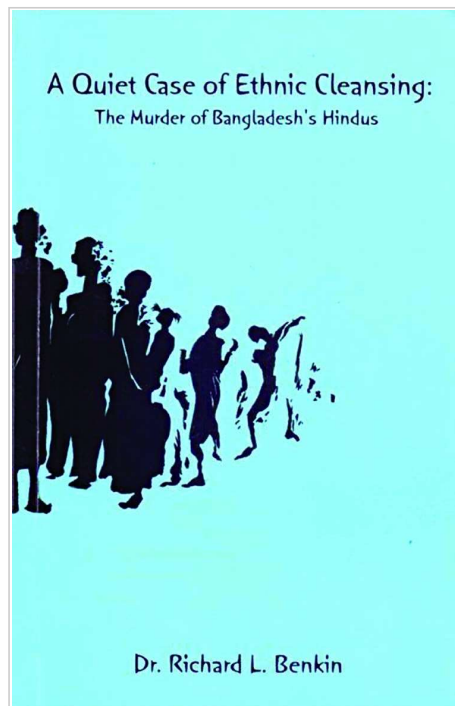


Communal trauma and monstrosity -The Asian Age



Mahfuz Ul Hasib Chowdhury elucidates his views about an investigative text on the plight of religious minorities in Bangladesh

Painfully true that even after the independence of Bangladesh from the repressive Pakistan regime in 1971, the grim nightmares of communal atrocities still hold the religious minorities across Bangladesh in tight grips and whenever political turmoil breaks out in this country, the Hindu people at most times come under the vicious clutches of communal outfits.

Till today, even after so many years of liberation, the Hindus and other non-Muslim communities of Bangladesh have not been able to get themselves released from communal discrimination and vices. Allegations show that the culprits who carry out attacks on religious minorities often remain out of the reach of administration due to their strong alliance with political higher-ups.

As a result harmony, political stability and safety are breached every now and then in Bangladesh through unleashing violent outrage on minorities. Bangladesh's fame on the global stage is often downgraded by such instances of communal turbulence.

Dr. Richard L. Benkin's analytical and research-based book *A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing: The Murder of Bangladesh's Hindus* is a comprehensive and evidential text portraying the injustice, torture and dispossession the Hindus in Bangladesh had to undergo during last several decades.

The author has chosen the words "quite case" because most of the occurrences of communal mayhem are not properly addressed by the authorities concerned. The inactivity of law and order forces to nab the masterminds of communal crimes has all along empowered the radical political fronts in Bangladesh who have a very antagonistic approach to minorities.

Not just offenses like physical abuse, Hindus have been subjected to forced conversion, displacements from their ancestral households and other types of ignominy by politically bolstered musclemen who use theology as their instruments but silence from those who at present have and who earlier had the power to eliminate the communal gangs have all the while worsened the situation, according to the facts and figures illustrated by Dr. Richard L. Benkin in his book. Dr. Richard L. Benkin is an American author and a prominent human rights activist. He has written a number of articles on South Asian issues.

For looking deeper into the ordeal of Hindus in Bangladesh, Dr. Richard L. Benkin has made analogical references to the German Holocaust of World War II in which millions of Jews were killed. It's known to all that lots of Hindus were tormented and murdered by the Pakistan army and their local collaborators during the Liberation War of 1971 but Dr. Richard L.

Benkin has asserted that Hindus have been continuously oppressed by the influential people even after Bangladesh's independence as a result of which the percentage of Hindu population in Bangladesh has gone down drastically. Huge numbers of Hindus lost their lands and properties to powerful lynchpins in independent Bangladesh, Dr. Richard L. Benkin added.

The unrestrained rise of communal groups has facilitated the expansion of militants and religious bigots across the country who are clear threats to domestic peace. Bangladesh has already suffered several attacks by fanatic terrorists who have killed ordinary, innocent people in some parts of Bangladesh including foreigners. So, if the government cannot resist the communal organizations, then the bid to terminate militancy may also hit hurdles. Those who kill common citizens in the name of religion are the most terrible enemies of human beings.

To quote a few lines from Dr. Richard L. Benkin's book, "Finally, abduction, forced conversion and other acts of violence against religious minorities in general and against Hindus in particular remain common occurrences in Bangladesh....For instance, during January and February 2009 alone, there were anti-Hindu actions including murder, rape, abduction, land grabbing, forced conversion and religious desecration at the rate of one a half per week." These lines are sharp reflections of the intensity of the repeated attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh.

Dr. Richard L. Benkin has supported his points with specific data and bibliographic citations. The author has added a remarkable list of textual sources wherefrom he gathered necessary information for writing this book. This book also contains some letters Dr. Richard L. Benkin sent to the higher officials of Bangladesh government stating allegations of communal crimes against Hindus which happened during 2012 and 2013.

While speaking on ethnic cleansing, it takes us back to the horrendous carnages executed by the former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in Bosnia, to the massacres that took place in Rwanda, in Cambodia, in Congo and in some more parts of the world. The theme of ethnic cleansing also makes it important for the readers to glance once again over the genocides which have occurred in Myanmar's Rakhine province as a result of which over one million Rohingya refugees have moved into Bangladesh in recent times.

These instances of mass murders have been able to draw attention from global stakeholders but the incursions on Hindus in Bangladesh have gone on and on in ominous ways which have remained unexposed for the most part under cover of political gambits-this message emanates lucidly from the pages of Dr. Richard L. Benkin's book *A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing*.

The reviewer is a literary analyst for The Asian Age

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Kazi Nazrul Islam Ave, Dhaka 1215