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Tale of an abandoned monument

Madhuri Lata still whimpers for her martyred husband and relatives

Shahidul Islam

Madhuri Lata sits silently every morning in the courtyard for some time with her eyes closed and prays for salvation of the departed souls of her near and dear ones killed by the Pakistani occupation forces during the War of Liberation in 1971.

She is one of millions who lost their near and dear ones during the nine months' bloodbath from March 25 to December 16 in 1971.

"The horrible war memories still haunt me terribly," the elderly woman told The Daily Star.

She looked deserted, pale and frail.

Madhuri, close to crossing 100 soon, is herself a living monument of ages who witnessed many epoch-making, historic and turbulent period as well as happenings of the immediate past century.

The slaughter ground at Jamijuri in Dohazari of Chan -danaish is now virtually an abandoned and decrepit three-foot concrete wall, popularly known as 'Martyr Monument.' It is difficult to discover any remains or memoirs of the war here.

The Pakistani forces killed hundreds of innocent Bangalees, including women and children, at the ground in 1971.

And, 14 close relatives of Madhuri, including her husband, were slaughtered here. Thirteen others were: Master Prafullah Ranjan Bhattachariya, Kabiraj Tara Charan Bhattachariya, freedom fighter Bimal Das, Master Milan Kanti Bhattachariya, Bishwersher Bhattachariya, Dr Karuna Chowdhury, Amar Das, Hari Ranjan Bhattachariya, freedom fighter Subhas Das, Benubala Bhattachariya, Mohendra Sen Bhattachariya, Nagendra Rani and Ramani Das.

The names of the 14 martyrs are inscribed on the monument overlooking a ramshackle semi-pucca house where two survivors, Madhuri Lata and her only son Sunil Bhattachariya, of 1971 nightmare live. Sunil is now a doctor.

"It was 14th of Baishakh (Madhuri could not recollect the Roman date), the Pakistani forces stormed our house and opened fire indiscriminately. I was a bit fortunate and escaped hurriedly in fright along with few other women through the backyard," Madhuri narrated feebly the nightmarish experience of her life.

With tears rolling down her face she continued: "As we returned to the house after few hours of the massacre, we found of my husband and others lying in a pool of blood."

Each family of the martyrs had received financial help once from the post-independence Awami League government.



The horrible incident of 1971 still haunts Madhuri Lata. She whimpers for her martyred husband and spends some time taking care of the monument (on the background) every morning. PHOTO: Zobaer Hossain Sikder

Later, the concrete monument was built and an AL leader gave Tk 15,000 for development of the monument. But afterwards neither families of the martyred got any help from anywhere nor a single touch of masonry was seen on the monument yet. And, the monument after 33 years of independence is on the verge of complete decay.