

Reading Allen Ginsberg's *September on Jessore Road*: An Attempt to Ruminare over the Horrific Reminiscences of the Liberation War of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Allen Ginsberg's 'September on Jessore Road' captures the blood-stained history of the creation of Bangladesh through highlighting the unflinching struggle of the Bangladeshi people and their appalling plight that they went through during the country's war of independence in 1971. This poem mainly reports on Ginsberg's visit to the refugee camps located in the bordering areas of Jessore of Bangladesh and Kolkata of India in mid-September, 1971. Those camps sheltered millions of Bengalis who fled their homes fearing persecution and violence inflicted by the Pakistani occupation forces during the liberation war of Bangladesh. Ginsberg's first-hand experience of encountering the refugees in those camps is reproduced in this poem where the poet very meticulously pens the untold sufferings that every individual experienced during that war time. The poem also criticizes the US government and all its state apparatus for not supporting the freedom loving Bengalis in that war. His original intent of composing this poem was to express solidarity with the Bengalis' resolute craving for freedom on the one hand and to create awareness among the masses and form public opinion against Pakistani atrocities on the Bengali people on the other. This paper thus attempts to depict how Ginsberg puts all these aspects into words with a view to reminding us of the gory history behind the establishment of the modern state of Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

American poet Allen Ginsberg in the poem 'September on Jessore Road' details his first-hand experience of witnessing the sufferings of the people of Bangladesh during the country's liberation war of 1971 in specific and hints at the disastrous havoc that war always causes to people in general. This legendary 152-line poem unfolds the intense miseries of millions of Bangladeshi people who fled to India to save their lives from massacres inflicted by the Pakistani army during that wartime. Ginsberg composed this poem soon after he along with Sunil Ganguly, a famous Indian Bengali poet visited many refugee camps in Kolkata of India and its bordering Jessore of Bangladesh towards the end of 1971 where he met thousands of fleeing people and encountered some shocking and disturbing experiences. Then he decided to translate those experiences into words the result of which this poem came into being with the graphic description of untold stories of millions of refugees fleeing the violence. While portraying the distresses of the war victims of 1971, Ginsberg depicts how every family member falls prey to utter despair and destitution. He accounts the sufferings of

the baby, its father, mother, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandfather and grandmother. Through this poem, the poet virtually made a clarion call to the rest of the world to take immediate measures in order to mitigate the sufferings of the war victims of Bangladesh.

This poem serves as an indictment of the United States and its military policies taken during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. Ginsberg raises serious questions about the roles and responsibilities of some international non-government organizations like USAID during wartime. Moreover, Ginsberg is also critical of the American people for indulging themselves in luxury and for not standing in solidarity with the war-ravaged people of Bangladesh. He thus reprimands them for being unresponsive to such a situation where people in Bangladesh were fighting for their identity, independence, and nationhood while in America, people were merely watching them and their woes on TV channels without even protesting. As a whole, this poem is a museum of the images of the predicaments that Bangladeshi people went through during the war of independence in 1971 and also a satire towards the whole mankind in general and

America in particular. This paper thus attempts to shed light on how Ginsberg has introduced all these issues in this poem and helped us revisit the history of the birth of Bangladesh. Besides highlighting the contexts and the structural aspects of the poem, it also pays little attention to Ginsberg's viewpoints on poetry.

Significance of the Study

There have not been enough studies about how authors and writers from countries other than Bangladesh view its liberation war of 1971. Ginsberg's 'September on Jessore Road' in that sense is a very significant poem where he actually talks about only one city of Bangladesh namely Jessore and uses it as a representative to narrate the agonies of war-inflicted people. Much has also been said about the number of people who laid down their lives in the war of 1971. But little is said about the near 10 million helpless people who fled to neighboring India to evade persecution, murder and rape. The unsung stories of almost one crore people have been unheard of till now and Ginsberg in 'September on Jessore Road' has brought the narratives of those unrewarded heroes into light. From that perspective, this study carries a lot of significance since it endeavors to focus on how a foreign poet like Allen Ginsberg has recounted those unheard stories of millions of Bangladeshi people through words.

SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS OF THE POEM

Allen Ginsberg composed this poem soon after he visited the refugee camps in border areas of Jessore of Bangladesh to witness the sufferings of the war victims of the then East-Pakistan (Bangladesh at present) in 1971. He first came to know about the horrible and terrifying conditions faced by those war-ravaged people through reports of foreign correspondents. The harrowing tales of inhuman sufferings of those people caught the attention of many poets and singers who later composed songs and poems about them and their miseries. Ginsberg came all the way to Kolkata in mid-September, 1971 to witness the Bangladeshi war victims who were living in the refugee camps under the open sky, braving sun and shower and without food. With the help of Sunil Ganguly (mentioned in Stanza-29) a renowned Indian Bengali poet and writer, he reached the Jessore border through Bongaon of India by boat in the month of September since that road was under water due to heavy rains. They witnessed the sufferings of refugees living in the campsites in Jessore and its neighboring areas of India where most of the refugees from Bangladesh took shelter in. He was greatly moved after coming in contact with millions of them who were forcibly evicted from their hearth and home when Pakistani army let loose a reign of terror, killing, burning and destroying everything that came on their way in Dhaka and elsewhere of the country on the fateful night of March 25, 1971 and afterwards. It was a miserable situation and Allen Ginsberg was greatly shocked to see those things personally. With tears in his eyes, he witnessed with pity and awe the inhuman sufferings of the people who were without food and

shelter for months together. He also came across the mothers without food and children un nourished. He saw the hungry fathers and mothers holding the empty pots for food and succor in trembling hands. He also experienced deaths of people in the camps. The plights of millions of innocent people in the refugee camps left a permanent scar on his mind which he later expressed in writing the poem 'September on Jessore Road'. He made it an epoch making poem by giving details of his on the spot observation. It speaks of the whole of the people who fought for their mother tongue and also for freedom to lead a life of a heroic nation. Allen Ginsberg was bold enough voicing protest and hatred against his own government and the U.S. President for waging war against Vietnam and also for supporting Pakistan for crushing freedom loving people of Bangladesh. But both Pakistan and the U.S. finally met the poetic justice as both faced defeat at the hands of freedom loving people of Bangladesh and Vietnam.

Ginsberg did not stop here just after composing the poem. With the help of his friend Bob Dylan and others, he transformed this poem into a song. They arranged a concert and collected money for the help of Bangladeshi refugees by singing this song at the concert. Later, West Bengal singer Mousumi Bhaumik also gave a famous rendition of this poem in Bengali while YouTube launched another version of Bhaumik's song along with a visual footage of captured motion pictures of refugee migration. This poem was later included in Allen Ginsberg's famous book *The Fall of America: Poems of These States, 1965-1971* and 'September on Jessore Road' is probably the best poem in the book.

ALLEN GINSBERG'S POETIC PHILOSOPHY

Ginsberg's poetry exemplifies the poetic styles of the Beat Generation. The Beat Generation, or Beat poets as some were called, used to focus on poverty and despair of people living outside mainstream culture. They were a generation that felt they could never settle into the lives of corporate jobs and nuclear families – the essence of bleak urban culture. Ginsberg's poetry thus deals with the tensions between rural ideals of the American Romantic poets and the reality of poverty, industrialization, and urban blight. Ginsberg, like his fellow Beat poets, felt that he simply could not belong to modern America. His works thus became a seed for the rebellion, protest and cultural uprising that would mark the late 1960's and early 1970's. At the same time he never shied away from the realities of war and violence. J.D. McClatchy, editor of the Yale Review, called Ginsberg "the best known American poet of his generation, as much a social force as a literary phenomenon". McClatchy added that Ginsberg like Whitman was a bard in the old manner – outsized darkly prophetic, part exuberance, part prayer, part rant. His work is finally a history of modern era's psyche with all its contradictory urges which sought to redefine the values both of poetic form and social commentary. His poetry still retains its appeal since it exhibits the depictions of drug use, war violence, and lewd sexual acts.

Like Whitman, the foundation of Ginsberg's work was the notion that one's individual thoughts and experiences should be resonated among the masses. "It occurs to me that

I am America” (America: 46) Ginsberg wrote, and while the statement sounds humorous, it also illustrates his idea that democracy begins with the raising of even a single voice. He was always willing to talk about the taboo subjects which made him a controversial figure during the conservative 1950s and a significant figure in the 1960s. Ginsberg, who at the youthful days of his life supported the philosophy and thoughts of the Beat Generation and later embraced his role as the Beat Generation’s most eloquent and persistent spokesperson, always ensured a continuing legacy of the study and practice of Beat Generation-influenced writings which also go in line with Ginsberg’s lifelong obsession with controversial issues as the Vietnam War, gay rights, drugs and explicit portrayals of the human condition. His opinions and knowledge, however controversial, were highly solicited and his political essays were in constant demand. Ginsberg eventually parlayed his fame and network of connections into a modestly successful career in music. Over the years, he appeared on stage with a diverse group of musicians, including Bob Dylan, the Fugs, Phil Ochs, the Clash and Patti Smith. Ginsberg might have been an American by birth, but through his extensive travel, he developed a global consciousness that greatly affected his writings and viewpoint. He spent extended periods of time in Mexico, South America, Europe and India. He visited every continent in the world and every state in the United States and some of his finest works came about as a result of these travels. Ginsberg was clearly aware of an America that had gone awry, and though he kept hope for the country’s renewal, his work never shied away from depicting the less romantic realities of a beatnik life.

DISCUSSION

Significance of Jessore Road during the War of 1971

Jessore Road earned its name for being a crucial communication link between the eastern and western parts of Bangladesh. It passes through Khulna district and connects south-western Bangladesh to Kolkata, India. But this road emerged with immense significance during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971 when millions used it as a highway to flee to India in order to save their lives from atrocities and massacres of the Pakistan Army. It was one of the lifelines through which nearly 10 million people fled the country for a makeshift refuge in neighboring India as the Pakistani troops launched a cleansing operation against the Bengalis throughout the year 1971. Most of the people particularly in the western region chose Jessore Road as a safe passage particularly in September - a very difficult time when the country witnessed a late monsoon deluge on the one hand and a wave of atrocities and misfortunes inflicted by the Pakistani occupation forces on the other. Jessore Road thus became the witness of many such untold stories of millions of fleeing refugees and appeared to be a topic of war and refugee migration. Foreign journalists and aid workers reported on it, singers composed music and great poets wrote poetry about it. Of those fateful eight months in 1971, as the world slowly realized that a massacre was underway in the then East Pakistan and sympathy and support began to

trickle in from the West, the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg wrote his lyrical anthem ‘September on Jessore Road’ in support of those war victims which he later recited at a poetry recitation program in St George Church of New York.

1971: A Documentation of Social and Humanitarian Crises

In the poem ‘September on Jessore Road’, Allen Ginsberg seems to be less interested in exposing the political tensions between the then East Pakistan (Bangladesh at present) and West Pakistan (Pakistan at present); rather he focuses on the social and humanitarian predicaments born out of that political stalemate. He vividly portrays the conditions of the people of Bangladesh during the war of 1971 and describes the amount and gravity of sufferings that they went through due to lack of food, medication and shelter. Here, Ginsberg also details how the carnage perpetrated by the Pakistani forces on the innocent Bengali civilians during the war of 1971 caused widespread loss of human lives and rampant violation of the sanctity of human honor.

Ginsberg here describes the sordid picture of refugee camps that accommodated millions of fleeing Bengalis. This poem also gives an account of individuals of all ages with nothing but pain, mud, death, sadness, anguish and anxiety. Babies had their ‘bellies swollen, children were ‘weeping in pain’, parents were ‘dying for bread’ and the elderly became ‘silently mad’ (Ginsberg: 2; 104; 9; & 12). Children were watching the skies for divine help and intervention since they all were without or little food for a long time. They only used to receive ‘rice ration, lentils one time a week’ (Ginsberg: 39). They all suffered from starvation and malnutrition the result of which their abdomens got bloated and their eyes turned big and round. Ginsberg mentions how millions of fathers, mothers, daughters, grandfathers and grandmothers were in ‘pain’, sadness, and ‘woe’. His description also includes the destitution of thousands of ‘aunts with holes in their heads’, hundreds of ‘uncles with swollen sick feet’, and millions of sisters with their ‘skulls on the ground’ (Ginsberg: 142; 148; & 143). This poem thus attempts to divulge the stories of those thousands of families who remained helpless and ‘hopeless alone’ (Ginsberg: 16) throughout the war time.

In 1971, during its liberation war, Bangladesh witnessed a mass exodus of fleeing people towards Kolkata, India who left homes with a desperate aim to save their lives. With leaving their homes, they thus left behind everything they had only to ruminate the glorious past. They became refugees in neighboring India and homeless in their own country since they had actually ‘nowhere to go’ (Ginsberg: 8; & 152). Being homeless, thousands of families had to lead a wretched life in the refugee camps where they all met the cruelest realities of the world. They encountered intense woes and unbound pain when they saw the family members dying before their own eyes. Ginsberg’s touching description of their being ‘homeless on Jessore road under the grey sun’ (Ginsberg: 18) actually underscores the very dilapidated conditions of their makeshift houses in the refugee camps. The once affluent people started to live in ‘long bamboo huts’ (Ginsberg: 3)

with roofs made of plastic and palm leaves. Some had to live in the muddy 'thatch'd house' and in 'huge pipes in wet-shit field rain' (Ginsberg: 113; & 114).

Their homeless condition and living in that temporary, dilapidated and make-shift houses in the refugee camps further worsened due to untimely flood caused by the monsoon water. Monsoon 1971 was a grueling time for millions who were fleeing their homes fearing persecution and violence. With torrential rain over their heads, people walked in muddied roads and crawled their ways through waist-high water heading for an uncertain future, which nevertheless was a glimmer of hope. Food supply also stopped only to double the miseries of those destitute people since the trucks carrying food could not reach the affected areas due to flood as Ginsberg says "border trucks flooded, food can't get past" (Ginsberg: 85). Even people who went for collecting food had to wait in rain since Jessore Road was underwater. The following lines briefly state the situations of those homeless people.

September Jessore Road rickshaw
50000 souls in one camp I saw
Rows of bamboo huts in the flood
Open drains, & wet families waiting for food
(Ginsberg: 80-84)

In fact, every line of the poem speaks volume about the miseries of the war victims who were subjected to starvation, malnutrition, homelessness, diseases etc. along with countless barbarities perpetrated by the Pakistani occupation forces. There was no food, no 'money or work for the man' (Ginsberg: 41). Since they did not have any work to do, their earnings were cut off. As a result, they failed to provide their families with food, medicines and other life-saving ingredients. Some parents, without a source of income for sustenance, resorted to begging. They merely had to depend on rations and relief supplies which were too small for them and for their families. The scarcity of money and food led them to starvation thus making their lives more deplorable. Ginsberg's words 'then children starve three days in a row and vomit their next food unless they eat slow' (43-44) echo an awful image of the starving people during the war and that dearth of food and shelter eventually led a million to untimely death. There were deaths on the roads, as there were deaths at refugee camps. And every day, the death count increased as more civilians succumbed to their ailing health. As numbers of refugees grew, so did the casualties.

We can easily envisage Ginsberg's descriptions of the 'skinny runt' and 'stunted boys' (Ginsberg: 58 & 26) with silent round eyes. They looked bony and became 'hollow eyed' since they had to starve for many days and had little to eat. They all had to depend on the ration. Standing in the long queue for the paltry supply of rice, lentils etc., children often fought with each other for food and the authority needed to use force (big whistles and long bamboo sticks, Ginsberg: 55) to disperse the crowd waiting for their daily bread. There were times when the rations dried up. Since there was not enough food, the man in the 'bread door' had to shout to the crowd and declared that there was 'no more bread today' (Ginsberg: 67).

Ginsberg's visit to those refugee camps put him before some excruciating experiences. His own words 'on Jessore

road Mother wept at my knees/Bengali tongue cried mister please" (Ginsberg: 45-46) briefly tell about that traumatic experience where the mother was seen pleading with the author for some help. He took recourse to similes to further illustrate those horrifying experiences. The portrayal of the weeping mother and her sons who were 'standing thin legged like elderly nuns' (Ginsberg: 30) signifies a lot. Ginsberg details not only about the mother and her sons but also about the husband who 'still waits at the camp office door' (Ginsberg: 48) for food. Moreover, the filthy conditions of the refugee camps along with the lack of basic amenities simply multiplied their sufferings. The tents were overcrowded without minimum health care facilities. As a result, people easily became vulnerable to different diseases like dysentery, rheumatism, gastroenteritis, blood poison etc. and the outbreak of cholera always spiked the statistics. The new born babies were the worst victims of that untidy condition. The babies were so weak that they got 'sick shit'. Within months of opening the refugee camps, the rate of child mortality grew on an alarming scale. It seemed as if the angel of death had frequented the place claiming lives of the youth, the young and the elderly.

Refugee camps in hospital shacks
Newborn lay naked on mother's thin laps
Monkey sized week old Rheumatic babe eye
Gastroenteritis Blood Poison thousands must die
(Ginsberg: 76-80)

Towards the end of the poem, Ginsberg asks repeated questions with "how many" (Ginsberg: 137-148) in order to tally the number of casualties during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971 and his repeated answer is a resounding 'millions' (Ginsberg: 5-8, 9-12, 102-104, & 149-152).

An Indictment of the United States

In 'September on Jessore Road', Ginsberg delivers essentially the same critique of modern America that he does in some of his other poems. He travelled worldwide with the hope to be able to update and reshape his thought process regarding poetry and introduce spontaneity in it. He accumulated direct experiences and feedback on US policies in different countries which later helped him take a grimmer view of his own country. In this poem, he sharply criticizes the role of his own country, the United States, and its top leaders who opposed the creation of Bangladesh in its liberation war in 1971. Allen Ginsberg also hoped to reach a wide American audience with this poem and to expose the hypocrisy of a country that would fund a war in Vietnam but leave countless individuals in the world to die of lack of basic necessities (Stephenson: 55). Besides criticizing the state machineries, he also ridicules the lavish life style of American people who were busy in indulging in extravagance without paying heed to the humanitarian crisis looming large in Bangladesh during the war of 1971.

In the poem, Ginsberg also uses the tone of mockery to taunt the US government and its war policies. He calls the American war tools 'angels' (Ginsberg: 86). Like many people, he expected prompt actions with foods and medicines from those 'Angel Machines' in order to help the distressed people stranded in the campsites on and around Jes-

sore Road. Instead, they remained busy with their mission of invading other countries which resulted in the killing of many innocent children.

Where is Ambassador Bunker today?

Are his Helios machines gunning children at play?

(Ginsberg: 87-88)

Even he is very critical of the US Air force for not extending help to the war affected people of Bangladesh in 1971. He also raises questions about the social and moral obligations of the US Air force that remained occupied in 'bombing North Laos all day and all night' (Ginsberg: 92) instead of helping Bangladesh in attaining its independence. Ginsberg also criticizes the role played by the US AID whose helicopters were supposed to support the refugees with relief supplies. But no such helicopters appeared and he scorns this organization by saying that its helicopters were used in 'smuggling dope' (Ginsberg: 90) in Bangkok. Allen Ginsberg does not stop himself just by questioning the roles played by the US-AID and the Air force of America. He is equally critical of the roles played by the US 'Armies of Gold' (Ginsberg: 93) and the US 'Billionaire Navies' (Ginsberg: 94).

Allen Ginsberg not only mocks the US government and its military for not duly playing their parts, but also criticizes the mass civilians of America for being unresponsive to the plights of Bangladeshi war victims during 1971. While millions of people were being killed in Bangladesh, while millions of fathers were losing their sons and daughters, while millions of babies were passing their days without food, while millions of aunts and uncles were dying with holes in their heads, while millions of grandfathers and grandmothers were starving to death, people in America at that time were enjoying their suppers and dinners with delicious foods in New York city thus relishing in luxurious thinking about big 'cities and cars' (Ginsberg: 121). Through this poem, he essentially tried to create a sense of awareness and fellow feeling for the war victims. In fact, one stanza in the middle of the poem, 'Ring O ye tongues of the world for their woe ... Ring in the conscious of America[n] brain' (Ginsberg: 105 & 108) suggests that the goal of this work is to somehow resonate in the brain of Americans and other citizens of the developed world in order to elicit intervention and aid.

He pleaded with Americans to realize that although the scene he depicted existed for them only 'on planet TV' (Ginsberg: 130), it was all too real for many. While Americans worry over problems that do not even exist, such as what to "buy with our food Stamps on Mars" (Ginsberg: 122), people in other parts of the world are dying needlessly. Although the American government celebrates its humanity, Ginsberg claims that the country chooses to squander its riches on meaningless wars rather than invest the resources to rebuild human life. Furthermore, in Ginsberg's opinion, it is not only the American people who are at fault. He rather criticizes the whole world and therefore urges everyone to see and feel everything with 'human eye' (Ginsberg: 130).

Structural Facets of the Poem

Allen Ginsberg's life and work always inhabited a space outside of the mainstream and sought to move away from the

formal styles with a view to deconstructing the modernist forms of poetry. His poetry attempted to recreate forms of speech and patterns of conversation using the long line. 'September on Jessore Road' begins and ends with the same tone which resonates a dire humanitarian crisis born out of a war where the poet himself acts as the narrator who is narrating his first-hand experience of visiting the war-ravaged people in the bordering areas of Bangladesh and India during the war of 1971. In this poem, Ginsberg traded the sprawling Whitmanesque style of rhymed couplets, lilting stanzas, and organized meter with a view to using them in music not in poetry. Ginsberg himself made it clear that he intended the poem to be a 'mantric' lamentation rhymed for vocal chant to western chords. This poem consists of 38 stanzas and each stanza contains 28 words on an average. The stanzas and lines are almost consistently the same with a few exceptions. The closest stanza types of this poem are heroic couplets. This poem has 152 lines with each line having 7 words approximately. Ginsberg mostly uses the end rhyme and the closest rhyme scheme is *aabb* with a few variations.

Ginsberg always sticks to the use of formal language. In order to increase the musicality of the language, he takes recourse to the figurative use of the language including imageries, metaphors and similes. His use of figurative language reflects his sarcasm and mockery and gives the poem a new dimension with an underlying satiric tone. The metaphor 'starving black angels' (Ginsberg: 28) in the 7th stanza and the simile 'thin legged like elderly nuns' (Ginsberg: 30) in the 8th stanza are used to describe the starving children standing in queue in the refugee camps for food. In the poem, Ginsberg also uses anaphora- repetition of a fixed base at the beginning of some neighboring lines. The purposeful repetition of words like 'millions', 'why', 'where', 'ring', 'what', and 'how' is to emphasize the sufferings of war victims, the essence of the poem. While the poem's cadence strikes as little more than a nursery rhyme, its imagery still has intended effects of inducing nausea and sadness. This is probably what Ginsberg wanted although what is lesser known is that he had planned to make the poem a song. The poetic inspiration behind writing this poem signals Ginsberg's shifting allegiance to the musical counter-culture. Ginsberg in this poem largely relies in interesting ways on rhetorical questions which draw the reader into contemplation though he later tries to answer those questions. If we "go online and listen to the poet recite—or, rather, *sing*—this work on YouTube, there is a lulling, incantatory repetitiveness to the performance until Ginsberg gets to the final stanza, which he sings slowly and with a kind of agonized emotion, suddenly shifting from numbness to pain" (Slovic: 2016). 'September on Jessore Road' is thus a powerful demonstration of the effort to communicate the emotional meaning of large-scale social disturbance and human sufferings.

CONCLUSION

In 'September on Jessore Road', Ginsberg unfolds the degree of sufferings that millions of Bengalis faced during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. He very pains-

takingly details the miseries of each and every member of the family in the refugee camps sited in Jessore of Bangladesh and Kolkata of India. This poem also sharply criticizes the US government, its Army, Navy, Air force, the US AID and the common Americans for not helping the freedom loving people of Bangladesh. Through this poem, Ginsberg expressed his solidarity with the genuine struggle of Bangladeshi people for freedom. After witnessing the sordid conditions of the refugee camps, he returned to America and composed this epoch-making poem. He converted this poem into a song and sang that in the 'Concert for Bangladesh' organized by Pandit Ravi Shankar and George Harrison at the Madison Square Garden in New York in 1971. The concert was able to stir the whole world through disclosing the barbarity of the Pakistani aggressors. Since then, public opinion was formed in favor of our glorious freedom fight and the world was waiting for the birth of an independent state named Bangladesh. After that concert, everyone stood behind the freedom craving Bengalis- artists through arts, poets with their poetry, musicians through composing music and singers by rendering voice. 'September on Jessore Road', immortalized by the poet, thus forever remains a reminder that freedom comes at a price. Not just the three million dead, or the other one million women violated, victory came at the anguish of millions more. Victory is not only about celebration but also of appreciation; of the lives lost and the lives hurt.

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