

Genocide, State and Museum

A Study on the Bangladesh of 1971

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Genocide is a combination of primordial sin and primeval crime. In all probability, it began after the Age of Nature, as defined and described by Jean Jacques Rousseau, came to an end. When religion received an organised and institutional form the importance of Genocide increased. As a student and a teacher of history, I have read about the exploits of victors and also lectured on the latter. The essential summary of this narrative is that a specific community or an individual-leader has embarked on the conquest of other countries. He is conquering one country after another. If this victor belongs to the Occident, historians of the Occident have given him the title 'Great'. Recall the name and title of Alexander the Great in this context. Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered, that the honoured descriptive 'Great' was never suffixed to the names of Chengis Khan or Timur. According to the narratives of Western historians, the so-called victor of the Occident was Great. It is true that he or they committed some atrocities while conquering, but the emphasis fell on the subject of victory, and not on the destruction they had perpetrated. However, when Chengis and Timur were the subject of the historical narrative, their acts of destruction received priority. We do not include the war launched by two sides as a part of genocide, and if the nation concerned is powerful, the question of its inclusion just does not arise. The USA, for example, fought in Vietnam. But Vietnam did not want to wage a war. The USA simply imposed war on it and it resisted gloriously. The USA killed many civilians, still these acts or happenings have never been

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included in the matrix of genocide. What also remains unsaid is the forced impregnation of Vietnamese woman by American soldiers, which was a part of the programme known as 'Americanisation'. According to this theory and practice, an American child will not fight against the USA. Yet, according to the Occidental definition of genocide, this act tantamounts to genocide. Though 'genocide' is never pronounced when the context or theme is the US or America.

What is unfortunately true is that human beings have not yet been able to scissor themselves totally from reaction and reactionary politics. Not only simple human beings but also those whom we respect and regard have not been able to shake themselves free from the negatives of racial discrimination, ethnic hatred and high-born arrogance. When we deal with these respected figures, we preserve some of their acts and characteristics in memory, while we tend to forget the dark and contrary aspects. What we need is an ideal human being, a 'hero'. We construct this hero by arranging the myths relevant to the figure in our own style. For example, we cannot discuss the French Revolution without referring to the contribution of the French philosopher, Voltaire. As a devotee of Voltaire, I went to the Voltaire Museum in Geneva. There was no indication of the fact that Voltaire was a racist in this museum. The museum, concentrated solely on Voltaire, the Hero. In other words, the museum was not expressive of both, that is, Voltaire the hero and Voltaire as a human being. In short, this presentation of Voltaire was a part of politics and the museum itself has turned into a part of politics. Further, the theme of the Declaration of American Independence comes back to our mind repeatedly. This turns to be relevant when we are discussing human rights as well. Thomas Jefferson, about whom we have to read time and again, was the author of this Declaration. Even the Declaration of Bangladesh's Independence was modelled on Jefferson's document. In our prescribed syllabus and in the approved textbooks we all read about this glorious and historical detail, but it would never be mentioned that Jefferson was an owner of slaves like George Washington. The moment a person tables these unpalatable truths, he is branded as a 'Radical', 'Communist' or 'Anarchist'. The outspoken individual

is placed in a difficult and awkward position, particularly in the capitalist countries. Reaction is to that extent powerful. Immanuel Kant was also a racist, but the devotees of Kant would never mention this.¹

The concept called human rights has certainly been constructed, but even this is pockmarked with questions. And for this reason, we have not been able to sever ourselves from that primordial sin, genocide. On the contrary, with the progress of technology, the expansion of domination has continued and with that the practice of genocide. It needs to be remembered at this point, that perpetrators of genocide before committing the actual act often create an excuse or opportunity; at times they even raise a theoretical framework. In fact, genocides have been committed in the name of expansive domination. The assaulters construct a circle of influence, first, inside the country with the help of genocide, and then, if possible, outside the country. A recent and near-at-hand example of this sort of aberration is the genocide of Rohingyas in Myanmar. No country or nation has taken a strong and unflinching position against this genocide. This implies that genocides can be set in motion if the interests of the big powers have not been affected as far as the Rohingya crisis is concerned, the attitudes of the USA, China, Russia, Japan and India are more or less the same. The civil society of Myanmar or Aung San Suu Kyi is not receiving support from any other civil society because they themselves have supported the Rohingya genocide. We can learn one important lesson from this bloody imbroglio. That is, if the members of civil society do not protest against the ruler's genocide, they themselves will be annihilated. According to government estimates, till now more than 100 have been killed in Myanmar. Even if we do not use the word 'genocide' in this context, we can surely speak of a 'massacre'. But even that is not being said by any influential country. This massacre is being regarded as an internal problem of Myanmar. The same logic was used in 1971 when genocide was committed in Bangladesh. To be candid, in 1971, the Pakistani civil society supported the genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani military junta. And now that same Pakistan is regarded as an example of a failed state, extremely militant and terroristic in character. They are

deprived of the sympathy of the world's civil society. This sort of politics can be termed 'debased' politics. As opposed to this, our duty would be to nurse and pursue transparent and progressive politics which would in its interest condemn genocide, racism and ethnic hatred. Indeed, this opposition should turn into vocal politics. Even if we are pushed back many times, we shall persist with our aim for that would reduce the space occupied by debased politics. An example of this protesting process is Trump's period of governance. That US which has been often flaunted as a champion of human rights, Trump dismissed it as a kind of myth. I have mentioned earlier that this debased politics has spread worldwide because the reactionaries constitute the majority in this world at present. Nonetheless, people stood firm against this politics, spread the message of hope throughout the earth and they did influence the American election. The essence of this oppositional politics was the slogan 'Black Lives Matter'. The latter's influence was felt not only in US but in Europe as well. For example, that particular sculpture on the sea-shore in Britain which lauded the slave trade in all its vainglory was destroyed and thrown into the sea. Black lines were daubed on the sculpture of King Leopold of Belgium. In fact, in the US, many iconic sculptures had to be guarded and protected. The human society has in this way, step by step, went against reactionary politics, and reoccupied parts of their space. The human society and the world have progressed in this way, step by step.

2

There is a politics present in genocide-torture. It is more appropriate to regard this politics as debased politics. Those who are seated in power, they in order to exhibit their might, in order to extend their area of domination, in order to seek revenge, inflict torture. And if this method does not work, they resort to genocide-torture to realize their aim. We can begin our narrative by returning to the genocide-torture which was perpetrated in Bangladesh in 1971. From 1947, and after that, the Pakistanis of the West expanded their domination throughout the entire nation. Any movement launched by the Bangalis in the East, was branded by them as

Hindu in character or influenced by Hindus or Indians. Not only this, all such movements were regarded as opposed to Islam. The people were called upon to protect Islam. In all colonial set-ups a class of collaborators is roped in to work for the colonial rulers. The Centre or rulers and their collaborators help in injecting the colonial ideology in the mental frame of the people living in the colonies; that is, they help in spreading the message of domination of the colonizers. Ziaul Haq wrote in an essay, "As much as Pakistan tried gradually to be neo-colonial and to be the model for imperialist slavery, to that extent an artificial Islamic ornamentation was fixed onto its capitalist/feudal system. As a result, Islam became the ideology of the higher classes. This truth, in fact, was manifested in the three constitution of 1956, 1962 and 1973 created in Pakistan".²

In Section 197 of the 1956 constitution, it was stated that "in order to build a Muslim society on the real basis of Islam, the President will form an organization which will supervise higher education and Islamic research". In Section 198, it was further said, "No legislation will be passed in accordance to the Holy Koran and Islamic law as present in the Sunnah; and the prevailing legislation will also be made useful, according to this Section."³ Yet another comment made by Ziaul Haq deserves to be considered because it is



Genocide of Bangladesh, Photographer: Anwar Hossain

relevant and applicable to today's Bangladesh. In this comment, he states, "The politicization of religion increases the confusion of the masses and increases the exploitation against them. Moreover, the corruption which they see everywhere and the corruption which has imprisoned them for a long time, that corruption also increases."⁴

The Communist Party and the Awami League have led movements against this corruption for a long time. Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman have been defined and labeled as anti-state since 1949. Yet another much-used term was Communist. Right from 1949, the Pakistani Intelligence has dubbed Bangabandhu as a Communist.⁵

Even Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was not only responsible for the break-up of Pakistan but also for the genocide in 1971, wrote that the Centre in West Pakistan never treated East Pakistan in a just and fair manner. Indeed, West Pakistan could never accept a movement against this injustice as well as the mandate given to Bangabandhu by the Bangalis.⁶ That is why the first parliamentary session was suspended, shooting at sight was ordered to kill during the Non-Cooperation Movement and finally on March 25, 1971 the pre-planned and continuous genocide began. Yahya Khan declared, "If 30 lakhs were killed, they would sit on their knees".

In 1971, Lt. Colonel Aziz Ahmed Khan was posted in Bogura and Thakurgaon. He told the Hamudur Rahman Commission that General Niazi during his visit to this region asked, 'How many Hindus have you killed?' In the month of May, the commander of the 23rd Brigade Abdullah Malik gave a written order to kill Hindus. Brigadier Iqbalur Rahman told the Hamadur Rahman Commission that General Gul Hasan used to ask the soldiers, "How many Bangalis have you killed?" The Commander of the 8th Baluch Regiment, Lt. Colonel Aziz Ahmed Khan informed, "Brigadier Arbab gave the order to burn all the houses in Joydebpur. I did this. To follow the command of Brigadier Malik, on one night in the Kumilla cantonment, 17 Bangali officers and 915 soldiers were said to have been killed. At least, this specific accusation was raised. While killing *muktijodhas* or supporters of the Liberation War, the killers said, 'Send them to Bangladesh'. Major General Farman Ali, who is accused of killing the intellec-

tuals, said, "Harrowing tales of rape, loot, arson, harassment and of insulting and degrading narrated in general terms."⁷ General Niazi said, "you scratch any Bangali and he is a separationist". Not only this, he also wrote, "There must be more killing, more mopping up and more witch-hunting". A copy of the blueprint of genocide written by Niazi (without a signature, but typed out) is preserved in the Genocide Museum at Khulna for public display. This not only discusses in detail how the Bangalis have to be killed and subjugated but also how the Biharis have to be rehabilitated.⁸

The Pakistani rulers built up a theoretical framework to justify the genocide. This theory was propounded after 1947. The essence of this theory was the Bangali Muslims are not 100% pure Muslims. They are half Muslims. They are influenced by Indians, in particular by the Hindus of West Bengal. For this they do not want to accept the domination of the Centre which represents 100% unsullied Muslims. The Hindu teachers have indoctrinated the Bangali Muslims. And the Hindus or India are conspiring to break up Pakistan with the help of the Bangalis. The Six Point Demand is the weapon for this attempted disintegration. That is why, in order to protect religion that is Islam, and that is synonymous with Pakistan, we have to punish the Bangalis, we have to force them down on their knees. The soldiers have also been told that they are going to confront the Kafers.⁹

In order to save and protect religion, Pakistanis began their genocide in 1971. The Muslim-majority countries supported this doctrine and extended help to Pakistan. For once, they did not think that Pakistan itself was killing Muslims. Indeed, it can be said that it was the greatest annihilation of Muslims undertaken by Muslim themselves. Yet, after the Bangalis attained their victory, they invited Bangabandhu to participate in the OIC conference. Algeria's leader Boumedien sent his own plane to Dhaka to bring Bangabandhu.

Quite a controversy welled up in Bangladesh after this. Many thought that these countries had supported the genocide, and therefore, their invitation, after the genocide, should not be accepted. In fact, acceptance of the invitation would imply an indirect support to the supporters of genocide. What was called for was a protest

and not attending the conference would be a form of protest. A negative reaction was perceptible in India as well. Journalist Manash Ghosh was in Dhaka at that point of time. He wrote, Bangabandhu would be going to Lahore to attend the conference. After this declaration was made, he went to see Khondokar Moshtaq and to speak with him. Moshtaq told him, “Babu Manash Ghosh in spite of your grandfather’s (Subimal Datta, because of his age which had crossed 80, he was addressed in this fashion) more than hundred efforts, Bangabandhu’s participation in the OIC conference in Lahore could not be stopped. Just note, in one region after another, people are so happy about his decision to visit Lahore. They are playing songs on microphones. You people did not want his going to Pakistan. But we common people felt that he should go, that he should re-establish the fluent age old ties with Pakistan. That’s what is going to take place. He will go to Lahore. Bhutto will come to Dhaka. Tell your grandfather that India’s game has been spoilt”.¹⁰ Subimal Dutta was then High Commissioner of India in Bangladesh.

Then Bhutto came to Dhaka. A section of Dhaka residents greeted him effusively. J.N Dixit was then the India’ High Commissioner in Dhaka. He was so much disturbed by all that he noticed that tears of injured surprise came to his eyes.¹¹ He himself wrote on this later.

After going through all these descriptions – during the Liberation War and later – one should conclude that a section of the population in Bangladesh did not want that there should be a full severance of ties with Pakistan. Some Awami League leaders were also in this group. Thereafter, Ziaur Rahman and Ershad and Khaleda nourished this trend for three decades. In fact, this group was not prepared to accept that genocide at all had taken place. This subject calls for a closer analysis.

The Muslim-majority countries were then within the American sphere of influence. Only a few countries were within the Chinese sphere. Moreover, China at that time was eager to receive America’s favour. As a result, most of the countries falling within the Sino-American sphere supported the genocide. For strategic reasons, Soviet Union supported India and Moscow tried again and

again to control and restrain Yahya. But it failed. What is important to note in this context is that at the final moment the Soviet veto in the Security Council helped Bangladesh and India.

Viewed from this perspective, it can be said that when a nation for the sake of its domination, subjects a part of its population to genocide, other countries do not consider, almost always, the human angle. What these countries consider is their national interest and geo-strategic political interest. That is the reason why so many governments supported the worst and biggest genocide of the world that took place in Bangladesh.



More than five lakh women were raped by the Pakistani forces in Bangladesh. Such a tragic event has never happened before. Photographer: Naib Uddin Ahmed

Even after the attainment of independence, the genocide-torture of Bangladesh was ignored. Encyclopedias and writings concentrating on genocide have been written after 1971 but even there the genocide in Bangladesh has been ignored. The reason for this is to be found in the processes of international as well as internal politics. The fact is if the subject of genocide is placed with force and strength, then it becomes difficult to deny it from the angle of ethics. On the other side, the USA and Europe regard themselves

as standard-bearers of human rights and ethics. The latter is emphasized in the sphere of their foreign policy as well. Reports on all these transgressions are usually placed at the US Congress. As far as we can recall, no report was placed on the genocide of 1971 as an example of human rights violation and trampling of ethics. In short, the indiscriminate slaughter of the Bangalis was bypassed. Internal politics has also turned out to be an issue in this particular context. Victory has been highlighted in the narrative on the Liberation War. This is also to be expected because such a massive victory had never occurred in the history of Bangalis. As a result, victory songs and exclamations were pronounced and propagated on all the four sides. In the process, the quarantine of a vast number of people inside the country and their meaningful contributions were totally ignored. The government started giving certificates to the *muktijodhas*. This meant that the latter were the real victors, they have liberated Bangladesh. He who has this deed would be entitled to opportunities and benefits given by the ruling dispensation. In fact, the freedom fighters were almost regarded as soldiers of a victorious country. But if this had been another country, they could have been labelled as victors exercising domination and control over the defeated as in the ancient and in the Middle Ages. There is an expression '*ganimater mal*' in the Muslim vocabulary. It means those who have earned victories would place all the war booty in the treasury of the victor and after this deposition the goods and valuables will be distributed among the soldiers. Journalist Enayetullah Khan had posed a crucial question at that moment, which read, were all the six crores who stayed back in their country collaborators or *razakars*? None would give a reply to this question at that particular moment. It is true that the list of *muktijodhas* has been changed or revised six times and even after fifty years names are being included or excluded. But all these are being done to ensure that recipients receive opportunities and benefits offered by the government. This comment could hurt many persons but this is the truth. And precisely for this the martyrdom of 30 lakh and rape and torture of more than 5 Lakh women still continues to be neglected. This is nothing short of a mockery of the history of the Bangali people.

On the other side, after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, generals close to Pakistan indirectly and directly ruled Bangladesh. It can be said that after 1975, the military rulers of Bangladesh followed the agenda of Pakistan. An aspect of this agenda was to make people forget that the Pakistanis were annexationists, killers, rapists and looters. If this amnesia could be achieved, the role of the collaborators would also be forgotten.

A sub agenda of this main agenda was to obliterate and vilify Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or Bangabandhu's memory. A spate of measures was undertaken to achieve this aim. At the very beginning they highlighted the victory at the expense of genocide. Moreover, the new rulers continued to offer benefits and advantages to the freedom-fighters which they had been receiving from Bangabandhu's rule, so that these could prompt the recipients to sing in praise of the new regime. They acted in this way and manner during Ershad's rule as well. Can one then deny the accusation that the freedom fighters indulged in this sycophancy in order to ensure the flow of benefits. While underlining victory, the new dispensation said that Bangabandhu was not in the theatre of war. The same can be said about Tajuddin and other Awami League leaders. Only General Osmani was in the battlefield. Please note in this connection that the place where the address of 7th March took place and the same place where Pakistani soldiers surrendered, that was converted to a children's park. Further, Zia was presented as a hero of the Liberation War. Even the Dhaka airport came to bear his name.

There is no end to the recognition and reverence given to Osmani. Genocide, however, was absent. What Bangabandhu had done to rehabilitate the Biranganas was withdrawn by Zia. The reason is if the subject of genocide-torture is raised or, if it becomes a part of the memory, opportunistic politicians and the Bangali collaborators would also stand exposed. By then Zia also abolished the political restrictions and prohibitions that had been imposed on the collaborators. They became friends. But murderers cannot be friends of Zia. That is why a politics of reconciliation or understanding was set in motion. General Ershad not only continued this trend, he also took a big step backwards and turned Bangladesh into an Islamic

state. Pakistan also wanted the fulfilment of this special agenda. Khaleda bestowed power on rapists and killers. She also questioned the proposition that 30 lakhs had been martyred. She changed the documents of the Liberation War as well as text books for schools and colleges. For 30 long years which comprise three generations. Zia-Ershad-Khaleda indoctrinated them in their own ideology. Bangabandhu had united the Bangalis. In opposition to this, Zia-Ershad-Khaleda not only divided the nation but also strengthened the hands of fundamentalist terrorists. Today, they are opposing the installation of sculptures, and trying to introduce Kaumi education in place of secular education. Hence, this truth also cannot be denied that quite a lot of such aberrations were done with the approval of the freedom fighters. However, real and true history simply cannot be wiped out. We can link yet another aspect about which I had spoken earlier, namely, the faith in and belief of Pakistan in the Bangali psyche persists in spite of the Liberation War, it could not be extracted fully out of the psyche.

3

The genocide that took place during the Nazi era is known as Holocaust. Hitler was then the ruler of Germany and it was carried out during the Second World War. The Jewish race or people are the most organised in the world. No matter where they live and how they are faring, they remain united in purpose and they cherish a common faith. After the Second World War, their 'thousand-year long wandering' came to a close. A state for the Jews, known as Israel, was created for them. Was it mere sympathy that prompted the creation of this new state? By no means. The Western powers created Israel as their representative and proxy in the Arab world. In fact, the US and other western powers helped to the hilt while this state was being created. The Jews in the US exercised a lot of influence and further, they controlled the movements of financial capital. The greater part of Rothschild's family for example belong to the US. The Americans, in fact, indulged in double support. On the one hand, they gave shelter to the Jews, and on the other, after Germany's downfall they sheltered Nazi criminals and sympathizers. The Jews knew about this double game but they remained

silent so that the US's contribution to the creation of a new state for Jews flowed smoothly. It needs to be mentioned that the Jews vehemently protested when countries other than the US gave shelter to the Nazis. At the same time, after the Second World War, there was an intense reaction in entire Europe to the Nazi genocide. The Nazis indulged in genocide in all the countries they had conquered. The common people of Europe could not forget this massive cleansing operation. In those countries where the democratic system prevailed and a liberal outlook of the people existed, the memory of genocide and torture was kept alive so that the abysmal Nazi and Fascist torture is simply not repeated. Jews of many countries contributed to this effort and came forward to help. The Nuremberg Trial served as an aid to this measure. As a result, we have seen that during the last 80 years Europe has observed the Victory Day, and more importantly – remembered the Holocaust also. Countless films have been made in the course of the last 80 years which depict the destruction carried out by the Nazis and Fascists. Poetry,



Buchenwald concentration camp: the prisoners in the barracks - from internet

songs, research, stories and novels have been ceaselessly written to keep alive the memory of Holocaust. Children of schools are taken to the museums devoted to the theme of Holocaust. All these attempts have borne one solid fruit. Which is, Nazism and Fascism have not been able to rear its ugly head in Europe again.

The Jews remained intensely connected to the memory of the Holocaust. For this reason, the word 'Holocaust' is indispensably linked with the genocide of Jews, though, the actual meaning of Holocaust is to kill by setting persons on fire. But there is also a subtle politics involved. Not only Jews, but also thousands belonging to other races were also killed in the same manner in the concentration camps which dotted Europe. A great number of soldiers belonging to the Red Army was also killed in the concentration camps. Indeed, communists, socialists, liberals, gypsies, homosexual, members of different races and classes, dissident politicians were murdered at random. However, when the word Holocaust is uttered, the fates of these thousands of others are not loudly pronounced. The reason for this is the antagonistic attitude of Europe and US towards the Soviets and US's unfriendly attitude towards the Socialists per se. Similarly, in the sixties of the last century, the USA helped Suharto, the military ruler of Indonesia, to kill Communists and dissidents. More than 1 lakh were killed in this genocide. But what is amazing is that protests against this genocide were not voiced anywhere in this world, nor a trial was asked for – as if the Communists are not human beings. Citizens of Indonesia themselves remained silent. Why? Perhaps they wanted to preserve their Muslim identity and that is why the Communist tag was rejected. In Rwanda, the genocide prompted trial and legal action, in Cambodia as well. The USA and West had some interest in the former because there were many Christians among Tutsi. Pol Pot and Khieu Sampan, who ruled Cambodia, were Communists of the extreme stone-age variety, and in that country no foreign power came to perpetrate the genocide. The Cambodians, in fact, were victims of a dreadful civil war prompted by themselves.

The background to genocide is created when the ruler acquires the power to dominate and a majority of the subjects under his rule turns into his firm supporter. When he practices or imposes domi-

nation, he thinks that whatever he is doing is for the betterment of the people and the nation. Moreover, his act of expansive domination is regarded by him as a means which will make the nation more sovereign and powerful. Indeed, he believes that following this path will strengthen and ensure his domination. But nowhere in this world is this domination considered unbreakable or invincible. Both Yahya and Hitler are examples of the transience of this domination. But if this domination in a single country or countries goes in favour of some nations, the latter keep silent for strategic reasons. These nations then limit themselves to uttering accusatory statements in the UN and elsewhere. Nothing more than that.

The world has seen how Israel is subjecting the Arabs to persecution and torture, and even committing genocide of the Arab Muslims. Though the Islamic nations speak of *Ummah*, they remain silent when the persecution takes place. Why do they do this? Precisely because this persecution does not go against their interests. And because the Arab states are vassals of the US, they strike up not only reconciliation with Israel but also establish diplomatic relations with it.



Pile of skulls of Cambodian Genocide - from internet

The word genocide is directly related to death and it is regarded as the greatest crime in the annals of history. That is why, the Western

world has constructed a few other expressions to describe the crime. Our academicians, on their part, hold the Western academics as great and so they employ terms such as 'ethnic cleansing', 'mass murder', 'massacre' etc. When the killing of Rohingyas began in Myanmar, a controversy arose as to how to describe or define it. Almost all the countries chose the expression 'ethnic cleansing'; as if the crime thus perpetrated is not that severe like 'genocide'. But when China and India opted for 'ethnic cleansing', the USA defined it as 'genocide' and since then the United Nations, including the West, have chosen the term 'genocide'.

The small nation Bangladesh cannot stand up against India or China. So, she and only she has to bear the burden of Rohingya refugees, unless and until a godly power intervenes in favour of Bangladesh.

4

It is time to think why the Bangali equivalent of the English word 'museum' is *Jadughar*. *Jadu* is a Persian word, and *Ghar* is a Bangali word. When a *Jadughar* was being built in 19th Century Kolkata, the locals named it *Ajabghar*.¹² Varied objects which they have seen or not seen around them are kept in a single place and when the citizen is going to that place to view them, he finds the entire spectacle *Ajab* or strange. He comes to regard it as the game of the strange and fanciful. And the use of *Jadughar* most probably arises out of this perception.

All countries have their own national *Jadughar* or museums. Governments of all countries take the initiative to build museums. In fact, the national museum serves as the symbol of nationalism and a sort of politics is also embedded in the nomenclature. If the museum was built in colonial times, it manifested the attitude of the colonial rulers who wanted to show that they ruled over such a colony which had its history and heritage. Later, when the colonies acquire freedom, they tend to place the exhibits in a way that would reflect their sense of history. A political statement is also evident in the new arrangement. Members of the government's cadre service and not 'professionals' are usually placed at the helm of the museums which have been built or which function in the subcontinent.

By cadre service we imply members of the BCS, IAS and CSP. They are placed at the top so that the reflections of the government's policy are ensured through them. Moreover, they do not oppose the policy and supervision of the government concerned. A Trustee Board is also set up, though it is clearly stated that its authority is less than that of the 'Director' and the 'Curator'. Indeed, the government sees to it that the authority of the Trustee Board is less than that of the higher-placed Bureaucrat Director.

In this context, let us speak of our own national museum. During the rule of Khaleda Zia, a Zia corner was constructed in the section exhibiting objects associated with the Liberation War. At that point, a Professor of History of Dhaka University, Iftekarul Anwar, was the General Director of the Museum. This Professor was not a supporter of Awami League. But it can be said that he was one among the small number of professionals who was placed at the top. The proposal was placed during his tenure that a Zia corner would have to be included¹³. The aim behind setting up the Zia Corner was clear and single-minded. Namely, Bangabandhu's memory would be obliterated and the role of Zia as the first announcer of Liberation War and also a spirited soldier in the *muktijudho* would be presented to the new generation. The persons in power were successful in their efforts. This emphasis on Zia continued for quite some time, even during Sheikh Hasina's regime. When this 'anomaly' drew the attention of the Awami-League government, the 'Zia Corner' was removed and it was replaced by 'Bangabandhu Corner'. Almost in the same way, what is being emphasized in India at present is the display of the heritage of the Hindu religion as a part and parcel of Indian culture, at the expense of Buddhism, non-Aryan and Muslim cultures.

After Nalinikanta Bhattachali (till before the establishment of the national Museum) the Dhaka Museum was built and enriched by the famous historian Ahmed Hasan Dani. He was appointed the Curator of the museum. Before he took up the brief, he questioned Moazzem Hossain, Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University, about the collection on display (The museum was then under the supervision of the University). Prof. Hossain said that, the museum has some sculptures and yellow and white coins.¹⁴ This proves that there

was a museum all right, but — not to speak of the common people who were ignorant — not even the elite and the University authorities had any comprehensive idea about the collection.

At that point of time, the museum was situated in an old building in Nimtali where the Naib-Nazims of Dhaka lived in 18th and 19th centuries, which is now part of the Asiatic Society. In those old days, the office of the museum operated from the ‘huge gateway’ and the collection was placed in the old building.

Bhattashali raised a circle in front of the museum with coconut trees. A sculpture was placed under every tree. Sculptures were placed inside the museum as well and there were some exhibits related to natural and life sciences. The collection of books and coins was accommodated in the office-room.

Dani wrote, just opposite to the museum was a slum inhabited by the *mohajirs*, who were mostly non-Bangalis. They used to come to the mosque at the corner of the Asiatic Society to pray. “I myself went there on Fridays. After some time, I noted that the museum was not popular with them. One reason for this was the assemblage of sculptures outside the museum (these were there even before 1947). The local mollahs and maulavis were also instigating the *bustee*-dwellers. They met me several times to voice their objection and even said that they would demolish the sculptures, because they that it separates Hinduism.”

It could be that the changed situation prompted them to raise the accusation and they could influence the common Muslims too living in that area. Dani visualised that if one wanted to beautify and popularize the museum in Dhaka one would have to change the common perception attached to the museum. A communication would have to be established with the common people in the light of the realistic situation. After pondering on this issue for some time, he again met the VC and said, “I want to Islamize the museum”.

‘What do you mean by this?’

“We have to keep some Muslim or Islamic exhibits”.

His first step was to break the circle of coconut trees. Then he brought the sculptures inside. The common Muslims’ grievance was partially removed after he had taken these two steps. In the

next phase he tried to collect Islamic artefacts and possible exhibits for the museum.

Quite a few aspects emerge clearly from this narrative. First, a museum is not something static and unalterable. One has to attune it to the times. The wishes of the people and civil society are reflected if an autonomous body or a Trust is at the helm. Second, if the government invests, then also the viewpoint of the investor needs to be tabled clearly. Third, it also became evident from Dani’s narrative that the viewpoints of the local Muslims as well as the *Muhajirs* were not exactly the same. The local Muslims never raised a query regarding the placement of the sculptures outside the museum. But after the arrival of the *Muhajirs* in Dhaka a blow was struck on the local culture of reconciliation and understanding. The points of view of the Pakistanis and the *Muhajirs* were same. In 1971, we saw that *Muhajirs* along with the Pakistani soldiers came down to kill the Bangalis.

After all such explanations and analyses, it has to be accepted, at the end of the day, that a museum is a symbol of a kind of nationalism. When foreigners come, they are taken to the museum where they could see and hear the recitation of the nation’s glory. A sense of pride is also present in the prevailing attitude (no matter what is the nature of the statement projected by the authority through the medium of the museum). On the other hand, if one crosses the limits of the national museum, and concentrates on a particular, specialized museum dealing with a particular theme, like the Liberation War or genocide, this entire effort is viewed with suspicion. In fact, a sense of suspicion and associated politics function more strongly than the aspect of national pride, especially in countries like ours. The same attitude prevails in the West as well. But there the nation is built on the basis of democracy, the democratic sense of the society is also intense and those in power have to contribute space to the perception of the civil society.

Let us begin the discussion by focussing on our own country. After many twists and turns, a kind of stability characterizes our national museum at present though there are quite some unintended and intended mistakes in it. For example, the photographs and pictures of 1969 mass upsurge do not show Tofail Ahmed. The fact is we

simply cannot think of 1969 without him. But a soft rumour has created the impression that the head of the government is not well-disposed towards him. No one has bothered to find out the truth or untruth of this whispering campaign.

Whatever be the case, all museums established after 1975 are connected with a certain strain of politics. To stress once again, all museums constructed between 1975 and 1995 with the financial help extended by the government are linked with politics, though the museums have not faced any problem or obstruction on this score while being constructed. Obstacles were raised in the process of constructing other kinds of museum.

5

Let us begin with our own country. Barring the national museum, a certain kind of politics has played a role in the creation and construction of all other kinds of museum. The organisers and builders have had to cross over many obstacles.

During the rule of the BNP, museums were constructed in the names of Zia and Osmani because these underlined the statement that the role of the army was primary in nature during the Liberation War. However, he who led the movement for a sovereign Bangladesh, he who is the Father of the Nation was ignored. Indeed, no effort was made to construct a museum in his name. Even, no attempt was undertaken to construct a Liberation War Museum. Moreover, the effort that was made to raise a military museum in the most expensive area of Dhaka is not at all connected with our history and tradition. In opposition to this, Sheikh Hasina made the attempt to construct a Bangabandhu Museum. She donated the family residence, organised the financial side and established the museum somehow after crossing many barriers. Now she is in power and that is why some support comes from the government and the state guests are taken there. There is a clear political statement in this as well – with the help of a foreign power military personnel assassinated the leader of the civil society.

The Liberation War Museum is a product of the civil society. Those who took the initiative spent money out of their own pockets to begin the job. And their supporters welcomed this endeavor by

contributing as much as they could. This initiative also had a clear political statement to deliver. Namely, it was against militarisation and Pakistanisation. The BNP and Jamaat did not object to this initiative and did not create trouble because they knew that any opposition to this attempt would go against them. But they were not patronized by the government. What needs to be stressed here is that memory of the Liberation War was still fresh in the mind of the common people. The Liberation War Museum is a classic example of how a museum like the National Museum could be built without any capital grant. Till 2012 the civil society donated money handsomely to finance the direction and development of this museum. In fact, the people of Bangladesh had not given so much help towards the construction of any other monument as it did for this museum. The other crucial meaning of this cooperation is that the memory of the Liberation War cannot be erased from the mind of the people. Even now, the common people react positively to any appeal voiced by the Liberation War Museum. Moreover, there is no government diktat in this case. The museum grew and developed in the way the trustees wanted it to grow and develop.



Rohingya Genocide - from internet

When the military rule began in 2011, there was a public works minister in the Cabinet who was a supporter of the Liberation War. The organisers of the museum had a good relationship with him.

The minister responded to their appeal and gave a plot of land in Agargaon to put up the museum there. Till then the museum had functioned from a rented house. When Sheikh Hasina came to power, she sanctioned more than 100 crore taka to build the edifice of the Liberation War museum.

We thought from the beginning of the new century we should give more importance to the aspect of genocide-torture. In order to rejuvenate the politics of Liberation War, that is the assertion of truth as opposed to the politics of reconciliation, the theme of genocide has to be stressed and the demand for the trial of killers has to be continued. From that point of time, Shahriar Kabir and I began writing about genocide-torture and the killers in a specific manner. The *Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee* also added strength to the demand for trial. Further, a call was given to observe March 25 as Genocide Day. For nearly two decades, torchlight processions are being held at the *Shahid Minar* to observe the Genocide Day on 25th March.

A question had been raised to the effect that Bangladeshis appealed for international recognition of Genocide but they did not observe the Genocide Day in their own country. Politician Tofail Ahmed was the chief guest at a seminar organised by the *Nirmul Committee* in 2017. The parliamentary session was already on. Junaid Ahmed, a Pakistani, had written a book in which he tried to show that, on the one hand, there was no genocide of the Bangali people, but on the other the Bangalis themselves perpetrated genocide on the Biharis.¹⁵ In that context, I said that we Bangalis observe the Handwashing Day but still no Genocide Day is observed. After my statement Tofail Ahmed rose to deliver his lecture in which he said, "Though I am a freedom fighter, still I have not thought about this. I feel really ashamed".

I said, 'The Parliamentary session is still on. So, please go there immediately and raise the issue'.¹⁶

Tofail Ahmed rushed back to Parliament and tabled this proposal. In a flash an emotional moment was created. All the members, including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, supported the proposal and the decision was taken to observe March 25 as Genocide Day. What could not be achieved for 20 long years was achieved in a

moment, and so easily. Our logic was the following: Memory will be revived if March 25 is observed in a befitting manner, the physiognomy of the killer would turn clearer, demand for trial will be raised, the killers will be punished and this entire side of dark politics will be revealed. Moreover, a nail will be driven hard on those who still indulged in pro-Pakistani politics. Those who love to reproduce the commentaries of Western pundits, they would of course say that this has been done to strengthen the nationalist narrative of the rulers who obviously won the support of the Awami League MPs who enjoyed a clear majority in Parliament. But if that was the case, the Awami League could have taken the decision much earlier when they were in power. But it did no such thing. The reason for this is, that in the Liberation War narrative, the extermination of 30 lakh Bangalis and two lakh Birangana who were raped and often killed were mentioned time and again. This is a part of the general lecture, evidently a cliché. They failed to realize that this statement could carry a different meaning. But the sudden tabling of this proposal and the revival of memory during lectures turned everyone emotional. They, then, could not grasp the fact that this could also be an example of redemptive politics. In other words, it needs to be stated that all narratives do not begin to create an advantage for politics. Perhaps, after the passage of time, after reflection, it is regarded as a part of politics. And to be frank which theme discussed in the world is not a part of politics.

The meaning by the word 'genocide' has extended and expanded from the meaning that was attached to it by Lemkin in the past. Swadesh Roy has written using the definition given by the United Nations, "When a race or community or people belonging to a specific ideology faces forcible obliteration or are killed, tortured or made victims of force or any other form of oppression – all these acts would be singled out as genocide. How many persons were thereby killed is not of primary importance. The main issue is killing or torture or leaving one's home or soil. When the main reason behind this is to exterminate a community, race or group, then that will definitely fall within the purview of genocide. Therefore, figures and numbers are not of primary importance here. The aim and intention are the matter that counts".¹⁷

Those who commit genocide they never accept the enormity of their crime. Precisely because it is a primordial sin and its trial-tenure never comes to an end. Along with the denial, the question of self-protection is also raised. There is yet another aspect involved – as the Nazis have always said the command has been simply followed. An effort is also made to confuse the situation. For example, the Pakistanis have said, Bangalis have killed the Biharis, that is why the Army had to protect the Biharis. And, last but not the least, there is always a controversy around figures and numbers.

Three women scholars have written thesis on the genocide and rape in Bangladesh. They are Sarmila Bose, Yasmin Saikia and Nayanika Mookherjee. Barring Sarmila Bose, the other two came to Dhaka and I had the opportunity to talk with them. The young researchers of Bangladesh are attached to their internet. They mention the names of these three researchers, while discussing the genocide in Bangladesh, and also quote from their books because they are written in English. However, they have not discussed at all the errors and delusions present in their theoretical framework and analyses.

What has Yasmin written on the genocide of Bangladesh? According to her, “The multiple actors and perpetrators complicate the picture and it is almost impossible to distinguish victims and perpetrators” (P.57).

So, what took place cannot be called ‘genocide’. The foreign researchers have said exactly this. But what could be called plain genocide is the extermination of Jews by the Nazis. It can also be said that genocides occurred in Darfur, Bosnia, but not in Bangladesh. In one place she has written 10 lakhs have been killed. She has never accepted the figure 30 lakhs. Why is the Hutu-Tutsi conflict not a civil war, but what took place in Bangladesh is a civil war. And how can genocide take place in the midst of a civil war. To use her words, “No single group had a monopoly on committing violence.” (P.48)

What is the meaning of this?

The meaning is: Pakistanis have killed, Punjabis have killed. But the Bangali freedom fighters have fought with the Razakars, hence

killings resulted on both sides. Al Badars and Razakars have been killed, sometimes they were released. As opposed to 30 lakh Bangalis, if one could come to the estimate that during the Liberation War, freedom fighters had killed 40 thousand Pakistani soldiers, Razakars and Biharis, even then a theory could perhaps be constructed. But this simply did not take place. When Yasmin comes to the firm conclusion that 30 lakhs did not turn into martyrs, it is futile to discuss with her. She thinks, “Obviously the misguided ethnocentric and political interest to participant – Pakistani, Bangali, Bihari and even Indian led to man violence”. [P.51]¹⁸

Sarmila Bose described the Liberation War as a civil war. She has also raised queries regarding the number of Bangalis killed and women raped. She is the grandniece of Subhaschandra Basu. Her book titled *The Dead Reckoning* has also been published from abroad.

These three writers are outsiders. But what about our own insiders? Known as ‘uncompromising’, our Prime Minister for three terms, Khaleda Zia, expressed doubt in 2015 regarding the number of Bangali martyrs. Just one year later BNP leader Goyeshwar Roy supported Khaleda Zia’s position.¹⁹ At that point of time, Sheikh Hasina began the trial of those who were accused of committing genocide. The leaders of Jamaat were being tried in tribunal.

Pakistan and Turkey were aggrieved at this turn of event. Jamaat and BNP were allies, to that extent they were allies of Pakistan as well. They have also been influenced by the Pakistani way of thought. Jamaat was indulging in massive lobbying activity. The son in-law of Kamal Hosain, David Bergman, also raised queries. He started writing to express his views. Khaleda Zia, Zia’s wife, was influenced by the Pakistani concept. She even sent a message of condolence, when she was the PM ignoring government protocol, to the family of a Pakistan general under whose supervision she had lived for 9 months. Again, Dr. Kamal was opposed to the Awami League. In other words, denial of the figure of Bangalis martyred and raising a controversy over this was based on ideology. The basis of the theoretical framework constructed to defend the genocide was also ideology, and denial of the figure of Bangalis killed, also had ideology as its basis.

It is not possible to give the exact figure of the people exterminated in genocide. This is true of all genocides that have occurred. In fact, the numbers that have been given for genocides perpetrated in different countries of the world are all hypothetical. The basis of this hypothesis is grounded in direct observation. Other sources are different reports and experiences. That is why the figures proposed by countries where genocides have taken place are more or less accepted by others.

From Cambodia to Rwanda, from Germany to Indonesia, where have we counted the number of the dead in definite exactitude? Suharto killed, it is suspected, more than 100000 (a lakh) people because, ostensibly, they were all communists and what he perpetrated was a clear genocide. Whether we accept this figure or not is a different issue, the main contention is how mercilessly he killed the communists. For example, someone says 29,90,591 were killed in Bangladesh. Does this mean that there has been no genocide in Bangladesh, or the responsibility of those who have committed genocide and the supporters of the latter, is in any way less?



Rayer Bazar Mass Killing Field, Dhaka. Photographer: Rashid Talukder

Now we come to the question of rape. This aspect of torture is closely connected with genocide. Rape is also regarded as a part of torture. In the International Crime Tribunal, rape is considered as an international crime. That is why the act of rape is important. Objects and articles associated with the torture [raped] of women are exhibited in our museum.

6

I discussed with different people from Pakistan the subject of rape and the close association of the Pakistani Army with it. One of the discussants was M.A. Naqvi who was a renowned columnist. When I placed relevant questions to him, he replied in a steady and stern voice, "The Pakistani Army was disorderly and reckless, it was in fact an army of looters. They looted and plundered and committed all kinds of crime starting from rape. The proof of their insensitivity and cruelty is provided by General Tikka Khan on his return to West Pakistan from Dhaka. When he was questioned about loot and killings by journalists, he replied unabashedly that the statistics of rape have been highly exaggerated. In fact, he stressed that only 3000 women had been raped. While discussing this grossly unpleasant theme, Naqvi's voice was trembling in rage. He said that Tikka, Yayha, Niazi, Bhutto were all associated with it.²⁰ Indeed, he said if the soldier of a country rapes even one woman of the same country, he commits a repugnant crime.

The famous Indian novelist, Mulk Raj Anand, spoke on the subject of rape and the Pakistani policy behind it in candid terms. What he said in 1972 was essentially this: "The Pakistani Army followed this policy to create a new race"²¹. This policy had been implemented in Vietnam by the US army and this I have said earlier: "Rapes were so systematic and pervasive that they had to be conscious Army policy. Planned by the West Pakistanis in a deliberate effort to create a new race or to dilute Bangali nationalism".

The Australian doctor Geoffrey Davis was closely associated with the post-war rehabilitation, and he said in an interview while answering the question: how did they try to explain or defend the matter of rape: "Oh my God. The soldiers in fact were ordered by

Tikka Khan and directed by him to indulge in rape". He further said, 'A true Muslim would fight against everyone except his father. So, their duty was to impregnate as many Bangali women they could. This was the policy or theory behind this act of massive rape'.²²

The subject turns out to be even clearer in my book 'Birangana' where I have described quite some case studies. When one reads these case studies, one comes to know that the rapes followed a systematic pattern. That is, it was a weapon to implement the policy of brutal repression, which was strengthened by the following considerations: One-rape, and two, to create a new race as an outcome of this rape so that Bangali nationalism can never rear its head and three-treating the inferior people of the colony in a cruel and indifferent manner; as if they were not human beings, but mere commodities and finally four, to fulfil their sexual lust. This last aspect was a form of revenge and it was closely associated with numbers one and two.

How many were raped in Bangladesh in 1971? We have received many estimates after liberation. The figure has reached 4 lakhs at present. Dr. Davis has also given this figure of 4 lakhs. When the news of this mass rape reached the ears of the world, many international organizations came forward to help. The London-based International Action Research and Training Centre sent Dr. Geoffrey Davis to Bangladesh. He worked in the nooks and crannies of Bangladesh with the women raped. He described as incorrect the estimate provided by the then government servants. He said, "The government employees have given us a district-based estimate, out of the 480 police stations in the country, 270 were under the control of the Pakistanis. If it is held that everyday two women were found missing, the figure of abused women comes to 2 lakhs. The decision was taken to accept this figure as final and flawless". Dr. Davis said at that moment this figure should have reached 4 lakh to 4 lakh 30 thousand.²³

I personally feel that the figure of women who had been tortured or raped is much higher. As an example of my claim, I am offering a report which appeared in the *Newsweek* on November 15, 1971. The report was as follows: In order to eliminate members of the

Liberation Army, the Pak military launched an offensive in the village of Demra (there was not a single freedom fighter in this region). The soldiers separated and raped every female starting from the age of 12 to 35 years. Moreover, all males above 12 years were shot dead.²⁴

Dr. Davis gave the following answer to a question about with this brutality. The question was, many documents preserved by Pakistan state that the number of rapes has been highly exaggerated. Do you regard the claim as truth? Dr. Davis replied, "no, no they have been raped and raped and the figure that is being provided is much less than the actual figure. The way they subjugated towns and villages also rouses our interest and curiosity. They used to push forward the artillery and keep the soldiers behind. Then the artillery opened fire on hospitals, schools and colleges. All these buildings were destroyed thoroughly and the town experienced a severe disorder. Thereafter, the soldiers came in and separated the women after a preliminary selection. They used to collect together all females who were sexually matured. Some soldiers gathered together males living in the town or village. All those who were connected with the Awami League were promptly shot down. Thereafter, the females were brought to the military compound and were distributed among the soldiers. This was a repugnant act. You do not find another example of this sort of cruelty in any other part of the world. But this process happened and was repeated in Bangladesh".²⁵

Yes, it is true and according to logic, that the Pakistanis did not ravage 64,000 villages. But wherever they went they spelled disaster for women. A pattern emerges from the description of such incidents included here. The pattern is, they invaded village after village to round up women, and they invaded the towns to pick up women. That was a terrible phase. In many places, the Razakars and members of the Peace Committee abducted women as well. A section of the women raped, committed suicide, another part was mercilessly slaughtered. Often it so happened that the members of the affected families did not come out with the truth in order to retain the honour of the households. As a result, it would be impossible to pinpoint a figure. Moreover, the government employees at

that time were under intense pressure to lessen the figure. A kind of guilt feeling also prompted the employees to reduce the number. For one reason or the other, the males failed to protect the women which was their duty, for males this was a matter of shame. And that is why they tried to reduce the figure of woman raped and tortured. I cannot fathom the sociological reason of this attitude. As a result, no one wants to bring into discussion, the subject of rape.

Dr. Davis has also said, “the government records have failed to take into account the number of women raped by the army of assaulters in village after village. In order to satisfy their lust, the assaulters forced the women to go into the military camps. When they were found to be pregnant, or suffering from ailment they were rejected or killed.”²⁶

Susan Brownmiller has written, “rape in Bangladesh had hardly been restricted to beauty – girls of eight and grandmothers of 75 had been sexually assaulted.”²⁷ The Pakistanis not only raped the women on the spot, but also took them to military barracks and pounced on them at night. ‘Some women may have been raped as many as eight times in a single night. How many died from this atrocious treatment, and how many more women were murdered as part of the generalised campaign of destruction and slaughter, can only be guessed at’.²⁸

Dr. Hasan in his book mentioned about a report that was prepared by the Uppsala University. This report claimed that the number of women raped was between 2 and 4 lakhs. He has referred to his own survey and said “we conducted countless interviews with the people concerned in 25 police stations of 42 districts. This was done between the years 1991-2002. We analyzed 267 interviews and concluded on the basis of the proof tabled by these interviews that 2,20,000 women were raped in those areas ... and in the entire country the figure of raped and tortured women was more than 4,50,000.”²⁹

He has however kept separate those conclusively raped and those tortured in two categories. His statement is also candid. He said it is not the survey of the entire country, the evidence provided in also not comprehensive and final. But still the figures reveal the massive extent of rape.



The Holocaust. Artist: Bedrik Fita

The description which he has given after this – if we consider it in the literal sense – would point to a figure even more than he himself has provided. He could track 30,000 Birangana in Sylhet itself. His words are “The female workers who laboured in the tea gardens – women labourers and their young as well as adolescent daughters, Manipur and Khasia women, were raped indiscriminately. Each and every house was raided and countless women were raped in Sylhet town, in Balaganj’s Burunga, Adityapur, Sri Ramsi, Sherpur, Peerpur, Peernagar, Karimganj Border, Haor region, Haor region in Sunamganj the town of Maulovibazar, Rajnagar, Sadhuhati, Samsher Nagar under Kamalganj Police Station. Indeed, the villages which were inhabited by Manipuri women were subjected to excruciating torture. Apart from those mentioned above, the following regions were also victim of merciless depredation: Chhabia along with adjacent villages in Bhuapara police station area in Tangail, almost all villages in the range of Gaurnadi police station in Barisal, Rajiher in Agailojhara, entire Barisal district with emphasis on Kola village, almost every house in Patuakhali, Jail and remote villages of this district. He has also named quite some villages in Faridpur district where villagers had

been subjected to rape and torture.³⁰ The question is, what sort of a figure do we arrive at if we estimate that every house in the concerned town had been invaded.

I have already mentioned that not only the *Khansena* [Pakistani soldier], but also Razakars and members of the Peace Committee indulged in rape. Brownmiller has quoted a report from a newspaper which said that Pakistani soldiers and Razakars pounced on the villages at night to lift women. Some were raped on the spot; the rest were forced into military barracks.³¹

International Commission of Jurists stated:

It has been learnt that the Pakistani army men have perpetrated extensive rapes on elderly women and young girls. Confessions from countless sources underline the truth of this valid accusation. The Bangladesh government has claimed that as a result of this massive rape more than 70,000 women have turned pregnant. No matter what the correct figure is, American and British doctors and surgeons are continuing their work of abortion. They are also extensively engaged in persuading people to accept these women in the society. This situation and the efforts of so many people attest to the formidable figure of rapes committed. Pakistani Army officers however express their ignorance about this barbarism, they want to remain free from any blame or accusation. But the fact is these very military officers themselves imprisoned young women in order to satisfy their own sexual lust.³²

The reports of those journalists who wrote on this subject in various newspapers and magazines, have also been considered. Indeed, this theme appears in their reports time and again. We quote from four such reports filed by four journalists :

Tony Clifton of *Newsweek* wrote, "I have seen that people in the literal sense of the term have turned dumb, when the Pakistani soldiers slaughtered the children in front of them and dragged-out women to quench their terrible sexual lust. I have no doubt that hundreds and hundreds of cruel and horrific acts as seen in MyLai or Ledici have taken place in East Pakistan".

Arnaud de Borchgrave, senior editor of *Newsweek* wrote, "Giving the lame excuse that they have come to fish out rebels, Pakistani soldiers in recent times surrounded the village named Demra.

Thereafter, they raped each and every woman or adolescent between 12 and 35 years and killed each and every male aged above 12."³³

Sydney Schanberg of *New York Times* wrote: In almost every sector the Pakistani army has kept Bangali women as sexual slaves. These women, stark naked always, were kept inside the bunkers of soldiers. After their surrender on December 16, torn and mangled parts of their bodies were discovered.³⁴

John Hastings, a missionary, said "Pakistani soldiers have thrust their bayonets into the vaginal passages of women and killed them."³⁵ The women were also locked up in mosques where they were raped. This form and place of torture was revealed after the release of women from the mosque of a village in Satkhira.³⁶ It goes without saying that the rescued women were found in a naked state. After taking into account all such incidents, one could claim that the number of women raped could come close to 6 lakh, or even more, not less. Between 1941 and 1945, Indonesia, Korea, China and Philippines were under Japanese domination, and within these five years 2 lakh women were raped.³⁷ When one compares the size and population of these countries with the size of Bangladesh and its population, one can understand the intensity and widespread nature of the torture and rape inflicted on Bangladeshi women. Such a desecration has not happened in any other country of the world. According to a conservative estimate, 4,50,000 women were raped in Bangladesh.

From yet another calculation we come to know that even during the six year long Second World War, the European Nazis and Fascist forces together did not rape so many women.³⁸ After taking into account all these details, I tend to believe that more than 5 lakh women were raped during the time of the Liberation War.

Sarmila Bose was the first writer who questioned the extent and depth of rape in Bangladesh in one of her articles (a few more articles by her on this theme were published after this first questioning) that was published in the famous magazine EPW which comes out from Mumbai. The question remains; how could the publisher print this article? Not only is it saddled with lies, but more than that it assaults a total nation. If the editor-founder of the magazine,

Sachin Chandhuri, would have been living, such a dastardly act could not have taken place. I have said previously, that I, on my part, would have ignored such articles in the past. But now one has to attend to these because they go against an entire race of people and their nation.

When the researchers pick up an article to read, they first note the sources of the said article. The style of Sarmila's article is academic, that is why I first considered the sources (it needs to be mentioned in this context, the quality of an article does not depend on the length of the sources). The title of her article is long and heavy, it goes upto 14 words. Now it is a fashion among academics in West to go for exotic titles. The aim behind this is to invoke an academic spirit with the help of the title. The title of Sharmila's article is: 'Losing the Victim, Problems of using Woman as Weapons in recounting the Bangladesh War.' Among the sources, the following could be mentioned – *Swadhinatar Dalilpatra*, Volume 8, a selection edited by Shahriar Kabir, one of her own articles, a book written by an American researcher, a book based on Jamaat publishing printed in London and a Pakistani book. This last source included the white paper published by Pakistan in 1971 and the statements of the vanquished Pakistani general General Niazi and another Pakistani General Mitha. Sharmila has found all these Pakistani sources as more acceptable. Once you dissect the links and sources, Sharmila's intention becomes clear.

1) Sarmila's essay focuses on the raped women of 1971. She states that the writers/researchers of Bangladesh and their supporters' foreign writers/ researchers tend to think that 2 to 4 lakh women were raped during the Liberation War. The real figure however is a few thousand, and this also includes the rape of Bihari women by Bangalis. Which means that the number of raped Bangali women is still fewer. And these have not sprung up directly from the war. In her words: "The available evidence confirms the occurrence of rape but does not support claims of hundreds of thousands of women raped by the army in East Pakistan in 1971. The seven case studies in Nilima Ibrahim's book, the opportunistic rape admitted by the army and the reports of genocide of non-Bangalis (West Pakistan and Bihari) men, women and children by Bangalis, sug-

gest that several thousand women may have been victims of sexual violence in 1971".

2) The description of rapes in Bangladeshi publication is unreal and exaggerated. As examples, she has mentioned the name of three women – Rabeya, Ferdousi Priyabhashini and Champa. Their statements are false and Priyabhashini, in fact, stayed back with the Pakistanis in order to be raped (because she did not escape or ran away).

3) The Pakistani army did not envision any policy of planned or projected rape. Some rapes did take place but these are somehow associated with all – Pakistani soldiers, Bangalis, Biharis etc. And these are all "opportunistic sexual crimes in times of war". Why? Because Pakistani soldiers are gentle, manly and professional.

4) Bangalis killed Biharis and thereby were engaged in 'ethnic cleansing' as well.

Sarmila has written that this subject of rape and the controversy around it, is nothing more than political hyperbole. Moreover, no proof is available that can help us to pinpoint the number of women raped. These who shout and give exaggerated figures want to vilify the 'enemy'. The aim behind this is to glorify 'victimhood' in the name of some ideal. In reality, the exaggerators, in fact, show no genuine concern for those who have really suffered.

To tell the truth, this is for the first time that I read a text like this. Even the Pakistanis themselves have not defended themselves in such a manner. In 1990 I spoke with 36 policymakers of Pakistan who were involved with the Military Junta. They tried to evade the issue of rape by adopting several other points of view but they did not speak in the way Sarmila wrote. Rather they were apologetic. One has to offer some examples from Sharmila's description. Right from the beginning she described the Liberation War as 'civil war'. She wrote that the population of East Bengal was approximately 7.5 crore when the 'civil war' began. During this phase, that is at the beginning, Pakistani soldiers in East Bengal numbered 20,000. In December the figure came upto 34 thousand. The number of armed civil police and non-army staff was around 11 thousand. So, controlling and administering a country with a mere 34,000 soldiers, on top of that they were engaged in fighting, was a heavy and

difficult job. To claim that they found the time to rape even after this very busy schedule is certainly farfetched. Hamoodor Rahman, a Bangali judge who was a head of the Commission, also accepted this view.

Sarmila came to Bangladesh some years ago. She researched at the field level. She interviewed many. The latter spoke about the war, spoke about killings but did not say anything about rape. That means the Pakistani army did not target women and children. In her words, "Women were not harmed by the army in these events except by chance such as in crossfire. The pattern that emerged from these incidents was that the Pakistani army targeted adult males while sparing women and children." Nevertheless, she accepted the premise that women could have been raped in some other place, women and children could have been harmed again, at some other place. She added that her research at the field level reflected the position elaborated in the white paper which commented on the total elimination of the Biharis. Pakistani army officers have also said the same thing. To be fair, Pakistani soldiers were responsible for some unpleasant incidents for which they were also adequately punished – that is Sarmila's stand.

Rabeya Khatun was raped, she was a commoner but her narrative is that of an educated woman's. What Akhtaruzzaman Mondal wrote in his book, that is the description of rapes, was also not correct. Nayanika Mookherjee examined these very issues and dwelt on the problem which researchers had to encounter. But her opinion came closer to that of the Bangalis. She said that no comfort women were kept confined in the army camps. In her own words, "The allegation that the army maintained 'comfort women' – even the numbers were nowhere close to the Bangladeshis claim - is a serious charge and merits further enquiry". As for the fates of those women about whom Nilima Ibrahim wrote in her book *'Ami Birangana Bolchi'*, the majority of them were raped first by the Bangalis and then they were handed over to the Pakistanis. They were kidnapped. Even if they had not been raped by Pakistanis they could be labeled as 'raped' Etcetera, wrote Sarmila.

Each and every line in Sarmila Bose's text can be challenged with facts and figures. I do not want to go into this line-by-line refuta-

tion. I would only give a few examples from her text which are patently wrong.



The Nazis killed over a thousand Jews in a village in Ukraine, Photo displayed in the information center.

On December 16, 1971, the Pakistani army and its associates surrendered to the India-Bangladesh joint command. In the war documents of the three countries, the number of the troops surrendered, as well as of their associates were mentioned. The relevant figure that was given was 90,368. Could Sharmila enlighten us on one count, namely, from where did the extra or additional 60,000 soldiers and their associates come? The number of Al-Badar, Razakar and Shanti Committee associates was not revealed. Anyway, they numbered more than 11000, and most of them were armed. Moreover, the soldiers did not administer the country. This work was done by the Pakistani administrators as well as local officials who belonged to the beleaguered country. It is not possible for each and every citizen to join the Army or escape from the war. It also needs to be remembered that many belonging to the local administration actively helped the freedom fighters. The associates of the Pakistani army – Jamaat, Muslim League and Razakars – were the armed collaborators of the Pakistani army and they together killed,

looted and raped. This does not however imply that they all indulged in rape. A soldier could have raped, more than once at several places. Now, if the figure of the armed soldiers and their associates came to about 1,50,000, was it not possible for them to engage in 2,00,000 rapes? How could in Rwanda 2,50,000 to 5,00,000 rapes be committed in a war lasting 100 days? This figure has been given by Western analysts themselves.

Did the Pakistanis commit the rape according to a well-coordinated plan or just raped here and there, helter-skelter, I shall provide some information on this duality but I shall not give any information provided by the Bangalis because Sharmila Bose is most reluctant to accept the Bangali version. What needs to be mentioned is that she considered the relevant figures only to prop up her own analysis. General Niazi wrote in one of his memos, "I want each and every Pakistani soldier to be a symbol of order and discipline? They will follow the 'code of honour' because they are gentlemen and officers".

Niazi included this memo when he was narrating on the extensive killing, loot and rape indulged in by the Pakistani army. To use his words, "since my arrival, I have heard momentous reports of troops indulging in loot and arson, killing people at random and without reason in areas cleared of the anti-state elements; of late there have been reports of rape and even the West Pakistanis are not being spared; on 12 April, two West Pakistani women were raped and an attempt was made on two others". Not only this, while returning from the field of action they have taken the objects looted and plundered. And they helped one another when they were busy perpetrating these heinous acts. In his language, "I gather that even officers have been suspected of indulging in this shameful activity and what is worse, in spite of repeated instructions, combo have so far failed to curb this alarming state of indiscipline and shielding such criminals,"³⁹ Well, the fact of the matter is, while the military leader describes his own soldiers as disorderly criminals, Sharmila indicates that they were "gentlemen". Sharmila Bose, could you name one country where the able and professional army keeps the civil administration at a distance and deprives the latter from exercising civil power for year after year? Or kills people of the same

country, punishes, loots and rapes them?

Planned and projected rapes were not committed – that is then the interpretation? To remove any doubt on this score, read the telegram dated March 1 sent by Archer Blood, Consul General of the US. "Six naked female bodies at Rokeya Hall, Dacca Feet tied together. Bits of ropes hanging from ceiling fans. Apparently raped. Shot and hung by their heels from fans."⁴⁰ Sharmila would have come across such descriptions, had she cared to read newspapers and magazines published in India. But then, the publications in Kolkata are run by Bangalis, would they be trustworthy? She would have perhaps cared to read if these were published by Pakistanis.

Okay, let me describe what has been said and noted by Pakistani officials. The Commissioner of Dhaka during this turbulent period was Alamdar Raza. He has written a book in which there are description of repeated rapes committed by the Pakistani soldiers. When the report of the Hamoodur Rahman Commission was released, he decided to file a writ petition against it and to demand that the Pakistani war criminals have to be punished. In an interview given to me at Islamabad, he said, "while renewing the writ petition, I spoke of a particular incident. Four Pakistani soldiers raided a house. The father of the house was killed. Then they focused their eyes on a young girl. With folded hands, she told them that she was also a Muslim, so she should be treated as their sister. When, even after hearing this, they advanced she pleaded that she herself was a Pakistani. 'You might be having a daughter of my age' she said. Even then they advanced. Finally, she kept the *Quran Sharif* beside the bed and said if you want to violate me, you have to cross the *Quran*. The soldiers, crossed over the *Quran*. When I was describing this incident there was pin drop silence in the court. And the judge asked me repeatedly – is it true what you are saying? There were tears in his eyes."⁴¹

You have raised the issue of Comfort Women? The *Time* magazine informed on October 25 that 563 women were held captive in the Dhaka cantonment. Many of them were pregnant. Many had gone through the process of abortion. Some had been released. It needs to be underlined that had Sharmila Bose read this report, she would

have definitely said that the Punjabi soldiers were ‘gentlemen’, hence they released some women. Here follows the report of the *Time*.

“One of the most horrible revelations concerns 563 young, Bangali women, some only 18, who have been held captive inside Dacca’s dingy military cantonment since the first day of the fighting. Seized from Dacca University and private homes and forced into military brothels, the girls are three to five months pregnant. The army is reported to have enlisted Bangali gynecologists to abort girls held at military installation. But for those at the Dacca cantonment it is too late for abortion. The military has begun freeing the girls a few at a time, still carrying the babies of Pakistani soldiers”.

Let us end with another reminder. Sharmila, every time, has labeled the Liberation War as ‘civil war’. For the information of this lady, who has a soft corner for the Pakistani soldiers, let me say that in the last century, Bangladesh was the one and only country which fought for freedom after declaring independence and won the fight. That is why, for theoretical reasons it is not correct to call it a ‘civil war’. If you say this, you insult the birth of a nation.

The Pakistani soldiers have not only broken Pakistan, they have also converted Pakistan into a failed state. They have with the help of arms suppressed the country and its civil society and there is nothing heroic about it. Many belonging to the civil society protested against the genocide and rape conducted by the Pakistani army and they have even been sent to prisons for their stand.

This highly criticized army simply hates India (which they label as Hindustan) and the Hindu community. They also regard the Bangali Muslim community as supporter of India Hindus. After all this, when a Bangali lady, tries to lessen the savagery of the massacre perpetrated by the Pakistani in a wrap-up of research, we really come to feel that the ISI is indeed very powerful, influential and it is an organisation adept at state terrorism.

Yasmin Saikia has also offered many theoretical examinations. Only a few observations on her effort follow.

1) The word Birangana has not been given by Bangabandhu. Leaders of womens’ organizations gave this name, even before Mujib arrived on the scene.

2) The Mujib government gave the ‘chilling mandate’ to carry out abortions (Page 59). As opposed to this, the women themselves organised the abortions. Those who wanted to preserve the baby or were forced to, they were not aborted. But many raped women themselves insisted on abortion. The doctors, at that point, declared there could be no legal opposition to it. In other words, it was by no means a ‘chilling mandate’. After the delivery, most of the mothers, did not want to keep the newborn. That is why they were sent as adopted to children’s homes on a legal basis. It could well be the attitude of some not to keep illegitimate children, but I cannot recall that the entire country and race opted for this solution. Yasmin has mentioned in her ‘Sources and References’ that the minister responsible for the rehabilitation of women, Health Minister Jahangir Haider, used the expression, ‘Pakistani bastards’. The Chairman of the Commission for Rehabilitation, she stated, was Professor Rehman Sobhan at that time. But, at that point, there was no health minister of the name of Jahangir Haider. Moreover, Professor Rehman Sobhan, was not the head of the Rehabilitation Commission.⁴²

She attempted to picture the actual condition of the women. But her problem began when she came to regard the Liberation War or Independence as a ‘civil war’, and tried to raise her theoretical framework on this erroneous basis. Her thesis was, the civil war was on between Bangalis and Biharis. Those who stoked the fire were India and the centralized command of Pakistan. She also considered the Biharis as an important part of the narrative. But if one considers the number of Biharis living in Bangladesh, even then they cannot match up to one side of the civil war.

This narrative on the genocide and rape perpetrated in Bangladesh has turned out to be long and many could view it as irrelevant. But I wanted to show how researchers indulge in subtle politics. Quite some respected persons in Pakistan have told me and Shahrir Kabir that the Pakistani generals invited Sharmila Bose and took good care of her. Bearing this hospitality in mind she wrote her controversial text. Yasmin, who is a bit confused, has churned out a thesis which would be perhaps liked by the Western academics. When these books/articles are published, there is no mention of

genocide-rape. To extend this position, the Museum of genocide-torture could also lose relevance and logic. That is why for the good of humanity and fair justice, protests should be done against these versions.

I did mention earlier. But still I have restressed the related points with a perspective in mind. The latter is as follows:

A kind of politics is at work behind the pinpointing of the numbers. The genocide which the US perpetrated in Vietnam by using napalm is not labeled as genocide in the West but rather as a part of war. Because if you express the word war the responsibility for killing is lessened. Obviously, both the warring sides will lose men if there is a war between the two. But that which took place in Vietnam – was it merely a war?

In fact, Vietnam wanted to attain independence but the imperialist powers were not prepared to accept this demand. For this reason, it was not merely a war, but killing of innocent civilians which took place for 40 years. Many Western researchers and American scholars



After the independence of Bergen-Belsen, 1945- collection

have labeled Bangladesh's a Liberation War as a civil war. Because if one comes to accept the latter label, the burden of genocide does not fall upon the perpetrators. I have mentioned earlier that there is not one mention about the war and genocide begun by Suharto. Attempts have been made to wipe out the memory of this genocide, none speaks about it. Precisely because the US supported it. But even after saying this, it needs to be said that what Pol Pot did was a crime against humanity. Further, Suharto and Yahya committed the same crime.

7

In the eighties of the last century, Shahriar and I went to Khulna. At the entry point of the city, we found that the long and recognized Jessore Road has lost its name. Its new name was Khan A. Sabur Road. At the Press Club, we asked the journalists how could the historic road be named after a Razakar. Everyone at the Press Club remained silent. We were really surprised to find that even the politicians who were in favour of the Liberation War did not make the slightest protest. Well, silence could also be an example of debased politics. Then we heard about the genocide in Chuknagar. We had earlier heard about the genocide in Gallamari. On our part, we filed a writ petition to change the name of the road. The petition was granted and the road got back its old name – Jessore Road. But we were amazed by the attitude of the regional Awami League politicians – not one of them supported our move. It is said that all politicians of Khulna, Awami League included, thought the Sabur Khan had been instrumental in bringing Khulna to Pakistan. If, even after 50 years of Liberation we hold such opinions, we have to state and understand how retrogressive is our mental world, how even after 50 years we are being clouded by the ideology of Pakistan, in spite of our being supporters of the Liberation War. Let's call a spade a spade, Abdus Sabur Khan was a big bully of the Muslim League in this region, this is the historical truth.

I decided to build and establish the Genocide-Torture archive and the Genocide Museum in Khulna itself. I discussed with my

friends, well-wishers. Everybody welcomes the idea. Dr. Sheikh Baharul Alam of Khulna, a prominent doctor came forward to help us. Our all-time friend and artist Hashem Khan also pledged support. We began our work in a rented house in Khulna. Hashem Khan donated some lithographs. We would sell these from door to door to meet the expenses. It was 2014. We approached the then Khulna Commissioner M.A. Jalil to help us by allotting us a abandoned house. He said that, he would consider our appeal with sincerity. The house that we got was in a dilapidated state, it was not the house we had selected. The better one had been selected as the hall for the BCS cadre convention hall. One year passed but the region's Commissioner did not give his signature of approval in the relevant file. He did not sign even on the last day of his office. He was perhaps thinking that if the impending election brought Khaleda Zia and BNP to power, he might face difficulties. Because the BNP-Jamayat power bloc, no matter what they liked or preferred, had no love to lose for the two words 'Genocide' and 'Muntassir Mamoon'. The present government had made him a secretary and after retirement a chairman of a government organization may be for this reason. The next Commissioner was M.A. Samad. His brother had been a fighter in the Liberation War and was martyred. Our appeal gathered dust in his office as well. After some days, we met politician Tofail Ahmed in the Secretariat. He wanted to know why we were there. After narrating the entire episode to him we said that we would go to the Public Works minister Mosharaf Hossain. Tofail Ahmed said that he would accompany us. He also said that he usually did not go to anyone to seek favour, but with us he would certainly go. We explained everything to Mosharaf Hossain, who promptly directed the public works Secretary to proceed with the matter. Nothing emerged even after this intervention, so we approached Tofail Ahmed once again. He asked, "What is the matter". To which we replied that the Commissioner was not sending the file, he was sitting on it. Immediately he phoned the Commissioner and directed him to send the file within 24 hours to the Secretariat. The file came though the story of delay continued. I do not feel like narrating this

story. But we need to narrate. We informed the PM's Secretary Sajjadul Hossain. He said that he would look into the matter and promised immediate action. Anyway, the file reached PM's department within 24 hours and the PM gave her signature there and then. But our problems were not resolved even after this. A house was granted to us, but the Commissioner held back the document. At this stage, the then advisor to the P.M. Mr. H.T. Imam stepped in and said that the registration would have to take place within 24 hours. Well, after such a rigmarole, the registration was completed within the next 24 hours. The courtyard of the house granted to us was filled with decades of rubbish. Dr Bahar spent one full week to remove it and do the needed cleaning.

Later we came to learn that an adjacent plot measuring two decimals was also a part of the said property. But a fourth-class employee lived there. Anyway, we filed another petition to acquire these two cottahs. Two months passed by but the file remained standstill. I rang up the Commissioner who said that the fourth-class employee had applied for the ownership of this 2 cottah of land, and as a result, our petition would not be considered. I said, "My petition is for public interest, it has nothing to do with me at the personal level". But he refused to budge. Then I did something which I normally avoid doing. I turned a trifle rude and told him that our petition has to be considered. He replied that the Secretary's assent was needed for this. I approached the Secretary thereafter and the problem was resolved. But I must state the Commissioner was highly irritated by my conduct. Anyway, the file went to the PM's secretariat again and the PM gave her signature within 24 hours. As a reward, Mr. Samad was made the Secretary of Ministry of Shipping. The Minister of Ministry, Shah Jahan Khan, told in a public meeting that why and how for this secretary the money granted for a film on the Liberation War had to be returned. Such persons, better said government bureaucrats, pose as supporters of the Liberation War. And the pity is that the government believes that they are dutiful and loyal.

In a brief manner, I have described how the 'Genocide Archive and Museum' was established in Bangladesh. I, however, was bothered

by a relevant question, namely, all these bureaucrats whose predecessors might have been killed or wounded, were they not prepared to admit their contribution to the nation, or were they still enmeshed in the mindset of the Pakistanis? One needs to remember, at this point, that none other than Sheikh Hasina was in power then. Even after this, in her reign, we had to face obstacles at every step. But when it came to finance other projects, there was no problem with the sanctioning of the money required. What is the reason for this blatant attitude? Money?

After the completion of this complex ownership process, I began collecting money by selling lithographs of Hashem Khan. No one seemed to be keen to purchase the lithos, but they would not give a direct negative answer to you. At that stage, I ran into poet Asad Mannan who was then a member of the Planning Commission. I requested him to buy some litho's when he said, "How long would you continue with such jobs, your whole life? Please give us a project proposal". With the help of his officers, he prepared a draft and told me to submit it to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. At that time, the Secretary of this Ministry was Rowshan Akhtari who was well known as a progressive person. The Minister of Culture, Mr. Asaduzzaman Noor, directed her to send the proposal in a befitting manner. But Rowshan held back the file for a long time. The minister, on his part, then called me, Hashem Khan, Tarik Sujat, Asad Maman and Rowshan for a meeting. We all requested the Secretary to do the needful, she smiled in return. But another full month passed and nothing was done. At this point, Asaduzzaman Noor directed Rowshan sternly to send the file to the Planning Commission. The Commission raised 17 objections which were logical. We knew nothing about all this. We went thereafter to the Planning Minister Mr. A.H.M. Mostafa Kamal after receiving no information on the fate of the file. Mostafa Kamal directed his secretary to bring the file. After going through the documents, he said, "The Secretary of the Minister of Culture has sent the file with the note that this project was not meant for their ministry'. What could we do or propose at this moment? We were really surprised by the arrogance of a junior bureaucrat. Minister Mostafa Kamal rang up

Asaduzzaman Noor and told him, "Noor Bhai, I have another identity and I am known as Lotus Kamal. You are also well known as Baker Bhai. Please act like Baker Bhai [Baker Bhai was a tough character in a popular Drama series played by Noor, one of the brilliant actors of our time.] After this dialogue he told the Secretary, "Even if there are 17 mistakes in the project proposal, correct them and place it after that". Even after this stage some barriers remained to be crossed. The fact remained that most of the employees in the Ministry of Culture were indifferent towards this project. They conveyed the impression that this was not their job. So, we had to run around with the file in our hands.

Thus the Genocide Museum received the land reserved for it. It came to be known to the common people as well. We had to bear so many insults from junior bureaucrats. They functioned as Deputy or Joint Secretaries. If Asaduzzaman Noor, Secretary of the Ministry of Culture at that time Ibrahim Khan, member of the Planning Commission Asad Mannan, Minister Mostafa Kamal had not been there to help us two or three bureaucrats would have been enough to terminate this entire project for the Genocide Museum. Sheikh Hasina told me once, "You will build a museum, we shall support you. This museum cannot be raised under government control". This was the policy of the government and we found it to be correct and meaningful. Sheikh Hasina provided grants to both the museums; I have to admit that the persons mentioned before contributed substantially to the growth of this museum. In fact, now that we are able to do so much work on the history of the Liberation War, it is because of the massive help they rendered in the immediate past. They are all politically conscious and supporters of the Liberation War. On the other hand, most of the bureaucrats stood against the Liberation War. Only a few amongst them could be considered as exceptions.

I narrated this complex history because to build a related museum on the Liberation War or a memorial is almost impossible though this Liberation War brought us freedom. If, however, the armed forces set up a project, these same Deputy and Joint Secretaries will stand in line and get the job done.



Bergen-Belsen Memorial - Collection

There is a reason for providing this complicated narrative. Not only in our country, but elsewhere too it is extremely difficult to establish a genocide memorial or museum. Not only that, only in a few cases are the actual killers produced in trials and judged. Most of them evade punishment, their associates also get away scot-free. When you note this grave injustice all around you, you tend to ask why are the tormentors so happy every time in any country or society. Look at the Rohingyas. They were and are still subjected to gruesome persecution. On the other side, Aung San Suu Kyi, dresses herself and by placing an orchid in her hair continues to rule the country. No one was keen to punish her for supporting genocide. Suharto was also not punished. All the killers of Cambodia have not been held accountable. This is true also in the case of those who have perpetrated the holocaust. The same is true about Bangladesh. The perpetrators – how can they uphold this practice of not being

punished, how do they protect themselves? Indeed, after seeing all these taking place, we realize that humanity is just a spoken word. The prime purpose is to extend domination in the nation. Further, those who dominate they determine catering to their own interest as to what should be done. At one point of time, we thought that genocide is perpetrated only in capitalist and feudal countries. But then we faced the purges in Soviet Russia. With what bravado Stalin committed a genocide all through a long period. Neither Stalin nor his associates had to face a trial. And what they committed was in the name of ideology. Those who opposed this so-called ideology were branded as reactionaries, enemies of revolution and the state.

8

I have narrated the history of the establishment of the Liberation War Museum for one crucial reason. That is, the basis of the Liberation War Museum is ideology. Preservation of Memory is nothing more or less than the narration of history. We all know about the heroism and sacrifice of the people of this country in the Liberation War and the victory they attained. We had to build this museum on a day-to-day basis in a rented house and in a hostile atmosphere. People who are not engaged in politics have also rendered help to construct this Liberation Museum. It has to be admitted in this context that the anti-liberation government did not prevent them from continuing their work. The reason for this approval is, this government itself set up a ministry to deal with Liberation War in its own interest. The politics of those who set up this ministry is well known but, one has to realize, that they retain an influence and authority in the society as well. An individual's social influence is also taken into account when he or she decides to help in the building of such a museum. Indeed, this was the first effort in our country to build such a museum. The anti-liberation government, in order to save its face, helped minimally. It needs to be said that no rich individual or institution helped noticeably in the work of building this museum. Even after all this, it took two full decades to build a house that would befit such a museum. It needs

to be admitted that it would not have been possible to construct such a big building in Agargaon without the assistance rendered by Sheikh Hasina and her democratic government.

As opposed to this, the building of the Genocide-Torture Museum proceeded at a fast pace. It was impossible to depend on public or citizen's contribution, because everyone knew about the Liberation War Museum. The citizens must have also felt tired to donate for two full decades. That is why we had to take a different course. The bureaucracy could obstruct us at every step in this particular sphere because it exercised considerable power in the country, despite the fact that the state or country has been democratic in character. There were a few exceptions in the rungs of bureaucracy. Had this not been the case, the ideological spirit of the Liberation War would not have advanced in the country. At the same time, because of their ideological affiliation the ministers came forward. Moreover, Sheikh Hasina's contribution and commitment ensured such a progress in five years. In the concluding phase, this support of Sheikh Hasina played a pivotal role. In other words, if the ideological position of the head of the government is in favour of the building an institution, then no one can set up obstacles in the final phase.

One could perhaps tend to think that the entire mission proves to be easier in a democratic set up. The answer to this important query is 'Not always' and to prove our point we can give some examples. One should not think that the process of preservation began instantly in those places where genocide had taken place. This refers to the situation of Europe after the Holocaust. Or, that museums were simply not built. But this was not expected in the democratic societies of Europe. Yet it did happen. Later for several reasons obstacles could not halt or postpone the work of the preservation of memorials.

What was the condition of Europe after the Second World War? It was, in one word, devastated. Even at the mental level, the surviving generation was full of despair and fatigue. But even in the midst of this, on one side, the democratic states and, on the other, the socialist states influenced and directed by the Soviet Union grew up and developed. In almost all countries a deep sense of

guilt, collective in nature, prevailed. For Germany and Italy this was obvious because they were directly associated with genocide. As for the other countries, the yawning despair prevailed because they could not stop the genocide. But it needs to be remembered in this context, that the tradition of preservation of the past and memory, was strong and widespread in Europe. They did not allow the elements and evidence of genocide to be destroyed, in particular, in the sphere of photographs.

It is not that all leaders of Europe, in this phase, were liberals. But, considering the sense of heritage that was strong among them, they felt that they should preserve the memories in order to grant them a kind of permanence. If they did this, the new generation would come to learn about Fascism and Nazism and they would see to it that there was no revival of these two inhuman tendencies. Indeed, this sense of history is a part and parcel of Western culture. Moreover, both the nation and its people or civil society advanced on this destined way. The sense of genocide is intense even now in Europe because of the commitment exhibited by its intellectuals. In both the Soviet-influenced countries and Western democracies, writers, artists, filmmakers have condemned Fascism in their own mediums. It can be justly claimed that during the last 70 years, a separate genre of culture and creativity has arisen and developed which influenced each and every generation of the last 70 years on the subject of fascism and genocide. At another level, the European Jews who have a strong feeling of unity and brotherhood took the initiative and progressed on the same path. The democratic structure of West Europe helped the Jews in their mission. In fact, the tradition to preserve is so powerful in Europe that during the war, both the warring sides tried as much as possible not to bomb historical sites. Another example – when the USA bombed Iraq, it did not perpetrate a destruction of Babylon. For this, the concentration camps in Germany, Poland and elsewhere have been protected and preserved. But then it took some time for this awareness to develop strongly. Let us give a few examples. Recently we visited quite some museums of this kind in Europe. Our narrative is based in the light of the experience.



Cart full of corpse in Auschwitz - Collection

9

The guilt and burden of genocide was imposed on Germany for almost 75 years. Even now, they have not been exempted from this historic guilt and burden. One would have expected the construction of several genocide museums, for this reason, in the cities of Germany but this has not taken place. Perhaps, the Germans themselves did not want these testimonies from their hearts. If, however these were constructed, the Germans would have had to bear the collective burden for the rest of their lives. This is no lie that the majority of Germans, in the past, were quite euphoric about Hitler. Yes, it is also true, that the big concentration camps are being preserved. Yet, one has to remember that the impact created by a museum, cannot be created by anything else. I had this sort of an experience while I visited the museum at Pyongyang. Once you see the exhibits of this museum, you turn spontaneously into anti-Americans and anti-Japanese. In fact, there is no other alternative. On the other hand, the Jews constructed these museums wherever they found signs of torture of the Jews and of genocide. If not complete museums, they built memorials or something similar to recall the genocide. But after seeing the museums in Berlin during our last visit, I tend to think that the German viewpoint has changed to

a certain degree (though the age of these museum almost 20 years). The result of this new type of thinking is the construction of three memorial sites. They have not been described as museum as such. One of those is called 'A Memorial to the murdered Jews, or in German, 'Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas'. This is also known as Holocaust Memorial. The other two are 'Memorial and Information Point for the victims of National Socialist euthanasia killings' or in German 'Gedenk and Information für die Opfer der National Sozialisten 'Euthanse Morde' and 'The Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime'. Apart from these three, there is another memorial site, which is called 'Über Anna' or 'All About Anna'.

Interestingly, the place, where the Holocaust Museum has been built, was a Jewish residential area before Hitler launched his genocide. During Hitler's days the Chancellery and bunker were close to this site. After the war, the Berlin Wall was raised through the middle of this area. Quite some foreign embassies are located near about. This region is, at one level prestigious and valuable, and, at another level, certainly historic.

It is necessary to know the history of the construction of this memorial site. In the eighties of the last century, television journalist Le Russ and historian Eberhard Jackel, raised the demand that a memorial site needs to be built for the 60 lakh Jews who had been annihilated. Russ persisted with this demand. In 1989 he built a small group around himself and continued to emphasize his demand by propagating his aim. When the public opinion veered to his support, the Bundestag or the German Parliament passed a proposal supporting his demand.

In 1994, an open competition was organised to seek possible plans for the project. In all, twelve architects were invited to take part in the competition. Each of them was given 50,000 marks which is almost 25,000 Euros. A Jury Board was also set up comprising members from the spheres of art and aesthetic, architecture, city planning, history, politics and administration.

In all 528 proposals were tabled for the Berlin memorial. The Jury, in its first move, accepted 13 proposals. Again 11 out of these 13 were rejected. At this point two proposals remained for considera-

tion and comparative evaluation. The Jury Board also asked if the money allotted for the project was found good enough to implement it. The two that came to the final grade were conceived by Simon Junger of Hamburg and Christine Jacob Marx. Later Christine's plan was accepted and approved. Helmut Kohl was then the Chancellor of Germany. He was quite eager about the entire project but he did not like Christine's plan. As a result, another competition on a limited scale had to be organised. At this stage 25 persons were called upon to submit their plans and proposals.

In 1997, the Jury Board selected the plan tabled by the architect Peter Eizman and artist Richard Sero. The main elements of their plan where 4000 stone pillars will be placed on an area measuring 1,80,000 square feet. But Sero withdrew from the project after the selection. Chancellor Kohl, on his part, suggested some changes. Eizman accepted these changes. For example, the number of pillars was halved. In the meanwhile, Gerhard Schroeder had become the German Chancellor. He first rejected this plan, but later endorsed it. Even at this stage, a few changes were introduced. For example, it was decided to construct 1800 to 2100 pillars instead of 28,000. The construction of a House of Remembrance was also approved which could be used as an archive, information centre and exhibition. After a lot of yes and no, the motion was passed in Bundestag - 314 endorsed it and 209 opposed. Planner and architect Dagmar Von Wilken was requested to decorate the information centre. In 2001 an advertisement in newspapers and billboards caught the attention of the people. The ad showed a beautiful green mountain and a lake beside. On top of these it was inscribed in big point 'Holocaust never took place'. And under this statement, it was written in small print "Even now, many people believe it". After 20 years, the figure of the not-believers would increase. Therefore, the memory has to be preserved. The architect Eizman and his associates expected a grant of 2 million marks and it was decided that the Jewish Museum would direct the implementation of the project.

In the year 2000, before laying the foundation stone, a symbolic function was held. An international seminar was also organised. After 19 years, in 2005, the memorial centre was opened. In that

year 3,50,000 visited the Museum. But a few obstacles were raised even during the period of construction. For example, in 2003, a Swiss newspaper published the news that protectosil was being used to construct the memorial. This protectosil was produced by Degussa Company, and if used, graffiti could not be drawn on the walls. The newspaper also wrote that, the subsidiary of Degussa, Degesch, supplied Ziklon B Gas to the Nazis during the war to kill countless people in the gas chambers. Disputes of this nature continued, but nonetheless the information centre of the memorial was done up to the full.

There were two other information centres. We crossed them but did not enter. One is in the Tiergarten on the persecuted homosexuals, which was opened in 2008. And the other is on Tiergarten Strasse, which was the memorial that recalled euthanasia killings. Hitler killed the old, disabled and autistic persons in order to beautify and ennoble the Aryan race. This figure is also not puny. Almost 3 lakh belonging to these categories were exterminated.

Architect Ursula Williams and construction-architects Nikolaus Coliusis and Heinz Holman prepared the plan for the last-mentioned Euthanasia memorial. Its speciality lies in the basic design - 24 metre blue glass walls on concrete. By sitting on the concrete bench, the viewers can see the portraits of 20 victims or the historical pictures of annihilation. The German Parliament decided to build this memorial in 2011. In 2014 it was inaugurated. The special point of this centre is, it is open 24 hours. The Nazis killed the gypsies as well, an information centre on the gypsies' fate has also been constructed.

I have mentioned earlier that the plan to build memorial centres was endorsed in the Bundestag. The President of the Central Board of Trustees, the then President of the Bundestag, Norbert Lambert, delivered a forceful lecture on the occasion without touching politics. The essence of his speech was 'Those incidents which should not have occurred in German history but occurred should be communicated to the future generations so that the latter do not trample human rights. Our duty would be to protect at all times democratic politics. The law should consider every person as equal and we should always resist that rule which is based on terrorism'.



Bergen-Belsen, 18 April 1945. Released yet barely breathe - Collection

[The actual version of what Norbert Lambert said is given here-with: “It is an expression of the German parliament’s commitment to honour the murdered victims. Keep alive the memory of these inconceivable events in German history and to admonish all future generations never again to violate human rights, to defend the democratic constitutional state at all times, to secure equality before the law for all people and resist all forms of dictatorship and regimen based on violence”.]

Professor Monica Gruters, Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media, also made a forceful statement where the theme of collective duty was included. In fact, genocide and collective responsibility is still a theme for discussion. When genocide was being perpetrated in Germany, Hitler’s government did not indulge in this abuse singly. Indeed, barring a countable few, the entire nation supported this dreadful violence. Therefore, the responsibility of genocide rests with Germany and the Germans. The Germans lost the war and that is why Germany had to bear the responsibility of genocide – this statement and argument is wrong. Germany has to bear this burden of calumny throughout. It is true Germany has turned into an acceptable European nation. Why? Because they have accepted their responsibility and have preserved memory for

the future generation.

They might be eager to get rid of this load of guilt at present, but that is not possible because of the role played by civilization and culture. In a similar fashion, Japan had to accept that it had committed genocide in China. Hutus of Rwanda and Bosnia’s Serbians come under the same category. Pakistan has not accepted the responsibility of genocide in Bangladesh; that is why, in each and every forum Bangladesh needs to remind the world of this genocide. One has to preserve the relevant memories and one has to state that Pakistan, in ethical terms, cannot be a member of the civilized society, if it does not accept its collective burden and guilt. In fact, the recognition of this guilt is highly important; otherwise, human rights would cease to exist. The court that has been set up to judge the crime, its tenure term has to be shortened. Otherwise, the justice or *bichar* will not be just. I offer one example: if it takes ten years to come to a verdict on the Rohingya genocide, by that time neither the Rohingyas nor those who have committed the genocide will remain. Where is the gain there from? Let us give another example on the ethics that always accompanies and challenges genocide. Aung San Suu Kyi is not in a position to go elsewhere, neither will she be able. Almost all her honours have been retaken. Only Aung San Suu Kyi knows, what is the use of such a life in which the only acquisitions are a little power and little money. Now that she has lost power, she might be realizing her unenviable situation even better.

Professor Gruters has said, “As a human rights violation on an unprecedented scale, the systemic genocide of European Jews will forever retain an unparalleled significance in German commemorative culture. It is our responsibility to remember these crimes and commemorate the victims in a dignified way”. This memorial is the visible example of collective German guilt.

Le Russ has hit upon the essential. He said, Eberhard Jackel and he first made this proposal. They thought that one would need only three years to construct the memorial, but it took 19 years.

He further said, “We are residents of West Berlin, we neither have money nor political power. We had one particular idea and we encouraged people to accept it. The subject is simple – European

Jews have been slaughtered. We wanted to keep this in our memory and honour those who died To give them back their names". "We did not want the Germans to be excited with Union, Reunification and wealth, and pretend as if nothing had happened. In their words, "we wanted to prevent Germany from simply getting down to the business of reunification, rebuilding, affluence – as if nothing happened. But that would not be easy. Because at no other time in history had a nation, people, admitted to and visibly documented such a tremendous crime committed in its name.

At first, they found a friend in Willy Brandt who declared, "In order to retain our honour, we have to bear in memory that European Jews had been killed". Russ has written, "In order to propagate our view we have given advertisements, waited on streets lashed by rain and wind, took the help in biscuit containers. We found after a time that 10,000 have given their signatures and we have collected 1, 00, 000 deutsch mark., Many donated 10 euro every month. At the end of it, the Bundestag passed our resolution with 314 yes votes, and 209 voted against."⁴³

For this reason, I narrated earlier the story of the Genocide-Museum in Bangladesh. One is really surprised to note that even a country like Germany took 19 years to build up the main memorial site. Moreover, 209 MPs voted against this initiative. This indicates that the new Germany is perhaps no longer keen to preserve that memory which would remind the present-day Germans of the fact that their ancestors were perpetrators of genocide. But, for one reason or another, this redemptive culture has found its basis in Europe's democracy which is keen to pinpoint the crime, to punish the perpetrators and to state that it does not want the return of Nazism and Fascism. At the same time, it needs to be mentioned that the moment the seeds of Nazism and Fascism sprout, measures are taken to uproot these seeds. It also needs to be admitted that there is no dearth of supporters of Nazism and Fascism in Europe today. We need to learn from the European practice of uprooting Fascism.

In this connection one should mention about the Bunker Museum. Shahid stressed its importance, though I did not give it that much

weight. We had a full day at our disposal. Therefore, after visiting the Jewish Museum we took the Uber to bring us to the Bunker. Raindrops were falling on our heads when we were at the Bunker. We did not find anything strikingly noticeable after crossing the gate. One has to go up using the broad, iron staircase. After that one comes to an old wooden gate of earlier times. One has to push open this gate to go to the counter; thereafter the museum starts.

In 1880 the Anhalter Bahnhof or rail station was erected in Berlin. It was the biggest rail station in Europe at that moment. When the Second World War began and the British started bombing Berlin, the Hitler government decided to build a bunker for the shelter of the Berliners or more specifically for the waiting passengers. In 1942, the administration decided to construct a shelter for the passengers. Accordingly, in 1942, the underground shelter was constructed. A tunnel was also built inside the station. The people reached the bunker by going through the tunnel. When in the concluding phase of the war, the Russians subjected Berlin to non-stop bombing, many Berliners came over to this bunker on a long-term basis. At one point of time, it gave shelter to 12000 people.

On May 2, 1945, for some reason, the SS authorities directed those who had taken shelter to leave to bunker. The tunnel was situated 150 metres away from the bunker and it was constructed under the Landwehr Canal. This tunnel was also blown up by the SS. Which meant, that the entire tunnel system that had been built was flooded.

In the post war period, after draining out the water, the entire bunker was converted into a godown to store emergency food supply. Food was stored here to cater to the needs of 2 million Berliners. After the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the need to store food ended. Food valued at half a billion Deutsch Mark was sent to the Soviet Union as assistance.

In 1990 – during the end phase of the year – a small museum was built inside the bunker. In 2014 a project was planned to use the bunker in a befitting way.

There was already a structure of the museum present in this place. The Unter den Linden story museum was transferred to this spot in

2015. In 2016 'Documentation Fuerehr Bunker' was built. In 2017 the three storeys of the bunker were converted into a museum. The title of this standing exhibition was 'Hitler, how could it happen'. This is the present state of the bunker which has five storeys. It was made entirely out of concrete and it took ten months to build it. The museum stresses the role and regime of the National Socialists or Nazis. That is, that particular regime, and how its weltanschauung led to the painful sacrifice of many are projected here with the help of, primarily, photographs. Of all the museums we have seen in Berlin, this bunker-museum has the largest floor space. In fact, you feel quite tired after you have seen the section 'Hitler how could it happen' mounted on countless photographs. A relevant question struck us at that point. The question was – which is better: a museum filled and stuffed with exhibits or selected materials that point toward a specific message? What about the viewer, is he drawn to the first or to the second? One space or room inside the bunker was made 100% in imitation of Hitler's cell. Video films are shown here. A film on Hitler is also shown. The film shows Hitler getting married to Eva Braun in his bunker.⁴⁴

In all the relevant establishments of Berlin stressing genocide – museums, memorials, information centres – Hitler and his associates' names are not pronounced. Rather, there are many mentions of the National Socialist Party. According to an extensive survey, the name of Hitler is most well known in the world. Jewish activists functioned as a strong lobby behind the construction of each and every memorial. But they have also to come to an understanding with the current German attitude. It is not possible for them to build a Holocaust Museum, as it had been built in Washington DC. But, in any case, the Jews have been able to establish their politics through the medium of such memorials and the West has also accepted their view. However, it needs to be stated that as a result of this negotiation one-sided history has been promoted. No question has been raised on this one-sidedness.



Those survivor of the Buchenwald camp - Collection

10

The Holodomor Museum now being constructed in Ukraine is the product of the country's intense nationalistic anger against Russia. It is being built entirely by the Ukrainian government. The narrative behind the construction of this museum is as follows:

After being integrated to the Soviet system, collectivization in the sphere of agriculture was put to practice in Ukraine. As its first measure, the Kulaks or affluent farmers were deprived of their land, they were not given any compensation. One family after the other was sent to the Gulag. In the course of three years (between 1928 and 1931) the number of farm holdings was reduced to 3,52,000. In all 1,500,000 farmers were adversely affected. The villages of Ukraine had no love to lose for this massive collectivization programme. In 1930, 30,000 people were suppressed in the name of justice that was artificial and meant to delude the masses. Moreover, by 1932, 1000 churches were closed down and the property of the churches was taken over by the government.

According to Soviet policy, in the thirties of the last century, efforts were made to collect food. In 1932-33 this policy was implemented to the hilt. The result of all these measures was a massive famine.

70 to 90 lakh persons were dead as a result of starvation. This great tragedy is known as Holdomor.

The death of the Ukrainians during this unprecedented crisis was a direct result of Soviet policy, and hence Ukrainians regarded this tragedy as an act of genocide. J.V. Stalin, V.M. Molotov, L.M. Kagnovitch, Pipi Postichiev, S.V. Kosieur, D.I. Chuber and M.M. Khatayivich were blamed for this terrible outcome. The second clause in the Charter of UNO's Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide clearly states "Genocide means acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part any national, racial, ethnic or religious group as such."

The Ukrainians believe that as a result of the famine caused by Soviet policy 70 to 90 lakhs simply perished. And therefore, following the second clause in the Charter of the UNO, this obliteration of peasants could be regarded as genocide. They firmly say, "We were killed because we were Ukrainians."⁴⁵

With this perspective in mind, the museum is trying to collect evidence from those who had survived this 'annihilation'. But the survivors have turned very old and many had died out of those who had to face this pernicious collectivization programme.

We are also facing a similar problem when we are trying to publish a Genocide Index from '1971: Genocide-Torture Archive and Museum'. At present, they are collecting photographs of famine. But their number is small.

The Holdomor Museum is now being built over a large area. You need about five minutes to reach the main gate. One big room has been already arranged. The life pattern of the Ukrainians is being shown in this room with pictures and material objects. All museums in the Occident are now interactive in nature. What are new to be found in this room are registrars bound in black leather which are placed on a few stands. Those who lost their lives, their names have been included in the registrars. The registrars are known as the Black Book. Iriana told us that many come here to examine if the names of their relatives are mentioned in the black book.

Along with material objects used by the Ukrainians, some photographs are also being displayed. It is clear that the persons shown in the photographs have died. Another room will contain these pic-

tures. Construction work is proceeding at night as well. The museum is being built according to the laws of the Parliament and the Ukrainian government is investing quite a big amount for the construction and upkeep of this museum. One gets a clear impression of the conditions that prevailed in Ukrainian villages, famine and loss of human lives which are detailed in a single room of the museum. Iriana showed us this room as well. She said that a metro rail station will be built beside the museum. Within the next few years, Holdomor museum will not only be the biggest memorial in Kiev, but also in the entire Ukraine. This will be the symbol of Ukrainian nationalism as well as a big weapon of propaganda against the Russians. While returning from Holdomor, we felt that in the course of the Second World War, Germans and their associates had also killed many. They had prepared massburial sites and Jews had also to leave Ukraine. But not a word is uttered on their ravage. The problem of ultra-nationalism is exactly this. Many, in the future would come to see this museum, but they will return with the same question. Namely, why are the other genocides not being included in the museum concerned.

11

The German concentration camp in Belsen was liberated in 1945. In that year the British placed a plaque here. Those Jews who had been transported to this camp and survived also placed a wooden memorial plaque in Belsen. It was turned into stone plaque in 1946. In the same year the Soviets built a plaque to recall the prisoners of war, and the Polish too constructed a plaque within the camp area. We came out of the memorial room and walked in the open space outside for quite some time. Mass graves dotted this region. A small stone plaque was placed at a particular point which read, '5000 persons have been buried here.' April 1945. A plaque carries the name of Anne and Margot. When in 1952 a memorial pillar was built here, the then German President Theodor Heuss' said, "The Germans should not forget what transpired in Belsen." The preservation of Belsen-Bergen is relevant for us. Till 1950, from time to time, memorial plaques were raised here. At that

moment the ascending focus on Auschwitz and other concentration camps, somehow, almost eclipsed the name of Belsen-Bergen. In 1957 a large group of youths came here to see the death-site of Anne Frank. After this or since then the name of Belsen again was picked up by the media. In 1959 an incident occurred in Cologne. Graffiti against the Jews was drawn on a Jewish synagogue in that city. Nahoum Goldman was the President of the Jewish Congress and Konrad Adenauer was the Chancellor of West Germany. Goldman held a meeting with Adenauer who came to visit Belsen thereafter and declared that a memorial would be built there.

From sixties of the last century, Belsen earned recognition as the torture-centre of the Jews. An information centre and an exhibition centre were also set up. The main focus was on Anne Frank and how a camp was established in Amsterdam as well. The first permanent exhibition of Nazi crimes began in Belsen, we saw it.

Quite some incidents took place between 1979 and 2000. Germany's President, Germany's Chancellor, US President Regan, Chairman of European Parliament Simon Dehl and others visited Bergen-Belsen. The importance of this concentration camp began to increase. The State of Lower Saxony and Federal Government reconstituted Belsen-Bergen. Not only Jews but also the tales of other victims found place in the memorial site.⁴⁶

Germany's Mauthausen concentration camp was liberated in 1945. In 1949 Mauthausen was declared as a national memorial site. Austria's Chancellor Bruno Kreisky inaugurated this museum in 1975. That is 30 years after the declaration, Mauthausen acquired its present form. All the memories of 'subcamps' of Mauthausen have been obliterated. These have been turned into residential plots.

12

However not much time was taken to construct the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam. The new owner of Anne's house, [a company] in 1955 decided to add a few houses to 263 number residence and convert the entire area into a big office building. And at that precise moment common people and the media came forward to protect the house layered with Anne's memories. An Anne Frank

Foundation was established. The then owner of the house donated the house to the Foundation. The Foundation started collecting money and on May 3, 1960 the museum was inaugurated. The adjacent house next to the main building is also part of the museum.⁴⁷

After hearing that a genocide museum has also been built in Sarajevo, we went to visit it. Like our museum in Bangladesh, the museum at Sarajevo is also a fruit of the endeavour taken by the civil society. Some persons belonging to families which lost their members in the genocide perpetrated in Bosnia got together and constructed the memorial. The government is not extending any help. This museum is similar to our museum in many respects. The Childhood Museum of Sarajevo has also been built by the victims on the basis of an entirely new consent. The government has not extended help to this museum as well.⁴⁸

In this connection we can say something on the Holocaust Museum which stands in Washington. This museum has been built in the most expensive area of Washington, just beside the National Mall. If you go by underground Metro you have to disembark in Smithsonian. This area was earmarked in 1978. It comprises 1.9 acre. This information needs to be given for one reason. It proves that this prestigious and expensive plot was given to an extremely influential group of the nation who applied pressure on the US government.

Ellie Weisel was a renowned writer. He was teaching at Boston when plans were set afoot to build this museum. He had suffered in Auschwitz. Most probably under his leadership, the Jewish lobby decided to build the Holocaust Museum in Washington. Jimmy Carter was then the President of USA. He formed a committee in 1978 to proceed on this track and Weisel was made its chairman. After one year, the relevant Commission submitted a request in which it was said that to preserve the memory of Holocaust, in Washington, a national museum an educational foundation and a Committee of Conscious could be built. In 1980, the Congress approved of and endorsed this proposal. A subscription effort was made and it yielded 190 million dollars. President Ronald Reagan laid the foundation stone of this museum in 1988. In 1993, the US

President Bill Clinton, Israel's President Chime Herzog, Chairman of the Trust Harvey Meyerhof and Ellie Weisel inaugurated the Museum. After few days the museum was opened for the public. The first visitor to this museum was the 14th Dalai Lama. The exhibition at this museum was different from the other genocide museums that had already been built. When you enter the exhibition room you have the eerie feeling that you are really entering a concentration camp.

Perhaps there is a reason for this reaction. Its architect was James Ingo Fried, he was born in a German-Jewish family which fled to the US in 1939. Before finalizing his plan he went to Germany to study the architecture of those days, he visited the concentration camps as well. Stressing the distinctive nature of his plan, a specialist said, "(it) evokes deception, fear and solemnity."⁴⁹ It took quite some time to construct Auschwitz.

Even after the liberation of Auschwitz, this momentous news was not propagated widely. The famous Soviet writer, Boris Polevoy, wrote in *Pravda* on 2.2.1945, the prisoners at Auschwitz were victims of fascism. He did not specifically mention the Jews. When Buchenwald, Dachau and Bergen-Belsen were liberated, people living far and wide came to know about Auschwitz as well. Some world-renowned personalities had to suffer in Auschwitz. They were, to name three of them, Primo Levi, Ellie Weisel, Tadeusz Boronik. All three were writers. Weisel received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1986. The President of European Parliament (1979-1982) Simon Deyl was also incarcerated in Auschwitz. Maximilian Kolbe died out of wilful starvation. Edith Stein accepted the Catholic creed. Both of them were given sainthood. In 2005 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a proposal. The latter was January 27 would be observed as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day."⁵⁰

In 2017 Korber Foundation in Germany conducted a survey among boys and girls aged 14 years on the subject of Auschwitz. Forty percent responded by saying that they knew nothing about Auschwitz. Next year, in 2018, the Holocaust Museum in Washington and a few other different organizations conducted a similar survey among 1350 Americans. 41 % responded by saying

that they did not know anything about Auschwitz. 21 % said that they have never heard the word 'Holocaust'. In the same year CNN-Komres in Europe conducted another survey. The results were more or less same.⁵¹



A Japanese soldier stands near the victims of the Nanking genocide on the banks of the Qinhu River - from internet

In this lengthy narrative we have shown that even in those countries which have a democratic structure and the tradition of preservation, it has taken a long long time to build genocide museums. The prevailing ideology, the nature of those who are ruling, the nature of those who have made the proposal - all these aspects had to be considered before a decision could be reached. The common people hoped that the museum would be built within a short span of time but in reality, it took a long time, both in democratic states and in those that are not democratic.

For this reason, concentration camps in Germany, Poland and other countries are being maintained and preserved. But this has also

taken time because, in this sphere, the political will to preserve a camp or not has influenced the nation's policy. An example of this political viewpoint is strongly evident in the case of torture centres and killing fields which functioned in Cambodia or Kampuchea. In the first phase, the cruelty of Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan was exhibited in order to grant legitimacy to the present rulers. But even this did not imply that the torture chambers and killing fields were preserved from the first redemptive moment. It took time and the nation also needed to establish its stability. The Hunsen government has also consolidated its power. At the present moment, they are not much keen to invest in preservation.

I think those steps which are needed in Phnom Penh's S21, in order to upgrade the memorial sites, have not been taken or implemented by the Cambodian government.⁵² The present government in Sarajevo is also not that much eager to preserve genocide museum, national museum and other memorial sites. For instance, for the ruling government in Bosnia, history begins after the genocide that had taken place in the 21st century or after independence. Bosnia's tradition and heritage are not that important. But those who are involved with the museum they think that the immanent heritage should not be ignored or neglected. Therefore, the government will not contribute money. If again, we read the shortened history of information centres in Germany, it becomes clear to us that the government was not keen to preserve the memory all by its own. A deep sense of guilt and the constant pressure of influential groups led to the preservation. In this context, an aspect should be highlighted; that is, the democratic process and democratic organization have found a strong and powerful base or foundation in Europe and the US. This democratic sense encouraged the preservation of memory. Again, let us take the example of Ukraine. They have not preserved Babiyeir as they perhaps should have. Also, the Holocaust is not at all stressed in Ukraine. In contrast, the erstwhile Soviet Union invested a huge amount to preserve the remembrance of genocide. In this case history has bypassed the domination of the nation. In order to maintain and uphold the balance or equilibrium, the government has to preserve properly and correctly the cursed memory of the Holocaust.

13

Not Bangladesh let us consider the examples of other countries. Some memorial were constructed in Germany after the war. Later, with the discovery and liberation of the concentration camps, memorial symbols, plaques and pillars were also raised. But to tell the truth it took one full decade to organize preservation and build museums at the formal, governmental level. In many cases the acts of preservation were attempted by the Jews. After the creation of Israel, the initiative to protect the memorial sites increased. Germans did not volunteer to take on the responsibilities. But, later, the pressure of the people and Israel's initiative resulted in the construction of the Holocaust Museum in Berlin. In Sarajevo, after two decades, a museum was created based on civil support. But I have already mentioned that the Bosnian government was not eager to extend any help, financial or otherwise. In Cambodia, the Hunsen regime did not want to miss the opportunity to display the terrible cruelty of the Pol Pot administration. Further, they received the S21 readymade in their hands. However, at present, the Cambodian government is not that eager to preserve what had been built earlier. In the US it took 70 years to build the museum in Washington in spite of the fact that the Jews constitute a powerful economic lobby in that country.

These emphases in more than one country prove that the Holocaust museums, by definition, have turned into memorials recording the torture-genocide of the Jews. In other words, Holocaust was invoked whenever they built museums. Let us, in this context, consider the Polin museum built in Warsaw. The Israeli way of life is being exhibited in this museum separately.⁵³ One simply cannot imagine the amount of money that had been spent to raise this memorial site. Genocide also took place in Ukraine, it also had some memorial pillars, but neglect towards them and lack of interest in them have led to their damage and destruction. In fact, in Ukraine, the 'genocide' committed by the Soviet Union is the subject of display and the state has invested millions to set up this museum blasting the Soviets. A new nationalist consciousness inspired this display.

In order to strike a balance, memorial sites (information centres)

recalling the extermination of homosexuals and gypsies have been built in Berlin close to the Holocaust museum. Perhaps, the aggressive attitude of the Jews when it comes to the preservation of the past was not much liked by the others. But another basic aspect needs to be remembered in this context. The said government or bureaucracy never takes the initiative to build such museums. Only when the people play the role of volunteers and when the public opinion is strongly voiced it comes forward to help. Almost all countries of Europe have come forward to preserve the past in this manner.

Once the museum is erected, the question about what is to be exhibited there is raised. Europe has remained a vast storehouse of pictures and documents and its tradition of preservation has led to its massive collection. And the weather also helped. This has been accomplished through a good stretch of time, step by step. Further, the use of digital technology has led to a clean and comprehensive preservation of the materials. This will exist throughout the centuries as the symbol of the cruelty exercised by human beings. Those who committed genocide will also be hated through the centuries. This is the positive side of technology. On the other hand, we have seen when we began our work in Bangladesh fifty years later, that the expected number of pictures, documents and correspondence are not available. Whatever we are finding and collecting meticulously is due to the internet. But no matter how much we exhibit, the new generation inside and outside Bangladesh is astonished by the collection thus preserved. Foreigners have said again and again that they did not know about this genocide.

Whether one likes it or not, in Europe and US, museums have turned into a medium of profitable investment. Countless people are going to the notorious concentration camps and museums - their number is just unimaginable. In other words, there is profit to be earned from this investment. There are even persons who go to Cambodia to see only the killing fields. We can call these visits a part and parcel of black tourism. We have to accept that equivalent sums of money will not be invested in our museums or memorial sites, that is also not possible. But museums of this kind constitute the narratives of our history. These help us to understand what our

ancestors wanted and the price they had to pay to acquire what they had wanted. Moreover, they would have a clear idea about debased politics and they would distance themselves from the practice of such politics. At the same time, they would come to know clearly what the killers did, and this idea or knowledge would turn out to be even clearer from what the museums convey.

14

Those who commit genocide declare at the first opportunity that they have not committed genocide. Pakistan has not acknowledged the fact that it has committed genocide in Bangladesh. In fact, it has tried to limit its impact as much as possible. But there is a bitter fruit associated with this denial. That is the trial of war crime has never taken place in Pakistan because Pakistan has never accepted that it has perpetrated genocide.

What has happened after this? The burden of genocide has not been imposed on anyone else in Pakistan. Militant fundamentalists have turned stronger. In the absence of trial and justice, a sense of commitment has not arisen in the nation. The domination of several, different groups raised its head in the nation. As a result, Pakistan is now viewed as a failed state. Japan, to take another example, had also not accepted that it had committed genocide in Korea and China. But now it has turned impossible for it to deny what it had done. In future may the Japan has to provide compensation to the brave women of Korea, and this act is equivalent to the acceptance of the grave crime, namely, genocide. A liberal Japanese researcher told me once that there is no mention of genocide committed by Japan in the country's textbooks. Europe, on the other hand, has acknowledged it, adopted the responsibilities and has moved forward. For this reason, it has been able to disseminate the ideal of democratic institutions and the sense of humanism. If democratic rights are not ensured, if there is no resuscitation of the human sense and feeling, the nation veers away from its path of duty. In this context, we can use the word 'ruler' instead of 'nation'. In Bangladesh, Ziaur Rahman, Ershad and Khaleda Zia worked as rulers in accordance with the Pakistan concept. So, they also turned Bangladesh almost to a failed state. Consider their con-

dition at the present moment. Sheikh Hasina, on the other hand, started tries against humanity in the trial. At the same time, she is quelling the fundamentalists. Bangladesh, as a nation, is progressing and see for yourself, what heights she has attained.

We have built a genocide-torture archive and museum. I have already mentioned that there is an aim behind this establishment. Many could say that we have made a political statement. The opposite point of view, which is denial of genocide- torture, is also political in nature. Therefore, we have to select which kind of politics is our aim. Many derive pleasure by saying that the politics of the Awami League is nationalist politics. But the question that needs to be raised, is BNP politics outside the sphere of nationalism? Granted Awami League's politics is nationalistic, but it still has elements which deserve consideration and commendation. Secularism, anti-communalism, opposition to caste and class divisions are these positive elements. It is indeed desirable to spread that politics which is against the killers of 1971 and their supporters living at this moment. For four decades, we have been engaged in the movement demanding trial of those who have perpetrated crimes against humanity. Why? Because we felt that if the trial of the alleged criminals did not take place, the offenders would gain relief in their country and outside and would continue with their heinous acts. Pakistan and Myanmar are examples of two countries where the criminals have gone unpunished. Shahriar Kabir has written, "There must be an acknowledgement of genocide in the country and abroad." This would act as a dampener for those distorters of history who have denied the truth and reality of genocide in 1971 in Bangladesh, both inside the country and outside. Simultaneously, this would resolve the identity crisis of the new generation. The generation which has grown up after the Liberation War has to know the nature of the extreme sacrifice the Bangali race had to suffer to construct a secular and democratic state. In fact, no other race had to pass through such an ordeal at any other time or in any other country⁵⁴. Chowdhury Shahid Kader has written, "There has always been an effort to wipe out genocide from our collective memory. And, doubtlessly, this effort is not something politically neutral".⁵⁵

We know this very well and that is why we are engaged in the act of preservation of memory of the genocide. In connection with this, we are presenting the results of a survey conducted by the government.

The Liberation War ministry selected 35 killing fields where it would install memorial. This programme is being implemented since the start of this century and it is still to be completed. The IMED conducted a survey in 2016 which is still relevant for us. The main aim of this survey is to evaluate and examine the impact of this project, its social, cultural and political characteristics, particularly on the generation of youth. In other words, the main objective was to measure the reaction among the youth to the installation of the memorial in the designated regions.⁵⁶

Against this perspective, a survey was conducted among almost 550 youths who belonged to all stages from the illiterate level to those who had completed their Bachelor course. What is hopeful to learn is that they have all heard about the Liberation War. However, almost 40% of those examined did not know anything much about the many aspects of this war. They also accepted that they were unaware of the German holocaust. But there are several reasons which account for the ignorance here. These are (i) for three full decades they were served with the distortion of history (ii) they were not allowed to delve into real history (iii) even during this regime the history of the Liberation was not taught comprehensively.

In 2016, we the members of the *Itihas Sammilani* [History Congress] went to visit the Parliamentary Committee in order to discuss how this specific history of liberation could be taught. Perhaps, this is for the first time in the world that members of a relevant academic organisation had to go to the Parliamentary Committee to discuss the teaching of history. The Committee accepted the logic of the *Sammilani* but it refrained from giving any directive. In that very year, however, the history of the Liberation War was included in the syllabus, as per the directive of the National University given to all colleges that came under it. In simple terms, every student has to learn this history and he has to appear for an examination carrying 100 marks. After the adoption of this measure, one can hope that the situation has improved in the last five years.

The survey on genocide is important. Two out of every eight have known and 50 out of eighty know that the memorial is being constructed to raise their awareness. Moreover, 84.8% youths know that there are killing fields in their regions. The places which carry these memorials would arouse their interest in Liberation War that is what is felt by 60% of those interviewed. Finally, 72% think that the installation of the memorial has already created an interest in the Liberation War among those interviewed.

From the tables that accompany this report we can gauge that, in spite of the distortion of history for three full decades and the indifference of the well-groomed citizens and governments, the common people were not victims of amnesia regarding the Liberation War and genocide. We feel that not only memorial plaques should be installed but along with that many other associated jobs need to be done.

That is why, we have not only limited ourselves to the exhibition of frightful cruelty but also undertaken related engagements so that the required message is disseminated at the grassroot level. The genocide museum displays what Pakistan and its Bangali associates did. On seeing the latter, the new generation has almost trembled. Along with this, the politics of Liberation War is turning out to be clearer for them. Their views regarding the role of the killers who helped the Pakistani forces are also being made transparent. A research centre is functioning under the Genocide-Torture Museum which is known as the 'Center for Genocide-Torture and Liberation War Studies'. This centre is engaged in manifold activities. For example, publishing a single book on a single genocide. The title of this series is '*Genocide-Torture Index*'. Already 100 books in this particular series have been published, another hundred are awaiting publication. The story and misery of those who lived at the grassroot level are being disclosed in the series. It is true that their role was ignored for a long time. In fact, we did not know much about their contribution. Moreover, this research has revealed the truth of those genocides which had occurred in those places, which were unknown to us. After 50 years of the Liberation War we conducted a survey entitled '*Genocide-Torture and Killing Fields Survey*'. For the first time such a project was implemented,

and its results have thoroughly surprised us. At a personal level, I felt that we simply do not know enough about the Liberation War. After researching in 32 districts, we have come to know: the number of genocides that took place is not 246 as it was claimed in the past but 11756; the number of mass graves has increased from 81 to 992. Again, the number of torture cells is not 40 as it had been claimed, but 1071. And, further, the number of killing fields is not 159 as it was known in the past but 736. This however, is the estimate of half of Bangladesh. It lays bare the cruel intensity of the torture and killing which took place at the grassroot level. It also indicates that the number of those martyred could cross 30 lakhs. In sum, by associating the conditions of grassroot people with the Liberation War and merciless punishment meted out to them, the relevant history itself is undergoing a change.

Many places which experienced the reality of killing fields or mass graves have been since occupied, or wiped away by military rulers and their proxies. At this particular point, the conflict between development and preservation comes to the fore. In a country like ours, development implies the destruction of that which is existing and construction of the new in its place. Indeed, that which has been preserved in the interest of history falls under the hammer of development. We are not against development per se. But we feel that even after preservation, development is possible. To be candid, the placing of a memorial plaque on 1/2 decimal of land where genocide had taken place and killing fields existed would not act as an impediment to development. Utilizing our limited resources, we have installed plaques in 50 places. And our experience tells us that the people at the grassroots felt rejuvenated while observing our engagement. Those who have seen the plaques have stopped for a while and read the content inscribed on them. We have also placed a plaque in front of the Khulna circuit house. The fact that this circuit house was the centre of torture and killing has been inscribed on the plaque. The DC [Deputy Commissioner] at the time of construction, registered a mild protest, but we brushed it away. On one morning, I saw that a rickshaw puller had stopped his rickshaw and was reading the content. He said, "What took place here, we know nothing about it." He came to know at that precise moment. On the

Genocide Day (March 25) floral offerings are placed before this memorial site. In this way the present is being linked to history, linked to the past.

We have also begun training courses related to the Liberation War in several districts, and, primarily, teachers have participated in these courses. This is for the first time that they are being associated with research on the Liberation War, writing on it and the latter is being published as well. We have tried to introduce subjects which can run without interruption, which maintain the sequence, and our efforts are meeting with success. All these activities are centered around the Museum. Indeed, the museum and its varied activities are having a noticeable impact on the common people. It has to be admitted, in this context, that it would have been really difficult to for us to continue in such a manner with these programmes without the helping hand offered by Sheikh Hasina.

Other genocide museums are also engaged in related research big or small. Some receive state assistance, some do not. But then the civil society has emerged as the helper. Dec 9, as promulgated by UN, is being observed as Genocide Day.

What is extremely hopeful is the fact that politicians are gradually recognizing genocide as a crime against humanity and, as a result of this recognition, the influence or domination of the genocide perpetrators and their supporters is lessening in the political sphere. Had this not taken place, it would have not been possible to institute the following genocide trials. These are Nuremberg Tribunal, Germany (1945), Tokyo Tribunal, Japan (1946), Yugoslavia Tribunal, Holland (1993), Tanzania (1994), Sierra Leone (2002), Khmer Rouge, Cambodia (2001) etc.

Let me give another example. Japan had at no time admitted that it had committed the grisly Nanking genocide. The USA had indirectly administered Japan, stability on China was also absent for a long period. As a result, people almost forgot about Nanking. But from the nineties of the last century much research was done on it. Amongst the work that had been done, *Rape of Nanking* written by Irish Chang won special fame. At present, pressure is being applied on Japan to admit this genocide. In reality, the academicians have a particular role to play in this area. They should undertake serious

research and reveal the truth about genocides, so that the society at large comes to know about it and directs the killer to muster the courage to accept it.

In order to prevent the expansion of genocidal politics it is imperative that descriptions of genocide and the truth associated with it are repeated time and again, as it has been done in the case of Holocaust. It is our responsibility to proliferate this truth. We have to ensure the punishment of those who had committed genocide. It goes without saying that when our efforts are crowned with success, the influence and domination of the killers would be signally reduced in the countries of the world.

The Myanmar military junta and Aung San Suu Kyi would have to share the criminal burden of the genocide of the Rohingyas. In this manner, the stern opposers of genocide, killing fields and mass burials build a public opinion against these anti-human crimes.



Mass grave of Bosnia - from internet

I feel after examining the related international as well as internal experiences that if you do not have a democracy, it is difficult to proceed on this path. Unless the interest of the anti-democratic regime and the opposers of genocide strike the same chord. The

more the state turns democratic, the more would the movement against genocide win social and national approval. For the good of the future, the opposing ideology of genocide could spread its message in the democratic states themselves. In fact, this opposing ideology needs to dominate the world over. In this way the ideology against genocide could be spread and it could also consolidate itself. Once this opposing ideology spreads in the psyche, the commoners' idea of debased politics will be made transparent and clear. We with the help of everyone want to extricate the politics and philosophy of genocide. In 1971, using religion as an excuse, Muslims were killed. Bangabandhu prohibited that politics. In order to have the killers in his own party Zia-ur Rahman expunged the relevant legislation. Today, Saudi Arabia is going to garland Israel. But this same royal family of Saudi Arab in order to uphold its hegemony, had ceaselessly propagated jihad against the Jews in the past.

In order to stop this treachery with religion, the subject of genocide-torture would have to be voiced constantly.

Overcoming many obstructions and difficulties, we have been able to install 50 memorial plaques in those killing fields and places of genocide, whose names were unfamiliar to the people. Chowdhury Shahid Kader has correctly said; "By recalling the memories of genocide and its victims and by according to them the deserving honour, we turn out to be more human. This process of



Memorial built by the Genocide Museum,
Platinum Jubilee Jute Mill, Khulna

being human is the first precondition of building a human society".⁵⁷

Memory is power, memory is history. The preservation of Genocide-Torture remembrance recalls and honours memory and history. The present generation not be alienated itself from 1971, that is precisely what we want.

Journalist Christiana Lamb interviewed a *Birangana* named Ayesha in Sirajganj. Ayesha said, "We have given our most precious thing and have died inside many times but you won't find our names engraved on any monument of war memorial".⁵⁸

The 1971 Genocide-Torture Archive and Museum has been built, so that no one else can express this kind of a lament.**

***A Book written by me titled, 'Ganohattya Jadughar: Rashtro, Rajniti O Adhipattya' (Genocide Museum: State, Politics, and Hegemony) was published in 2021. The name of the book was the title of the first chapter. That essay is the basis of this article. In order to give the article a sense of completeness parts of different books and essays written by me have been added to this text.*

Source and References:

1. Jeffery C. Alexander, 'The Dark Side of Modernity', P.1 Quoted in Imtiaz Ahmed(ed) *Genocide and Mass Violence, Politics of Singularity*, Dhaka, 2019. Introduction P vvi-xvii
 "As modernity emerged, so did colonial expansion; as modernity intensified, colonial domination deepened in the name of Enlightenment and Civilizations. From Napoleon onward, modern nations waged wars for progress with heinous weapons forged by technological reasons. In the middle of the twentieth century, Germany, a nation of scientific and Enlightenment Building, committed genocidal murders against six million Jews and killed more innocents and soldiers in a war that almost succeeded in returning Europe to medieval times. Two decades later the American air force tried bombing Vietnam back to the Stone Age. In Bangladesh, the first draft of the Declaration of Liberation was written by Kamal Hosain. See, Mohiuddin Ahmed, *Pratinayak*, Dhaka 2021. During the Liberation War it was drafted by Barrister Amirul Islam. The latter is now a part of the Constitution.
2. For details, Ziaul Haq, 'Pakistani o Islami Matadorsho (Pakistan and Islamic ideology)' Edited by Hasan Gardeji and Jamil Rashid, *Pakistan: Religion and the Politics of Conflict*, Dhaka, 1986.
3. *ibid*.
4. *ibid*.
5. For details, see Muntassir Mamoon, *Bangabandhu Jibon* (The Life of Bangabandhu), First Volume, Dhaka, 2019.
6. For details, see Z.A. Bhutto, 'West Pakistan thrives at the cost of East Pakistan' C. Rajeswara Rao(ed), *Case for Bangladesh*, New Delhi 1971.
7. The quotations have been taken from, Inam Ahmed and Shakawat Liton(ed) *Genocide They wrote*, Dhaka 2016
8. Niyazi thinks that not only the killing of Hindus, but also the betrayers of Islam and their brothers, that is Murtads, have to be killed as well. He is directly referring to Bengali Muslims.
 In the last paragraph, mentioning the Biharis, he said that they have to be armed and their courage must be brought back so that they could be used as 'the second line of defense'.
 Against this background he made eight recommendations (resolutions)
 1) Along with doctors and professors, 75 % Bengali civil officers have to be killed. The remaining high placed would have to be transferred to

West Pakistan. The Army, Police and Civil Armed Force would not have a single Bengali.

2) Army, Central and Statewide Intelligence Services should not have a single Bengali. Because the latter kept the government in dark about the separatists.

3) The entire Pakistan should have one national language which should be the only medium of instruction.

4) One has to streamline the state education departments.

5) The Pakistan ruling system should be such that Bengal will be given a 'special status' for ten years, or, in accordance with what the Army head states, till the time when the liberation army and infiltrators' action-programmes are over.

6) Four areas in Pakistan should be made Bihari-dominated - Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Saiyadpur-Parvatipur. The three cities mentioned above should have a Bihari majority so that no anti-Pakistan movement could be started from here.

7) All Biharis aged from 18 to 50 years have to be armed and should be given short time training. Only those will be excluded, against whom the Intelligence Department submits adverse reports.

8) The Housing and Relief departments, at the higher level, will be run by non-Bengalis—

a) 500 plots are still empty in Mirpur for the people of hese can be distributed right away.

b) All staff quarters in Mirpur and Mohammedpur need to be given to Bihari refugees.

c) Mirpur and Mohammedpur and all adjacent areas should be allotted to non-Bengalis.

d) All educational institutions in Mirpur and Mohammedpur and adjacent areas should be converted to Urdu schools and colleges and should be opened for non-Bengali children and students.

e) All government shops in Mirpur and Mohammedpur have to be allotted to refugees (Biharis).

f) The same rule could apply to ration shops in Mirpur, Mohammedpur and adjacent areas.

9. For details, Muntassir Mamoon, *Sei Sab Pakistani (All Those Pakistanis)*, Dhaka 1999.

10. Manas Ghosh 'Bangabandhu Bangladesh through the Eyes of a Journalist', *Bangla Bichitra*, Dhaka, March, 2021, P25.

11 For details, J.N. Dixit, *Liberation and Beyond : Indo-Bangladesh Relations*.

12 One could consult the following book for analytical analysis of Indian

- Archaeology, Museum, objects Tapati Guha Thakurta, *Monument, Object, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*, Delhi 2004.
- 13 Most of Trustee were politically inclined with Awami Leage and they didn't object to this idea. They were opportunistic intellectuals.
- 14 I did a long interview with Professor Ahmed Hasan Dani when he came to Dhaka— *Dhakar Hariye Jawa Kaman* (The Lost Cannon of Dhaka), Dhaka, 1991. The narrative in this text related to Dani is a summarized version of that essay.
- 15 Junaid Ahmed was the Chairman of the Karachi National Management Consultants. He wrote the book as a consultant and it was sponsored by ISI. The title of the book is *Creation of Bangladesh, Myths Exposed*, Karachi, 2017. This book has been extensively reviewed in Muntassir Mamoon's article titled 'ISI o Muktiyudho' (ISI and Liberation War), Muntassir Mamoon, *Muktijudher Itibas : Anyabhabe dekha* (The History of Liberation War, The Other View), Dhaka 2018.
- 16 Tofail Ahmed, 'Itihaser Sotto O Gonohotta Dibosh', 24 March 2019, *Bhorer Kagoj*. 'Shirin Akhtar MP, in the light of the demand placed by Nirmul Committee, submitted a proposal which said that March 25 should be observed as Genocide Day. Later, on the basis of this demand, the decision was taken to observe Genocide Day on March 25
- 17 Lemkin wrote:
- Genocide has two phases. One, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other is the position of national pattern of the oppressors. Swadesh Roy's unpublished article was read at Bangla Academy on 5.3.2021. The title of the paper, 'Bangladesher Ganahatya o Antarjatik Swikriti' (Genocide in Bangladesh and International Recognition), "Genocide means act committed with the intent to destroy whole or in part any national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such."
- 18 Yasmin Saikia, *Women War and Making of Bangladesh : Remembering 1971*. For a detailed discussion of this book, see Muntassir Mamoon's 'Muktijudha, Grihajudha and Dharsan' (Liberation War, Civil War and Rape) Muntassir Mamoon, *Muktijudher Itibas : Anyabhabe Dekha* (History of Liberation War, The Other View), Dhaka, 2018. The part of this book devoted to the analysis of Yasmin's text has been taken from the essay cited.
- 19 B.B.C.Bangla, 21.12.2015, *Dainik Samakal*, Dhaka, 11.2.2016.
- 20 In order to know the viewpoint of Pakistani policymakers, see Muntassir Mamoon's *Sei Sab Pakistani* (All Those Pakistans), Dhaka 1999 and

- Pakistani Generalder Mon: Bangali, Bangladesh, Muktiyuddho*, Dhaka 2010 (Psyche of the Pakistani Generals: Bangali, Bangladesh and Liberation War); *Pakistanider Dristite Muktiyudho* (Liberation War viewed by Pakistanis) : Muntassir Mamoon and Mohiddin Ahmed (joint editors), Dhaka 2005.
- 21 Muntassir Mamoon, for detailed analysis and description- *Birangana*, Dhaka, 2013 and *Ganahatya o Nirjaton* (Genocide and Torture), Dhaka 2014.
- 22 Bina D'Costa, Dr. Geoffrey Davis, "Doctor as a Volunteer in war-destroyed Bangladesh, Asok, *Judhobparadh*, Dhaka (War Crimes, Dhaka), 2008, P47-54.
- 23 *Ibid*.
- 24 Newsweek 15.11.1971, Rokeya Kabir and Mujib Mehadi, *Muktijuddhe Nari* (Women in Liberation War), Dhaka, 2006, P180
- 25 Nari Nirjaton (Torture of Women) *Banglar Bani* (Special Number on Genocide, Dhaka 1971)
- 26 *Ibid*.
- 27 For details, Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will : Men Women and Rape*, New York 1975.
- 28 *Ibid*, P. 83
- 29 Dr. M A Hasan, *Juddho O Nari*, (War and Women) Dhaka 2002, p. 31
- 30 *Ibid*, P. 32
- 31 "A stream of victims and eyewitnesses tell how truckloads of Pakistani soldiers and their hireling rajakars swooped down on villages in the night rounding up women by force. Some were raped on the spot. Others were carried off to military compounds. Some women were still there when Indian troops battled their way into Pakistani strongholds. Weeping survivors of village were raped because they were suspected to be siding with the Mukti Bahini. Freedom fighters told how wives were raped before the eyes of their bound husbands who were put to death: Just how much it was the work of Pakistani regulars is not clear. Pakistani officers maintain that their men were too disciplined for that sort of thing." Report of Joseph Friend, quoted in Brownmuller, *op cit*.
- 32 Quoted Umme Habiba Sumi, *Ekattorer Ganadbarsaner bichar prosange judhobparad* (War Crimes related to the trials of mass rape)
- 33 *Ibid*.
- 34 *Ibid*.
- 35 *Ibid*.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Rokeya Kabir, Mujib Mehadi, *Muktijudhe Naree* (Women in Liberation War), Dhaka 2006, mentioned earlier, P181.

38 Shahriar Kabir, 'Ekatore Nari Nirjaton ebong Nirjatitoder Samajik Abasthan' (Torture of Women in 1971 and the social position of the tortured), *Ekattorer Ganabaty, Nirjaton ebong Judhobparadbider Bichar*, Dhaka, 2000, Page 25.

39 For details- A.A.K. Niazi, Lt Gen. *The Betrayal of East Pakistan*, 1998, Appendix.

40 For details, Archer K Blood. *The Blood Telegram*, Dhaka.

41 For Details, *Sei Sab Pakistani* (All Those Pakistanis).

42 Certain parts of rape-related descriptions written by me, *Birangana 1971* have been incorporated in this text.

43 For Details, *Information Centre at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, Holocaust, Berlin, 2016 and Online sources.

44 For details, Wieland Giebel, *Berlin Story Bunker* and Online.

45 For details, *Genocide-Holodomor 1932-1933, The Losses of the Ukrainian National*, Kiev, 2016.

46 Eberhard Kolb, *Bergen-Belsen from 1943-1945*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Munich, 1988.

47 *Anne Frank House: A Museum with a Story*, Amsterdam, 1992

48 Jasminko Halilovic, *War Childhood*, War Childhood Museum, Poland, 2018; Selma Leydesdorff, *Surviving the Bosnian Genocide: The Women of Srebrenica Speak*, 2011; Paul R. Bartrop, *Bosnian Genocide: The Essential Reference Guide*, ABC-CLIO, 2016; Jan Willem Honig & Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, 1997; Normal L. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of 'ethnic cleansing'*, 1995; David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*, 1996.

49 Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, London, 1995.

50 Ian Baxter, *Auschwitz and Birkenau (Images Of War)*, Pen and Sword Military, 2016; Ian Baxter, *Auschwitz Death Camp (Images of War)*, Pen & Sword Military, 2010.

51 On setting up of several museums and their development, see Muntassir Mamoon, *Ganabaty Jadughar: Rashtra, Rajniti O Adhipaty* (Genocide Museum: State, Politics and Domination), Dhaka, 2021. From Chapter 8 to 11 in that book or the shortened version of some chapters has been taken from the book mentioned.

52 For Victims and Survivors statements: Huy Vannak, *Bou Meng: A Survivor From Khmer Rouge Prison S-21, Justice for the Future Not Just for the Victims*, Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2010; Chum Mey, *Survivor: The Triumph of an Ordinary Man in the Khmer Rouge Genocide*, Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2012; Eng Kok Thay, *Norng Chan Phal - the Mystery of the Boy at S-2*, Cambodian Institute for Peace and Development, 2018; *Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum*, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

53 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (ed.), *Polin: 1000 Year History of Polish Jews*, Museum Historii Zydow, Warszawa, 2017

54 Shahriar Kabir, *1971 Ganabaty Panch Dasak: Swikriti, Bichar o Itibaser Day* (Genocide-Five Decade: Recognition, Trial and Obligation of History), Dhaka 2021.

55 Chowdhury Shahid Kader, *Ganabaty Smriti Sangrakshan o Ganabaty Jadughar* (Preservation of Genocide Memory and Genocide Museum), Dhaka 2021.

56 IMED (Planning Ministry, People's Republic of Bangladesh Government), 1971- Mohan Muktijuddhekal Pakistan Hanadar Bahini Korthik Gonohottar Jonno Babohirito Boddhobhumisoh Songrokkkhon O Smritifolok Nirman Prokolpo (Evaluation of Influence and Report on the Survey: 1971-Preservation of the killing fields for Genocide committed by the assaulting Pakistani forces during the Great War of Liberation in 1971 and the project to construct memorial.)

57 Chowdhury Shahid Kader, *Ibid*, P.24.

58 Christiana Lamb, *'Our Bodies Their Battlefield : What War Does to Women'*, London, 2020.

Shahriar Kabir has written, "Religion, Race, National Identity, Language, Region, no matter what is the cause, in order to save the world from the curse of Genocide admission of Genocide is extremely essential. This admission leads to the paying of respect to those who had been killed and at the same time clears the path for the trial of the genocide perpetrators in one country after another." Mentioned earlier.

**Translated from the original Bangla by Shubo Ranjan Dasgupta.*

