

Bangladesh; A Crane that keeps flying

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Who is Bangladesh?

Is she the sitar of Ravishankar,
Wrapping hearts with rain-drenched strings of water, as
Ali Akbar with closed eyes, pulls those strings in Sarod,

Or is Bangladesh the squatting boy with a big belly on the album cover;

Is he Bangladesh? Asks George Harrison.?

“BenGLADESH is a bottomless basket!”

Gurgled a fat man with a thick german accent and glasses
so much thicker that he could be blind.

But alas he wasn't blind, he was a pundit who in his spare time dropped bombs.

And that question on Bangladesh from him was half hiss and half whisper
from an evil genius also known as Dr. Strangelove

And yet students, ambassadors, Professors of Economics with unpronounceable names,
housewives pushing prams with little kids,

They all memorized his words
And chanted it incessantly in seminar halls and filled walls with
Such graffiti.

So alas, now the poor boy with a big belly was also a broken basket;
In words of men of dark suits and shining limousines.

I was that boy, I was that basket, I was Bangladesh.

But who had made me that boy, that hopeless basket?

Let me tell you another story.

In gushing winds of March when dry leaves flew from rural hamlets to open fields
Waiting for the yellow dazzle of Mustard;
When the flowers of mangoes brought spring madness to Rabindranath

The boys from the land of five rivers came to play.

They were Bakhtiars, Gul Muhammad, Farman and Sikandar;
Turbaned youth in galloping horses; their women left behind in night-dark Burqas

They came and played on our fields
Instantly turning our green and gold into dunes of sand
And making our rivers and ponds drenched in blood.

And piles of corpses lay on the stripped naked land, on those dunes of sand;
Lay young boys with clenched fist, lay bespectacled professors of philosophy, lonely
writers of sad poems; lay a girl who secretly loved to scan the sky for shooting stars such
was her anguish for good fortune.

Gul Muhammad, Farman Sikandar, fellow brothers in Islam,

Cursed men now living in Lahore and Peshawar; Listen to me
Listen to me Iqbal the poet of Shiqwa,
and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, follower of Lenin
Listen

On that heap of blood and bones
On those mutilated bodies of music, poetry and songs,
On those eyes of young boys with cut throat;

You slaughtered your own humanity.

As the whirlwind of Chaitra ended and came the gushing rain
As mangoes fell on corrugated iron roofs and thatches of mud-huts

On our plains and villages; you went hunting for your own humanity.

On our giant waterways with eddies and streams
Under the bridges with rusting metals; your boats like prehistoric animals
Searched and destroyed dreams, youth, extinguished faint light of dinghies.

Sinking your own humanity in those rivers.

And like a silver fish of shining dream from a previous life,
Like a rainbow of tomorrow from sweeping currents of Padma;
There rose a giant white Crane out of blood drenched waters.

I am that Crane; a dream -come-alive-from million-deaths;

A dream beyond the name-calling of the basket, the hunger of that boy on the album;

I rise out of the ashes of savagery of men into a blue space of history,

And behold, I keep flying on and on.