

Birth of the Nation

English translation:

Bangladesh is a very beautiful country. Here... Bangladesh is filled with greenery. Bangladesh is very beautiful from nature... the point of view of nature. At one time, Bangladesh was ruled by other nations. Different nations have ruled us at different times. For instance, at first, the British ruled over us, and then the Pakistanis ruled over us. In ...this way, we were ruled by other people for about two hundred years. At one time, there emerged a problem with respect to our language.¹ They [attempted] to take our language away from us. But the people of Bangladesh... rebelled against this measure. For this [and related] reasons, at one point [we began] our independence movement. For this reason... for this reason, [the nationalist] struggle started up in the year 1971, and through this struggle, [and after] much strenuous effort, the people of Bangladesh [achieved] independence [from Pakistan]. When ... our country became independent on the 16th of December, 1971. The Bengalis began a new life.

Our ... Bangladesh is very rich culturally. We have several different cultural festivals here. Muslims ... Muslims are the largest demographic group in Bangladesh. Muslims observe two *Eids* every year. Besides these, there are various ... every year there are many celebrations – the Bengali New Year is an example. This is the first day of the Bengali year. On this day, we wear the... chief... attire of Bengalis: the chief attire of women is the sari, and that of men is the *panjabi-paijama*.² And we wear this attire of ours, and ... go to the many fairs that are organized on that day. Then, in the morning, we... I mean, we eat our food – rice and fish, and so forth. The staple food of Bengalis is rice, which we eat together with different kinds of fish. Bangladesh has many, many rivers. One can get many different kinds of fish here. That is why we Bengalis are often described as those who like their rice and fish.³ Besides this, in Bangladesh... among the other cultural festivals of Bangladesh is the 21st of February. On this day we staged a revolution centering on the right [to use our mother] language. That is to say, the Pakistanis had wanted us all ... Bengalis to adopt Urdu as their mother language. But we did not accede to that demand, and revolted against it. There were processions on the main thoroughfares, and on this day, students had marched in violation of Section 144.⁴ At this time, many were injured, or killed. Our... our annual 21st of February celebrations are [meant to] mark [these events].⁵ Then we have the 25th of March. This was the day of the Dark Night. On this night, the Pakistan army ... Pakistani soldiers attacked us [innocent] Bengalis. They perpetrated terrible atrocities upon us. And then the 26th of March is our Victory Day.⁶ And then, [finally], when the Liberation War came to an end... that day is the 16th of December. This is a very joyful day for us. We enjoy ourselves very much on this day. We listen to patriotic songs, and then there are different kinds of celebrations

¹ The speaker is referring to the suppression of the Bengali by the Pakistan government in 1952.

² Long, loose shirt, and tailored drawstring pants.

³ Literally, "Bengali in their rice and fish."

⁴ An anti-riot measure that took away the right to congregate in numbers larger than four.

⁵ UNESCO now recognizes February 21st as International Mother Language Day.

⁶ Actually, December 16th is observed annually as Victory Day. The Bangladesh Liberation War began on March 26, 1971, and ended on December 16, 1971.

in different places – there are songs, and dances; there are various dance performances and poetry recitations.

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