

Bangladesh - Forces of Unreason Strike Again! Rationalist Avijit Roy Slaughtered on a Busy Dhaka Street

Sunday 1 March 2015, by [SEN Sukla](#) (Date first published: 28 February 2015).

No, he was no personal acquaintance of mine.

But I had for quite a long while been on the yahoo-group Mukto-mona ("freethinker" or "freespirited"). Then, at some point of time lost touch.

Roy was the one who had launched and running the group to uphold rational thoughts and promote tolerance of diverse views and opinions, even markedly different from one's own.

That's no mean task.

And on Thursday, the Feb. 26th last, he had to pay with his life.

A bunch of savages, understandably two men, butchered him on a busy

Dhaka street and severely injured his wife Rafida Ahmed Bonna while they were on their way back home from a book fair releasing the Roy's latest.

The crime has been committed presumably in defence of some "faith". And, in his country of origin, Roy is definitely not the first one to die a martyr to the cause of rationalism and secularism.

Preceding him, legendary poet Shamsur Rahman had faced a murderous attempt on his life in

January 1999, carried out by the militant Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami. Humayun Azad - also a leading associate of the Mukto-mona, hounded for long, died mysteriously in August 2004 while on a visit to Munich in Germany - before that he had also faced a murderous attempt on his life earlier in February that very year, again on his way back from the Ekushay February Book Fair in Dhaka.

And, then a prominent and atheist blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider was hacked to death by a bunch of thugs associated with the Jamaat-e-Islami party in February 2013 in Dhaka.

So all these attacks are obviously parts of a larger pattern.

In all these cases the attackers have as yet successfully eluded the proverbial long arm of law.

And, on this side of border - in India, we had the leading rationalist Narendra Dabholkar brutally murdered in Pune on August 20 2013.

And, again, the murderers are just roaming free.

The history of savagery, perpetrated in the name of (various) faiths is perhaps as old as the history of faith.

Only the labels change across time and space.

Of course, to be fair, there were, and are, quite a few who stood up against violence and savagery from under the banners of their respective faiths. Three prominent names, belonging to the land from which Roy and Dabholkar came from, that come to mind are Buddha, Gandhi and Badshah Khan.

Nevertheless.

The Mukto-mona website [[1](#)], yesterday carried a message (in white), in Bangla, against an ominous dark background:

*We Are Grief-stricken
But Not Vanquished*

Today it has been updated. The English message, in addition to the Bangla one on top, reads:

*We are united in our grief and we remain undefeated
Mukto-mona*

So, Long Live this indomitable spirit!

So, Long Live Roy, Dabholkar and their innumerable comrades-in-arms – past and present!

Even in death, they must be abhorring rest!

Their deathless memories must keep us in a state of perennial unrest, at least as long as the forces of unreason persist.

Sukla Sen

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.mukto-mona.com/>