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War babies, biranganas should be honoured

Says Mustafa Chowdhury, author of 'Ekattorer Juddhoshishu: Obidito Itihash'



"If I ever meet my birth mother, I will thank her for not killing me through abortion. She just abandoned me with a hope that I will remain happy. She must be happy as I am now," this was the quote of a war baby who is living in Canada while expressing his reaction about her birthmother to the author of a book written on them.

Mustafa Chowdhury, a Canadian citizen of Bangladeshi origin who wrote the book titled "71'er Juddhoshishu: Obidito Itihash" shared this quote with the audience yesterday while speaking about the book at a programme organised by English and Humanities department of BRAC University in the capital.

Mustafa said among the 15 war babies, one committed suicide from depression while another died normally. The remaining 13 are happy now as they are living their lives and are sympathetic towards their birthmother.

"The war babies and biraganas of 1971 should be given honour and compensation," he emphasised.

In his book he described the journeys of the first contingent of 15 "war babies" to Canada who were embraced by their adoptive parents as their own when they reached there back in July 1972.

He brought his readers up to speed by describing how the war-babies bear the stigma of illegitimacy in the eyes of Bangladesh.

"My birthmother is neither a woman of disrepute nor selfish and uncaring. There is no need to punish her for relinquishing me. She could not have offered me what I needed as a child," said Onil Mark Mowling, mentioned in a quote from the book.

According to historical documents, 2 to 4 lakh Bangladeshi women and teenage girls were raped by Pakistani occupation army and its auxiliary forces in 1971.

After the independence, the government made abortion legal for a certain period so that the unfortunate women, who got pregnant, could have a choice regarding the war babies they were carrying.

The book was published in Bangla last year. English version of the book, "Picking up the pieces: 1971 War Babies' Odyssey from Bangladesh to Canada" was published in the US last year and it will be available at the Ekushey Boi Mela this year.

Rukhsana R Chowdhury, Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam and Afsan Chowdhury, among others, spoke at the programme.