

#CHECK IT OUT

# Winter Sunlight, Flags, and the Memory

It was never just another occasion on the annual calendar. We felt a deeper connection to Victory Day, and to all days of national significance, not because it was imposed by the powers that be, but because of the atmosphere that prevailed around us.

In early December, schools would arrange essay competitions. True, it felt unexciting and quite a chore at the time, but all our friends taking part made us feel united in our efforts. There would be special poetry and music sessions during assembly, sometimes followed by drawing competitions. The flags, flowers, rifles, and sunrises we drew were simple attempts to translate our patriotic feelings into colour.

December 16 was inevitably a morning soaked in winter sunlight. As red-green flags fluttered from bamboo poles, one could smell the unmistakable coat of fresh paint as neighbourhood youth hurriedly touched up makeshift gates in patriotic colours.

The day would begin with the sounds of gun salutes echoing through the morning air. There would be a military parade which, although we understood little of it, remained one of the highlights.

BTV aired patriotic programmes, but the primary attraction was always the war-themed films. Back in the day, families planned their entire afternoon around these screenings. Bangladesh Betar broadcast special programmes too, featuring speeches, recitations, and interviews with freedom fighters. Even the Victory Day advertisement campaigns

became part of the season's soundscape.

In the evenings, families would venture out. Children ran about comparing who had the bigger flag, while local clubs hung banners with hand-painted slogans that looked slightly uneven but were full of heart.

There were special melas showcasing handicrafts and local products. One still fondly remembers roaming the fair wearing a bandana in patriotic colours, a large cotton candy in hand.

We could not comprehend the complexities of the war, yet we understood the pride that was 1971. It came from watching our parents stand up at the theatre before the movie began — every single time.

It came from the softness in our teachers' voices as they narrated the bravery of the martyrs, or from the stories our grandmother whispered in the evenings before we fell asleep. Her stories often blurred fact and feeling, but they shaped our earliest understanding of courage and love for the country.

None of it was imposed, none of it curated through social media algorithms — all "organic," as one would say in today's lingo.

Back then, the experience felt slower, warmer, and more personal, making the recollections feel more authentic. At the time, Victory Day was less about spectacle and more about belonging, stitched together by simple rituals that quietly taught us what freedom truly meant.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif  
Photo: Sheikh Mehedi Morshed



স্বপ্নের ছোয়ায়, তোমার উপমায়,  
বদলে দিলে যে আমায়...

**অ্যান্ডালিনা**  
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