

HIS-103: Emergence of Bangladesh

Lecture 19

Killing of Intellectuals, Victory & Emergence of Bangladesh, Return of Sheikh Mujib—the Father of the Nation



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Killing of Intellectuals 14 December 1971

- Killing of Intellectuals a planned killing of the Bangalee intellectuals representing one of the most brutal and savage carnages in history. The killing of the intellectuals, educationists, journalists, litterateurs, physicians, scientists, lawyers, artists, philosophers and political thinkers was executed by a group of collaborators under the directive and guidance of the Pakistani military rulers in occupied Bangladesh during the war of liberation in 1971.
- The intellectuals were the philosophers and guide in infusing in the people of East Bengal the spirit of Bangalee nationalism, and they inspired the people in all the mass movements against disparity and repressive measure of the Pakistani rulers. Hence the intellectuals have all through been the targets of the rulers of Pakistan. The killing of the intellectuals was obviously the execution of a blueprint of the military junta chalked out with an avowed object of eliminating the intellectuals, thereby reducing the Bangalee nation into intellectual bankruptcy and depriving them of leadership.
- The blueprint of crippling the intelligentsia is known to have been chalked out by a body of at least ten persons headed by Major General Rao Farman Ali, the military adviser to the Governor of East Pakistan. It is widely believed that the killings of 14 December was orchestrated by Rao Farman Ali. After the liberation of Bangladesh, a list of Bangalee intellectuals (most of whom were executed on 14 December) was discovered in a page of his diary left behind at the Governor House

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- The existence of such a list was confirmed by Farman Ali himself, although he denied the intention of genocide. The execution of the blueprint was led by Brigadier Bashir, Lt Colonel Hejazi, Major Zahur, Major Aslam, Captain Nasir and Captain Qayyum under the overall guidance of Lt. General Ameer Abdullah Khan Niazi, commander of the Eastern Command of Pakistan army. The extreme right-wing Islamist militia groups Al-Badr and Al-Shams executed the brutal killings, having been provided with arms and support by the Pakistan army.
- The killing of the intellectuals virtually began following the army crackdown in Dhaka on the night of 25 March. The Pakistan army during their operation searchlight chalked out the targeted victims and killed them. Some of the teachers of Dhaka University were killed on the night of 25 March. But the planned killing of the intellectuals took a serious turn especially in Dhaka during three or four days preceding the surrender of the Pakistan army on 16 December. On the night of 14 December, over 200 of intellectuals were abducted from their homes in Dhaka. The act of killing was initiated in Dhaka and gradually spread over the whole of East Pakistan especially in the district and sub-divisional towns.

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- The killers used to abduct the targeted victims from their respective houses in gestapo style and carry them blind folded to torture cells at Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Nakhapara, Rajarbagh, Physical Training Centre (Mohammadpur) and other locations in different sections of the city. They mostly took advantage of curfew in the city and kidnapped the victims. The victims were physically tortured, brutally killed mostly by indiscriminate bayonet charges. The main spots of execution in Dhaka city were Alokdi, Kalapani, Rainkhola, back yard of Bangla College, Harirampur graveyard, Shialbari in Mirpur, eastern end of Mohammadpur thana, and Rayerbazar. In the marshy land at Rayerbazar and at Mirpur, a huge number of dead bodies were found scattered in the ditches, plains and inside the heaps of bricks. The dead bodies, eyes covered, and hands tied on the back, were found bruised all over, bullet shots on the chest, head or back and bayonet injury all over the body.
- In memory of the martyred intellectuals, 14 December is mourned in Bangladesh as Shaheed *Buddhijibi Dibash* (Martyred Intellectual Day).
- The number of intellectuals killed in the country could not be estimated exactly, not to speak of the identity of the persons killed. From the available sources the number is roughly 1111 of whom educationist 991, journalist 13, physician 49, lawyer 42, litterateur and artist 9, engineer 5, others 2.

Surrender of Pakistani Army—Victory

- The liberation forces started carrying out massive raids into enemy fronts from October 1971. After the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty in August 1971, India began to demonstrate more interest in the Bangladesh war. And finally, India entered the war on **3 December 1971**. In fact, the Indian soldiers were already participating in the war in different guises since November when the freedom fighters had launched the Belonia battle.
- Because of the geo-morphology of Bangladesh, the war could not be won too swiftly. Even then, Dhaka was liberated in a matter of two weeks, the previous successes of the freedom fighters during the preceding few months having been a major contributing factor.
- On 16 December 1971, commander of the 14 division of Pakistan army Major General Jamshed surrendered to Indian General Nagra near Mirpur bridge in Dhaka. At 10.40 am, the Indian allied force and Kader Siddiqui entered Dhaka city. That signaled the end of 9-month long War of Liberation of Bangladesh. Stray battles were still waged at various places of the country.
- The Commander of Eastern Command of the Pakistan Army Lt General Ameer Abdullah Khan Niazi surrendered to the commander of the joint Indo-Bangladesh force and the chief of Indian eastern command Lt. General Jagjit Singh Aurora. The Bangladesh Forces were represented at the ceremony by Group Captain AK Khondakar.



Bangladesh...an Independent state

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- With this Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in the global map sacrificing the lives of three million people.

Return of Sheikh Mujib

- After the liberation of Bangladesh on 16 December 1971 from Pakistani occupation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from Pakistan jail and via London he made a triumphant homecoming, arriving in Dhaka on 10 January 1972 amid joy and jubilations throughout the country.
- Hundreds of thousands of people of all walks of life received him at the Tejgaon old Airport according him a heroic welcome. With his homecoming, all uncertainties loomed large around the leadership of the new republic, for that matter, the future of Bangladesh were removed, as Daily The Guardian (published from London) in an editorial on 10 January 1972 wrote: 'Once Sheikh Mujibur Rahman steps out at Dacca Airport the new republic becomes a solid fact.'
- Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman headed the first government of the post-liberation Bangladesh for a short period of three years and a half. Starting from scratch his government had to deal with countless problems of a war-ravaged country. Under the leadership of Bangabandhu, the state-building and nation-building took off the ground covering all important fields. Restoring law and order, recovering illegal arms, rehabilitating the *mukhtijoddhas*, rebuilding the communication system, saving lives of the people hostile to the War of Liberation from the public wrath, and, most importantly, feeding the hungry millions and many others were the formidable challenges before his government.
- In spite of all these problems, Sheikh Mujib never faltered to enact a constitution, which he did within ten months. Return of Indian allied forces was ensured within three months of liberation. Within a period of fifteen months general elections were held (7 March 1973). As many as 140 countries recognized Bangladesh.