



Significance of Muktiuddha...
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that it could not be termed as a secessionist movement. He depended on the power of the people, on the other hand the Pakistani rulers were determined to destroy the people's power with military might. They with full force struck treacherously on the night of 25 March, 1971. In face of the genocidal attack upon the Bangali nation Bangabandhu declared the independence of Bangladesh. Overnight the democratic struggle for national rights turned into the war of national liberation, a concept which in the 1960's earned UN recognition as part of the anti-colonial movement of the nations for self-determination. At one side was the genocidal attack and on the other side the war of national liberation, two opposing components of the struggle for Bangladesh.

It cannot be said that such reality of Bangladesh struggle was well understood by the international community. Bangladesh was not Biafra rather it gave rise to a nation-state breaking the shackle of colonial state structure of Pakistan. There were not many people who could evaluate the struggle from the perspective of anti-colonial movement and one such exceptional academic was Herbert Feith, the convenor of the Victorian Committee to Support Bangladesh. In September 1971 during the turmoil with no end in sight he delivered a lecture at the Flinders University of South Australia and observed:

"Bangladesh movement is much more like an anti-colonial movement than any of the other would-be breakaway causes of the third world. It is an anti-colonial movement in every major sense except in not being directed against a European power. We have traditionally come to see anti-colonialism as a matter of brown people rising up against their domination and exploitation by white people. But Korean nationalism, which was directed against the Japanese, was anti-colonial nationalism too. So why should we not see the Bangladesh cause in this framework?"

Professor Herbert Feith had the insight to look at the Bangladesh struggle in broader dimension. He depicted the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu and the subsequent non-violent non-cooperation movement as the 'Prague Spring of Bengal'. He said,

"It marked the beginning of what has been sometimes called the Prague spring of East Bengal, the period of high elation, big commitment and high sense of unity, when Bangladesh as a state of mind was born."

The genocidal atrocities that began on the night of 25 March, 1971 continued for nine long months. Even in the early days the signs of genocidal intent and targeted killing was inherent in the plan and pattern of atrocities. Here we recall the role played by Archer Blood, the U. S. Consul in Dhaka. As early as

on 28 March in the secret telegram sent from his office to the State Department he put the caption 'Selective Genocide'. Later on he wrote, "On March 28 I sent a telegram captioned 'Selective Genocide'. As far as I know, it was the first time that term has been used, but it was not to be the last."

But the Western powers, specially the US administration headed by Nixon-Kissinger axis, in their effort to appease President Yahya Khan negated the truth of genocide. They downplayed the atrocities and accused India for their interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. But the brutal way in which Pakistan Army attacked the Bangali nationalists and Hindu population had exposed the harsh reality of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity. These found ample reflection in the human sufferings reported in both the electronic and print media world-wide. The genocide in Bangladesh was not a hidden one, rather a widely publicized tragedy of humanity.

But media has its own limitation and is very much tied to the event as it unfolds. They rarely focus beyond contemporary settings. Post-independent Bangladesh went out of focus of the global media. The efforts of the war-devastated country to rebuild itself or the right of the victims of genocide for justice found little mention in the media. No international initiative was taken to try the Pakistani war criminals or their local collaborators. On the other hand Bangladesh was pressurized to send back home the 195 Pakistani POWs accused of international crimes. Many countries and international organizations were vocal about the release of prisoners after cessation of hostility as per Geneva Convention, but no one raised voice for justice for the victims of genocide as per Genocide Convention. In the backdrop of failure of the international community Bangladesh moved forward all alone and in July, 1973 adopted in its Parliament the seminal law entitled 'International Crimes (Tribunal) Act'. But due to international pressure to release the Pakistani war criminals Bangladesh could not make much progress in their trial. The scenario changed drastically with the tragic killing of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu and a reversal of policy began. There followed a long period of denial of justice as well as distortion of history.

In spite of this great reversal the people, specially the near and dear ones of the victims of genocide, the freedom fighters and adherents of the core values of Muktiuddha, never allowed their right to justice to be forfeited. They tried to keep the flame of memory alive. One glaring example of memorialisation was Jahanara Imam and her book of memoirs 'Ekattorer Dinguli' (Days of

'71) which inspired the youths as well as larger population. It was under her leadership that People's Tribunal was formed to try the leading local collaborators. The long endeavour to end impunity for the perpetrators of genocide achieved success in the 2008 national election when the coalition led by Sheikh Hasina was over-whelmingly voted into power with mandate to try the war criminals. Accordingly Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took initiative to establish the Tribunal and in 2010, almost 40 years after the genocide, International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh was established. This landmark event in the history of justice for genocide had great national and international significance. The Tribunal was set-up on the basis of the 1973 Act and following due process of law



verdicts now are being delivered one after another. Justice for genocidal crime is a complicated process and it took global community almost 60 years to establish the International Criminal Court in 2002. The shift in the international arena as well as in Bangladesh has drawn new attention to the events of 1971. In recent years significant books based on new and extensive research on the emergence Bangladesh has been published in the West. Prominent among those is the book by Gary J. Bass titled 'The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide.' When a book backed by documentation and solid research is being published on a forgotten genocide it no longer remains forgotten. Other significant books '1971: A Global History of Creation of Bangladesh' by Srinath Raghavan, 'The Bangladesh War and Its Unique Legacy' by Salil Tripathi and 'The Spectral Wound' by Nayanika Mookherjee, a sensitive account of sexual violence and its aftermath.

In the post-conflict scenario Bangladesh took significant steps to support the victims of sexual violence. Bangabandhu had embraced the victims as 'Beerangona' or War-Heroine which Nayanika Mookherjee termed as 'unprecedented in history'. She observed that after a long gap it was only in Bosnia in 1994 similar call was made by the Imam of Muslim Society to treat the victims of sexual violence as fighters or soldiers. She noted that the efforts of Bosnia as well as Bangladesh remained outside the purview of international community. It may be mentioned here that another significant act of Bangladesh also remain unrecognised which is the legal recognition of 'rape' as a Crime against Humanity. 1973 Act of Bangladesh categorized the crime of rape whereas in the Genocide Convention of 1948 there was no mention of such brutal crime.

In the changed international scenario the contribution of Bangladesh is getting more and more recognition. This has been reflected in the observation made by genocide scholar Professor Adam Jones. In March, 2014 in a lecture delivered at the Liberation War Museum he noted: "The establishment of the International Crimes Tribunal in 1973 was one of the earliest systematic attempts to seek justice for genocide - the first major one since the Nuremberg Trials following World War Two, and the first in which vocabulary of 'Genocide' was front and centre."

On the other hand we have witnessed massive international campaign launched by the religious fundamentalist forces, the perpetrators accused for their complicity, abetment and participation in the brutal acts of genocide, to tarnish the image of the Bangladesh tribunal. They could confuse some people for some time but failed in thwarting the justice process. It is also imperative that Bangladesh promotes its own domestic process of justice for international crimes more vigorously in the global arena.

In the long struggle of Bangladesh to establish truth and justice another significant step has been taken by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 11 March 2017 when the Parliament declared 25 March as the 'National Genocide Day'. This will create new possibility to commemorate the victims of genocide and work for its prevention. It is important not only to understand what happened, but also to study why it happened. That will assist all to learn lessons from the past atrocities and chart future course for humanity to live in harmony. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his struggle to establish the nation-state of Bangladesh has shown the way to create harmony in diversity. This is the civilizational challenge we all are facing now.

The struggle for Bangladesh is also the struggle for emancipation of Mankind. Joy Bangla. □

Translation: The writer himself

The Bangladesh We Desired

Dr. Mohammad Hannan

What kind of Bangladesh was desired by the people of this country, how the valiant people of this nation, with their chests up rallied in front of the glaring cannons, what kind of Bangladesh was dreamt by the fallen martyrs, to find out such queries we need to look 45 years back. Bangladesh was then, a newly independent nation. Justin Falaand and J.R. Parkinson, two economists from the World Bank came to this new nation to analyze its opportunities and avenues towards development. After making their observations they filed a report (the report was then publicized from Dhaka in 1976 headlined Bangladesh: The Test Case of Development).

The two economists of the World Bank wrote in the report "Bangladesh is the toughest question in the face of development for the World." The two economists concluded their piece of advice with the words "If by the end somehow Bangladesh develops, it will take at least two hundred years to do so."

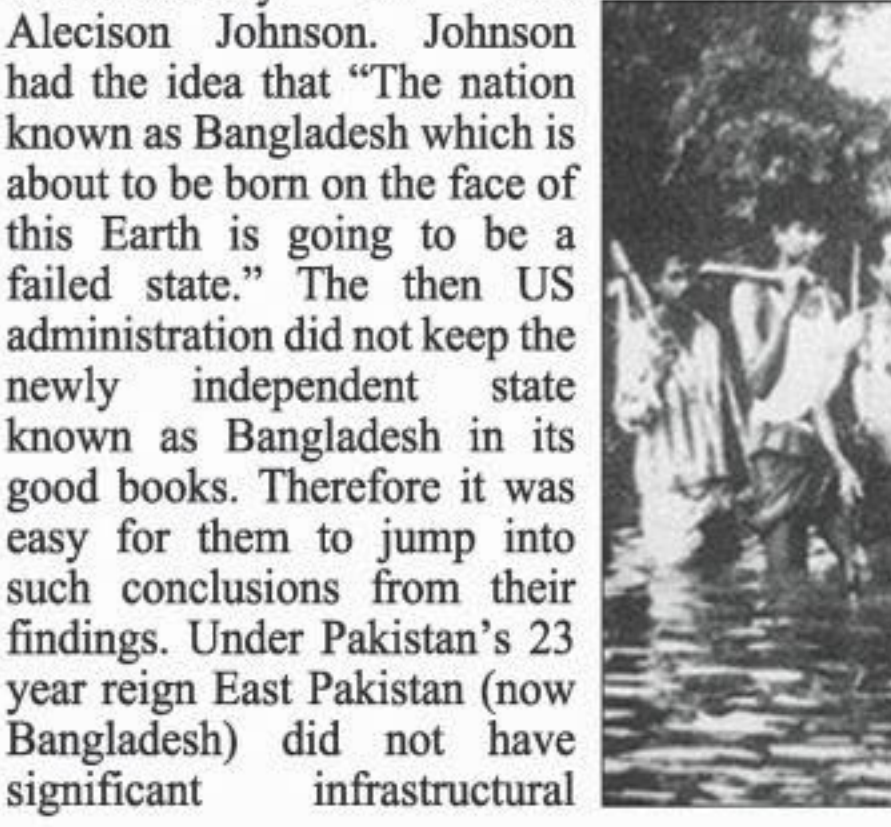
Where were we! Nobody refrained from making a joke on us. The test case was shortly followed by the story of the Basket case or the "bottomless basket" case. Although the direct meaning of the phrase "basket case" is not "bottomless basket". In 1914, during the First World War, when injured soldiers would lean on unharmed soldier's shoulders to walk, they would be denounced as "Basket case". In 1945, after the second world war "failed organizations" would be labelled as "Basket case". By 1971, that phrase was used to declare a nation as a "failed state". Contrary to popular belief it wasn't a term coined by Henry Kissinger. The founder of this term was US undersecretary of state Alecison Johnson. Johnson had the idea that "The nation known as Bangladesh which is about to be born on the face of this Earth is going to be a failed state." The then US administration did not keep the newly independent state known as Bangladesh in its good books. Therefore it was easy for them to jump into such conclusions from their findings. Under Pakistan's 23 year reign East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) did not have significant infrastructural

development to forecast that this state can run as an independent nation.

But throughout 1972-1975 and post 1975 they had hurt the Bangabandhu government and insulted them by rephrasing the "basket case" as "bottomless basket" and they started a propaganda, the very people who did not want this Bangladesh, who did everything they could to stop the birth of Bangladesh by standing beside the tyranny of the Pakistani rulers. The fact that it is humiliating for a nation to do so did not even recur on their minds, the main objective of this propaganda was to condone off Bangabandhu.

What did we have! Floods, Drought, Famine. Every year the people of North Bengal would die of starvation. When there was a shortage and necessity of food, foreign aid would come in the form of rice via cargo ships, which would be sunk at sea, so as to ensure the famine lasted longer. A war torn country, on top of which these natural disasters, oil prices were hiking in the international market, Jute had been overtaken by the introduction of Synthetic in the world over, no hold of law and order, as if vengeance and oppression were in a race amongst themselves. The objective was simple, to imbalance the Bangabandhu regime. The enemies were successful in attaining the background for this objective. After the assassination of Bangabandhu, it seemed as we were going astray from where we desired Bangladesh to be.

The next chapter of the story! 1996, the rebirth of the journey. The nation made a sensational comeback after 21 years. A minor discontinuance followed in the middle. But from 2009 onwards, the world came up with



more and more explosive facts and findings. In terms of development, the turning of Bangladesh into "role model" has become a much talked about agenda.

The World Bank! The World Bank had stated in its report of countrywise national income 2015, "in 2014 the income per head of Bangladesh has risen to one thousand and eighty US dollars. The countries with one thousand and thirty six to four thousand and eighty five US dollar income per head are recognized by the world bank as lower middle income country. Bangladesh was up to then recognized as a lower income country. In the vision of the present government, by 2021 Bangladesh is being promised to be recognized as a middle income country. Before that Bangladesh has upgraded into a lower middle income country, hence making the path towards becoming a middle income country easier.

Test case, Basket case, and now a Showcase! World Bank President Jim Yeong Kim came to visit Bangladesh in October 2016. Marking the world wide poverty erosion day, on 17 October, he identified Bangladesh as a "showcase" and stated that "there is a lot to learn from Bangladesh".

We wanted to hear these very words. We wanted to witness this very Bangladesh. We wanted to come out and clear the allegations that were made against us. Our youth has an indomitable spirit, which can compete with that of any other country in the world. In 1971 in a mere nine months they took down a ferocious opposition and took the world by storm. That same essence and demographic, is changing the landscape of this country. It is such a phenomenon that cannot be explained or bracketed by theories. We wanted that Bangladesh, whose infinite strength will leave the world in awe.

"Famine" will be wiped out of the dictionary, some people doubted this thought. But we wanted such a Bangladesh, where no one will



die of starvation. Bangladesh now exports rice to foreign countries. No longer does consortiums sit down in Paris to discuss aids to help Bangladesh. We wished for such a Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh which can take up the challenge of constructing a bridge across the flashy Padma river, this is the Bangladesh that we wanted.

The villagers are getting electricity, for hearing such news we have waited for ages. In October 2016, as per the report published on the website of the World Bank, "to the rural underprivileged people, via solar energy, Bangladesh is being able to supply power easily. Currently thirty five lakh families have both got food shelter and power in Bangladesh. Between 2012 and 2015, along the rural areas 37 lakh people have been supplied with power via nonrenewable fuels."

The expansion of women literacy has been simply beyond imagination. The examination results are showing that, it is the female students who are comparatively performing better. From preliminary to higher studies, it is the female who are more progressive. The garments sector currently has forty lakh labours, among which around thirty two lakh are female. This is astounding news for the world. This is the very Bangladesh we wanted.

Nobel Laureate Economist Amarta Sen wrote "who was a little while back looked down upon as a "dustbin", that Bangladesh has had substantial economic and social successes and moreover in this along with other transformational possibilities, the contribution of women in the workforce continues to play an integral part. In two decades the drop of the infant birth rate of Bangladesh from 6.1 to 2.9, (which is quite possibly the quickest drop in history) the silent yet effective role of the women have given both purpose and fruitful results which has led to gender equality and other related positive indicators to be exemplary. [Tarkapriya Bharatio, Ananda, Kolkata, 2010, Pages 236-237].

The way one Nobel laureate has lauded Bangladesh and expressed his excitement, we wanted such a Bangladesh. Hurling dust towards the face of enemies Bangladesh marches forward, march it shall, that is the Bangladesh, we have all come to expect. □

Translation: Kh. Muhtasim Omar

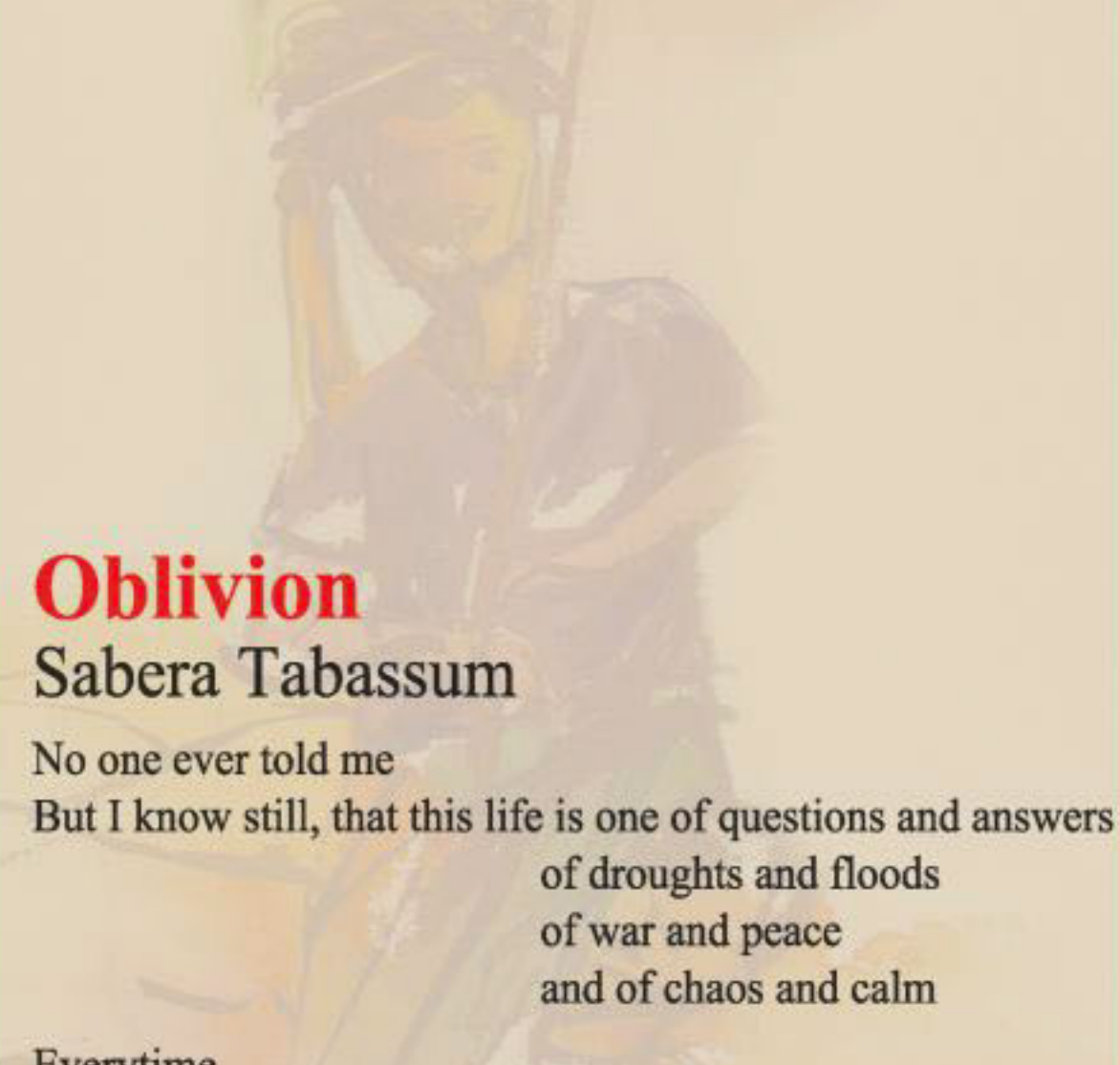
Bangali's Nation-State

Asim Saha

The Bangalis' were never sovereign, subjugated perpetually they were The Shoks, the Huns, the Pathans, the Mughals never merged here. Horsemen coming from faraway conquered this land The coward king of Bengal-with security-boon not blessed. He fled away leaving his subjects behind For hundred years foreign rulers seized our command. Luminescence douse while I write that history Kindle fire of combustion for that century. Here came the Pathans, came the Moghuls, came the Aryans Yet independence has not come here, Darkness never expires. The British came as crowned Head, Everything they grabbed, The Bangalis had been prisoners For two hundred years, Yet bowed down their heads they never- Didn't achieve self-governance, outcasts they were, Yet did never bow their heads down, cherished own aristocracy! Suddenly roared Siraj, war trumpet blown in Plassey, woke up, opened eyes hundreds impaired visually. To defeat him, Generals of Siraj conspired with Britishers, Brought irreparable damage to the nation those double dealers. The nation will remember Siraj as a great national redeemer Failed they to subdue this nation, those conspirator, Yet those who ruled for two hundred years could not stand- were at sixes and sevens. Surreptitiously imposing two-nation theory, they blinded our comrades. Right at that moment young Mujibur appeared, And became our national comrade. He wrote in his own hand the salvation deed of the Bangali In that struggle how quickly he guided the chariot of victory! Thereafter came sixty nine, an explosion took place To intercept that, the Pakistanis' staged a carnage. That's why Mujib called for perpetual delivrance In race course ground, declared independence, And it was very logical. In response to that declaration, Yahya took at dead of night retaliation. The Bangalis' died and In Dhaka city millions groaned.

On the night of 25th, cruel Hyenas', dangerous under cover of 'search light' Killed thousands of innocent Bangalis', but none of the Hyenas' died in fight. On the night of 26th March, message Of liberation was sent through wireless Set. Did nobody hear, did nobody know, Who made the call of rescue? Listening that call, the Bangalis woke up, luminous and inventive. Long nine months' inspiration, were gratified in the name of Mujib. Three million sacrificed their lives, two lac offered honor They offered reward, bringing independence winning the war. Blowing war trumpet on 16th December, victory flag flew high In free Homeland, free space in each house top flags occupy. The Father of the nation returned home on 10th January. At that moment The funeral pyre of Pakistan was burning in liberated Homeland. We achieved proud identity of a nation-state We achieved victory of 'Joy Bangla' in an independent Homeland. We achieved Bangali Homeland piercing history We achieved bottle green Bangla desert penetrating. We achieved golden Bengal, songs of Rabi Thakur We achieved days of Surjya Sen and Pritilata. We achieved rebellious poet great heart Nazrul, Dukhu Mia. We achieved red-green flag soaring sky high We achieved thousands of lustres in a new territory. We achieved our Sheikh Mujibur, Bangabandhu- the boss Best Bangali of thousand years- unprecedented, sovereign, unanimous. We live this day, will live forever with his inspiration, The country will live, will be known to eternity at his illumination. We are Bangali, our Homeland, it's name is Bangladesh Mujib is the light that flows relentlessly in our conscience, So long this country, its rivers prevail, relentlessly they will flow. The sky and breeze of this country with tales of Mujib, relentlessly they will blow

Translated by: Samirana Saha



Oblivion
Sabera Tabassum

No one ever told me
But I know still, that this life is one of questions and answers
of droughts and floods
of war and peace
and of chaos and calm

Everytime
Like a fish spawning her eggs, I remain cautious
Yet in crevices hide the arms of hunters
Finding my deepest weakness.

Everytime,
In one of many abandoned houses and
In the dear utensils hurriedly thrown into wells,
Life shows me the photo of torture waiting for the child,
And tells me the story of the grief-struck photographer who committed suicide
And the tales of the million mountains, forests and rivers that kept us safe
Everytime,
The failure of the protest of the millions,
Everytime,
The abrupt success of petty individuals
No one ever told me,
But I know still, this life is one of endless captivity, and a hint of independence.

Translation: Ashfakul Ashekin