

She isn't a little girl of the 1971 any more!

by Dr Khairul Haque Chowdhury

WHENEVER I approach her, I feel numb. I feel
speechless. I want to know who she is. But I
don't know who to ask. How to ask.
This photograph has always haunted me. I don't
remember when I first saw it. Probably in a book
of war photographs. And later in the
Muktijuddho Jadughar, . . .
- Rahnuma Ahmed

*On the 12th day of December 1971,
It seems the crowd all around is jubilant
At Mymensingh Agricultural University campus.
The celebrating men pull out a 10 or 11 year old girl from one of the
bunkers of pakies.*

*The girl sits wilting and astounded
Supports herself holding the metallic pole at her back . . .*

*"Look, what those beastly khans have done?
End of the little girl!"
The world is so inhuman around her.
It may become a jungle full of those male-beasts?
Doesn't it look like one anyway?*

*Approach her as a father or a brother,
With a humane affectionate gesture
In a land that is liberated by her strength and sacrifice,
The land which is liberated with a ten year old's strength And
Sacrifice?*

*Among celebrating crowd around her
There are men of all ages
Men of every creed and caste,
They celebrate by looting buildings and campuses
For anything or everything valuable.*

*Men stand around her
Men, young and old with amusement in their eyes
As she sits, her head drops on one side and her spine
Supported by the pole.
She holds the pole with both of her hands
Metaphorically and literally the pole is the last support
She needs to cling in this liberated land.*

*Several men standing, a little distanced from her
Stares at her nervously,
"The pakies have done it to her –
She is finished."*

*No man and no woman comes to share her pain and suffering;
Her eyes are closed
She seems to be dazed
And she is not in this planet.*

*She seems to talk to herself
"You are celebrating victory.
You are free now," she whispers.
"But my suffering and pain continues,
I give you freedom through my suffering, pain and sacrifice of my*

ten year old life”.

The men murmur to each other, one asks the girl,
“Who are you?”
“The freedom embodied,” *she says*, “dead and happy.
My intention is to make you happy
Even my 10 year old body should be mutilated
I am leaving the physical casing of mine,
I can see the land that I have liberated
Because I have no body in particular and because I die
In the year 1971.”
She finishes, “the last thing you need to remember,
I have suffered physical mutilation and lust of khans in my
Child-body to present you a brand new land where you
Celebrate life to the full!
Remember, I give my little body for your freedom.
Remember, I will be with you in the endangered time when
You need me to be sacrificed for another noble cause!
Remember, you need to love and respect me as a child,
Is it a big ask?”

Reference: Ahmed, Rahnuma. “Distances.” **NEW AGE INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL.** <http://www.newagebd.com/2008/mar/26/independence08/i02.html>
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