

The Price of Freedom :

Death, the end of life, an unexpected event in nature's cycle. Pain, agony beyond measure, caused from hardships and torture. Sorrow, a feeling of despair, of hopelessness and pain. Genocide, the destruction of life, the cause of premature death, of sorrow, and of pain, the stealing of life in a mass scale. To most of us these words are mere lines on paper only seen in books and videos, they are meaningless words that we can neither feel nor relate to. But there are an unfortunate few out there who can relate to them, a few who know the true meaning of these simple little words. Those few are haunted by these words in their dreams and scarred to the soul by them. They carry those words as a heavy burden on their heart, a burden that they shall never be relieved of. They are the cause of nightmares and sleepless nights, of an eternal agony that shall never let them rest. Now there are those of you ignorant and inexperienced enough to laugh and those foolish enough to not care, but there are also those of you out there with intelligence and the desire to learn of a world out there, a world outside of your safe sheltered bubble that you call life. For you, I have a story; it is a tale of pain and suffering, a tale of death and destruction. For you I have a tale of millions.

Imagine living in a world where your waking thoughts are: 'How will I get food this day. And if I do, will I survive long enough to eat it'. Imagine a world where the government that is supposed to insure your safety is as corrupt as an international crime lord who has only its own well being at heart. Where laws meant to ensure your security are created with an intention to cripple you. A world where a peaceful protest by unarmed civilians could result in the government taking martial action against them. Where massacres and wide spread government ordered homicides are a common occurrence. A world where you have no voice in parliament and all actions taken by that same government are done with a motive to destroy you. Imagine a world there you are persecuted for speaking your native language. Imagine a world where you do sixty percent of the work and all the sorry excuse of a government can give you is thirty percent of the benefits. Imagine this land with a raging storm with powers destruction that would make hurricane Katrina look like a child's work. Can you see this? Now imagine that the whole world sends donations for you to rebuild your destroyed life, for you to locate the bodies of your relatives thrown out to sea. And then your loving government takes that money to enrich their already kingly lives. Imagine being in the month of March. Imagine it being the year 1971. Imagine this little world of yours going by the name of Bangladesh. Do you have the image? A small country east of India with a tropical climate. A country with hundreds of small villages and a few large cities. This is the land where my story begins.

It is March in the seventy-first year of the twentieth century; your government is foreign to you for it is stationed in a land on the opposite side of India from where you are; it is a tyrannical power that has in the past forbidden you the right as the majority population to have a voice in government. Finally about three months ago they had held

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an election where you have been given the right to voice your opinions in parliament. But do to unknown circumstances known only to the politicians in power your right to fair representation has been placed on hold. Your people are getting tired of waiting so they organize strikes and hold peaceful protest against the government. Now pretend that you are a soldier from the Bengal region of Pakistan known as East Pakistan. You have just intercepted orders from your commanders to your West Pakistani brothers that state that Entire battle divisions of your main armed forces have been deployed all around East Pakistan and that was the reason for the transfer of powers. The orders state that the recipient of the orders is to surround and open fire on all armed forces personnel from the Bengal region at twelve o'clock midnight on the night of the twenty-fifth. The orders also state that they are to set ambushes for all Bengali military operatives on active duty at the moment as someone has been ordered to send them on a mission in your location. And for each Bengali killed and each house looted the soldiers shall be rewarded. And once all military strong holds of the Bengali division of our army are destroyed commence with a mass extermination of the rest of them with disregard toward age and gender.

There are three stories that I will speak of now. Three stories of facts. Three stories of the cruelty of the Pakistani soldiers, and their horrendous acts upon the people of Bangladesh. Three stories of bravery and pain. Three stories of honorable men who looked death in the face and never gave up hope. The first of these tales is one of an unknown, young civilian boy. His story begins with two Pakistani soldiers that were walking by the flying form of the newly formed flag of Bangladesh when they spotted the young boy, who at this time was about thirteen years of age. They then proceed to call the scared young boy over to them and begin to ask him to lower the flag. The boy, who can hardly move out of fear, climbs up the pole and lowers the flag and then as any true patriot would do, he carefully begins to fold the flag in respect to the land of his mothers. The soldiers slowly raise their weapons, and yet the boy goes on folding the flag which so many of his proud brothers are now dying to defend. The cruel, demonic soldiers then send rounds from their weapons into the boy's chest.

The second of these stories begin with my father's best friend. He is like an uncle to me and therefore that is what I will now refer to him as. This tale begins when my uncle was about sixteen to eighteen years old and he had just decided to become a Freedom Fighter in the Bangladesh militia. There were a many a time he stared death in the face but the one time that I remember most clearly is the time that he was captured by a few Pakistani soldiers. Now the Pakistani soldiers loved to dishonor enemy soldiers especially those who were young and frozen with fear as my uncle, so as a result of this satanic passion, they told my uncle to turn around and walk away and they would let him live. Scared, my uncle was but stupid has definitely never been a word in his vocabulary, he knew very well that they would shoot him in the back so he turned around and ran for three seconds before he threw himself on the ground and sure enough the next second he heard the firing of guns. He then crawled to safety and managed to survive. But it was not

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only the warriors that had to run, no all who spoke Bengali had the misfortune to meet the reaper, and my father was no exception.

This final story is of my father and grandfather's escape from death. My father was about ten years old and like all kids he wanted a game which in our country is a traditional game played like billiards. He and my grandfather went to the market to buy supplies when he asked for the board. My grandfather, being of reasonable mind knew that wasting money on entertainment in a time of war would be a foolish decision, and so told my father that when the war would end, then he would buy the best board the he could from India. A Pakistani spy over heard this and thought my grandfather to be a freedom fighter, so he went to the local Paki officer and ratted out my family. The next morning my father woke up to the sound of guns firing on his home. Luckily all of the family escaped. All but my grandfather managed to get through the doors and windows. My grandfather unfortunately was forced to find a more creative route when the terrorists stormed the house. My grandfather, thinking quickly, ran around his house and hid from the soldiers until he was finally able to escape through the sewage system.

This is the story of my father. The story of my uncle, my family and my people. This is the story of a nine month long genocide which resulted in the killing and torturing of over three million people, a genocide which freed a nation from the tyranny of a foreign government. This is a story of millions.

It took Adolph Hitler over four years to kill and torture about 6 million Jews, to do even half of that in less than a year is truly an unimaginable horror. But then Hitler thankfully did not hold the support of Richard Nixon nor did he have the 7th fleet of United States armed forces as aid, like the government of Pakistan did. It is mostly for this reason that I can not support any military action taken by any government no matter what the cause. It is for this reason that no matter how right it was to remove Saddam Hussein from power, I will never support the actions taken to rid Iraq of him for it was done by martial means. And just as the great Gandhi and Martin Luther King had discovered, I too know that any and all acts of violence could have been prevented and countered by more logical and humane means. That is not to say that I don't respect the troops in the field, for I have a great admiration for those who are not afraid to take a stand for their beliefs, it is just that I never wanted to send them into the field in the first place.