

NATIONAL GENOCIDE DAY

Justice is the only way to prevent recurrence of genocide

Eminent Indian political psychologist and social theorist Ashis Nandy talks to Shamsuddoza Sajen of The Daily Star about various aspects of genocide in the context of South Asia, particularly Bangladesh.

Why is it important to study genocide in the context of South Asia?

I believe that genocide is such an issue that it cannot simply be ignored after it has occurred. A society can be brought to the ground from the intense implosion resulting from genocide. The framework of a social conscience that forms the ethical entity of a society is thus moved. After a genocide, a sense of cruelty can be witnessed in a society which reaches the very roots of that people. And this comes out at different times. Let me give you an example. A friend of mine told me the story of a married couple in Cambodia who were fighting with each other about a new lover in the husband's life. The husband used to sell fruits in the market. Several wars have taken place in Cambodia, so one could easily buy old grenades and bombs. The wife, out of spite, bought a grenade from some place. When her husband was at the shop, selling his fruits, she threw the grenade at his stall. The husband died, obviously, but those who were around him died too. It was a marketplace and thus crowded with people.

This mentality comes from the history of genocide in Cambodia. The framework of Cambodian life changed because of genocides. The same thing happened in the case of South Asia as well. That's why justice is important, and that's why punishment is also important. But that is not the end of everything. The children, grandchildren of the



Ashis Nandy

perpetrators are still alive. They will create their own mythology. We say that they are guilty; they say that they are not guilty. They claim to be patriots as well. The process of genocide doesn't end with genocide—it continues. Once Dr AQ Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, was interviewed by Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar. Nayar asked AQ Khan, "Dr Khan, you created the bomb but your father and brothers live in Bhopal, which is in Madhya Pradesh

in India. When you throw the bomb in Delhi or Mumbai, the radiation will spread to Bhopal as well." AQ Khan said, "In 1947, I entered Pakistan after crossing the deserts of Rajasthan, starving and thirsty for a drop of water. I haven't forgotten that incident yet. The experience haunts me till date. If the security of Pakistan is threatened, I will drop the bomb on India even if it means destroying my own family." This kind of mentality, this way of thinking is prevalent in a post-

genocide society. It's our misfortune that such genocides took place, and several small genocides still occur every now and then. One can recall the Brahmaputra Mail train bombing of 1996 or the riots in Gujarat in 2002 as genocides on a smaller scale.

Do you see any change in the modus operandi of genocide in recent times? During the Partition, most of the people who raped women accepted their crime and even married their

victims later. When they were being repatriated, these women did not want to leave their new families behind.

But, now we have become very individualistic. As urbanisation has increased, there has been a growing sense of anonymity. The internal checks have collapsed. Our sense of ethics has diminished. During the Gujarat riots, the rape victims were burnt to death.

In the context of the subcontinent, there always seems to be a relation between religion and genocide. What do you think?

There is a religious dogma, true, but it's not like there's always a religious purpose to them. Because in their hearts everyone knows that this has no relation to religion. Punjabi Muslims would generally say that Bengali Muslims are not actual Muslims because they are similar to Hindus. But the traditions of Punjabi Muslims were much more in line with Hinduism than those of Bengali Muslims.

How can one mobilise people when every kind of people—be it Bengalis, Punjabis, villagers, Shiites, Sunnis or Hindus—makes a population? This is the case in the entire South Asia. Politicians think that people can be mobilised if they are religion-centric. This was not the case earlier on. When religion is brought into politics, the issue of religious divides would appear as well.

War criminals are being tried in Bangladesh but there are attempts to show these trials in a negative light, especially in the western media.

The American government is promoting negative propaganda against the trial because they fear that their skeletons might be dug out in this process. If fair justice of war crimes is to be done, then Henry Kissinger should be forced to stand trial. Let them release every document and correspondence. Then we'll know whether they're speaking the truth or lies. We'll know, we'll decide.

Why are these trials important?

So that these genocides don't take place in the future. Otherwise, these will continue; there will not be any end to this. After the trials are over and justice delivered, everyone can say that justice has been served. The families of those condemned to the death sentence might be angry. But nothing can be done about it. In Bangladesh, you are not doing any summary trial or trial through "kangaroo" courts. There is a scope to appeal after the sentence is delivered. There should not be any doubt about the trial process in Bangladesh. People are seeing that; they are not idiots, they can see for themselves and decide. Capital punishment is executed even in America. Let the people who oppose capital punishment here express their objections in America.

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Shadowtime: Notes on living in two temporal scales simultaneously



Silence again, as he moves on further down the street. Two years ago, father's journey to his eternal abode began at this hour, and ended at two o'clock in the daylight of March 25. And time stopped for me. *** Work stopped for everybody the next day, Independence Day. Frozen in grief, my mind stopped its colloquium with the world. I lay immobile and numb in my home, as father lay lifeless and cold on his bed of ice. Burial with full military honours and ceremony the day after Independence Day. *** September of two years ago, and Spring bloom in the Southern Hemisphere, autumnal chill in the Northern. I am in my daughter's home, recovering from torpid days of depression. Recovering from cataract surgery. Clearer vision with implanted lens. Dreaming of talking with dad, in the middle of the night, the witching hour. Jolted to alert wakefulness by sudden silver light and smattering of lashing rain

against the window-pane. I am back in the lap of my surreal nor'wester, my *Kalboishaki*. *** Turn, turn, turn, my mind sings, with Mary Hopkins in 1968. For every season there is time, time to reap and sow, to be born, to die. The haunting image of the woebegone Tithonus floats up in my mental landscape. "The woods decay, the woods decay and fall, The vapours weep their burthen to the ground, Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath." Spontaneously, rhythmically, Tennyson's lines emanate from my circumambient sadness at being left bereft. Yet, there is gratitude in my heart too, for father's peaceful passing to the other side. His soul had returned whence it came, trailing clouds of glory, in the vigorous flowering Bangla season of hope and renewal, in Falgun. *** Twenty days before Pahela Boishakh, a grief-stricken daughter says final farewell to her father in the crowded city of her ancestors. *** Two years have passed, with the length of twenty-four months of good days and bad days, of family quarrels and reconciliations, of marriages and new births. Father's transition brings change and transition in his children's lives. Thus flows forward the current of the river of life, in the natural order of things, in the inexorable law of time and generation. *** With two days more to the second

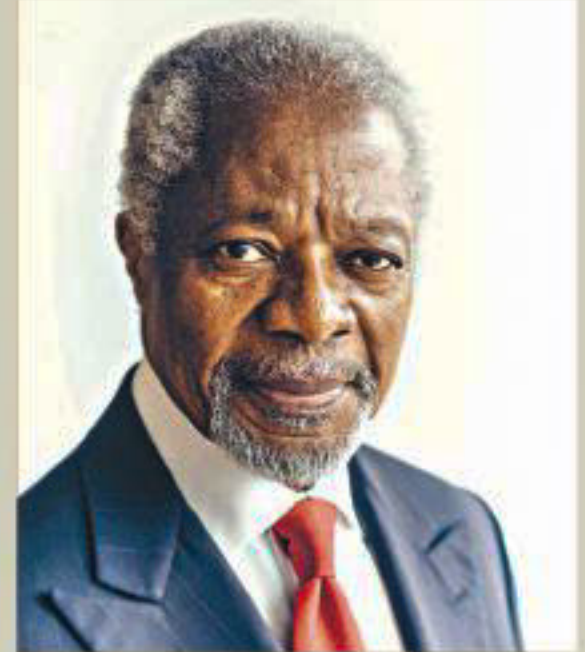
anniversary of father's death, tonight I contemplate the paradox of life, of the intricate mystery of the warp and weft of the human loom. I look lovingly at the antique moss green Belgian glass vase, a treasured object from the post Second World War period in Dhaka. I found it under my grandfather's mahogany four-poster bed in our Armanitola home in my late teens. Now, this vase is on the oval dining table in my own home, a resplendent vessel for bright Gerbera flowers.



grandfather to my father to me. From the grandfather who named me "titli" when I was a toddler. Later, inspired, grandfather named me "toofani" when I was five. *** A precious gift of a pet-name from one who cherished my wild questing spirit. *** Green vase. A concrete, syncretic symbol. A family icon cementing the generations across time and space. Across the earth and the heavens. In my vision, you immutable green vase, are the matrix and the nexus of my family's master-narrative. *** In the quiet of the night a sly mosquito hums close to my cheek. The tick-tocking wall clock is a slow goods train on tracks, somewhere afar. It is half-past three in the morning. Almost two hours to first light. *** BBC News. Syria and Ghouta and the children. Oh, the beautiful, suffering angels caught in man's inhumanity. Insanity. Forgive us, Divine Father. Forgive our trespasses. Look kindly on the meek and the innocent. *Kalboishaki*, come! Come. Cleanse this earth of wickedness and killing. Wash away our sins. Help us open a new humane *Halkhata*.

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QUOTEABLE Quote



KOFI ANNAN (b. 1938)
Former UN Secretary General

A genocide begins with the killing of one man – not for what he has done, but because of who he is.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 "Scram!"
7 Wildly eager
11 Show up
12 Bike part
13 "Dallas" star
14 Formerly
15 Finale
17 Bar bills
20 Biden and Pence
23 Yale supporter
24 Rider's foothold
26 Knight's address
27 "Lenore" writer
28 Chowd down
29 Flunkies
31 Tell whoppers
32 Pale
33 Crook
34 Casino patron

DOWN
1 Derisive cry
2 History stretch
3 Neighbor of Uru.
4 What x sometimes means
5 Infamous czar
6 Watch over
7 Penitent person
8 Soft drink choice
9 Tolkien baddie
10 "Aw, shucks!"
16 Brown and

ACROSS
37 Prayer ender
39 Singer Frankie
43 Seasonal song
44 Deep chasm
45 John Major, for one
46 Inclined
Cornell, for two
17 Scientist Nikola
18 Fake name
19 Soft drink choice
21 Russian leader
22 Velocity
24 Wasn't thrifty
25 Gift from Santa
30 With vigor
33 Cheering word
35 Sea dogs
36 Egg outline
37 Wee worker
38 Cow call
40 Sass
41 Low bill
42 Outlaw Kelly

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CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

REFER	PAPAL
EXILE	OHARA
SPRING	WATER
TOM	TOW
GATOR	SAD
AWFUL	WOZY
PIER	BRIE
ENDUP	BEEPS
SAGAS	
USA	WAR
SPRING	FEE
EAGLE	BOARD
STOLE	RANGE
ARSON	

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER




CHAPLAIN, I'D LIKE TO TALK TO GOD LIKE YOU DO

BUT WHEN I TRY TO TALK TO HIM, HE DOESN'T ANSWER

10-24

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



SPIDER!

SHOVE!

PLOP!

I'M FEELING A COMBINATION OF MAJOR GUILT AND HUGE RELIEF.

GO ON...