

Representation of Bangabandhu's 7th March Speech: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This paper uses critical discourse analysis to examine Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech delivered on 7th March 1971. Analysing language techniques in the sociopolitical context of Bangladesh in 1971, the paper explores societal consequences, power structures, and ideological conceptions. The research examines discourse practice, textual and sociocultural elements and demonstrates how language shapes power structures, transmits ideologies, and affects social transformation. This analysis aims to contribute to the larger conversation on the role of language in political narratives and historical transformations by offering a nuanced understanding of the speech's rhetorical significance.

Keywords: *Social transformation; Freedom fighters; Power dynamics; Ideologies*

Introduction

Bangladesh, formerly recognized as East Pakistan, waged a nine-month struggle for independence against the imperialistic rule of West Pakistan, now known as Pakistan. Throughout this period, Bangladesh endured many atrocities including genocide, rape, and murder, resulting in the tragic loss of nearly three million lives in the hopes of freedom and the establishment of a sovereign state. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, known as the Father of the Nation, demonstrated extraordinary leadership on the cusp of these challenges. His pivotal speech on the 7th of March 1971 rallied the citizens of East Pakistan, urging them to prepare for war and resist the injustices perpetrated by West Pakistan. This speech has been included in the Memory of the World International Register, a list of the world's important documentary heritage maintained by UNESCO [1].

The pivotal lines of the speech, “Bear in mind that since we have given blood, we will give more. By the grace of Allah, we will surely liberate the people of this country. The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for our independence. Joy Bangla” [2], motivated over two million people who fought for an independent Bangladesh despite the lack of weapons and

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armour. Bangabandhu's speech fuelled the blood of many freedom fighters who portrayed brotherhood and unity for the motherland, resulting in a historical win and West Pakistan forgoing their rule in Bangladesh.

This paper uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse Bangabandhu's 7th March speech, focusing on power dynamics, ideological constructs, and linguistic strategies. It will examine the speech's power dynamics, ideological underpinnings, and rhetorical devices. The paper will also use Fairclough's 3-dimensional Model to explore text, discourse practice, and sociocultural context. It will also examine intertextuality in the speech, revealing intricate connections and references. By adopting a critical standpoint grounded in CDA and integrating Fairclough's model and intertextuality analysis, the paper aims to provide a holistic understanding of the speech's multifaceted dimensions.

Theoretical Framework and Research Questions

Before we begin to understand what we understand by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is imperative to illustrate what Discourse Analysis suggests in its most basic form. Stephanie Taylor rightly suggests that Discourse Analysis refers to a research approach in which language material, such as talk or written texts, and sometimes other materials altogether, is examined as evidence of phenomena beyond the person [3]. A statement like this indicates the function of dissecting an important dialogue and analysing its effects in its vicinity and beyond.

CDA is an approach to studying Discourse Analysis in a more specific attempt. The term "critical" could imply a dogmatic study of discourse analysis; however, it is more than that. It challenges dogmatism and dichotomies and views texts more implicitly making opaque structures of power relations and ideologies proving that "critical" is not limited to pessimism but being able to find out the limitations of a text and offering alternatives [7]. Applying CDA to Bangabandhu's speech unveils themes of connecting language with power. The speech becomes a platform where social and political power is exerted through language, addressing social problems and promoting an ideology of freedom. Notably, Bangabandhu's mention of his conversation with Yahya Khan establishes an intertextual link, identifying West Pakistan as distinct from East Pakistan. This reveals his aspiration to liberate the distressed people of East Pakistan from imperialist rule.

Hence this paper will concentrate on two specific research questions:

- How does the language contribute to the power relations within the socio-political context of 1971 Bangladesh?
- How was the ideology of freedom conveyed through linguistic elements in the speech, and how do these contribute to the broader narrative of the struggle for independence?

Contextual Background

Following the partition of British India in 1947, two independent countries were established: Pakistan for Muslims and India for Hindus, based primarily on religious differences. Each religious community was to have its territory, according to this division. But religious distinctions alone proved more difficult to draw, particularly in areas bordering India, such as Bangladesh. Bangladesh was called East Pakistan since the majority of its people are Muslims. The geographical division of the newly formed state of Pakistan into West Pakistan and East Pakistan created distinct challenges that resulted in socio-political and economic divides between the two regions. While West Pakistan's per capita GDP grew three times quicker, East Pakistanis received less money and resources. In 1948, Urdu became the state language of West and East Pakistan. This situation led to the rise of the Bengali Language Movement that resulted in mass protests and deaths in Dhaka in 1952, and Mass Upsurge in 1969. The political situation reached its climax in 1970, when Bangladesh Awami League, the largest political party in East Pakistani, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a landslide victory in the general election of Pakistan. But Pakistani military ruler did not accept this result, which ultimately led to Rahman's famous 7th March speech indicating an independent Bangladesh [5].

Bangabandhu's 19-minute speech touched on a wide range of topics. This script evolved into a comprehensive guide for the Liberation War of Bangladesh. He made an effort to address the expectations and areas of interest for every social class. He addressed historical memories of deprivation at the beginning of his speech and closed with strategic directives and hope for the nation's liberation. This speech served as a force shaping power dynamics, fuelling resistance and crafting a historical narrative that resonates with the Bangladeshi identity. Bangabandhu's language isn't just talk; it empowers us, Bangladeshis, against injustice. By weaving historical references, he legitimises our struggle, connecting it to our shared past. This critical analysis reveals language's profound impact on socio-cultural and political dynamics during this pivotal moment in Bangladesh's history.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech uses language as a tool of power to assert leadership and rally support for East Pakistan. The speech addresses political and social inequalities, empowers the audience, and fosters solidarity against oppression. Historical references and imagery legitimise the struggle for independence, enhancing the cause's legitimacy. The speech's resonance with the audience's cultural identity and collective memory highlights the profound impact of language on socio-cultural and political dynamics during a pivotal moment in Bangladesh's history.

Methodology

In this paper, the methodology involves the careful selection of the historical 7th March speech of Bangabandhu also known as the Joy Bangla speech based on its historical significance and relevance to the research objectives. The speech was sourced from Bangladesh Awami League ensuring the authenticity of the primary data. The transcription process involved finding the website of Awami League- the political party of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, maintaining accuracy in capturing linguistic nuances. The analysis will employ a Critical Discourse Analysis, focusing on key rhetorical elements such as power and ideology, language and discourse, Fairclough's 3-dimensional Model, and intertextuality along with its analysis. Ethical considerations include sticking to the strict view of CDA excluding any personal biases and ensuring a faithful representation of the speaker's words. The cultural and historical context of the speech will be considered by analysing West Pakistan's involvement that underpinned the motivation behind the speech. The interpretation of data will be guided by textual analysis and exploring the power relations and ideological aspects. Furthermore, the entire speech will be included in Appendix 1 for the reader's thorough comprehension of this paper.

Analysis

Fairclough's 3-dimensional Model

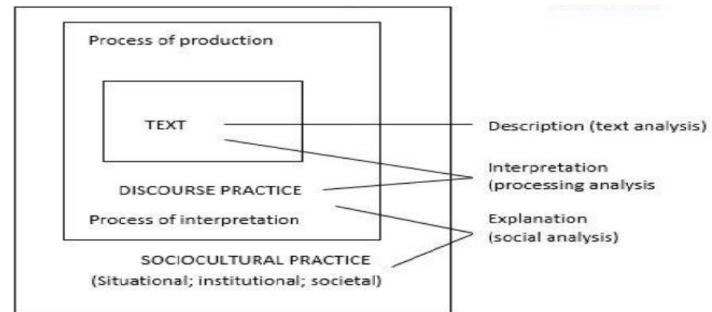


Figure 1. Fairclough's 3-dimensional Model

As mentioned above, Bangabandhu's Joy Bangla speech is considered to be a comprehensive guide for the Liberation of Bangladesh. A consideration like this hints at how rich with words this speech was, indicating the use of language and rhetorical devices employed here to bring forward a call to action, in this case, a war.

Bangabandhu begins his speech with the lines, "Brothers of mine; Today I appear before you with a heavy heart. You know and understand everything", indicating that he is directly speaking to his brothers fostering a familial relationship with the audience to build a sense of unity. His mention of a 'heavy heart' indicates that he is about to deliver a bad news of significant importance, but when he says 'You know' after pausing, he directly appeals to the audience and implies that they are aware. In a sense, it could be said that at the beginning of the speech, he is naturalising power. From a Weberian perspective, this hints that Bangabandhu legitimised his speech by making it consensual, wherein, he directly addresses his brothers and indicates that they 'know' what is going on. In this case, power is being exchanged in two ways-power through dominance, i.e. Bangabandhu directly speaking to his audience, and power by consent, i.e. audience accepting what Bangabandhu is implying. According to these interpretations, the dominant class (Bangabandhu) obtains consent from the subordinate classes (audience) through "a process of massive indoctrination" or "ideological predominance over the subordinate class [6]. In this case, he exerts power through text dimension, wherein, his speech uses linguistic elements, relations, identity, and representation- elucidating one part of Fairclough's 3-dimensional Model [8].

Subsequently, the overarching themes and motifs of the speech work as a catalyst to exert power through language further perpetuating Fairclough's idea of text dimension.

Motifs	Number of Appearance
Brothers of Mine	3
You	23
People of Bangladesh	2
Bengal	17
Blood	9
Independence	2
I	595

Table 1. Motifs of Bangabandhu's speech

The table above mentions some of the important recurring motifs of the speech, which further illustrate how power is being explored through the use of language. The mention of the pronoun “I” (595 times) indicates how hegemony is established under the shadow of the pronoun “you” (23 times); hence it can be said that here Bangabandhu’s appeal to this audience is being portrayed as ‘natural’ or ‘common sense’, wherein, he exerts his idea on people, and they accept it at its natural form.

Furthermore, the speech includes his conversation with President Yahya Khan, which aligns with the central theme of the speech- ‘struggle for emancipation’. Here, the speech illustrates Fairclough’s dimension of discourse practice, wherein, discursive practice dimensions relate to text production, distribution, and consumption [8]. Mujib in his speech mentions, ‘He said he would give a constitution and democracy to the nation. We Agreed. Thereafter the rest is history. There was an election. You know the fault was not ours.’, where he uses the pronoun ‘he’ to indicate Yahya Khan and ‘we’ to indicate the audience thereby ‘othering’ the voice of West Pakistan. In this case, ‘othering’ refers to the interpersonal act of categorising the world into ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ based on (i) representing via grammar who is doing what to whom, and (ii) building a dichotomy of opposing social groups with distinct master identities whereby outgroups are depicted as a morally distant [7]. Through the use of pronouns in his sentences and nouns like Bengal, blood, and Independence, Bangabandhu was able to perpetuate the theme of emancipation from imperialist rule. Hence through Fairclough’s model, it is fair to say that the text was produced for, distributed to, and consumed by the people of East Pakistan to create the effect it needed to start a war.

Moving along, the sociocultural practice dimension is related to the analysis of macro-contexts. The socio-cultural dimension is divided into three levels- situational, institutional, and social [8]. From this perspective, it can be said that by implementing phrases like ‘Brothers of mine’, ‘no one can dominate us’, ‘we have given blood, we will give more’, and ‘Joy Bangla’, Mujib has created a sense of urgency in regards to a situational context. He fosters the need for immediate action in the current situation by establishing cultural identity (being Bengali) and unity (being Bangladeshi). This was further elucidated through an institutional context, wherein, he mentions his political exchanges with the West Pakistani officials, for instance, his mention of ‘Bhutto’s demand to hold assembly’ and his conversation with Yahya Khan. Lastly, Bangabandhu’s mention of ‘what wrong did we commit?’ brings together the social context of the speech. Here, by presenting a rhetorical question, he illustrates the idea of being abused by West Pakistan. Through this, we can understand the power

structure of Bangladesh in 1971 where it is evident that East Pakistan was in immense despair.

This analysis helps us understand how language has shaped power relations during a significant period in Bangladesh's history through rhetorical elements, linguistic choices, and the use of pronouns.

Van Djick's Socio-Cognitive Approach

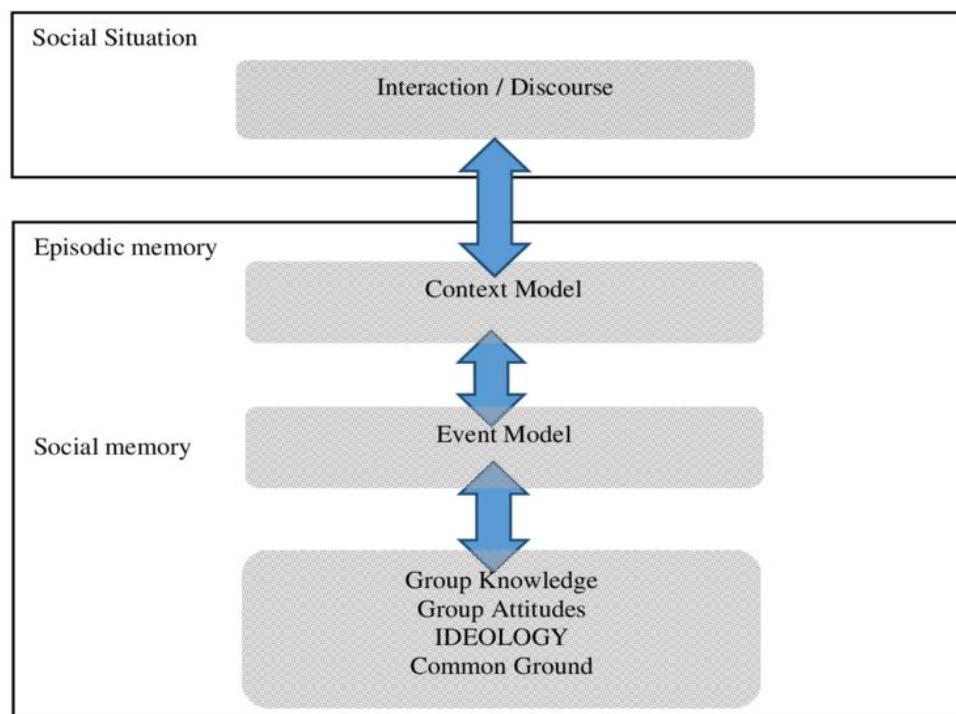


Figure 2. Van Djick's Socio-Cognitive Approach

To understand how linguistic elements conveyed the ideology of freedom and contributed to the struggle for independence, it is imperative to analyse the speech through Van Djick's Socio-Cognitive Approach. This approach explores the interconnectedness of knowledge, discourse, and society, focusing on subjectivity and the correlation between personal and socially shared knowledge, influencing discourse production and interpretation [9]. Bangabandhu skilfully employs intertextuality-which refers to the facilitation of recycling prior dialogue [10], to establish authority and convey the ideology of freedom, notably in the context of resisting an imperialist rule. He perpetuates historical insinuations using Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach, especially, while narrating his exchange with Yahya Khan.

Bangabandhu draws on both episodic memory, 'Today I met President Yahya Khan and discussed everything with him' - which recalls a particular interaction - and social memory, 'Today I have to tell painfully the pitiful history of the last twenty-three years', - which evokes more generalized group memories - by incorporating this dialogue into his speech. This conversation's intertextual connection is a powerful tool for portraying the independence movement as a resistance to imperialist forces. It portrays Yahya Khan as the oppressor who wants to maintain imperialist control over East Pakistan.

The conversation's intertextual connections reinforce the story of East Pakistan's struggle for independence by bringing up common memories of political oppression. Van Dijk's approach clarifies how these intertextual components help mould the audience's socio-cognitive background and promote a shared understanding of the fight against imperialism.

Furthermore, he deliberately frames himself as the authoritative voice against imperialist ideology by narrating Yahya Khan's pledges and subsequent betrayal, saying, "He didn't agree with me, rather he yielded to Mr. Bhutto's demand." Not only is the ideological fight for freedom there in the conversation's overt content, but it's also subtly referenced to past injustices and the audience's collective memory.

Bangabandhu's speech serves as a mechanism for fighting against the ideology of imperialism, subsequently establishing authority emphasising the quest for freedom and independence through language.

Limitations

While the speech was analysed based on the authentic version available on the Awami League website with a flawless English translation, it's crucial to acknowledge inherent challenges in interpreting discourses. This paper recognises limitations in exploring multiple layers of meaning, particularly in relation to the cultural sensitivity in interpreting symbols, the subjective nature of historical allusions, and the inherent ambiguity in specific linguistic choices. This approach recognises that as the speech is so complex, it might miss some layers of meaning in the setting of contextual variability. Finally, it emphasises how interpretations are dynamic and subject to change throughout time and among different audiences.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the aim of this paper was to critically scrutinise Bangabandhu's historic 7th March speech, which also serves as a guide to Bangladesh's Liberation War. In doing so, we applied Fairclough's 3-dimensional Model and Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach to understand the power relations, intertextuality, and ideology implied through the use of language. Lastly, it is fair to say that through Critical Discourse Analysis, we can comprehend the nuanced understanding of the speech's rhetorical significance.

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Appendix 1

The historical 7th March speech by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Brothers of mine;

Today I appear before you with a heavy heart. You know and understand everything. We tried with our lives. But the painful matter is that now the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur are stained with the bloods of my brothers.

Now the people of Bengal want freedom. The people of Bengal want to live. The people of Bengal want to have their rights. What wrong did we commit?

The people of Bangladesh cast their vote overwhelmingly for me, for Awami League. Our National Assembly will sit. We will draw up the Constitution there. And we will build this country. The people of this country will have economic, political and cultural freedom. But it's a matter of great sorrow that today I have to tell painfully the pitiful history of the last twenty three years. The bloody history of Bengalis tortured in Bengal itself. The history of the last twenty- three years is the history of the wailing of dying men and women. The history of Bengal is the history of the staining of streets with the blood of the People of this country.

We gave blood in 1952. After winning the election in 1954, we couldn't even form the government. Proclaiming martial law in 1958, Ayub Khan made us slaves for ten years. During the 'Six Point Movement', my children were gunned down on 7th June 1966. After; the fall of Ayub Khan brought about the 'Mass Movement' of 1969 where Yahya Khan usurped power. He said he would give constitution and democracy to the nation. We Agreed. Thereafter the rest is history. There was an election. You know the fault was not ours. Today I met President Yahya Khan and discussed everything with him. Being the leader of not only of Bengal but of the majority party of Pakistan, I requested him to convene the National Assembly of 15th February.

He didn't agree with me, rather he yielded to Mr. Bhutto's demand to hold the assembly in the first week of March. We said that was alright. We would sit in the Assembly. I went even to the extent of saying that if anybody, even a lone person proposed something reasonable, we, although the majority will accept the proposal. Mr. Bhutto came here. He conferred with us and said that the door for discussion was not closed. There would be more discussions. Then we talked with other leaders and said 'please come and sit together; let's prepare the Constitution through discussion'. Mr. Bhutto said that if the members of West Pakistan came here, the Assembly would turn into a slaughter house. He said whoever would come would be killed. If they came to the Assembly, then from Peshawar to Karachi, all shops will be closed down by force. I said that Assembly would continue, then all of a sudden, the Assembly was closed on 1st March. As President, Mr. Yahya Khan had summoned the Assembly. I said that I would attend. Mr. Bhutto said that he won't. Thirty- five members from West Pakistan came here. Then all of a sudden, the Assembly was closed. The people of Bengal were blamed; I was blamed too. Because of the closure, the people of this country burst into protest. I told them to observe 'hartal' (strike) in a peaceful manner I told them to close down all mills and factories. The people responded. The people spontaneously came out on the streets. They firmly pledged to continue their resistance in a peaceful manner.

What did we get? The weapons we bought at the expense of our money to protect the country from the invasion of foreign enemies, are now being used against the poor and unarmed people of our country; they are being shot down. We are the majority of the people of Pakistan. Whenever we Bengalis tried to gain power; tried to rule this country as our own, they assaulted. They are our brother; I asked them 'Why must you shoot your brother? You were deployed to protect this country from the attack of foreign enemies'. Mr. Yahya said that I had agreed that there would be a Round Table Conference (RTC) on 10th March. I said no such thing to him. I had a talk with him over the telephone. I told him 'General Yahya Khan, you are President of Pakistan. Come to Dhaka and see the how my poor people, my people of Bengal are being shot down. How the bosom of our mothers are being emptied of their sons. How my people are being killed. You come, see and do justice and then finalize. That's exactly what I told him.

I told him long ago, RTC for what? Who do we sit with? With them... who spilled the blood of my people?

Without any consultation, with me or any discussion with us, suddenly after 5 hours of secret meeting, Yahya Khan delivered his speech, in which he dumped all the blame squarely on me, squarely on the people of Bengal. (The crowds say shame, shame). I have said in the meeting, the struggle this time is our struggle for emancipation, the struggle this time is the struggle for our independence.

Brothers of mine. The Assembly has summoned on the 25th March. The marks of bloods have not yet dried. I had clearly said on 10th March that Mujib Raman can't joint RTC, treading the bloods of martyrs. They have called the Assembly. They have got to accept my demands: First, martial law must be withdrawn;

All army personnel must go back to the barracks; There has to be an inquiry into the way the killings were carried out and the power has to be handed over to the people's representatives. Only then, we will consider whether we can sit in the Assembly or not. Before that we can't sit in the Assembly. The people have not given me that right.

Brothers of mine

Do you have faith in me? (The crowds says yes yes) I don't want Prime Ministership. We want to establish the right of the people of this country. I want to say in clear terms that from now on all courts, magistrates, offices and educational institutions in Bangladesh will remain closed sine die.

To ensure that no suffering is inflicted on the poor people, to ensure that my people do not suffer, from tomorrow the following things will be put out of range of the 'hartal'. Rickshaws and hackney carriages will work; railway trains and launches will run. But the Secretariat, Supreme Court, High Court, Judge's Court and semi-government offices like WAPDA (Pakistan Water Development Authority) will not function. All employees will draw their salaries on the 28th of the month. If salaries are not paid; if one more shot is fired and if my people are killed again then my request to you is; build a fortress in each and every home. Face the enemy with whatever you have. In case I can't give you any further order, I tell you; close all roads and highway indefinitely.

We will starve them to death. We will make them go without water and choke them to death. You are our brothers. You stay in your barracks; no one will say anything to you. But don't ever try to shoot us. This will do you no good. You can't keep seven crores of people subjugated. Since we have learnt to die, no one can dominate us. We, from Awami League, will try our best to help those who are embracing martyrdom and those who have received injuries. Those who are capable, please extend your monetary support, whatever you can to our relief fund. And every owner of industries will pay salaries to all workers who participated in the 7-day 'hartal'. My instruction to government officials is that you must obey what I say. From now on, tax will not be paid till such time as the freedom of our country is achieved; no one will pay anything. Listen and bear in mind, the enemy has penetrated us in order to create divisions amongst us and to start looting.

Hindus, Muslims, Bengalis and non-Bengalis, all those who live in this Bangla are our brothers. The responsibility of protecting them is on you. Ensure that our reputation is not smeared in any way. The employees of the Radio and Television; please bear in mind that if our words are not broadcasted by the radio, then no Bengali shall go to the radio station. If our news is not broadcasted by Television, then no Bengali will go to the Television station. The ban shall remain open for two hours every day so that the people can get their salaries. But from East Bangla, a single paisa will not be allowed to be remitted to West Pakistan. Telephone and Telegraph service will remain operative in our East Bengal. They shall keep on sending our news to foreign news media. But if there is any sinister move to annihilate the people of this country, the Bengalis, you will have to keep very careful watch.

I am requesting you, you are my brothers. Do not make this country a hell and destroy it. Do not make this country a hell and destroy it. We will not see each other's face in the future. If we can solve things in a peaceful manner, we can at least live as brothers. That is why I am requesting you; do not try and run military rule in my country. Secondly, in every village, every locality, every union and every sub-division establish 'Resistant Council' under the leadership of the Awami League. And be ready with whatever you have.

Bear in mind that since we have given blood, we will give more. By the grace of Allah, we will surely liberate the people of this country.

The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for our independence.

'Joy Bangla'

Figure 3: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March Speech