

M. Ibrahim Khalil*
Bermohol Gainbari Genocide

Introduction

Bangladesh came into existence in the world map at the cost of 3 million lives and killing honour of 200,000 women in 1971. People of the then East Bengal and later East Pakistan which was 1,200 km away from West Pakistan could realize that although Pakistan has been created on the basis of two nation theory (in fact two religion theory), they are again in a trap of subjugation and will not be able to get their justifiable rights and privileges from Pakistan confederation. That is why they had to organize dialogues, put forward demands and waged several movement including language movement in 1952 and six-point demand in 1966 to get their equitable share. But the issues remain unsettled creating anger and frustration among the people of East Pakistan. Finally, they were forced to fight for independence as the West Pakistan refused to hand over power to Awami league—the party that won majority seats in general election in 1970s. As soon as the war of independence was declared by the father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Pakistan military swooped on the innocent unarmed people in every nook and corner of the then east Pakistan. The people of Hindu community were the main target of their unbridle mayhems as they were

considered *bona fide* supporter of Awami league—the party that lead the war of indolence. In many places, Pakistani military slaughtered many people using firearms. The dead bodies were dumped in ditches and covered with earth which is known as mass grave. Hundreds of such mass graves have been identified across the country, but many others are still behind the scene even after 49 years of independence. *Bermohol Gainbari* mass grave is one of those places. The grave is unknown to many people till today; and no effort has been taken to protect the memory of the martyred so far. Unbelievably, it is now a fallow land located at a very solitary place near *Gainbari* of *Bermohol* village under *Gava-Ramchandrapur* union of *Jhalokathi Sadar Upazila*, *Jhalokathi* district. About 35 people have been brutally killed with a premediated attack on the minority Hindu community who later fled their homes and took shelter in different places including the neighbouring India. This write-up provides anecdotal description on *Bermohol Gainbari* genocide.

As part of a training organized by the *1971: Genocide, Torture-Archive & Museum Trust*, I have taken this site as my field work for bringing the unknown atrocities perpetuated by the Pakistani army on the people of *Bermohol Gainbari* area into light. Before the start of this project, I have reviewed a number of literature like *Mukijuddho Kosh* (in Bangla) edited by Muntassir Mamoon, *Bangladesher Swadhinota Judder Dolil Potro* (in Bangla) edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman, *Ekattorer Baddobhumi* (in Bangla) edited by Sukumar Biswas, *Banglapedia* edited by Sirajul Islam, and *Barishal Muktiyudde Sadoro o Ondore* by Mansurul Alom Montu, *Muktiyudde Barishal: Prottokhidorshi Ebong Ongshogrohon Karider Biboron* (in Bangla) edited by Mainul Hossain and *Bangladesh Muktiyuddo Gankosh* edited by Professor Harun-or-Rashid. However, those literature has scanty or no description of the genocide that was perpetrated at *Gainbari* of *Bermohol* in 1971. Moreover, there is no record of *Bermohol Gainbari* genocide in

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any of the books including the recently published one by M. Muniruzzaman Shahin titled, *Barishal 1971: Gono Hottar Itibritto o Prokriy* (Barishal 1971: Nature and History of Mass Killing in the *Probondho Songroho* vol 7 published by Bangladesh Itihas Sammilani since it focused on Barishal district only. Local newspapers even did not run any reports on the mass killing at Bermohol.

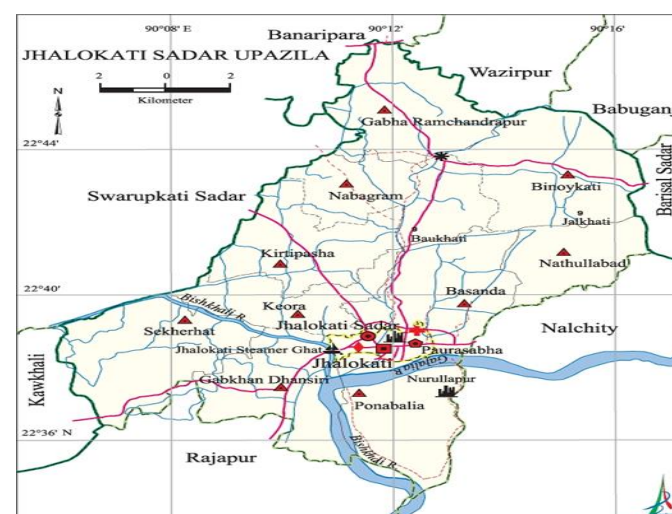
A number of qualitative interviews and Focus Group Discussion have been conducted following two separate guidelines to gather primary data. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed in Bangla and subsequently translated into English. In addition, digital camera was used to get first hand picture of the place, eye-witnesses and victims of the martyred families.

Available literature and my observation find that most of the people of this area were engaged in agro-based farming for their livelihood with a very poor literacy rate back in 1971. Besides, a long period of time has already been elapsed after the horrific incident after the war of independence in 1971. In some of the cases, the witnesses could not exactly recollect the name, identity, age, occupation of the victims as well as the perpetrators and exact time of the incident. Moreover, like many other places, they even could not remember the sequence of incident due to elapse of long time. Despite all these limitations, the present study is an attempt to unveil the atrocities of the Pakistani army in a remote village of Bangladesh.

Geographical Description

Jhalokati district has 758.06 sq. km land area. It is located in between 22°20' and 22°47' north latitudes and in between 90°01' and 90°23' east longitudes. It is bounded by Barishal district on the north and east, Pirojpur district on the west, Barguna district and Bishkhali river on the south. It has a population of 694,231; male 345,735, female 348,496; Muslim

620,585, Hindu 73,327, Buddhist 144, Christian 91 and others 84. Jhalokathi Sub-division was formed in 1972 and it was turned into a district in 1984. The four Upazilas of the district are Nalchity,



Map of Jhalokathi Sadar Upazila, Source: Banglapedia

Kathalia, Rajapur and Jhalakathi Sadar. Jhalokathi Sadar Upazila comprises of 10 unions including Gava-Ramchandrapur. There are six mass graves in Jhalokathi district¹ of *Gainbari* mass grave is located at Bermohol village under Gava-ramchandrapur union. *Bermohol Gainbari* mass grave is located at Bermohol village under Gava-Ramchandrapur union. It is about 18 km away from Jhalokathi headquarters in the east and around 25 km from Barishal district headquarters via Nobogram road. There are around 600 households with a population of around 2,000 in the village. Among the inhabitants about 38% are Hindus and 62% are Muslims. The main occupation of the villagers is agricultural farming and betel culture. Some others live on small trading, fishing, agricultural labour, transport worker etc.

Historical Background

Bermohol village was under Gava-Ramchandapur union of the erstwhile Jhalokathi thana in Barishal district in 1971. Like many other villages, Bermohol was a typical rural village where about 70 percent people were Hindus and 30 percent people were Muslims. Only around 4% people were literate and most of them were poor. They used to earn their living by agricultural farming, betel culture, fishing and agricultural labour. Most of the houses were made of nipa palm and sedges locally known as *golpata* and *hogla* respectively. Along with paddy, betel leaf culture is one of their mainstays of local people. As such, there were several betel leaf sheds mostly owned by people of Hindu community. Road communication was not good as there were few roads and people mostly depended on traditional waterways to and from growth centres especially Gava bazar, Bamuner Haat and Jhalokathi Thana headquarters. The *Gainbari* of *Bermohol* village was one of the largest homes in the locality and had names and fame in and around the village. There were 18-19 houses and a population of 70-75 people during the massacre. There was a ditch at the northern side of *Gainbari* where 28 people and 7 people were shot dead on 2 May 1971 and on 3 May 1971 respectively by the Pakistani army.

Background of the Genocide

After the historic speech of 7 March 1971 by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, all the freedom-loving people including the youth of *Bermohol* village were working to create public opinion in favour of Liberation War. But it did not slip attention of local peace committee chairman Fazle Ali Sikder who planned to give them a good lesson. The site has been selected as it was then a Hindu dominated area. The area was abuzz with a lot of betel leaf sheds. Survivors and eye witnesses guess that Fazle Ali Sikder informed the Pakistani military that

many enemies have hid in the *Gainbari* betel leaf sheds. A contingent of 20-30 military personnel came to *Gainbari* on foot on 2 May 1971. They encircled all the houses of *Gainbari* and captured many and lined them up. All on a sudden, they army men shot them abruptly on 2 May 1971 at 2.30 pm and killed 28 people on the spot. The Pakistani military again perpetrated onslaughts on 3 May 1971 in same place and killed 7 more people. According to Mr. Golam Mowla Masum Sherwani, incumbent chairman of Gava-Ramchandapur Union, there are two mass killing sites at Bermohol village under Gava-ramchadrapur union: one at *Gainbari*, and the other is located at Bamuner haat areas. This research focuses on the *Gainbari* mass grave only.

Description of Genocide

It was 2 May 1971, Sunday, 18 *Baishakh* 1378 *Bangabdho* [Bangla era] at 2.30 pm. People of *Gainbari* were busy with their daily activities in the field and maintaining betel leaf sheds. The women were busy with preparing midday meals and other household chores. They were unaware of any such move of the Pakistani military or collaborators beforehand. Suddenly they observed that Pakistani military guided by some local collaborators marched towards their village. They later came to know that Fazle Ali Sikder, the then president of Gava-ramchandrapur union Parishad, indirectly guided them. The people of the locality got frightened to see that some captured people were tied with rope and forced to follow them. Later they learnt that some people from Zuthia and some unknown places have been captured. They were stopped on the bank of a ditch at the north of *Gainbari* surrounded by several betel leaf sheds. Apprehending the presence of military many people went on hiding to save their lives, but some of the ill-fated could not escape. They called some people from *Gainbari* and asked them to line up in a queue at the ditches mentioned earlier. Suddenly

they opened fire and around 22 people were killed on 2 May 1971 at 2.30 pm. Later they set fire on 20-30 houses of the area. The dead bodies were piled up on the fringe of ditch. Military came in the same place again on 3 May 1971 and shot dead 7 more people. As the dead bodies were producing stench and dogs and foxes started eating the dead bodies, Chittaranjon Halder and Monoronjon Gain pulled all the dead bodies and put them together in the ditch and covered them with earth.

The people were asked to join a peace meeting for ensuring peace and tranquillity in the locality. The people of Hindu community voted for Awami league in the 1970 election which infuriated the peace committee chairman Fazle Ali Sikder who planned to give the Hindus a good lesson by letting losing terror and killing them.



Figure 1: *Gainbari* mass grave at Bermohol village

Identity of Martyres

The mass killing took place in two phases on 2 May 1971/18 Baishakh 1378 on Sunday at 2.30 pm. The second one happened 3 May 1971, 19 Boishakh 1378 on Monday at 12.30-1.30 pm. The full details of all the martyred could not be identified as no written document was available. Besides, a long period of time has elapsed since the incident took place. Many of the eyewitnesses and survivors also died by this time. Moreover, the eyewitnesses or survivors who are still alive could not recollect all the details of the dead and the perpetrators. However, available details of the martyred are as follows:

SL	Name	Age	Father	Occupation	Address	Place
1	Gonesh Gain	28	Chandi Gain	Farmer	Bermohol Gain Bari	Bermohol Gainbari
2	Narayan Gain	35	Atul Gain	Farmer	Bermohol Gain Bari	Bermohol Gainbari
3	Rajen Gain	48		Farmer	Bermohol Gain Bari	Bermohol Gainbari
4	Gopal Gain	23	Hemonto Gain	Farmer	Bermohol Gain Bari	Bermohol Gainbari
5	Mongol Gain	19		Farmer	Zuthia	Bermohol Gainbari
6	Harolal Gain	16	Nibaron Gain	Farmer	Zuthia	Bermohol Gainbari
7	Kartik Chandra Halder	29		Farmer	Zuthia	Bermohol Gainbari
8	Sudhir Halder	46	Rakhal Halder	Farmer	Zuthia	Bermohol Gainbari
9	Rajen Halder	40		Farmer	Zuthia	Bermohol Gainbari
10	Anil Chandra Halder			Farmer	Zuthia	Bermohol Gainbari
11	Ram Chandra Halder			Farmer	Zuthia	Bermohol Gainbari
12	Jamini Mondal			Farmer	Zuthia	Bermohol Gainbari
13	Anonto Mondal	40	Bhoddro Mondal	Farmer	Bermohol	Bermohol

SL	Name	Age	Father	Occupation	Address	Place
						Gainbari
14	Kartik Chandra Shiholi	40		Farmer	Bermohol	Bermohol Gainbari
15	Binod Shiholi	60			Bermohol	Bermohol Gainbari
16	Amrito Thakur	50			Bermohol	Bermohol Gainbari
17	Kala Gain	65			Bermohol	Bermohol Gainbari
18	Shahrada Das	65			Unknown place	Bermohol Gainbari
19	Unknown person from Binoykathi				Binoy Kathi	Bermohol Gainbari
20	Unknown person from Satorakathi				Satora Kathi	Bermohol Gainbari
21	Unknown person Chatol bari				Chatolbari	Bermohol Gainbari
22	Guest from Narayanpur					Bermohol Gainbari

Source: Fieldwork, January, 2019

In addition, 7 more people were killed on 3 May 1971. The details of the martyred are as follows:

SL	Name	Age	Father	Address	Place
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1	Anju	18	Kalachad Gain	Bermohol	Bermohol Gainbari
2	Monorama (Mentally handicaped)	18			Bermohol Gainbari
3	Sarnobaroi	70			Bermohol Gainbari
4	Rajoni Sikder	60			Bermohol Gainbari
5	Boba bou (Dumb women)	32			Bermohol Gainbari
6	Unknown person from Barisal				Bermohol Gainbari
7	Nalit Gain (Killed while houses been set on fire)	65-70		Bermohol	Bermohol Gainbari

Source: Fieldwork, January 2019

In an interview with a Jhalokathi Awami league leader Samsuzzaman Chunnu (63), claimed that the number of people killed on 2 May 1971 at Gainbari area would exceed 35. He maintained that people like Rajoni Kanto Sikder, Shova Rani Shiholi, Amrito Chakrobarti, Megahbati Chakraborti, Shefali Gain and Vadro Mondol of Bermohol and Bimol Chandra Halder of Zuthia were also killed in the fateful day. However, their details could not find out despite repeated attempt.



Sushoma Sarker (70) showing Gainbari mass grave site at Bermohol village

Identity of the Persecutors

The killing has been perpetrated by the Pakistani army with help of Fazle Ali Sikder—the then president (currently the position is called Chairman) of the Gava-Ramchandrapur union under Jhalokathi Sadar Upazila of Jhalokathi district. He was 35 years of age then and was involved in the politics of Muslim league. He was an influential member of Barishal district ‘Peace Committee.’² His brother-in-law Ruhul Amin was his second in command and committed atrocities in many parts of the union in collaboration with Pakistani army.

Testimony of the Victims and Eyewitness

During field visit a number of qualitative interviewes have been conducted with the surviving victims and eye witnesses. None of them were literate enough to write the fateful memories. Therefore, the research team had to depend on their meomory only. In most of the cases, they could not remember all the details of the victims and other necessary information correctly due to elapse of long time. However, they give an account of the incident in a nutshel. The details of the interview area as follows:



Amio Bala (90)

Husband's name: Lalit Gain, Occupation: Housewife, Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place, date and time of Interview: (Bermohol own residence) 16 January 2019 at 3.25 pm.

Amio Bala said, 'I did not know that Liberation War has started but noticed Pakistnai military and their local agents patrolling through our locality very often. I was doing some household chores at my kitchen on Sunday while my husband Lalit Gain was taking rest inside our house, and our 13-years old daughter Kajol was playing on the courtyard. Suddenly I heard some gun shots and came out of kitchen. I noticed military men coming towards our house from its backside and upon reaching they set our house on fire. Afterwards they shot my daughter and left her unattended. I ran away to save may own life and avoid further untoward incident. I went on hiding in a nearby *tagor*.³ My husband could not come out as military men were kept standing outside our house. He was burnt alive into ashes inside the burning houses. I came out when they left the place and found my husband's dead body lying on the floor. I was crying and

running between by dead body of my husband and wounded daughter. Later, I came to know that 25-30 people have been killed near betel leaf sheds of *Gainbari* by the Pakistani army.'



Monoranjan Gain (70)

Father's name: Chandra Gain, Mother's name: Surobala; Occupation: Farmer, Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place, date and time of Interview: (Bermohol own residence) 16 January 2019 at 2.45 pm.

Monoranjan Gain said, "I was working in the field bending downwards during the time the Pakistani military attacked our village. I noticed that a group of people were lined up in a que in a field which is not far from my field where I was working. As soon as I stood up leaving my work to see what is happening over there, I heard several gunshots and seen everyone was lying on the land. Witnessing the horrific attack, I ran and hide into a sedge bush and covered myself under a heap of hyacinth. I was so frightened that I hardly dared to peep in. I came out after two and half hours and found all of them dead as it were a targeted brush fire. Seeing the terrible scenario, I again went into hiding in a *togor*. When I came to my house in fear, I did not find anyone as everyone has left their houses leaving all their belongings behind. Later I got Chittoranjon Halder who helped me to burry all the dead bodies together in a mass grave without any funeral ceremonies."



Samiran Chandra Gain (60)

Father's name: Mukundo Lal Gain, Mother's Name: Kamola Rani Gain, Occupation: 3rd Class employee of Barukathi High School, Gava. Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi, Place, date and time of Interview : (Bermohol own residence) 16 January 2019 at 12.00 pm.

Samiran Chandra Gain (60) said, "I was a student of class VII at Gava High School in 1971. I was so young at that time that my moustache and beards are yet to grow. My father bought a new *lungi*⁴ for me. On that fateful day I was walking around our courtyard wearing that very *lungi* in a joyous mood. At one stage, I observed military in our village. They brought some people and asked some people from our village to be lined up in a que. The number may be around 20-30 in total. I saw fire arms for the first time in my life. They opened fire to kill all the people at around 12.30 to 1.30 pm. We run helter-skelter and hide in water hyacinth and *togor* and was saved. But those who run whimsically were brutally killed by the military.

Abdus Sobhan (77)

Father's name: Abdul Gani, Mother's Name: Delowara, Occupation: Retired police constable, Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place, date



and time of Interview: (Bermohol own residence) 16 January 2019 at 12.00 pm.

Abdus Sobhan (77) said, "I was a member of erstwhile East Pakistan police service. When the Liberation War started, I was in Dhaka and later I shifted myself to my village home. It takes five minutes to get to *Gainbari* from my home. I was getting ready for taking bath in a nearby pond on 2 May 1971 at 1.00 pm. While I was heading towards the pond, I heard some loud and harsh voices speaking in Urdu language, but till then I could not understand what may happen. Soon after that I heard some gun shots and became panicked. I was filled with fear but still curious to see what has happened hiding in sedge bush. After 30 minutes, I moved forward gradually and found around 20-25 dead bodies laid one another beside the field adjacent to *Gainbari*. Seeing this frightful scenario, I came back to my home very quickly. Within 7 days of the massacre, I decided to join Liberation War under the direct command of Bir Uttam Shahjahan Omor, but I did not receive certificate even although I made repeated attempt."



Chittoranjon Howlader (68)

Father's name: Late Madhu Sudan Howlader, Mother's Name: Mitangini Howlader, Occupation: Farmer, Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi, Place, date and time of Interview: (Bermohol own residence) 16

January 2019 at 1.00 pm.

Chittoranjon Howlader (68) said, "I was very young then, and just started to shave. I finished my midday meal at my house. After some time, I noticed that a group of 25-30 people is being taken on foot in que by



the military men. I got frightened but could not guess what might happen. Suddenly I observed that the lined up people are being shot dead. I hide in a nearby sedge bush and hyacinth. After 1 hour, although fear gripped me, I came out and found many blood-strained dead bodies. I, with the assistance of another person named Monoronjon Gain, dug a grave and buried 30 people together in the same place. From then on, I worked as a messenger for the freedom fighters in the area under Captain Beg until the Liberation War was over.



Sonekha (95)

Husband's name: Late Yadab, Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi, Occupation: Housewife, Place, date and time of Interview: (Bermohol own residence) 16 January 2019 at 4.00 pm.

Sonekha (95) said, “On 2 May 2071 at 1.00 pm, I took my tiny son Jagodish for taking bath at the pond *ghat*. When I came back to my house, I suddenly heard sounds of gunshots and howling of the people. I got out of my home again and observed that people are running helter-skelter. I was filled with fear and have fallen into nearby *togor*. After sometimes, my husband Yadab called me and I came out in fear. Then I went to *Gainbari* and found around 25-30 dead bodies lying on the fringe of a ditch near betel leaf sheds.

Yadab Halder (85)

Father's name: Late Aswini Hawlader, Mother's Name: Saroda Sundori, Occupation: Carpenter, Address: Bermohol, Gava-

ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place, date and time of Interview: (Bermohol own residence) 16 January 2019 at 1.00 pm.

Yadab Halder (85) said, “Very often we learnt from our neighbours that Pakistani army will attack us anytime, and people of our houses went on hiding as we were from minority Hindu community. There was food crisis at that time as such we could not stay on hiding for a long time. Suddenly Pakistani military raided our village and they set our houses on fire. Some people of our village were caught, and the military men brought some others from nearby villages. They have been killed at fringe of a ditch near *Gainbari*. One of them has been killed by burning. We buried them together. Later we went on hiding until the liberation war was over.”

Gourango Gain (60)

Father's name: Atul Chandra Gain, Mother's Name: Besob Gain, Occupation: Farmer, Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place, date and time of Interview: (Bermohol own residence) 15 January 2019 at 2.25 pm.



Gourango Gain (60) said, “that day was Sunday when we were attacked. Women were busy with preparing midday meal while male members were busy with our agricultural activities in the field like many others. Suddenly we were attacked by Pakistani military. Some of us were able to flee while others were caught, and we were taken to a field near *Gainbari*. They set our houses on fire. We recited *Kalema*⁵ to make them understand that we

were Muslim too and thus try to save ourselves from the attack of Pakistani army. Some people were brought from other villages. They were lined up in a queue tying with a rope used for managing cattle. My elder brother was also among them. At one stage they were killed through brushfire and left the scene by setting fire on some houses. Later I participated in burial of the dead bodies together at place digging a ditch.”



Odhir Dakua (66)

Father's name: Shishu Kumar Dakua, Mother: Sefali Chandra Dakua, Occupation: Business: Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place, Date, Time of interview: Own shop, 20 January 2019 1.40 pm.

Odhir Dakua (66) said, “I was 14 years old in 1971. I have learned from my father that Bangabandhu has declared the independence of Bangladesh. We apprehended beforehand that military may raid our village as this area was Hindu dominated. We were busy with our daily activities on Sunday 2 May 1971. On that very day, Pakistan military raided our village from two directions. People of Gainbari and adjacent areas did not worry first, but got frightened when we observed that some people have been tied with rope used to bond cattle. All of them were standing within *Gainbari* and betel shed near *Gainbai*. I heard several gunshot as I was preparing to flee from my house sensing that something dangerous may happen. I got frightened and hid in a *togor* near our house. I came out of *togor* after one hour and moved towards the place as the military left the place. I went the spot and saw dead bodies of many people lying on the pool of blood. Seeing the devastating scene, I left the place instantly and

took refuge at a muslim family called Sikder Bari at Chakhar. After three days I came to my village and very often took shelter in Sikder bari when we got the news of military's arrival in our village.



Gonesh Sannomot (82)

Father's name: Makhon Lal, Mother's name: Saruda, Occupation: Business: Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place, date, Time of interview: Own residence, 20 January 2019 1.55 pm.

Gonesh Sannomot (79) said, “I was a middle-aged youth in 1971. I suppose my age was 30 years. Then I was a farmer but now I do business for living. Military attack has destroyed our village totally. I have observed that Pakistan army has captured many people from nearby villages and took them under their disposal. I have seen many dead bodies flowing away with the tide of the canals that exist near our houses. I got news that military has raided in our village and hid in bush adjacent to our house. After some time, I heard some gunshots. I frightened but came out when the military left the place. I went the betel leaf sheds near *Gainbari* and found that many people have been shot dead. After the incident, I very often hid in bush to save live from the hands of Pakistani military.



Mofazzel Hossain (62)

Father's name: Motahar Ali Howlader, Mother's name: Karimunnesa, Occupation: Farmer: Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place,

date, Time of interview: Own residence, 20 January 2019 2.48 pm.

Mofazzel Hossain (62) said, “There was no educated person in the village to tell the truth. During that time, I was 14-15 years of age. Most of the people were engaged in agriculture for their living. I also helped my father in agricultural activities. While we were working in the field my father used to say that military may raid our village any day, and time. We were working in the fields and heard some hue and cry in the village near *Gainbari*. I moved towards the place avoiding my father’s instruction not to go there. I heard some more gunshot and took shelter at nearby house. After about two hour we learned that military has left the place killing many people who have been captured from nearby village and *Gainbari*. All of them have been lined up and killed at a place between *Gainbari* and betel sheds near *Gainbari*.



Sushoma Sarker (70)

Husband’s name: Krishnakanto Sarker, Mother’s name: Sona Rani, Occupation: Housewife; Address: Bermohol, Gava-ramchandrapur, Jhalokathi Sadar, Jhalokathi; Place, date, Time of interview: Own residence, 15 January 2019 2.50 pm.

Sushoma Sarker (70) said, “I was walking in the courtyard at noon taking my 10 months age daughter at my lap. Suddenly, I noticed that military has entered our house and started capturing the entire male emebbers who they could see in front of them. They also have brought some people from adjacent areas. My husband has just gone to India for taking training to participate in the Liberation War of Bangladesh. As I encountered the military, they asked me something in Urdu language, but I could not understand what they wanted to mean

due to language barrier. Later they used body language to make me understand that I should leave the country with my daughter. I asked them to give me a token so that army do not capture me on the way. They could not understand my language as well. Meantime, they took all the people they have captured from our home and adjacent areas at a frontier of a ditch near our home. I observed that they have been lined up in a que and shot dead altogether. I ran away from my village the time they have been shot and moved towards Indian border to take refuge in India.”

Memorial and Preservation of the Memorials

The mass graves that exist adjacent to northern side of *Gainbari* at Bermohol village under Gava-Ramchandrapur union of Jhalokathi Sadar Upazila are now a deserted fallow land covered with bush. Thus far, no initiative has been taken to demarcate the site let alone constructing a memorial plaque either by the community people or union parishad/local Freedom Fighters’ Command Council/Local administration. There are still some betel leaf sheds at the southern side of the grave but no sign of existence of any ditch where so many people were lined up, shot dead and dead bodies were dumped into the ditch covering with earth. Chittoranjon Halder and Manorojon Halder were among those who buried all the dead bodies.

Evaulation

Gainbari genocide is one of the two genocide sites of Gava-Ramchandrapur Union i) *Gainbari* ii) *Bamuner haat* where many people were killed in 1971 as part of ethnic cleansing by the Pakistani army. The study evaluates that

1. The people of Hindu community and people who rallied in favour of Liberation War at Gava-Ramchandrapur union under Jhalokathi Sadar Upazila were the main target in the

genocide plan of the occupying Pakistani forces and its local collaborators with a view to panic them and ultimately drive them out from the then East Pakistan.

2. The people were innocent and most of them were farmer, betel leaf labourer, agricultural labourer and fishermen who were, in fact, poor and illiterate.
3. Negligence to preserve the site is palpably evident as there is no demarcation of the site let alone constructing any memorial plaque. Even the site has not been listed in the government documents. Local union parishad knows about the site, but no written documents were available at the Gava-Ramchandrapur Union Parishad office.
4. The place, like many others in the union, should be earmarked and memorial plaque should be built to preserve the memory of the martyrs.
5. They should be appropriately identified by the relevant agency and facilities could be given by the concern department of the government.
6. The Hindu community who took refuge in India could not return until the war was over, and upon return they got their houses divested, cattle and household belonging lost making them mentally traumatized.

Preservation of mass grave is of prime importance and dissemination of real history of Liberation War is necessary for the future generation who should know the highest sacrifice of martyrs and women who lost their honour for gaining Bangladesh's independence. It will help discourage developing fanaticism, rise of militancy and create a non-communal Bangladesh. They also will be able to learn the ideals and supreme sacrifice of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for developing patriotism amongst them and participate in the nation building activities.

Notes

1. Sirajul Islam (eds), *Banglapedia*, Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2000. Retrieved from http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Jhalokati_District
2. Peace Committee' was formed on April 10 in 1971 led by the then president of East Pakistan Council Muslim League Khwaja Khairuddin to save Pakistan and to resist the emergence of Bangladesh. The committee was later constituted across all administrative units of the then east Pakistan.
3. Narrow canal between the frontier of two homes in rural areas of Bangladesh.
4. Male lower garment widely used in many Asian countries including Bangladesh.
5. Verses containing basic faiths of Islam.

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The Nation and its Women: Revisiting 1971

The markers of violence, as we know, are difficult, if not impossible to discern. Deaths and physical harm construct the realms of violence in certain terms. However, the practice of violence is not restricted to bodily pain. Violence can become the referral point while talking of riots and mayhem. One might talk of riots while meaning violence. The moment of utterance is marked by this confusion of categories. Historicizing violence has, therefore, been a difficult exercise. Moving from one occurrence to the other has, more or less, set the pattern. In this narrative of violence, one finds the high points of violent outbreaks. However, since the act of speech (as also that of silence), complicates this process, it becomes imperative to accommodate remembrance and forgetting within this narrative. Women's experiences, in this narrative of violence have a special place since their victimhood get intricately linked with the *honour* of their families and their communities. This experience, steeped in silence, eludes the attempt of the historian to document and to record. Memorialization of this experience in fixed terms of martyrdom and resilience fails to take note of the possibilities of violence as much as the incidence of violence.

I

As violence becomes communal, fixing the identity of a community, it becomes difficult to accommodate it in the realm of the modern nation-state. The coming of the nation creates a