

## A Pathan Soldier

Stephen Gill\*

*(This story is set in 1971 when the tragic events unfolded in the region known as East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The barbarous rape seemed unbelievable but it is a fact. Within a few months three million Bengalees were killed and ten million escaped to the neighboring country of India. Out of the atrocities there emerged a new country, called Bangladesh.)*

**The infant** raised his tiny soft hands, giving the sweetness of a smile, as Daud Khan took his machine-gun to fire at close range. Perhaps the infant thought the man was offering him a toy. Close by, the parents of the infant were lying besmeared with blood. The hands of Daud Khan began to tremble and the room began to spin. He was about to turn away when he heard Captain Ayub shouting, "You, coward!" Like lightening the Captain rushed forward and finished the job with his Chinese revolver. Daud Khan wished to snatch the Captain's weapon to kill him instead. Instantly he realized that in the army such actions were unacceptable.

When evening approached, Daud Khan returned to the Dacca camp with other soldiers. At supper, all of them shared the stories of their kills, but Daud Khan was uncomfortable in that setting. The infant reminded him of his own son whom he had left in his village. At the same time, the action and the words of the Captain were torturing him. It was disgraceful for Daud's tribesmen to attack an unarmed person, particularly treacherously. He remembered his tall grand father who once gave a night's rest to a stranger, whom he recognized in the oil-lamp's dim glow as his old enemy. That night his enemy was his guest and therefore his grandfather treated him in the tradition of a Pathan's hospitality. In the morning, he bade him farewell with due respect....

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