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in  
1971 Bangladesh Genocide**



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**भारत नीति प्रतिष्ठान  
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## Preface

Unlike Europe and Americas, Indian sub-continent has always prided itself in its ancient civilisation and refined culture. Literature, art, music, science, architecture, medicine and spirituality blossomed and bloomed here for thousands of years, till barbarians from West and Central Asia began their destructive attacks on undivided India. One of the most heinous, yet least studied, genocides in human history took place in India, where tens of millions of innocent Indian men, women and children were massacred by barbarians from outside, in the first half of the second millennium.

The Indian people had never imagined such brutalities from fellow human beings. War and violence were not strange phenomena for Indians, but there were clearly defined codes of conduct even during war time, and at the battlefield. Global trade, materialistic prosperity and peaceful co-existence with people having diverse beliefs transformed India into a soft target for the barbarians from outside. Frightened by the brutal dance of death, rape and torture, millions of Indians converted to Islam during those bloody periods. With passage of time, due to both genetic and nurturing influences, their descendants began to think and behave like tormentors of their ancestors.

Partition of India ended up in similar brutalities, massacres, rapes, destruction and kidnappings, on both western and eastern regions, as their ancestors had suffered at the hands of barbarians from outside. More than a million people were killed and lakhs of women were raped and tortured brutally. Out of this macabre violence, Pakistan came into existence. On demand of Bengali speaking Muslims, East Pakistan also came into being. Linguistic unity with Hindu Bengalis crumbled before religious affinity with Muslim Punjabis. Muslims on both sides of Pakistan were happy to be part of one Islamic nation. But soon, they began to distrust each other. Religious bonding could not keep them together for long. Muslims in West Pakistan considered Muslims from East Pakistan as lesser Muslims, having cultural influences of undivided Bengal and India.

The rift continued to widen and a moment came when power crazy political and military leaders from West Pakistan decided to teach a lesson to people from East Pakistan. The end result was another horrible display of brutalities, murders, rapes, loot and arson. This time by Pakistan's armed forces on their own citizens, both non-Muslims and Muslims. Within a short span of few months, lakhs of innocent people were killed mercilessly, women were kidnapped and turned into sex-slaves, and millions were forced to run for safety to India, having lost families, properties and dignity at the cruel hands of Pakistani armed forces and their local agents.

While world media and humanitarian organisations regularly highlighted the plight of innocent millions, and ongoing brutalities of Pakistani forces on people in East Pakistan, USA, China and some allies of Pakistan remained not only mute spectators of this barbaric genocide, but they also continued to provide covert and overt support to the inhuman agenda and propaganda of Pakistani leaders and media against the suffering Bangladeshi people.

Ultimately, burdened by influx of more than 10 million Bangladeshi refugees into its territory, India had to interfere militarily and Pakistani forces suffered a humiliating defeat. Finally, Bangladesh became an independent nation.

The saddest chapter of this genocide in Bangladesh was suffering of millions of innocent girls and women, who were tortured and raped repeatedly over months, resulting in unwanted pregnancies and deliveries. These most unfortunate women had to suffer social isolation and public humiliation for no fault of theirs. And then they were forced to give up the 'war babies' for adoption to foreigners since their leadership didn't want any 'Pakistani child' on the soil of their newly formed country.

Humanity has made immense progress in science, technology and communication. But its real progress can only be measured in terms of value assigned to sanctity of lives of humans, animals and other beings. As long as any belief or idea exists which takes pride in taking life of another being, and refuses to punish all those who preach and promote violence against others, humanity shouldn't take pride in its progress. Nearly five decades have gone, and Pakistan is yet to punish the criminals responsible for Bangladesh Genocide of 1971. Civil Society of the world and international organisations should have exerted pressure on Pakistan to ensure punishment for the guilty. Failure of the world to take Pakistan to task for its role in Bangladesh Genocide has emboldened it so much that since then it has transformed itself into a terror-sponsor state, causing havoc not only in India, but in several countries around the world. Not merely that, Pakistan armed forces have also indulged in brutalities on people in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Barbarianism of the past has taken a new shape. How long the humanity can ignore this brutal reality? Bangladesh Genocide is a painful reminder to us all. This compilation of incidents from 1971 by Brig R P Singh and Hitesh Singh is an effort to sensitise the readers about perils of ignoring such tendencies. Hopefully, it serves the intended purpose.

– **Dr. Kuldeep Ratnoo**  
Director  
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**I**n 1971 Pakistan armed forces had unleashed the biggest genocide, ethnic cleansing and pogrom of non-Muslim population in East Pakistan (Bangladesh). Since the perpetrators of the crime, 195 Pakistani war criminals, were never punished, Pakistan army is now indulging in similar acts in Baluchistan, PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Human rights' violation has become a norm rather than exception in Pakistan.

The sordid tale of 'Operation Searchlight', unleashed on innocent unarmed people of East Pakistan, clearly exposes the true brutal face of the Pakistan Army.

Going by the number of people killed on a daily basis, this was the worst pogrom in history. In a short period of 267 days, an estimated thirty lakh people were killed, four lakh women were raped and more than seventy thousand war babies were born. One crore refugees were forced to flee to India. Majority of the victims were Hindus. Numbers of studies have been carried out on the Pakistani genocide committed on the innocent unarmed people. One of the authors, Brig R P Singh (Retired), was a young Captain in 1971. He was involved in liberation of Bangladesh from day one i.e. 26 March 1971 till the last day i.e. 16 December 1971 in different capacities. He witnessed the cruellest actions of Pakistani soldiers.

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**O**n 14 August 1947 British India was divided into two nations and three geographical identities, before independence on 15 August. East and West Pakistan were created on Eastern and Western corners of India, more than two thousand kilometres apart, with Indian landmass in between. Barring religion there was no commonality between people of two wings.

Partition was based on the Central and Provincial Assembly elections results held in 1945-46, which were fought on seats reserved for Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs etc. All India Muslim League (AIML) won



*Photo Courtesy : <http://sassamchronicle.com/bangladesh-genocide>*

all 30 seats reserved for Muslims in Central Legislative Assembly. In provincial assemblies AIML won most of reserved seats, barring NWFP where Frontier Congress, an affiliate of Indian National Congress, led by Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, won 29 seats out of 46. In NWFP the AIML could get only 45 percent votes but in remaining India it secured between 82 to 100 percent. In Madras and Bombay presidencies and Orissa it won hundred percent Muslim seats. In United Province it got 82 percent and Central Province 93 percent. Thus the myth spread by the pseudo-secularists that majority of Muslims who stayed in India had rejected Two Nations theory is absolutely wrong. In fact in the Muslim minority provinces there was more enthusiasm for creation of Pakistan amongst the believers of Islam.

However AIML could form government only in Bengal. In Punjab, Congress, Akali Dal, Unionist Party and others was formed a coalition. In Sindh, AIML managed to stitch a coalition by breaking GM Syed's Progressive Muslim League. In NWFP Frontier Congress formed the government which was headed by Dr. Khan Sahib (Captain Dr. Khan Abdul Jabbar Khan, a World War I veteran), elder brother of Frontier Gandhi. People of NWFP wanted to join India but Jawaharlal Nehru refused on the logic that there was no land contiguity, with West Pakistan (200 kilometres) being in between India and NWFP. Although between East and West Pakistan there was Indian land mass of over 2000 kilometres. Frontier Gandhi was so annoyed with Nehru that he never spoke to him during rest of his life and never visited India during Nehru's lifetime. Baluchistan (Khanate of Kalat) was a protectorate of British India till 11 August 1947 when it was granted independence by Lord Louis Mountbatten, Viceroy of British India. Baluchistan had its own flag and Embassy in Karachi. Khan of Kalat wanted protectorate status from India but Nehru finally refused on 27 March 1948 and the very next day Pak army moved in and forcibly included it into Pakistan. Since then people of Baluchistan celebrate 11 August as Independence Day and 28 March as black day.

PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) were illegally occupied by Pak militia, disguised as tribals, after attacking Princely state of J&K on 22 October 1947. When enemy had encircled Srinagar airfield Maharaja of J&K signed instrument of accession with India on 26 October 1947. Indian army landed at Srinagar airfield on 27 October 1947 and started pushing the enemy back, reached on last mountain range overlooking PoK's capital city Muzaffarabad. Indian Army was on the verge of giving final push when



Nehru referred the matter to UNO on 1 January 1948 and later accepted the UN brokered ceasefire with effect from 1 January 1949. In GB, a British Indian army officer, Major Philips Brown, was on deputation with state forces of J&K. He staged a mutiny, murdered Governor Brigadier Ghansara Singh and illegally signed an instrument of accession of merging the GB Agency with Pakistan in November 1947. Nehru accepted the ceasefire in GB along with PoK.

Nehru did not even charge Major Brown for staging mutiny, murdering the Governor of GB and illegally merging it with Pakistan in November 1947 whereas the whole state of J&K was merged with India by its ruler on 26 October 1947. Thus GB was part of India. Major Brown was in Kolkata in 1959, after his retirement and was working in a private firm. He was liable to be sentenced to death under the law but Nehru did not take any action against the mutineer. However some Sikh ex-army men who were part of Gilgit Scouts in 1947, were in Kolkata. They recognised him and attacked him, and left him for dead. But Brown was lucky as he was picked up by a doctor. Thus barring Western Punjab and Sindh, people of none of the remaining provinces under Pakistan opted to be part of that country. People of all the illegally occupied territories have been struggling for the last 72 years to free themselves from Pakistan. Partition resulted in killing of more than ten lakh Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims; and more than one crore refugees had to leave everything in Pakistan and run for safety to India.

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**E**ast Pakistan was treated like a colony by West Pakistanis. Majority of population (56 percent) lived in East Pakistan yet first PM Liaquat Ali Khan was from western part. Capital Karachi was in West Pakistan. East Pakistanis were discriminated in every



Photo Courtesy : <http://sindianexpress.com/article/research/birth-of-bangladesh-when-raped-women-and-war-babies-paid-the-price-of-a-new-nation-victory-day-4430420>

field, be it education, health services, jobs, industrial development or recruitment in the armed forces and civil services. 70 percent of foreign exchange was earned from exports of jute, tea and rawhide produced in

East Pakistan but earnings were spent on developing West Pakistan. Urdu was forced on Bengalis who loved their mother language. They had to make lot of sacrifices to get Bengali recognised as an official language. Soon East Pakistanis got disenchanted with the idea of Pakistan and raised demand for autonomy. In 1954 East Pakistan Provincial Assembly elections Awami League and other regional Parties won massive mandate. Bengalis rejected 'Two Nation' theory, the very basis for creation of Pakistan. Military dictator Ayub Khan ruthlessly suppressed their democratic rights. But Bengalis kept their fight on for autonomy.

Awami League chief Sheikh Mujibur Rahman raised 6 Point Program demand in 1966 to bring equality between two wings. He was falsely implicated in a concocted case called 'Agartala Conspiracy Case.' Under which a plan was supposed to have been hatched in Agartala, capital of Indian state of Tripura, in which Sheikh Mujib with help of India planned to secede East Pakistan. Massive public agitations in support of Sheikh Mujib forced Military Dictator to withdraw the case, release Mujib honourably and compelled Ayub Khan to hand over power to another General, Yahya Khan. This episode raised stature of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. He became Messiah of the poor and downtrodden in East Pakistan and icon for youth.

In the first and last free and fair general elections based on universal franchise in the history of united Pakistan were held in December 1970. Sheikh Mujib's Awami League got massive mandate winning 167 out of 169 seats in East Pakistan, getting absolute majority in a 314 member Pakistan National Assembly. But West Pakistanis did not hand over power to Bengalis. Yahya Khan in connivance with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto decided to launch military crackdown. Pakistan ruling clique was mulling over crackdown from December 1967 when mass movement was launched by East Pakistanis during Agartala Conspiracy Case trials. Generals were convinced that it was the only option available for subjugating Bengalis. Initial plan was drawn in 1969 by Lt Gen Sahabzada Yakub Khan who had codenamed it "Operation Blitz". He wrote in his diary that he wanted to see "the green fields of East Pakistan red."

Sheikh Mujib launched a massive Civil Disobedience Movement consequent to postponement of National Assembly session on 1 March 1971 by Yahya Khan as per the plan to deny him the rightful post of PM of Pakistan. After the success of Civil Disobedience Movement, the requirement of troops was reassessed. Soldiers in civvies were flown in chartered civilian aircrafts from West Pakistan via Sri Lanka, Myanmar,



Photo Courtesy : <http://snewsin.asiahasina-claims-indias-support-un-recognition-march-25-genocide-dayoperation-searchlight-March-25-1971>

Bhutan and Nepal. Arms, ammunition, transport and equipments were shipped via Colombo. Cover plan to draw away attention of East Pakistanis from troops build up was executed under which Yahya Khan arrived in Dhaka on 15 March 1971 for talks to resolve the

deadlock created by ZA Bhutto to stop Sheikh Mujib from becoming PM of Pakistan. After being briefed about prevailing situation in East Pakistan Yahya Khan told General Officer Commanding in Chief (GOC-in-C) of Pak forces in East Pakistan Lt Gen Tikka Khan, "Don't worry. I will line up Mujib tomorrow...will give him a bit of my mind....shall cold shoulder him and won't even invite him for lunch. Then I will meet him day after and see how he reacts. If he does not behave I'll know the answer." After a few awkward moments a tall wiry general officer got up and requested permission to make a submission. Yahya Khan nodded his head in approval. "Sir the situation is very delicate. It is essentially a political issue and needs to be resolved politically; otherwise thousands of innocent men, women and children will perish..." Yahya Khan listened to the wise counselling with rapt attention as others in apprehension and batting his eye lashes and nodding his head said, 'Mitty I know it...I know it...' the general officer sat down. Major Gen AO Mitha (Mitty for Yahya Khan) was relieved of his duties few days later. (1)

After one to one meeting between Sheikh Mujib and Yahya Khan on 17 March; Lt Gen Tikka Khan met President. Yahya Khan told him, "The bastard is not behaving....you get ready." Tikka Khan rang up Maj Gen Khadim Hussain Raja at 10 pm same night and said, "Khadim you can go ahead." It was the signal for army to start preparations for military crackdown. On 18 March Major Generals Khadim Hussain Raja and Rao Farman Ali reviewed Operation Blitz prepared by Major General Shahibzada Yakub Khan. They found it outdated since ground situation had changed drastically with massive support to Sheikh Mujib's Non-Cooperation Movement. New plan, christened 'Operation Searchlight' was drawn and presented to Army Chief Gen Abdul Hamid Khan and Lt Gen

Tikka Khan on 20 March 1971. Plan was approved by Yahya Khan on 23 March.

On 25 March 1971 at 11 am, Lt Gen Tikka Khan telephoned Major Gen Khadim and said, "Khadim it is tonight." In the evening of 25 March Yahya Khan drove to Flag Staff House in the Dhaka Cantonment to have a cup of tea with Gen Tikka Khan. Before dusk, President's cavalcade drove back to President's House with usual fanfare - pilot jeep, outriders and president's car with star plate having four stars and flag flying on bonnet. But as a ruse instead of Yahya Khan travelling in the car, a Brigadier deputized for him. Yahya travelled to Dhaka airport from Tikka Khan's residence incognito and entered the airport from PAF gate and flew off to Karachi. (2)

Tikka Khan was overall commander of Operation Searchlight. 26 March 1971 was fixed as D Day. It was decided by Yahya Khan to coincide with his second anniversary of assumption of power in 1969. As soon as President's aircraft was airborne, a waiter appeared in front of Yahya and asked what drink he would like to have. Yahya ordered for his favourite Scotch whisky. He was enjoying his drink while cruising at an altitude of 40,000 feet above mean sea level over Sri Lanka around midnight when captain of the aircraft appeared in front of him. After saluting he informed Yahya Khan that Op Searchlight had begun. (3) By the time Yahya got off from his aircraft in Karachi in early hours of 26 March 1971 thousands of innocent Bangladeshis had already been massacred.

All the foreign correspondents were deported from East Pakistan before launch of Op Searchlight. But few of them managed to hide. One of them was Simon Dring who sent his report which was published in Washington Post on 30 March 1971. "Led by American supplied M-24 World War II tanks, one column of troops sped to Dhaka University shortly after midnight. Troops took over the British Council Library and used it as a fire base from which to shell dormitory areas. Caught completely by surprise, some 200 students were killed in Iqbal Hall, headquarters of the militantly anti-government student's organisation. ....Two days later, bodies were still smouldering in burnt out rooms, others were scattered outside, more floated in a nearby lake and an arts student lay sprawled across his easel. The military removed many bodies, but 30 bodies still there could never have been accounted..... At another hall, reportedly, soldiers buried the dead in a hastily dug mass grave which was then bull-dodged over by tanks. People living near the university were caught in cross fire, and 200 yards of shanty houses running alongside of a railway line were destroyed.

Army patrols also razed nearby market area.....Fires were burning all over the city and troops had occupied the university area and surrounding areas. There was still heavy shelling in some areas. ...Shortly after dawn most firing had stopped, and as the sun came up an eerie silence settled over the city, deserted and completely dead except the noise of crows and the occasional convoy of troops or two or three tanks mopping up," wrote Simon.

About the genocide in English Road, French Road, Niar Bazar and City Bazar, Simon wrote, "They suddenly appeared at the end of the street. The lead unit was followed by soldiers carrying cans of gasoline. Those who tried to escape were shot. Those who stayed were burnt alive. About 700 men, women and children died between noon and 2 p.m. .... On Saturday morning the radio announced that the curfew would be lifted from 7 a. m. until 4 p.m. ....Magically the city returned to life and the panic set in. By 10 a. m. with palls of black smoke still hanging over large areas of old town and out of distance towards industrial areas, the streets were packed with people leaving the town. By car and in rickshaws, but mostly on foot, carrying their possessions with them, the people of Dhaka were fleeing. By noon the refugees numbered in the tens of thousands. ... Silent and unsmiling, they passed and saw what army had done. They looked the other way and kept walking...near one of the markets a shot was heard. Within seconds, 2000 people were running. At 4 o'clock, Saturday afternoon, the streets emptied again. ... Many people took to the river to escape the crowds on the roads, but they ran the risk of being stranded when the curfew fell. Where one such group was sitting on Saturday afternoon there were only blood stains the next morning. Hardly anywhere was there evidence of organised resistance. Even the West Pakistani officers scoffed at the idea of anybody putting a fight..... 'Nobody can speak out or come out. If they do we will kill them--they are traitors, and we are not. We are fighting in the name of God and a united Pakistan,' said one Punjabi lieutenant". Simon Dring's dispatch was one of the first authentic news to the outside world about the



*Photo Courtesy :* <http://sthewire.in/history/the-untold-story-behind-indira-gandhis-decision-to-release-93000-pakistani-pows-after-the-bangladesh-war>

genocide in Bangladesh. His despatch was followed by hundreds of such tales of horror over next nine months.

Brigadier (Major in 1971) Siddiq Salik was officer-in-charge of Inter-Services Public Relations in Bangladesh in 1971. He described scenes of brutality in his book 'Witness to Surrender.' "I watched the harrowing sight from the veranda for four hours. The prominent feature of this night was the flames shooting to the sky. At times, mournful clouds of smoke accompanied the blaze but soon they were overwhelmed by the flaming fire trying to lick at the stars. Light of the moon and glow of the stars paled before this man-made furnace. The tallest columns of smoke and fire emerged from the university campus, although some other parts of the city, such as premises of 'The People', an English daily, had no small share in macabre fireworks. ... At about 2 am wireless set in the jeep again drew our attention. I was ordered to receive the call. The Captain on the other side said that he was facing a lot of resistance from Iqbal Hall and Jagannath Hall...a senior officer snatched the hand-set from me and shouted into the mouth piece: 'How long will you take to neutralize the target?'... 'Four hours!'...'Nonsense...What weapons have you got?'... 'Rocket launchers, recoilless rifles, mortars and ...' 'OK, use all of them and ensure complete capture in two hours.' ... Before first light on 26 March, the troops reported completion of their mission. General Tikka Khan left his sofa at about 5 am and went into his office for a while. When he reappeared cleaning his glasses with a handkerchief and surveying the area, he said, 'Oh, not a soul there!' Standing on the veranda, I heard his soliloquy and looked around for confirmation. I saw a stray dog, with its tail tucked between its hind legs, stealing its way towards city."

"I was surveying mass graves in university area where I found three pits of five to fifteen meters in diameter each. They were filled with fresh earth. But no officer was prepared to disclose exact number of casualties....From university area, I drove on the principal roads of Dacca City and saw odd corpses lying on the footpaths or near the winding of streets...I experienced a strange and ominous sensation. I do not know what it signified but I could not bear it for long. I drove to a different area. I went to Dhanmondi where I visited Mujib's house. It was totally deserted...it appeared that it had been thoroughly searched. I did not find anything memorable except an overturned life-size portrait of Rabindranath Tagore. The frame was cracked at several places, but the portrait was intact...I hurried back to the cantonment for lunch. I found the atmosphere very different there. The tragedy in the city had eased the nerves of defence personnel and their

dependents...The officers chatted in the officers' mess with a visible air of relaxation. Peeling the orange, Capt Chaudhary said, 'The Bengalis have been sorted out well and proper, at least for a generation.' Major Malik added, 'Yes they only know the language of force. Their history says so,' wrote Siddiq Salik.

Once the major towns were cleared, the Pakistan army started moving to the countryside. They adopted the same scorched earth policy. Strong columns of the troops went to the smaller towns and the villages. Brig Siddiq Salik has described the scenes of some of these operations. He was accompanying one of the columns from Dhaka to Tangail on 1 April 1971. He wrote, "The main column moved on the main road. The troops in vehicles had their machine guns fitted ready to bring automatic fire. Two companies were spread five hundred meters astride the road in field formations as per the military battle procedures for advance to contact. Behind the infantry columns was a battery of field guns which fired a few shells at suitable intervals in the direction of their move in order to scare away the Bangladeshis. The infantry columns opened fire at the slightest pretext or mere suspicion. The stir in a bunch of trees or a little rustle in the bari (house) was enough to evoke a burst of automatic fire or at least a rifle shot...a little short of Karatea, on the Tangail road, there was small locality which hardly rated any name. The searching troops passed through it, putting a match to thatched huts and the adjoining bamboo plants. As soon as they advanced ahead a bamboo stick burst with a crack because of the heat of the fire. Everybody took it as a rifle shot by the hidden 'miscreants.' This caused the weight of the entire column to be riveted on the locality and all sorts of weapons fired into the trees. When the column commander was sure that the source of the danger had been eliminated a careful search was ordered. The search party found no sign of human being alive or dead. The sound of bamboo bursting had delayed the march." (4)

Siddiq further writes, "Karatea was a modest town surrounded by a thick growth of wild trees. It boasted a local bazaar consisting of a single row of shops. The people had already fled their homes. .... The column halted there, surveyed the town, burnt the bazaar and set fire to some kerosene drums. Soon, it developed into a conflagration. The smoky columns of fire smouldered through the green branches of the trees. The troops did not wait to see the fruits of their efforts, they moved on. ... I walked into a mud hut to see how the people lived there. The interior was neatly plastered with clay- a mild grey shade. A framed portrait of two children, probably brothers, hung on the front wall. The only furniture in the hut was a

charpoy and a mat of palm leaves. On the mat was a hand full of boiled rice which bore the fingerprints of infant eaters. Where were they now? Why have they gone? I was awakened from these disturbing thoughts by a loud argument between the soldiers and an old Bengali civilian whom they had discovered under the banana trees. The old man had refused to divulge any information about the miscreants (Pakistan Army used the term for Mukti Bahini guerrillas) and the soldiers threatened to kill him if he did not cooperate. I went to see what was going on. The Bengali, a walking skeleton, had wrapped a patch of dirty linen around his waist. His bearded face wore a frightened look. My eyes, following his half naked body down to his ankles, settled on the inflated veins of his dusty feet. Finding me so inquisitive, he turned to me and said, 'I am a poor fellow. I don't know what to do. A little earlier, they (the miscreants) were here. They threatened me to put me to death if I told anybody about them. Now, you confront me with equally dreadful end if I don't tell you about them.' That summed up the dilemma of the common Bengali." (5)

Siddiq Salik being a Pakistani Army officer did not give the full account of the carnage in Bangladesh. The sordid saga of this savagery started becoming clear with passage of time and the arrival of Bangladeshi refugees in India. The initial reports were from the foreign mediapersons who were holed up in Dhaka on the night of 25 March and the foreign evacuees. Sydney H Schanberg was one of the 35 foreign newsmen who were expelled and were flown out of Dhaka on 27 March. He sent his dispatch from Mumbai which was published in New York Times on 28 March 1971. In his dispatch he described how Pakistani soldiers mounted in vehicles patrolled the city streets and got down at selected places to resort to indiscriminate firing and setting houses and bazaars ablaze. He narrated how the tanks, artillery and machine guns were used for butchering innocent civilians. He portrayed how Bhutto was sleeping peacefully in his room till 7.30 a.m. on 26 March and was later escorted by the Pakistan Army from Inter Continental Hotel and his refusal to comment on the Pakistan Army's crackdown in Dhaka. On 29 March United Press International released the report of the diary through the eyes of Robert Kaylor of UPI with the heading '26-Hour Chronicle of the Dacca Drama.' He reported about the Pakistani soldiers torching houses and shops in East Pakistan, burning of English Daily 'the People', Bhutto's departure from the Hotel and some other incidents which he saw or heard from his hotel. (6)



On 29 March two Australian newspapers the Sydney Morning Herald and the Age Canberra published the editorials on the genocide in Bangladesh. The Sydney Morning Herald reported about the mass killings of innocent people. "President Yahya, blind to some of the bloodiest lessons in history, to the British in Ireland, the French in Algeria and many more, is trying to restore solidarity by armed force. ... He is attempting to impose an always artificial Pakistan, dominated by a West Pakistan minority, upon 75-million Bengalis who have already shown by an overwhelming vote in democratic elections that their loyalty is to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his demand for an autonomous East Pakistan. ... Only after the breakdown of talks with the President did he call for independence. The blame for the breakdown rests with the President. The President has the power--tanks, artillery and planes--to win temporary victories in East Pakistan cities. But in the long run, with his army 1000 miles from its bases, how can he hope to subdue the guerrilla warfare, fuelled by Bengali nationalism." The editorial of the Age Canberra emphasized, "...a nation cannot be held together indefinitely by military repression of a hostile majority of people."

The New Herald of Kathmandu, Nepal in its editorial dated 30 March wrote, "...It must be admitted that the brutal military suppression to which the people of East Pakistan are being subjected by the military machine of West Pakistan has brought forth the sympathy of the entire world for them. .... The sooner the West Pakistanis realise that unity imposed on the East Pakistanis cannot definitely prove durable, the better for them."

The Guardian of London published an editorial on 31 March that was most direct and unforgiving. It wrote, "Only now are we getting Pakistani facts to abet fears. President Yahya Khan has written to suppress these facts, filling his airwaves and press with evasive propaganda, deporting every journalist he could find. But a few independent reporters escaped his net and their stories--just emerging--reek with horror: crowds indiscriminately machine-gunned, students' hostels razed by shells, shanty towns burned and bombed, civilians shot dead in their beds. We do not yet know the fate of those arrested in East or the level of resistance through the



*Photo Courtesy : <http://sunb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh1971-genocide-in-bangladesh-govt-efforts-on-to-have-un-recognition15202>*

province. ....But unity can never come through murder and is not worth the price of innocent lives. ... Bhutto, who purports to be national leader, 'thanks God' for this massive carnage. .... In contrast to Biafra, rights and wrongs of East Pakistan are easily determined. Those--like America--who stock Pakistan army, must realise to what uses their weaponry is put. Those--like China and Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka), who permit forces to ferry from West, must realise the acts and purposes those forces pursue. Those--like Britain--who retains some prestige of influence in the area, should spend it openly and forcefully. The fate of Dhaka is a crime against humanity and human aspirations; no one should stand mealy-mouthed by." The New York Times in its editorial on 31 March mocked the Pakistan Army for butchering innocent Bengalis "in the name of God and a united Pakistan." It also advised the American Government to stop military aid saying, "The United States, having played a major role in training and equipping Pakistan's armed forces, has a special obligation now to withhold any military aid to the Yahya Government. Economic assistance should be continued only on condition that a major portion is used to help bind up East Pakistan's grievous wounds." (7)

Mervyn Jones' report titled "Weep for Bengal" appeared in New Statesman of London on 2 April 1971. He wrote, "Despite censorship and official lies, reports are coming out of Dhaka that must shock even readers accustomed to all that's implied in the sinister phrase: 'Order was restored'. President Yahya Khan's tanks have been ordered into destructive action, no holds barred, against the people of East Pakistan: and, in grim logic, the enemy must be the whole people because they had declared themselves with rare unanimity for demands of self-rule." Mervyn then went on to describe the background of poverty prevailing in Bangladesh; the characteristics of the Bengali people and the way they have been exploited by the West Pakistanis from the time of creation of Pakistan by various rulers. He concluded his report by reminding Yahya Khan that his crime was provoking war if not now then surely after some time. The Times of London published an editorial on 3 April 1971 on the carnage in Bangladesh. It wrote that the picture which was hazy about the massacre had become clearer and more gruesome. "Since the first hand information was available not only from Dhaka but also from other towns as well it had come in to confirm that what was happening was far worse than what might have been expected in a war that East Pakistan was resisting the forces of central government in their demand for independence. ... From the evidence available one could conclude that the aim was to wipe out the

Awami League leadership that it could no longer provide an effective leadership for any resistance movement.”

It was not only the Western or Indian media alone that had reported and commented on the carnage. The New Nation of Singapore published an editorial with the heading “The Holocaust in East Pakistan Must be Ended” on 6 April 1971. The editorial mentioned that eye witnesses from foreign residents evacuated from East Pakistan painted a more horrible picture of the carnage that had been unleashed by President Yahya's troops than had been suspected. It said, “What has been happening is nearer to genocide. ... The East Pakistan holocaust must stop. Appeals to see reason have been made to Rawalpindi by India, Russia and Britain. More countries must join in this effort to demonstrate that the voice of humanitarianism cannot be stifled by pedantic considerations of internal sovereignty.” (8)

Some 119 foreign evacuees of 17 nationalities arrived in Kolkata docks from Chittagong on 6 April by British cargo vessel Clan Mac-Nair. The two largest groups among them were 37 Americans and 33 Britons. The British Vessel was unable to unload the cargo due to heavy fighting in Chittagong between the Bangladeshi forces and the Pakistan Army and could sail out of the port only on 5 April. As the passengers came down the gangplank, they were met by diplomatic officials and a crowd of Indian and foreign newsmen. Sydney H. Schanberg's report on their narration of the carnage Bangladesh was published in New York Times on 7 April. “It is a massacre” said one passenger and “We saw the army shooting civilians” said another one. The evacuees gave the detailed account of the Pakistan Army's atrocities on the innocent civilians, burning of slums and houses, torture, arson and looting. “They seemed to be enjoying killing and destroying everything. ... Many Bengalis have been killed. In the river just four days ago, you could count 400 bodies floating in one area,” said one of the passengers. “The army was very polite,” said one of the evacuees named Edward J. McManus, an American engineer from New York with sarcasm. “They drank my whisky, but they gave me all my glasses back, very honest.” Similar reports and editorials were published by other news papers in different countries. Expressen of Stockholm on 12 April gave the title to its story as “Mass Murder in Bengal,” “Blood of Bangladesh” was the heading of New Statesman's story on 16 April. “Death in East Pakistan” was the title of Evening Star's editorial on 17 April. The Baltimore Sun published an editorial on 14 May in which it wrote, “The deaths by Mr. Rosenblum's rough estimate, may number half a million. The devastation,

he says, defies belief. Millions of people face starvation, from famine and from halted distribution of relief for earlier and natural disasters. The picture could be grimmer." (9)

Archer Kent Blood was the US Counsel General in Dhaka in 1970-71. He witnessed the complete episode of elections and the subsequent events till the military crackdown on the night of 25/26 March 1971. He continuously kept the US State Department informed about the genocide in Bangladesh. On 27 March he sent his first telegram in which he wrote, "1. Here in Dhaka we are mute and horrified witnesses to a reign of terror by Pakistani military. The evidence continues to mount that the MLA (Martial Law Administration) authorities have a list of Awami league supporters whom they are systematically eliminating by seeking them out from their homes and shooting them. 2. Among those earmarked for extinction in addition to the A.L. are the student leaders and university faculty. In the second category we have reports that Fazlur Rahman head of philosophy department and a Hindu teacher, probably Prof Guha Thakurta, or Govinda Dey, (but I have to check), M Abedin head of department of history have been killed. Razzak of the political science department is rumoured to be dead. Also on the list is bulk of MNAs elect and number of MPAs. Moreover with the support of Pakistan military, non-Bengali Muslims are systematically attacking poor people's quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus." (10)

On 6 April, Archer Blood sent another strong worded telegram to the US State Department. He wrote, "Our Government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our Government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our Government has failed to take purposeful measures to protect citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the West Pakistan dominated government and to lessen any deservedly negative international public relations impact on them. Our Government has evidenced moral bankruptcy ...to condemn genocide. We as Government servants express our dissent with current policy. But we have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely an internal matter of a sovereign state. Private Americans have expressed disgust. We, as professional civil servants, express our dissent with current policy and fervently hope that our true and lasting interests here can be defined and our policies redirected." (11) Archer Blood's report was not in line with the US Ambassador to Pakistan

Joseph S Farland. Archer Blood paid the price for being fair in sending the true diplomatic dispatches to the State Department. He was removed from his post and his diplomatic career was damaged due to his humane approach towards the Bangladeshis.

US House of representative member, James D. (Mike) McKeivitt in his speech in the House of Representatives delivered a speech on 11 May 1971. He described horrifying incidents witnessed by an American Evacuee. While concluding his speech he said, "Russia has, and although this seems hypocritical, they at least acknowledged that it was happening. The United States has not. Perhaps our reluctance stems from our embarrassment at My Lai and Lieutenant Calley." A. Hossain of the Pakistan Observer in an interview to Peter Hazlehurst of the Times of London told him what he saw with own eyes. "I saw many bodies floating down the Buriganga between May 6 and May 10. Their hands were tied together and in some cases six to seven victims had been roped together. There were no signs of violence on their bodies. Some people nearby told me that the victims were workers belonging to Sattar Match Factory on the outskirts of Dhaka and that non-Bengalis were responsible for their killings. ...Mr. Hassan Ullah Chowdhury, the manager of the Bengali edition Purbadesh was hacked to death two weeks ago by non-Bengalis in his house in Mirpur, nine miles out of Dhaka. ... On May 5, I was passing Nawabpur road in the old area of Dhaka. I saw three Army trucks stop next to a group of Bihari Muslims. They pointed towards a Bengali at a nearby shop. A soldier lifted his rifle and shot the man without asking a question." (12)

Another US Senator Gordon Allott received similar letter from Fort Collin's which he read out in the Senate. Senator Allott had also prepared a fact sheet which was based on the information collected by American citizens who were evacuated from Bangladesh. It gave the detailed account of the genocide, arson looting, rapes, burning of houses and shops. He also gave the details of many Bengali officers of Pakistan army who were killed for disloyalty. The American missionaries in Bangladesh had narrated the horrible stories about the killing of innocent civilians without any fault of theirs. He mentioned that even the foreigners located in Bangladesh were not spared. On 30 March, three British citizens were almost executed by the Pakistan Army. These civilians were walking through old Dhaka taking photographs of the destruction when they were arrested by the army. Two Americans who were accompanying the British were subsequently released and reported the incident to the British High Commission. Only

the last minute insistence of the British representative saved the lives of the three British subjects who were lined up against a wall in an army station ready to be shot after three hours of interrogation. The home of an American doctor was entered by two soldiers when his wife was home alone. One soldier at gun point looted the servant quarters. Another armed with hand grenade threatened the wife and took money, clothing, rug and a watch. While driving in Gulshan, an American and his wife were stopped by two soldiers who ordered them out of their car. They were robbed of watch, money and a ring.” (13)

The refugees from Bangladesh started arriving in India from the first week of April 1971. The initial lot was from the areas which were closer to the Indian border. They were mainly Awami League supporters and Hindus. By second week of April, one hundred and twenty thousand had crossed over into the Indian Territory. By 24 April, the strength of the refugees had swelled to more than six hundred fifty thousand. The same day, The Bangkok World in its editorial wrote, “More than five hundred thousand refugees from (East) Pakistan have already fled to nearby India and for all that, the latter nation's determination to meet the problem head-on, it can be seen that international assistance will be required quickly. To be sure India may well have her sympathies in order but the enormous costs and mobilizing the action required to handle the ever growing refugee total, will soon go beyond any single power's ability to sustain”. By the first week of May the strength of the refugees had gone up to more than eight hundred fifty thousand and by 15 May it was more than twenty three hundred thousand. The genocide and the refugee's exodus to India had become the focal point of world media attention. The daily newspapers all over world gave wide coverage to the Bangladesh massacre and published editorials regularly. The Guardian of London on 7 May; the Ottawa Citizen on 10 May, the Palavar of Accra on 20 May; the Bangkok Post on 24 May and the Age Canberra and the New Herald of Kathmandu on 26 May 1971 in their editorials condemned the Pakistani military action for genocide, praised India for looking after the refugees and urged the world community to pressure Pakistan to stop the carnage.

Governments of various countries barring USA, Muslim Countries and China initially urged the Pakistan Government to go for a political solution. But as the picture of unprecedented atrocities on the innocent people started emerging the attitude of these governments changed drastically. World leaders from all corners condemned the genocide committed by

Pakistan and praised India for the help it was providing to the hapless millions of Bangladeshis. Prominent among them were Presidents of USSR Nikolai Podgorny, Chilean President Salvador Allende and Ferdinand Marcos of Philippines. The Prime Ministers of United Kingdom Edward Heath, Keith Halyorke of New Zealand, Kosygin of USSR and the Chancellor of West Germany were prominent amongst those who called upon Pakistan to stop the genocide of innocent people. Besides them foreign ministers of Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand had also appealed to Pakistan for stopping the carnage.

In April 1971, Pakistan Army took eight senior correspondents of leading West Pakistani news papers on a conducted tour to show them that everything was under control in the eastern wing. One of them was Neville Anthony Mascarenhas of The Morning News, Karachi. His report on Bangladesh genocide appeared in the Sunday Times of London on 13 June 1971. Mascarenhas was born in a Roman Catholic family in Belgaum (in Karnataka State of India) and had studied in Karachi. A man of conscience and high scruples, he was shaken up on seeing and hearing the stories of carnage during his Bangladesh visit. He interacted with a large numbers of people including army officers who were involved in the massacre. Barring him the remaining seven correspondents of West Pakistani news papers published their stories in the language as dictated by the Army authorities. Instead of publishing anything in the Morning News, Mascarenhas went to London on the pretext of his sister's sickness. In London he contacted Harold Evans of the Sunday Times and gave him the details of what he saw and heard in Bangladesh. The Times editor agreed to publish the story. But the problem was that Mascarenhas's wife Yvonne and their five children were still in Pakistan.

If he published his report without getting them out of Karachi they would have faced the wrath of the Pakistan Army. Therefore, they had to be brought out of Pakistan first. Before leaving for London, Mascarenhas had given a code word to Yvonne to get ready to move out of the country at short notice. He sent a telegram to her with words saying "Ann's operation successful." This was the signal to Yvonne to be ready to move out of Pakistan. In order to avoid any suspicion Mascarenhas returned to Karachi and sent his wife and children to London. As per rule, no Pakistani could visit a foreign country more than once in a year. Therefore, he crossed over to Afghanistan and from there he went to England. Once the family was reunited, the article titled "Genocide" was published. This single piece

about Pakistani brutalities by Mascarenhas proved to be the game changer in the history of Bangladesh Liberation war. The world was shocked by the eyewitness account of the atrocities by Pakistan Army on their own countrymen narrated by a Pakistani journalist. There were spontaneous outcries all over the world. Anthony Mascarenhas' report was published in the Sunday Times London on 13 June 1971. He gave the eye witness account, the excerpts of which are given in the succeeding paragraphs.

“Abdul Bari had run out of luck. ... He was 24 year old, slight man surrounded by soldiers. He was trembling because he was about to be shot. 'Normally we would have killed him as he ran,' I was informed by Major Rathore, the G-2 (general staff officer-grade 2) of the 9 Division, as he stood on outskirts of a tiny village near Mudafarganj, 20 miles south of Comilla. 'But we are checking him for your sake. You are here and I see you having a squeamish stomach.' 'Why kill him?' I asked with mounting concern. 'Because he might be a Hindu or he might be a rebel, perhaps a student or an Awami Leaguer. They know that we are sorting them out and they betray us by running.' 'But why are you killing them? And why pick on the Hindus?' I persisted. 'Must I remind you,' Rathore said severely, 'how they have tried to destroy Pakistan? Now under cover of the fighting we have an excellent opportunity of finishing them off.' 'Of course' he added hastily, 'we are only killing the Hindu men. We are soldiers, not cowards like the rebels. They kill our women and children.'” (14)

The Hindus constituted about twenty percent of 75 million population of Bangladesh. They along with thousands of Bengali Muslims were the victims of Pakistan Army's pogrom. The Muslims included university and college students, teachers, Awami League and the army, paramilitary forces and the police personnel who had rebelled on 26 March. The Pakistan army officials had told Mascarenhas privately that about 250,000 had been killed. These included both the Bengalis and non-Bengalis; who were killed by Bangladeshis after the declaration of independence. Any man seen by the army was stopped and frisked and his private parts were checked to confirm the circumcision, which is obligatory for Muslims. The Hindus were shot dead instantly. Any one seen running was also killed without questioning. Mascarenhas was with the Army in Bangladesh for six days. He witnessed the Hindus being hunted from villages to village and door to door, shot off hand after a cursory “short-arm inspection” that showed they were uncircumcised.



Innocent people were loaded in trucks and disposed off in the dark hours of the night. The Army undertook the pogrom, where a large number of “kill and burn missions”, after clearing the villages of the freedom fighters, were undertaken. Whole of villages were devastated as collective punitive actions. In the officers'



*Photo Courtesy :* <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/20110520115983958114219.html>

messes the officers often discussed the day's kills. The officers claimed that all this carnage was committed for the “preservation of the unity, the integrity and the ideology of Pakistan.” The Pakistan army was dominated by Punjabis who hated the Bengalis. The Pakistan Army officers had another justification for their atrocities. They claimed that they were doing this to avenge the massacre of non-Bengalis in Bangladesh before the Pakistan army moved in. “They have treated us more brutally than the Sikhs did in the partition riots in 1947. How can we forget or forgive this,” told a Punjabi officer of Pakistan army to Mascarenhas. Tikka Khan in a radio broadcast on 18 April had said, “The Muslims of East Pakistan, who had played a leading role in the creation of Pakistan, are determined to keep it alive. However, the vast majority had been suppressed through coercion, threats to life and property by a vocal, violent and aggressive minority, which forced the Awami League to adopt destructive course.” It was a clear message that the problem in Bangladesh was the creation of Hindus. However, the Pakistan Army officers were very forthright. One Col Naim of 9 Division HQ told Mascarenhas, “The Hindus had completely undermined the Muslim masses with their money, they bled the province white. Money, food and produce flowed across the border to India. In some cases they made more than half the teaching staff in the colleges and schools, and sent their own children to be educated in Kolkata. It had reached a point where Bengali culture was in fact Hindu culture, and East Pakistan was virtually under the control of the Marwari businessmen in Kolkata. We have to sort them out to restore the land to the people, and the people to their faith.” (15)

Operation Searchlight was launched with two politico-military aims, which Pakistan wanted to achieve inside Bangladesh. The first was what the army termed as the “cleansing process”; a euphemism for massacre.

This was clearly defined by Tikka Khan in his radio broadcast on 18 April. The second was which the authorities described as the “rehabilitation effort.” This process was aimed at turning Bangladesh into a docile colony of West Pakistan. The ruling clique in Pakistan had anticipated that the massacre of the Hindus and the fleeing of refugees with their tales of horror to India would spark off the Hindu-Muslim riots in India particularly in the states of West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Bihar. This would cause reverse flow of Muslims to Bangladesh. These Muslim refugees would be handed over the land and property vacated by the fleeing Bangladeshi Hindus. It was anticipated that the percentage of Bengalis vis-à-vis non-Bengalis would be reduced. The non-Bengalis in Bangladesh had been more devoted to Pakistan. An increase in the percentage of non-Bengalis would have ensured better loyalty of population towards Pakistan. (16)

Major Bashir a staff officer in 9 Division summed the thought process of Pakistan authorities in his conversation with Mascarenhas. He said, “This is war between the pure and the impure. The people here may have Muslim names and call themselves Muslims. But they are Hindus at heart. You won't believe that the maulvi of the cantonment mosque here issued a fatwa (edict) during Friday prayers that the people would attain jannat (heaven) if they killed West Pakistanis. (Such edicts in Pakistan and elsewhere in the world have been issued by fanatic clerics for killing of infidels-non Muslims- only). We sorted out the bastard and now we are sorting out the others. Those who are left will be real Muslims. We will even teach them Urdu. Mascarenhas found the officers and men of Pakistan Army everywhere fashioned their imaginative garments of justification from the fabric of their own prejudices. “The genocide was conducted in a highly casual manner. Sitting in his office the Martial Administrator Major Agha, on the morning of 19 April awarded the sentences in an offhand manner. A Bihari sub-inspector of police walked into his office with a list of prisoners being held in the police lock-up. Major Agha looked it over. Then, with a flick of his pencil, he casually ticked off four names on the list. 'Bring these four to me this evening for disposal,' he said. He looked at the list again. The pencil flicked once more... 'And bring this thief along with them.' The sentences had been pronounced over a glass of coconut milk. I was informed the two of the prisoners were Hindus, the third a student, and fourth an Awami Leaguer. The 'thief' it transpired, was a lad named Sebastian who had been caught moving household effects of a Hindu friend to his own house.

Later in the evening I saw these men their hands and legs tied loosely with a single rope, being led down the road to the circuit house compound. A little after curfew, which was at 6 o' clock, a flock of mynah birds were disturbed in their play by the thwacking sound of wooden clubs meeting bone and flesh," was the story narrated by Mascarenhas. ".....Capt Azmat of the Baluch Regiment had two claims to fame according to mess banter. One was his job as ADC to Major General Shaukat Raza, the commanding officer of 9th Division. The other was his colleague's ragging of Azmat. It transpired he was the only officer in the group who had not made a 'kill'. Major Bashir needled him mercilessly. 'Come on Azmat' Bashir told him one night, 'we are going to make a man out of you. Tomorrow we will see you how you make them run. It's so easy.'" "The practice is even more terrible than anything the words could suggest. 'Punitive action' is something that the Bengalis have come to dread. We saw what this meant when we were approaching Hajiganj, which straddle the road to Chandpur, on the morning of April 17. A few miles before Hajiganj, a 15-foot bridge had been damaged the previous night by the rebels who were still active in the area. According to Major Rathore (G-2 Ops) an army unit had immediately been sent out to take punitive action. "Long spirals of smoke could be seen on all sides up to distance of a quarter mile from the damaged bridge. ...At the back of the village some jawans were spreading flames with dried coconut fronds... We could see a body sprawled between the coconut trees at the entrance of the village. ... As we drove on Major Rathore said, 'They brought it on themselves.' I said it was too terrible a vengeance on innocent people for the acts of handful of rebels. He did not reply...

...A few hours later when we were again passing through Hajiganj on the way back from Chandpur, I had my first exposure of the savagery of a 'kill and burn mission.'... We turned a corner and found a convoy of trucks parked outside the mosque. I counted seven, all filled with jawans in battle dress. At the head of the column was a jeep. Across the road two men, supervised by a third, were trying to batter down the door of one of more than a hundred shuttered shops lining the road. .. Major Rathore brought the Toyota to a halt. 'What the hell are you doing?' The tallest of the trio, who was supervising the break-in, turned and peered at us. 'Mota' (fatty), he shouted, 'what the hell do you think you are doing?' Recognizing the voice, Rathore drew a water-melon smile. It was, he informed me, his old friend 'Ifty', Major Iftikar from 12th Frontier Force Rifles. Rathore: 'I

thought someone was looting.' Iftikar: 'Looting? No, we are on kill and burn.' Waving his hand to take in the shops, he said he was going to destroy the lot. Rathore: 'How many did you get?' Iftikar smiled bashfully. Rathore: 'Come on. How many did you get?' Iftikar: 'Only twelve. And by God we were lucky to get them. We would have lost those too, if I had not sent my men from the back.' Prodded by Major Rathore, Iftikar then went on to describe vividly how after searching Hajiganj he had discovered twelve Hindus hiding in a house on the outskirts of the town. They were 'disposed off'. Now Major Iftikar was on the second part of the mission: burn. By this time the door of the shop had been demolished and we found ourselves looking into one of those catch-all establishments which, in these parts, go under the title 'Medical & Stores'. Under the Bengali lettering on the signboard there was in English the legend 'Ashok Medical & Stores'. Lower down was painted 'Prop. A M Bose'. Mr Bose, like the rest of the people of Hajiganj had locked and run away. ... Iftikar soon had a fire going. ....When I chanced to meet Maj Iftikar the next day he ruefully told me, 'I burnt only sixty houses. If it had not rained I would have got the whole bloody lot.' (17)

“Approaching a village a few miles from Mudafarganj we were forced to a halt by what appeared to be a man crouching against a mud wall. One of the jawans warned it might be a fauji sniper. But after careful scouting it turned out to be a lovely young Hindu girl. She sat there with the placidity of her people, waiting for God knows who. One of the jawans had been ten years with East Pakistan Rifles and could speak bazaar Bengali was told to order her to the village. She mumbled something in reply, but stayed where she was, but was ordered a second time. She was still sitting there when we drove away. 'She has' I was informed, 'nowhere to go- no family, no home. ....' Major Iftikar was one of the several officers assigned to kill and burn missions. They moved in after the rebels had been cleared by the army with the freedom to comb-out and destroy Hindus and 'miscreants' (the official jargon for rebels) and to burn down everything in the areas from which the army had been fired at.... This lanky Punjabi officer liked to talk a lot about his job. Riding with Iftikar to the circuit house in Comilla on another occasion he told me about his latest exploit. 'We got an old one.' he said, 'The bastard had grown a beard and was posing as a devout Muslim even called himself Abdul Mannan. But we gave him a medical inspection and the game was up.' Iftikar continued: 'I wanted to finish him there and then, but my men told me such a bastard deserved three shots. So I gave him one in the balls, then one in the stomach. Then I finished him off with a shot in

the head.' When I left Major Iftikar he was headed north to Brahmanbaria. His mission: Another kill and burn." (18)

"...Pakistan Government resorted to vigorous propaganda about the "return to normalcy." Pakistan TV crew members were taken to make propaganda films. Laksham was one place which became the focal point of the endless series of broadcast, daily showing welcome parades and 'peace meetings.' I wondered how he could manage it but the major said it would be no sweat. 'There are enough of these bastards left to put on a good show. Give me twenty minutes.' Lt Javed of the 39 Baluch was assigned the task of rounding up a crowd. He called out an elderly man who had apparently been brought in for questioning. The man, who later gave his name as Maulana Said Mohammad Saidul Huq, insisted he was a 'staunch Muslim Leaguer and not from the Awami League.' (The Muslim League had led the movement for creation of Pakistan). He was too eager to please. 'I will very definitely get you at least 60 men in 20 minutes,' he told Javed. 'But if you give me two hours I will bring 200.'... Maulana Saidul Huq was as good as his words. 'Pakistan Zindabad!' 'Pakistan Army Zindabad! Muslim League Zindabad!' (Long live Pakistan, Pakistan Army and Muslim League) He brought a slogan chanting crowd. Moments later they marched into view a motley crowd of about 50 old and decrepit men and knee high children, all waving Pakistani flags and shouting at the top of their voices. Lt Javed gave me a knowing look.

Within minutes the parade had grown into a 'public meeting' complete with make-shift public address system and rapidly multiplying group of would-be speakers. Mr Mahbub-ur-Rahman was pushed forward to make the address of welcome to the army. He introduced himself as 'N.F. College Professor of English and Arabic who had also tried for history and is life-time member of the great Muslim League Party.' Introduction over, Mahbub-ur Rahman gave forth with gusto. "Punjabis and Bengalis,' he said, 'had united for Pakistan and we had our own traditions and culture. But we were terrorized by the Hindus and the Awami Leaguers and led astray. Now we thank God that the Punjabi soldiers have saved us. They are the best soldiers in the world and heroes of humanity. We love and respect them from the bottom of our hearts.' After the 'meeting' I asked the major what he thought about the speech. 'Serves the purposes,' he said, 'but I don't trust the bastard. I will put him on my list.'" (19) The Mascarenhas report in the Times, London authenticated all previous information which had come in bits and pieces till first week of June 1971. Since he was a

Pakistani national, his report had a devastating effect on the credibility of the Pakistan Government.

By mid May, the military thought that the situation in East Pakistan had returned to normal due to the reports sent by the units on the ground. But the worst was yet to come. 14 Infantry Division was located in Bangladesh ab-initio. For Op Searchlight, 9 and 16 Infantry Divisions were inducted post-haste from West Pakistan, which were located in Kharian and Multan respectively, to sort out the Bengali rebels and the Hindus. The HQ of 9 Infantry Division was based at Comilla and that of 14 Infantry Division at Jessore. The 9 Infantry Division was responsible for operations in the East Bangladesh and for sealing the Eastern portion of Indo-Bangladesh border against movement of rebels and their supplies. The 16 Infantry Division was tasked to carry out similar operations in the Western Bangladesh. The Pakistan army successfully completed the first phase of Operation Searchlight, which was capture of the major cities and towns by mid May. Thereafter the troops undertook the combing out operations. (20)

By mid June, the Bangladeshi freedom fighters had started launching sporadic raids on the government installations and even the army convoys. They relentlessly targeted the means of transport and communications. The road and rail tracks between the port of Chittagong and north of Bangladesh were in the



*Photo Courtesy :* <httpswww.indiatimes.comnews/world/why-we-should-never-forget-the-1971-genocide-in-bangladesh-that-changed-the-history-of-indian-subcontinent-248459.html>

hands of Bangladesh forces till 7 May when Feni was captured by Pakistan army. Six major bridges and thousands of small ones were destroyed by the freedom fighters. This had completely hampered the movement of goods particularly grain and essential supplies meant for the civilian population. There was likelihood of famine hitting the Bangladeshis. Due to the military operations by Pakistan army and resultant flight of people to India, the acreage under cultivation had also reduced considerably. Tikka Khan had acknowledged the shortage of food grains in his radio broadcast on 18 April but the authorities in West Pakistan were not bothered much. Discussing the problem in his plush air-conditioned office in Karachi, the chairman of the Agricultural Development of Pakistan Mr. Qarni, said

bluntly: “The famine is the result of their acts of sabotage. So let them die. Perhaps then the Bengalis will come to their senses.” (21)

The policy of the Pakistan army was summed up by Major General Shaukat Raza, GOC 9 Infantry Division while talking to journalists in May 1971. “You must be absolutely sure,” he said, “that we have not undertaken such a drastic and expensive operation--expensive both in men and money--for nothing. We have undertaken a job. We are going to finish it, not hand it over half done to the politicians so that they can mess it up again. The army can't keep on coming back like this every three or four year. It has more important tasks. I assure you that when we have got through with what we are doing, there will never be a need again for such operations.” The prognosis of Shaukat Raza proved to be correct. Bangladesh was liberated in less than six months after this 'prophetic' pronouncement of his. No army in the world can treat its own citizens the way Pakistanis had done.

The Pakistan army eliminated any government servant who was found to be suspicious. Mascarenhas reported some incidents. “Captain Durrani of the Baluch Regiment, who was the in-charge of the company guarding the Comilla airport, had his own method of dealing with the problem. 'I have told them,' he said with reference to the Bengalis maintaining the control tower, 'that I will shoot anyone who looks like doing anything suspicious.' Durrani had made good his word. A Bengali who had approached the airport a few nights before was shot. 'Could have been a rebel,' I was told. Durrani had another claim to fame. He had personally accounted for 'more than 60 men' while clearing the villages surrounding the airport. (22)

Major General S S Uban has given an eyewitness account from his sources about the carnage committed on the innocent people by Pakistan army in his book 'Phantoms of Chittagong.' A few instances are reproduced here. “On 27 March a house to house search was conducted in Sylhet town from where most people had run away to the countryside. All women left in the town were raped including one who was 60 years old. After committing rape on one girl they chopped off her breasts. The poor thing collapsed and died on the spot. Collaborators whether Biharis or Bengalis were not spared where the question of raping was concerned. The daughter of a Muslim Leaguer of Gahira was taken away by Pak soldiers after she served them tea. A Muslim engineer of Zikatola Mankeshwar who was working for the Pakistanis was forcibly made to witness the rape of his mother, wife and sister-in-law in broad daylight by the Pak soldiers...Pahartoli locality of Chittagong town was attacked by the Pak Army in collaboration with

Bihari refugees. About 3000 Bengalis were killed and all women raped. About 500 girls were dragged to the cantonment and innumerable men (soldiers) used to rape them. One of the girls is reported to have remarked it is possible to stand the pangs of rape by so many beasts but impossible to bear the heat in body which results from excessive accumulation of semen. ...The month of April 1971 was particularly reserved for insemination. On 10 April a village called Nizirahat in Police Station Fatikchori, district Chittagong was cordoned off. No one was killed. No house was set on fire and no property was looted. About 200 presentable women were raped by Pakistanis and the husbands and parents of women were compelled to witness these ghastly acts. They were all Muslims....In Chhatak the daughter of a Jamaat-e-Islami member, who was an enthusiastic collaborator of Pakistanis, was raped by four Pak soldiers in front of him and others," writes Gen Uban. (23)

Uban further writes, "About forty percent population of Dinajpur district was of Hindus. Only a few could escape to India. The remainder was wiped out by the Pak Army. Some Hindus appealed to be converted to Islam and spared the agony of torture to death. None was excused. All were shot dead and buried in one pit....On the report of Sital Sarkar that Hindus of Signia village about 8 miles North-East of Thakur Gaon were still hoisting the Bangladesh flag, the total population of the village consisting of about 1500 people was done to death in about half an hour and dead bodies dumped in two large pits dug by the Hindus themselves. ... Chittagong town perhaps suffered the most. On 5/6 April the town was cordoned off, houses looted, women raped and after the rape naked women were marched to the river for a bath-all tied with ropes like cattle. About 50 girls were taken to Ramgarh military cantonment where each girl was raped by about 10 to 15 men. At the time of rape the Pakistanis would shout 'Jai Bangla' the war cry of freedom fighters and ask their miserable victims to shout for help to their father, 'Sheikh Mujib.' Here all those affected were upper class Muslims.

...On 26 April Biharis observed what they called a 'Revenge Day' in Dhaka with full cooperation of the Pak Army. The area chosen in Dhaka lay between Mirpur and Shyamoli, since it was mainly occupied by upper and middle class Muslim government servants. The whole locality was cordoned off by Pak forces. Non-Bengalis were then let loose to satisfy all their sadistic tendencies. After loot and butchery they raped every woman. ... Here was yet another cruelty practiced which has no precedence in history. During curfew hours Pak soldiers used to collect all the young boys



they could find in the houses. They were blindfolded and handcuffed and taken to hospitals where their blood used to be drained off. After which their dead bodies were thrown in the river Buriganga. This is reported to have been practiced at many places throughout Bangladesh. After all Bengal blood is not bad for dying Pak soldier in need of blood transfusion, and soon gets purified while it enters the blood stream of a Punjabi Muslim," wrote Uban. (24)

Uban continued, "In the first week of May 1971 about 200 Pak soldiers attacked a village in the police station Gazaria on the border of Dhaka and Comilla districts. Hundreds of innocent civilians were killed without any provocation whatsoever. Their properties looted and women raped. On completion of mission the Pak soldiers were invited by the Muslim League chairman of Gazaria union, who had been helping them all along. The food was served among others by his daughter. This daughter was forcibly taken away by the Company Commander to the military camp. No one till today knows the poor girls fate...

....Many talked of a most ghastly incident of torture of an innocent Muslim named Hafiz Mian. On 28 April at 7.30 a. m. Srimangal town of Sylhet district which had fallen earlier to Mukti Bahini, was bombed by Pak Air Force. As a result of heavy bombing many people got killed and remainder fled in panic. On 29 April Pak forces reoccupied the town, looted property and raped women in their best tradition. Now they arrested a certain Hafiz Mian who was in-charge of one food godown in this police station and was stupid enough not to desert his place of duty. In fact the man was so proud of his loyalty that he did not allow any relative to run away since he expected some high reward form the Martial Law authorities when the town was recaptured. But Hafiz was suspected of helping Mukti Bahini to kill Bihari Railway Station Master and allowing local population to take away the food-stuff from his godown. No cognizance was taken of the fact that other godowns had been looted and did not exist any longer. Hafiz Mian's godown was the only one still intact and still had stocks...

...In the presence of the deceased Station Master's family, Hafiz Mian was ordered to be dismembered, bit by bit, while his own family members were tortured during intervals of these slow but most painful acts. First Hafiz Mian's fingers were chopped off and slowly his arms and legs were cut off. While he groaned and shrieked in agony his family members were tortured one by one. This gruesome play took many hours. Three daughters of Hafiz Mian were raped and carried away never to be heard again. One Kuti Sen,

a Hindu, who had not been able to run away to India was caught and handed over to the Muslim Leaguers gathered in the football field. A Pak Army officer gave a lecture which was explained to the Bengali Muslim Leaguers by an interpreter. The gist of the lecture was that all Hindus were agents of India and therefore Muslims must kill them as an act of religious duty. Kuti Sen was tied with ropes, thrown on the ground and kicked to death by all present as an act of piety. Kuti Sen's son Babla Sen who had reached India, on hearing this incident came back stealthily and wanted to commit suicide when he saw the condition of the dead body of his father. Some people however persuaded him to wait for the day of reckoning, which he did. He disposed off the body of his father. But some pieces of Hafiz Mian's dead body were still lying unclaimed even by the Jackals," described Gen Uban. (25)

Uban further states, "On recapture of Maulvi Bazar in Sylhet district in the third week of April the town was looted and all suspects were killed. All fair looking girls were taken to Army camp and raped. Next morning they were brought naked to the local play ground and compelled to dance before the leaders of Muslim League throughout the day. Then they were taken to Shivpur Army camp and nothing was heard of them again. On 1 April 1971 a most horrifying thing happened in Halati Village under Police Station Sobar of Dacca district. ..This was a pro-Awami League Hindu village. It was set on fire where even cattle and domestic animals were burnt alive. Those who ran out were machine-gunned as usual except some girls who were saved for sadistic pleasure. Babies were snatched from their mothers and thrown up to fall on the pointed bayonets as exercise in dexterity. The breasts of their mothers were chopped off and inserted into the mouths of their dead bodies. Those still alive were asked to shout 'Jai Pakistan.' ... A boy aged six years, however, innocently said 'Jai Bangla' the slogan he was used to shouting. This enraged the Army men so much that they cut the boy in fifty pieces and gave one piece each to still alive to eat. On their refusal they were shot dead for the glory of Pakistan. ... The few girls who were spared the mercy of death were told not to be afraid. "We are not going to hurt you or kill you. You have been chosen to receive the good Muslim semen so that you give births to good Muslims and not the bastard like Mujib." The girls were dragged away to the Army camp at Tongi. ....Four villages, i.e., Goal Tek, Morkon, Pagar and Abdulapur were charged with sheltering Mukti Bahini and committing sabotage. The villages were set on fire while the inhabitants were asked to gather along with their families in selected places in batches of about thirty. Here fathers

and brothers were asked to rape their own daughters and sisters in front of the gathering. On refusal they were all butchered including women and children. They were all Muslims. In some places people were forced to jump into the fire and were roasted alive. There are too many instances to recount. They would fill pages of history to the ignominy of Pak Army," wrote SS Uban. (26)

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The arrival of refugees had become an unending flow of humanity into India by mid May 1971. The average daily arrival which was fifty-seven thousand per day in April had reached the peak of one hundred and twenty thousand per day in the month of May. The total arrival during the month of May was more than three million. The flow of refugees continued till the end of November 1971. The number of those who took shelter in India had reached a staggering 9.98 million i.e., almost one crore by end of November 1971. The initial burden of the refugees was borne by the neighbouring states of East Pakistan, i.e. West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam. But as the number increased some of the migrants were also sent to Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The biggest burden was shared by West Bengal which took care of more than 7.35 million. This was due to the similarity of language. The Bangladeshis felt more comfortable in crossing over to West Bengal than in non-Bengali speaking states.

The report of the International Rescue Committee Emergency Mission to India for Pakistan Refugees was submitted on 28 July 1971, by its Chairman Mr. Angier Biddle Duke to Mr. F L Kellog, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the State for Refugee Affairs, Government of USA. Excerpts of the report are given in succeeding paragraphs.

"Initially the refugees came to India by way of the usual border crossings and along the roads normally travelled. But when the world media reports started giving horrifying stories of Pakistan army's atrocities and the world community took cognizance of the exodus of



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the large population of Bangladesh, the border with India was closed by Pakistan Army in the first week of June. However the migrants infiltrated through forests and swamps in order to avoid being detected by the army. In the beginning they were accommodated in all the available government and public buildings. The school buildings were also utilized. But as the number increased they were settled along the major roads. The availability of open ground and drinking water was the main criteria for establishing the camps. Many of them avoided the camp communities and melted away into the countryside. The refugee camps varied in size from a few hundred people up to 50,000 depending upon the size of ground available....Extraordinary efforts were made by the Governments of India and West Bengal to organise these camps and supply them with at least the minimal amounts of food and water. The camps were located near to the existing villages.”...

...“The sites selected for the camps were as far as possible on the high grounds but it was not possible in all the cases particularly in West Bengal plains. Barring the buildings which were occupied by the early arrivals, three types of temporary accommodation was created. Small thatched huts made from the locally available material. The second was the small and low tents made out of the wooden frames and covered by tarpaulins. The third was the cement casement and drainage pipes which were used for shelters. At one time all the tarpaulins in India were exhausted since the demand swiftly shot up due to sudden and unexpected influx of refugees. More over the demand for tarpaulins also increased since these were also required by the Indian Army, BSF and Mukti Bahini for putting up shelters for the troops in the concentration camps. In order to overcome this problem plastic material was used in the refugee camps. The water requirement was met by drilling hand pumps. However sanitation was a problem. Initially slit trench latrines were made in the close vicinity of the camps. But soon it was realised that this arrangement was a health hazard during the monsoons due to very heavy rainfall. To overcome this problem more permanent arrangements were made,” mentioned the report. (27)

The report further stated, “The refugees' diet was dependent upon food supplied by the relief agencies and supplemented by the small amount of local relief authorities and those supplemented by purchases. Boiled rice, lentils, and milk powder were the main ingredients of the meals given to them. Occasionally green vegetables were also provided. The diet could be at best called as merely adequate. Health care and medical facilities were rudimentary. Mobile medical units for mass inoculations and distribution

of simple medications were fairly active in most of the camps. The main diseases contacted by the migrants were gastrointestinal disturbances with vomiting, diarrhoea; and skin diseases were common during the monsoon months. Luckily some Bangladeshi physicians had also escaped to India. Most of these refugee physicians registered themselves with Bangladesh Red Cross which was established under Dr. Haque."...

...“The West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya state health ministers held regular conferences in which the Bangladesh Red Cross members were also included. By end of June 1971, a minimum possible health cover for the refugees was organised. The Bangladeshi physicians were given stipend for their services by the respective state governments. On an average two to three US dollars were paid to them keeping in view their professional qualification and the degree of experience. The Indian Central Government, state governments and International Red cross, all were juxtaposed in health and hygiene programme for the refugees....Children's education was also taken care of. A Calcutta University group had registered all the teachers and professors who had migrated from Bangladesh. About 10,000 teachers of various categories were registered. They were paid a salary of twenty five US dollars for primary and secondary teachers and forty US dollars for the university professors per month. There were some administrative school personnel amongst the migrants whose services were utilized for the administration of the educational institutions,” said the report of International Rescue Committee Emergency Mission to India for Pakistan Refugees. The report appreciated India's efforts in looking after the Bangladeshi migrants. “The response of the people of the United States has fallen short by far of the traditional response our country has been capable of in similar emergencies—none of which has been of similar scope, in suffering and disruptive impact.” (28)

On 23 April 1971 India decided to officially seize the UN General Secretary U Thant on the refugee issue. 'Denouncing Pakistan's brutality in East Bengal amounting to genocide', India, in a letter, requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which already had an office in New Delhi, for assistance. The UNHCR office was established in Delhi in December 1949. But India viewed it critically in the 1950s. However after the 1959 invasion of China on Tibet, India sought UNHCR help and there was a greater cooperation with the agency as it helped in looking after the Tibetan refugees. In 1969, Indian Government allowed the

UNHCR to establish its office in New Delhi. In the 1971 the UNHCR office was handy initially; however when the High Commissioner of UNHCR, Prince Sadruddin Agha Khan, exceeded his mandate and tried to assume the role of a mediator, India was forced to protest.

U Thant, after conferring with the Administrative Consulting Committee of UNHCR in Bern on 26 April, designated UNHCR as the nodal agency for coordinating the relief work for the Bangladeshi migrants. The Pakistan Government protested against U Thant's move as well as India's figures of refugees terming them as inflated stating its strong political undertones. The permanent Representative of Pakistan in UNO, Agha Shahi sent a letter on 4 May stating that India's effort to seek UNHCR help was meant to internationalize the issue which amounts to its interference in the internal matters of Pakistan. It accused India of continuously forcing Indian Muslim refugees into Pakistan. Pakistan condemned the UNHCR of succumbing to India's pressure. However the UN General Secretary did not bother about Pakistani protests and appealed to the international community to provide help for Bangladeshi refugees. He also sanctioned on 19 May 1971 US\$ 500,000 which was the upper limit of UNHCR emergency grant. Within a few weeks of U Thant's appeal, US\$ 17 million were pledged by the international community. The World Food Program (WFP) supplied food items worth US\$ 3.1 million; UNICEF also sent milk powder, medicines and vehicles. Three member team of UNHCR under Deputy High Commissioner Charles Mace visited India from 12-19 May and submitted its report to U Thant. (29)

On 18 May U Thant called a conference of all UN Programs and Agencies as part of the UN Inter-Agency Consultation. The International Red Cross was also invited. Under the chairmanship of High Commissioner of UNHCR Prince Sadruddin Agha Khan, the UN Standing Inter-Agency Unit was created to implement the relief program. The Indian Government had created Coordinating Committee of all operational ministries of the Central Government. The Coordination Committee coordinated all the relief work in all the states where refugees were staying. Pakistan and USA doubted the figures of refugees given by India. Yahya Khan termed them as pseudo refugees who, in his opinion, were the displaced slum dwellers of Kolkata. Pakistan Government and the media tried to mislead their own citizens by claiming that only the Indian agents had migrated to India. Later it blamed that continuous propaganda by All India Radio and the Indian agents for instigating the people to flee to India. Henry Kissinger also doubted the

figures. In a Special Actions Group meeting in the White House in September Kissinger said that there cannot be more than two million refugees in India whereas New Delhi had claimed them to be eight million by this time. However a State Department official who had recently returned from India put the figures at six million. Large number of foreign dignitaries had visited the camps and UNHCR personnel who were working in these camps confirmed the figures given by India. (30)

I (Brig R P Singh) visited numerous refugee camps in West Bengal as I was involved in assisting the civil administration of West Bengal in the management of migrants till the arrival of international relief organisations from April to June 1971. I interacted with large number of men and women of different age groups. What I saw and heard from the inmates of these camps was quite chilling. The Pakistan army had gone berserk and their actions crossed all the limits of perverseness. In April 1971, I met Father John Hastings of Norwich, UK, who was also associated with the churches of Leicester. From April 1971 onwards, Father Hastings served with United Relief Service and Bangladesh Volunteer Service Corps. He visited number of refugee camps. I accompanied him during his tour to some camps. What he saw and heard has been given in the Bangladesh Documents volume II. Here are some of the cases taken at random from April to October 1971. He described the horrifying tales of genocide in Bangladesh. "...The pattern after seven weeks is still the same. Even the least credible stories, of babies thrown up to be caught on bayonets, of women stripped and bayoneted vertically, or of children sliced up like meat, are credible not because they are told by so many people, but because they are told by people without sufficient sophistication to make up such stories for political motives. ... We saw the amputation of a mother's arm and a child's foot. These were too far from the border, and gangrene developed from their bullet wounds. Many saw their daughters raped and the heads of their children smashed in. Some watched their husbands, sons; and grandsons tied up at the wrists and shot in more selective male elimination. .... No sedative will calm a girl now in Bongaon Hospital – she is in permanent delirium crying, 'They will kill us all, they will kill us all....' Next to her is a girl still trembling from day-long raping and a vaginal bayonet wound. About 400 were killed at Chaudanga while on their way to India, surrounded and massacred. Why? Lest they take the tails to India! Or because choosing a certain democratic system under Sheikh Mujib means forfeiting the right to live in any country?" (31)

The Hong Kong Standard on 25 June 1971 wrote an editorial stating, "For hundreds of years, name of Genghis Khan has echoed through history as

byword for cruelty and butchery. In the twentieth century, it seems a Pakistani namesake of the great killer is determined to out-do his grisly predecessor. Pakistani General Tikka Khan--with modern nicety known as the "pacifier" of rebellious East Pakistan--is commanding fierce Punjabi and Pathan troops who are running wild in a fearsome bloodbath. There is overwhelming evidence of murder, of senseless slaughter of children, of rape, or prostitution organised by and for senior officers, of wholesale, maddened, crazed, blood-thirsty determined massacre. Genghis Khan for all his bloody faults, at least built up an empire in the course of his career. Tikka Khan and his gang of uniformed cut-throats will be remembered for trying to destroy the people of half a nation."

On 12 May 1971 India's Permanent Representative in the UNO Samar Sen raised the Bangladesh issue in the Social Committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the agenda item 'Report of the Commission on Human Rights.' Samar Sen counted all the thirty four UN instruments relating to human rights and said that all of them had been violated by Pakistan Army in East Pakistan. After a well articulated discourse Samar Sen demanded that a coordinated relief program under the UN auspices to create suitable conditions in Bangladesh to stop the exodus of the people should be undertaken immediately. The Permanent Representative of Pakistan in UNO Agha Shahi was on the back foot on the question of influx of refugees but he said that the figures have been inflated by India. However, he warned India not to interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan. Shahi blamed India for politicizing the refugee issue. While replying to the points raised by Shahi, Samar Sen made five suggestions to the world body. These were: 1. Government of Pakistan must stop violations of human rights. 2. The Government of India should be provided all the assistance, bilateral or international, official or non-official to meet the unprecedented situation created by the influx of refugees. 3. In order to tackle the problems at its roots by providing the relief to people in East Bengal itself. For implementation of these measures the UNHCR representatives would have to be posted in Bangladesh who would be able to see the Pakistan army's genocide. 4. The Pakistan Government must ensure early return of the refugees. 5. The UN secretary General should continuously monitor the situation and advise and assist as required. Samar Sen said that it was an international problem and therefore required an international solution. (32)

The donor countries were not at all satisfied with the pace of relief work in Bangladesh. In September the UN General Secretary U Thant expressed the



disillusionment of the donor countries. He said, "The response to my appeal for the relief operations in East Pakistan.....has been far from sufficient or inadequate to the magnitude of the task. In my dealings with the Government of Pakistan, as well as in the organisation of the relief effort in East Pakistan, I have been at pains to emphasize the necessity of being able to the donor countries appropriate assurances that their contribution will reach their intended destination- the people affected. Some non-official charitable organisations like Oxfam exercised great influence on their governments' thinking. Restricting their humanitarian work came under lot of criticism and even influenced the governments of their countries attitude towards Pakistan. UK and Canada Governments in particular became quite critical of Pakistan army's atrocities in Bangladesh.

The charitable organisations were as keen as the UN Secretary General to give assistance to the affected people in Bangladesh and exerted pressure on the governments of their countries as well as on the UNO. They claimed the role equal to the UN agencies in relief work. Their claims were backed by the western media and the western countries' governments. As a result of their lobbying the UN General Secretary U Thant appointed Stephen R Tripp as coordinator for International Humanitarian Assistance to Bangladesh. From 1 July 1971, Tripp started functioning from his office in Geneva which became the hub of Bangladesh relief activities. In New York the diplomats viewed the Bangladesh crisis as the fight for liberation and violation of human rights. But in Geneva it was projected on its humanitarian merits in order to condemn Pakistan. (33)

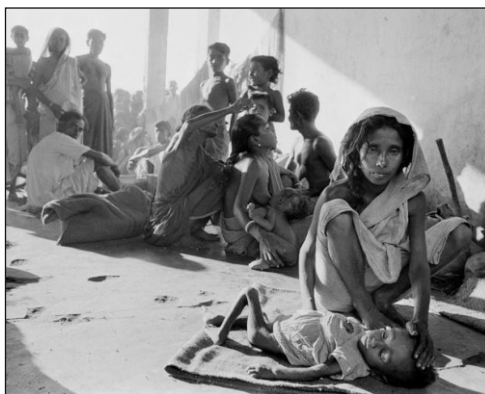
On 5 June Assistant Secretary of State Joseph J Sisco protested to (Pakistan's UN Permanent Representative) Hilaly, that 'there were numerous reports that Pakistan Army had singled out Hindus for attacks' which explained their continuous influx into India, and that there were reports of repressive measure being taken against those Hindus who were still left in East Pakistan. (34) The Hindus were specially targeted by Pakistan establishment which had always been obsessed with Bengali Hindus as instigators and mentors of nationalist elements in Bangladesh. The world community got reports of ethnic cleansing from different sources starting from last week of March 1971 onwards. Journalists, foreign evacuees, workers of the relief organisations, missionaries, escapees and refugees gave detailed accounts of how Hindus were singled out and shot dead and their women raped.

Mohammed Shohidul Islam son of Mohammad Siddique of 13 Free School Street, Dhanmondi Dhaka was returning from a refugee camp in India with a group of eight others who thought of availing the amnesty offer of Yahya Khan. They were apprehended by the Pakistan Army and huddled in Railway warehouse of Akhaura Railway Station. His ordeal is given as follows-“...The Captain simply expressed that the “refugees” will be shot dead and the smugglers will be sentenced to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment and after that the Captain left and with terrible sound the gate was closed. ...We spent 22 days in that dark godown .... One Punjabi Quartermaster with a register came to the prison and entered our names there and told us that the next morning we will be released. Everybody beamed with happiness and embraced one another in glee and one invited the other to his house. Suddenly the heart rending wail attracted our attention and found the same as that of small boy Bachchu who used to adore me and would always love to talk with me and described all his sorrows and happiness to me. On query the reason learnt was that his name was not noted and also the names of Promod, Amar and Gauranga--all Hindus by religion. It was taken for granted that they would be killed. There was no word with us to console Bachchu.” .....Shohidul Islam was the only survivor out of the group because he fainted due to exhaustion before the others fell to the bullets of Pakistani soldiers. (35)

I (Brig R P Singh) was with Father Hastings on the events reported by him, “We began to go to the border from April and within the first few days we realised there were people who had come under very great stress and some had already lost their children and some said they had been bayoneted and many said they had been lined up before firing squads. Many escaped from these firing squads by pretending to be dead. Several cases that I saw in Hospitals and After Care Centres had bullet wounds through their shoulders. One old man I met in Berhampore Hospital, a man of 65, he gave me story (which I have recorded) of how several hundred came to the banks of Ganga from Rajshahi area. While they were there they were surrounded by the Pakistan Army troops and prevented from getting into boats to cross Ganga. The women and girls were then put on one side and told they could go home. The men and boys were told to sit on the sand and they were all machine gunned. Many were killed instantly, others pretended to be dead and then they were all picked up and piled like faggots in a bonfire. Petrol was poured over them but when the fire started, he of course couldn't pretend to be dead any more. He scrambled out of the piled bodies and his son did the same. There were several others with them. With their clothes

still on fire and parts of their bodies badly burnt, they rushed to the Ganga as fast as they could. It was near dusk and the Pakistan soldiers fired at them but they were not easy targets in the dark. Some of them succumbed to their burns even though they had got out of the bonfire. This man himself, along with several others, managed to hide during the night and eventually got to Behrampore Hospital. He was there again a month later, still with badly burnt legs, swathed in bandages and still wearing the same blood stained dhoti. I went to another department in the same hospital and found another man who corroborated this story. They had been in the same group. The event must have taken place around April the 12th.” (36)

Father John Hastings continued, “The people of Dinajpur District came over in great floods in April and May. Many of them came completely naked. They had been attacked during the night; and stripped and they came running as they were. At the village of Hilli one day in April when I was there, there was shelling and firing of bullets by Pakistan Army. ... And some of these bullets landed in the refugee camp in Hilli which was very close to the border. The (Indian) Government decided to evacuate the refugees from this camp. At the same place, Hilli, that same morning, I saw a girl with a dead baby. This baby looked quite healthy and was not suffering from any apparent disease, but it had died through lack of milk and possibly also pneumonia. It had no medical attention. The mother was in a huge crowd of people who had been sheltered in a school building at Hilli, during previous two or three days. Many of these people had lived only three or four miles away and their villages had been burnt by the army invaders, the Pakistan Militia. They had run away apparently terrified. This girl was only 15 or 16, and this was her baby. She had run in terror carrying her baby. She had tripped over the railway line into Hilli which marked the border, along with some 500 in this school. But through fear, terror, panic and so on, her milk had dried up and although she was aware of this and she herself very wet (I remember it was a very rainy day). She could not draw attention of someone to her individually, among such a



*Photo Courtesy :* <http://www.srilankaguardian.org201803commemorating-25-march-as-bangladeshs.html>

crowd. Although everybody had milk, she herself had not said anything about the needs of the baby that she could not suckle any more. So the baby died, and it was found the next morning." (37) (Brigadier R P Singh was with Father John Hastings and he personally saw everything narrated by him)

Father John Hastings further said, "Later that morning, I looked across the railway line towards Pakistan and saw a place which used to be a rice stock ablaze with fire. There were Pakistani soldiers watching this and we saw officers on the other side with guns pointing in our direction. We went inside and saw the next village being gradually set on fire systematically, there was a column of smoke suddenly at one point and then a few yards on, another big fire would begin. I took photographs of that also. It was in Dinajpur District. I saw families there, some of whom had tiny children which had just been born on the way from Pakistan. Some were born the day on which the flight began, and some were born under trees by the side of road, or where they were being registered inside West Bengal. The plight of these women and new born babies was, of course, horrifying. On one occasion I saw the after-birth also and a make-shift tent being put up for women. Further south, near Kolkata, at Bongaon, we met many people who had no one left. One woman had one child in her arms and said the other five had been killed. Her husband was gone. And a young man said he had gone out to buy buffaloes. When he came back to his village, there was nothing left, whatever it was completely destroyed and he did not know where his family was." (38)

Father John Hastings' narration continued, "In Bashirhat hospital there was one woman who had a foot amputated from bullet wound. She had three children with her, all of whom were injured, either by a bayonet or a bullet. They had bandages on, the baby had a bullet wound across the thighs, and she said her husband had been shot. She was part of, I think, a very big group that were coming from Khulna and had crossed at Hakimpur into West Bengal. They had been surrounded on the way, at a place called Jaldanga. This was apparently done with collaboration of some villagers along the way who stopped the thousands who were moving in this direction and passed information to the Army, who came along and machine gunned them. And they say some 400 of them died, while they were on their way to what they thought was safety in India. The Army followed them and other groups to the border of India and was in fact shooting at them as they were trying to cross, on more than one occasion.

One day, the Army came to the river crossing and seized girls also who were about to cross into India by boat and carried them off. Other women and girls jumped into the river and tried to swim across and two were drowned. I spoke to one woman who had crossed at that time.” (39)

There were numerous people who gave the accounts of the inhuman brutalities committed by Pakistan Army on the hapless people. Rupam Kishore Barua was an examinee in economics in Chittagong University. He was Buddhist and crossed over to Tripura on 30 May 1971. He narrated his story of horror, “On last Baisakhi Purnima Day, Armed Pakistani troops followed by local looters and anti-social elements entered into our village Mohamuni. The Pakistani troops robbed people of their watches, ornaments, cash and all valuables, and prepared a list of Government officials and assaulted them. The Pakistani troops raped some women of the village on the spot and carried away some. The Muslim Leaguers led by the son of Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, a Convention Muslim League member who had suffered an ignoble defeat in the last elections, did the looting. Two or three days thereafter people of several villages prominently Buddhists numbering 300 to 400 started for India but at place called Dhaishya Babar Khamar and at Ranirhat the Pakistani troops attacked them and shot dead some of them while the looters looted all their belongings. ..With great risk I returned to Chittagong town only to find that Hazari Golly, Nabargraha Bari, Awami League office and the houses of Awami Leaguers had already been burnt. All the houses and shops on either sides of Chittagong-Dhaka Grand Trunk Road had been reduced to ashes and the entire villages at Mirsharai and Sitakund had been completely burnt.” (40)

The atrocities of the Pakistan Army were not only reported by the Western, Indian or the media of USSR, but also by most of the Muslim world. LA PRESSE, a daily of Tunisia, shook the conscience of the people of that country by publishing the horrifying details of cruelty on Bangladeshis on 29 August 1971. “The three hundred candidates to suicide ...were said to have been systematically raped during four months by the Pakistan soldiers of Pathan, Punjabi, Baluch and other West Pakistani units, having been sent to them as prostitutes for the regiments. They would have all become pregnant and that is why a West Pakistani officer considered them “out of use” and thus they would have been released.”

There were numerous reports of girls being forcibly taken away from families for sex slavery but only a few are being published for the sake of

brevity. The Washington Daily, Evening Star, published the news item under the title "Despair in East Pakistan" on 14 October 1971. "...In a clandestine meeting elaborately arranged to elude military surveillance, a Bengali farmer told this correspondent about one such experience. Talking with great reticence and glancing around in fear that he had been led into police trap he said, '...The army came to the village on the night of April 11. One patrol led me away from my house to identify something, and when I got back I found my sister missing. Another girl, the daughter of a neighbour, was gone, and there was a Hindu family whose girl was missing. In the middle of May they released my sister and the neighbour's daughter, but the Hindu girl is still gone. The two girls who came back are both pregnant and will have their babies. At the place where they were kept there were 200 to 300 girls doing the same thing. They had to wash clothing and forced to have sex with the soldiers two or three times a day. My sister does not know where she was kept.' Many Dhaka residents, including foreigners, tell of having seen young women taken away by military policemen without even an identification check."

Time Magazine corroborated the large scale cases of sex slaves in October 1971. "...One of the more horrible revelations concerns 563 young Bengali women, some only 18, who have been held captive inside Dhaka's dingy military cantonment since the first days of the fighting. Seized from Dhaka University and private homes and forced into military brothels, the girls are all three to five months pregnant. The army is reported to have enlisted Bengali gynaecologists to abort the girls held at military installations. But for those at Dhaka Cantonment it is too late for abortion. The military has begun freeing the girls, a few at a time, still carrying the babies of the Pakistani soldiers."

International scholars suggested that Pakistani Army used 'rape' as a weapon of war to terrorize the majority Bengali speaking Muslims and Hindus. Rapes by Pakistani soldiers caused thousands of pregnancies, birth of war babies, abortions, infanticides, suicides and ostracizing of victims by their families and society. It has been recognized as one of the major occurrence of rapes during war in the history. As per Raunaque Jahan, a Bangladeshi political scientist, feminist leader and author, massive scale rapes depicted racist attitude of Pakistanis against Bangladeshis. Political scientist R J Rummel, in his book 'Death by Government: Genocide and Mass Murder' writes that Pakistan Army looked upon Bengali Muslims as sub humans and Hindus were as "the Jews were to the Nazis"

scum and vermin that was best to be exterminated. This racism was then expressed that the Bengalis, being inferior, must have their gene pool fixed through forcible impregnation. The idea was similar to that of 'Eugenics', under Nazi Regime in Germany.



*Photo Courtesy : <https://www.theguardian.com/comments/free>  
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Spanish Professor Belen Martin Lucas described rapes as ethnically motivated. Tikka Khan, the architect of Operation Searchlight was the Governor and GOC-in-C of Pakistani Eastern Command till Lt Gen Niazi took over on 11 April 1971. When reminded by one of the correspondent that he was in-charge of the majority province of Pakistan, he quipped, "I will reduce this majority to minority." His words were swiftly put into action by his troops. As per Indian author Mulk Raj Anand, "These rapes were so systematic and pervasive that they had to be conscious Army policy, planned by West Pakistan in a deliberate effort to create a new race or dilute the Bengali nationalism." His assessment was confirmed by Indian journalist Amita Malik, after surrender of Pakistan Army of 16 December 1971 when she quoted a Pakistani Army officer as saying, "We are going but we are leaving our seeds behind."

Aim of raping women was to humiliate Bangladeshis. Therefore large number of rapes were committed in front of husbands of married women and families of unmarried victims. In some cases genitals of victims were bayoneted after the rapes and some of them were even murdered. Pro-Pakistani and fundamentalist parties like Muslim League, Nizam-e-Islam, Jamaat-e-Islam and Jamiat-ul-Pakistan collaborated with Pakistanis in committing heinous crimes. During Indo-Pak war between 3 and 16 December large numbers of such victims were liberated by Indian Army. In 1972 Bangladesh Government launched rehabilitation program for rape victims. Women Rehabilitation Camps were established in Dhaka and other cities. Rape victims were shifted to these centres where abortions were performed wherever possible. In cases where pregnancies were in advanced stages deliveries were arranged.

Efforts of Women Rehabilitation Centres were supported by large numbers of international charitable organisations. International Planned

Parenthood Federation was one such non-governmental organisation which brought Australian physician Dr Geoffrey Davis to Bangladesh in 1972. Davis estimated that commonly cited figure of four hundred thousand of rape cases was very conservative as compared to actual numbers. He also said that he had heard of numerous cases of suicides and infanticides by rape victims. During course of his work he found that more than five thousand victims had performed self-induced abortions. Such victims developed variety of gynaecological complications and long term after effects. Estimates of forced pregnancies vary. A doctor at the rehabilitation centre reported that 170,000 abortions were performed and 30,000 war babies were born. While Davis said that before Government sponsored abortions began, between 150, 000 to 170, 000 abortions had already been done. Bangladesh Government's estimates of war babies were 30,000 while report of Centre for Reproductive Law and Policy placed the figure of war babies at 250,000. An Australian doctor reported in the New York Times that vast majority of rape victims were infected with venereal diseases by Pakistani soldiers. (41)

The victims were confined in army camps where they were gang raped almost every night by Pakistani soldiers. Those girls who were good looking were assigned to officers. They were lucky not to be gang raped since they were meant to satisfy the lust of only one master. Sex slaves of officers were also better off as they were well fed and well looked after. Victims were deprived of their traditional wear, saris, since some of them had committed suicide by hanging by these garments. They were given minimum clothing to cover their bodies to preclude the chances of their running away in case they were fully clothed. In some camps no clothing was provided to them and they remained naked. Food was provided to them by female staff. They were completely cut off from rest of the world and did not know what was happening in the outside world or even in their own country. Rape victims had not only suffered physically but were shattered emotionally and psychologically. Trauma of being physically violated by unknown people repeatedly had immensely affected their psyche. (42)

I (Brig R P Singh) met some Birangonas (Bangla women who faced cruelties of Pakistanis) during and immediately after end of war in December 1971 and January 1972. They were completely disoriented at that time. In May-June 1971 while assisting civil administration in managing migrants' camps I visited most of the refugee camps in West Bengal. I saw some rape



victims as young as fourteen or fifteen years of age. They looked blank and perplexed. Some of them had their genitals ruptured as they were bayoneted after being raped. Such victims were writhing in pain due to wounds inflicted by Pakistani soldiers. What Pakistani soldiers did to Bangladeshi women was worst kind of sexual perverseness. Could a man be so brutal, inhuman and cruel towards another fellow human being? Did the Pakistani soldiers have no compassion at all? I wonder till date. During my visit to Bangladesh on 40th anniversary of liberation in December 2011 and in subsequent trips to Dhaka I learnt that agony of Birangonas got compounded in Independent Bangladesh. Bangladesh was liberated on 16 December 1971 but the Birangonas were permanently enslaved in the societal bondage. They suffered immense humiliation and were not accepted by their parents or husbands. They became outcasts in their own country and the society. Some brave ones have narrated their horrifying tales to the world. One of them Priyabhasani Firdousi was married by a well known social worker after her first husband abandoned her after 1971. She herself was well known sculptor of Bangladesh. Video of her interview is available on You Tube. Her face reflects the sordid saga of indescribable misery suffered by Birangonas.

Bina D' Costa is a research fellow at the Centre for International Governance and Justice, Regulatory Institutions Network and Convener of the Security Analysis Program at the Australian National University. She has done an exhaustive research on rape victims of Bangladesh. Bina in conversation with Dr. Davis which appeared in a Bangladeshi publication sometime back has highlighted plight of Birangonas. It mentions the stories of women being tied to trees and gang raped, breasts hacked off, dumped in mass graves, being held in Pakistani rape camps. When asked if the usual figures of the number of women raped by the Pakistani Army, 200,000-400,000, are accurate, Davis stated that they are underestimated. As per Davis, "...Probably the numbers are very conservative compared with what they did. The descriptions of how they captured towns were very interesting. They'd keep the infantry back and put artillery ahead and they would shell the hospitals and schools. And that caused absolute chaos in the town. And then the infantry would go in and begin to segregate the women. Apart from little children, all those were sexually matured would be segregated... And then the women would be put in the compound under guard and made available to the troops...Some of the stories they told were appalling. Being raped again, and again, and again... A lot of them died in those [rape] camps. There was an air of disbelief about the whole thing.

Nobody could credit that it really happened! But the evidence clearly showed that it did happen.”

Rape victims were given the title of 'Birangona' (War Heroine in Bengali) by Father of Nation of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Davis spoke about how President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman labelled the rape survivors as Birangonas to help them reintegrate into their communities, but the gesture largely did not work. After being assaulted and impregnated by Pakistani soldiers, these Bangladeshi women were completely ostracized by society. Many were killed by their husbands, committed suicide, or murdered their half-Pakistani babies themselves. Some women were so scared to go back home after being held captive in Pakistani rape camps, they begged their Pakistani captors to take them to Pakistan with them. (43)

The cases of rapes and military prostitution were having the sanction from the top Pakistani military brass. Yahya Khan and most of the other Pakistani senior officers were busy womanizing in Rawalpindi. The army officers at the lower levels were following the retched examples of the officers commandeering wherever they were in Bangladesh. The unit commanders used to select good looking girls to be presented to their bosses. It was an organised system. Niazi himself was indulging in womanizing in Dhaka. When asked by a correspondent of a western daily about the rampant cases of rape by his troops in Bangladesh, he replied that when his troops were living and fighting in the eastern wing they can't be expected to go for sex to West Pakistan. (44)

Pro-Pakistani and fundamentalist parties like Muslim League, Nizam-e-Islam, Jamaat-e-Islam and Jamiat-ul-Pakistan collaborated with the Pakistan Army in committing these heinous crimes. During the war between 3 and 16 December large numbers of such victims were liberated by the Indian Army and Mukti Bahini. In 1972, the Bangladesh Government launched a rehabilitation program for the rape victims. Women Rehabilitation Camps were established in Dhaka and other cities and towns. The rape victims were shifted to these centres where abortions were performed wherever these were possible. In cases where the pregnancies were in advance stages the delivery of the children were arranged.

Birangonas' plight has formed part of large number of books. I have read some. “Ami Birangona Bolchi” (I am War Heroine Speaking) by Dr. Nilima Ibrahim gives the stories of the miseries of some of them. Yet, there were

hundreds of thousands of Birangonas whose voices were not heard by anyone nor their stories told. They have suffered in silence. Their sacrifices during the liberation war were no less than those young men who joined the Mukti Bahini and picked up the guns to fight the enemy. But instead of them being honoured they faced humiliation and apathy.

Tara Banerjee's father was a doctor, a Hindu, doing his private practice till March 1971. In the evening of 27 March 1971 a jeep came in which the chairman of the civic committee of the town accompanied some other persons. Tara knew him very well and she always addressed him as uncle. She pleaded with him to let her off. But he did not listen to her pleas. Tara was forcibly taken to the police station from where she was picked up by some Pakistan Army officers. She was repeatedly raped by them for more than eight months. She was rescued by the Indian Army in December 1971. In the Women's Rehabilitation Centre her father and brother came to meet her. She was eager to return to her home since she was terribly home sick. But her pleas were turned down by her kin. She was highly disappointed for being abandoned by the family. There was an NGO working in the Rehabilitation Centre which helped Tara in joining a course of nursing. With the help of this NGO she was sent to Bulgaria's capital Sofia for further training. In Sofia she befriended a Dutch class fellow. The Dutch friend asked her to come to her home during the vacations.

The Dutch were very affectionate to her. A Dutch journalist who had worked in Bangladesh fell in love with her and asked her to marry him. Tara had been missing such love and affection. She married him and tried to live happily. However she always missed her motherland Bangladesh as well as her family although they had abandoned her. She got a chance to visit Kolkata in 1984 and visited her sister's house who was married in the city. She also went to her home in Rajshahi where her mother immediately asked her if she had informed her husband about her captivity in the Pakistan Army camp. Tara told her mother that her husband as well as his parents knew everything about her past. Tara lamented that the European were much better who did not bother about her past and showered love and affection which her parents failed to do. She lived happily in Netherlands. (45) But all Birangonas were not lucky like Tara.

Meherjan was the daughter of a tailor who lived in a small suburb of Dhaka. In March 1971 one day a Pakistan Army jeep stopped in front of her house. Some Bengalis were accompanying the Pakistanis. They said, "Sahib this is Meherjan's house. She is very beautiful." Her father and elder brother were

away at that time. Her mother took her to the bedroom and locked the door from inside. The Pakistani soldiers broke open the door, shot her mother and younger brother and took her away forcibly in the jeep. She was kept in a camp where she was gang raped by three to four soldiers each night. She suffered in the ghastly conditions for more than eight months and worked as sex slave for the Pakistan Army. There were other inmates like her in the camp. Their saris were taken away and they were given lungi and T-shirt to cover their bodies. Only vegetarian meal of lentils and chapattis were served to them. She and her fellow victims had no contact with the outside world.

They did not know what was happening around them inside Bangladesh. No news of their families was given to them. They screamed in pain every day after each night's torment. They had lost the count of the days, dates and even months. The only external sound which Meherjan's ear could receive was gun shots or grenade sounds in far away distances at night. Then one day she was given a sari to wear and taken to another camp in a tented colony. Meherjan and her fellow inmates were warned not to try to run away since the Pakistani soldiers were around them in the trenches. The routine in the tented encampment was same as was in the previous camp. Then one day she heard the tank noises around her camp. The camp in-charge an old Pathan named Havildar Layek Khan was sympathetic to Meherjan. In her moments of agony anyone who commiserated with Meherjan was bound to win her affection. That day she found Layek Khan in pensive mood. Meherjan asked the reason for his distress. The Pathan soldier told her that Pakistan had lost the war and either he would be killed by the Mukti Bahini or taken prisoner of war by the Indian Army. He apprehended that he may be killed and buried in Bangladesh whereas Meherjan would be free and would go to her family, get married and start her new life. Meherjan had seen that Layek Khan was the only man with compassion. She told him quite empathetically that she would marry him and save his life. Havildar Layek Khan was reluctant but Meherjan was adamant on her decision. A Maulvi was called and Nikah solemnized that evening.

The Indian Army liberated Meherjan and other sex slaves and wanted to send them to their homes. But Meherjan refused to go to her home. She was sent to Dhaka in an Indian Army truck and was kept in a room in the Dhaka Cantonment with Havildar Layek Khan. Later she was shifted to the Women's Rehabilitation Centre. Her family address was noted and her family was informed. Her father came to meet her in the Camp. On seeing

each other they could not control their emotions and both cried while embracing each other. Despite display of sentiments her father refused to take her home. In the Centre she witnessed that large number of her fellow victims' family members came to meet them and some of them had also brought gifts for them. But despite the public display of affection none of them was ready to take the Birangonas to their homes. Meherjan went to West Pakistan with Havildar Layek Khan when the prisoners of war were repatriated by India. (46)

Rina was yet another ill-fated sex slave. Her father was a high ranking official of Pakistan Government and brother was an officer in Pakistan Army. She was studying at Dhaka University on scholarship. There was no dearth of basic comforts in her life. In March 1971 some Pakistan Army personnel came to their house. They knocked at the door. Her father opened the door and welcomed the officer. The Pakistani asked about Rina's brother. Her father said he must be in Comilla. There upon the Pakistani officer slapped him. The Army personnel shot dead her mother and father and took her away forcibly. She was taken to one of the Pakistan Army officers' mess and handed over to a colonel. He raped her every night but she was treated well. There was a janitor to look after her. She had reconciled to her fate when suddenly the colonel was replaced by a Brigadier. After the colonel's departure she was gang raped every night. She was freed by the Indian Army in December 1971 and taken to the Women Rehabilitation Centre. Rina was lucky that one of her kin who was abroad, who took her away with him and got her married off. She was happily married but always lamented that she and her fellow victims did not get the recognition in their own country which they deserved as Birangonas. (47)

There are hundreds of thousands such stories of the brave girls and women who suffered inhuman treatment at the hands of Pakistani soldiers during Op Searchlight. They were longing all the while to be united with their families when the country would get liberated. But their miseries got multiplied when they were liberated from the clutches of the Pakistan Army. On 16 December 1971 when Bangladesh got liberated the Birangonas' souls were imprisoned for ever. Immediately after the independence of Bangladesh on 16 December 1971, the Bangladesh Catholic Church authority, Archbishop Theodosius Amal Ganguly, CSC of Dhaka and Bishop Michael A. D' Rozario, CSC, of Khulna, invited Mother Teresa to start her work in Bangladesh.

Mother Teresa first started a centre in Khulna. In early 1972, Mother Teresa and her Sisters came to Dhaka and took over the vacated building at Amputty, from where the Adoration Monastery had moved to Mymensingh town. They named their centre "Shishu Bhavan" (children's home). In this centre, the Missionaries of Charity gave shelter to a good number of Birangonas who were pregnant. There were some Birangonas, who did not want to be exposed to the public for the shame involved, but left their newborn children, the "war babies," with the Sisters at this Centre. Through these Sisters, a sizable number of war babies got adopted abroad in Europe, North America, Australia, and some other countries. (48)

Bina D' Costa, in an article titled "Victory's Silence" published in English newspaper Daily Star, Dhaka on 4 December 2014 gave her description of 'war babies' and Bangladesh's tragedy of abortion and adoption. Excerpts from her article are reproduced. She wrote, "16 December 1971 - now celebrated as Victory Day, a day of reminiscence for citizens of the new nation. But many memories are troubling, especially those of the 'war babies' - children born during or after the War of Liberation, as a result of the often-planned and systematic rape of Bangladeshi women. If we turn back the pages of Bangladesh's history, we can get some rare glimpses of the marginalised; but there is still complete silence when it comes to the babies of war. Some recent sceptics have also questioned the numbers both of people killed and of women raped. How do we know that targeting women in this manner was a deliberate strategy on the part of the Pakistan Army? An article in the Dawn published on 22 March 2002 quoted Yahya Khan on the matter. As president, Yahya had directly ordered the army crackdown on East Pakistan in 1971. Before launch of Op Searchlight, while talking to a small group of journalists in Jessore, in southwest Bangladesh, he pointed towards a Bengali crowd that had assembled on the fringes of the airport. According to the article's account, he said, in Urdu, "Pehle inko Mussalman karo" (First, make them Muslim). This anecdote is significant, for it demonstrates that at the senior-most level of the Pakistan Army there was a perception that Bengalis were not loyal Muslims. These perceptions also fed into two other stereotypes: that Bengalis were not patriotic Pakistanis, and they were too close to Hindu India. The leadership in Islamabad had always considered Bengalis to be not only weak and powerless, but Hinduani - too close to Hindu religious and cultural practices. As such, for Pakistan, Bengalis/East Pakistanis needed to be purged off this Hindu-ness." (49)

Bina D'Costa stated, "Salma Sobhan, an activist and scholar, documented that from the initial stages of the conflict, the Pakistan Army boasted about its opportunity to "convert East Pakistan through engendering true Muslims" – meaning forced impregnation. Yahya's order to make Muslims out of Bengalis was carried out most cruelly and literally during the nine months of conflict, when an estimated 200,000 women were systematically subjected to rape. Pakistani soldiers and their collaborators raped women in their homes, in their local areas, or even forcibly took them to 'rape camps'. In this process, there were various lists created of names and numbers, which many social workers talked about with this writer. Many of those lists were deliberately burned by the post-war government in 1972, and the remaining lists were all destroyed during 1978-80 and again in 1985-86 by subsequent pro-Pakistan governments led by Army generals. Besides forced impregnation, there were other rationales for widespread rape, as well. The army used rape to terrorise the populace, to extract information about the insurgents, to boost the morale of soldiers, and to crush the burgeoning Bangladeshi national identity. In addition, the Pakistan Army's local militia, known as the Razakar and al-Badr, used rape to terrorise, in particular the Hindu population, and to gain access to its land and property....After the war, Pakistan denied charges of genocide and mass rape. But Islamabad's refusal to take responsibility was matched by Dhaka's failure to hold the perpetrators responsible for these war crimes.

About the number of war babies and their disposal Bina D' Costa wrote, "Official documents suggest that there were at least 25,000 cases of forced pregnancy in the aftermath of the war. Bangladeshi leaders entrusted social workers and medical practitioners with the primary responsibility of dealing with the raped women; as a result, International Planned Parenthood, the Red Cross and the Catholic Church became involved in rehabilitation programmes. These organisations also became responsible for



*Photo Courtesy :* <httpswww.thedailystar.netmonth-victorywatch-now-pakistan-lying-about-1971-genocide-185098>

carrying out the daunting task of dealing with the pregnancies. Two activities thus began to take place simultaneously: the programme that allowed pregnant women to have abortions, and the programme for the adoption of war babies. From writer's interviews with some prominent social workers and medical practitioners directly involved with the war babies, it is clear that while many of these workers were genuinely committed to supporting the victims, there were occasions when decisions of terminating pregnancy or giving up the baby for adoption went contrary to the women's own choices. In addition, there were instances in which pleadings by young pregnant girls one way or the other were ignored, with the women being considered too young to make mature decisions." (50)

Ms D'Costa further writes, "Confusion over how to deal with the war babies appears to have gone to the very highest levels. The then Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, repeatedly referred to these Birangonas as his "daughters", and asked the nation to welcome them back into their communities and families. However, he also declared, with incredible insensitivity, that "none of the babies who carry the blood of the Pakistanis will be allowed to remain in Bangladesh." Nilima Ibrahim, a prominent social worker and feminist author, recalls her meeting with Sheikh Mujib, in her book *Ami Birangona Bolchi*. When questioned about the status of the war babies, the prime minister said, "Please send away the children who do not have their father's identity. They should be raised as human beings with honour. Besides, I do not want to keep those polluted blood in this country." Perhaps such statements aided the push for adoption. In addition, however, through state-sponsored programmes, International Planned Parenthood and the International Abortion Research and Training Centre, local clinics helped women to carry out abortions. Clinics were set up with the support of the Bangladesh Central Organisation for Women's Rehabilitation in Dhaka and 17 outlying areas, in order to cope with unwanted pregnancies.

Bina gave the details of the furtive adoptions of the war babies. She wrote, "An appeal was issued by Mother Teresa urging women not to have abortions, and instead to contact the Missionaries of Charity, which offered to take care of the war babies. In December 1971, Mother Teresa and M, a social worker who does not want to be named, visited some of the camps for rape victims in Bangladesh. In an interview, M recalled that Mother Teresa did not find girls at the camps, but only their hair, petticoats and a few other items. Their hair had been cut off because the Pakistan Army



soldiers feared that the girls would attempt to commit suicide by tying their hair to ceiling fans, as some had already done. M went back to Bangladesh at the request of Mother Teresa on 21 January 1972, where she arranged for the adoption of war babies, most of whom were adopted by families in Canada, with some were also sent to France and Sweden. In 1972, the Bangladesh Government established the Women's Rehabilitation Organisation to institutionalise women's rehabilitation projects, with the National Central Women's Rehabilitation Board coordinating the government's post-war policies. Under the Bangladesh Abandoned Children (Special Provision) Order of 1972, the Government encouraged foreign adoption agencies to take war babies from Bangladesh. The US branch of the Geneva-based International Social Service was the first international adoption agency to work in post-war Bangladesh. Through the Missionaries of Charity, other institutions also became involved in the program, including Families for Children and the Kuan-Yin Foundation (both in Canada), the Holt Adoption Program (USA) and Terre des Hommes (Switzerland)." (51)

D'Costa further wrote, "In an interview, Nilima Ibrahim said that Muslim clerics initially protested about the adoption policies because the babies were being sent to Christian countries. But this resistance was not the only obstacle to overcome. "Many girls cried and did not want to give their babies away ... We even had to use sedatives to make the women sleep and then take the babies." Ibrahim's recollections highlight the fact that women had limited, if any, choice about the future of their babies. The social workers obviously wanted to help these women, but eventually the trauma experienced by the women was mostly ignored. This seems to have come about due to the 'purity' of the state being given higher priority than the social workers' perspective that the women should be protected. B, another prominent social worker who was also reluctant to be named, confirmed that in the aftermath of the war, the Bangladesh Government responded in two ways, neither of which were sensitive to the women's needs. First was through abortion programmes, and the second was the enactment of adoption laws, though only for the immediate post-conflict period. Adoption of Bangladeshi children is not permitted under the country's law; and while Bangladeshi citizens can be foster parents, this is a difficult process. While talking about the rejection of some of these women by their families, B recalled the case of one young girl who had given birth. 'Prior to delivery, she said she wanted to give her baby for adoption,' B said. "But when the time came, she refused to do so, and cried so much." (52)

About the plight of adopted children's fate Bina D' Costa wrote, "While scattered narratives point to the experiences of children who fought during the war and those who were raped by the Pakistan Army or brutally killed, almost nothing is known about the destiny of the war babies. By now, they have largely disappeared from the official history of Bangladesh. The state acted as the moral agent, deciding who could stay and who could leave. Although the social workers and humanitarian and medical practitioners considered themselves to be working in the best interests of the war babies and their mothers, the assumption that they should be separated ultimately deprived the babies a chance to be raised by their birth mothers. This also generated additional trauma for already upset women. Today, there is very little information about these children – about how they have developed, about how they often lived without social recognition within their societies, about what happened to those who were adopted by people from other countries.

In recent years, the humanitarian community has shown interest in integrating children born out of sexual violence during conflict through post-conflict humanitarian efforts, migration policies and refugee-settlement programs. This writer sent an appeal to several adoption agencies, Bengali websites and newspapers to talk about the war babies, but only a few of them wanted their stories to be public. The following e-mail was sent by one website owner: 'I had a lousy dad, who just insulted me ... I tried to commit suicide four years ago ... I often wonder why I am here in Canada, adopted by parents who divorced three months after I was adopted ... I hated being a kid, and I am angry at Bangladesh for not taking care of me when I needed it most. I don't have any roots and that makes me cry. So that is why I am trying to learn more about where I was born...

...There is no way of knowing the fate of all the adopted war babies. Undoubtedly, however, their past and the trauma of violence that is linked to their births have haunted nearly all of them. Perhaps, by tracing through their histories, it could be possible for Bangladesh to obtain crucial data regarding its own interlinked past. But in this, it must be understood that it is not ethical to try to find these individuals, nearly all of whom have no intention to be found. Instead, it is more important to understand how, more than four and a half decades ago, the state, families and communities united to construct a destiny for Bangladeshi women and the war babies. This understanding would also benefit the movement in Bangladesh to seek redress for war crimes committed in 1971," concluded Bina D' Costa. (53)

The leading news papers all over the world published the details of savagery, arson, rape and impregnation by Pakistani soldiers. They gave description of these horrific deeds under the headings like "Cruel Genocide", "Savage Force", "Premeditated Brutality", "Burning Villages", " Only the Dead Remain", "Army Terror", "Savage Slaughter", "Harrowing Accounts", "Vicious Killing", "Bloodshed and Destructions", "Cold Blooded Murder," "Appalling Catastrophe," "Massive Extermination," "Wide Spread Devastation," "Genocide," "Savagery," "Reign of Terror," "Genocide of Hindus" just to mention a few. (54)

In August 1971, Senator Edward Kennedy visited the refugee camps in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. In one of the camps, where I (Brig R P Singh) was also present, he broke down and wept like a child on listening to the tales of horror and watching the plight of the victims of genocide. He along with prominent citizens and Senators/Congressmen Cornelius Gallagher, Frank Church, William Saxbe, J W Fulbright, etc., raised the issue inside and outside the Senate and Congress. But President Nixon maintained a mute silence on the issue of genocide and helped Pakistan militarily as well as economically during the Bangladesh Liberation War. Similar voices and concerns about Pak Army genocide were raised by legislators and prominent citizens of England, France, Germany, Japan, Australia, and other big and small nations all over the world. But U.S. and Chinese government supported Yahya Khan to the hilt.

On 30th November 1971 a joint command of Indian and Bangladesh forces was formed. Lt Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora, GOC-in-C Eastern Command was appointed as the Commander of the Joint Forces called Jukto Bahini in Bengali. There was an acute shortage of Bangladeshi officers to command the Mukti Bahini troops, whose strength had risen to almost one lakh by end of November 1971. Army asked for officer volunteers to lead the Mukti Bahini freedom fighters into the battle. Only those officers whose units were deployed on the Sikkim-Tibet border or officers from those formations which were earmarked as Army HQ reserve should volunteer. Only two officers volunteered to command irregular troops who were neither trained nor known to them. More over fighting capabilities of Mukti Bahini were also not proved. Since my unit 2 Maratha Light Infantry was part of 123 Mountain Brigade, which was Army HQ reserve, I (Brig R P Singh) volunteered. I was given command of a Mukti Bahini Wing of 850 guerrillas which fought valiantly and liberated large chunks of territories in Northwest Bangladesh. By 10 December the enemy was on the run.

“...As we were about to commence our advance towards Jaldhaka in the afternoon of 10 December, I received a message HQ Alpha Sector that the town had been abandoned by the enemy. Instead of going to Jaldhaka I was ordered to secure Mirganj which in all probability had also been abandoned. I decided to visit two Mukti Bahini boys who were wounded in Boragari battle and were admitted in the Thakurgaon hospital. I ordered the 2nd in command to close in on to Mirganj and establish a firm base for assault (in case required) by the time I reach back at Mirganj after my hospital visit. After issuing instructions I, with one of the freedom fighters who belonged to Thakurgaon, mounted on the motorbike and proceeded to the hospital. In Thakurgaon, I witnessed two incidents which left a deep mark on my memory. The first was in the centre of Thakurgaon, I saw an old man behaving in a very strange manner. On seeing my companion on motor bike he started to dancing, laughing and singing; and moments later he started crying and saying something incoherently in Bengali.

On enquiry the locals told me that the old man was a widower and had two sons and a daughter. The elder son was killed by Pakistan army in March 1971. The younger son had crossed over to India and had joined the Mukti Bahini. The old man was staying with his daughter in a nearby hutment. Pakistanis came to know through collaborators about his younger son joining the ranks of freedom fighters. One night a Pakistani patrol came to his house and banged the door. He came out of his house. They asked him about his son who was in Mukti Bahini. The old man replied that he did not know anything about him. On this they started thrashing him. On hearing the chaos his teenage daughter came out. The moment they saw the girl they asked him as to whom she was. When the old man told them that she was his daughter they took them inside the room and asked him to rape her. When the old man refused they started kicking him. He begged them for mercy. They striped the father and daughter naked and asked the old man to rape her. He fell on their feet but they forcibly made the old man lie down on her. After some time the commander of Pak troops told the old man that he will be taught how to rape a female. They tied the old man with the wooden pole of his hut and gang raped the daughter in front of him. The girl cried initially and after 5-6 Pakistanis assaulted her she became unconscious. The Pakistanis untied the old man and kicked him hard. He fell down flat and lost his senses. They left them in that condition. In the morning the old man found his daughter's body hanging on a tree outside his hut. He went mad after the incident.

The second incident was of Thakurgaon hospital...I met the Mukti Bahini boys admitted there. They were very happy to see me. Both were recovering fast. They requested me to take them with me since they were keen to fight. But the doctor told me that they will take some more time to fully recover. I advised them accordingly. I thanked the doctor and as I was leaving he came out to see me off. On my way out I heard shrieking sounds of females. I asked the doctor as to whom they were. I was told that they were injured in the mine blast. I asked the doctor whether I could see them. He took me to the room where they were writhing in pain. They were pretty teenagers. I learnt that they were cousins. One day the Pakistani commander of Thakurgaon defended locality was returning from his visit to Baliadangi when he spotted these girls. He ordered his troops to pick them up and put them in his jeep. He brought them to his company HQ East of Thakurgaon and raped them repeatedly every night. His company defences had protective minefields all around except one opening towards the rear which was manned by two armed sentries day and night. So they could not escape. The Pakistani soldiers used to bring any suspect sympathizer/informer of Mukti Bahini who was captured by them to the company commander. The Pakistani Major used to announce the punishment on the spot. Most of them used to be ordered to walk through the minefield. The girls were made to watch such spectacles. Most of the victims used to be blown up. But if any one survived he was shot dead.

On 4 December 1971 when the joint forces were preparing to attack Thakurgaon defences, the company commander asked the girls to walk through the minefield. They begged for mercy but the Major cocked his sten carbine and threatened of shooting them if they disobeyed his command. Having known his brutal nature they slowly started walking towards the perimeter fencing holding each other's hand. The leading girl stepped on an anti-personnel mine and blew up her leg. The other one fell down instantaneously because of shock waves of blast due to which her backbone got fractured. This was one of the hundreds of thousands of incidents of Pakistani officers' height of sadistic pleasure and perverseness. "How could one be so brutal to any innocent human being" I wonder till date whenever the incident comes to my mind.

The Pakistani armed forces made public surrender in front of Commander of Joint Forces of India and Bangladesh on 16 December 1971. Vanquished Lt Gen AAK Niazi (clansman of current Pakistani PM Imran Khan Niazi)

GOC-in-C of Pakistan Eastern Command took off his badges of rank and pistol, bowed in front of victorious commander Lt Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora and handed it over to him. This marked the surrender of 93500 Pakistani all ranks who carried out genocide for 267 days. Bangladesh became an independent sovereign country.

200 War criminals (194 officers from the army, 3 each from Pakistan navy and air force) were identified as the main war criminals out of which five were let off on humanitarian grounds. List of War Criminals is available with the authors. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, immediately after his return from Pakistani captivity on 10 January 1972 started the formal process of war crimes trial. On 29 March 1972, Bangladesh government announced a formal plan to try 1,100 Pakistani military prisoners, including Generals AAK Niazi and Rao Forman Ali Khan. On 14 June 1972, India agreed to initially deliver 150 POWs, including Niazi to Bangladesh for starting the trials. On 19 June 1972 -- ten days before the Simla meeting between Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reaffirmed his commitment to try the War Criminals. Simla Agreement signed on July 2, 1972 did not mention anything about the Pakistani War Criminals that Bangladesh wanted to prosecute because it was an issue between Dhaka and Islamabad. But Bhutto played his devilish card and took some commitment from Indira Gandhi on their release. He immediately on returning to Islamabad made an announcement that 400,000 Bangladeshis who lived in West Pakistan will not be allowed to go to Bangladesh. He wanted to use them as bargaining chips to free the Pakistani war criminals. Bangladeshi army officers who were serving in West Pakistan were put in "concentration camps."

In a press conference on 10 August 1972 Bhutto said that Bangladesh believed "it had a kind of veto over the release of our prisoners," but "there is a veto in our hands also." He requested China, the newly inducted member of UN Security Council veto power to bar Bangladesh from becoming a member of UNO which was critical for the war-torn country. Beijing cast its first veto on 25 August 1972 in the Security Council to bar Bangladesh's membership. Bhutto insisted that Pakistan would recognise Bangladesh only after all the Pakistani prisoners were released. In November 1972, Bangladesh and India decided to repatriate some 6,000 family members of Pakistani POW. In response Pakistan agreed to release 10,000 Bangladeshi women and children. However, the fate of most Bangladeshis trapped in Pakistan remained uncertain. On April 17, 1973, after four days of bilateral talks Bangladesh and India announced a

"simultaneous repatriation" initiative to end the prisoner-deadlock. Bangladesh, however, made it clear that India would not release any of the war criminals whom it would try along with local collaborators.

Bhutto furiously refused Bangladesh's contention of trying accused Pakistanis in Bangladesh. He threatened that if Bangladesh carried out the trial of the Pakistanis, Islamabad would also hold similar tribunals against the Bangladeshis trapped in Pakistan. In an interview on 27 May 1973, Bhutto said: "Public opinion will demand trials (of Bangladeshis) here ... We know that Bengalis passed on information during the war. There will be specific charges. How many will be tried, I cannot say." To prove that it was not just an empty threat, Pakistan government quickly seized 203 Bengalis as "virtual hostages." Bhutto argued that if "Bangladesh tried any of its PoW, Pakistanis who were already 'terribly upset' would topple Pakistan's political leadership". This is what Bhutto had told Indira Gandhi on 2 July 1972 in Simla. He claimed that his government had already arrested some top-ranking military officials for conspiracy.

On 28 August 1973, India and Pakistan signed the Delhi Accord, which followed the Bangladesh-India "simultaneous repatriation" proposal. This allowed release of most of the stranded Bengalis and Pakistanis held in Pakistan and India respectively for more than one and half years. The tripartite repatriation began on 18 September 1973. Pakistan and India agreed that the issue of 195 accused Pakistanis would be settled between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Pakistan kept the 203 Bangladeshis out of the repatriation process. Earlier in the last week of April 1973 Pakistan issued a statement saying, "Pakistani government rejects the right of the authorities in Dhaka to try any among the prisoners of war on criminal charges, because the alleged criminal acts were committed in a part of Pakistan by citizens of Pakistan. But Pakistan expresses its readiness to constitute a judicial tribunal of such character and composition as will inspire international confidence to try the persons charged with offenses." This eased the atmosphere a bit.

After about one year, Bangladesh finally accepted Pakistan's proposal, fearing for the fate of Bengalis trapped in Pakistan and to gain the much-needed access to UNO. With faith that Pakistan would hold the trial of the Pakistanis involved in the wartime atrocities, Bangladesh withdrew its demand for trying the Pakistanis in Dhaka. Upon the formal understanding, the last group of 203 detained Bangladeshis was allowed to return home on 24 March 1974. Bangladesh's position was formalised on 10 April 1974 through a tripartite agreement among Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Pakistan offered apology to Bangladesh on the same day.

Tripartite Agreement noted that Bhutto would visit Bangladesh and "appeal to the people of Bangladesh to forgive and forget the mistakes of the past in order to promote reconciliation." The war criminals were released in spirit of "ushering an era of peace and tranquillity in the region."

Releasing the War Criminals was the biggest folly of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and Indira Gandhi. Barring few senior officers among the War Criminals, who were charged with professional incompetence instead of war crimes, all others continued to serve in the Pakistan Army and some of them rose to become Major Generals and Lt Generals. These very officers were masterminds of hatching an ISI-CIA jointed conspiracy to murder Sheikh Mujir Rehman and most of his kin on 15 August 1975. They also orchestrated Sikh militancy in Punjab which ultimately resulted in the assassination of Indian PM Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984. In 1977 Gen Zia-ul-Haque overthrew Bhutto regime in a bloodless military coup d'tat in which these officers had played a major role. In 1978 Zia-ul-Haque launched Operation Topac for starting militancy to capture J&K and bleed India through thousand cuts to weaken it militarily and economically. These officers were at the forefront in execution of OP Topac. They also formed core group for training Taliban for establishing the Shariat regime in Afghanistan. Thus instead of ushering peace and tranquillity in the region their release resulted in ushering an era of terrorism.

Pakistan has not fulfilled its commitment to try the war criminals. More than 100 war criminals are still surviving and leading luxurious lives on the loot from Bangladesh. It is time for right minded citizens to build consensus through different means including social media for starting trial process for them. India and Bangladesh Governments' hands are tied due to Tripartite Agreement of 10 April 1974. If Nazis could be tried as late as in 2016 and Japanese could be forced to apologize and pay compensation to Korean sex slaves 70 years after end of World War II; then similar trial of war criminals and apology and compensation to Bangladeshi victims of Pak genocide just after 48 years is not out of place.

Nobody had the right to release the Pakistani war criminals because they had committed the crime against humanity. Therefore it is duty of every human being to raise her/his voice to bring the surviving Pakistani War Criminals to justice by an international crime tribunal. Pakistan must be compelled by world community to render an unconditional apology and pay compensation.





Hero of 1971 Indo-Pak War-Lt Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora with Father of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his residence on 13 January 1972.

EXODUS-by November 1971, the number of refugees from Bangladesh in India had reached 10 million. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with refugees.

Photo courtesy :  
*The Hindu*



Some of the Birangonas who have got recognition as freedom fighters after winning independence through "Liberation War" in Bangladesh in 1971.

Photo Courtesy:  
*Asian Age*



US Senator Edward Kennedy visiting Bangladeshi refugee camp in Kolkata.

*Photo Courtesy: The Daily Star*

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