

Bangladesh Liberation War: A Personal Diary

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"Bangladeshi governments and political leaders may have the luxury to ignore those dead ones and squabble over leadership, but how can I forget them? How can I forget Bilkis whose father was an additional SP of Comilla and was shot dead? How can I forget my relatives, my neighbours and my friends that were killed for no fault of their own? Our Hindu neighbour's college going daughter was raped. How can I forget her pure face and affectionate behaviour? On the Victory Day each year, while we rejoice, I feel pain as we could not honour the dead, nor the victims, nor the freedom fighters yet with due solemnity. I feel bad when I find the national leaders questioning the 'Muktijudder Chetona'. What a travesty of justice, what a shameful act!! How can we make friendship with those that still refuse to accept their guilt and deny the existence of injustice and atrocities of 1971?"

March 23, 1971: Journey to Sylhet

I just came to pick up my sister who was a medical doctor at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). While entering the building, I met Tajuddin Ahmed, Molla Jalaluddin, Obaidur Rahman and few other Awami League (AL) leaders. They came to see some wounded AL supporters at the DMCH. I knew Tajuddin and Molla Jalaluddin. I met them in Rawalpindi and Lahore in 1969 during Ayub's Round Table Conference (RTC). I asked them about the progress of their dialogue with President General Yahya Khan. He did not show much enthusiasm, and instead asked me about my well being. I went to my sister's (Apa) room. She was not there. I met a class friend of mine, Shohidul Huq, who was a Medical Representative at the time. Now he is a big businessman. He is a good soul, always very friendly, helpful and forthright. When Apa came to her room, Shohid advised her to send her kids to Sylhet to avoid any likely trouble if 'dialogue' fails. Shohid had always been very close to Obaidur Rahman and he assured that he would let us know the latest developments. Apa was worried as she had two small kids, Sayyied, an infant and Lubna, a toddler. Now Lubna is a mother and a financial consultant. Their father, a young promising surgeon, Humayun Kabir (31) died in a car accident in Khulna in June 1970 when Sayyied was an infant. Now Sayyied is the General Manager of the ETV television channel. Expatriates like me are thankful to Sayyied and his boss, A. S. Mahmud, Chairman of the ETV as their private TV channel did a wonder... it facilitated us to watch Bangladeshi news, dramas, cinemas, and life of Bangladesh even from abroad, for example, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The ETV news is objective and therefore very popular. Due to ETV, the cable sales has gone up significantly especially amongst its 900,000 Bangladeshi expatriates and many in Riyadh would ask you to join dinner parties after the 8 O'clock news of ETV [Dhaka's 11 PM is Riyadh's 8 PM].

We left for Sylhet on 23rd March 1971. My immediate boss, a Pakistani did not allow me leave of absence. However, I just vanished and reported to work on December 19, 1971 from Guwahati (India)... This does not mean that I was always in India during this long 8 months and 26 days. In fact, I mostly lived within then East Pakistan during the war of liberation and went through the horrors and tension of the occupation army.

On 26th morning when there was no 'Radio Dhaka', we knew that the situation went wrong. However, reports of massacre in Dhaka reached to us on 27th morning.... More details came

on 28th. On 28th March we first listened the voice of Major Ziaur Rahman from the clandestine radio who in the name of 'Sheikh Mujib' announced that the Bangladeshis are at war with Pakistani occupation forces [Ami Major Zia bolchi...Jatir Mohan Netha Sheikh Mujibur Rahman er na-mee ami swadhintha gushona...].

On 2nd April, we heard sounds of fire exchange at night. The following day, we learned that when the Pakistan army asked the Bengali jawans to surrender their arms and ammunitions, they refused at the Telikhal BDR camp and therefore, there was an exchange of fire. The martial law government imposed curfew and therefore, it was difficult to gather information.

April 4, 1971: A Historic Day for Sylhet

On this day, the independence movement started in Sylhet town from my house. On that morning I went to see my friend, Shabbir Ahmed, formerly VP of Sylhet M. C. College Chattra Sangshad and Chattra League. He was a very close friend of mine. East Pakistan Governor Monayem Khan barred Shabbir from studying in any of the colleges of the province as he threw his sandal at the podium of President Ayub Khan at a meeting at the Sylhet Circuit House. I requested many people including Dr. AKM. Rabbani, then DC of Sylhet, Minister Abdus Salam, Police Chief Kazi Anwarul Huq, then Chattra League leaders Fazlul Huq Moni and Abdur Razzaque, et al to release him from jail but in vain. We employed Advocate Chowdhury ATM Masud [later Justice and Chief Election Commissioner] to get his bail. Finally, Zamir Ali, a NSF leader of S. M. Hall managed to get him released. When Bangladesh was created, he became a JSD leader. Later he went to England to do CA and settled in Cambridge (UK). While we were talking, suddenly I was informed that firing started in my locality, Dhupadigirper. I rushed to my home but could not proceed further. There were none on the road, the rickshaw puller was afraid to move. I got down and walked fast. When I reached my house, the main gate was locked. I somehow managed to enter. On entrance, I saw 10/12 Bangladeshi BDR jawans in our compound. They have taken positions. They assured us and asked me to get a barricade erected near the Agricultural Office, 20 yards from my house. We did erect the barricade. My parents were afraid and my father reminded me that the military government had declared that if any barricade were erected in front of the house, they would demolish the house. We heard that a young Punjabi, a body builder, who works at the nearby United Engineers (Aslam Co.) had been shot dead earlier.

Soon a military van came and stopped near our gate. It was about 3 PM in the afternoon. This is the military's announcement van. Our house is located between two roads, one leading to Tamabil known as Sylhet-Shillong Road and another to Jatarpur-Chalibander area and therefore, it was easy to see even the Banderbazar, 1or 2 kilometre from home--very strategically located. When the road was built, my grandfather, Khan Bahadur Abdur Rahim then a SDO donated the land for the road and my father's maternal uncle, Abdul Hamid, a member of Assam Legislative Assembly was a big leader, a powerful Minister and a Speaker of the assembly.

As soon as Sikander, the announcer, started announcement of curfew, the valiant BDR fighters opened fire. But the van escaped. After it left, we knew that the Pakistani army would arrive soon. Therefore, we started putting up all sorts of barricades in our wooden doors and glass windows. We put up piles of bookshelves, tables, chairs, and mattresses. The bookshelves were very heavy...bookshelves of bounded law books/documents belonged to my father who was a lawyer. Very interestingly, God gave us enormous strength to move those heavy bookshelves at

the time. I wonder how we did that. They saved us from bullets. We found so many bullets inside the pages of those books and voluminous documents later.

Within 20 minutes, two armoured vehicles came. A few soldiers got down nearly 40 yards from our home and started walking forward by the roadside. Soon they started shooting and it continued for hours. Mortar shells demolished the walls of our home. The handle of the easy chair on which my father was seated suddenly hit and went away. But miraculously, he was unhurt. We lay down on the floor. The sun was setting and the house appears to have caught fire. By 8 PM the shooting stopped. The BDR and the Pak army left. We could see couples of roadside shanty stores burning. There was not a single human being around. All was very quiet. We were extremely tired and exhausted. I don't know when I slept on the floor. At midnight, I wake up as rainwater was falling on me. Then we could realize that the rooftop of the house had been blown away at the mortar attacks. Before dawn a couple of people showed up and they were surprised as we were still alive under the debris. Soon we decided to escape. We went to our neighbour's house, Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, a businessman. He is originally from Karimganj, India. Two of his brothers were politicians; one was a member of the Indian Lok Sabha and another in the Assam Assembly. Mr. Chowdhury was a staunch supporter of Ayub Muslim League and his best friend, Ajmal Ali Chowdhury was Ayub's Minister for Commerce and Industry. Mannan family also was surprised to see us alive. None could ever think that we could survive such an onslaught and barrage of bullets. I have also never seen Sikander, the announcer since that day.

By 8:30 AM, the whole area was crowded with thousands of people. There were two dead bodies. It was difficult to identify them as foxes have eaten them up. However, they had khaki uniforms. When we went back to collect money and ornaments from our house, we found people were looting our stuff. It was very sad. Before dawn when we left we did not take any money even. By 9 AM, we saw a Pakistani jet came and strafed the area. People vanished... Many dived into the waters of Dhupadighi, a lovely pond [now most of it is filled up to erect shanty stores]. Soon we saw, two more jets come and dropped bombs. We thought our Kitchen, separated from the main house, the 1st Muslim League Office of Sylhet, was on fire [when my father joined All India Muslim League and started organizing it in Sylhet, he had to leave his parental home, named 'Shaheb Bari' in Raynagar as his father was an SDO, a British Civil Servant. Initially, our kitchen was only built and it soon became the Muslim League Office as he was its Secretary]. As jets started coming and coming again, we all ran out and finally could not proceed further as shooting started all around us. We settled at a 'lakrier dum' or store for fuel-woods near Howapara, nearly 1.5 miles away from our house. There was no bathroom and no food. Infant Sayyied and Lubna were crying.

However, by afternoon we could reach Zindabazar at our maternal uncle's house, Dr. Syed Shah Anwar Chowdhury. We had a good meal after 24 hours and we could listen to the Indian and the BBC radio as well. We observed that the world was still functioning and normal although last night, we thought 'everybody died'!! Since our uncle was a strong supporter of AL, we decided to move out of his house and later, we settled at the house of Mohammed Ishaque, another uncle (Fufa) at Howapara, Sylhet. He was a retired government official, a Muslim Leaguer and he had a neat and lovely bungalow.

The whole of Sylhet by the time was liberated. When I was going back to my house to release our chicken, pigeons, cows, dogs, I met a few prisoners that were just released from the Sylhet jail. There was great relief as well as uncertainty. When I reached my home, I reflected on my father's saying. He said before leaving home, 'Pakistan was created in this house and its destruction started from here. Ayub Kha, Yahya Kha, Tikka Kha, Choto Kha, Boro Kha --- none fought for Pakistan. They have no love for the country. They destroyed our dream...' In fact, our home was the first Muslim League Office of Sylhet. My father who was very active in the Indian independence movement especially Pakistan was fully devastated. He quit his college when Gandhi called for 'non-cooperation movement'. However, his father who was Deputy Commissioner in Guwahati at the time forced him to finish his BA, MA and LLB. During Sylhet referendum through which Sylhet was included into Pakistan, my father was its Secretary and our home was virtually the Sylhet Referendum Committee Office. His maternal uncle, Maulvi Abdul Hamid was a Minister in the Assam and a senior Muslim League leader. The President of Sylhet Referendum Committee was Maulvi Abdul Matin Chowdhury (Khola Miah) and he used to stay in our house as his house was away from Sylhet town by 10/15 miles [on those days it was very difficult to travel]. Many political leaders of undivided India, for example, Maulana Akram Khan, Sadre Isphani, HS Suhrawardy, AK Fazlul Huq, Abul Hashem, Maulana Bashani, Abdur Rab Nishtar, Maulana Sahul Osmany and young political workers like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Fazlul Qader Chowdhury, Molla Jalaluddin, Hamidul Huq Chowdhury, Mahmud Ali, Abdus Samad Azad, Dewan Farid Ghazi, ATM Masud (later judge & Chief Election Commissioner), Sarequm Abdullah, Dewan Abdul Baset, Syed AB Mahmud Hussain (later Chief Justice), Moqbul Hussain, Tassadduq Ahmed Chowdhury (UK) et al spent days in this house ... meetings after meetings were held beginning 1940 in organizing Muslim polity, referendum and Pakistan. It is an irony that, the Pakistan occupation army destroyed this house, a virtual symbol of Pakistan and Referendum. Alternatively, the struggle for sovereign Bangladesh started first in the Sylhet town again from the same house that achieved independence of Sylhet from the British Raj, 24 years ago. Freedom fighter, Al-Amin Chowdhury, Bir Bikram, once thus stated, 'this house is our national pride as Mukti Juddo was launched from here'. He was very much saddened to see that it was transformed to a poly clinic at the time.

Soon we moved out of town and went to Fulbari, 10 miles from the town. We took shelter at the houses of two brothers, Mugo Miah and Luboi Miah Chowdhury, close friends of my father and also relations of ours. Many families like us, for example, the Regional Manager of Pakistan State Bank (Sylhet) and his family took shelter in the same house. Nearly hundred people took shelter. Our hosts were great and they did their best to keep us comfortable and well fed. In fact, we enjoyed our stay and their hospitality. We used to spend our time either by playing carom-board or other indoor games or listening to the radio, Bangladesh Betar, BBC and Akash Bani. During the war, M.R. Akther Mukul's "Choram Patro" was our most favourite radio program and it used to uplift our hopes and spirit. We met Dewan Farid Ghazi, the elected member (MNA) and Chief of Sylhet AL party when he visited us. He came to see my father. The Akash Bani, the Indian radio in its national news reported that my father, Abu Ahmed Abdul Hafiz, a very senior Muslim League leader, President of Sylhet District Bar Association and formerly Secretary General of the Sylhet Referendum Committee was killed by the Pakistan army when they attacked his house. Actually, our house was destroyed but my father escaped unhurt; but Abdul Hafiz, a colleague and a namesake of my father, was killed by the Pakistan army. Dewan Farid Ghazi reported that Dr. Shamsuddin Ahmed, Principal Sylhet Medical College and Civil

Surgeon of Sylhet were shot dead by Pakistan army. We were very saddened at the news. Dr. Ahmed was a very fine man. His wife, Hosne Ara Chowdhury, Principal of Sylhet Women College, was very close to us. His two sons and daughters are now living in the U. S. His son Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed of Philadelphia and Mr. Tareq Ahmed of Connecticut are actively involved with the Bangladeshi community welfare.

At Fulbari, my sister helped deliver a baby to the wife of Dr. M. Samad Chowdhury, a Professor of Sylhet Medical College. He also took shelter like us. That baby must be a grown up person now!

April 20, 1971: The Day of Humiliation

Around 9 O'clock in the morning, the Pakistan army launched a campaign against the Mukti juddah that were organized in Fulbari. It is known as the famous 'Baitikorer Juddo'. It lasted for hours. When the war was over, the Pakistani army arrested us and took us away. However, they released the old ones including a local doctor who was nearly 80. They kept us and started asking me questions, one after another. They brought us to a school near Ronikhail. They ordered me to get undressed and checked my penis to ascertain whether I am a Muslim [as if, if you do not have circumcision then you are not a Muslim] and made sarcastic remarks. One young person being afraid fled away and he was shot. As I wanted to help, they beat me mercilessly. We were kept on the roadside [Fulbari-Badeshor-Karimgonj road] in a kneel-down position for the whole night. It was cold and at times drizzling. But we had to endure the tortures, as we were Bangalees by birth! It reminded me Poet Nazrul's poem titled "Fariyad"... 'a noyeh thobo bidan... sontan thobo koriche az thumar osamman, Bhogovan, Bhogovan' [it must not be Your rule that we would only suffer... Your sons are dishonouring You, my Lord].

The following morning, a young officer, Major Rob ordered us to march with them. They kept us in the front line and asked us to show them Mukti, Awami League and Hindu houses. Since I never lived there, I argued. It did not help. Instead, they got mad and cut my wrist with a bayonet. Those marks of tortures are my pride of liberation movement and they vividly remind me of my duty to my motherland.

We led five columns of army, three on the main road, two off the road. If there were any habited locality, they would fire the big gun to get response. If there was no response, we proceed. We did this for the whole day in wretched condition, no shoes, no sandals, no food, and no water. As I objected, they beat me again and in the process, I believe, I lost consciousness. When I was on my senses, I found myself in front of Lt Col. Sarfaraz Malik, the commanding officer. He asked me a variety of questions. He commented that 'You are an Awami Leaguer, a Mukti'. He said, he had my photograph among the demonstrators in Sylhet. I challenged him and explained to him that I was living in Rawalpindi during 1969 and 1970 and I just came to Sylhet only on March 24th. He asked many questions on my stay in Rawalpindi and by miracle, he found that I was close to his cousin who was a teacher at the Rawalpindi Women College. I knew the names of his nieces and nephews. Finally, he released me and said, he would visit my parents.

He dropped me at Fulbari and said, he would come back tomorrow. When the villagers saw army vehicles, they all were afraid. They ran for their lives. However, I returned alive and my mother started weeping. On the following day, photos of Jinnah, Liaquat, Ayub and General

Yahya were hung up and Pakistani flags were hoisted atop each villa out of fear. All green coloured lungis were torn apart to make flags. I cannot forget the debate between Luboi Miah (Luban Ahmed Chowdhury) and his son, Saniath Jamshed Ahmed Chowdhury. Saniath, a fresh graduate from the Dhaka University would like to keep his personal photos of 1969, some with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib; many of which were the hallmarks of Bangladesh history and 1969 mass movement. His father being afraid of the army wanted to destroy them all --- Saniath was willing to upkeep history at the cost of his own life while his father wanted to save life at the cost of history. Now Saniath lives in London and I wonder did he ever look back and reflect?

Soon at the insistence of Col. Malik, we had to move to our Dhupadigirpar house that was destroyed by them. Col. Malik and Brig. Rana arranged special flight for us to fly to Dhaka. The Pakistani occupation army realized an opening for a good public relations campaign and to nullify the Indian news (Akash Bani) media claim. They pressed my father to make a 'radio broadcast' that he refused. They flew my brother, Sujan A. Muiz along with others to check and state that my father was alive. General Tikka Khan sent 'Peace Committee Member' Mahmud Ali and General Rao Forman Ali to see our house and the passers-by were forcibly recruited to rebuild the house overnight. The house was rebuilt and army officers used to come by to loot all precious collections, for example, gold coins of Emperor Akbar, the coins of Tuglak, coins of many countries that my mother collected over the years, rare books and old copies of Quran, gold and silver collections, a part of which were rescued and later was donated to the Dhaka Museum. For the next nine months, no one could live in that house for fear of the occupation army.

My father was sent to Dhaka Medical College hospital for treatment as a mortar splinter caused infection on his right leg. We could not take care of it when we were on the run. His next-door patient was Poet Jasimuddin, the Palli Kobi. He dictated many poems to my younger sister, Shipa Hafiza that possibly have never been published yet!

One of my elder brothers, Shelly A. Mubdi, was working as the Sales Manager for the ICI Pharmaceuticals and he left Dhaka through Canadian embassy on 27th March and joined the Bangladesh liberation movement in London. Another one, Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, who was working at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington DC left Pakistan government service on protest and became a lobbyist in Washington DC for the Bangladesh liberation movement. He was the senior most CSP officer who switched allegiance to Mujibnagar government. I came back to Dhaka and was working with Professor Giasuddin Ahmed of the Dhaka University, a close family friend. We used to collect medicines and relief materials for the Mukti Bahini. My sister, Dr. Shahla Khatun used to get medicine samples and a number of my brother's friends (Mubdi of ICI) were very cooperative and they used to supply us boxes of medicines. For example, Mr. M. R. Osmany of the Wyeth Laboratories, a cousin of Gen. M.A.G. Osmany was a good contributor. My sister's Morris Minor car with customary 'doctor's emblem and 'Red Cross' sign was very helpful to transport medicines for the freedom fighters without any body's suspicion. One day, Gias Bhai and I got caught at the Mirpur Road near Dhanmondi Road No. 2. They inquired about the boxes of medicines. However, the doctor's emblem and Red Cross signs saved us from disaster. I felt awful when I learned of the cruel death of Gias Bhai, a man of great dignity and a towering personality. Al Badr/ Al-Shams Bahini murdered him on December 14, 1971, along with many other intellectuals two days prior to independence. May Allah bless him. Surely the

martyrs did not give their lives for nothing-- they are indeed a blessed lot.

In Assam, we had to maintain low profile as the Assamees and the Indian Muslims did not like us there. In Karimganj, neither the brothers of our neighbour, Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, were happy with us although they were MPs from the Congress-I (Indira Congress) party. They rebuked us for breaking Pakistan. However, we got help from Bengali speaking Indians especially relatives of Hindu friends of Bangladesh. Finding difficulty in Karimganj, I came back to Dhaka to collect medicines and money for the refugees and the Mukti-Bahini. In passing, I must mention one thing. During the occupation period, one of my elder sisters, Fauzia Khatun died in Dhaka as no one was able to shift her to the medical emergency owing to the 'curfew'. We could neither bury her at our family graveyard in Sylhet. A couple of weeks earlier, she flew from Rawalpindi to my parents rented new home in Dhaka near Pak Motors on Mymensingh Road and their downstairs' tenant was Dr. S. D. Chowdhury, former Vice Chancellor and next door neighbour was advocate Ahmedur Rahman, son-in-law of former Chief Minister, Nurul Amin. At times, I stayed with my sister at the Sobhanbagh Colony and under occupation, all our neighbours [both in Pak Motors and Sobhanbagh colony], Mr. M. A. Samad (Agri. Dept), Professor A. Hasheem (Dhaka College), Dr. Idris Lasker, Dr. Badiul Alam (Medical Professors) and their families, to name a few, became a close-knit family. No wonder people in distress become close friends! It is interesting that during 1971, one of my younger sisters, Nazia Khatun got married to Dr. A. H. Shibly, a teacher at the Rajshahi University. Many of our own relatives did not attend her wedding out of fear as her brothers were working for the Bangladesh cause. In addition, one of my maternal uncles, Syed Shah Jamal Chowdhury, a resident of SM Hall and a Final Year student at the Dhaka University never returned home since 25th March 1971.

An Unique War Experience: Even Soldiers Hardly Get It

On November 19, 1971 my parents went back to Sylhet for the first time since April 4th and all of us joined them to observe the Eid-ul-Fitre. I was supposed to return to Dhaka on November 27th. However, all the flights were cancelled and on December 4, 1971, we had to move our family away as occupation army set up a camp behind our house. When I was about to leave, the Pakistan army did not allow me to leave. I insisted on my leaving and therefore, they said, they would kill me. They added, they were at war with India. Till April 20, I was never been afraid of Pakistan army. But after that day and after I returned from India, the sight of Pakistani army used to create fear, shivering, and real tension.

However, I remained at home alone. At the evening, the Pakistani army started shooting at random at the Indian paratroopers and Mukti Bahini, they said. I looked around but could not see anything. By 8 O' Clock, it was clear to me....I listened to the speech of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who declared war. I was delighted and had been waiting for that hour. As the sounds of shooting intensified, I took shelter at a small trench in our backyard. The shooting continued throughout the night. You could hear different kinds of sounds...ketor ketor, tash tash, woo-woo, gurum gurum, gumm. It reminded me of Lord Tennyson's poem, 'cannons to right of them, cannons to left of them, cannons in front of them, volleyed and thundered". Like Srikanto's 'Somudro Jatra", I thought, if I die, let me enjoy the war and its ferocity and therefore, I started looking up. I could see flashes of lights and flashes of fire projectiles all around me. They were never-ending. What a great wonder that men's creations developed weapons of self-destruction!! What a great mystery that it is human beings that created more problems, tensions

and disasters for themselves!!

It might be near impossible for many professional soldiers to be 'in-between the opposing forces' but I had a rare chance. I was in-between the Pakistan army and the joint forces of India and Bangladesh. At late night, I could hear the Pakistan army retreating. Their big armoured cars, jeeps and trucks had gone leaving behind tons of ammunitions and varieties of guns. So many weapons! The following morning, when I heard a Bengali voice, I got up from my trench. I met an Indian Captain. He was originally from Faridpur. They were trying to jump start a car. They took it and he told me not to move around the ammunitions. Within half an hour, he came back along with an Indian Colonel and asked me to accompany them to the Army HQ. I did. I met General DQ, the Indian Army General. He told me not to allow anyone to touch the ammunitions. Soon Indian trucks came and loaded the leftovers; varieties of guns, rifles, recoilless guns, and tons of ammunitions, might be worth of millions of dollars. Our entire backyard where we used to play football was full of ammunitions and arms. They dug so many trenches all across the football field and destroyed our pineapple gardens, hundreds of them.

I went out by bike to see my family that took shelter at Masimpur, 8 miles from our home. On the way, I saw dead bodies near the Hasan Market, the State Bank premises and the Kane's bridge. One dead body was hanging on the grill... he must have tried his best to flee away but failed. I did neither have time nor the courage to bury the dead ones. Still today those scenes haunt me in my pensive or in-pensive mood.

Conclusion: Should We Forget Muktijudder Chetona?

Bangladeshi governments and political leaders may have the luxury to ignore those dead ones and squabble over leadership, but how can I forget them? How can I forget Bilkis whose father was an additional SP of Comilla and was shot dead? How can I forget my relatives, my neighbours and my friends that were killed for no fault of their own? Our Hindu neighbour's college going daughter was raped. How can I forget her pure face and affectionate behaviour? On the Victory Day each year, while we rejoice, I feel pain as we could not honour the dead, nor the victims, nor the freedom fighters yet with due solemnity. I feel bad when I find the national leaders questioning the 'Muktijudder Chetona'. What a travesty of justice, what a shameful act!! How can we make friendship with those that still refuse to accept their guilt and deny the existence of injustice and atrocities of 1971? How can we not ask them to solicit mercy and forgiveness for their crime against mankind? A crime is a crime. It cannot be ignored with the lapse of time. Lord Cromwell was tried from his dead and the Nazis of World War II are still being sought after. The Nazis and the KKK are barred from getting elected in democratic societies. We must not condone a criminal or his crime, nor should we give shelter to criminals. We can only forgive them provided they ask for forgiveness and mercy---there is no alternatives known to me. Those who believe in Islam know that even the Almighty Allah will not forgive those who have committed crimes against His creatures unless they forgive them first. Therefore, unless they solicit mercy and forgiveness and confess their guilt publicly, they must not be forgiven. If a group or a person forgive them for group or personal interest, then they share the same loathe and disdain of our dead. They cannot be our heroes nor can they be the torchbearers for our future generations.

Muktijudder Chetona is very simple and pure. It stands for justice and fair play in human

relations. It abhors racism, intolerance, dehumanization discrimination and communalism that the occupation force represented. It seeks equity in society and equal opportunities for all. It upholds democratic values; after all the 1971 war was fought to ensure democracy and economic emancipation. Can we therefore forget Muktiujder Chetona?

We know that 'past is past, future is uncertain, and present is a gift of God'. Since the 'present' is a gift of God, therefore, should we not use this gift to the best of our ability to enhance Muktiujder Chetona, more fellow feeling, more tolerance, better economic opportunities and justice for all?