

Zoom Lecture on Genocide Day and Liberation War

For

BSISC Students, Baridhara DOHS, Dhaka Cantonment

By

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As Salamu Alaikum.

Bismillah hir Rahmanir Rahim.

All praises to Allah SWT that we are still safe and sound specially from COVID 19 pandemic to take part in this zoom session.

Thanks to BSISC authority for giving me this opportunity to share my experience of Dhaka City on 25th March 71 and Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

Today is Thursday, 25th March 2021. It was also a Thursday on 25th March in 1971. At that time, I was a student of the then EPUET, East Pakistan University of Engineering and Technology. Which is now BUET- Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. I was a resident student of the then Liaquat Hall, which is now Suhrawardy Hall. Since the University was closed in those days of turmoil, the Hall was almost empty. I was also planning to leave the Hall for my home in Panchagarh on the very next morning of 26th March 1971. Nevertheless, I had to undergo the horrific experience in that dreadful night.

I was in my room 3012, which was very close to the Palashi crossroad. At around 11 at night I woke up by sounds of shouting and howling of an angry crowd, rolling empty drums, trunks of trees and many other such things to setup a barricade right on the Palashi crossing. This barricade was intended to stop movement of Pakistani Army if they wanted to come to Dhaka University. Because in the daytime a rumor was spreading that the Pak Army would raid the Dhaka University Halls. The then Iqbal Hall now Sergeant Zahurul Huq Hall was in the targeted raid list.

Amidst barricade setting, sporadic rifle shots were heard from distance like Farm Gate or Cantonment. Gradually the rate of fire was increasing, and it was nearing too. After a while automatic rifle shot were heard. Meanwhile I went to the roof top of the four storied building to have a clear view of everything happening in between the Azimpur Eden Girls Hostel Crossing and the Palashi crossing area. With the closing in of the sounds of the rifle shots the enthusiastic crowd vanished in no time.

While in the roof top, I was hesitating to decide my next course of action, a convoy of Military vehicles emerged from the Azimpur crossing and steadily approaching towards Palashi crossing with head lights off and only the yellow coloured fog lights on. The convoy stopped in the Palashi crossing barricade. Few soldiers got down and quickly cleared the hastily made so called barricade. Then very quickly the front vehicles rushed in front of the Salimullah Muslim Hall of Dhaka University and few vehicles took right turn towards our Hall.

It was Allah SWT's rahma that instantly I understood that our Hall was also in the raid list. So quickly I got down from the roof and started running towards the University Campus. When I was in front of the Sher E Bangla Hall then I heard the firing on the rooms of Liaquat (Suhrawardy) Hall. I reached the campus and got up in the roof of an under construction six storied building, which was later known as Civil Building. From the top of the building, I could see the terrible and gruesome scenes in front of me. Firing on the Liaquat (Suhrawardy) Hall continued, incessant bombarding on the Salimullah Hall by rocket launcher and grenade launcher. I also observed burning the slums by the abandoned rail line in between Architecture Building and the Halls of EPUET (BUET) by flame thrower and then firing at the fleeing people by automatic rifle from the Palashi crossing side. Also firing and explosion was evident from Jagannath Hall. Slightly far away I could hear the terrifying sound and see the flash of explosion at the Shaheed Minar in front of the Dhaka Medical Collage and the Hindu Temple in the Racecourse in front of Bangla Academy. Sound of firing of heavy arms were also heard from the far area of Shantinagar and Rajarbag. I could hear sound of automatics and see the flash of occasional explosion in the far area of Old Dhaka.

For my own safety I decided to leave the Engineering University Campus. Finding Bakshi Bazar and adjacent areas quiet and calm, I walked to that area behind Alia Madrasha. There I met Mahfuz, a statistics student at Dhaka University, who offered me to be their guest for time being.

The morning of 26th March 1971 started with awe and shock. City dwellers experienced the brutal killing and massive destruction caused by a professional Army who unleashed their lethal and gruesome force with unbounded hatred towards a people who were unarmed and their compatriots a few hours back. The killing mission of Pakistan Army was code named "Operation Search Light". It was looking like a dead city. No movement of any type whatsoever. Only the roaring sound of the Patrolling Military vehicles in the main roads of the Dhaka City were heard from time to time. Stealthily I came to my room in the hall. To my utter surprise I found all the rooms were broke opened and ransacked. Hurriedly I collected one or two pairs of my cloth and sneaked away to Bakshi Bazar.

On the next morning of 27th March, curfew was lifted for some time. So me and Mahfuz came out to see the aftermath of the Military crackdown. We came in front of Salimullah Hall but did not dare to get inside because of a fear of unknown. Then we moved on towards the Iqbal (Sgt Zahurul Huq) Hall. In the corner of the boundary of Salimullah Hal we saw about 6/7 slain police guys. Inside the Iqbal (Sgt Zahurul Huq) Hall we found few dead bodies too.

Then quickly we left the place and started walking towards Jagannath Hall. Almost all the rooms of Jagannath Hall were bombed and fired at. The doors were burned. Due to burning marks the overall look of the building was so ugly and terrifying that we did not dare to step in. It will be pertinent to recall an incident here. After the horrifying onslaught at night the Pakistan Army caught hold of the surviving students in the morning. More than a dozen of them were lined up in the field in front of the Hall. Then brutally killed them by firing in cold blood. The entire shooting incident was video recorded by one of our Engineering University Professor Dr. Nurul Ula. He used to stay in teacher's quarter just opposite to Jagannath Hall across the road on the 3rd floor. That was probably the only video proof of Pakistani massacre. The video is still available in the U Tube Channel.

Then we entered a labour shed of under construction Shamsun Nahar Hall opposite to Jagannath Hall. Where we found a shocking scene. A man with a boy (may be his son) lying dead in a makeshift bed, covered with a mosquito net. We lifted the corner of the mosquito net to have a better look.

Then we started walking towards TSC. While we were nearing the traffic roundabout, we were caught unaware by a group of armed Army men standing inside the TSC building. As far as possible covering our frightening posture we decided to move forward instead of turning back and fleeing away. Then we entered inside the Ramna Kali Mandir in the Racecourse. It was an awful scenario. A heap of human corpse; some are burnt, and some are partially or unburnt. The air around the place was full of unbearable flesh burning malodour. Meanwhile we saw and heard a hovering helicopter in the sky. We decided to fall back to our house at Bakshi Bazar via Dhaka Medical College Hospital. We found the hospital totally abandoned.

The Military authority was time to time promulgating different Martial Law Orders and Instructions. Dhaka city slowly and gradually started to become normal. Meanwhile Independence of Bangladesh was declared. People were talking about guerrilla war against Pakistan Army. But nobody at Dhaka City knew the location and extent of the war. Only thing was clear that the Bengal Regiments of the Pakistan Army had revolted and fighting valiantly against Pakistani Occupation Army. On 10th April Bangladesh Government was formed in exile. The formal declaration took place on 17th April in a mango garden in Meherpu, Kushtia district of Bangladesh, adjacent to Indian border.

At this juncture of time, I decided to leave Dhaka and go to my village home-Boda in Panchagarh District with an intention of organizing Freedom Fight in my known locality. Initially mother of Mahfuz was unwilling to leave me into an uncertain situation. Finally, I could convince her of my safe journey to my parents.

I left Dhaka on 18th April 1971. After walking for five days in the route Dhaka-Tangail-Charabari Ghat-Santosh-Bhuapur-then crossed the Jamuna river in a local boat known as Goina and reached Sirajgonj. Then Raiganj-Chandaikona-Sherpur-Dupchachia-Khetlal-Joipurhat-Panchbibi and finally reached Hili on 22nd April 1971. Hili is divided as Indian Hili and Bangladeshi Hili.

Meanwhile a company of 3rd Bengal Regiment under the leadership of Captain Anwar (Major General), retreated to Hili from Syedpur Cantonment. The battalion took shelter inside India in a place known as Kamar Para about 10 km from Hili. I changed my decision of going home and joined 3rd East Bengal Regiment to fight for Bangladesh.

Initially we carried out few raids and tried to disrupt railway communication by destroying rail lines. Then I was sent for formal guerrilla training 1st in Raigonj of West Dinajpur District of West Bengal. Then the training camp was shifted to Kaliagonj due to inundation of the Raigonj camp which was on the bank of river Kulik. Due to heavy rain and muddy terrain the training camp was finally shifted to Himalaya mountain range-in a place known as Panighata. Which was near to Indian hilly city of Kurseong.

At the end of my training, I came back to my old camp at Kamarpara. This was under Sector 7. Headquarters of the Sector 7 was in Tarongapur-a place near Raigonj. We used to carry out various operations inside Bangladesh. In the month of October 71, I was sent to an Indian Artillery Regiment (64 Mountain Regiment) located at Baura- a place inside Bangladesh in the District of Rangpur (presently Lalmonirhat District). There I was trained as OP to bring Artillery fire on the Pakistani Army well inside and dug in bunkers.

In the late October, the Indian Artillery Regiment (64 Mountain Regiment) was mobilized to some other place. So, I came back to my old camp at Kamarpara. Then I started guerrilla operation inside Bangladesh till the victory and emergence of Bangladesh as an Independent Country.

Detail description of each operation is deliberately escaped due to time limitation.

May Allah SWT forgive and bless us all.

Thank you all for a passionate hearing.

As Salamu Alaikum.

Note:

On 27th March 1971 Maj Ziaur Rahman declared Independence of Bangladesh from Kalurghat Transmitting station of Radio Pakistan. The first declaration was in his own name. The second declaration of Independence was on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the advice of others in the same evening. His second speech of declaring Independence is recorded in the 3rd volume of the book, Liberation War of Bangladesh: Documents (Bangladesher Shwadinota Judhoya: Dalil Potra; Tritio Khondo.).

Dr. Nurul Ula's video recording link of killing Jagannath Hall student on 26th March 1971 morning by the Pakistani Army.

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