of society." Yes, there was appropriation, but it was also very revolutionary.

It was after the war, everything was chaotic. Things needed to get back on track. I am currently doing this work on the adults who were adopted out of Bangladesh. So there's a British couple I have interviewed. The mother of the child who was adopted by them wanted to see