

Spirit of Liberation War and It's Practice Among Young Generation

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Abstract:

Liberation war of Bangladesh is indeed a unique episode of her history. This history is the extreme level of the movements of 24 years including language movement of '48 & '52, election of '54, establishing Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan in '56, education movement of '62, six point Bengali nationalist movement of '66, mass uprising of '69, gaining majority of Awami League in general election of '70. Around 3 million people were killed and 2 lakhs women were abused between that 9 months. Nevertheless, practice of the spirit of liberation war has been temporized and true history has been procrastinated to record. Through this study, the researcher tried to find out how the young generation think about liberation war and how much they are intended to practice the spirit of liberation war in daily life. This study has been accomplished in qualitative method. A specific number of participants have been sampled to collect data. These data have been analyzed meticulously and according to those, some initiatives have been recommended to deal with it.



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Introduction:

The liberation war of Bangladesh during 1971 resulted in the secession of West Pakistan from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and establishing the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The war lasted over a duration of nine months. It was one of the most violent wars of the 20th century, which witnessed large scale atrocities, the exodus of 10million refugees and the displacement of 30million people. The war broke out on March 26, 1971, when the Pakistani military launched militancy operation "Operation Searchlight" against Bengali civilians, students, intelligentsia and armed personnel. In response, the declaration of Bangladesh independence was proclaimed by the father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. A temporary govt named "Mujibnagar Govt" was formed on April 10, 1971 and the secretariats took oath on April 17, 1971. This govt leaded the war in the absence of Sheikh Mujib as he was arrested on March 26 and had been in the Pakistani custody throughout the war. India entered the war on December 3, 1971 after Pakistan launched preemptive air-strikes of northern India. Being overwhelmed by two war fronts, Pakistani defense soon collapsed. On December 16, an Instrument of surrender was signed by the defeated Pakistani General Niazi and thus Bangladesh got liberated and independent. 49 years have gone by since the liberation war in 1971. Still it is our sole responsibility to teach our young generation about the history of our liberation war. Our young generation must learn about what this nation aimed at, the terrible sufferings and sacrifices which had to be endured to achieve this free country and its freedom. Otherwise it will be impossible for us to make our future generation respect and love our motherland. (Rahman, 2007)

Background of the study:

On special days like Independence or Victory days, repeated lamentations on erosion of the spirit of Independence since the post Mujib era have become a banal. To the new generations, especially to many members of the post liberation generation, this simplistic notion has no special appeal at all. Rather to them, the spirit of liberation signifies some nostalgic slogans of some members of the older generations. This is no doubt due to the utmost failure of our older generation, who bore to torch of some patriotic ideologies with a view to guiding and rationalizing the popular demand for independence. Perhaps they were so overwhelmed with their success in the war of liberation that they were little concerned about transmitting those patriotic ideologies to the newer generations who are at the helm in different sections of the society of Bangladesh. Understandably, due to this weakness of the patriotic forces of the older generations, the reactionary and defeated forces of 1971 could quite easily succeed in manipulating the mindset at the younger generation by fabricating and twisting our history in a shrewd manner.

To clarify more, there is no denying the fact that being familiar with past events that took place in our country can help the new minds not only to learn from the past losses but also from the successes. Besides, the true knowledge about the past of our country can also help the youths to have a full understanding of the present condition of our country. And if one wishes to understand the present condition of our culture, politics and economy, one has to understand how the country began its journey in the past and gradually came into this present. Thus understanding the events and motifs of people that brought about our freedom and shaped who we are today will allow every new mind to be more rational in dealing with the problems in the country in future and remain respectful and responsible to his or her motherland. The ignorance about the history of our liberation war is quiet unexpected, knowing the fabricated and fragmented history can mislead our younger generation too. So, the younger generations need to know their authentic history and practice the spirit of it.

Literature Review:

Firstly, we need to know that what type of war it was. The war of Bangladesh during 1971 was a war of liberation though many opine it as a war of independence. Liberation war refers such kind of war where a long history is included behind the battle. If a community faces social, economic, political, military and cultural discrimination and oppression for a long time by a nation or another community and then all out protest against it unconditionally and massively, it will be considered war of liberation. Independence is used in narrow sense in a war whereas liberation war has a long extensive history behind. Though the war of Bangladesh took place in a duration of nine months but its depth was primitive. After the partition of 1947, Pakistan created discrimination between the East and West Pakistan. Consequently, a lot of movements were initiated by the people of East Pakistan against the discriminations including language movement of '48 & '52, education movement of '62, six point movement of '66, conspiracy case of Agartola in '66, mass uprising of '69, gaining majority of Awami League in general election of '70 and lastly the sanguinary war of '71. The goal and objective of this war was not only to make this land independent rather to build a nation with no exploitation, no discrimination and social justice. So, acknowledging this war as just an independence war neglects the long history behind it. It is a matter of lament that even after 49 years of liberation war we do not have any document regarding the true history of it. Researcher Afsan Chawdhury informed that we might lose the generation of the war as they are decaying. After some years, we will lose almost all people of that generation and then it will be more arduous to verify the authenticity of the history. So it is high time, we took necessary steps to reserve the true history of the liberation war of Bangladesh.

Prudent attitude and inquisitive mind is the most needed skill to practice history. One of the most prominent torch bearers of modern history Leopold Von Ranke once mentioned that the job of a historian is to inquire thoroughly the each and every barest and austere truth of information. He also added that supposition is not allowed at all in any study of history not even in any minimum point of that and mythic information must not be comprised in the study. He guided to strictly maintain the sequence of the incidents while narrating the history. But for lack of proper initiatives, still no authentic document has been published relating to the liberation war. The main limitation of these kind of research is the lack of interdisciplinary outlook and methodology. Some more limitations are as follow -

According to Shahriar Kabir, after the post Mujib era, the reactionary forces administered the country and they manipulated and distorted the history capriciously. So we found the fabled information about the history. Reactionary forces who were against the liberation war practiced administrative power mostly during the post liberation war era. They did not want true history of liberation war be published. Shahriar Kabir said that these administrations did not initiate any step to record the true and broadened history. Even if any individual or organization took any initiative, they would be disgraced. During post liberation war era, one statement of the constitution of 1972 was amended as "...independent and sovereign country has been formed through a historic war for national independence" from "... nation state Bangladesh was formed through a historic struggle for national liberty". As we know, our liberation has an extensive history. Though the war took place in a duration of nine months but its depth was primitive. After the partition of 1972, Pakistan created between the East and West Pakistan and prioritized West Pakistan. Consequently a lot of movements were initiated by the people of East Pakistan and the war was the ultimate protestation. So, this war was for national liberty, not just for independence. Muntasir Mamun once said in an

interview that in any discussion about liberation war only the frontal attacks and the eleven sectors are being focused. Apart from these, the liberation war has other various dimensions such as the activities and the immigrants worldwide and so on but they are mentioned a little while discussing about liberation war. There is a problem of distortion and lack of reliability of the information so young generations feel confused about those to believe. For lack of individual initiatives, limitations of funding and other facilities, some historians feel apathy to make researches. According to a letter to Dr. Rajendra Prasad of Sir Jadunath Sarkar regarding to liberation war, national history is incomplete if the bad sides are kept hiding. All the true incidents should be included in the document of national history. So our history of liberation war will be incomplete if we do not include the activities of the reactionary forces. But for the changes of govt. the initiative to list the anti-war forces had been repressed that actually questions the authenticity of the history. Sir Jadunath once said that we need spiritualization to revive the basic research about the history. A historian must think beyond any barrier of nation, period and society. He needs to disassociate the tendency to achieve cheap claps of the domestic people. Some historians create a new version of history by mixing up his supposition with the real incidents, which they must avoid.

Discussion:

Though true history has not been published as a document yet but a lot of initiatives have been taken already to reserve the history of liberation war of Bangladesh and most of them went in vain for some reasons. Syed Anwar Hossen explained that if a community faces intrusion over their basic cultural components, an extreme collective defense is created. Bangladesh also faced such kind of intrusion as East Pakistan after the partition in 1947. The people of then East Pakistan face intrusion over their language even over their existence and they protested against it extensively and engaged themselves in the liberation war. He further added that liberation war of Bangladesh was administered by two kinds of organization activities, political and military organization. First initiative was taken by Bangla Academy in July, 1972 According to govt instructions, a 'National Independence History Committee' was formed. In spite of having organizational and financial limitations, this committee completed some important tasks in just one year -

1. 4141 interviews from all sectors who were engaged in liberation war directly or indirectly.
2. 350 interviews from the military personnel.
3. 495 interviews from the elected representatives, members of the ministries of Mujibnagar govt, political leaders and activists of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.
4. Relevant informations from print media had also been recorded.

After 1975, all these informations were submitted to the 'History of Independence War Writing Project' but due to lack of manner of writing history, only 3 pages had been selected for the document of liberation war from a huge book of 256 pages. Another initiative was taken as 'History of The Warriors of The Liberation War Writing Project' but it went in vain as well. Cooperation of Bangladesh Rifle and Sukumar Biswas edited a book 'Liberation War & Rifle' in 1977. Lot frontline war incidents were narrated there. In 1988, then Information ministry initiated a project 'History of Independence War Writing and Printing Project'. Under this project, 15 part documents and one album had been published but on July, 1988, this project was closed down suddenly. After this period, a lot of books in different foreign languages had been published such as 'Japan & The Emergence of Bangladesh' by Dr. Sukumar Biswas, 'Witness to Surrender' by Siddique Salik etc. Writers included particular dimension or area in this books not the whole history like Abdul Matin described the life of an

immigrant Bengali in England in his book 'Bengali immigrants in Liberation War'. 'Liberation War Research Centre' was a non-govt organization which initiated research regarding the liberation war in 1990 but for the lack of combination, it was also closed down. In 1991, Asad Chowdhury and Enamul Kabir published a book 'The people behind liberation' in association with 'Freedom Fighter Welfare Trust' that included biography of 500 freedom fighters who were killed in the war. In 26 June, 1999 Bangla Academy started an initiative 'Liberation War History Project' that was basically the first initiative that tried to cover the whole history. It had two basic departments -

1. One was to publish 64 parts history of 64 district each.
2. The another was to refurbish the existing 'Document of Independence War' and publish it.

Incidentally some local institutional initiatives can be mentioned such as 'Contribution of Dinajpur in Liberation War Information Collection Committee' which was formed in 25th April, 1972 to record the history of Dinajpur during liberation war. In 1989, this committee was reshaped as 'Liberation War & Martyrs Memorial Conservation Committee'. This type of initiative was started in some other districts but they failed to conclude as great. Apart from these, Shamsul Huda Chowdhury wrote 'Mujibnagar in Liberation War' and Belal Mohammad wrote 'Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra' which described about the contribution of Mujibnagar govt and the activists of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra respectively. 'To save a flower' by Rafiqul Islam and '9months of Liberation War' by M S A Bhuiyan described about the frontline battle. 'Mainstream of '71' by Begum Mushtari Shafi is such book that presented some candid true incidents that forced to think about some political Leaders and social activists of then. Some other books revealed some exceptional incidents. Abdul Mohammad wrote 'Genocide in Sylhet' in which he upheld some gruesome incidents of genocide in Sylhet. On the other hand, Kader Siddiqi expressed history of guerrilla organizations and guerrilla attacks in liberation war in his book 'Independence of '71'. First bibliographical writing was published by Md. Delowar Hossain as 'Bangladesh: Treaties Regarding Liberation War'. Joyas Rahim and Enayetur Rahim published a bibliography in English language as 'Bangladesh: A Select Bibliography of English Language Periodical Literature' in association with Asiatic Society in 1986.

Methodology:

This study was conducted to demonstrate the thought of young generation about liberation war of Bangladesh, to find out how much aware our youths of it, to bring out how much they know about the basic history and to figure out how much they are keen to practice the spirit of liberation war in their lives. This research was basically conducted in qualitative method. Sampling, data collection and all the further processes were accomplished in qualitative way. The study is originally young generation oriented so to conduct this, some college and university students in the age between 18-25 years were required as sample. Data was collected from 100 participants in which 20 are from colleges and 70 are graduating students and the rest 10 are post graduating students from different educational institutions. Questionnaire was used as the instrument to make surveys from the participants. Through Google, an online questionnaire was set to collect the data and then sent via email and social media to the participants. To make the study more reliable, some interviews were taken from some freedom fighters. The interviews were a mixture of both structured and unstructured type as the researcher prepared a set of questions to ask and in the interview session, the respondents were free to express their views even in topics which were not included in the discussed areas. It should be noted that the conversations flowed smoothly and pleasantly.

The analysis of the questionnaire results took place via thematic analysis method. Because of the small number of participants and diverse design and answers sets of the questions and because of the qualitative research approach of the study, the author did not use any of the statistical software available. The results of the interviews were also analyzed manually, where the author aimed to detect common words, phrases, and groups or cloud them together in order to be able to determine trends and tendencies in the answers of the respondents. The current study was subject to certain ethical issues. As it was mentioned earlier, all participants reported their written acceptance regarding their participation in the study, through a signed consent and briefing letter. At the same time, sample members were asked to sign a debriefing and withdrawal letter. The aim of both was to reassure participants that their participation in this research is voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from it at any point based on a reasonable cause. Next To this, participants were fully informed regarding the objective of the study, while they were reassured that their answers were treated as confidential and used only for academic purposes and only for the above, participants were not harmed or abused both physically and psychologically, during the conduct of the research. In contrast, the researcher attempted to create and maintain a climate of comfort.

Data Analysis:

Through questionnaire, the author attempted to know how much the young generation think about the liberation war. But surprisingly and lamentably this young generation has a little knowledge about liberation war. In the very first of the questionnaire, the participants were asked some basic knowledge regarding liberation war but deplorably most of them answered wrong. Almost 73% answered the war as of independence that means they have no clear concept about independence war and liberation war. Liberation war refers such kind of war where a long story is included behind the battle. If a community faces social, economic, political, military and cultural discrimination and oppression for a long time by a nation or another community and then all out protest against it unconditionally and massively, it will be considered war of liberation. Independence is used in narrow sense in a war whereas liberation war has a long extensive history behind. Though the war of Bangladesh took place in a duration of nine months but it's depth was primitive. After the partition of 1947, Pakistan created discrimination between the East and West Pakistan. Consequently, lot movements were initiated by the people of East Pakistan against the discriminations and the war was the ultimate movement. So acknowledging this war as just an independence war neglects the long history behind it. The participants were asked about the goals, objectives and spirits of liberation war. Almost 98% answered as just to get an independent country, 1% answered as to get golden Bangladesh and the rest 1% answered as to establish freedom of speech. The spirit of the liberation war was Bengali nationalism. The war occurred not just to get an independent country but to gain liberty as a nation from economic, social, categorical exploitation. Apart from this, 93% participants did not know that this war is a consequence of 24 years discrimination and exploitation; rather they knew this history starts from the 'Operation Searchlight' attack on March 26, 1971. They were asked about the war techniques, 43% of them did not know even about the guerrilla technique whereas the most used technique was guerrilla technique in liberation war of Bangladesh. Secret agents of a camp used to provide information about the camp of Pakistani military and their operations to the freedom fighters and then the freedom fighters abruptly used to attack the Pakistani military and run away. This technique is considered guerrilla technique. Though they all know about the 11 sectors but 41% do not know about the three forces which confronted basically the

frontline attacks. These three forces are Z, S, K force that was led by Major Ziaur Rahman, Major K M Shafiullah and Major Khaled Mosharref respectively. Almost 89% participants never went through a book based on liberation war as they are not keen enough to read any writings regarding the history. On the other hand, almost everybody celebrate the significant national days but only with their own institution. Apart from this, only 12% experienced to have a conversation with real freedom fighters. Though they all agree on that point that true history of the liberation war needed to be reserved and practiced but no one has taken any initiative regarding this. 37% agreed that text books, published books, journals, articles provide with a lot of information and that is pretty enough. The rest think a lot researches are required to reserve and record the whole history of the liberation war. In this regard 13% marked unwillingness of the historian, 23% marked limitations of individual initiative, financial and others facilities and 62% marked lack of perversion of information and reliable sources as the hindrance to reserve and record the real and authentic history. Moreover 2% participants wrote that any discussion about the anti-war forces is a denigration of the history while 98% boldly claimed that this dimension must be included in the record otherwise the history will remain incomplete.

In the answer of the question about the tasks and duties of young generation in the preservation and practice of the history, different opinions have come out. Some opined to teach these from the very beginning of the primary school level so that the students can feel the struggle and sacrifices to gain an independent country and hold the spirit of it throughout the life. Some other answered that organizing meetings and seminars can be functional in this regard. Institutions need to enhance activities regarding liberation war except teaching the textbooks and celebrating the national days only with placing wreaths to the martyrs' grave. Many of them opined to increase researches regarding liberation war and the researchers must be honest, loyal and think beyond any barriers. In the interview session, respondents were asked about the task to do revive the spirit and practice it among young generation. Their answers were so constructive. According to their experiences and knowledge, they all expressed their opinion regarding how we can preserve and practice the spirit of liberation war of Bangladesh.

Recommendation:

A large group of young generation have a very few knowledge about the true history of the liberation war. The main reason behind it is the scarcity of preservation of that history that has created a deep gap between the liberation war and the young generation after 49 years of its birth.

Some points have been noted through the conversation of the freedom fighters and liberation war researchers. We do hope with the implementation of these we can overcome the obstacles and be able to reserve and practice the true and authentic history. (1) At first, we need to make our generation athirst about liberation war. They need to realize that liberation is the root of our existence, dignity, development. Conversation, meetings or seminars with the freedom fighters can be functional in this regard. Young generation can feel the struggle, sacrifices if they hear the story from those who actually struggled. As the generation of liberation war is consumptive so this initiative needs to be started as early as possible. (2) It is a must for a researcher to be honest and loyal while recording the true story. He needs to think out of the box, beyond any delusion and any political sentiment. He needs to stop changing the history with the change of govt. (3) This type of research requires a large number of expenditure. The govt organization and non govt. organization can provide the

researchers with the necessary funding and facilities. (4) Educational institutions can play a vital role by arranging cultural programs based on the history as the young generation generally gets attracted to these type of programs. So they can participate and learn from these. (5) Without mentioning the anti-war forces, the history remains incomplete as it is one of the important dimensions of the war. For these forces, country lost a great number of freedom fighters. Because the Pakistani Military would not be able to conduct their operations so smoothly by identifying the roads and bridges in East Pakistan if these anti-war forces did not assist them. Sometimes these forces took part in the war directly and killed he freedom fighters. Though they were also Bengali, citizen of East Pakistan but they helped the opponent party throughout the war. They are the worst traitor ever. It is important to include detail description about their cruelty and atrocities in the record of the true history. So we need a flawless list of these people on that basis, the researchers will write the record. And (6) Through some field work and direct contact with some freedom fighters, it was seen that a large number of them do not have the liberation war certificate and some do not get any allowance in spite of having certificates. So they lead such miserable lives. It makes them offended and unwilling to provide with information. It is very inhuman that they, for those we are now living peacefully in an independent country, use to beg for their daily meals. They need to be respected, they deserve it. If they can be provided with proper allowance and respect, their sufferings might be decreased and probably they will cooperate in this journey to record the true and authentic history of liberation war.

Conclusion:

Liberation war is the base of Bangladesh. Because if it was not happened, if the freedom fighters did not battle he war, we would not lead our daily life in this independent country. But it is a matter of great sorrow that by the evolution of period, we have lost eagerness from our liberation war and forgotten the history. If it continues to happen, one day Bangladesh will lose its root. We need to reserve and practice our history to escape from this. This duty is devolved to the young generation as they are the future steersmen of the country. So it is high time, the young generation needed to take necessary initiatives to stop the history from contortion otherwise it will be losing its significance. They need to be devoted, united and honest to their duties of reserving history. After having the recorded copy of the history, it is needed to provide to all the students and teach them the history in such a way so they feel eagerness rather than boringness and realize the spirit of liberation war and practice it in life. Assiduously we will be able enough to practice true and authentic history of liberation war even generation after generation.

Research Limitations:

As it is for every study this study had the following limitations -

(a) The size of the sample was relatively small - 100 participants. A bigger sample would probably enhance the reliability of the research. (b) Qualitative research is not allowing the measurement of the examined problems, and (c) In some cases, participants refused to speak against some organizations.

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