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Genocide and Number Games

The genocide of 1971 has been an issue of much controversy recently. However, the dispute is not solely a negative phenomenon because it again puts the case of genocide on the table. The genocide in Rakhine State by the military and Aung San Suu Kyi's government of Myanmar, genocide in Yemen, Sudan, etc., prove that genocide and genocidal violence are still relevant in the contemporary world. Still, Myanmar's military junta continues genocidal activities in other parts of Myanmar.

To date, no one has accurately illustrated casualties of warfare or genocidal violence. Researchers could estimate the numbers based on a specific area's intensity, domain, and population. The genocide perpetrated by Nazis, Fascists, and Phalangist across Europe during World War II lasted more than four years, and the violence spread over a vast area.

Contrary, Bangladesh is a small but densely populated country. Pakistani military and their allies took advantage of this, which geared up the intensity of the genocide. As a result, they could kill so many people in a short time. For example, In Chuknagar, about 10,000 people were killed in hours. Killing so many people within such a short time is one of the critical aspects of the Bangladesh genocide.¹

Various statistics and reports appeared about the number of casualties of the genocide immediately after the War of 1971. *Pravda*, a newspaper of the Russian Communist Party, put the death toll at 3 million. Pakistan's President Yahya Khan once

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declared – “Kill three million of them, the rest will perish in our hands”; the *Pravda* authorities may have remembered that, and in the light of that announcement, 3 million were killed.

The United Nations conducted a survey called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its report was published in 1982. The reports said 6,000 to 12,000 people were killed daily in Bangladesh in 1971. This rate is the highest in the history of genocide: “Report among the genocides of human history, the highest number of people killed in the lower period was in Bangladesh in 1971. An average of 6000 to 12000 people were killed every single day... This is the highest daily average in the history of genocide.” The death toll in Bangladesh exceeds 3 million; if we accept the UN estimates of the highest average.

When the trial for crimes against humanity began, the controversy started again. Pakistan protested against the trial, while BNP-Jamaat protested in Bangladesh. They protested because they thought it would lessen their responsibility. Jamaat being a collaborator of Pakistani Army, participated whole heartedly in perpetrating the genocide. Bangladesh Nationalist Party or BNP is a political ally of the Jamaat in the national politics, which indirectly makes them supporter of the genocide. However, this is not an argument that they will understand. West and powerful states hesitated at the beginning because by helping Pakistan, they had to bear responsibility also. However, Bangladesh did not say anything on this issue, and they were not capable also at that time. What can Bangladesh do against America, China, and Saudi Arabia? However, the controversy did not fade away.

The government's account of the genocide is accepted all over the world. In Bangladesh, the government has said that 3 million people were killed in the genocide, and we have accepted that. One of the reasons behind this controversy is that academics or activists did not regard genocide as a central feature of the Liberation War. However, the main feature of the War is genocide-torture.

2

As a part of civil society, we took some initiative in such a context. We established the country's first genocide-torture Museum in Khulna. I took the initiative in establishing this Museum. We published the *Genocide Index Series* from the Museum, which is the field-level investigation of the genocide perpetrated in different parts of Bangladesh. Generally, most of the sites related to genocide or mass graves are not known or were obliterated; even if known, no details were preserved. Due to this situation, we have taken the initiative to conduct research based on the interview of the eyewitnesses, survivors, and relatives of the genocidal event. We have already published more than 125 books on genocide as a part of this initiative. Besides, we have placed plaques in many places. Most of the genocides in this *index* were unknown. That means the extent of genocide in Bangladesh is vast.

A decade ago, a debate was initiated by the then leaders of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, including three times Prime Minister of the Country Khaleda Zia, revisionist academicians, etc. However, nobody questioned the number of people who died in Auschwitz in Poland. Nobody questions the number of people who died in the Holodomor genocide of Ukraine. But in Bangladesh, it was questioned by some Bangalis, which is undoubtedly a tragedy. However, our aim of surveying is not to justify three million but rather to explore the intensity, nature, and extent of the genocide. The results so far exposed the whole range of genocide, from cities to villages, from Centre to periphery.

In the last 50 years, no one - Government, Ministry of Liberation War, Freedom Fighters, Muktiyuddha Command Council, academics, etc. - has engaged thoughtfully and critically with the happenings of 1971 perpetrated in every corner of Bangladesh. After establishing the Genocide Museum in Khulna, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs started a project that established a research center titled 'Centre for Genocide-Torture and Liberation War

Studies'. As mentioned earlier, we took an initiative to conduct a survey in 64 districts from the center. The objective of the survey was to identify and enumerate the number of genocidal incidents, torture cells, killing fields, and mass graves in all districts. The aim was also to prepare a list of liberation war memorials and freedom fighters' graves.

So far, we have completed the survey of 35 districts and published these reports. From this survey, all the astonishing information about genocide and torture came into being for the first time. As a whole, genocide was perpetrated in every square mile of Bangladesh. For the first time, we get a detailed account of the torture cells, killing fields, mass graves, and an approximate account of the genocide. This estimation will also add the number of casualties from epidemics in the refugee camps. Then the number of martyrs will exceed three million.

Another thing to note is that while conducting this survey, we find much evidence of genocide in remote areas. The collaborators - Razakar, Peace Committee, Al Badar, etc. - paved the way for perpetrating genocide in those areas. From this point of view, the number of collaborators was not so small, and we estimate that the number will be much higher.

The main feature of the survey is the number, but not the number of martyrs because it was not our intention. The survey emphasizes genocidal events, killing fields, mass graves, and torture centers. According to the published publications earlier, the highest number of genocidal events, killing fields, mass graves and torture centers was 905. However, the survey provides a different scenario, much more intense than the preceding statistics.

The second feature of our survey is the involvement of well-trained local researchers. The Genocide Museum first trained the new researchers at the district level. For example, 101 researchers were trained in Dinajpur initially. Later these trained researchers took part in field research in this region along with

Dinajpur. They traveled from village to village to collect the unknown history of 1971.

The third important feature is the research methodology. Fourthly, collected data and information are cross-checked thoroughly. Fifthly, the study identifies genocide-mass killing sites, mass graves, and torture cells across the country. The mass killing fields, genocides, and the history of the mass graves are in the process of being listed.

Besides conducting research, we also took another initiative to preserve the memory of the mass killing field and graves. Already 50 memorial plaques have been erected in different districts. Furthermore, we launched a digital map based on the survey. Torture cells, genocidal sites, mass killing sites, and mass graves are identified and digitalized using GPS. This attempt is closely related to the project of Digital Bangladesh.

This survey is proof of the brutality and torture perpetrated by the Pakistani Army in 1971. It highlights the intensity of the genocide of 1971 as well as the history of brutality.

The survey highlights the narratives of marginalized people as it emphasizes oral history. For the first time in the history of Bangladesh, victims are speaking on their own. Their voices should be heard! Contrasting the history of military heroism, it is a history of marginalized peoples and a history of misery too!

This survey shows some precise results:

Genocidal sites, killing fields, mass graves, and torture cells across the country will be identified. Through this survey, a partial list of names of freedom fighters as well as victims can be estimated. A list of district-based anti-Liberation War supporters and collaborators will be known.

The survey of 35 districts has already been completed. Despite the many limitations, many have expressed surprise at the results of these 35 district surveys.

According to the preliminary survey of 35 districts so far, we are getting:

Genocidal events : 14527

Killing Field : 765

Mass Grave : 1051

Torture Cell : 1032

Total : 17375

The question, as mentioned earlier, can be considered again: what will be the total number after the survey? The number of martyrs may exceed three million. This might end the debate on the genocide of Bangladesh.

The work of this survey was difficult. Because there was no model in front of us, little money, lack of interested people. We tried to get the job done with little resources. The biggest obstacle is the loss of memory. Many do not remember what happened so many years ago, and many who witnessed it are not among us anymore. The research is undoubtedly micro-level research.

It is clear from the above table that the district survey sheds light on the history of 'suppression' of 1971, highlighting the extent of the brutality of the Pakistani Army. The results will undermine all the prior assumptions. History is not only to be collected; it has to be preserved, propagated, and practiced.

Although the participation of Bangalis, irrespective of their classes, in the Liberation war was acknowledged, their voices were absent at large. This attempt of the Genocide Museum provides a comprehensive picture of the participation of all classes. Thus, everyone can establish a direct relationship with the Liberation War, regardless of class, religion, caste, or creed.

3

Nowadays, people do not want to accept something as standard unless it has a quotation from English books, regardless of the subject I am studying or researching. This tendency is strong among researchers in Bangladesh. They generally do not want to quote from Bangla books. But they did not examine that their [authors] analyses and theoretical framework is not perfect.

Genocide-torture includes rape. One of the verdicts of the International Crimes Tribunal considered rape as a crime comparable to genocide or a crime against humanity.

I will discuss three books published in the last few years on related issues in this article. Let us talk about genocidal rape. Three female scholars have written theses on the genocide and rape in Bangladesh.² They are Sarmila Bose, Yasmin Saikia and Nayanika Mookherjee. Except for Sarmila Bose, the other two came to Dhaka, and I had the opportunity to talk with them. As the young researchers of Bangladesh are used to using the internet extensively, they usually cite these three researchers and use quotes one after another while studying genocide in Bangladesh because they are written in English. However, they paid little attention to the flawed and problematic theoretical framework of the studies and analyses.³

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'. Foreign researchers have said precisely this. However, for them, the extermination of Jews and the cases of Darfur and Bosnia amount to genocide, but surprisingly, the case of Bangladesh does not qualify as genocide. She also mentioned that the number of martyred was ten lakhs and never accepted the 30 lakhs. Why is the Hutu-Tutsi conflict not a civil war, but what took place in Bangladesh is a civil war? Furthermore, how can genocide take place amid 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. Nevertheless, the Bangali freedom fighters fought with the Razakars. Hence killings resulted on both sides. Al Badar and Razakars have been killed; sometimes, they were released. As

opposed to 30 lakh Bangalis, if one could estimate that freedom fighters had killed 40 thousand Pakistani soldiers during the Liberation War, Razakars and Biharis, a theory could be constructed. However, this simply did not take place. When Yasmin concludes 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 mass violence". [P.51]

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 insiders? Known as 'uncompromising', our Prime Minister for three terms, Khaleda Zia, expressed doubt in 2015 regarding the number of Bangali martyrs. One year later, BNP leader Goyeshwar Roy supported Khaleda Zia's position. Then, Sheikh Hasina began the trial of those who were accused of committing genocide. The leaders of Jamaat were being tried in the tribunal.

Pakistan and Turkey were aggrieved at this turn of events. Jamaat and BNP were allies, and they were allies of Pakistan as well. The Pakistani way of thought has also influenced them. Jamaat lobbied extensively. 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 nine months. Again, Dr. Kamal was opposed to the Awami League. In other words, denial of the figure of Bangalis martyred and raising 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 impossible to give the exact figure of the people exterminated in genocide. This is true of all genocides that have occurred. 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 others more or less accept the figures proposed by countries where genocides have taken place.

From Cambodia to Rwanda, 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 an alleged 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 is the responsibility of those who have committed genocide and the latter's supporters less?

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

4

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, plundered, and committed all kinds of crimes, including rape. General Tikka Khan proves their insensitivity and cruelty on his

return to West Pakistan from Dhaka. When questioned about loot and killings by journalists, he replied unabashedly that the statistics of rape had been highly exaggerated. 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, and Bhutto were all associated with it. Indeed, he said if a soldier rapes even one woman of his country, he commits a repugnant crime.⁴

The famous Indian novelist, Mulk Raj Anand, spoke candidly about rape and the Pakistani policy behind it. What he said in 1972 was essentially this: "The Pakistani Army followed this policy to create a new race." The US army had implemented this policy in Vietnam. I have said earlier: "Rapes were so systematic and pervasive that they had to be conscious of Army policy. Planned by the West Pakistanis in a deliberate effort to create a new race or to dilute Bangali nationalism."⁵

The Australian doctor Geoffrey Davis was closely associated with 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 were ordered by Tikka Khan and directed by him to indulge in rape". He said, "A true Muslim would fight against everyone except his father. So, their duty was to impregnate as many Bangali women as possible. This was the policy or theory behind this act of massive rape".

The subject turns out to be even more evident in my book *Birangana*, where I have described quite some case studies. When one reads these case studies, one learns 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 cruelly and indifferently; as if they were not human beings, but mere commodities and finally four,

to fulfill their sexual lust. This last aspect was a form of revenge and was closely associated with number one and two.

How many were raped in Bangladesh in 1971? We have received many estimates after liberation. The figure has reached four lakhs at present. Dr. Davis has also given this figure of 4 lakhs. When the news of this mass rape reached outside Bangladesh, 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, æThe 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 every day 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.

I 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 *Newsweek* on November 15, 1971. The report was as follows: 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 from 12 to 35 years old. Moreover, all males above 12 years were shot dead.

Davis gave the following answer to a question about this brutality. The question was whether 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, æno, no, they have been raped and raped, and the figure being provided is much less than the actual figure. The way they subjugated towns and villages also roused 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. After that, the soldiers separated the women after a preliminary selection. They used to collect together all sexually mature females. Some soldiers gathered together males living in the town or village. All those who were connected with the Awami League were promptly shot down. After that, the females were brought to the military compound and distributed among the soldiers. This was a repugnant act. You do not find another example of this cruelty in other parts of the world. However, this process happened and was repeated in Bangladesh”.

According to logic, it is accurate that the Pakistanis did not ravage 64,000 villages. However, wherever they went, they spelled disaster for women. A pattern emerges from the description of such incidents included here. The pattern is that 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 was raped and 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 to retain the honor 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 another, the males failed to protect the women, which were their duty; for males, this was a matter of shame. Moreover, they tried to reduce the figure of a woman raped and tortured. I cannot fathom the sociological reason for this attitude. As a result, no one wants to discuss the subject of rape.

Davis has also said, æthe 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.”⁶

Susan Brownmiller has written, ærape in Bangladesh had hardly been restricted to beauty – girls of eight and grandmothers of 75 had been sexually assaulted.”⁷ The Pakistanis not only raped the women on the spot but also took them to military barracks and pounced on them at night. æSome 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 generalized campaign of destruction and slaughter, can only be guessed at”.⁸

Hasan, in his book, mentioned a report that Uppsala University (Sweden) prepared. This report claimed that the number of women raped was between 2 and 4 lakhs. He has referred to his survey and wrote, æwe 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 based on 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.”⁹

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 is also not comprehensive and final. However, still, the figures reveal the massive extent of rape.

The description he gave after this – if we consider it literally – would point to a figure even more than he has provided. He could track 30,000 Birangana in Sylhet itself. His words are, æThe female workers who labored in the tea gardens – women laborers and their young as well as adolescent daughters, Manipur and Khasia women, were raped indiscriminately. Each

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 inhabited by Manipuri women were subjected to excruciating torture."¹⁰ Apart from those mentioned above, the following regions were also a victim of merciless depredation: Chhabia along with adjacent villages in Bhuapara police station area in Tangail, almost all villages in the range of Gournadi police station in Barisal, Rajiher in Agailojhara, entire Barisal district with an emphasis on Kola village, almost every house in Patuakhali, Jail and remote villages of this district. He has also named quite some villages in the Faridpur district where villagers had been subjected to rape and torture. What sort of a figure do we arrive at if we estimate that every house in the concerned town has been invaded?

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

International Commission of Jurists stated:

It has been learned that the Pakistani army men have perpetrated extensive rapes on older women and young girls. Confessions from countless sources underline the truth of this valid accusation. The Bangladesh government has claimed that due to this massive rape, more than 70,000 women have turned pregnant. No matter whatever the correct figure, American and British doctors and surgeons continue their work on abortion. They are also extensively persuading people to accept these women in 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. However, the fact is that these very military officers themselves imprisoned young women in order to satisfy their sexual lust".¹¹

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, æI 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 Borhgrave, senior editor of *Newsweek* wrote, æGiving 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."

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.

John Hastings, a missionary, said æPakistani soldiers have thrust their bayonets into the vaginal passages of women and killed them." 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. 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 5 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. 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.¹² 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 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 Sarmila'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. Sarmila has found all these Pakistani sources as more acceptable. Once you dissect the links and sources, Sarmila'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, suggest 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 could 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 aprofessional".
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 Sarmila'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 refutation. I would only give a few examples from her text which are patently wrong.

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 Sarmila 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 Sarmila 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, æI 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 in his book the extensive killing, loot and rape indulged in by the Pakistani army. To use his words, æsince 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".¹³ 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, æI 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,"¹⁴ Well, the fact of the matter is, while the military leader describes his own soldiers as disorderly criminals, Sarmila indicates that they were ægentlemen". Sarmila 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? To remove any doubt on this score, read the telegram dated March 1 sent by Archer Blood, Consul General of the US. æSix 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."¹⁵ Sarmila 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, æwhile 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.'¹⁶

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 Sarmila 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*.

æOne 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".¹⁷

I have mentioned in *Birangana* that, the number of raped women might exceed five lakhs. One of the judgements of Highcourt also mentioned that number.

Let us end with another reminder. Sarmila, 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, but they have also converted Pakistan into a failed state. With the help of arms, they suppressed the country and its civil society, and nothing was heroic. Much civil society protested against the genocide and rape conducted by the Pakistani army and even sent them to prison for their stand.

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

This narrative on the genocide and rape perpetrated in Bangladesh has turned out to be long, and many could view it as irrelevant. However, I wanted to show how researchers indulge in subtle politics. Quite some respected persons in Pakistan have told Shahriar Kabir and me that the Pakistani generals invited Sarmila 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 that Western academics would perhaps like. When these books/articles are published, there is no mention of genocide or 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 it earlier. However, 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 the US perpetrated in Vietnam using *napalm* is not labeled as genocide in the West but rather as a part of the war. Because if you express the word war, the responsibility for killing is lessened. The warring sides will lose men if there is a war between the two. However, that which took place in Vietnam – was it merely a war? Vietnam wanted independence, but the imperialist powers would not agree to this demand.

For this reason, it was not merely a war but the killing of innocent civilians, which took place for 40 years. Many Western researchers and American scholars have labeled Bangladesh's Liberation War as a civil war. Because if one accepts the latter label, the burden of genocide does not fall upon the perpetrators. I have mentioned earlier that there is not one mention of the war and genocide begun by Suharto. Attempts have been made to wipe out the memory of this genocide, but none speaks about it. Precisely because the US supported it; however, even after saying this, it must be said that what Pol Pot did was a crime against humanity. Further, Suharto and Yahya committed the same crime.

5

Another point is to be addressed. The reports on the genocide did not include the death toll of the refugee camps in 1971. Nevertheless, the refugee camp victims are also the victims of genocidal violence. Newspapers and reports of 1971 published horrible words and pictures about refugee camps. In one photo, I saw a corpse that had died in an epidemic being eaten by a dog.

According to a report in American *Life* magazine, the vultures ate their bodies so much that they lost their appetite. That number must be included with the genocide. Various research is also being done on the death in the refugee camp. A few days ago, Shahaduzzaman said that more than three lakh Bangladeshi refugees had died of other diseases, including the cholera epidemic in June-July.¹⁸ This number does not include the number of deaths of refugees during April-May. If all numbers are considered, we estimate that the total number of deaths in refugee camps could be four to five lakhs. In other words, if we consider the whole picture of the liberation war, we can say that the total number of martyrs is more than three million. We make this assumption based on two conclusions; One, the numbers that our district survey shows are surprising; Two, more than 4-5 lakh deaths in refugee camps must be considered. The then government has shown the genocidal rape figure less than what happened. Maybe it was a conservative mindset. In my research, the figure is more than five lakhs, which the High court has accepted in a verdict. As a result, this numerical debate is, in fact, of no use at all except a lucrative invented academic discussion and populist but useless political debate.

Notes

1. For Details: Muntassir Mamoon, *Chuknagar Genocide*, Genocide Museum, Khulna, 2014.
2. This part of the essay was published in the first issue of the Journal (Muntassir Mamoon, 'Genocide, State and Museum: A Study on the Bangladesh of 1971', *The Journal of Genocide and Liberation War Research*, Issue 1, 2021).
3. The books mentioned here are: Yasmin Saikia, *Women, War, and the Making of Bangladesh: Remembering 1971*, Duke University Press Books, 2011; Nayanika Mookherjee, *The Spectral Wound: Sexual Violence, Public Memories, and the Bangladesh War of 1971*, Duke University Press, 2015; Sarmila Bose, *Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War*, Hurst, 2011; Discussions on these books : Muntassir Mamoon, 'Muktijuddho, Grihojuddho O Dhorshon', *Muktijuddher Itihas, Onnovabe Dekha*, Anyaprakash, Dhaka, 2018.
4. For detailed discussions of rape see : Muntassir Mamoon, *Birangana 1971*, Subarna, Dhaka, 2013; For conversations with the Pakistani Generals see : Muntassir Mamoon, *Pakistani Generalder Mon*, Somoy Prokashon, Dhaka, 2018 (5th Edition); Muntassir Mamoon and Mohiuddin Ahmed, *Pakistanider Drishtite Ekattor*, UPL, Dhaka, First Published in 2015 [9th Edition]
5. For detail: Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, New York, 1975.
6. For detail: Bina D'Costa, æDr. Geoffrey Davis : Doctor as a Volunteer in war-destroyed Bangladesh', Asok, *Judhoparadh*, Dhaka (War Crimes, Dhaka), 2008, P47-54; 'Nari Nirjaton' (Torture of Women) *Banglar Bani* (Special Number on Genocide, Dhaka 1971).
7. Susan Brownmiller, *Ibid*.
8. *Ibid*.
9. Dr. M. A. Hasan, *Juddho O Nari*, Dhaka, 2002, p.31.
10. *Ibid*.
11. Quoted in Umme Habiba Sumi, *Ekattorer Ganadharsaner bichar prosange judhoaparad* (War Crimes related to the trials of mass rape)

12. Shahriar Kabir, 'Ekatore Nari Nirjaton ebong Nirjatitoder Samajik Abasthan' (Torture of Women in 1971 and the social position of the tortured), *Ekattorer Ganahatya, Nirjaton ebong Judhoparadhider Bichar*, Dhaka, 2000, p. 25.
13. For details: A. A. K. Niazi, Lt Gen. *The Betrayal of East Pakistan*, 1998.
14. *Ibid.*
15. For details: Archer K. Blood. *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh*, UPL, Dhaka, 2002.
16. Muntassir Mamoon, *Sei Sob Pakistani*, [Those Pakistanis] UPL, Dhaka, 1999
17. *Time*, 25 October 1971.
18. Shahaduzzaman and Khairul Islam, '1971 Sale Shoronarhi Shibire Mriter Sonkha Koto' [What is the number of deaths in refugee camps in 1971?], *Prothom Alo*, 16 Decembe 2021

Appendix

Survey of Genocide. Killing Field. Mass Grave and Torture Cells

Nilphamari

Genocide: 11
Killing Field: 37
Mass Grave: 17
Torture Center: 20
Total: 85

Natore

Genocide: 63
Killing Field: 18
Mass Grave: 22
Torture Center: 04
Total: 107

Narayanganj

Genocide: 209
Killing Field: 23
Mass Grave: 10
Torture Center: 46
Total: 288

Bhola

Genocide: 37
Killing Field: 5
Mass Grave: 17
Torture Center: 15
Total: 74

Bogra

Genocide: 45
Killing Field: 33
Mass Grave: 20
Torture Center: 41
Total: 139

Satkhira

Genocide: 15
Killing Field: 11
Mass Grave: 8
Torture Center: 7
Total: 41

Rajshahi

Genocide: 127

Mass Killing Field: 9

Mass Grave: 26

Torture Center: more than 100

Total: 262

Gaibandha

Genocide: 136

Killing Field: 9

Mass Grave: 10

Torture Center: 8

Total: 163

Khulna

Genocide: 1155

Killing Field: 27

Mass Grave: 7

Torture Center: 32

Total: 1221

Jamalpur

Genocide: 192

Killing Field: 22

Mass Grave: 21

Torture Center: 21

Total: 268

Pabna

Genocide: 75

Killing Field: 26

Mass Grave: 12

Torture Center: 13

Total: 126

Narail

Genocide: 149

Killing Field: 3

Mass Grave: 4

Torture Center: 5

Total: 161

Kurigram

Genocide: 15

Killing Field: 15

Mass Grave: 12

Torture Center: 42

Total: 84

Panchagarh

Genocide: 649

Killing Field: 4

Mass Grave: 17

Torture Center: 23

Total: 693

Moulvibazar

Genocide: 317
Killing Field: 26
Mass Grave: 15
Torture Center: 18
Total: 376

Jessore

Genocide: 589
Killing Field: 39
Mass Grave: 33
Torture Center: 36
Total: 697

Lalmonirhat

Genocide: 562
Killing Field: 18
Mass Grave: 8
Torture Center: 13
Total: 601

Brahmanbaria

Genocide: 343
Killing Field: 35
Mass Grave: 180
Torture Center: 92
Total: 650

Barishal

Genocide: 240
Killing Field: 20
Mass Grave: 23
Torture Center: 23
Total: 306

Cox's Bazar

Genocide: 195
Killing Field: 20
Mass Grave: 29
Torture Center: 23
Total: 267

Chittagong

Genocide: 603
Killing Field: 95
Mass Grave: 62
Torture Center: 88
Total: 848

Dinajpur

Genocide: 1726
Killing Field: 32
Mass Grave: 34
Torture Center: 65
Total: 1857

Thakurgaon

Genocide: 409

Killing Field: 13

Mass Grave: 14

Torture Center: 11

Total: 447

Naogaon

Genocide: 1600

Killing Field: 51

Mass Grave: 18

Torture Center: 154

Total: 1823

Munshiganj

Genocide: 145

Killing Field: 7

Mass Grave: 65

Torture Center: 17

Total: 234

Chapainawabganj

Genocide: 512

Killing Field: 11

Mass Grave: 51

Torture Center: 30

Total: 604

Tangail

Genocide: 545

Killing Field: 16

Mass Grave: 76

Torture Center: 23

Total: 660

Sirajganj

Genocide: 579

Killing Field: 15

Mass Grave: 85

Torture Center: 29

Total: 708

Gazipur

Genocide: 692

Killing Field: 29

Mass Grave: 23

Torture Center: 28

Total: 772

Chudanga

Genocide: 695

Killing Field: 16

Mass Grave: 17

Torture Center: 17

Total: 745

Faridpur

Genocide: 678

Killing Field: 7

Mass Grave: 23

Torture Center: 15

Total: 723

Mymensingh

Genocide: 342

Killing Field: 33

Mass Grave: 31

Torture Center: 23

Total: 429

Rajbari

Genocide: 480

Killing Field: 14

Mass Grave: 22

Torture Center: 11

Total: 527

Narsingdi

Genocide: 322

Killing Field: 26

Mass Grave: 12

Torture Center: 34

Total: 394