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## The Causes and Characteristics of Bangladesh Genocide: A Case Study on Mojupur Genocide, Lakshmipur

From the middle of the twentieth century especially after the Second World War, the word genocide has become a buzzword. After signing the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG), widely known as the Genocide Convention (1948), the concept of genocide has taken on a systematic form.<sup>1</sup> There is no dispute that the Bangladesh Genocide was Genocide under any of the internationally popular definitions. During the war (1971) the world's major newspapers referred to it as genocide, and even United States Consul General in Dhaka Archer Kent Blood (1970-1971) used the term 'selective genocide'<sup>2</sup> in the title of his telegram. The systematic pattern of the murders throughout the province matches exactly the dictionary definition of genocide.<sup>3</sup> The Pakistani government investigated the case through the War Inquiry Commission (1971) and acknowledged the atrocities by stating that 26,000 people had been killed.<sup>4</sup> The debate over the number of the martyrs of the Bangladesh Genocide ranges from 3 million to 26 thousand. Nonetheless, after summarizing the Bangladesh Genocide in the numerical debate<sup>5</sup>, it can be said that the Bangladesh Genocide is one of the textbook examples of genocide.

Bangladesh, the then East Pakistan, was under colonial rule for ages. The people of this country were hoping to get a taste of freedom after driving out the British, the colonial power. But the opposite happened. The rule of Punjabi supremacy or internal

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colonialism began. The army rulers of Rawalpindi got a taste of the scepter. So, exploitation in the name of governance was continued in this land. But, under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Bengalis first opposed it in a soft tone and then made a ballot revolution. The Pakistani invaders did not like this Bengali ambition. That is why, they sought to suppress them forever. Consequently, the bloodbath started in the village after the village. One such village was Mojupur inside Lakshmipur Municipality in the district of Lakshmipur.

Though the genocide received widespread international media attention during 1971, very soon after the media turned to other issues and Bangladesh became an almost forgotten case.<sup>6</sup> But, in 2005, an Indian writer named Sharmila Bose termed the genocide in Bangladesh as a civil war. Nay, he questioned the number of martyrs stated by the Bangladesh government.<sup>7</sup> Also, in 2010, after the formation of the International Crimes Tribunal (Bangladesh) for the prosecution of persons for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, it again came into the centre of discussion and criticism. In this context, this article is based on the need to determine the causes and characteristics of the Bangladesh Genocide.

### **Description of Genocide and Torture**

It was 21st May, 1971 (7th Jaistha, 1377) late night.<sup>8</sup> The call for Fajr prayer had just come. People of Mojupur village were still sleeping soundly. The birds had just started chirping. The villagers are preparing for celebrating Purnima.<sup>9</sup> It was the Buddhist Purnima also. Just then, the sound of the gun roared through the soft belly of dawn. People woke up and panicked and started running in different directions. The shots started like raining from behind. At that time, Pakistan army did not base in Lakshmipur. They made the camp on May 24, 1971. Hence, they conducted the attack from Noakhali base during the Mojupur massacre. In other words, the collaborators invited them to take their personal revenge from the villagers. However, by that time, a camp of freedom fighters had been made on the bank of the

pond of Nor, later it is renamed as Mukhtigonj, the adjacent village of Mojupur. Their first objective was to destroy the camp by killing the freedom fighters. On the day of the incident, two jeep army equipped with modern weapons along with the collaborators launched an operation. But, after getting the news, the freedom fighters retreated to a safe heaven. So, this time they targeted the the neighboring Pala Para where many Hindus lived and they were also prominent and wealthy in the society. Though pottery was their traditional profession but over time almost all of them turned into traders. However, the army set their machine gun, took position and blew balloons and flags as a signal.<sup>10</sup> After knowing this, Idris Mia (50), a devoted Muslim from the northern part of the village, rushed and informed Rashmohon

(35) to warn the Hindus. Rashmohon screamed and tried to wake up the entire village. People started running away. Those who could not escape were shot dead on the spot. Besides, those who went South instead of East to escape also died. The entire Pala Para was then filled with jute field. The jute trees were big enough for people to hide. That day, it was, indeed, their savior. Otherwise, not a single one would survive.<sup>11</sup> Even then they killed many including Parboti Choron Pala, Rabendro Pala, Ganga Sundari Pala, Har Kumar Pala, Kanu Pala, Oissini Kumar Pala, Sundori and Shaha (Father of Amit).

As almost all the people fled away in different directions, this time they targeted the neighboring Muslim neighborhood. Because, they thought the Hindus were sheltered by the Muslims. And the collaborators gave information that the entire Muslim neighborhood is Awami League activists and supporters. Also, they had a rumor then that a central leader of Songram Committee had taken shelter here.<sup>12</sup> On hearing the news, the Muslims also started fleeing. But, some thought that they were Muslims so they would not be killed or if they saluted in the Islamic manner like Assalamu Alaikum (Peace be upon on you) they would not be killed.<sup>13</sup> But, they shot whoever they found in front. Many were killed in this neighborhood including Montaj Miya, Toriq Ali, Hajera Khatun, Hasan Ahmed, Fatema Khatun,

Jafor Ahmed, Ansar Ali Pundit and Chowdhury Miya. Abul Bashar, a four-year-old child, was not spared. Rahima Khatun, Chandra Mohon Pala, Md. Lokman, Aterezaman, Nurjahan Begum, Meherunnesa, Ashura Khatun, Amena Khatun and countless others were injured in the firing. Then, they set fire to the entire village. The elderly, children and the sick could not get out and were burnt in the fire. Shohor Banu (Hur Banu) was burnt to ashes. Nay, they also set fire to cattle sheds and haystacks. As a result, many cattle also perished in the fire. When the local braves came to bury the dead after the army left, the collaborators spread rumors that the military was coming again. On this news, the cremators fled away. By taking this advantage, the collaborators looted money, rice and pulses, gold and grains and the last belongings of the villagers. After that, many of the villagers went to Calcutta as refugees. Those who remained fled in fear of the return of the military. When Bangladesh became independent, the situation became normal. But the families of the martyrs continue to live with poverty and the pain of the loss of their loved ones.

### **The Causes of the Genocide**

1. The 1970 election, Pakistan's first national election, was the ballot revolution of the Bengalis. It was the legitimacy of Bangabandhu's declaration of independence and the liberation war of Bangladesh as well. The factions over this election, the conflict of the interest of the military dictators, the unprecedented victory of the Bengalis, the procrastination to transfer power and above all the total war were the reasons of Bangladesh Genocide. Yahya Khan (1969-1971), the then president of Pakistan from military origin, did not organize elections to transfer the country from military to democratic rule, but to consolidate his power. Based on a wrong intelligence report, he thought that no political party would get a majority in any part of Pakistan.<sup>14</sup> As a result, he will continue his rule undisturbed. But, surveys and spy-report are not always correct. Not in this case either. Awami League got

an absolute majority. This was the reason for the wounding of the dictators. In this connection, the speech of Din Muhammad may be mentioned. He says, "They (His father and uncle) supported Awami League openly. During the 1970 elections, Jamat-e-Islami activists came to distribute their leaflets. They lit cigarettes with that leaflet in front of them. It was the possible cause of the attack of our village."<sup>15</sup> That means, the genocide was committed for political reasons.

2. The invitation of the Collaborators is another cause of Bangladesh Genocide. They called on the army to carry out their personal vendettas in the name of protecting Islam and the Muslim League. They introduced Awami League activists and supporters. They showed the freedom fighter family, fabricated the incident to the army and severely misrepresented it. In this context, Nasir Ahmed says, "We had no bad blood with Yousuf Ali Munshi, Hossein Ahmed, Bolu Miya and Arab Ali, except for political party support. They were active worker of the Muslim League. As a result, they invited the army to attack our locality."<sup>16</sup>
3. Although many Hindus migrated to India due to the partition of Indian subcontinent based on the Lahore Resolution of 1947, many remained here. Pakistan military rulers thought that the liberation war of Bangladesh was a conspiracy imposed by Hindu-majority India. And the internal Hindu community was also conducting all the crimes in connivance with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. So, they sought to completely uproot Hindus from this country. So, they carried out massacres where Hindus were dominant. Their aim was to make the areas leaderless. This is echoed in Sunil's commentary. He says, "The Pak army targeted our locality. To begin with, it is a Hindu-majority area. In addition, the Hindus of this locality were prominent enough."<sup>17</sup>
4. Thousand years of Bengal history is the history of communal harmony. The Islam of Bengal is not the Islam of the sword but the Islam of Sufism. Here Hindu- Muslims have been living side by side for ages and sharing happiness and sorrow.

Consequently, West Pakistanis perversely thought of Bengalis as half-Muslim. As a reason, they used to call Pani as Jol.<sup>18</sup> However, wherever the Muslims had warm relations with the Hindus, Muslims were also killed indiscriminately. Cleansing of Bengali Muslims from Hindu influence was a goal often repeated by the Pakistani military during the 1971 genocide.<sup>19</sup> On this basis, Nasir Ahmed says, “The cause of the attack might be the Hindus of Pal Para flew away in our area or they thought that we had a good understanding with the Hindus.”<sup>20</sup>

5. Courage is the most needed to win a war. Pakistanis thought that if their parents and close relatives could be killed to demoralize those who participated in the liberation war, it would be easier to succeed in the war. That is why, they started killing in villages. They wanted to suppress the desire for freedom of Bengalis by installing fear and establishing a reign of terror through genocide.<sup>21</sup>
6. From the very inception of the country Pakistan, the rulers those who were from martial-race dictators or sometimes unelected civilians treated its eastern wing as a colony. Economic exploitation and disparity were crystal clear. State-sponsored transfer of assets was going on. Government policies were designed in such a way that industries in West Pakistan could prosper. It seems a “two economy” system was inaugurated in Pakistan.<sup>22</sup> The result was first the demand for de-exploitation then autonomy and finally independence. However, to continue the colonization through these disparity, injustice, and exploitation, they perpetrated the abominable genocide.

### **The Characteristics of the Genocide**

1. Pakistan military targeted Awami League activists for genocide or it can be said that the Awami dominated areas were their target. Since the League had won the national election, their aim was to wipe them out. In this context, Din Muhammad says, “During the 1970 election I took three

rickshaws to take women to polling stations and helped them vote as they were illiterate. That is why, I was their eyesore.”<sup>23</sup> During Anthony Mascarenhas’s visit to the 14th Division Headquarters at Comilla, he came to know about the target of genocide of five categories. One of them was: the Awami Leaguers—all office bearers and volunteers down to the lowest link in the chain of command.<sup>24</sup> So, it can be said with certainty that this massacre was characterized by Politicide.

2. The Pakistan military considered the liberation war of Bangladesh to be the plan of Hindu-majority India. They also thought that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was planning to break up Muslim Pakistan to destroy Islam at the instigation of Hindus. Furthermore, Hindus were the vote bank of the Awami League and leading in the society as well. That is why, they drew a heinous picture of wiping out the entire Hindu community from the then East Pakistan. The Hindus were marked out because the regime considered them to be “Indian- agents” who had subverted the Muslims of East Bengal.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, this genocide can be characterized as religiocide. On this basis, the speech of Sunil Chandra Pala of Mojupur village can be mentioned. He says, “The Pak army targeted this locality. To begin with, it is a Hindu-majority area. In addition, the Hindus of this locality were prominent enough.”<sup>26</sup>
3. Burning people’s settlements with fire is another notable feature of this genocide. They set fire to every house... Even the leaves and soils of the area were burnt.<sup>27</sup> The people in the house were burnt alive in this fire. As happened with Shohor Banu of Mojupur. In this context Md. Yousuf says, “When our house was set on fire a pillar was burnt and fell on his body and his head, tongue and chest were burnt. What an atrocity it was!”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, they set the cattle house and haystack on fire. As a result, the cows were also burnt and started shouting. This was a strange scene.<sup>29</sup> In this context, Sunil Chandra Pala says, “Dumb animals like cows and goats were burnt to ashes that day. Before setting the fire, they sprinkle powder or petrol over the houses. As a result,

houses with paddy, rice, jute, cows, betel nuts and other products were dusty.”<sup>30</sup>

4. There was also looting during the Bangladesh Genocide. The collaborators were mostly involved in looting. They killed poor people and took away their last possessions. Those who survived would be penniless destitute. One such person was Md. Yousuf. During the preparations for the funeral of the dead at Mojupur, the whole village was looted on the hearsay of the arrival of the military again. In his words: In the afternoon, the people of the next village including the then-chairman came and prepared to organize the cremation. Meanwhile, the Rajakars spread rumors that the invaders were coming again. Subsequently, people fled in fear and the Rajakars looted people’s belongings.<sup>31</sup>
5. Indiscriminate massacre of common people in search of freedom fighters is another feature of this genocide. In this context, the Quote of Din Muhammad is significant. He says, “The military asked Tum Musalman Hai? (Do you a Muslim?) My father answered with nod. Then, they asked that Afka Beta Mukti Hai? (Your son is a freedom fighter?). My father replied negative. They were looking for me...”<sup>32</sup> It goes to say that the freedom fighters were their official enemies. But, they were not so stupid as to sleep in bed willingly or walk around in broad daylight. So, ordinary persons were their easy target. Especially, they wanted to take cowardly revenge on the freedom fighter family. Actually, Pakistan army launched the operation in Mojupur after hearing that the freedom fighters made a camp at Muktiganj, the adjacent village of Mojupur.
6. Cooperation of the domestic friends of the Pakistan army like Rajakars, Al- Badar, As-Shams etc. is one of the features of Bangladesh Genocide. They guided the Pak army, explained the language, provided logistics and identified the freedom fighters. They themselves looted, raped, abducted and committed arson. They were able to do this very easily as they had a good understanding of the village roads. In this

context Sunil Chandra Pala says, “Basically, the Rajakars invited the army to share the loot as booty. Yousuf Ali Munshi (25), Arob Ali (20), Hosen Ali (18) and Abdus Sobur (20) were the renowned Rajakars. Without their cooperation, this genocide would have been impossible.”<sup>33</sup> The associate force was collecting data of freedom fighters, Awami League supporters and the prominent Hindu leaders as well. On this basis Din Muhammad says, “I met with some collaborators named Hossain Ahammad, Abdus Sobur, Ruhul Amin, Yousuf Ali, Mowlana Abdul Hai and Shah Alam. They asked me how long I would stay at home. It was suspicious to me as they took the training of the collaborators.”<sup>34</sup>

7. Killing mass people indiscriminately is another characteristic of Bangladesh Genocide. It was the sight of killing the people like the birds by the hunters.<sup>35</sup> In fact, it is the main component of any genocide. The civilian is not the part of the war. But, in a situation like this, they are the ones who suffer the most. In this sense, Nurjahan Begum, losing her husband and wounding herself and her innocent child, says, “What was the crime of me, my innocent child and my guileless and apolitical husband?”<sup>36</sup> No one has the answer to this question of Nurjahan Begum. Suffice it to say, committing a crime is not always a condition for damnification.
8. Rape is an obvious element of genocide. The Genocide Convention does not explicitly state that sexual violence is a crime of genocide. The convention should be expanded to include mass rape, regardless of whether the victims are raped on the basis of racial/ethnic, national, or religious identity.<sup>37</sup> However, No significant evidence of rape of women was found before or after the massacre in Mojujur village. However, Mokbul Ahmed, an eyewitness to the massacre, claims that a woman in this village was raped and had the baby in her womb for seventh month.<sup>38</sup> This piece of information is not supported by other sources. As Nurjahan Begum says, “By the grace of Almighty, despite hearing of cases of rape of women in various directions, nothing like

this happened in our village.”<sup>39</sup> In this case, the sample is not representative. This requires more detailed and extensive research.

9. The last but not the least feature of this genocide is the execution of massacres while sleeping. The village was sleeping. The birds were just beginning to chirp. The morning sun had not yet fully risen in the eastern sky. The Muazzin just said, Haiya Alas Salah (Come for prayer). But alas, they came to kill!<sup>40</sup> In this context, Noni Gopala says, “I was in a deep sleep. After hearing people’s crying and shouting I woke up and tried to flee.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Statement of Witness:**

*Noni Gopala (80), Father: Banga Chandra Pala, Occupation: Businessman (Tobacco leaf), Address: Pala Para, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Home, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023*



*Noni Gopala (80)*

From the beginning of the liberation war, we had guarded the village in turn at night. There were 10 people in every watching squad. It was the 6th Jaistha (actually the 7th Jaistha 1377 in Bengali Calendar) I returned from the market and joined the squad. Parboti Pala (One of the Martyrs) was also with us. Still, the Pakistan army did not enter Lakshmipur. We were patrolling because we had heard about the arson, looting and invasion somewhere. We made some homebred weapons by using bamboo, wood and trees etc. At 12:00 AM, we had gone to sleep as our watching time is over. At dawn, Idris Miya (50), a pious Muslim from the next village, woke up Rashmohon (35), one of my cousins, to warn him and his villagers. After that, he rushed away. Rashmohon was running and shouting for alarming the people. I was in a deep sleep. After hearing people crying and

shouting I woke up and tried to flee. During my escape, I took a tin filled with rice thinking of mistakenly fried rice. I took this for emergency eating because we heard that the Pak army was setting on fire. My mother took my elder son and my wife, Kanon Bala Pala (75), took my seven days old newborn baby. We were rushing towards the East. The village is full of jute fields. After some distance, I bumped into the paddock. Afterward, I, leaving the tin, crawled and took shelter in the House of Patwary. They suggested that I should go east more. I was ceaselessly running. Meanwhile, I looked back and saw the flames of fire in our village. I returned home at noon. Actually, two military jeeps came and they attacked from two sides. They heard that the freedom fighters made a camp at Mukhtigonj, the adjacent village of Mojupur. However, many people were killed including Parboti Charan Pala, Har Kumar Pala, Rabendra Pala, Ganga Sundari Pala, Shaha, Oissini Kumar Pala, Sundari and even her 1.5-year-old baby was plugged. Dead bodies were scattered here and there. Many Muslims were also killed. Montaj Miya was shot while weeding the field. People left the village in fear. Only a person named Nizam and one of his companions cremate the dead bodies. As this village is far from the main road, many town dwellers took shelter in this village. In every house, two to three persons were sheltered. They were also killed indiscriminately. It was the sight of killing the people like the birds by the hunters. Moreover, they set fire to almost all the houses. The Rajakars have shown the people and the houses to the Pak army. In fact, they brought them. Thereafter, we went to India's Kolabagan Camp-2 with great difficulty.

***Sunil Chandra Pala (65), Father: Banamali Pala, Occupation: Teacher (Retired), Address: Pala Para, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11,***



*Sunil Chandra Pala (65)*

*Lakshnipur Municipality, Lakshnipur, Place and Date of Interview: Own Pharmacy, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023*

The name of our area is Pala Para, a part of Mojupur village. Traditionally the occupation of the Pala is pottery. But, a small number of people in our Para were potters. Most of the people were businessmen. They were socially remarkable persons. For instance, the people of the whole district knew Parboti Charan Pala (One of the martyrs) by one name. He courted people. Everyone still knows him. So, the Pak army targeted our locality. To begin with, it is a Hindu-majority area. In addition, the Hindus of this locality were prominent enough.

At the beginning of the day, I was in a sound sleep. This is the story of great sorrow. However, they invaded before the Azaan for Fozor prayer. Idris Miya (50), one of our neighbors known as Ashar Bap (The father of Asha), went to the call of nature. He heard the sound of numerous shoes. He thought that Hindu Para will go to the dogs today. He, without responding to the call of nature, started running with bated breath to alert the villagers. He warned as much as he could and suggested to flee as soon as possible. However, they set their machine gun, took position and blew balloons and flags as a signal. Some balloons touched our heads also. The remarkable fact is that after completing the operation the balloons went away. I along with my family members somehow escaped towards the east. Before D-Day, one day there was a rumor that the army was coming. We pulled away towards the south. If we had gone in the same direction as that day, we would have become the prey of the raiders. The jute trees were big enough for people to hide. That day, it was, indeed, their savior. Otherwise, not a single one would survive. Shots were fired in droves over our heads. After the Pakistanis left, we came back to the village and saw dead bodies and corpses all around including Parboti Chandra Pala, Rabendra Pala, Har Kumar Pala, and Kanu Pala etc. Man's sky-scraping self screams. According to the previous plan, they also killed our Muslim neighbors indiscriminately. Nay, they looted what they got. Basically, the Rajakars invited the army to share the loot as

booty. Yousuf Ali Munshi (25), Arob Ali (20), Hosen Ali (18) and Abdus Sobur (20) were the renowned Rajakars. Without their cooperation, this genocide would have been impossible. Not only that, they also set fire to the cattle house. Dumbanimals like cows and goats were burnt to ashes that day. Before setting the fire, they sprinkle powder or petrol over the houses. As a result, houses with paddy, rice, jute, cows, betel nuts and other products were dusty. Afterward, we went to Calcutta. They burned our house. We lived inhumanely and suffered indescribably in Calcutta, but we are not beneficiaries.

***Din Muhammad (75)***, *Father: Hasan Ahmed (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Retired Govt. Employee, Senior Supervisor Lineman (Palli Biddhut), Address: 734, Din Muhammad Vila, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Home, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023*



*Din Muhammad (75)*

I joined the liberation war on 3 May, 1971 AD. I was staying at Faridgonj Rupsha area specifically Dewanji Bari at Hainnala Bazar under Chandpur district with my fellow freedom fighters and my commander, Mosarrof Hossain. (The information is not supported by any documents). On 17 May 1971 AD, I came home on leave. On the way near to the Stadium of Lakshmipur, I met with some collaborators named Hossain Ahammad, Abdus Sobur, Ruhul Amin, Yousuf Ali, Mowlana Abdul Hai and Shah Alam. They asked me how long I would stay at home. It was suspicious to me as they took the training of the collaborators. They were going to Peyarapur, the centre of their high officials. After two days when I decided to leave, my father pleaded with me saying that the country is in chaos, please stay at home. As he did not know that I had joined the war and what the collaborators told me. Consequently, it was natural for him to make this

request. He said you may not see me again. After saying this he sat down with his hands on his chest. One of our neighbors, Yousuf Ali, said, Nephew, cares your father. I did so and said that since ours is a village area, there is little chance of the military coming here. Even then, if they come, do not be afraid of you and talk to them with greetings. My father and his cousin, Zafar Ahmed, another martyr of Mojupur Genocide, always stayed together like the friends. They supported Awami League openly. During the 1970 elections, Jamat-e-Islami activists came to distribute their leaflets. They lit cigarettes with that leaflet in front of them. It was the possible cause of the attack of our village. Even then the military did not come to Lakshampur. Then the military camp was at Technical School, Chowmuhani. On May 21, I heard on the Lahore Radio that 23 freedom fighters, including a major, were killed in an army operation in Majupur village. They mistook Parboti Choron Pala for a Major because of his toned body. However, the army asked my father Tomhara Beta Kidar Hai? (Where is your son?). My father said O Ghar Par Nahin Hai (He is not at home). But, the collaborators like Hossain, Abdus Sobur, Shah Alam, Yusuf Ali, Arab Ali said O Jut Bol Raha Hai, Unakee Chuttee Chhah Din Kee Hai (He is telling a lie, His son told us his holiday was six days). The military asked Tum Musalman Hai? (Do you a Muslim?) My father answered with nod. Then, they asked that Afka Beta Mukti Hai (Your son is a freedom fighter). My father replied negative. They were looking for me because during the 1970 election I took three rickshaws to take women to polling stations and helped them vote as they were illiterate. That is why, I was their eyesore. Mowlovi Oziullah and Mowlana Abdul Hai were the local leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami. The latter threatened me. I was also ready to face any difficulties. I worked during the day and participated in operations at night. On 21st May at 3 pm one of my uncles came to me and urged me to go home saying my wife is sick. After going home, my relatives hid everything from me in various ways as I could not bear the shock of the suddenness of the incident. Two days later my brother took me to the cemetery and introduced me to everyone. This is your father's grave

(Hasan Ahmed), this is your grandmother's (Shohor Banu/Hur Banu), this is brother's (Abul Bashar), this is auntie's (Hajera Khatun) and this is uncle's (Jafor Ahmed). [Crying out loud]. I lost consciousness after seeing the rows of graves. It was like the sky falling on my head. After consciousness, I saw that I was lying in our house. I looked around and saw that everything had turned into a crematorium. This is like a wasteland. They burned all the houses except our house. The smell of burned corpses and smoke still hung in the air. The next day they took me to the hospital to see the wounded. There my wife (Rahima Khatun), mother (Ashura Khatun), brother and sister (Amena Khatun) are wrestling with death. I looked and saw that someone had no hands, someone had no legs and someone had no body skin. The sky and the earth were heavy with the screams of the wounded. The next history is the history of the struggle in my life. Even, I myself stayed here instead of staying in the village house for fear of the collaborators.

***Md. Yousuf (69), Father: Toriq Ali (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Farmer, Address: Nur Baks Maji Bari, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Alom's Tea Stal, 15th July 2023***



*Md. Yousuf (69)*

In 1971, I was 15 years old. From the beginning of my life, I was staying at my maternal grandparents' house located at Vangakha Union adjacent to Mojupur village for my livelihood. At noon, I heard that Mojupur was attacked and my father was killed. I ran home out of breath. I saw dead bodies of men and women all over the area. My father was shot. When our house was set on fire a pillar was burnt and fell on his body and his head, tongue and chest were burnt. What an atrocity it was! In the afternoon, the people of the next village including the then-chairman came and

prepared to organize the cremation. Meanwhile, the Rajakars spread rumors that the invaders were coming again. Subsequently, people fled in fear and the Rajakars looted people's belongings. After that, my father was buried without proper Islamic guidelines. We were on the run for five to six months. Our days passed of great misery. The villagers individually helped us and even they begged for our livelihood.

There were two major parties named Muslim League and Awami League during the election of 1970. It was the time of triumph for the Awami League. Sheikh Saheb (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) visited two times in our Lakshmipur at before Circuit House and the Lakshmipur main town respectively. I physically was present in both public gatherings. However, my father was killed due to his support for Awami League. Yousuf Ali Munshi (30) son of Habibullah Choiyal was a teacher of the local Moktob (Mosque-based Islamic Education Centre) and I was his direct student. He along with Arob Ali (25), a student of Madrasha (Islamic Institution), directed the army. And even after this date, they used to capture people for investigation and torture.

*Nasir Ahmed (75), Father: Hasan Ahmed (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Farmer, Address: Yakub Ali Sordar Bari, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Home, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023*



*Nasir Ahmed (75),*

I, along with my two children and wife, was asleep. As soon as I woke up by hearing the sound of the gun, the military encircled our house. The Muazzin just said, Haiya Alas Salah (Come for prayer). But Alas, they came to kill! There was no way to escape, to talk, to hear. Consequently, we stayed in our house. The cause of the attack might be the Hindus of Pal Para flew away in our area or they thought that we had a good understanding with the Hindus. My

house is next to my parent house. My father was courageous enough. He stood in front of the door and exchanged words with them. Suddenly, they charged bayonets. Afterward, they shot him and he died. Seeing this from the inside of the house, my mother (Ashura Khatun), daughter (Fatema Khatun) and Sister in law (Rahima Khatun) shouted. That is why, they were also fusillade. The three were seriously injured by a single bullet. Zafor Ahmed, one of my neighboring uncles, was also shot. He jumped into the pond and died. In a situation like this, I used the back door and took shelter in a trench. They set fire to every house. Luckily, my house did not burn down. Even the leaves and soil of the area were burnt. Then how much fasting! How much hunger has to endure! We were an active supporter of Awami League. We had no bad blood with Yousuf Ali Munshi, Hossein Ahmed, Bolu Miya and Arab Ali, except for political party support. They were active worker of the Muslim League. As a result, they invited the army to attack our locality.

**Statement of the tortured victims:**

**Rahima Khatun (75),** *Husband: Din Mohammad (Ex), Occupation: Homemaker, Address: Kazim Uddin Bepari Bari, Somaspur, Ward-2, 14 Mandari Union, Chandragonj, Lakshmipur. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 16th July 2023*



*Rahima Khatun (75)*

I was sleeping with my new born baby girl named Siri on my chest that day. My mother in law and sister in law were also with me. The military came from the garden. On the way, they shot one of my aunts (Hazera Khatun) and her son (Abul Bashar). The military started firing indiscriminately through the fence of the house. Three of us were shot. A piece of my mother-in-law's (Ashura Khatun) leg was torn off. My sister in law (Fatema Khatun) got 4 to 5 bullet injuries on her leg. He later collapsed to death. They shot my father in law (Hasan Ahmed) as soon as he kept his prayer bed.

He breathed his last on the spot while reciting the Kalema. Moreover, they set the cattle house and haystack on fire. As a result, the cows were also burnt and started shouting. This was a strange scene. Then my brother came and admitted me to the hospital. My husband (Din Muhammad) left me because I became crippled. In 1971, I lost my leg and my spouse as well. So, 1971 is a horrible name to me.

**Md. Loqman (65)**, *Father: Chowdhury Miya, Occupation: Farmer, Address: Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Home, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023*



*Md. Loqman (65)*

This is the place where my father was killed. The military was cruel enough. They fired bullets indiscriminately. How can people be so heartless! I was 12/13 years old in 1971. I can clearly remember the killing scene of my father. You cannot imagine. They fired bullets to my mother too. Consequently, she critically injured. The same bullet pierced me that blew off one of my toes. Still, looking at the feet I remember the scene of my father's death and my chest rises. Actually, they wanted to suppress the desire for freedom of Bengalis by installing fear and establishing a reign of terror through genocide. That is why, they killed whoever they found in front of them. The country became independent. I breathed in the open air and hope. But, we got nothing but sighs and not even recognition.

**Nurjahan Begum (80)**, *Husband: Chowdhury Miya (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Homemaker, Address: Hazi Bari, Radha pur, Vangha Kha Union, Lakshmipur Sadar, Lakshmipur. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 16th July 2023*



*Nurjahan Begum (80)*

Before the attack on our village there were rumors that the westerners would come. That is why, people were

terrified. My husband told me that let's go to your father's house tomorrow. But, the forces of the hell did not allow it to happen again. As soon as the light of the morning dawned, we got up and prayed. After that I fell asleep and my husband went to the field to graze the cows. He then saw the military coming along with the collaborators. He could have survived if he ran away. But, as his son and pregnant wife are sleeping at home, he came home early. He woke me up and said run quickly, the enemies have come. But, then I was in a fix. He took the elder son in his arms, and I took the daughter. Afterwards, we started running out of breath. After a few steps, the leg became paralyzed. I touched it and saw that it was bleeding. It was definitely a bullet. My husband was shot next to me. My son's (Md. Loqman) toe also got blown off. People brought my husband home and put him to bed. He still told me that I will be fine and you run away with your life. By saying this, he fell into the lap of death. What was the crime of me, my innocent child and my guileless and apolitical husband? After that, during the rest of the war, I would stay awake all night with my three children in my arms, fearing the loss of my life and dignity. But, by the grace of Almighty, despite hearing of cases of rape of women in various directions, nothing like this happened in our village. When the country became independent, I and my children lived by begging. It was a humiliating life that I would like to forget.

### **Evaluation**

On May 21, 1971, a brutal genocide was perpetrated in the village of Mojupur. All genocides accomplished in the world are, obviously, inhumane, merciless, and cruel. But, the massacre of Mojupur village surpassed all cruelty. Here, people were killed indiscriminately and systematically for political, religious, or sometimes without any reason, houses and persons were burnt, dumb animals were also burnt and people's wealth was looted. Even a rape was reported to have been organized. This is like a reflection of all the massacres of the whole country. In this respect, the case is, indeed, almost representative. But, a limitation of this study is the small sample size. Therefore, the sample may not be representative of rape cases. By using these findings with larger samples future researchers may overcome this limitation.

**Appendix: 1**  
*List of the Martyrs*

Sl.	Name	Father/Husband	Age	Occupation
1	Parboti Choron Pala	Girish Chandra Pala	50	Businessman
2	Rabendro Pala	Jagabandhu Pala	35	Potter
3	Ganga Sundari Pala	Hus: Jagabandhu Pala	75	Homemaker
4	Har Kumar Pala	Ram Kanai Pala	70	Police Constable (Retired)
5	Oissini Kumar Pala	Gobindra Chandra Pala	70	Potter
6	Sundori	Hus: Mahendra (Boro Mona)	35	Homemaker
7	Child (Unknown)	Father: Mahendra (Boro Mona) Mother: Sundori	1.5	Not Applicable
8	Shaha (Father of Amit)	Unknown	65	Businessman (Betel)
9	Kanu Pala	Roshraj Pala	50	Businessman
10	Montaj Miya	Mojib Ali	50	Farmer
11	Toriq Ali	Aiub Ali	50	Saw Mechanic
12	Ansar Ali Pondit	Unknown	45	Farmer
13	Hajera Khatun	Hus: Ansar Ali	30	Homemaker
14	Abul Bashar	Father: Ansar Ali Mother: Hajera Khatun	4	Not Applicable
15	Hasan Ahmed	Abdul Hamid	55	Farmer
16	Fatema Khatun	Hus: Fazal Ahmed	23	Homemaker
17	Jafor Ahmed	Abdur Rahim	30	Farmer
18	Shohor Banu (Hur Banu)	Hus: Abdur Rahim	65	Homemaker
19	Chowdhury Miya	Gonu Miya	40	Farmer

## Appendix: 2

### *List of the the tortured victims*

Sl.	Name	Father/Husband	Age	Occupation	Description
1	Rahima Khatun	Hus: Din Mohammad	25	Homemaker	She was fired. A bullet hit her upper lag. She was admitted into hospital. Ater getting well her husband divorced her. Her injury was grevius. Gunshot injury at the left mid thigh amputation.
2	Chandra Mohon Pala	Girish Chandra Pala	60	Farmer	Injured by bullets.
3	Md. Lokman	Chowdhury Miya	15	Farmer	One of his right leg's fingers was flown away by bullets.
4	Aterezzaman	Gonu Miya	40	Farmer	Injured by bullets, He lost his one of his eye
5	Nurjahan Begum	Hus: Chowdhury Miya	30	Homemaker	Injured by bullets. A piece of the leg fell off
6	Meherunnesa	Hus: Jafar Ahmad	25	Homemaker	Injured by bullets
7	Md. Shofiq He was in the lap of his father.	Nurul Islam	7	Carpenter	After hearing the shout (water, water) of his grandmother (Shohor Banu) and uncle (Jafor Ahmad), his father went to help them. At that time, he was occurred an accident.
8	Ashura Khatun	Hus: Hasan Ahmed	40	Homemaker	Injured by bullets.
9	Amena Khatun	Hus: Bodiul Alam Father: Hasan Ahmed	15	Homemaker	Injured by bullets.

## References

1. According to the article 2 of Genocide Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. Retrieved from: [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocitiescrimes/Doc.1\\_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocitiescrimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf), 07 December 2023
2. Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide*, (Hurst Publishers 2013), p.78
3. Anthony Mascarenhas, *The Rape of Bangladesh*, Reproduced by Sani H. Panhwar, (Vikas Publications 2022), p. 92
4. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission officially the War Enquiry Commission was formed on December 26, 1971 to investigate the complete circumstances of military engagement in the East Pakistan. The final report was submitted on October 23, 1974. But, it has never made officially public in Pakistan. This report tries to downplay the Bangladesh Genocide. Retrieved from: <http://www.bangla2000.com/Bangladesh/Independence-War/Report-Hamoodur-Rahman/chapter2.shtm>, Chapter 2, Article 33, P.7
5. Attempting to specify the number of people killed in any one of genocide is, obviously, absurd. The depth and impact are important. Therefore, the estimate of the country admitting genocide is always accepted widely. For Details: Muntassir Mamun, 'Genocide and Number Games', *Journal of Genocide and Liberation War Research* 3, (1971: Genocide-Tortuure Archive & Museum Trust 2022), pp. 13-39

6. Rounaq Jahan, 'Genocide in Bangladesh', *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, [ed. Samuel Totten, William S. Parsons and Israel W. Charny], (Routledge Publications 2008), p. 264
7. Sarmila Bose, *Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War*, (Hurst Publishers 2011), pp. 161-184
8. In two books on the history of the liberation war in Lakshmipur, the date is written on April 23, but it has been confirmed by scrutinizing related papers and documents that the actual date was May 21, 1971. The name of two Books is as follows:
  - I. *Nazim Uddin Mahmud, Lokkhipur Zelar Muktijudder Itihas (History of the Liberation War on Lakshmipur Districts)*, (Gatidhara Publications 2012), p. 27
  - II. *Gazi Gias Uddin, Muktijudder Kishor Itihas, Lokkhipur Zela (Juvenile History of Liberation War, Lakshmipur District)*, (Tamrolipi Prokasoni 2017), p. 85
9. *Purnima* is a Sanskrit word means "full moon". It has considered as very propitious and the Hindus hold special worship, spiritual activities and other religious ceremonies. Though Buddha Purnima marks the birth anniversary of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, it is a propitious day even for the Hindus those who believe that Buddha is the 9th avatar of Lord Vishnu.
10. Sunil Chandra Pala (65), Father: Banamali Pala, Occupation: Teacher (Retired), Address: Pala Para, Dokkhin Mojuapur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Own Pharmacy, 15th July 2023
11. Sunil Chandra Pala (65), *Ibid*
12. Nazim Uddin Mahmud, *Ibid*
13. Mokbul Ahmed (72), Father: Zobed Ali, Occupation: Farmer, Address: Yakub Ali Sordar Bari, Dokkhin Mojuapur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Alom's Tea Stal, 15th July 2023
14. Anthony Mascarenhas, *Ibid*, pp. 29-41

15. Din Muhammad (75), Father: Hasan Ahmed (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Retired Govt. Employee, Senior Supervisor Lineman (Palli Biddhut), Address: 734, Din Muhammad Vila, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Dhate of Interview: Home, 16th July 2023
16. Nasir Ahmed (75), Father: Hasan Ahmed (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Farmer, Address: Yakub Ali Sordar Bari, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Home, 15th July 2023
17. Sunil Chandra Pala (65), *Ibid*
18. *Pani* and *Jol* are the two synonyms of water. By habit, Hindus of this region call water *Jal* and Muslim call it *Pani*. But some use interchangeably. It is a cultural match. From the sociological context, it is called as cultural assimilation. But, the Pakistanis took it as a sign of being half- Muslim.
19. Rounaq Jahan, *Ibid*, p. 254
20. Nasir Ahmed (75), *Ibid*
21. Md. Loqman (65), Father: Chowdhury Miya (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Farmer, Address: Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Home, 15th July 2023
22. For details: Rehman Sobhan, *From Two Economies to Two Nations: My Journey to Bangladesh*, (Daily Star Books 2015)
23. Din Muhammad (75), *Ibid*
24. Anthony Mascarenhas, *Ibid*, p. 93
25. *Ibid*, p. 93
26. Sunil Chandra Pala, *Ibid*
27. Nasir Ahmed (75), *Ibid*
28. Md. Yousuf (69), Father: Toriq Ali (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Farmer, Address: Nur Baks Maji Bari, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality,

Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Alom's Tea Stal, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023

29. Rahima Khatun (75), Husband: Din Mohammad (Ex), Occupation: Homemaker, Address: Kazim Uddin Bepari Bari, Somaspur, Ward-2, 14 Mandari Union, Chandragonj, Lakshmipur. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 16th July 2023
30. Sunil Chandra Pala, *Ibid*
31. Md. Yousuf (69), *Ibid*
32. Din Muhammad (75), *Ibid*
33. Sunil Chandra Pala (65), *Ibid*
34. Din Muhammad (75), *Ibid*
35. Noni Gopal (80), Father: Banga Chandra Pala, Occupation: Businessman (Tobacco leaf), Address: Pala Para, Dokkhin Mojupur, Ward 11, Lakshmipur Municipality, Lakshmipur, Place and Date of Interview: Home, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023
36. Nurjahan Begum (80), Husband: Chowdhury Miya (Martyr of Mojupur Genocide), Occupation: Homemaker, Address: Hazi Bari, Radha pur, Vangha Kha Union, Lakshmipur Sadar, Lakshmipur. Place and Date of Interview: Home, 16th July 2023
37. Lisa Sharlac, "Rape as Genocide: Bangladesh, the Former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda", *New Political Science*, Volume 22, Issue 1, 2000, p. 89
38. Mokbul Ahmed (72), *Ibid*
39. Nurjahan Begum (80), *Ibid*
40. Nasir Ahmed (75), *Ibid*
41. Noni Gopal (80), *Ibid*